Where have the teachers gone? A mixed method study of Japanese English-as-a-foreign-language teachers' burnout and self-efficacy development.

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A thesis submitted to McGill University for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

March 2024

Table of Contents

Abstract

The present study stems from a shortage of teachers in Japan due to the elevating attrition rate. An extensive review of the literature indicates that teachers leave their profession due to several factors, particularly heavy workload that depletes them physically and mentally. High levels of work-related stress experienced by teachers have consistently been associated with adverse outcomes, including decreased instructional quality, compromised teacher well-being and health, and ultimately, burnout. Hence, this study explored teacher burnout as the primary component and other related factors, including teacher self-efficacy as the secondary component. By systematically investigating these factors and offering insights into mitigating the fundamental problem of increasing teacher attrition rates, the study aims to facilitate the understanding of teacher support among government officials and school administrators and offer recommendations.

To analyze the relationship among teacher burnout, teacher self-efficacy, and other relevant factors more effectively, I employed a mixed methods design, combining a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. During Phase 1 of the study, a quantitative survey consisting of 60 questions was administered to 132 Japanese English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers. In Phase 2, a follow-up interview was conducted with 17 participating teachers selected from Phase 1.

The present study has three primary findings. First, a negative correlation was found between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout, suggesting that enhancing teachers' self-efficacy could help to reduce their burnout levels. Second, teachers in Japan often endure extended working hours, with some individuals working for up to 12 hours per day or more, for tasks such as lesson planning, grading, extracurricular activities (ECAs), participation in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and handling disciplinary issues. Therefore, it is crucial to urgently address their workload with the assistance of governmental entities, including local governments, school administrators, and supervisors. Third, aspects of Japanese culture (e.g., pressure from students' parents, peer pressure, supervisory support, etc.) are prevalent in educational settings and play a pivotal role in considering teacher support.

The present study concludes with implications and proposes nine actionable measures for teacher support based on the findings of both phases, which can be implemented collectively by the government, school administrators, supervisors, and teachers themselves. The implications, along with the findings of this study, will not only contribute to the specific

context of EFL teachers but also have broader implications for educational settings worldwide facing issues of teacher shortage, high attrition rates, and teacher burnout.

Resumé

L'étude actuelle traite de la pénurie des enseignants au Japon dûe à un taux croissant d'attrition. Une revue approfondie de la littérature indique que les enseignants quittent leur profession en raison de plusieurs facteurs. La première raison est une charge de travail intense qui les épuise physiquement et mentalement. Des niveaux élevés de stress liés au travail vécus par les enseignants sont régulièrement associés à des résultats négatifs, notamment une diminution de la qualité de l'enseignement, une altération du bien-être et de la santé des enseignants, et finalement, l'épuisement professionnel. Par conséquent, cette étude explore l'épuisement professionnel des enseignants comme composante principale ainsi que d'autres facteurs connectés à ce thème, notamment l'efficacité personnelle des enseignants comme composante secondaire. En enquêtant sur ces facteurs et en offrant des éclairages sur la manière d'atténuer le problème fondamental de l'augmentation des taux d'attrition des enseignants, l'étude vise à faciliter la compréhension du soutien aux enseignants de la part des responsables gouvernementaux et des administrateurs scolaires, qui peuvent entre autre formuler des recommandations.

Pour analyser de manière plus efficace la relation entre l'épuisement professionnel des enseignants, leur efficacité personnelle et d'autres facteurs pertinents, j'ai utilisé une conception de méthodes mixtes, combinant une enquête quantitative et des entretiens qualitatifs. Au cours de la phase I de l'étude, une enquête quantitative composée de 60 questions a été administrée à 132 enseignants japonais d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE). Dans la phase II, un entretien de suivi a été mené avec 17 enseignants sélectionnés à partir de la phase I.

L'étude actuelle présente trois conclusions principales. Premièrement, une corrélation a été trouvée entre l'efficacité personnelle des enseignants et l'épuisement professionnel. En fait, renforcer l'efficacité personnelle des enseignants pourrait aider à réduire leur niveau d'épuisement. Deuxièmement, les enseignants au Japon endurent souvent des heures de travail prolongées, certains travaillant jusqu'à 12 heures par jour ou plus, pour des tâches telles que la planification des cours, la correction, les activités parascolaires, la participation à l'Association des parents et des enseignants (APE), et la gestion des problèmes disciplinaires. Par conséquent, il est crucial de traiter de toute urgence leur charge de travail avec l'aide des entités gouvernementales, y compris les gouvernements locaux, les administrateurs scolaires et les superviseurs. Troisièmement, des aspects de la culture japonaise (par exemple, la pression des parents des élèves, la pression des pairs, le soutien des superviseurs, etc.) sont

prédominants dans les milieux éducatifs et jouent un rôle crucial dans la prise en compte du soutien aux enseignants.

L'étude actuelle se conclut par des implications et propose neuf mesures concrètes de soutien aux enseignants basées sur les résultats des deux phases, qui peuvent être mises en œuvre collectivement par le gouvernement, les administrateurs scolaires, les superviseurs et les enseignants eux-mêmes. Les implications, ainsi que les conclusions de cette étude, contribueront non seulement au contexte spécifique des enseignants d'ALE, mais auront également des implications plus larges pour les milieux éducatifs du monde entier confrontés à des problèmes de pénurie d'enseignants, de taux élevés d'attrition et d'épuisement professionnel des enseignants.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals and organizations for their invaluable support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the endeavors of my research.

First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger, for her unwavering support, expert guidance, and constructive feedback throughout the entire process of this dissertation. Her wealth of knowledge, dedication, and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping this work and my academic growth.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my committee members, Dr. Masatoshi Sato and Dr. Caroline Riches for their insightful comments, valuable suggestions, and continuous support during the development of this research. Their expertise and thoughtful input have significantly enriched the quality of this dissertation.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge Ms. Shomoita Alam from the tutorial service for her assistance in statistical consulting. Her efforts have played a vital role in analyzing statistical data, particularly maximizing the potential of the dataset and ensuring the validity of the data for this study.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to the participants who generously volunteered their time and shared their experiences for this research. Without their involvement, this study would not have been possible, and I am deeply indebted to them.

Moreover, my heartfelt appreciation goes to my family in Japan for their unwavering support, understanding, and encouragement throughout this academic journey. Their love and belief in me have been a constant source of motivation, and I am truly grateful for their presence in my life.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to my Ph.D. cohorts in 2017 and my classmates who took the same courses at McGill University for their intellectual discussions, encouragement, and friendship. Their insights and feedback during the Proseminar in Education, research group meetings, and informal conversations have contributed to shaping my ideas and refining the arguments presented in this dissertation. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my best friend, Nesa Bandarchian, who has supported me not only academically but also personally. We have overcome numerous hardships over the past six years in our Ph.D. journey. Simultaneously, we have spent countless precious moments chatting, drinking, and watching a variety of TV series. I will never forget the beautiful memories spent with her and her partner, Sadra.

In conclusion, this dissertation is a culmination of the efforts, support, and contributions from numerous individuals and organizations. I am truly grateful for each and every one of them, and their collective impact has shaped the outcome of this research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Positionality Statement

As an experienced teacher and researcher investigating teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy, my journey through the education system in Japan has deeply influenced my approach to the present study. With over a decade of teaching experience, I brought both personal insights and potential biases to the research process.

First, I recognize that my familiarity with the Japanese educational context might inadvertently led me to assumptions or preconceived notions. The passion I have for education and my desire to advocate for the well-being of teachers could have influenced how I interpreted the data or even the questions I asked during interviews (e.g., See also researcher subjectivity in Researchers' Roles in Thematic Analysis). To address this, I was dedicated to maintaining a reflexive stance, continuously questioning my own biases, and seeking input from my tutor in statistical consulting and my supervisor and committee members to ensure a well-rounded perspective.

Second, my positionality potentially shaped how I understood the intersections of teacher burnout with broader educational policies and societal factors (e.g., pressure from students' parents). My involvement in the Japanese education system equipped me to explore the structural dimensions of burnout, but I also needed to remain attentive to potential blind spots in my analysis. I aimed to critically engage with relevant literature and theories to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Third, my position as an educator might have introduced a power dynamic between myself and the participants. It is crucial for me to acknowledge this dynamic and approach the study with humility and respect. I was committed to creating a safe and open environment for participants to share their experiences authentically. This also means recognizing that my presence possibly brought up personal thoughts for the participants, and I strived to handle their narratives with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Lastly, I share a story that underscores the impact of my positionality on the research problems in the present study. In establishing the aforementioned research problems (i.e., elevating teacher attrition rate and teacher shortage), I reflected on my 12-year teaching career in Japan, working longer than 12 hours per day including Saturday or/and Sunday, being swamped with countless tasks and duties such as classroom management and extracurricular activities (ECAs). Yet, this demanding routine was by no means exceptional; it was shared by a substantial proportion of my coworkers across the three schools where I

was employed. Nevertheless, the working conditions of teachers have scarcely evolved, as I observe that the notion of teachers dedicating long hours for the betterment of students and society is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture. Historically, educators were even referred to as "priests" and revered as role models for life (Fukui TV, 2019). This intricate concept, more or less, endures in contemporary Japanese society, explaining why my coworkers and I willingly committed additional hours beyond our regular work schedules without compensation (See Kyutoku-hou in the Introduction chapter). It is also a reality that a significant majority of my coworkers left the teaching profession within a few years of beginning their careers. The data from MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology: MEXT, 2022b) reveals that approximately 5,000 public-school teachers take sick leave annually. Consequently, Japan is currently facing a pronounced teacher attrition rate and a shortage of teachers, factors that can detrimentally impact the quality of teaching (Senno, 2022). Therefore, my background as an educator not only compelled me to outline the research problems but also qualifies me to investigate them.

My extensive teaching background fuels my commitment to the present study on teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy, but it also necessitates a heightened awareness of my potential biases. Through transparency, self-reflection, and a dedication to ethical research practices, I endeavor to contribute valuable insights to the field while respecting the voices and experiences of the participating teachers who graciously share their stories.

Problem Presentation

In Japan, 45.6% of the new employees in the education industry (including schools, cram schools, educational support organizations, etc.) leave their profession within the first three years (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan: MHLW, 2021). This is the third highest rate among primary industries in Japan, following food service industry (i.e., 51.5%) and life-related service industry[1] (i.e., 46.5%). Above all, in Japan, it is noteworthy that a considerable number of teachers, approximately 5,000 annually, take leave of absence due to mental health[2] concerns (MEXT, 2022b). While the government's data does not provide specific figures regarding the return of teachers after their leave, it is assumed that a significant portion of them do not return to their teaching positions (Senoo, 2021). Consequently, this trend has contributed to an increasing teacher attrition rate over the past

[1] The service industry related to daily life includes cleaning shops, barber shops, beauty salons, and aesthetic salons. https://mynavi-job20s.jp/howto/serviceindustry (2021)
[2] Mental health is a term used in official documents by the MEXT, while "mental illnesses" serves as a broader term (MEXT, 2022b).

decade. Moreover, the above data from MHLW (2021) reveals a notable trend for younger teachers in their 20s and 30s to take leave due to mental health concerns. In 2020, compared to the ratio in 2016, the number of teachers in their 20s on leave increased by 1.66 times in their 20s, and 1.43 times in their 30s (MEXT, 2020). Multiple factors may contribute to these figures, and MEXT (2020) has stated that younger teachers exhibit lower resilience to stress. Furthermore, it is plausible that there is a group of potential teachers who have not taken or are unable to take leave despite needing it, due to factors such as cultural norms, social pressures, or financial constraints.

Undoubtedly, the prevalence of mental health issues among teachers has a significant impact for both teachers themselves and their students. Higher levels of stress experienced by teachers have been consistently associated with adverse outcomes, including lowered instructional quality, damaged teacher well-being and health, and ultimately burnout and attrition (Harmsen et al., 2018). Moreover, it is important to recognize the substantial impact on students when teachers experience elevated stress, as one's feelings are known to spread through emotional contagion (Bakker et al., 2001; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000). To provide an estimation, assuming there are potentially 5,000 teachers with mental health concerns who remain in the teaching profession and each of them teaches an average of 160 students daily (40 students per classroom across four class periods), this would imply that approximately 800,000 students could potentially be affected by these teachers on a daily basis.

Accordingly, Japan is now facing a crisis level of teacher shortage. Fewer and fewer applicants have applied for teaching positions (Mishima, 2019), and the quota for teachers is increasing because the number of teachers who apply for the teaching positions is less than those who retire, furthering the need for teachers to join and remain in the profession. A recent survey by the MEXT (2022c) revealed that 2,558 teachers are in lack at 1,897 schools in Japan. This teacher shortage results in high teacher turnover, leading to the hiring of more new teachers, which has been linked to lower quality of teaching (Senno, 2022) and lower student academic achievement (Swanson, 2010). For instance, due to a shortage of teachers, novice Japanese English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers with low English proficiency and less teaching experience are often hired just because they have completed a teacher training course at university (Kawano et al, 2015; Mishima, 2019). In fact, a hiring rate for public middle school teachers in Japan in 2021 was 4.4 times on average, which was a quarter of that of 2000 (MEXT, 2022d). In addition, it is said that novice teachers have high expectations of and for teaching compared to experienced teachers, and thus they tend to experience doubts about their students' ability (Vélez-Rendón, 2002). In turn, the students

show less academic success and are more likely to act out their frustrations in class (Vélez-Rendón, 2002; Wilbur, 2007). Hence, teacher shortage would bring negative effects in terms of teacher quality and students' academic learning.

In the following four sections, in order to grasp the current teaching reality in Japan, I intend to address the potential causes of high attrition rate and teacher shortage in terms of teachers' working environment, their workload, their salary and overtime pay, and Karoshi[3] (death from overwork), by presenting data.

Teachers' Working Environment

A nationwide decennial survey targeting teachers in Japan has been conducted by the Japanese government since 1997. The latest data provided in 2016 revealed that teachers' daily working hours, since the previous survey in 2010, increased drastically; 11 hours and 33 minutes per day at high school (N = 9,744), and 12 hours and 30 minutes per day at middle school (N = 4,414). 74.5% of middle school teachers and 52.4% of high school teachers work six days a week, including either Saturday or Sunday as a holiday work. More recently, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019, as cited in Kyodotsushin) found that middle school teachers in Japan, among the OECD countries, work longest: 56 hours per week, which is significantly longer than the average working hours of the OECD countries (i.e., 38.3 hours).

In line with Japanese teachers' extensive working hours, it is extremely difficult for them to take holidays. Generally, in the first place, Japanese workers including every occupation take the fewest paid holidays in the world (Gatayama, 2018). They take half the time off to which they are entitled (e.g., 10 days if they receive 20 days). However, teachers in Japan are in worse situation. MEXT's (2016b) extensive survey revealed that middle school teachers, on average, take 8.8 days of paid holidays although they are entitled 20−40 days of paid holidays, Despite the fact that the rest of paid holidays can be carried over the following few years, teachers work without using paid holidays even during the long vacation (i.e., one week in summer and winter respectively) when students are on break to deal with miscellaneous tasks such as meeting with students' parents to discuss each student's academic goals and working with local volunteers. MEXT (2016c) also reported, among Japanese middle school teachers (N = 10,687) surveyed, that only 22.6% of them used half the time off to which they are entitled. There seems to be several factors attributed to this

[3] Karoshi simply means "Death from overwork." This can be a sudden stress-induced heart attack or stroke. It also refers to any suicides resulting from overwork. Japan Intellectual Consulting (n.d.)

result. In addition to understaffing at school (e.g., teacher shortage), teachers are required to cover a wide range of tasks from academics to school events: moral education, inclusive education, dealing with students' disciplinary behaviors, mental support for foreign students, overseeing students' extracurricular activities (ECAs), and more (Senoo, 2022a). As many as 83.3% of teachers at middle school and 70.2% teachers at high school stated that they cannot set aside sufficient time for their classroom preparation under this working environment.

Another factor could lie in a cultural norm in Japan. Approximately 60% of Japanese workers feel guilty about taking paid holidays as Japanese people, culturally, have a strong societal pressure that generates sense of responsibility to their jobs (Gatayama, 2018). If one takes a day off, they might be regarded as being lazy or uncooperative. Besides, Japanese workers, in general, need permission from their bosses or supervisors to take a day off, which might be a stressful process since they are supposed to explain why they need a day off. In fact, approximately 60% of Japanese workers answered a survey telling that their bosses are not supportive; the lowest figure among all 19 countries surveyed (Gatayama, 2018).

The following thread on Twitter (i.e., current X), originally written in Japanese, was posted in January in 2020 by a teacher who started the teaching career in 2015:

> The other day, when I took a paid holiday, I received a complaint from my student's parent. I told my coworkers about my day off one month in advance and prepared self-study assignments for my students. It was a very important day in my life. I was reprimanded by my manager, saying, "Don't put yourself first, put the students first." They told you can't use your paid holiday unless you're feeling unwell. 8:54 a.m. (Anonymous)

This implies that Japanese society has a negative attitude towards taking time off while others work. Thus, despite teachers having the right of taking paid holidays, this cultural norm generates the society where Japanese workers can seldom ask their bosses or supervisors permission for the paid holidays.

Teachers' Workload

Teachers in Japan cope with a variety of workload: academic support for students, school events (e.g., Sports Day, school trip, etc.), moral education, inclusive education, etc. An OECD survey (2019) implies that one of the factors of teachers' long working hours lies in overseeing their students' ECAs. According to the survey, middle school teachers in Japan spend 7.5 hours for ECAs per week, which is significantly longer than the OECD average (i.e., 1.9 hours).

Looking back at the education in 1970s and 1980s in Japan, as school violence and delinquency occurred frequently, ECAs were implemented from the perspective of preventing delinquency and teachers started to be obliged to oversee the activities (Fukui TV, 2019). Generally, almost all the teachers are assigned to ECAs (MEXT, 2022a) whether or not they are familiar with each activity. For example, there is a possibility that a teacher with no experience of any kinds of sports can be allocated to coach a basketball team, or a teacher with no skills of music is supposed to be in charge of a brass band club. According to Benesse (2016), 57.2% of middle school teachers hope to decrease the hours which they are allocated to oversee ECAs. This tendency is stronger in female teachers (71.4%). In addition, 51.9% of high school teachers reported that ECAs are a big burden. Due to these factors, as mentioned above, 83.3% of middle school teachers and 70.2% of high school teachers feel lack of time for their class preparation. This deterioration of working situation might have led to the result that 66.1% of middle school teachers and 53.1% of high school teachers are not content with the work-life balance (Benesse, 2016), and these figures increased from 53.4% and 45.7% respectively from the previous survey in 2010.

Looking more closely at the allotted time for ECAs, middle teachers (N = 10,687), on average, spend 41 minutes every weekday and 2 hours 9 minutes on weekends (MEXT, 2016c). In line with this, in spite of a five-day-a-week school system, the majority of teachers work either Saturday or Sunday (Benesse, 2016) without additional payment (See the next section for teachers' overtime pay). Furthermore, the same data found that sleeping hours, for both middle school and high school teachers, are shorter than 6 hours: 5 hours 48 minutes and 5 hours 55 minutes, respectively. Thus, it is probable that teachers in Japan are in a working environment where they reduce their sleep time rather than working less.

Teachers' Salary and Kyutoku-hou

It is worth paying attention to an overtime pay, which is not fairly distributed to teachers in Japan. Rather, it is already included in teachers' salary as an equivalent to 4% of basic pay. For example, overtime hours cannot be counted as overtime once they reach the line of the 4%. It is extremely important to look at this serious circumstance even closer with the actual figures in the following paragraphs because low salary is one of the context-specific factors which lead to a work-related stress. For instance, Wriqi (2008) found that the participating teachers considered student quality, leadership and administration, working conditions and salary as the major factors responsible for their job dissatisfaction.

First, the aforementioned figure, 4%, was determined with "a labor standard act for teachers" called Kyutoku-hou, which was established in 1971 (Fukui TV, 2019). At that time, the average overtime work of teachers was about eight hours per month. Therefore, the Liberal Democratic Party passed a bill that "4% of the basic salary equivalent to eight hours of extra work is added to the monthly salary as an adjustment amount for teaching." However, after 1970s, teachers' responsibilities came to cover a wide variety of tasks in addition to classroom preparation (e.g., counseling with students, mental support for foreign students, ECAs, etc.). Furthermore, bullying among students, school refusal, and excessive demand from students' parents become social problems in 2000s, and thus, teachers were forced to deal with various problems that occurred at school (Fukui TV, 2019). In addition, in 2002, a five-day-a-week school system started shifting from a six-day-a-week, with the aim of improving the quality of education, namely promoting students' autonomous learning (Kamio, 2019). However, the number of class hours for six days a week had to be squeezed in five days, further increasing the burden on teachers. A 2016 survey by MEXT (2016c) revealed that approximately 60% of middle school teachers' overtime work exceeded 80 hours per month, which is equivalent to a line of overwork death or, what is called, a Karoshi line (See the next section). The overtime of 80 hours per month is ten times longer than that of 50 years ago, when Kyutoku-hou law started.

Mathematically speaking, the 4% of the additional salary for adjusting overworking hours is equivalent of eight hours of work per month; more precisely two hours per week. Comparing the basic 40-hour working week to Japanese middle school teachers' average 56-hour working week (OECD, 2018), there is a surprising gap: as many as 14 hours per week. Despite this fact, Kyutoku-hou is now still effective and supposed to cover the payment of all overtime (Fukui TV, 2019), with no revision of the special salary law since 1971.

Karoshi: Death from Overwork

Karoshi means "Death from overwork." This can be a sudden stress-induced heart attack or stroke, and it also refers to any suicides resulting from overwork (Japan Intellectual Consulting (n.d.). The problem of overwork, or "burnout" as it might be called in the West, is global (Japan Intellectual Consulting (n.d.). Some Southeast Asian countries have equivalent terms for death by overwork, but for Japan, Karoshi is a constant threat in the workplace and has been for some time.

In 2014, a novice middle school teacher (B, hereafter) in Fukui prefecture died by suicide due to working long hours (Fukui Shimbun, 2019). B's father filed a lawsuit against

the school, and in July 2019, the court ordered the city government to pay a total of 65.3 million yen in compensation. According to B's diary, B received excess labor demands and was unable to sleep frequently. B's father commented that many teachers, not only B, have no choice but to stay longer at the workplace in order to deal with all their daily work.

In 2019, a high school teacher (N, hereafter) in Osaka brought a lawsuit against a school N worked at (TBS News, 2022). N worked 155 hours of overwork per month, which is twice as the aforementioned Karoshi line (i.e., 80 hours). This caused N to have an adjustment disorder, resulting in taking a five-month leave. In addition to teaching N's specialized subject instruction, world history, N was in charge of a homeroom classroom, an ECA (i.e., the rugby club), study abroad programs, students' counseling, and more. Even during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, N has been working 13 hours and half every day without taking a paid holiday. N mentioned that this lawsuit would hopefully provide everyone in society an opportunity to think about teachers' working environment where they cannot avoid working long labor hours due to unlimited workload. N mentioned in an interview:

> I sometimes went home on the last train. Having been exhausted, when I was waiting for the train on the platform, I felt like invading to the train to commit suicide, which would probably make me escape from the life as a teacher.

Up to 60% of teachers' overtime work exceeds 80 hours per month. there may be teachers who are unable to voice their opinions like N did, due to the challenging Japanese cultural norms that make it difficult for them to take action, which could lead to antagonizing the government (Makiuchi, 2023).

Rationale of the Present Study

My interest in targeting Japanese teachers lies in my deep concern regarding the issue of teacher attrition within the Japanese educational system. Through an extensive review of relevant literature, it becomes evident that a body of empirical research has substantiated the link between teacher attrition and burnout (Garland, 2004; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Neveu, 2007). To illustrate, O'Brien et al. (2008) conducted a study involving Australian teachers (N = 98), revealing significant associations between their intentions to leave the profession and their levels of burnout. Moreover, Carlson and Thomas (2006) contend that burnout generates negative attitudes towards the person, leading to diminished job satisfaction, withdrawal from work, and high attrition rate. Importantly, the prevalence of burnout contributes to a shortage of teachers, consequently influencing student motivation (Shen et al., 2015) and academic

achievement (Sutcher et al., 2019). Further, while it is acknowledged that several other factors, such as salary, education level, and marital status, may contribute to teachers leaving the profession, these variables are not easily controllable. For instance, salary increase corresponds to the individual teacher's experience, resulting in a gradual rise rather than a substantial jump (Tokyo Personnel Commission, 2023). In contrast, burnout is a variable that might be improved once it is understood what exactly causes it (Madaliyeva et al., 2015). Guided by this notion, burnout assumes a primary concept within the framework of the present study.

Moreover, the present study delves into an additional concept for examining teacher burnout. Although extensive review of the literature has revealed several factors that are pertinent to burnout, self-efficacy beliefs, notably, emerge as a salient factor for its concept as it is not necessarily related to one's actual measurable ability, but rather is influenced by a person's belief in their context-specific abilities (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) (See the Literature Review chapter). Furthermore, while numerous studies have explored the association between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy (e.g., Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Zhu et al., 2018), to the best of my knowledge, investigations within the Japanese educational context have been scarce. Thus, I intend to examine if there is a research gap between the Japanese context and the contexts of other countries by comparing the findings in the present study with the ones reported in the other research contexts.

The present study seeks to specifically target Japanese EFL teachers for the following three reasons. First, foreign language (FL) teachers tend to leave the profession due to a lack of self-efficacy (Swanson, 2012). Swanson (2010), based on the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory, examined the relationship between FL teacher self-efficacy and attrition. Their primary interest was to see whether FL teachers' self-efficacy can be a predictor of teacher attrition. 463 FL teachers in Georgia, in the United States, answered to two surveys: the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) and the FL Teacher Efficacy Scale (FLTES; Swanson, 2010). The findings revealed that there was a significant link between FL teacher self-efficacy beliefs and attrition.

Second, since English education was implemented in the 8th-grade class at elementary schools once a week in Japan in 2020, and with globalization transforming English into an international language (Ukita, 2019), there is an expectation within Japanese society for EFL teachers to educate students to become proficient in English. Consequently, teachers in Japan are presumed to face greater social pressure in a context where English

holds significant value. A notable example of such pressure is evidenced by a survey conducted by Nojima (2021) among Japanese elementary and middle school students (N = 2,674). The findings revealed that English conversation schools ranked among the top three extracurricular lessons preferred by students from other for-profit institutions, following piano lessons, despite English education starting at elementary school in Japan. This ranking indicates that parents have high expectations for their children to possess proficient English-speaking skills.

Third, as a result of globalization and the emergence of English as an international language, numerous companies now seek individuals with high proficiency in English. In line with this trend, university entrance examinations in Japan place a heavy emphasis on English by allocating more points to the English portion of the examination, which enables universities to admit students with relatively higher English language abilities. This reform in entrance examinations has led to increased workload for Japanese EFL teachers. For instance, EFL teachers are often tasked with teaching supplementary classes outside regular school hours. Further, based on the author's 12 years of experience teaching English at three different schools in Japan, it was observed that EFL teachers, on average, carried a higher teaching load compared to teachers in other subjects. It is assumed that EFL teachers may experience pressure from other subject teachers and school administrators, as the allocation of examination points gives them partially responsibility for students' success or failure in passing the university entrance examinations. Therefore, based on the assumption that Japanese EFL teachers have heavier workload, increasing demands, and pressure from society, the present study focuses on Japanese EFL teachers.

Contributions of the Study

Presuming that burnout is the major cause of teacher attrition, the primary objective of the present study is to explore the factors associated with teacher burnout, and ultimately shedding light on the underlying causes of teacher attrition. By systematically investigating these factors and offering insights into mitigating the fundamental problem of increasing teacher attrition rates, the study aims to facilitate the understanding of teacher support. Consequently, the objective of the present study is to provide implications for teacher support by reevaluating the current educational environment.

The findings will not only contribute to the specific context of EFL teachers but will also have broader implications for educational settings worldwide facing issues of teacher shortage, high attrition rates, and teacher burnout. I also intend to disseminate the

implications of the present study through my doctoral dissertation, articles in academic and professional journals, a report that can be shared with school administrators and government officials, and presentations at academic and professional conferences. Furthermore, the implications may also be shared for educational and professional development purposes with pre- and in-service teachers.

The following literature review chapter comprises three primary components. Initially, the concept of burnout is introduced, followed by an examination of the theoretical perspectives on burnout, incorporating empirical research and studies. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the exploration of self-efficacy beliefs, which have been identified in my research as one of the most influential factors in relation to burnout. Previous studies support the conclusion that teacher self-efficacy plays a mitigating role in teacher burnout. Lastly, additional factors associated with burnout and/or self-efficacy are presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins by introducing the central concept of the study- burnout. Despite burnout not having an established theoretical framework, scholars and researchers in this field draw upon concepts from various psychological theories (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Following this, the theoretical framework of self-efficacy, the other key concept, is discussed. Specifically, I present three dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, I delve into five crucial variables that emerged from my extensive literature review. These variables are closely intertwined with either teacher burnout, teacher self-efficacy, or both. In essence, the overarching theoretical framework of my study centers around teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. My intention is to investigate the relationship between these two concepts and further explore them through the lens of the aforementioned five factors.

The Concept of Burnout

The concept of burnout stems from the interdisciplinary realms of psychiatry and social psychology. Its origins can be attributed to Freudenberger (1974), a renowned psychiatrist widely recognized as the founding father of the burnout syndrome. Burnout is characterized as an inability to effectively fulfill occupational responsibilities, resulting from the presence of numerous stress-inducing factors inherent in the job environment (Betoret, 2009; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). On the other hand, within the realm of social psychology, Maslach (1976) investigated the strategies employed by individuals in the human services sector to manage emotional arousal in their professional roles. This led to the development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a widely utilized burnout assessment scale (Maslach et al., 1996).

Burnout depletes individuals' psychological, mental, and physical health, and it may lead to negative attitudes and thus cause individuals to withdraw, feel less fulfilled by their job, or resign from their job (Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Garland, 2004; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1988) proposed a comprehensive definition of burnout which includes both state and process characteristics of burnout:

> Burnout is a persistent, negative, work-related state of mind in "normal" individuals that is primarily characterized by exhaustion, which is accompanied by distress, a sense of reduced effectiveness, decreased motivation, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors at work. This psychological condition develops gradually but may remain unnoticed for a long time for the individual involved. It results from a misfit between intentions and reality at the job. (p. 36)

While much of the literature considering burnout is often described as atheoretical, there has been a growing emergence of comprehensive conceptual frameworks aiming to establish connections between burnout and key psychological theories (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Concurrently, the concept of burnout is misunderstood, leading to confusion with other psychological phenomena, namely (1) stress, (2) depression, and (3) chronic fatigue. Therefore, to comprehend the theoretical perspectives pertaining to burnout, it is imperative to distinguish between burnout and these aforementioned psychological factors.

Burnout and Stress

The concepts of burnout and stress are likely to be misunderstood since both occur from job fatigue. However, occupational stress occurs when job demands mismatch one's adaptive resources such as social skills, knowledge, or stamina (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Stress is a universal term which describes the temporary adaptation process that is accompanied by mental and physical symptoms, whereas burnout is considered as a final stage in a breakdown in adaptation that results from the long-term imbalance of demands and resources (Brill, 1984). Hence, burnout is considered to occur from prolonged job stress. A conceptual difference between burnout and stress, according to Maslach (1993), is that burnout includes the development of negative attitudes and behaviors towards recipients (e.g., patients or students), the job, and the organization, while job stress does not necessarily co-occur with such attitudes and behaviors.

In addition, it is argued that anyone can encounter stress, while burnout can be experienced mostly by those who entered their careers with relatively high goals and expectations (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Accordingly, burnout is a specific type of job stress that is characterized by its chronic and versatile nature, and it includes the development of negative attitudes, and it occurs among originally highly motivated individuals.

Burnout and Depression

According to Freudenberger (1983), burnout is job-related and situation-specific rather than pervasive; on the other hand, depression occurs across situations and other spheres of life. Similarly, depression concerns context-free, affective well-being, whereas burnout concerns job-related affective well-being (Warr, 1987). This concept was supported in a study among teachers (Bakker et al., 2000a) that demonstrated that a work-related stressor (e.g., lack of reciprocity in the relationship with students) predicted burnout (and not depression), whereas a similar non-work stressor (i.e., lack of reciprocity in the relationship

with one's partner) predicted depression (and not burnout). Although burnout and depression are different phenomena, they overlap to a certain extent. Empirical research on the discriminant validity of both concepts suggests that the emotional exhaustion, one of the three dimensions in burnout, is related to depression. Based on 12 studies, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) calculated that both concepts share on average 26% of their variances. The relationships with other burnout dimensions such as depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment were weaker, sharing 13% and 9% of their variance, respectively.

Burnout and Chronic Fatigue

The most noticeable symptom of the chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is persistent unexplained fatigue (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). CFS is not restricted to a particular life event. Unlike burnout, CFS is pervasive and can affect all major physical systems (i.e., neurological, immunological, hormonal, gastrointestinal and musculoskeletal problems) (Jason et al., 1995). Thus, CFS primarily causes physical symptoms. Contrarily, burnout symptoms are mainly psychological, although accompanying physical symptoms can be observed to some degree as well. This concept lies in the fact, generally, that burnout workers blame their jobs for the condition they are in, whereas for patients who suffer from CFS, the origin of their symptoms is unclear. Moreover, while emotional exhaustion is a common measure of both burnout and CFS, the development of negative, dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors characterize burnout, but not CFS (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004).

To sum up, first, burnout is different from job stress in three ways; (1) it is considered as a final stage in a breakdown in adaptation as a result of prolonged job stress, (2) it includes the development of negative attitudes and behaviors towards recipients, the job, and the organization, and (3) it specifically affects highly motivated individuals. Second, burnout is different from depression in that it is job-related, although these two concepts overlap to a certain extent (e.g., emotional exhaustion dimension). Finally, unlike CFS, burnout is a primarily mental syndrome in a work-related setting, whereas CFS is universal and largely represented by unknown fatigue and additional physical symptoms. In the following section, three theoretical approaches in burnout: individual, interpersonal, and organizational approaches are presented.

Theoretical Approaches

Traditionally, most burnout research has not established its theory (i.e., atheoretical), but its research borrows concepts from a variety of psychological theories (Schaufeli &

Buunk, 2004). In the previous decade, more systematic theoretical approaches have been developed and some of them have been confirmed by empirical studies. However, a comprehensive theoretical framework for burnout is inadequate partly because a single general and valid theory of burnout always remains a misconception in terms of the complexity of the phenomenon (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). With this perspective in mind, according to Schaufeli and Buunk (2004), there are three theoretical approaches in burnout research: (1) individual, (2) interpersonal, and (3) organizational approaches. Individual approaches emphasize the role of intra-personal processes, interpersonal approaches specifically focus on the unbalanced relationships between caregivers (e.g., teachers) and recipients (e.g., students), and organizational approaches underline the relevance of the wider organizational context in order to understand burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004), each of which is delved into below.

Individual Approach

Several approaches in burnout have been presented by researchers; some of them are mainly descriptive, and others are attempts to analyze burnout from more general psychological perspectives that are either traditional (e.g., psychoanalysis, existential psychology, and learning theory) or more recent (e.g., action theory and conservation of resources theory) (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). In one way or another, all individual approaches emphasize the relevance of the discrepancy between expectations and reality. Here, I intend to introduce four of the individual approaches referring to Schaufeli and Buunk's (2004) overview of 25 years of research and theorizing.

Burnout as Failure to Retain One's Idealized Self-image. Freudenberger (1980). refers to burnout as the super-achiever sickness, and it develops when individuals strongly believe in their own idealized images as charismatic, dynamic, inexhaustible, and super-competent persons. As a result, they end up escaping from their other more-faulty selves. When they eagerly struggle to retain their idealized self-images, burnout candidates typically take the wrong strategies which further deplete their emotional resources (Freudenberger, 1980). These false cures are summarized by representing four Ds: Disengagement, Distancing, Dulling and Deadness.

Burnout as a Failed Quest for Existential Meaning. From the perspective of existential psychology, Pines (1993) developed a motivational approach to burnout in which the individual's basic need for meaning and significance plays an important part (Pines, 1996; Pines & Aronson, 1988). "The basic assumption of the model is that highly-motivated

individuals have a symptom of burnout; therefore, in a sense, an individual has first to be "on fire" in order to burn out" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004, p. 404). This implies that burnout does not occur to a person without such initial motivation although they can experience stress, alienation, depression, an existential crisis, or fatigue (Pines, 1993). According to Pine (1993), burnout is the final stage of a gradual process of disillusionment in the quest for a sense of existential significance from work.

Burnout as a Pattern of Wrong Expectations. Burnout also can be attributed to wrong expectations in regard to: (1) reinforcements, (2) outcomes, and (3) efficacy (Meier, 1983). First, expectations in reinforcements are described as one's goals which certain work outcomes meet. For example, a teacher may prefer to work with motivated students who frequently ask questions. If this kind of goal is set too high, reinforcement expectations cannot be met, and burnout might develop. Second, expectations in outcome are defined as descriptions regarding which behaviors will lead to certain outcomes. For instance, a teacher might experience burnout due to experiences that create the expectation which students simply cannot learn the material, thus leading them to expect no hope for positive reinforcement from that class (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Finally, expectations in efficacy refer to individual's belief in their context-specific abilities in completing tasks. Teachers, for instance, experience burnout because they feel a lack of the personal competence which is necessary to teach adequately (Wheatley, 2005).

Burnout as Loss of Coping Resources. Conservation of resources (COR) theory is a motivational theory positing that stress occurs: (1) when resources are threatened; (2) when resources are lost; or (3) when individuals invest in resources without the expected pay-off (Hobfoll, 1989). According to Hobfoll (1989), resources are broadly categorized as follows: valued objects (e.g., clothing, furniture), conditions (e.g., employment, successful marriage), personal characteristics (e.g., social skills, hardiness), and energies (e.g., stamina, knowledge). The concept of COR is closely relevant in understanding burnout because the basic assumption of COR theory is the utilization of resources and burnout is attributed to resource depletion. According to Hobfoll and Freedy (1993), burnout is more likely to occur when resources are lost than when resources are not gained. They call this the "primacy of loss" and the "secondary importance of gain," respectively. For instance, if teachers have negative interactions with students, parents and administrators, which indicates losses on the interpersonal level, their negative attitude towards these interactions are more remarkable than the everyday gains they receive from their job. When loss occurs, or when resources are threatened, people tend to be encouraged to use their coping skills in order to regain

resources or to prevent losses. From this perspective, burnout plays a vital role for the individual's active attempts to regain resources or to prevent their loss (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004).

Interpersonal Approach

There exist two interpersonal approaches. One highlights the importance of emotional demands in relationships with recipients, and the other emphasizes dynamics of social relationships in the workplace. Traditionally, emotionally demanding interpersonal relationships of professional caregivers (e.g., nurses, teachers) with recipients (e.g., patients, students) have been considered to be the root cause of burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). However, it is of importance to broaden the social context and to include relationships with others at the workplace as well, such as superiors and coworkers. Both approaches are described as below.

Burnout as a Phased Reaction to Emotional Demands. According to Maslach (1993), the burnout syndrome is initiated by emotionally demanding relationships between caregivers and their recipients. Generally, these types of professionals are confronted with recipients' needs, problems and suffering, and this puts a substantial psychological anxiety on caregivers. This brings caregivers to "emotional exhaustion," the first phase in the burnout development. In order to deal with the emotional stresses, professionals generally start to take a stance of detached concern; they distance themselves from recipients in order to help the recipients better. However, this strategy does not necessarily work in all professionals who work as caregivers. Some professionals end up failing to reduce their burden, and instead, develop an impersonal, negative, insensitive, and cynical attitude, in which initial concern is subject to complete detachment. This is the second phase of the burnout development called "depersonalization." Although it is regarded as a defensive coping strategy to deal with feelings of emotional exhaustion, this strategy, according to Maslach (1993), deteriorates the relationships with recipients because depersonalization increases exhaustion without reducing emotional strain. Furthermore, when professionals fail to achieve their professional goals consecutively, because relationships with recipients are ruined, feelings of "lack of personal accomplishment," the third phase of the burnout development, may occur. "This vicious cycle goes into a downward spiral: diminished accomplishment further increases emotional exhaustion" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004, p. 407).

Another view on the sequence of the burnout process is proposed by Leiter (1993): a mixed sequential and parallel model of burnout. Leiter defines emotional exhaustion as a

reaction to occupational stressors, positing that work overload and interpersonal conflict are among the most prominent of them. Leiter agrees that "depersonalization" is a function of "emotional exhaustion," and thus, they insist that emotional exhaustion mediates most of the impact of environmental conditions on depersonalization. However, contrary to the original phased reaction model of Maslach (1993), Leiter's developmental model does not describe "personal accomplishment" as a function of depersonalization; rather, it is positively influenced by the presence of resources (e.g., social support, opportunities for skill enhancement, and participative decision making). Thus, two processes are proposed: (1) a sequential process in which interpersonal work demands play a main role; leading to depersonalization through emotional exhaustion; and (2) a parallel process that is dominated by lack of resources, leading to lack of personal accomplishment (Leiter, 1993). An eight-month study confirmed the first process, as well as the somewhat independent role of personal accomplishment (1993, Lee & Ashforth). In addition, a five-year longitudinal study targeting physicians suggested that depersonalization turned out to deteriorate the relationship with patients, and thus increased emotional demands, which led to emotional exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2000b).

Burnout as a Result of Social Comparison and Social Exchange Processes. From the perspective of social comparison theory (Schachter, 1959) and equity theory (Walster et al., 1978), Buunk and Schaufeli (1993) suggest that burnout develops primarily in the social context of a work organization. In order to understand burnout, attention has to be paid to the following three processes; (1) how individuals evaluate their psychological outcomes of, and investments in, the relationships with the recipients, (2) how they compare their own responses and feelings with those of others at work; and (3) how they are influenced by the burnout symptoms in their colleagues. Within this general social-psychological framework, three different approaches are presented.

First, "equity theory suggests that people pursue reciprocity in interpersonal relationships: what they give and take from a relationship should be equal" (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004, p. 408). Reciprocity plays a central role in human life, and establishing reciprocal social relationships is essential for the individual's health and well-being (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1999). According to Buunk and Schaufeli (1999), if individuals lack reciprocity, it leads to negative emotions and motivates attempts to restore reciprocity. They suggest that this lack of reciprocity, whereby caregivers repeatedly put much more into relationships with their recipients than they receive back in return, may eventually deplete the professional's emotional resources. Indeed, this view is supported by significant correlations which have

been found between lack of reciprocity and burnout (particularly exhaustion and depersonalization) in several occupations (e.g., nurses, general practitioners, hospital doctors, police officers, teachers, staff working with the mentally handicapped, and correctional officers) (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1999; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

It is also worthwhile, according to equity theory, that similar social exchange processes that are observed in interpersonal relationships govern the relationship of the employee with their organization. Schaufeli et al. (1996) assumed, in addition to an unbalanced relationship at the interpersonal level, that burnout is also caused by lack of reciprocity at the organizational level. They argued that in addition to the usually observed cognitive and behavioral withdrawal reactions (e.g., job dissatisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, turnover, and absenteeism), lack of reciprocity at the organizational level may also lead to burnout. Their argument was supported by several studies which tested successfully in samples consisting of student nurses, teachers, therapists from a forensic psychiatric clinic, staff working with the mentally disabled, and police officers (for a review see Buunk & Schaufeli, 1999; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). That is, it was implied that burnout is related to perceptions of inequity at the interpersonal as well as at the organizational level.

Second, social comparison theory implies that a crucial feature of social comparison is its direction. Individuals may compare themselves with others who are better off (upward comparison) or with others who are worse off (downward comparison) (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Generally, it is assumed that one's engaging in upward comparisons and interpreting such comparisons in a non-defensive way serve an adaptive function by fostering effective performance and by promoting subjective well-being (e.g., Aspinwall, 1997; Collins, 1996). For instance, a number of studies demonstrated that engaging in comparison with others who are better off, and particularly deriving positive feelings from such comparisons, is linked with less emotional exhaustion (Buunk et al., 1994, 2001a, b). On the one hand, if individuals interpret upward comparisons in a negative, defensive way, it will contribute to burnout and will interfere with effective functioning. Indeed, those who score high for burnout, have been found to respond with higher levels of negative affect to upward comparisons, and to receive more positive affect from downward comparisons (Buunk et al., 2001b). Thus, those who experience burnout may, as a form of emotional coping, derive positive feelings from the idea that others are still worse off. It is clear that there are multiple ways to comprehend this phenomenon, and it is individuals who regard people around them as a positive affect or negative one.

The third approach is based on the concept that burnout works as an emotional contagion. Buunk and Schaufeli (1993) suggested that colleagues may act as models whose symptoms are imitated through a process of emotional contagion. That is, individuals under stress may perceive symptoms of burnout in their colleagues and automatically take on these symptoms. Emotional contagion is defined as "The tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, and movements with those of another person, and consequently, to converge emotionally" (Hatfield et al., 1994, p. 5). In fact, two studies targeting general practitioners (Bakker et al., 2001) and teachers (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000) demonstrated that participants who experienced their colleagues' burnout complaints showed higher levels of emotional exhaustion and the other two negative factors in burnout (i.e., depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment), compared to participants who did not experience such complaints. Moreover, individual susceptibility to emotional contagion was positively related to burnout, particularly in combination with the perception of burnout symptoms in their colleagues. Hence, general practitioners and teachers who perceived burnout complaints among colleagues and who were susceptible to emotional contagion reported the highest exhaustion rate (Bakker et al., 2001).

Organizational Approach

Organizational behavior, especially undesired behavior, has an impact on the organization as well as the individual (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Empirical studies support the descriptions of the following three approaches which differ in scope and degree: (1) burnout among young professionals, (2) a phase model of burnout, and (3) burnout as mismatch between person and job, and they are addressed below.

Burnout as Reality Shock. The first approach addresses burnout among young professionals. With regard to burnout among young professionals, Cherniss's (1995) model of early career burnout was based on interviews with human service professionals at the beginning of their careers. The basic principle of this model is that particular work-setting characteristics interact with person characteristics to generate specific stressors. The way professionals deal with these stressors determines whether burnout develops or not. The following eight negative work-setting characteristics are distinguished by Cherniss (1995, as cited in Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004, p. 411):

1. the absence of an orientation or introduction program for novices;
2. high workload;

3. lower stimulation;
4. limited scope of client contact;
5. low level of autonomy;
6. discrepancy between institutional goals with personal values;
7. inadequate leadership and supervisory practices; and
8. social isolation.

Furthermore, according to Cherniss (1995, as cited in Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004, p. 412), the major sources of stress that are brought about by the interaction of work setting and person are:

1. uncertainty and doubts about one's competence;
2. problems with recipients (e.g., patients for doctors, students for teachers);
3. bureaucratic infringement on one's autonomy;
4. lack of challenge and fulfillment; and
5. lack of collegiality.

In the process of adapting to these stressors, Cherniss (1995) observed young professionals' negative changes in attitudes and outlook that are characteristic of burnout: reduced aspirations and responsibility, loss of idealism, increased cynicism and pessimism, increased emotional detachment, withdrawal from work and growing concern with the self.

Cross-sectional studies among police officers (Burke et al., 1984) and teachers (Burke & Greenglass, 1989) support the validity of the model. Two significant indirect paths from work-setting characteristics and personal characteristics to burnout were found, and both mediated through experienced sources of stress. In addition, significant direct paths were found from work-setting and personal characteristics to burnout.

Burnout as a Virulent Process. The second approach focuses on a phase model of progressive burnout which has been investigated in a variety of organizational settings by Golembiewski et. al. (1996). They consider burnout as a destructive process that develops progressively through eight phases (i.e., phase I to VIII, Table 1), by dividing these eight phases into the three-dimensionality of the burnout syndrome (i.e., depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion) as proposed by Maslach (1982). They posit that depersonalization is considered the least important contributor to burnout, followed by lack of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. Research based on the phase model in organizations followed these three phases. Most studies have attempted and

succeeded to validate the notion of progressive phases of burnout in that individuals in more advanced phases almost always report more negative work experiences (e.g., greater stress, less autonomy, more conflicts and role problems, less support) and more negative outcomes (e.g., job dissatisfaction, psychosomatic symptoms, higher turnover intentions, less job involvement, decreased productivity).

Table 1

Progressive Phases of Burnout (Golembiewski et. al., 1996)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
DP	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
PA	Low	Low	High	High	Low	Low	High	High
EE	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High	High	High

Note. DP = Depersonalization; PA = Personal accomplishment; EE = Emotional exhaustion

Burnout as Mismatch between Person and Job. The final approach describes burnout as the result of a mismatch between person and job. Maslach and Leiter (1997) argues that burnout results from a situation of chronic imbalance where the job requires more than the employee can give and provides less than they need. They presented the following six types of person-job mismatches considered to be potential sources of burnout (1997, as cited in Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004, p. 414):

1. work overload (i.e., having to do too much in too little time with too few resources);
2. lack of control (i.e., having no opportunities to make choices and decisions, using one's abilities to think and solve problems);
3. lack of rewards (i.e., inadequate monetary rewards as well as internal rewards such as recognition appreciation);
4. lack of community (i.e., a loose and non-supportive social fabric, social isolation and chronic and unresolved problems);
5. lack of fairness (i.e., employees are treated inequitably, and respect and self-worth are not confirmed); and
6. value conflict (i.e., the requirements of the job do not agree with personal principles).

These six person-job mismatches are extensive in modern organizational life, Maslach and Leiter (1997) suggesting these mismatches should be broadly considered in burnout research.

To sum, the literature review introduced the concept of burnout which comes from the dual disciplines of psychiatry and social psychology. Further, the previous research indicated that burnout can be distinguished with other psychological factors (i.e., stress, depression, and chronic fatigue). Additionally, the previous sections presented that there are three theoretical approaches in burnout research: (1) individual, (2) interpersonal, and (3) organizational approaches. In the following section, I intend to expand the concept of burnout, focusing on burnout by teachers, as it is a main component in the present study.

Teacher Burnout

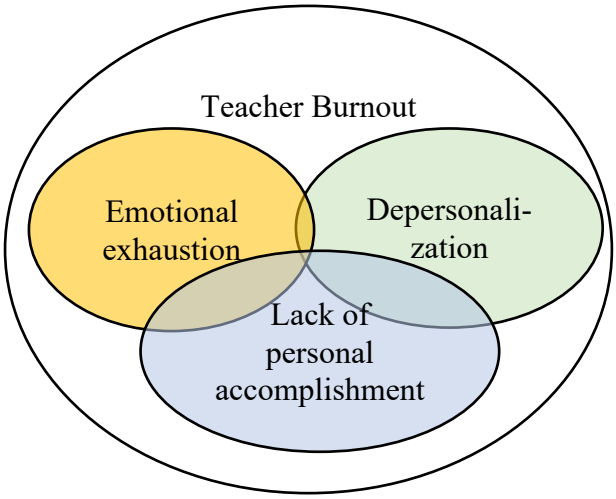
Previous research on burnout primarily focused on work-related stress experienced by professionals in human service occupations such as social workers, nurses, and hospital doctors. However, the concept of burnout has evolved to encompass all workers, particularly those who engage in various degrees of interpersonal interactions (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015), one of the three theoretical approaches in burnout research (See the Interpersonal approach above). Its application has also extended to educational settings, specifically examining the prevalence of stressful circumstances within the teaching profession (Moneta, 2011). Numerous studies have investigated burnout among teachers, revealing that they encounter substantial pressure stemming from various aspects of their work, including role conflict, relationships with students and colleagues, work overload, and long working hours. These stressors contribute to mental and physical exhaustion, frustration, depression, and a passive or indifferent outlook toward others, including themselves (Slick, 1997; Yankelevich et al., 2012). Such work-related stressors frequently result in the reduction of teachers' enthusiasm for education and teaching, leaving them susceptible to extreme fatigue and exhibiting indifferent attitudes towards their students. Consequently, the intense pressure experienced by teachers can significantly deplete their emotional and physical resources. As a result, teachers end up being in a serious state of burnout (Veldman et al., 2013). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that teacher stress, burnout, and poor well-being have detrimental effects on student achievement (Collie & Martin, 2017).

The concept of teacher burnout consists of three dimensions, as shown in Figure 1 (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001): (1) emotional exhaustion: referring to the situation in which teachers, due to long exposure to various stressors, have no

emotional energy to keep up with their students' learning and behavior, (2) depersonalization: referring to the situation wherein teachers show no feelings toward their students and consider them as objects rather than humans, and (3) lack of personal accomplishment: referring to teachers' lack of accomplishment in their job.

Figure 1

Three Dimensions of Teacher Burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001)



Above all, the emotional exhaustion aspect of burnout is considered to be its central element (Maslach, 1993) as burnout teachers first have feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. Teachers' emotional resources are depleted as a result of their energy being extremely used (i.e., emotional exhaustion). Moreover, particular cognitive abilities (e.g., attention) may be detached and become more rigid, leading them to have negative attitudes or cold responses towards people, demonstrate no feelings towards their students, and consider them as just objects (i.e., depersonalization). Additionally, teachers, once they experience burnout, feel as consumed, and have nothing left to dedicate to the students' learning, thus causing them to give way to less job-related commitment, impaired performance, and turnover (i.e., lack of personal accomplishment) (Maslach, 1993). Previous research has presented that burnout is a process that takes time to appear in an individual and therefore can be relatively hard to investigate reasons which are related to it (Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2014).

Intersections between Burnout and Self-Efficacy

In the selection of burnout as the primary focus of my research, I began exploring its association with various psychological factors, including aspects of human beliefs such as self-concept and self-esteem. Within this examination, one factor that has received extensive research attention is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, although related to self-esteem, distinguishes itself by not relying on one's objectively measurable abilities, but rather on an individual's belief in their capabilities within specific contexts (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Essentially, the concept of self-efficacy is founded on the subjective understanding of reality. Moreover, self-efficacy is predicated on the notion that individuals are active agents who navigate and interpret the world around them. It is a relatively changeable and task-specific belief, unlike self-esteem, which represents a stable and broad sense of competence (Chen et. al., 2004).

Furthermore, substantial empirical evidence supports the inclusion of self-efficacy as a significant component alongside burnout in the present study. Fathi and Saeedian (2020) conducted an empirical investigation to examine the relationships between teacher-related variables, specifically exploring the predictive value of teachers' sense of efficacy and resilience in relation to burnout among EFL teachers ($N = 213$). Through the utilization of structural equation modeling (SEM), their findings demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy accounted for 20.1% of the variance in burnout, whereas teacher resilience explained 11.7% of the variance. This suggests that teacher self-efficacy emerged as a stronger predictor of burnout compared to teacher resilience.

The role of self-efficacy in relation to teacher burnout has been extensively explored, with research consistently indicating that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with lower levels of burnout among teachers (Friedman, 2003). In Friedman's (2003) study involving 322 Israeli teachers, multiple factors related to efficacy were examined, including three classroom efficacy factors (i.e., instruction task, discipline control task, and consideration relations) and two organizational efficacy factors (i.e., inclusion task and influence relations). The efficacy of consideration relations and influence relations successfully measured teachers' abilities to foster positive relationships with students, such as encouraging students to express their thoughts and emotions. Further, organizational efficacy measured teachers' beliefs in their capacity to influence social and political factors within the educational institution. The study's findings indicated a negative correlation between burnout and self-efficacy variables, further supporting the importance of self-efficacy in understanding and mitigating burnout among teachers.

Khani and Mirzaee (2015) also found the intersection between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy among 216 Iranian EFL teachers. They discussed the possible role of self-efficacy as a mediator or moderator variable that could reduce negative influence of school contextual factors (i.e., time pressure and students' discipline issues) and stressors on teacher burnout. Their correlation analysis in SEM indicated that the strongest associations were found between depersonalization in burnout (e.g., no feelings toward students) and self-efficacy (r = -.53). Khani and Mirzaee (2015) implied that teachers who were able to devise and employ a variety of instructional strategies and engage students in class were suffering less from the feeling of depersonalization. They also posited that self-efficacy could function as a mediator or moderator which would reduce the negative effects of contextual variables and stressors on teacher burnout.

Similarly, it is plausible that lower levels of self-efficacy among teachers may be associated with job burnout. This hypothesis was examined by Yu et al. (2015) in a study investigating the impact of work stress on job burnout among Chinese middle school teachers (N = 387). The study employed several well-established measures, including the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1986), the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (Schaufeli & Leiter, 1996), and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Weber et al., 2013). In the first step, they tested the direct effect of the predictor variable (perceived stress) on the dependent variable (job burnout) without mediators. The directly standardized path coefficient was significant (β = .38, $p \leq .01$). Subsequently, the partially mediated model which contained mediator (self-efficacy) and a direct path from perceived stress to job burnout was tested. The effect of job stress on job burnout through self-efficacy was 37.65 %. This result indicated that self-efficacy served as a mediating factor between work stress and job burnout, suggesting that self-efficacy played a pivotal role in influencing the relationship between work-related stressors and the experience of burnout.

As there have been several studies that have found the intersections between burnout and self-efficacy, I intend to address the theoretical framework of self-efficacy beliefs, expanding them more into teacher self-efficacy beliefs. Concurrently, since the present study focuses on EFL language teachers, the academic features of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs research are also presented with an extensive review of relevant literature.

Theoretical Framework of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is grounded in the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory proposed by Bandura (1986, 1997), emphasizing the exercise of human agency, that is, the

notion that people can practice some influence over what they do (Bandura, 2006a). Further, self-efficacy beliefs provide a base of human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment because, without believing that their actions somehow can generate ideal consequences, people fail to maintain high motivation to act when they are confronted with difficulties (Erdem & Demirel, 2007). With this concept in mind, individuals set goals, predict likely outcomes, monitor and regulate actions, and reflect on their personal efficacy. From this view, self-efficacy greatly affects ones' goals and behaviors. Additionally, as self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by environmental factors, they determine how environmental burdens and opportunities are perceived, how much effort is exerted, and how long people are able to persist when they face obstacles (Pajares, 1997).

Self-efficacy also plays an important role in Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career theory. In this model, self-efficacy beliefs contribute to factors such as the development of an individual's career interests, occupational and educational choices, and success in academic and career engagements (Brown & Lent, 2006). More importantly, individual's perceptions of everyday engagements, observations, and interactions could be a factor in the change of their self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Usher & Pajares, 2008). These contextual and specific judgements, as the above models suggest, could impact one's decisions whether to pursue a career in their profession or leave.

Self-efficacy holds a prominent position within Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career theory. According to this theoretical framework, self-efficacy beliefs significantly influence various aspects of an individual's career development, including the development of career interests, decision-making regarding occupational and educational paths, and achievement in academic and career pursuits (Brown & Lent, 2006). Notably, an individual's perceptions of everyday experiences, observations, and interactions play a pivotal role in shaping their self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Usher & Pajares, 2008). These context-specific appraisals, as demonstrated by the aforementioned models, have the potential to influence individuals' decisions whether to pursue a career in their profession or leave.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy beliefs can be defined as teachers' beliefs in their abilities to support learning in various task-, domain- and context-specific cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social ways (Wyatt, 2018). The early work of Bandura (1977, 1986) on teacher self-efficacy beliefs includes a central agent-means component (i.e., a belief in the ability to

take action), which is combined with an outcome expectation (i.e., a means-ends belief as to the effect the action will have) (Wheatley, 2005).

"The knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs of teachers have direct implications for their instructional practices within the classroom. Particularly, the concept of "teacher self-efficacy" or "teachers' efficacy beliefs" refers to their self-perceptions regarding their teaching capabilities" (Choi & Lee, 2018, p. 175). These perceptions play a crucial role in determining whether teachers choose to engage in tasks they perceive themselves as competent in or avoid those they perceive as challenging (Bandura, 1997). Consequently, teacher self-efficacy is recognized as a fundamental psychological mechanism that significantly influences teachers' actions.

Teachers with a high sense of efficacy possess the belief that they can effectively manage challenging students. Conversely, teachers with a low sense of teaching efficacy tend to believe that they have limited control over motivating and educating unmotivated students because they regard that students' success depends on the external environmental factors (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). As a consequence, teachers who perceive themselves as less competent are more inclined to perceive potential problems as more serious than what they actually may be and develop negative attitudes (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000a).

Research in teacher education has suggested that teachers' understanding of self-efficacy influences their goals, commitment in teaching, motivation levels, persistence in the face of difficulties, emotional control, and, ultimately, levels of success in their students' learning (e.g., Bandura, 1997, 2006b; Caprara et al., 2006). If a teacher has a high sense of efficacy in any given area, they tend to set higher goals, fear failure less, and persevere longer in the face of obstacles (Tschannen-Moran et. al., 1998). For example, in terms of classroom management, highly efficacious teachers encourage student interaction and autonomy, whereas teachers with low efficacy beliefs are more likely to have an authoritarian orientation with rigid control over students (Woolfolk et al., 1990).

One of the factors that makes teachers' efficacy judgments so dynamic is the cyclical nature of the process: a teacher's experience can create a "spiral effect" on their either enduring or leaving the field (Choi & Lee, 2018). Bandura (1997, as cited in Choi & Lee, 2018) postulated that the most effective way of developing strong efficacy beliefs is through the accumulation of successful experiences. This cyclical nature makes efficacy beliefs very powerful for teachers' professional development. Further, Swanson (2012) hypothesized that higher teacher efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence, which may possibly result in better teaching performance, thus, in turn, leading to greater efficacy. The opposite, however,

could be true. Lower teacher efficacy leads to less effort and giving up easily, which may increase their burnout levels, and most importantly, leaving the teaching profession.

Research in Language Teacher Self-Efficacy

Existing literature has provided evidence of a relationship between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. As previously stated, the present study focuses on language teachers teaching EFL within the Japanese educational context. Therefore, in the following sections, initially, I examine the scholarly characteristics of research on language teacher self-efficacy beliefs. Subsequently, three dimensions that have been identified in research on language teacher self-efficacy beliefs are delineated. Finally, a comprehensive overview of previous studies investigating the associations between language teacher self-efficacy beliefs and other relevant educational and psychological factors are presented.

The investigation of teacher self-efficacy beliefs has received substantial attention over the course of several decades. In contrast, the exploration of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs has only gained significant interest in more recent years. Within the realm of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs research, a meta-analysis conducted by Wyatt (2018) analyzed a comprehensive body of literature, encompassing 115 studies conducted since 2005. This meta-analysis synthesized the findings related to the associations between language teacher self-efficacy beliefs and various educational and psychological factors of relevance.

It is worth noting that between 1998 and 2009, the majority of teacher self-efficacy research primarily concentrated on teachers in North America. A review of 218 studies investigating teacher self-efficacy beliefs revealed that 57% of the studies originated from North America, while 18% and 15% were conducted in Europe and Asia, respectively (Klassen et al., 2011). However, a noticeable shift occurred after 2005, as the interest in language teacher self-efficacy beliefs began to grow globally, particularly in Asian countries. Out of the 115 language teacher self-efficacy beliefs studies examined, a substantial portion (53%) have come from two countries: Iran (41 studies) and Turkey (20 studies), with nearly all European studies being conducted in Turkey. These findings indicate that only select countries have directed their research interests towards the exploration of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs. Further examination of the data reveals that within the 62 studies conducted in Asia, two-thirds originate from Iran.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that self-efficacy research in the Japanese context is scarce. Although CiNii, one of the largest search engines for articles in Japan, showed a number of

publications on self-efficacy, most of them involved Japanese nurses and other health care professionals, and no papers investigated self-efficacy beliefs of teaching professionals till 2010. From 2012 onwards, with the use of another research engine, Google Scholar, two empirical studies to investigate language teacher self-efficacy beliefs research in the Japanese context emerged. Both studies, by Nishino (2012) and Thompson (2016), respectively, targeted Japanese EFL teachers and investigated the relationship between participating teachers' beliefs and their employing communicative language teaching (CLT) methods. This scarcity of research in the Japanese context encouraged me to read more articles published outside Japan, which led me to find three dimensions of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs.

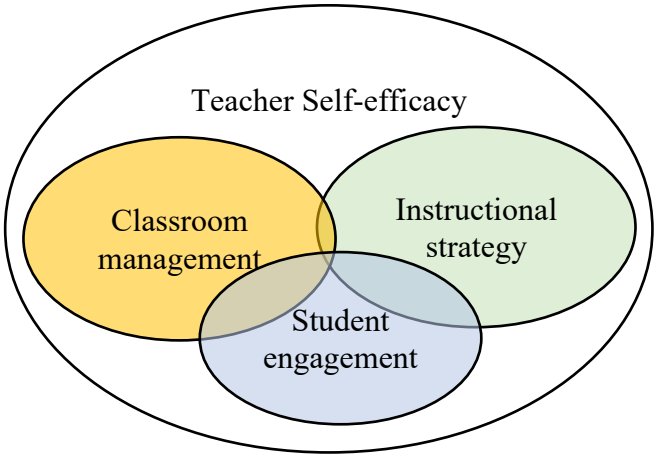
Three Dimensions of Language Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

The majority of research regarding language teacher self-efficacy beliefs have employed Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2001) scale based on three dimensions of EFL teacher self-efficacy (Figure 2). For instance, Khani and Mirzaee (2015) conducted a study on the role of teacher self-efficacy, contextual factors, and stressors in Iranian EFL teacher burnout ($N = 216$) by utilizing the above scale and argued that self-efficacy could function as a mediator or moderator variable which would reduce the negative effects of contextual variables and stressors on teacher burnout.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) describe that it consists of the following three dimensions: (1) efficacy in students' engagement, (2) efficacy in instructional strategies, and (3) efficacy in classroom management. These three dimensions represent the richness of teachers' work lives and the requirements of good teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). More specifically, based on Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's concept of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs and other relevant research, Choi and Lee (2016, p. 54) defined "competent language teachers as those who possess the pedagogical capabilities to promote student engagement and motivation (i.e., student engagement), use teaching materials and methods that are appropriate, effective, and interesting (i.e., instructional strategies), and control student behaviors and manage the classroom atmosphere (i.e., classroom management)."

Figure 2

Three Dimensions of EFL Teacher Self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001)



Language Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Other Relevant Factors

Language teacher self-efficacy has been found to be associated with various factors that influence the language teaching environment. For instance, poor learner motivation (Chambers, 1999), the imposition of specific teaching methods (Nunan, 2003), and constant curriculum changes (Wedell, 2008) have been identified as factors related to language teacher self-efficacy. In terms of classroom activities and tasks, high levels of self-efficacy in the four language skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening) among EFL teachers are likely to result in increased engagement of students in mastery experiences, leading to enhanced communication in the second language (L2) (Chacón, 2005). Moreover, lower perceived self-efficacy may lead teachers to exert less effort in motivating students.

Similarly, Choi and Lee (2018) discovered that teachers with a strong sense of language teacher self-efficacy are more inclined to employ activities that involve L2 communication and interaction. Conversely, teachers who possess lower self-efficacy in communicative teaching, particularly in the speaking and listening skills, may prefer a more structured and control-oriented approach in the classroom. These findings align with prior research conducted in other subject areas (Woolfolk et al., 1990), where teachers with lower self-efficacy tend to exhibit more rigid and authoritarian orientations towards student behaviors. Thus, it can be assumed that language teacher self-efficacy beliefs significantly impact the language teaching environment.

Theoretically speaking, the aforementioned social cognitive theory proposed by Bandura (1997) suggests that efficacy beliefs and teaching have a circular relationship in both

teacher self-efficacy and language teacher self-efficacy studies. Teachers' positive and negative experiences in promoting learning increase or decrease the likelihood of future successes or failures. Choi and Lee's (2018) qualitative data revealed that teachers' successful CLT experience increases the sense of competence in teaching EFL communicatively, and this increased sense of efficacy creates new successful experiences. Contrarily, the more teachers avoid using communicative practices, the more they lose confidence in this type of teaching. Hence, a shortage of experiences with communicative teaching can negatively influence the development of teachers' self-efficacy (Choi & Lee, 2018).

In the Japanese context, Nishino (2012) investigated the relationship among Japanese high school teachers' beliefs ($N = 139$), their practices, and socio-educational factors regarding CLT. They found student-related communicative conditions directly impacted classroom practices, positive CLT beliefs indirectly influenced classroom practices via CLT self-efficacy. Further, Thompson (2016) examined the extent to which Japanese EFL teachers' English language instruction was correlated with their efficacy beliefs ($N = 141$). The findings revealed that (1) years of experience, (2) their perceived English language proficiency, (3) time spent abroad, and (4) experiences with CLT were linked with different dimensions of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs.

Variables Related to Teacher Burnout and/or Teacher Self-Efficacy

Thus far, I have established teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy as the primary components based on my above literature review. Then I continued with my extensive reading to further explore variables in relation to both/either teacher burnout and/or teacher self-efficacy. Although details are consequently provided over the following several sections, I have found five variables pertained to them. Roughly speaking, first, I found that the Japanese government policy has a significant impact on Japanese EFL teachers in that its policy changes regularly, which may contribute to their teaching methods and styles. Specifically, the implementation of the educational reform in 2021 has resulted in significant changes to the standardized university entrance examination.

Second, it is presumable that EFL teachers' perceived language proficiency has a crucial role in their language teacher self-efficacy. In fact, some researchers show their concern regarding Japanese EFL teachers' English language proficiency. Further, I have found that several studies investigated the impact of teachers' perceived language proficiency on their self-efficacy beliefs, teaching styles, and teacher burnout.

Third, school contextual factors, such as time pressure, student-related matters, and parent-related matters, should be taken into consideration when it comes to considering teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. For instance, as introduced in the Introduction chapter, teachers in Japan work longest (i.e., 56 hours per week) among all the OECD countries, possibly indicating that they are swamped with tasks other than regular classes (e.g., ECAs). Additionally, student-related problems such as bullying among students and school refusal, and parent-related matters such as excessive demand from students' parents become social problems in 2000s (See the Introduction chapter), and thus, these school contextual factors should be delved into more in the present study.

Fourth, existing literature suggested that the present study explore the link between teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession and their burnout levels. There is a necessity to comprehend why and how teachers leave the profession, and if there exists a positive relationship between the two, I intend to provide implications regarding how to mitigate their burnout levels, ultimately lowering teacher attrition rate.

Fifth, it is undeniable that burnout research after the coronavirus pandemic must encompass the influence of COVID-19, given its substantial contribution to teachers' mental illnesses. Several articles have emerged that propose latest scales for assessing the impact of COVID-19, which are introduced in the subsequent sections.

Overall, a comprehensive examination of multiple scholarly articles has identified five significant factors that could potentially be associated with teacher burnout and/or teacher self-efficacy. These factors are now presented in greater detail, following the subsequent order: (1) government policy, (2) perceived language proficiency of Japanese EFL teachers, (3) contextual factors within schools, (4) teachers' intention to leave the profession, and (5) the impact of COVID-19. Finally, a detailed explanation regarding the necessity of gathering biographical information from participating teachers is provided.

The Government Policy

The government policy holds significant importance in analyzing the national education system, particularly when considering its impact on Japanese EFL teachers. This required me to comprehensively examine the background of English education in Japan in order to understand how government policy has influenced Japanese EFL teachers in various ways.

The findings shed light on the evolution of English education in Japan, where a shift from knowledge-cramming and memorization to communication-oriented approaches has

occurred over time. The emergence of the concept of "communication" in the English curriculum in 1989 marked an important turning point. Subsequently, in 2011, the English curriculum strongly suggested that oral communication in middle schools be taught in English. Furthermore, recent reform initiatives introduced by the Japanese government in 2021 have significantly focused on speaking skills in English instruction. These reforms align with the government's objective of setting higher academic goals for students, such as the ability of high school students to engage in debates and discussions on specific topics in English (MEXT, 2021).

The educational reform implemented in 2021 has brought about substantial modifications to the standardized university entrance exam known as the "Center Test," particularly in the English section. Two significant changes have been introduced. First, the allocation of points in the English section (250 points in total) has experienced a notable shift, changing from a 4:1 ratio (200 points for the written test and 50 points for the listening test) to a balanced 1:1 ratio (100 points for the written test and 100 points for the listening test). This change is noteworthy as the previous curriculum predominantly emphasized reading/grammar skills over listening skills due to the above ratio difference. Although Japanese EFL teachers had primarily focused on instructing reading/grammar skills, this critical modification may impose stress on Japanese EFL teachers as they are urged to adjust their teaching approaches and adapt to the new examination format. They are also required to revise existing curricula and syllabi accordingly.

Second, it is important to note that this significant change is only effective for a limited period of three years, until 2023. From 2024 onwards, the English exam will be entirely replaced by other official English exams such as TOEFL, IELTS, or EIEKN[4]. Once again, EFL teachers may be required to modify curricula, syllabi, teaching methods, and approaches to adequately prepare their students for these new examination formats.

Based on the aforementioned factors, it can be postulated that EFL teachers in Japan experience increased workload as a result of repetitive policy changes implemented by the government. This assertion is supported by Nishino's (2012) study among 139 Japanese high school EFL teachers, which revealed that government policy and entrance examinations influence teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, the findings of Nishino's study align with the research conducted by Kyriacou and Chien (2004), which indicated that teachers perceive the

[4] EIKEN is an abbreviation of Jitsuyo Eigo Gino Kentei (Test in Practical English Proficiency), one of the most widely used English-language testing programs in Japan. Eiken (n.d.).

teaching profession as stressful due to changes in educational policies. Considering the existing literature highlighting the relationship between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy, it is crucial to acknowledge that various stress factors, including additional workload and educational policy changes, can ultimately contribute to teacher burnout (Cherniss, 1995; Masui et al., 2018). Consequently, the present study incorporates the government policy as one of the influential factors impacting teacher burnout.

Japanese EFL Teachers' Perceived Language Proficiency

The Japanese people's speaking score on the TOEFL is ranked at the bottom among 31 Asian countries (ETS, 2016). This data could also apply to Japanese EFL teachers as Nishino's (2012) teacher beliefs questionnaire revealed that Japanese high school teachers, generally, are more confident about their reading and grammatical abilities than about their listening and speaking abilities. Nishino's view is supported by Hirata (2018) who, based on the MEXT's data regarding Japanese EFL teachers' English skills (MEXT, 2016a), mentioned that Japanese EFL teachers tend not to have confidence in their own English-speaking abilities and are therefore uncomfortable teaching communicatively in English class. In fact, a national survey by MEXT (2017a) showed that only 42% of Japanese EFL teachers in communicative classes orally produced English at least half of the time they were instructing even though the new curriculum guidelines by the government encouraged them to use English orally when they instruct.

One of the primary reasons the Japanese government urged to reform entrance examinations was the need to improve the speaking abilities of Japanese people not to be left behind by the global competition to be fluent in English (Ukita, 2019). For instance, Japan is currently facing a significant population decline, while Japanese companies seek to expand their global market share (Nihonkeizai, 2024). Notably, the global market share of Japanese products such as automobiles and boats has been on the rise since 2000 (Trade Statistics of Japan, 2024). Consequently, it is assumed that teachers' proficiency in English is expected to play a pivotal role as research into foreign language education has shown that teacher factors, particularly language proficiency and attitude, significantly influence learners' outcomes (Graham et al., 2017). Further, several studies investigated the link between teachers' language teacher self-efficacy and their perceived language proficiency. For instance, Thompson (2016) investigated whether Japanese high school EFL teachers' perceived capabilities for teaching were strongly related to their teaching styles ($N = 141$). Their correlation and multiple regression analyses found that teachers' perceived English

proficiency was associated with stronger beliefs for different dimensions of teacher efficacy beliefs.

Further, Choi and Lee (2016) conducted a study among 167 Korean EFL teachers who were asked their perceived English language proficiency, teaching efficacy beliefs, and to estimate how much time they spent using English in their classes. The researchers' objective was to see if there was a connection between the teachers' perceived language proficiency and their efficacy beliefs regarding their teaching abilities. Their multiple regression analysis found that there was indeed a significant relationship between teachers' perceived language proficiency and their efficacy beliefs. The researchers also discovered that there is a certain level of language proficiency where teachers feel more comfortable using English, and above the minimum levels, language proficiency and self-efficacy were interdependent.

Additionally, I found one study that investigated the link between teachers' perceived language proficiency and teacher burnout. Nayernia and Babaya (2019) examined the relationship between 110 Iranian EFL teachers' self-assessed language proficiency and their experience of burnout. Their correlational analysis revealed that teachers' perceived language proficiency had a significant negative relationship with all three dimensions in teacher burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, lack of accomplishment, and depersonalization), implying perceived language proficiency plays a pivotal role to buffer teacher burnout.

Thus, it is highly probable that EFL teachers' perceived language proficiency is related to their self-efficacy and burnout in teaching language in a variety of ways. Hence, I included EFL teachers' perceived English proficiency as an essential factor in the present study.

Five School Contextual Factors

Schaufeli and Buunk (2004) categorized the major causes of teacher burnout into five contextual variables: (1) quantitative work demands, (2) role problems, (3) lack of social support, (4) lack of self-regulatory activity, and (5) student related demands.

The first variable, quantitative work demand includes stressors (e.g., the number of hours of teaching, amount of time spent with the students or students' problems). A meta-analysis by Lee and Ashforth (1996) reported the more hours per week teachers work, the more burnout teachers experience. For instance, the mandatory hours that teachers are required to teach in state schools in Iran were found to be the critical factor causing burnout among the Iranian EFL teachers (N = 230) in Khezerlou's (2013) study. They reported that

the difference in the number of hours that Iranian and Turkish teachers ($N = 156$) worked had a more noticeable impact on emotional exhaustion, one of the burnout dimensions. This result could contribute to the number of mandatory teaching hours in each context: 24 hours per week in Iran versus 16 hours in Turkey. Thus, the longer teachers work, the more susceptible they are towards emotional exhaustion.

Second, role problems refer to role conflict and role ambiguity that teachers experience due to the conflicting job demands. Previous studies revealed that role conflict and role ambiguity are moderately to highly correlated with burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Role conflicts occur when conflicting demands at the job are met. For example, teachers are expected to discipline students, which some teachers do not see it as being part of their job (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). In fact, in some countries, dealing with discipline students is not teachers' task; rather, school administrators employ therapists or school counselors (Senoo, 2022) to guide these students. This disparity in teachers' roles can trigger teacher burnout.

Third, there exists clear evidence for a relationship between lack of social support and burnout. For example, lack of social support from supervisors is related to teacher burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Social support might buffer the effects of stressors in such a way that teachers who receive more support are better able to deal with their job demands (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). In other words, social support plays an important role to reduce teachers' burnout levels.

Fourth, regarding teachers' self-regulatory activities, it is assumed that both teacher autonomy and self-regulation are negatively correlated with burnout (Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2014). A particular set of job resources fosters self-regulatory activity, which is involved in achieving one's goals. Examples are participation in decision making, autonomy and feedback, all of which have been found to be negatively associated with burnout (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004). Contrarily, if participation in these self-regulatory activities is reduced or lost, teacher feel more burnout.

Lastly, student-related issues can also be a heavy burden for teachers to deal with, leading to both a loss of interest in the work and a loss of work commitment. Managing problematic students, problems in interacting with students, student misbehaviors, student dropouts, and general student disengagement can become a variety of resources depleting (Covell, McNeil, & Howe, 2009; Kokkinos, 2007).

Further, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) re-explored and found relations between teachers' perception of school context variables and teacher self-efficacy and teacher

burnout. The five school contextual factors were aligned with the ones in Schaufeli and Buunk's study (2004) above although they re-named each factor to make them more clearly: (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents. These factors have been investigated by previous researchers (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Hakanen et al., 2006; Leung & Lee, 2006; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008), revealing significant associations with teacher burnout. However, no studies have explored the relationship between these five school contextual variables and teacher burnout and self-efficacy specifically within the Japanese educational context. In light of this research gap, the present study adopted the conceptual framework of these factors as proposed by Schaufeli and Buunk (2004) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010).

Teacher's Intention to Leave the Profession

In a study conducted by O'Brien et al. (2008) in Australia (N =98), the researchers assessed teachers' turnover intentions by inquiring about the extent to which they were considering leaving their current job, while the levels of burnout were evaluated utilizing the previously mentioned Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI: Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). They reported that significant connections were found between teachers' intentions to leave the profession and their levels of burnout.

Additionally, in a study of 379 Chinese teachers in Hong Kong, Leung and Lee (2006) explored the associations among social support, teacher burnout, and teachers' intention to quit. They utilized the MBI to measure teachers' burnout levels. Results from SEM confirmed that teacher burnout, in particular the emotional exhaustion dimension, predicted teachers' intention of leaving the profession.

In the Japanese context, the government does not completely categorize reasons why teachers left the teaching profession. For example, in 2015, out of a total of 217,459 teachers, 8,280 teachers at public middle schools left the teaching profession, which consisted of 4,823 teachers for retirement and 3,457 for several reasons: 213 for sick or illness, 1,142 for seeking a new career including a teaching profession, 1,071 for unknown reasons, and 2,102 did not answer (Masui et al., 2018). Even among 1,142 teachers who seek a new career, there is a blurred boundary between those who seek another teaching job (i.e., movers) or a non-teaching alternative (i.e., leavers). According to Masui et al. (2018), it could be assumed that among above 3,457 teachers, either movers or leavers, a substantial number of them left the teaching profession due to burnout. Thus, in the present study, I intend to clarify the link between teachers' intention to leave the profession and their burnout levels.

COVID-19

Given the timing of distributing a questionnaire of the present study (i.e., November 2021 to February 2022), it is both inevitable and appropriate to take the influence of COVID-19 pandemic into account as it potentially threatens the external validity of the study's results. Although burnout among teachers has been widely investigated, researchers do not yet have sufficient information considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher burnout. A few researchers have already developed a so-called COVID-19 stress scale. For example, Taylor et al. (2020) developed 36-item COVID Stress Scales to measure COVID-related stress and anxiety symptoms: (1) Danger and contamination fears, (2) fears about economic consequences, (3) xenophobia, (4) compulsive checking and reassurance seeking, and (5) traumatic stress symptoms about COVID-19.

Within the Japanese context, Senoo (2021) asserts that the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a noteworthy factor contributing to teachers' mental illnesses. Notably, they suggest that younger teachers are particularly susceptible to the impact of the pandemic due to their limited access to social support from supervisors who are also overwhelmed with their own work responsibilities during this unprecedented era. Furthermore, the lack of prior experience in managing a state of emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic could augment feelings of burnout among younger teachers (Senoo, 2021).

Sokal et al. (2020) assessed the impact of COVID-19 on Canadian teachers (N = 1,278) during the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of supporting teachers in times of change. They examined whether Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) job demands-resources model (i.e., JD-R model) is a transactional model that has been used to examine teacher stress. Job demands were defined as "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)." Sokal et al. (2020) investigated five work demands: time management, technology, expectations of parents, balance of home and work life, and lack of resources. The results suggested that most demands were strongly correlated with emotional exhaustion: the initial stage of burnout. Thus, it is highly reasonable to include the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the present study as it may have an impact on teacher burnout in the Japanese context.

Biographic Information

The questionnaire in the present study includes inquiries about participating teachers' (1) age, (2) levels of education, (3) teaching experience, and (4) experience of going abroad. I included teachers' age as one of the background issues in the present research lies in the fact that 45.6 % of new employees in the education industry in Japan quit within the first three years (MHLW, 2021). This figure suggests that relatively younger teachers leave their jobs due to various factors. Consequently, it is presumed that teachers' age is relevant to their intention to leave the profession as well as their burnout levels.

Regarding teachers' levels of education, in a study conducted by Sadeghi and Khezrlou (2014) among 40 Iranian teachers, they found that there was a significant relationship between teachers' levels of education and their experienced stress. Their findings showed that teachers with a bachelor's degree had higher levels of burnout than those teachers who earned a master's or Ph.D. degree. Following this, I included teachers' levels of education in the questionnaire.

In terms of teaching experience, Choi and Lee (2018) found a circular relationship between teachers' accumulated teaching experience and their self-efficacy. Among 190 Korean secondary school EFL teachers, they reported that the accumulated experience of a particular practice influenced teachers' self-efficacy. This result is supported by social cognitive theory in which efficacy beliefs and teaching experience have a circular relationship (Bandura, op.cit, as cited in Choi & Lee, 2018). Bandura postulated that the most effective way of developing strong efficacy beliefs is through the accumulation of successful experiences; this cyclical nature makes efficacy beliefs very powerful for teachers' professional development.

Lastly, to the best of my knowledge, there is a scarcity of studies investigating the link between EFL teachers' study abroad experiences and their levels of burnout/self-efficacy in the Japanese context. Previous studies (e.g., Thompson, 2016) have found that EFL teachers' self-efficacy is related to their language proficiency. Given the assumption that study abroad experiences contribute to the development of language proficiency, the participating teachers' experiences abroad might play a crucial role in their self-efficacy. Therefore, the questionnaire includes inquiries about (1) participating teachers' age, (2) their levels of education, (3) their teaching experience, and (4) their experiences of going abroad.

Chapter Summary and Research Questions

The focus of my research is motivated by the rate of teacher attrition in Japan. 45.6% of new employees in the education industry leave their profession within the first three years (MHLW, 2021), thus resulting in teacher shortage, and ultimately a lower quality of teaching (Senno, 2022, also see the Introduction chapter). Previous studies have revealed that teacher attrition is triggered by burnout (Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2014), thus burnout is a primary component in the present study. Hence, the concept of burnout were introduced, referring to empirical research and studies.

Burnout differs from job stress in three key ways: (1) it signifies the final stage of prolonged job stress leading to breakdown in adaptation, (2) it involves the development of negative attitudes and behaviors towards recipients, the job, and the organization, and (3) it particularly affects highly motivated individuals. Additionally, burnout is distinct from depression as it is job-related, although they partially overlap, especially in the emotional exhaustion dimension. Unlike CFS, burnout primarily manifests as a mental syndrome in a work-related context, while CFS is universal and predominantly characterized by unknown fatigue and additional physical symptoms.

Additionally, the present chapter presented that there are three theoretical approaches in burnout research: (1) individual, (2) interpersonal, and (3) organizational approaches. First, all individual approaches emphasize the relevance of the discrepancy between expectations and reality. In the present chapter, four of the individual approaches (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004) were introduced. Second, there exist two interpersonal approaches; burnout as a phased reaction to emotional demands and burnout as a result of social comparison and social exchange processes. Third, interpersonal approach was introduced following empirical studies which support the descriptions of the following three approaches which differ in scope and degree: (1) burnout among young professionals, (2) a phase model of burnout, and (3) burnout as mismatch between person and job.

Next, through extensive reading, I found that self-efficacy is a significant factor closely related to burnout (Evers et al., 2002; Friedman, 2003; Khani & Mirzaee, 2015). Consequently, I decided to incorporate teacher self-efficacy as the second primary component in the present study. In alignment with this decision, the concept of self-efficacy was introduced. Self-efficacy, grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986, 1997), emphasizes human agency−the belief that individuals can exert influence over their actions (Bandura, 2006a). Teacher self-efficacy, on the one hand, refers to teachers' beliefs in their

ability to facilitate learning across specific tasks, domains, and contexts, encompassing cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social dimensions (Wyatt, 2018).

The present study exclusively targeted Japanese EFL teachers, as FL teachers tend to leave the profession due to a lack of self-efficacy (Swanson, 2012). Additionally, Japanese EFL teachers face considerable social pressure, as there is an expectation for them to educate students to proficiency in English. Moreover, the Japanese government's repetitive educational policy reforms and university entrance examinations have increased the workload on EFL teachers. Within this research context, the present chapter introduced language teacher self-efficacy, comprising three dimensions: (1) efficacy in student engagement, (2) efficacy in instructional strategies, and (3) efficacy in classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Lastly, the present chapter discussed other factors closely related to burnout and/or self-efficacy, as identified in previous research. These factors include: (1) government policies, (2) Japanese EFL teachers' perceived language proficiency, (3) five contextual factors within schools, (4) teachers' intention to leave the profession, (5) the impact of COVID-19, and (6) teachers' demographic information. In particular, numerous studies support the connection between EFL teachers' perceived language proficiency and their self-efficacy levels across all three dimensions.

To sum up, based on the research presented above and teacher situation in Japan, I selected two dominant components for the present study: teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy which mitigates teacher burnout. I also regard other several factors mentioned above as important factors to better analyze the relationship between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy, and ultimately teachers' elevating attrition rate in Japan. With these components and related factors as well as the presented issues in the Japanese context in mind, the present study address following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. Among (1) the government policy, (2) teachers' perceived English language proficiency, (3) teacher's intention to leave the profession, and (4) the influence of COVID-19, which factors predict more Japanese EFL teacher burnout?
RQ2. How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?
RQ3. How do five school contextual factors (i.e., (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents), impact Japanese EFL teacher burnout?
RQ4. How do five school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?

RQ5. How do Japanese EFL teachers' perceived English language proficiency influence their self-efficacy?
RQ6. Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?

In the next chapter, following the presentation of my epistemological stance, I intend to outline the research context and methodological approach of the present study. Additionally, I will detail the data collection and analysis procedures for both the quantitative and qualitative phases.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Analysis

The chapter is broken into five parts. The first part introduces my epistemological stance as a pragmatist and its reasons. The second part introduces the research context in the present study including recruitment of participants and their background information. The third part details the study's methodological approach, particularly outlining the choice of a mixed methods design. The transition from a quantitative phase (i.e., questionnaire) to a qualitative phase (i.e., individual interview) is also addressed. The fourth and fifth parts specifically describe the data collection and data analysis procedures for each respective phase. For the quantitative survey, each scale used in the present study is presented. In particular, the analytic strategy for the quantitative data deals with a variety of statistical concepts such as effect size, sample size, and statistical power, all of which are addressed in the fifth part. For the qualitative interview, an overview of a semi-structured interview is presented. Moreover, the analytic strategy to explore patterns and create themes across the qualitative dataset is addressed.

Epistemological Stance

I consider myself a pragmatist for the following two reasons. First, my philosophy as a researcher aligns with the principles of the pragmatist research paradigm, which is centered around addressing practical problems in the real world. This paradigm emerged as a method of inquiry for more practical-minded researchers (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Maxcy, 2003). It is rooted in the idea that researchers should adopt philosophical and/or methodological approach that is most suitable for the specific research problem that is being investigated (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In the context of the present study, my intention is to define my research problems and achieve the desired outcomes of my inquiries.

Second, since the research paradigm of pragmatism is rooted in the historical principles of the philosophy of pragmatism (Maxcy, 2003), it embraces a plurality of methods. Pragmatism is often associated with mixed-methods or multiple-methods (Creswell & Clark 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maxcy, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Given this, the pragmatist scholars reject the notion that social science inquiry can access the reality solely by employing a single method (Maxcy, 2003). For example, postpositivism typically supports quantitative methods and deductive reasoning, whereas constructivism emphasizes qualitative approaches and inductive reasoning; however, pragmatism takes a more inclusive stance, encompassing both ends of the spectrum and providing a reflective

approach to designing research (Morgan, 2007). In adopting this stance, the pragmatist researchers are able to select the research design and the methodology that are most appropriate to address the research question (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

One important consideration, however, is the aspect of pragmatism that is a part of a researchers' worldview and therefore can influence the way researchers conduct their research (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Dewey's work has been used to identify the weakness of most inquiries; that is, selecting the methodology without clearly understanding the problem. Hence, Dewey recommends that once the problem is identified and the dimensions are clearly defined, researchers should investigate the problem from various perspectives, depending on the purpose or objective of the inquiry (Dillon et al., 2000). Keeping Dewey's recommendations in mind, I would not employ pragmatism solely to validate my transition towards method acceptability (Maxcy, 2003). Instead, I believe that it is important to recognize that the most effective method is the one that generates the desired outcomes of the investigation, whether it is a single-method, multiple methods, or a mix of methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

To sum, my practical beliefs make me avoid using only qualitative or quantitative approach to research. Instead, I consider which methods from both paradigms would work best for my research. My investigation aims to identify the factors contributing to teacher attrition and shortage in Japan by examining their connections to teacher burnout, teacher self-efficacy, and other related factors. To achieve this, I evaluate various research methodologies and select the ones that most effectively address my research questions, irrespective of the paradigm.

Methodological Approach

Why Mixed Methods?

Several key concepts examined in the present study, namely teacher burnout, teacher self-efficacy, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) language proficiency, have been quantitatively investigated by researchers. Notable examples include the utilization of quantitative surveys to explore teacher burnout and/or teacher self-efficacy, as observed in studies conducted by Ghasemboland and Hashim (2013), Swanson (2010), and Thompson (2016). In order to examine teacher self-efficacy, these researchers employed established measurement scales, such as the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (2001), the Self-Efficacy Scale for Foreign Language Teachers (S/FLTES) devised by Swanson (2010), or modified versions of them, as exemplified by

Nishino (2012) and Thompson (2016). Likewise, within the field of burnout research, the majority of researchers, including Khani and Mirzaee (2015) and Zhu et al. (2018), relied on the implementation of a quantitative measurement tool known as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996) to evaluate teacher burnout.

Although questionnaires offer advantages, such as efficient data collection in terms of time and costs, researchers must also acknowledge their disadvantages and limitations (Dörnyei, 2003). An important consideration pertains to the challenging process of interpreting self-efficacy scores and ratings. When interpreting a broad range of ratings, such as differentiating between high and low ratings on individual items, it becomes crucial to understand the respondents' perspectives and confirm whether the items truly capture the essence of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). For instance, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) posed the question to participating teachers, "How much can you encourage your students to value learning?" The response to this question may vary as each teacher may employ different strategies to achieve this goal. Some teachers may actively engage in persuasive efforts to convey the importance of learning to their students, resulting in higher scores or ratings for this item. Conversely, other teachers may unconsciously facilitate their students' recognition of this importance, leading to lower scores or ratings. Hence, even if teachers undertake similar actions to encourage their students, the choice of score or rating may differ, potentially impacting the strength of their self-efficacy beliefs.

The same applies to teacher burnout scale in that it truly captures the nature of burnout. Although the stability of the MBI subscales (Maslach et al., 1996) over time is said to be consistent with its purpose of measuring an enduring state, this stability might generate the possibility that the measure lacks sensitivity to minor changes in burnout (Maslach et al., 1996) because the MBI asks participants to respond to such a general statement (e.g., I feel exhausted from teaching) that the scale cannot completely measure the participants' everyday state (Brenninkmeijer, 2003). Thus, quantitative research on teacher self-efficacy as well as teacher burnout may insufficiently address participants' true perspectives (Toomela, 2008).

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs encompass a broad scope, referring to implicit and often unconscious assumptions regarding students, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught (Kagan, 1992, p.65). These beliefs are not solely shaped by teachers' personal experiences and practices but are also influenced by their interactions with fellow teachers (Zahorik, 1987). As a result, when responding to questionnaires, some teachers may not express genuine beliefs in a short-answer questionnaire (Kagan, 1992). Moreover, it is important to recognize that teachers' assumptions regarding students, classrooms, and the

subject matter are subject to fluctuation on a daily basis (Kagan, 1992). Therefore, researchers should acknowledge the dynamic nature of teachers' beliefs and consider the collected data as a reliable representation of their beliefs solely on the day of administration.

On the whole, considering limitations of a quantitative study provides researchers a variety of reinforcements to confirm the study's validity (Asghar, 2018), and the primary reinforcement is provided by adding supplemental data (e.g., classroom observations, interviews, etc.) as they play a pivotal role to offset the limitations of a one-time questionnaire (Johnson et al., 2004). According to Thompson (2016), there are a couple of means to compensate for the weaknesses in the accuracy of quantitative measures in a study, and one of them is to utilize qualitative data collection (e.g., individual interviews, focus-group interviews, etc.). Creswell and Creswell (2018) posit that a qualitative approach can supplement what cannot be investigated by a solely quantitative approach. For example, using open-ended questions allows participants to share their views in a more in-depth way than they can do when responding to a closed answer item on a questionnaire.

As Bong (2006) mentioned, without following up or interviewing participants within a certain time frame, sole interpretation of measurement ratings may cause failure to accurately describe participants' beliefs and perceptions (Wyatt, 2012). If teachers indicate they are effective or ineffective in relation to particular tasks on quantitative measurements, there is a clear need to follow up in a semi-structured interview (Siwatu, 2011), which allows researchers to deeply investigate areas of particular interest and to better understand the reasons underlying participants' survey responses. Thus, additional measures (e.g., open-ended interviews, observations) should be combined to improve the validity of questionnaire studies (Pajares, 1992). Further, Kagan (1992) claims that quantitative research on teachers' beliefs should be approached by longitudinal studies or reinforced by a qualitative approach. Utilizing mixed method designs enables researchers to use the collection and analysis of multiple sources of data with both quantitative and qualitative analysis to offset the limitations of each (Johnson et al., 2004).

Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela (2006) investigated the value of mixed methods in the field of business by reviewing studies published in the field. They found that mixed methods added value by increasing validity in the findings, informing the collection of the second data source, and assisting with knowledge creation. They insist that studies utilizing a mixed methods approach gain a deeper, broader understanding of the phenomenon than studies that do not utilize both a quantitative and qualitative approach (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & Nummela, 2006).

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) provide a comprehensive mixed methods research design framework using the methods-strands matrix and discussing four families of mixed methods designs: (1) concurrent, (2) sequential, (3) conversion, and (4) fully integrated. According to Jang et al. (2008), within a concurrent design, qualitative and quantitative strands are implemented independently throughout data collection and analysis. An advantage of this design is that researchers can verify and generate theories by utilizing both qualitative and quantitative strands. In a sequential design, researchers literally utilize qualitative and quantitative strands chronologically. The preceding strand is used to create questions, develop instruments, or form hypotheses to be tested in the next strand. In a conversion design, either type of data (i.e., qualitative or quantitative) is collected and analyzed accordingly. Subsequently, the results are transformed for further analysis using the other methodological approach. Lastly, in a fully integrated design, researchers mix qualitative and quantitative approaches in an interactive and iterative manner throughout the study. At each stage, the two approaches interact with each other by affecting the formation of the other.

Considering the advantages of each of the above four designs, the present study adopted the concept of "sequential design" in which a questionnaire serves as the first and primary instrument supported by interviews as the subordinate instrument. In other words, the present study used triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of how participating teachers perceive burnout, self-efficacy, and other related factors (See the Data Collection sections below) in the Japanese educational context.

Research Context

Recruitment of Participants

There are two phases in the present study: a quantitative survey to Japanese EFL teachers (i.e., Phase 1) and a follow-up individual interview (i.e., Phase 2) to those who completed the survey in Phase 1. Participants in Phase 1 were recruited online with the help of Japanese EFL teachers' associations I belong to in Japan (i.e., Teachers Motivating Teachers (209 teachers), Teachers Help Teachers (377 teachers), Eigo-Kyoiku Eigakkai (150 teachers), English Teachers Help English Teachers (933 teachers)). A survey invitation (See Appendix B) and a consent from (See Appendix C) were distributed to approximately 1,600 Japanese EFL teachers, including both novice and experienced teachers at any age, throughout Japan.

Data collection began in November 2021 and ended in February 2022. Those who completed the survey in Phase 1 were offered a compensation of 500 yen, which is equivalent to 4 US dollars as of November 2021. The participants' background information is detailed below (See Table 2). At the end of the survey, the participating teachers were asked whether they would be willing to be contacted to participate in the follow-up interview in Phase 2. Accordingly, with the purpose of comparative study, I categorized the participants in Phase 2 into the following groups: teachers who showed their intention to leave the teaching profession in the survey (i.e., movers/leavers) and other teachers (in-service teachers). Given this aim, I adopted purposive sampling to recruit participants in Phase 2.

Participants in Phase 1: Convenience Sampling

134 teachers completed the survey in Phase 1. One teacher whose first language is English was excluded from the dataset as the present study focuses on Japanese EFL teachers whose first language is Japanese. The other teacher was excluded because they had left their teaching profession two years prior to earn a master's degree abroad. Thus, the final dataset had 132 responses.

Respondents included 65 female and 65 male teachers (2 preferred not to say). Their ages range from 23 to 68, with an average age of 40.93 years (SD = 12.49). They teach at middle school (N = 40), high school (N = 60), or both (N = 32). The average length of staying abroad for the purpose of studying is 10.2 months (SD = 14.91), and the average length of teaching experience is 188 months (i.e., 15.7 years, SD = 146.62).

Table 2

Participants' Background Information (N = 132)

Teacher characteristics		Percentage (%)
Education	B.A.	65.2
	M.A.	34.8
Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	24.2
	5-10 years	16.7
	10-15 years	12.1
	15-20 years	12.1
	More than 20 years	34.8
Studying abroad experience	Never	18.9
	Less than 1 month	16.7
	1-6 months	16.7
	6-12 months	27.3
	More than 12 months	20.5

Participants in Phase 2: Purposive Sampling

Phase 2 selected the participating teachers who indicated, in the Phase 1 survey, that they were interested in participating in the follow-up interview. They were invited by email (See Appendix D) and offered a compensation of 2,000 yen, which is equivalent to 15 US dollars as of December 2022. First, they were selected through purposive sampling by consulting burnout scores and self-efficacy scores as these are the two main components of the present study. Those who showed a serious burnout state (i.e., 7 out of 7 in one or more items in the burnout scale) and/or a lowest teacher self-efficacy (i.e., 1 out of 7 in one or more items in the self-efficacy scale) were counted 29 in total.

With the purpose of comparative study, I categorized these participants into three groups although they are all currently teaching: (1) movers, (2) leavers, and (3) in-service teachers, based on the rate on their intention to leave the teaching profession in the survey in Phase 1. Movers[5] indicate teachers who intended to leave their current job and leavers

[5] It is worth noting that public school teachers are reassigned to different schools within their prefectures every several years throughout their careers. Since most teachers receive notifications about whether they will be relocated to other schools around early March or later (Ido, 2022), it is assumed that they did not

indicate teachers who were seeking a non-teaching alternative. As a result of inviting participants to the interview, four movers and seven leavers agreed to participating the interview. Their ages range from 26 to 58 and there are four female and seven male teachers. Further, eight in-service teachers agreed to participating the interview. However, one in-service teacher cancelled it without any notice, and the other in-service teacher stopped replying one week before the interview. Thus, six in-service teachers (four female and two male) were interviewed. Their ages ranged from 25 to 51. On the whole, 17 teachers were individually interviewed. A breakdown of the demographics of all the participants can be found in Table 3 below.

know their reassignment status at the time of responding to the questionnaire (from November 14, 2021, to February 19, 2022).

Table 3

Participants' Background Information (N = 17)

	Education	Teaching experience	Studying abroad experience
Teacher 1 (*M-41)	B.A.	10 years	3.5 years
Teacher 2 (**L-47)	M.A.	25 years	1 year
Teacher 3 (L-31)	M.A.	7 years	0
Teacher 4 (L-26)	B.A.	4 years	1 year
Teacher 5 (***IN-25)	B.A.	4 years	4 months
Teacher 6 (L-27)	B.A.	2 years	1 year
Teacher 7 (IN-33)	B.A.	7 years	9 months
Teacher 8 (L-49)	B.A.	11 years	9 months
Teacher 9 (M-29)	M.A.	7 years	5 months
Teacher 10 (IN-26)	M.A.	3 years	1 month
Teacher 11 (L-58)	B.A.	34 years	3 months
Teacher 12 (IN-31)	B.A.	9 years	10 months
Teacher 13 (IN-51)	M.A.	25 years	2.5 years
Teacher 14 (IN-48)	B.A.	25 years	0
Teacher 15 (M-49)	B.A.	26 years	6 months
Teacher 16 (L-27)	B.A.	3 years	0
Teacher 17 (M-52)	M.A.	30 years	2 years

*M = Mover, **L = Leaver, ***IN = In-service teachers

Note. Numbers in ( ) = age

Data Collection for Quantitative Survey

Scales in the Survey

Several scales were used to measure participating teachers': (1) burnout levels, (2) self-efficacy, (3) attitude towards the government policy, (4) perceived English language proficiency, (5) attitude towards school contextual factors, (6) intention to leave the teaching profession, and (7) view on COVID-19. In the present study, validated scales from previous research were adopted except for the government policy scale which was modified according to the current Japanese government educational policy. It is noted that both burnout and self-efficacy are originally "perceived" scales as self-efficacy is influenced by a person's "belief" in their context-specific abilities (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). With regard to burnout, it

develops when individuals firmly "believe" in their idealized images of themselves (Freudenberger, 1980). These concepts led me to exclude the word "perceived" out of "perceived self-efficacy" and "perceived burnout" respectively. On the whole, the survey consisted of 60 items with a 7-point Likert scale response (See Appendix A). Features of each scale are detailed below.

Teacher Burnout. With regard to an instrument on burnout, the present study applied an abridged version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), a 14-item Likert-type scale (Friedman, 2003) because not only approximately 95% of the burnout studies employed Maslach et al.'s (1996) Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Schaufeli & Enzmann,1998), but also the three-dimension structure in MBI (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment) has been credited and confirmed in previous studies (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 2000).

Although the majority of researchers agree that the core symptom of burnout is emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2004) among three dimensions in burnout, it is noted that certain researchers insist that the central elements of burnout are both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). In fact, Khani and Mirzaee (2015) employed these two negative dimensions of the teacher burnout in their study, by excluding the third dimension in burnout (i.e., lack of personal accomplishment). On the one hand, Sadeghi and Khezrlou's (2014) study showed that lack of personal accomplishment contributed to teacher burnout. A more recent study (e.g., Pressley, 2021) included lack of personal accomplishment dimension to investigate the factors contributing to teacher burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maslach et al. (1996) suggested that a feeling of low personal accomplishment from the job plays a particularly important role in teacher self-efficacy or burnout. Most teachers enter the profession to help students to learn and grow, and when teachers no longer feel that they are accomplishing this, they cannot focus on other areas to receive rewards (e.g., putting in more time with family, making more money) (Maslach et al., 1996). Supporting these views, the MBI scale in the present study included all three dimensions. A few of sample items of each dimension are presented below in Table 4**.**

Table 4

Burnout Scale

Emotional exhaustion	I feel exhausted from teaching.
	I feel physically worn out by teaching.
Lack of accomplishment	I do not feel that I fulfill myself in teaching.
	I feel that I am not doing very well as a teacher.
Depersonalization	I feel that my students do not really want to learn.
	I think that I would rather have better students than those I have now.

Self-efficacy. Researchers of teacher self-efficacy insist that self-efficacy beliefs can predict, to a large extent, an individual's behaviors and performances (Bandura, 2006b; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). However, certain researchers have failed to observe that connection (Friedman, 2003) due to lack of the specificity of each item and the alignment of the prompted behaviors with the actual outcome measures (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Bong, 2006). From this perspective, it is important for researchers to presume what they are investigating with the scale(s) they employ. For instance, items in Dellinger et al.'s (2008) instrument align tightly to an "agent-means" conceptualization of teacher self-efficacy beliefs (e.g., what teachers do) that is central to the construct (Wheatley, 2005). On the other hand, most items of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) scale, Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES), focus on an "agent-ends" conceptualization (e.g., teachers' beliefs in the capability to accomplish desired outcomes). As the present study aimed to investigate participating teachers' beliefs to achieve desired outcomes, the TSES (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) was adopted. In fact, over two-thirds of all the studies on self-efficacy employed either the short or long form of TSES (Wyatt, 2018). This data is reinforced by the fact that Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) already reported a strong reliability and positive correlations between this scale and the other scales of teacher efficacy, concluding that the scale is reliable and valid. On the whole, the present study employed a 12-item Likert-type scale, utilizing the short version of the TSES. The 12 items are categorized into the following three dimensions (See Figure 2): (1) efficacy in students' engagement, (2) efficacy in instructional strategies, and (3) efficacy in classroom management. A few of sample items of each dimension are presented below in Table 5.

Table 5

Self-efficacy Scale

How confident are you that you can:	
Student engagement	encourage your students to value learning?
	motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?
Instructional strategies	provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
	use a variety of assessment strategies?
Classroom management	get students to follow classroom rules?
	calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?

Government Policy. Nishino's study (2012) investigated the influence of Japanese government policy and the adjustment to the national curriculum on English communication courses in the Japanese context. However, it is noted that government policy has been changing regularly since 2012. For instance, Nishino's scale included a question regarding the implementation of the listening test in the standardized entrance exam known as the "Center Test." However, the Center Test was significantly reformed since then (e.g., allocation points for each subject) and will be further reformed in 2024 (e.g., replaced with TOEFL, IELTS, EIKEN), as explained in the Literature Review chapter. Thus, the present study replaced two items of Nishino's questionnaire concerning the Center Test with other items related to the current government policy as of 2022. I inquired about (1) the abolishment of Center Test by the government, and (2) the replacement of the Center Test with other types of tests, both of which have been a controversial debate theme in the Japanese educational context. Thus, the present study asked the following three items with regard to the influence of the Japanese government policy; (1) to what extent the national curriculum guidelines influence participating teachers' English courses, (2) to what extent the abolishment of the Center Test by the government has influenced or is influencing their English courses, and (3) to what extent the replacement of the Center Test with other types of tests (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, EIKEN) has influenced their current English courses.

Perceived Language Proficiency. Participating teachers' perceived English language proficiency (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) was investigated in the present study, following the concept of Choi and Lee's (2016) survey. They originally adapted Butler's (2004) instrument on English language

proficiency, and they have established its high reliability (α = .91). However, the following issues arise unless language proficiency and language teacher self-efficacy beliefs are clearly distinguished. First, language proficiency is misconceptualized as a distinct sub-component of language teacher self-efficacy beliefs by several researchers. Swanson (2013), for example, confounded learners' and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs by eliciting language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding their ability to read and understand a newspaper. However, reading a newspaper is not a teaching task. Thus, this question is lack of validity in measuring participants' genuine language proficiency.

Second, preconceptions about the relationship between language proficiency and actual language use in class should be avoided. Choi and Lee's study (2016) asked Korean EFL teachers (N = 167) to estimate their own level of English proficiency and the percentage of class time in which they used English, assuming that a high percentage of English use in class is likely to be related to high language proficiency. However, this assumption has neither been supported in their study nor have they supported it with previous studies.

Lastly, teacher self-efficacy researchers should be cautious in making direct comparisons of the scores reported in studies taking place in different cultures due to the possibility that survey responses may reflect participants' background education (Ghasemboland & Hashim, 2013). Regarding the self-assessment levels of English proficiency, the English education that participating teachers received when they were students has an impact on them. For example, Korean EFL teachers in Ghasemboland and Hashim's (2013) study tended to rate their current proficiency levels in writing skills (.82) higher than the other skills (i.e., listening, speaking and reading), with a listening skill (.63), the weakest. A possible reason for the teachers' lower proficiency in listening skills, according to their analysis, could be found in the English education that the participating teachers received. English education in the Korean EFL context of the day focused mainly on grammar, writing, and reading comprehension, not on the development of listening or speaking abilities. Additionally, teachers and learners, at that time, had few opportunities to speak or listen in English for communicative purposes; namely, the target language is not used in everyday life, while they could easily obtain writing and reading materials.

Considering these discussions, the present study elicited the participating teachers' perceived English language proficiency in a simple way, following Choi and Lee's (2016) English language proficiency survey. They were asked to rate their ability of the following seven skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Perceived Language Proficiency Scale

Rate your ability of the following skills/knowledge from 1 (very weak) to 7 (very strong).
1. Speaking skills
2. Listening skills
3. Reading skills
4. Writing skills
5. Vocabulary
6. Pronunciation
7. Grammar

Five School Contextual Factors. As described in the Literature Review chapter, the present study employed the concept of Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2010) study on relations between teachers' perception of school context variables and teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout. There are five context variables: (1) time pressure, (2) students' discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) teachers' autonomy, and (5) relationship with students' parents, and each variable consists of three items. One sample item of each variable is presented below in Table 7**.**

Table 7

Five School Contextual Factors

Likert-type scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)	
Time pressure	Preparation for teaching is often done after working hours.
Discipline problems	Controlling students' behavior takes a lot of time and effort.
Supervisory support	My relation with the principal is one of mutual trust and respect.
Autonomy	In my daily teaching, I am free to select teaching methods and strategies for my class.
Relation to parents	I feel that the students' parents trust and accept my decisions.

Intention to Leave. The present study followed the concept of O'Brien et al.'s (2008) research, which assessed teachers' turnover intentions by inquiring about the extent to which they were considering leaving their current job. O'Brien et al. also utilized the MBI scale to

measure participants' burnout levels, which influenced the decision to employ their scale in the present study. They asked two questions. The first question inquired about how seriously teachers were considering leaving their current job, while the second question explored hypothetical scenarios regarding the teachers' career choices in teaching.

COVID-19. Lastly, the emergence of COVID-19 and the impact of it cannot be ignored in the process of investigating psychological aspects of humans. The present study adopted the Fear of COVID-19 Scale (FCV-19S) developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020). They took several steps to develop the scale. First, they conducted an extensive literature review to assess all general scales on fear, which led them to identify 30 measures regarding fear on different populations and diseases. Next, they combined relevant and possible items and removed those items with similar content or expressions. At this point, 28 items were left for further evaluation. Then an expert panel (comprising a psychologist, virologist, health psychologist, psychiatrist, general physician, and nurse) evaluated these 28 items, and 11 further items were omitted. The remaining 17 items were distributed to a different expert panel (comprising a health education specialist, pulmonologist, social psychologist, and sociologist in Iran) to review, and seven items were further omitted. Finally, the 10-item scale was piloted on 46 individuals (26 males and 20 females, mean age 39.63 years, number of years in education = 9.38 years) to receive initial assessment of the scale. A four-point Likert scale was used to test whether the individuals understood descriptions of each item. The results showed that all respondents fully understood the item descriptions (M = 3.81, SD = 1.04). Additionally, an individual telephone-based cognitive interview was implemented on the same pilot participants to explore their thoughts on each scale item and their responses. As a result, seven items were left, and the final version of this scale was named the Fear of COVID-19 Scale. Three sample items are presented below in Table 8**.**

Table 8

COVID-19 Scale

Likert-type scale 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)	
1.	I am afraid of COVID-19.
3.	My hands become clammy when I think about COVID-19.
5.	When watching news and hearing/reading stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become nervous or anxious.

Likert Scale. All the scales in the present study used a Likert scale with the range from 1 to 7 (i.e., a 7- point Likert scale), following Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (Schaufeli and Leiter, 1996). It should be noted that one of the disadvantages of employing a Likert scale with odd numbers(e.g., a 7-point Likert scale) is there is a possibility that participants who select the neutral number (e.g., 4 in case of a 7-point Likert scale) as they might either not have an interest in topics or not be able to understand questions in the questionnaire itself (Fujiwara, 2018), which may lead a significant impact on the results. However, in terms of respondents' view, providing them with a neutral choice would be an advantage in soliciting participants' honest answers (Fujiwara, 2018). This concept led me to adopt a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) for all the scales the present study employed. To sum, the survey in the present study consisted of 60 items with a 7-point Likert scale response (See Appendix A). Table 9 summarizes the number of items in each scale.

Table 9

The Numbers of Items Used in Each Scale

Scales	Dimensions *if applicable	The number of items
Burnout	Exhaustion	5
	Lack of accomplishment	5
	Depersonalization	4
Self-efficacy	Instructional strategies	4
	Classroom management	4
	Student engagement	4
Government policy		3
English language proficiency	7 skills (e.g., speaking)	7
School context	Time pressure	3
	Discipline problems	3
	Supervisory support	3
	Autonomy	3
	Relation to parents	3
Intention to leave the profession		2
COVID-19		7

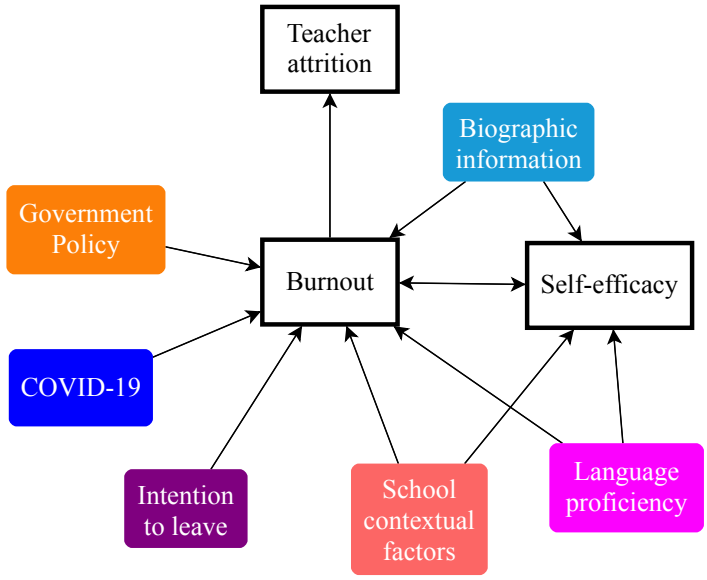
Quantitative Data Analysis Procedure

In order to explore how teacher burnout dimensions correlate with other factors (e.g., teacher self-efficacy, government policy, etc.), structural equation modeling (SEM), within the statistical software R, was applied. SEM is particularly useful in the social sciences where several key concepts are not directly observable (Westland, 2010). SEM mostly shares its concept and analytic procedure with path analysis. Path analysis, developed by Sewall Wright, a geneticist, in 1918, has been adopted in a variety of academic fields (e.g., physical sciences, social sciences). It is a form of multiple regression statistical analysis used to evaluate causal models by examining the relationships between a dependent variable and other independent variables (Crossman, 2019). Employing this method enables researchers to estimate the significance of causal connections between variables by seeing unidirectional influence of factors on others (Crossman, 2019).

In general, SEM involves the development of a path diagram in which the relationships between all variables and the causal direction between them are specifically output (Crossman, 2019). In other words, it can be conducted when there is a prior hypothesis regarding causal relations among variables (Kline, 2005). Thus, when conducting SEM, researchers first construct an "input path diagram," which illustrates the hypothesized relationships (Crossman, 2019). In the path diagram, a single path represents a hypothesized direct effect of one variable on another, whereas plural paths represent indirect effects, where one variable affects another variable, which in turn affects the third one (Nishino, 2012). Once the statistical analysis has been completed, researchers would then construct an "output path diagram," which illustrates the actual relationships from the data (Crossman, 2019). If the hypothesis is correct, both input and output path diagrams will show the same relationships between variables. Based on this guidance, the path diagram for the present study was created (Figure 3). I hypothesized, based on the assumption that teacher burnout leads to teacher attrition (Harmsen et al., 2018) as addressed in the Introduction chapter, that (1) the government policy, teacher's intention to leave the profession, and the influence of COVID-19 predict teacher burnout, (2) teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate each other, (3) teachers' perceived language proficiency, school contextual factors, and teachers' biographic information contribute to both teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy.

Figure 3

Path Diagram



As limitations of path analysis, while it is useful for evaluating causal hypotheses, this does not imply that this method can determine the direction of causality (Crossman, 2019). In other words, although it clarifies correlation and indicates the strength of a causal hypothesis, it does not prove direction of causation because path analysis is always theory-driven; rather, the same data can describe many different causal patterns (Columbia Public Health, n.d.). Thus, it is essential, as mentioned above, for researchers to have a prior idea of the causal relationships among the variables under consideration. Therefore, although path analysis may be used to test a causal model using data to refine a causal hypothesis, it should not be used to develop a model from data (Columbia Public Health, n.d.).

Effect Size, Sample Size, and Statistical Power

Prior to delving into the analytical strategy, it is imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of effect sizes in order to determine the optimal sample size for the present study. To confirm the appropriate sample size, several factors must be taken into account, including the desired level of statistical power and the number of observed variables (Westland, 2010). The subsequent sections explore the following topics by drawing upon relevant scholarly works: (1) distinguishing between effect size and *p*-value from a statistical standpoint, (2) the significance of sample size in research, (3) comprehending the concept of statistical power, and (4) the calculation of sample size.

Effect Size vs. P-value. According to Plonsky (2015), in analyzing statistical data, routine and narrow adherence to *p*-values and null hypothesis significance testing (NHST) remains orthodox in research in spite of compelling conceptual and statistical arguments to break this stream. Plonsky (2015) argues against the application of *p*-value for the following three reasons. First, the major flaw of NHST is that any size mean difference or correlation will reach statistical significance given a large-enough sample. Second, *p*-values tell researchers nothing about the extent of the relationship in question (e.g., Cohen, 1994). Third, most obvious flaw of NHST is the arbitrary nature of the .05 cutoff. More precisely, *p*-values are uninformative in that they encourage dichotomous thinking by classifying results as either significant or not significant (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). Plonsky and Oswald (2014) noted that this concept is acceptable if the research question itself is dichotomous, meaning whether or not to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, researchers should supplement such dichotomous questions with more nuanced judgments about practical significance. A heavy focus on solely *p*-values will be at the expense of overlooking other more useful research results that contribute to a more substantive understanding of data (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

On the contrary to *p*-values, a standardized effect size gives an estimate of the extent to which two variables are actually related (i.e., the magnitude of an effect), which is far more informative when based on reasonably large samples (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). Effect sizes are a crucial factor for quantifying differences and a key concept behind Type I errors (rejecting the null hypothesis that is actually true) (Gomer et al., 2019). First, effect sizes provide an estimate of the actual strength of the relationship or of the magnitude of the effect in question (Plonsky, 2015). Second, effect sizes are not significantly affected by sample size (Plonsky, 2015). Third, they are continuous, standardized (e.g., *z*-scores), and scale-free (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). For example, the Cohen's *d* value reflects the mean difference between two groups in standard deviation units. Effect sizes such as Cohen's *d*, Pearson's *r* (a measure for correlation) and Eta squared *η2* (a measure for variance commonly used in ANOVA models) are standardized metrics and these features of effect sizes enable researchers to make cross-study comparisons and to combine them via meta-analysis (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

The adoption of effect sizes holds significant advantages for researchers for several reasons. With regard to effect size measures, scholars such as Gomer et al. (2019) contend that they serve as valuable complements to the information obtained from NHST. As previously mentioned, Gomer et al. (2019) assert that the level of significance obtained from a test statistic fails to indicate the magnitude of deviation of the model from the population.

Recognizing this limitation, certain researchers have ceased relying solely on significance tests, instead favoring point estimates and confidence intervals (Schmidt & Hunter, 1997; Steiger & Fouladi, 1997). Additionally, within the SEM framework, relying on hypothesis tests can result in the rejection of well-fitting models due to large sample sizes or non-normally distributed data (Savalei, 2008). In essence, regarding NHST as the main authority on a model's benefit is alarming. Conversely, effect size measures remain relatively unaffected by these factors, thereby reducing such dependence and providing a more comprehensive understanding (Gomer et al., 2019). Unlike *p*-values, which are typically interpreted in a straightforward yet uninformative manner (i.e., significant or nonsignificant), effect sizes require a nuanced interpretation (Plonsky, 2015). "Taking advantage of the rich information provided by effect sizes enables researchers to comprehend a difference between a *d* value of .4 and .65 for theory and practice, and to understand a correlation of, for example, .25, etc." (Plonsky, 2015, p.37).

Sample Sizes in Research. The significance of sample size cannot be overstated in the realm of research; however, it is worth noting that numerous studies have reached robust conclusions without attaining adequate sample sizes. In a comprehensive meta-study conducted by Westland (2010), the sample sizes of 74 research articles from five esteemed Management Information Systems (MIS) journals were examined. The findings revealed that the actual sample sizes, on average, were met only 50% of the minimum requirement necessary to draw the conclusions posited by each study. Consequently, 80% of the research articles reached conclusions from insufficient samples. This outcome, as highlighted by Westland (2010), indicates the lack of appropriate guidance provided to MIS researchers and had not been well served by existing sample-size examining approaches. Without the appropriate information of sample size, researchers may be inclined to select smaller sample sizes in order to economize on data collection efforts. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that excessively small samples weaken the credibility of the conclusions, while excessively large samples require more costs (Westland, 2010). Hence, "the calculation of sample size for each study is highly important as it serves to enhance the credibility and applicability of research" (Westland, 2010, p. 478).

Sample size can be calculated with the use of effect size indices such as Cohen's *d* for mean differences, Pearson's *r* for correlations, or eta-squared *η2* for variance, and several methods exist to compute correlation; (1) the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (Fisher, 1990), (2) Spearman's *rho* and (3) Kendall's *tau* (Kendall and Gibbons, 1990) are widely used (Mari & Kotz, 2001). In the context of the present study which

employs SEM, “effect” represents correlation between latent variables (Westland, 2010), and “correlation” is interpreted as the strength of the statistical relationship between two random variables obeying a joint probability distribution (Kendall and Gibbons, 1990). For correlation coefficients (*r*), Plonsky and Oswald (2014) suggest that *r* close to .25 be considered small, .40 medium, and .60 large. These values correspond roughly to the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles based on correlations from their 175 primary studies and 20 meta-analyzed sets of correlations. The present study adopted these values, especially .40 for a medium effect, for justification of the effect size.

Statistical Power. “Statistical power is the probability of observing a statistically significant relationship given that the null hypothesis is false (e.g., $d \neq 0$; $r \neq 0$)” (Plonsky, 2015, p. 29). Adequate statistical power contributes to observing true relationships in a dataset (Kyriazos, 2018). “The more powerful the study is, the less the likelihood of false negatives” (Plonsky, 2015, p. 29). In other words, statistical power is the estimation of the sample size appropriate for an analysis.

Understanding power can lead researchers to find the number of participants to detect statistical significance in their study (Plonsky, 2015); that is, the researchers can calculate the sample size needed for a given level of statistical power. The conventionally accepted level of statistical power in the social sciences, according to Cohen (1992), is .80 which provides the researchers with an 80% chance of detecting a statistical relationship. Concurrently, there is a 20% chance of committing a Type II error (failing to reject a null hypothesis that is actually false) occurs. It is also noted, concerning statistical significance, power varies as a function of the effect size and sample size (Plonsky, 2015). With a larger anticipated effect size (e.g., $d = 1$), the researchers can detect a statistical relationship 80% of the time ($N = 35$), whereas a small effect size (e.g., $d = .2$) requires a larger sample ($N = 400$) to have an 80% chance of finding the effect at the .05 level (Plonsky, 2015).

Sample Size Calculation in SEM. There are several methods to calculate the recommended sample size in SEM. First, some researchers (Schumacker & Lomax, 2015) recommend, based on simulation studies, that a rule of thumb in SEM should be the ratio of cases (*N*) to the number of estimated parameters(*q*), with minimum recommendations from 10:1 to 20:1. Parameters are the unknown quantities such as coefficients, error variances, or covariances, that researchers estimate in their analysis (Alam, 2022). For example, if researchers set up 10 estimated parameters in their study, they need 100 to 200 samples. However, according to this rule of thumb, the range of the ratio (i.e., samples) extends as much as double, implicating that even suggestions based on the simulation studies are only

rough approximations. Moreover, as "a variety of unknown quantities could be included as parameters, it would be extremely laborious to calculate them" (Kyriazos, 2018, p. 2217).

Second, certain researchers postulate that the SEM approach needs $N = 100–150$ as a minimum sample size (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Ding et. al., 1995), while others set this minimum to $N = 200$ (Loehlin, 2004). Similarly, Kelloway (2015) noted that when sample sizes are small (e.g., less than 100), it can result in problems with convergence and inaccurate solutions when modeling with two or fewer indicators per latent variable. On the other hand, using three indicators per latent variable and having a sample size larger than 200 greatly reduces convergence issues and avoids improper solutions. However, it is important to acknowledge that the appropriate sample size in SEM depends on various factors, such as the study design (Brown, 2015), the number of relationships among indicators (Brown, 2015), the suitability of the data sets used (Westland, 2010), and so forth. Hence, even these numbers (i.e., $N = 100, 150, 200$) do not guarantee the adequate sample size, but rather a rough approximation of sample size (Brown, 2015).

Third, other researchers rely on Monte Carlo simulations, mathematical methods using random sampling and computer simulation, to solve problems under different SEM conditions (Brown, 2015). With these methods, Westland (2010) determined the sample size needed to compensate for the ratio of number of parameters (indicator variables) to latent variables. They then developed an algorithm for computing the lower bound on sample size required to assure the existence or non-existence of a minimum effect (i.e., correlation) on each possible pair of latent variables in SEM at given significance and power levels. "Where SEM studies are directed towards hypothesis testing for complex models, with some level of significance α and power 1- β, calculating the power requires first specifying the effect size the researchers wish to detect" (Westland, 2010, p. 478).

Based on Westland's concept of sample size and Cohen's Statistical Power Analysis for the behavioral sciences (1988), Soper (2022) created a sample-size calculating software: an A-priori Sample Size Calculator for SEM, which is, as of September 2022, available from https://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc. By entering (1) an ideal anticipated effect size (i.e., .40 for SEM), (2) a desired statistical power level (i.e., 0.8), (3) the maximum number of latent variables in one model (i.e., five for the present study), (4) the maximum number of observed variables in one model (i.e., 33 for the present study), and (5) an ideal probability level (i.e., .05), researchers can reach a minimum sample size for their study. This calculation led the present study to set a minimum sample size as $N = 72$ to detect effects. Thus, the present study intended to recruit at least 72 participants.

Goodness of Fit in SEM

To analyze the data, SEM was conducted using the statistical software RStudio. In applications of SEM, it is important to evaluate the compatibility between each model and the observed data, a process referred to as assessing the goodness of fit (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015). In the present study, to assess the adequacy of the proposed model in representing the observed data, three primary indices, along with a supplementary index, were employed: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Confidence Interval (CI). The subsequent sections provide an introduction to each of these indices.

The Comparative Fit Index. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI), introduced by Bentler (1990), is a fit index widely used in SEM. The CFI demonstrates robust performance even with relatively small sample sizes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Hooper et al. (2008, p. 55) explain that this statistics assumes that all latent variables are uncorrelated (null/independence model) and compares the sample covariance matrix with this null model. This model serves as the worst-case scenario, as it specifies no correlation among measured variables. Its values range between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating a better fit (Shi et al., 2019). While an initial criterion suggested a cutoff of $CFI \geq .90$, certain studies have indicated that a higher threshold is necessary to avoid accepting misspecified models (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Consequently, a value of $CFI \geq .95$ is currently recognized as indicative of good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFI has become a widely reported fit index in SEM due to its inclusion in all SEM programs and its relative insensitivity to sample size (Hooper et al., 2008, p. 55).

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), as proposed by Steiger and Lind (1980, as cited in Steiger, 1990), provides researchers with information regarding the goodness of fit of a model by evaluating how well the model, with optimally selected parameter estimates, would fit the covariance matrix of the population (Byrne, 1998). The RMSEA is considered to be one of the most informative fit indices due to its sensitivity to the number of estimated parameters in the model, selecting models with fewer parameters (Hooper et al., 2008). The RMSEA ranges from 0 to 1, with smaller values indicating better model fit. Recommendations for its cut-off points have been reduced considerably in recent years. Up until the early 1990s, an RMSEA in the range of .05 to .10 was considered an indication of fair fit and values above .10 indicated poor fit (MacCallum et al., 1996). It was then thought that an RMSEA value

between .08 to .10 provides a mediocre fit and below .08 shows a good fit (MacCallum et al, 1996). More recently, a cut-off value close to .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) or a stringent upper limit of .07 (Steiger, 2007) seems to be the general consensus among scholars (Hooper et al., 2008).

Exploring the Effect of Sample Size and Model Size. Shi et al. (2019) explored the effect of the sample size and model size on the behaviors of the sample fit indices under realistic settings involving model misspecifications, to better understand whether selected fit indices tend to increase or decrease as the sample size and model size increase for the appropriate application of practical fit indices. They performed a simulation study, with a Monte Carlo Simulation Method, to investigate the effect of the model size on CFI and RMSEA in both correctly specified and misspecified models. For model identification, they first set the variances of the factors to 1.0, and created five model sizes(p): 10, 30, 60, 90, and 120. Next, the sample sizes(N) were established to include 200, 500, and 1,000. Lastly, they fixed factor loadings(Λ)[6]: low (.40) or high (.80), which represent either weak or strong factor.

The results revealed a different view from previous research. First, with regard to CFI, the larger model size (e.g., $p \geq 90$) did not necessarily indicate well-fitting CFI values. For example, under correctly specified models, when the factor loadings(Λ) were .40 and the sample size(N) = 200, as p increased from 10 to 120, the average estimates of CFI changed from .972 (closely fitting model) to .611 (poorly fitting model). A similar pattern was observed when collapsing two factors with .90 correlation(r); when p increased from 10 to 120, the average CFI dropped from .965 to .588. When the misspecification was caused by omitting residual correlations, the average CFI initially increased as more observed variables were added to the fitted model; but as p continued increasing, the average CFI would eventually decrease. Taking $N = 200$ and $\Lambda = .80$ as an example, when p increased from 10 to 30, the mean CFI increased from .936 to .975; the average CFI then dropped to .948 ($p = 90$) and finally reached the bottom value at .908 ($p = 120$). Hence, the CFI values fluctuate depending on the number of the model sizes and sample sizes. Moreover, when fitting large SEM models (e.g., $p \geq 30$) with small samples (e.g., $N \leq 200$), the sample CFI could be largely downwardly biased, even when the models were correctly specified. Shi et al. (2019)

[6] Factor loadings(Λ) are correlation coefficients between observed variables and latent common factors. In the SEM approach, as a rule of thumb, 0.7 or higher factor loading represents that the factor extracts sufficient variance from that variable (Complete Dissertation, 2022).

suggested that a sample of size $N \geq 500$ may be required to gain relatively accurate estimates for the CFI values in large models.

Second, as for RMSEA, Shi et al. (2019) found its population value tends to decrease (i.e., indicating an improved fit) as *p* increases, regardless of the types of model misspecifications. Particularly, in small samples (e.g., $N \leq 200$), the average sample RMSEA tends to be upwardly biased, and the bias increases as *p* increases (indicating a larger difference between the population RMSEA and the average sample estimates). In particular, when the number of observed variables is large ($p > 30$), the sample RMSEA could be noticeably overestimated, even when the sample size is 1,000. Thus, it turned out, as with the sample CFI, that the sample RMSEA was sensitive to model size.

Shi et al. (2019) gained a better understanding of the behaviors of CFI and RMSEA in samples. In small samples, compared with their population values, the sample CFI was downwardly biased and the sample RMSEA tended to be upwardly biased. Therefore, when the sample size was relatively small (e.g., $N \leq 200$), the sample estimates for both indices tended to suggest a worse fit (than their population values), despite the types of model (mis)specification. Given the sensitiveness of these fit indices, some researchers (e.g., Bong et al., 2013) admit that a CFI above .87 and RMSEA values below .10 indicate marginal fit. Thus, in the present study, moderately flexible values (i.e., above .87 for CFI; below .10. for RMSEA, Bong et al., 2013) were adopted in the process of analysis.

Confident Interval. To supplement the above two main indices, it is worth mentioning the possibility of using the third index: a confident interval[7] (CI). The CI is the mean of researchers' estimate plus and minus the variation in that estimate (Bevans, 2022). This is the range of values researchers expect their estimate to fall between if they redo the test in the exact same way, within a certain level of confidence. In other words, confidence, in statistics, is another way to describe probability. For instance, if researchers construct a confidence interval with a 90% confidence level, they are confident that 90 out of 100 times the estimate will fall between the upper and lower values specified by the confidence interval. According to Higgins (2011), if the confidence interval is relatively narrow (e.g., .70 to .80), the effect size can be known more precisely, meaning that the model has a strong fit. On the other hand, if the interval is wider (e.g., .60 to .93), the uncertainty of the model is greater, although there may still be enough precision to make decisions about the utility of the

[7] A confidence interval is the mean of researchers' estimate plus and minus the variation in that estimate. Bevans, R. (2022).

intervention. Intervals that are significantly wide (e.g., .50 to 1.10) indicate that researchers have little knowledge about the effect, and that further information is needed.

Data Collection for Qualitative Interview

Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews are a research technique commonly used in qualitative research. Wyatt (2018) posits that the features of semi-structured interviews enable researchers to delve more into regarding the quantitative data. For instance, if participating teachers indicate they are inefficacious in relation to particular tasks on quantitative scales, there is clearly the potential to follow this up in semi-structured interviews, which allow deep investigation into areas of particular interest (Wyatt, 2018).

Further, semi-structured interviews offer several advantages over other interview formats. First, semi-structured interviews allow for a flexible conversation that can adapt to the interviewee's responses (Kallio et al., 2016). The interviewer can even improvise follow-up questions based on the responses (Polit & Beck 2010). This format enables the exploration of unexpected topics or avenues of inquiry that may arise during the interview, which can lead to rich and in-depth data collection (Kallio et al., 2016).

Second, the semi-structured interview format allows for open-ended questions, enabling interviewees to provide detailed and comprehensive responses, which enables researchers to gain in-depth insights into participants' thoughts, experiences, and perspectives, providing a rich understanding of the research topic (Adams, 2015). For instance, the present study asked the participating teachers regarding the impact of COVID-19 in the follow-up interview in Phase 2. As each teacher has a different attitude towards COVID-19, encompassing both the positive and negative impacts, the use of open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview format allowed me to delve into the research topic in greater detail.

Third, compared to structured interviews with fixed questions, semi-structured interviews create a more comfortable and conversational atmosphere (Adams, 2015). Interviewees feel less constrained by a relatively rigid interview structure, leading to more open and candid responses (Adams, 2015). Thus, interviewers should take a casual, conversational approach that is pleasant, neutral, and professional, neither overly cold nor overly familiar (Adams, 2015). The more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere fosters rapport and trust between the interviewer and interviewee, enhancing the quality of data collected (Galletta, 2012).

The prompts for the qualitative interview in the present study were developed based on findings and insights from the quantitative survey in Phase 1. For instance, the quantitative survey in the present study revealed that teachers with strong instructional strategies have a higher sense of personal accomplishment (See the discussion of RQ2 (i.e., How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?)). Based on this result, I asked teachers, in the follow-up interview, when, or after how many years of their teaching, they became confident in their teaching. All the interview questions can be found in Appendix E.

In the present study, the follow-up interview was conducted in the teachers' first language (i.e., Japanese), via an online platform, Zoom. Each interview took between 36 and 95 minutes, totaling 940 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the interviewees' permission. Detailed information about the participants can be found in the above Research Context.

Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis (or more recently it is called "reflexive thematic analysis") was employed for the interview analysis phase. Reflexive thematic analysis is tied to a qualitative paradigm, indicating that thematic analysis can be used to analyze most types of qualitative data- from individual and focus groups interviews to more innovative methods such as qualitative surveys, diaries, story completion, media data, online forum comments, and so on (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The present study selected thematic analysis over other methods as this form of analysis is well suited for analyzing findings from interviews, and it also differs from most other approaches in terms of both underlying philosophy and procedures for theme development. Additionally, one of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it is viewed as flexible when it comes to theory and conceptualization of the research process (Clarke, 2021a). This means that it can be used within a range of theoretical frameworks, to address quite different types of research questions related to, for instance, people's experiences, or people's views and perceptions (Braun et al., n.d.). Because of the thematic analysis' theoretical flexibility, it fits comfortably in a wide variety of approaches including mixed method designs which the present study applied.

Taking a simple example of thematic analysis, Zonoubi et al. (2017) investigated the outcomes of participating in Professional Learning Community (PLC) interventions for 10 EFL teachers' self-efficacy, and the data were collected through pre and post interviews with the participating teachers. In the pre-PLC interview, a participant said, "I do not know how to

teach main ideas in reading comprehension." In a PLC meeting during the intervention, however, this participant expressed the positive feeling by saying "I was happy with having employed the skimming strategy in my class because most of my students could answer main idea questions." The strong negative phrase "do not know" in the first excerpt was coded as low self-efficacy and positive wordings "happy with" and "could answer" in the second excerpt as indicating higher self-efficacy. Hence, comparison of the excerpts suggested a growth in this participant's self-efficacy. In the following sections, thematic analysis' further features, researchers' roles in thematic analysis, and analytic strategies I employed for the present study are presented.

Thematic Analysis' Flexibility and Variability

One of the notable characteristics of reflexive thematic analysis is its provision of substantial flexibility to researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 10). Clarke (2021a) elaborates that reflexive thematic analysis can be approached through various methods, such as inductive approaches grounded in the data or more deductive approaches driven by theory. Moreover, researchers can adopt an experiential or critical orientation when applying thematic analysis to qualitative data, and the theoretical perspective guiding thematic analysis can range from critical realism, contextualism, to constructionism. However, it is crucial for researchers to actively make a series of deliberate choices regarding their use of thematic analysis and to comprehend and explain the rationale behind their chosen approach (Clarke, 2021b). Hence, researchers using thematic analysis must actively engage in processes of conceptualization and design thinking in order to employ thematic analysis effectively.

Aligned with the key advantages of thematic analysis in providing researchers with flexibility and variability, there exist various approaches or variations through which thematic analysis can be undertaken, namely inductive, deductive, semantic, latent, experiential, critical, realist, and relativist orientations (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As explained in the rationale of the study within the Introduction chapter, the primary objective of the present study is to explore the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of participating teachers within the complex educational environment of the Japanese context. Specifically, the study delves into aspects such as teachers' perceptions of their heavy workload and their experiences in relation to their coworkers, their students, and students' parents. To achieve this objective, the process of coding and theme development was undertaken employing both semantic and latent approaches.

In the semantic approach, “coding and theme reflect the explicit content/meaning of the data, close to participant language” (Braun et al., 2019, p. 853). Its analysis explores meaning at the more surface, explicit, or manifest level (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In other words, semantic codes are brief summaries or descriptions of the surface or the overt content of the data which stay close to participants meanings (Clarke, 2021c). On the other hand, in the latent approach, codes go beyond the surface of the data and participants meaning, and its analysis reflects on the underlying meanings within the data. Given this, researchers create latent codes to capture the assumptions underpinning the surface meaning or use pre-existing theories and concepts to interpret the data (Clarke, 2021c). This is also where a deductive lens might come into reflexive thematic analysis where researchers use concepts/ideas from existing theory as an interpretive lens to make sense of the data (Clarke, 2021c). To achieve a descriptive understanding of how participants make sense of their experiences and to explore deeper meanings, I employed these two approaches.

Researchers' Roles in Thematic Analysis

Several important considerations are involved in the design of thematic analysis. First, it is essential to recognize that there are various approaches to designing thematic analysis, including theoretical and pragmatic routes, and no single approach is inherently superior to others (Braun et al., n.d.). However, the selection of a specific approach should align with the research questions and objectives, ensuring that the design is capable of addressing what researchers aim to understand.

Second, data quality matters. Not all textual or visual information can be regarded high-quality data, which is characterized by its ability to provide a comprehensive range of meanings, perspectives, and experiences relevant to the research topic, enabling researchers to explore, develop, and interpret meaningful patterns (Braun et al., n.d.). Thus, it is recommended that researchers evaluate the dataset early in the data collection/generation process, as emphasized by Braun et al. (n.d.).

Third, the subjectivity of the researcher should be acknowledged, particularly in thematic analysis. Within a variety of frameworks in thematic analysis, researcher subjectivity is viewed as an integral aspect of the analytical process, recognizing that knowledge generation is inherently subjective and situated (Clarke, 2021c). Gough and Madill (2012s) suggest that researcher subjectivity should not be perceived as a problem to be controlled or eliminated, but rather as a valuable resource for conducting the analysis.

Analytic Strategy for Qualitative data

Thematic analysis involves a reflexive, recursive engagement with the dataset, to produce a robust analysis (Braun et al., n.d.). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022) have outlined a six-phase process to facilitate the learning of, and doing of reflexive thematic analysis: (1) familiarizing yourself with the dataset; (2) coding; (3) generating initial codes themes; (4) developing and reviewing themes; (5) refining, defining and naming themes; and (6) Writing up. In the step of familiarizing oneself with the dataset, as explained above, the interview is transcribed, corrected, read, and re-read. Braun et al. (n.d.) explain the process of each phase as below:

Phase 1. Familiarizing yourself with the dataset

This phase involves reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content, and making notes on your initial analytic observations and insights, both in relation to each individual data item (e.g., an interview transcript) and in relation to the entire dataset. Clarke (2021c) suggests researchers make a note of things of potential interest, ideas to explore further in coding, and their own response to the data.

Phase 2. Coding

This phase involves generating succinct labels, called codes, that capture and evoke important features of the data that might be relevant to addressing the research question(s). It involves coding the entire dataset, with two or more rounds of coding, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis.

Phase 3. Generating initial themes

This phase involves examining the codes and collated data to begin to develop significant broader patterns of meaning (i.e., potential themes). Subsequently, it involves collating data relevant to each theme that tells a more convincing story of the data, so that you can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.

Phase 4. Reviewing and developing themes

This phase involves checking the candidate themes against the coded data and the entire dataset, to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that addresses the research question(s). In this phase, themes are further developed, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded. In the thematic analysis approach, themes are defined as pattern of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea.

Phase 5. Refining, defining and naming themes

This phase involves developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the "story" of each. Thus, researchers need to reflect on how all the themes work together to tell an overall story about their data in relation to their research question(s) (Clarke, 2021c). This phase also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme.

Phase 6. Writing up

This final phase involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualizing the analysis in relation to existing literature.

In coding process, researchers can develop patterns of meaning and identify key themes across a dataset that address a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These patterns are generated by finding repeated patterns of meaning from the transcribed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, researchers need to take a rigorous process of data familiarization (Braun et al., n.d). This step involves reading the transcribed data, looking for words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs that provide an understanding of the participants' beliefs (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process leads to data coding, which eventually provides researchers with ideas to generate key themes. Thus, coding is a process of organizing the data into themes, and it is worthwhile to mention the flexibility of thematic analysis, which allows for the refinement of themes during or after the coding process (Clarke, 2021a).

In the present study, the NVivo software program was utilized for transcribing, coding, and analyzing data. NVivo enables researchers to analyze and organize unstructured text, audio, video, or image data. Researchers can use its playback ability for audio and video files, so that interviews can be transcribed in NVivo (Lumivero, 2023). The most innovative feature of NVivo is to label related material into a container called a code, which eventually becomes a themes or subthemes of the whole dataset. Researchers also create a concept map or show a hierarchy chart in order to illustrate their results visually. The subsequent sections address the above six-phase procedure I undertook in the qualitative interview of the present study to explore patterns across the dataset. The detailed procedure I followed in each phase is explained below.

Phase 1. Familiarizing with the Dataset. As the researcher's subjectivity and skill are at the center of good reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), I made the most

of my notes, audio-recordings, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel in this phase. First, to get myself familiarized with the dataset, during the interview, I took notes on issues relevant to my knowledge regarding teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy beliefs, as well as my 12-year teaching experience in Japan. Following the suggestions of Clarke (2021c), I read notes actively, analytically, and critically, asking myself what the data mean to the interview questions as well as the objectives of the present study.

Moreover, immediately after each interview, I contextualized my notes with each teacher's quantitative data (e.g., age, teaching experience, burnout scores, self-efficacy scores) and made voice memos with a smartphone recorder, summarizing each question in the interview. Extra notes were added on the original notes as I was aware of something new which I was not able to notice during the interview. In total, the note counted 100 pages with Microsoft Word with over 80,000 Japanese letters. Concurrently, I roughly took notes for potential codes and themes as Clarke (2021a) suggested some or all themes can be determined in advance or in the early stages of analysis.

Next, all the interview data were transcribed (in Japanese) with the help of "Notta," an AI-based voice-to-text transcription tool. Transcription is considered an essential process for researchers to perform themselves as transcribing discourse itself is an interpretive practice (Riessman, 1993), indicating that analysis begins during transcription. Given this concept, during the transcription, new ideas relevant to the original research questions arose, which were jotted down in the notes. Further, it is worth mentioning that the transcription included "small talk" that took place with each participant in the first several minutes of the interview. This small talk, reflecting on the interview, was of particular value in that I, as an interviewer, was able to establish a connection with the participating teachers and expand the interview questions smoothly, as supported in Adam's (2015) guide in conducting semi-structured interviews.

Phase 2. Coding with NVivo. A code captures what is analytically interesting about the data- it consists of a coding label that evokes what is analytically relevant and the underlying idea/concept (Clarke, 2021c). After transcripts were complete, I imported all of them into an aforementioned coding software program NVivo. I read each interview line by line, and inclusively, comprehensively, and systematically coded them, searching for highlights of talk relevant to each interview question with comprehensive standpoints based on my literature knowledge and teaching experience. Additionally, my experience as a teacher in Japan greatly helped me engage with participating teachers, build rapport, explore

their stories with them. Ultimately, the initial codes were written in a column alongside the transcripts in NVivo.

It is noteworthy that I had a slight anxiety that my subjectivity as a researcher would vary during the 14 days of the coding process, although I hold in mind that the concept of thematic analysis values "researcher subjectivity" as not just valid but a resource (Braun et al., n.d.). My specific concern lay in my unconsciously changing subjectivity that might possibly impact my coding process and end up producing weaker reliability[8]. Thus, following Braun's suggestion (Clarke, 2021c), I revisited the interviews several times, re-read my interview notes, and re-listened to my voice memos. I also cross-referenced my new perspective to notice the differences of my previous perspective. Clarke (2021c) also pointed out that there might be concerns with quality in the coding process. However, they insisted that quality is conceptualized more in terms of depth of engagement and processes such in reviewing themes against the coded data and the entire dataset which encourage researchers to reflect on their process and assumptions and to take a rigorous and systematic approach. This suggestion helped me to focus on not coding accuracy but acknowledging the coding process as subjective.

Further, when I progressed coding, I noticed that Japanese language speakers' mindset might be embedded culturally; to suppress their emotions/feeling, especially in front of a stranger whom they have just met. For example, Teacher 4, in response to the second interview question regarding their intention to leave the profession, replied "I have never thought of leaving the profession." However, after the interview proceeded for approximately 30 minutes, Teacher 4 gradually revealed their unspoken feelings, and ended up answering "I would have quit if I had continued teaching" in the ninth interview question regarding teachers' heavy workload. Thus, I applied latent coding for their statements.

Another Japanese cultural aspect that I noticed includes expressing their thoughts indirectly, occasionally avoiding a direct manner of speech. For instance, Teacher 17 mentioned "I" frequently, which is rare in the Japanese language where people usually omit the subject "I." To the best of my knowledge and my experience as an interviewer, Teacher 17's frequent use of "I" would probably imply "I am different from my coworkers (…) who do not brush up their teaching skills." Thus, these kinds of statements were coded as latent

[8] Reliability refers to consistency of results and whether the same results would be received if a particular measurement technique were administered several times to the same research subject (Bryman et al., 2009, p. 22)

codes too.

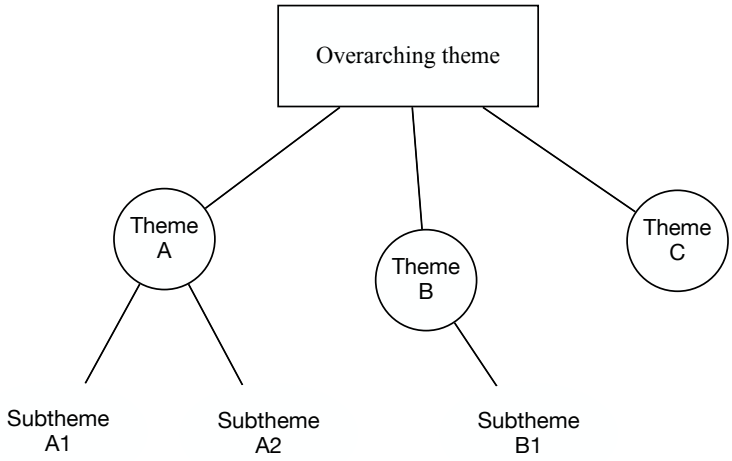
When all interviews were thoroughly coded, I realized things that had not been apparent when conducting the interviews. Hence, the coding process led me to notice new perspectives regarding the dataset. There were approximately 700 codes in the column, and these codes were further refined and added as interviews were revisited several times in the next phases of analysis.

Phase 3. Generating Initial Themes. Once initial coding was complete in phase 2, the codes were further developed on the basis of familiarization with all of the data. By utilizing the approach described by Braun and Clarke (2006), I looked for larger patterns across the dataset and grouped the codes into initial themes. In thematic analysis, generating themes is an interpretive and a subjective process, and they are actively created by researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 55). Clarke (2021a) added that theme generation occurs at the intersection of the data and the researchers' interactive frameworks, prior training, skills, assumptions, etc. Thus, researchers build or create through their interpretive engagement with data (Clarke, 2021a). Taking this into consideration, I began to further develop ideas about the patterns that I had developed from the data.

Although themes are the core analytic concept and focus in reflective thematic analysis, researchers can create some additional structuring into them in order to add interpretative depth or clarity (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 87). Reflexive thematic analysis reports patterned meaning at three different levels; overarching themes, themes, and subthemes (See Figure 4). I followed the concept of this three-level analytic structure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 88). According to them, an overarching theme is like an umbrella idea that embraces a lot of themes. By defining an overarching theme, researchers can demonstrate some broader conceptual idea that they identify as anchoring a number of themes together. The theme, which captures the multi-faceted manifestations of a single, central concept from the dataset, is the key analytic unit in reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 87). The central organizing concept of each theme demarcates it from other themes in the analysis. The sub-theme sits under a theme, and it captures and highlights one important facet of the central concept of a theme (Clarke, 2021c). Sub-themes generally should be used sparingly, only when there is one particular element of a theme that has a particular focus, is notable, and/or is particularly important for the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 88). Through naming and analyzing a specific sub-theme, that aspect of the theme becomes particularly salient (Braun et al., n.d.).

Figure 4

Analytic Structure with Three Levels of Theme (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 88)

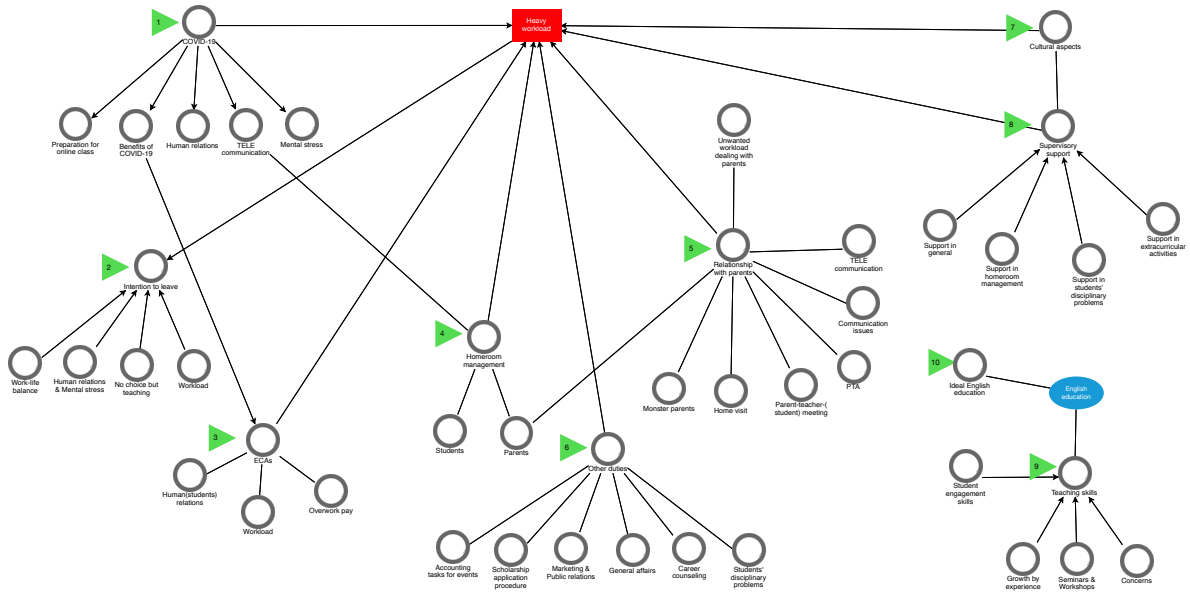


In order to better organize and develop the codes into initial themes/sub-themes, I clustered together similar codes and reviewed the coded data to help me identify potential themes. In particular, I made the most of "concept maps" in NVivo to cluster and re-cluster the codes repeatedly. I changed these as my understanding of the data developed and organized all the coded data relevant to each theme/sub-theme.

As seen in Figure 5 (See Appendix F for a larger map), the overarching theme, teachers' heavy workload, encompasses eight themes (See the right triangle number 1 to 8): (1) COVID-19, (2) Teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession, (3) Extracurricular activities (ECAs), (4) Homeroom management, (5) Relationship with students' parents, (6) Other duties (7) Cultural aspects, and (8) Supervisory support. Each theme consists of several sub-themes. I also developed the second overarching theme "English education" which encompasses two themes: (9) Teaching skills and (10) Ideal English education. Overall, thematic analysis at this stage included 10 themes and 35 sub-themes.

Figure 5

Concept Map of Initial Themes



Phases 4 and 5. Reviewing, Developing, and Defining Themes. These two phases provide researchers with an opportunity to check if the themes work in relation to (1) the coded extracts and (2) the entire dataset (Clarke, 2021c). These are also phases where researchers can take cursive process where they can move backwards and forwards to code some more again, developing their understanding about the data (Clarke, 2021c). The ultimate goal of these phases is to finalize a thematic map, reaching the end stage of the review process where researchers are reasonably confident of what their themes are and how they relate together (Clarke, 2021c).

My process of reviewing, developing, and defining themes was conducted based on both semantic (participant-driven, descriptive) and latent (researcher-driven, conceptual) elements, using Braun and Clarke's definitions (2022, p. 10, p. 57). It started re-reading every code, referring to candidate themes and sub-themes in the left column shown in NVivo. This was of great help in that I was able to check that themes/sub-themes were faithful to the data at a glance.

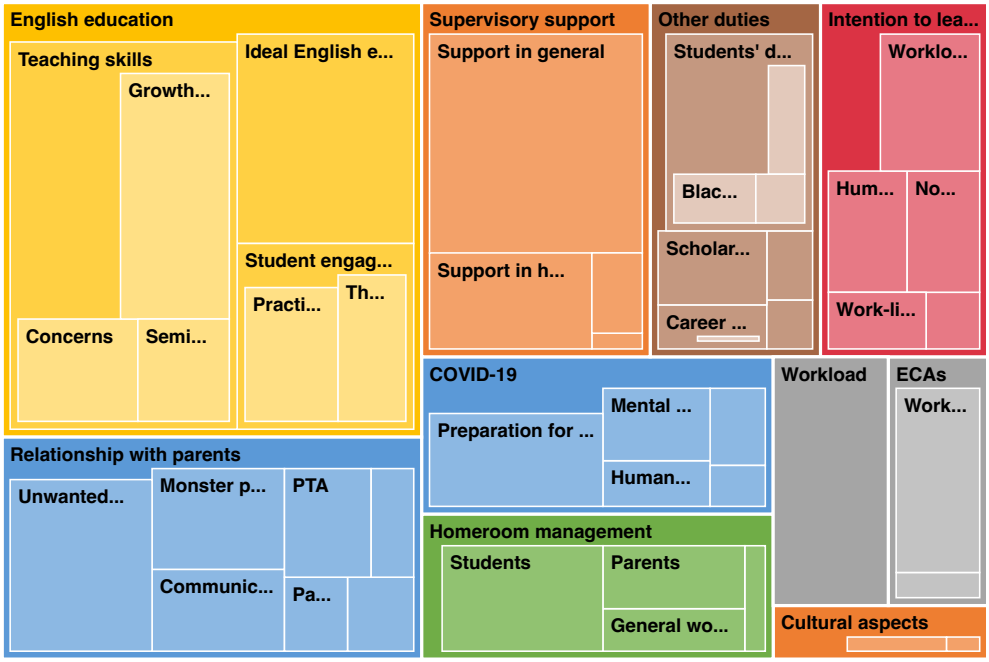
I also used one of NVivo's functions called "Hierarchy chart" that allows researchers to visually find which themes/sub-themes are more or less quoted by the interviewees (Figure 6). For instance, the chart indicates that some sub-themes were prominent enough to be promoted to themes. Given this, the sub-theme "Students" and "Parents" became a theme as they appeared across a wide range of topics (e.g., COVID-19, ECAs, Supervisory support,

etc.). Moreover, because "Students' disciplinary problems" was prominent among the other sub-themes under "Other duties," it became independent and was moved under the theme "Students." The same applied to "Black school rules" which used to be in the sub-theme (i.e., Students' disciplinary problems), but it became an independent sub-theme.

Further, I merged several themes/sub-themes, which led to creating a new theme. For instance, the theme "Parents" was integrated into "Relationship with parents," which ended up creating a new theme "Parents." Additionally, "Parent-teacher meeting" and "Home visit" were merged as they had much in common in terms of context (i.e., teachers' roles and workload). Similarly, I moved "Cultural aspects" as a sub-theme under "Supervisory support" as I recognized, by re-visiting the interview extracts, that supervisory support is dependent on aspects in the Japanese culture. On the other hand, I was aware that some themes/sub-themes were "light," and either removed them or integrated them into other parts of the analysis. For example, "Ideal English education" was moved under the theme "Teaching skills" as I found a close connection between them. Further, "General affairs" and "Scholarship application procedure" under "Other duties" were deleted.

Figure 6

Hierarchy Chart in NVivo

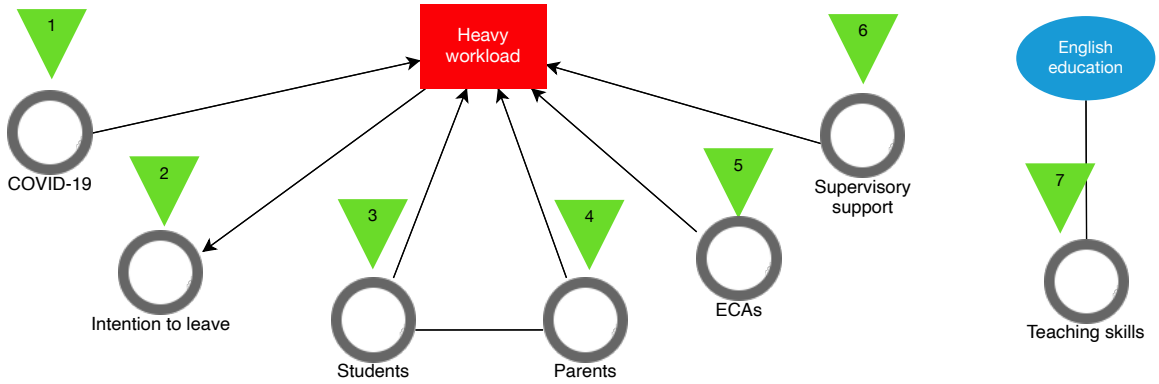


Several thematic maps were created that aimed to illustrate the way in which participating teachers made sense of their experiences across the dataset. Repeating these

processes ultimately led me to establish seven big themes: (1) COVID-19, (2) Teachers' intention to leave, (3) Students (4) Parents, (5) ECAs, (6) Supervisory support, and (7) Teaching skills (See the down triangle number 1 to 7 in Figure 7).

Figure 7

Concept Map: Seven Themes



Phase 6. Writing up. As Braun et al. (n.d.) mention, the route researchers take in thematic analysis should be guided by their research questions and purposes; the design should be considered and coherent and able to address what researchers aim to understand. Based on this concept, before writing my first draft of my analysis, I looked back at the rationale and contributions of the present study. My Introduction chapter presented that the rationale of the present study stems from high teacher attrition rate and teacher shortage in Japan. Considering the notorious working environment where as many as 5,000 teachers take a leave of absence due to mental health concerns every year (MEXT, 2022b), the contribution of the present study is to understand what is necessary to support teachers, and ultimately to prevent the elevating teacher attrition rate. Therefore, the central idea of the present study is to disseminate the importance of teacher support to readers, school administrators, and government officials.

Next, I considered in what order and structure I would present above seven selected themes in my writing as thematic analysis can be used to tell a story regarding the data to locate the data/participants within the wider social, cultural, historical, political, ideological contexts where there's a focus on interpretation (Clarke, 2021b). In particular, themes can be understood more as stories, and thus, the researchers' role is to tell a story by presenting an aspect of their data that are sometimes referred to as fully realized themes or shared meaning

themes (Clarke, 2021a). This is how researchers inform the readers of the significance and implications of the data. With the concept that themes should capture the story in mind (Clarke, 2021c), I carefully decided on the order in which to present the themes, using my subjectivity to be a resource (Gough & Madill, 2012); for example, there might be a theme that needs to go first for the other to make sense.

First, I thought I had to deeply understand the current working environment of teachers, including the impact of COVID-19 (i.e., theme 1). In particular, I needed to delve into teachers' working environment influenced by aspects of Japanese culture, which the quantitative survey did not reveal. Second, as one of the research questions of the present study is "Why do teachers leave or stay in the teaching profession?," I analyzed how and why they decided to leave or stay in their teaching job (i.e., theme 2). Third, when it comes to analyzing the working environment in Japan, teachers' wide range of workload cannot be ignored. Thus, I delved into student-related matters, parent-related matters, and ECAs (i.e., theme 3 to 5) in greater detail. Fourth, as Phase 1 in the present study revealed that supervisory support plays a crucial role in teacher burnout, I investigated what kind of supervisory support teachers need to reduce their workload and to maintain their mental health (i.e., theme 6). As responses from the participating teachers in theme 6 are directly connected to implications, I intend to use their input as implications in the Conclusion chapter. Lastly, based on the finding in Phase 1 that teachers' accumulated teaching experiences could develop their instructional strategies and student engagement skills, I explored how the participating teachers' teaching experience influenced their self-efficacy in teaching (i.e., theme 7).

In writing the Results chapter, a well-balanced analytic structure is of crucial importance for researchers. Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 131) suggest keeping the balance of analytic commentary and data extracts. For instance, more theoretical/deductive versions of thematic analysis might have a higher ratio of analytic narrative to data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 131). In my writing, as Clarke (2021c) recommends as a rule of thumb, I aimed for an equal-balanced (i.e., 50-50) analytic structure between the two elements: not too much data to suggest the analytic narrative aspect is underdeveloped, and not too much narrative at the expensive of real data (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 131). What is important, however, is to demonstrate patterning across data items and select data extracts from different participants from different data items in order to illustrate selected themes (Clarke, 2021c). Additionally, I referred to relevant existing literature, which also helped me to further question my interpretation of the interview data.

Chapter Summary

The present chapter detailed the present study's methodological approach. First, the research context including recruitment of participants in the present study and their background information were introduced. A total of 132 teachers participated in Phase 1 survey (See Table 2) and 17 teachers in Phase 2 individual interview (See Table 3).

Second, I verified my choice of a mixed methods design by outlining its advantages. In particular, it is noteworthy that utilizing mixed method designs enables researchers to use the collection and analysis of multiple sources of data with both quantitative and qualitative analysis to offset the limitations of each (Johnson et al., 2004).

The third and fourth parts specifically describe the data collection and data analysis procedures for each respective phase. Regarding the quantitative survey (i.e., Phase 1), each scale employed in the present study was introduced. It is highlighted that each scale established its validity in existing literature. To sum, the survey in the present study consisted of 60 items with a 7-point Likert scale response (See Appendix A). Further, the existing literature regarding effect size, sample size, and statistical power led to the minimum sample size needed for the present study to yield a minimum effect (i.e., correlation), which is 72. Regarding the qualitative interview, the interview questions were established according to the results of the Phase 1 (See Appendix E). For data analysis, I selected thematic analysis for its substantial flexibility and variability to researchers. Notably, it is underlined that researcher subjectivity is viewed as an integral aspect of the analytical process and as a valuable resource for conducting the analysis. Further, a six-phase process in analytic strategy (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in thematic analysis was outlined.

The following chapter (i.e., Chapter 4) presents the results of the quantitative survey (i.e., Phase 1) regarding the previously introduced six RQs (See page 41). Further, Chapter 5 addresses the discussion of the quantitative survey, and Chapter 6 explores both the results and the discussion of the qualitative interview.

Chapter 4: Results of Quantitative Survey

This chapter presents the results from the quantitative data analysis and is divided into six parts, each corresponding to one of the research questions (RQs) investigated. To develop a standardized model and investigate both correlations[9] and regressions[10] of each variable, a SEM function in a statistics software, RStudio, was performed. In applications of SEM, each model was examined to specify its correspondence with the data, by checking the goodness of fit index (i.e., CFI, RMSEA, and CI, see the Methodology chapter). This study's RQs were as follows:

RQ1. Among (1) the government policy, (2) teachers' perceived English language proficiency, (3) teacher's intention to leave the profession, and (4) the influence of COVID-19, which factors predict more Japanese EFL teacher burnout?
RQ2. How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?
RQ3. How do five school contextual factors (i.e., (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents) impact Japanese EFL teacher burnout?
RQ4. How do five school contextual factors (i.e., (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents) impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?
RQ5. How do Japanese EFL teachers' perceived English language proficiency influence their self-efficacy?
RQ6. Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate with teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?

[9] Correlation stipulates the degree to which both variables can move together. It determines the interconnection or a co-relationship between the variables. In other words, correlation helps to constitute the connection between the two variables (BYJU'S, 2022).

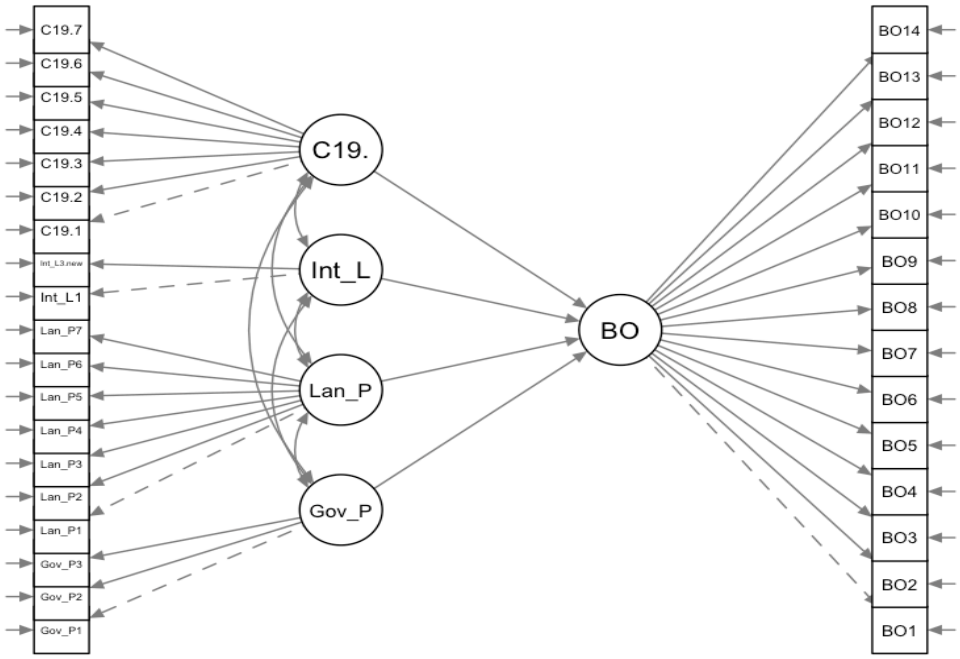
[10] Regression specifies the effect of the change in the unit, in the known variable(p) on the evaluated variable (q). It explains how an independent variable is numerically associated with the dependent variable (BYJU'S, 2022).

RQ1: Among (1) the Government Policy, (2) Teachers' Perceived English Language Proficiency, (3) Teacher's Intention to Leave the Profession, and (4) the Influence of COVID-19, Which Factors Predict more Japanese EFL Teacher Burnout?

First of all, in order to see the overall picture of a theoretical model of the present research, teacher burnout was set up as an endogenous latent variable and the following four factors as exogenous latent variables: participating teachers' (1) attitude towards the government policy, (2) perceived English language proficiency, (3) intention to leave the profession, and (4) attitude towards COVID-19 (Figure 8). The exclusion of teacher self-efficacy from the present model was a deliberate decision, as the subsequent model (i.e., RQ2 (How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?)) specifically examined the association between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. Similarly, school contextual factors, which were the focus of RQs 3 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors (i.e., (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents), impact Japanese EFL teacher burnout?) and 4 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?), were not incorporated into this particular model. This sequential approach was adopted to develop validated models by limiting the number of parameters under analysis, as an increased number of parameters within a model raises the likelihood of encountering statistical errors (Alam, 2022).

Figure 8

Analytical Model between Teacher Burnout and Other Variables



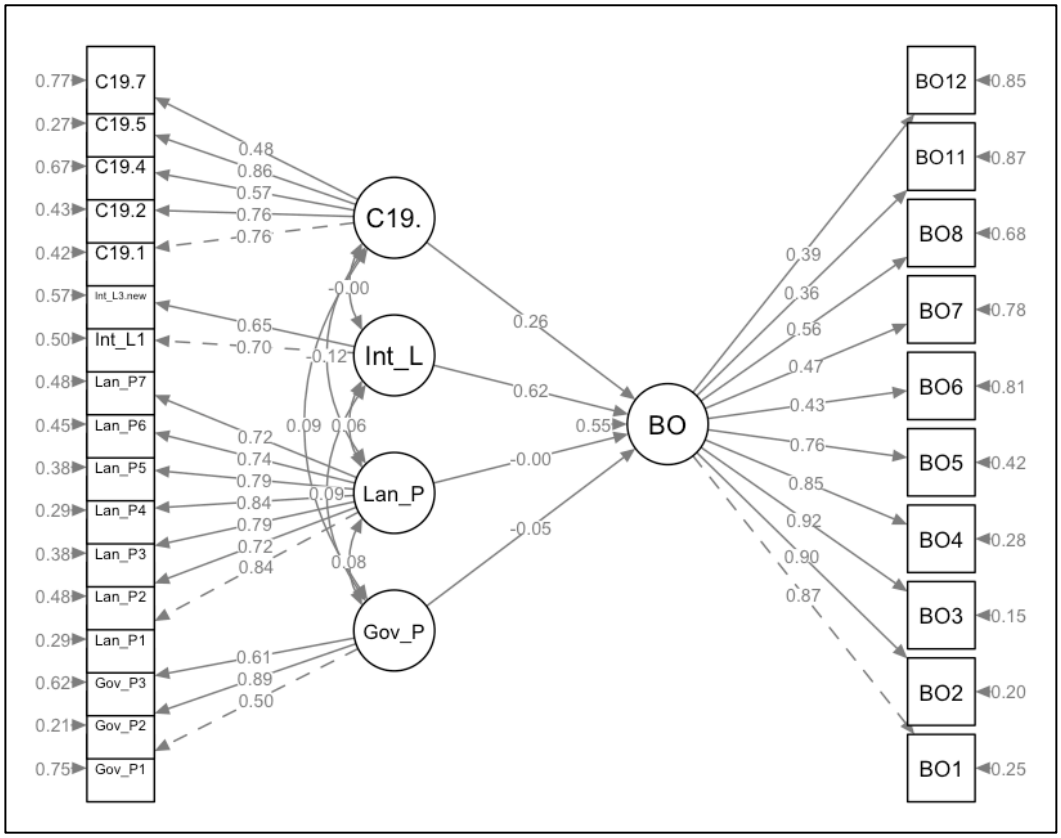
Note. BO = Burnout; C19. = COVID-19; Int_L = Intention to leave; Lan_P = Language proficiency; Gov_P = Government policy

As seen in Figure 8, the model first included 33 observed variables of all five latent variables, but it showed poor model fit (*CFI* = .71, *RMSEA* = .10). According to Hooper et al. (2008, p. 56), some modifications of items can considerably improve results, and it was, therefore, necessary to assess the fit of each item individually. In particular, items with small factor loadings (i.e., correlation coefficients) needed to be reduced as they are an indication of high levels of error, and by excluding them, fit measures increase (Alam, 2022). For correlation coefficients, Plonsky and Oswald (2014) suggest that values close to .25 be considered small, .40 medium, and .60 large, as deliberated in the Methodology chapter. Following this concept, modifications were made to the model. First, the items whose factor loadings are smaller than .40 were deleted. As a result, the items 9, 10, 13, and 14 in teacher burnout were eliminated. Additionally, under the instruction of a statistician, two items (item 3 and 6) in the COVID-19 scale, which had lowest loading in its scale were omitted. Consequently, the final model had a moderate to acceptable fit (*CFI* = .85, *RMSEA* = .08, Bong et al., 2013) (Figure 9). It is noted that the CFI value of this model is slightly lower

than Bong et al.'s suggested value of .87. This could be attributed to the attribution of the model, especially to the relatively small number of samples in the present study ($N = 132$). According to Shi et al., large SEM models (e.g., $p \geq 30$) with small samples (e.g., $N \leq 200$) produce lower CFI values, as indicated in the Methodology chapter.

Figure 9

Standardized Model of Teacher Burnout, COVID-19, Intention to Leave, language Proficiency, and Government Policy (N = 132)



Note. BO = Burnout; C19. = COVID-19; Int_L = Intention to leave; Lan_P = Language proficiency; Gov_P = Government policy

Table 10

Correlations between Teacher Burnout and COVID-19, Intention to Leave, Language Proficiency, and Government Policy in SEM Analysis (N = 132)

	Correlations	p-values
Burnout ~		
Government policy	-.049	.589
Language proficiency	-.001	.987
COVID-19	**.257**	**.004
Intention to leave	**.622**	***.000

Note. Significant correlations are marked in bold.

**$p < .005$. ***$p < .001$.

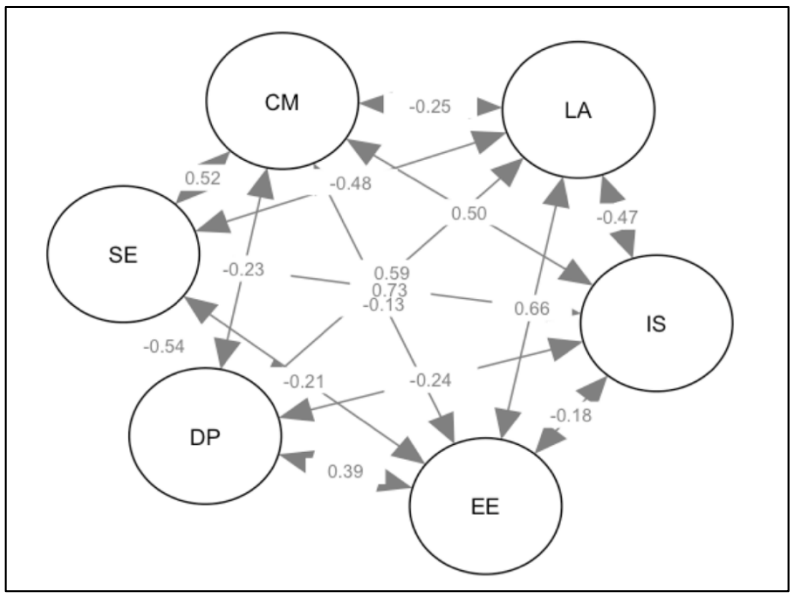
In answering RQ1 (i.e., Among (1) the government policy, (2) teachers' perceived English language proficiency, (3) teacher's intention to leave the profession, and (4) the influence of COVID-19, which factors predict more Japanese EFL teacher burnout?), as shown in Table 10, the final model revealed that COVID-19 had a significant correlation with teacher burnout ($r = .26$, $p < .005$), with one unit increase in COVID-19 accounting for an increase in burnout by .25. Furthermore, the participating teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession also correlated with teacher burnout ($r = .62$, $p < .001$), with one unit increase in teachers' intention to leave explaining an increase in teacher burnout by .65 units. Neither Japanese government policy nor participating teachers' perceived English language proficiency had a relationship with teacher burnout.

RQ2: How Do Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-efficacy Correlate with Each Other?

The second model analyzed the correlation between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. In order to precisely investigate the relation, three dimensions of teacher burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, lack of accomplishment, and depersonalization) and three dimensions of teacher self-efficacy (i.e., instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement) were investigated with SEM as seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Standardized Model of Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-efficacy (N = 132)



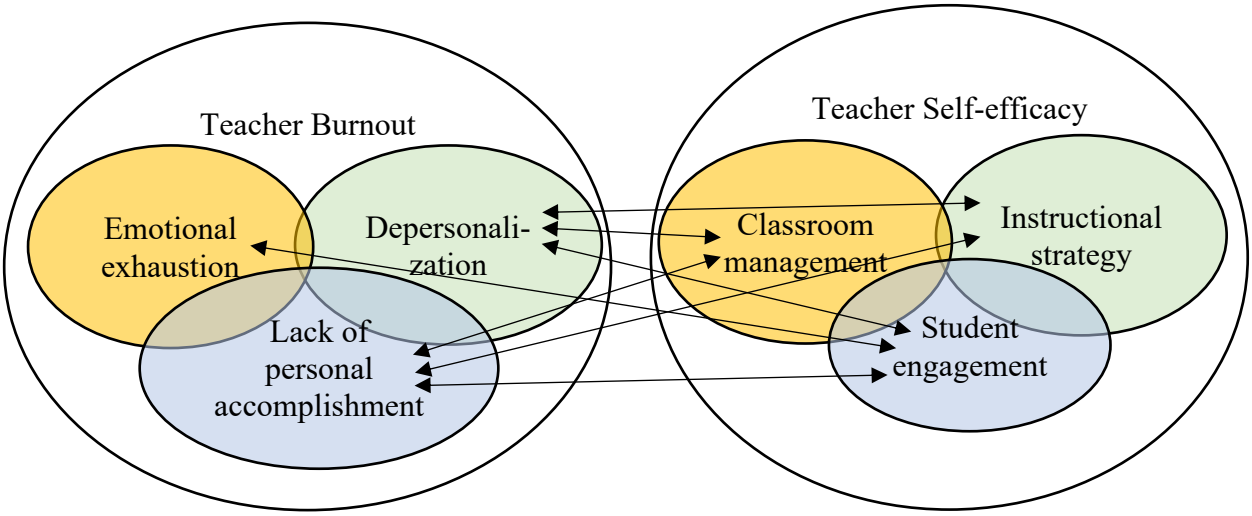
Note. EE = Emotional exhaustion; LA = Lack of accomplishment; DP = Depersonalization; IS = Instructional strategy; CM = Classroom management; SE = Student engagement

First, it was necessary to check fit measures to see what the actual levels of fit for this model were. The goodness of fit for this model indicated a good fit (*CFI* = .93, *RMSEA* = .06) which met Bong et al.'s (2013) suggested cut-off value of .87. or above for CFI and .10 or below for RMSEA (See the Methodology chapter).

Figure 11 illustrated all the relationships in the model. First, as for emotional exhaustion, it slightly correlated with student engagement (r = -.21, p < .05). For one unit increase in student engagement, there was a decrease in emotional exhaustion by .385. There were no significant correlations between emotional exhaustion and either instructional strategies or classroom management.

Figure 11

Correlations between Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-efficacy



Second, regarding lack of accomplishment, a moderate to strong relationship was found with all three dimensions in self-efficacy. Notably, instructional strategies (r = -.47, p < .005) and student engagement (r = -.48, p < .005) had a significant relationship with lack of accomplishment. For one unit increase in instructional strategies, there was a decrease in lack of accomplishment by .44, and for one unit increase in student engagement, there was a decrease in lack of accomplishment by .54. Classroom management had a moderate correlation with lack of accomplishment (r = -.25, p < .05).

Lastly, with regard to depersonalization, the results revealed a moderate to strong correlation with three dimensions in self-efficacy. Among them, student engagement had the strongest relationship with depersonalization (r = -.54, p < .001), followed by instructional strategies (r = -.25, p < .05) and classroom management (r = -.23, p < .05). For one unit increase in student engagement, there was a decrease in depersonalization by .873.

Table 11

Correlations between Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-efficacy in SEM Analysis (N=132)

	Instructional strategies	Classroom management	Student engagement
Emotional exhaustion	-.177(.071)	-.133(.164)	**-.211**(*.031)
Lack of accomplishment	**-.468**(**.001)	**-.248**(*.031)	**-.476**(**.001)
Depersonalization	**-.245**(*.019)	**-.228**(*.026)	**-.536**(***.000)

Note. Significant correlations are marked in bold. ( ) = p-values.

$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .005$. $^{***}p < .001$.

RQ3. How Do Five School Contextual Factors (i.e., (1) Time Pressure, (2) Discipline Problems, (3) Supervisory Support, (4) Autonomy, and (5) Relations to Parents), Impact Japanese EFL Teacher Burnout?

One of the purposes of the present study was to test whether teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy were predicted by school context. The present study tested a theoretical model with five latent school context variables predicting two latent variables: teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. As the first step, RQ3 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors (i.e., (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents), impact Japanese EFL teacher burnout?) investigated the relationship between teacher burnout and school contextual factors. Teacher burnout was set up as an endogenous latent variable and the following five factors as exogenous latent variables: (1) time pressure, (2) students' discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) teachers' autonomy, and (5) students' parents (Figure 12).

The first model showed a poor model fit (*CFI* = .78, *RMSEA* = .10). Therefore, the parameters with factor loadings of .40 or smaller were removed (i.e., burnout questions 9, 10, and 14). As a result, the model showed a better fit (*CFI* = .82, *RMSEA* = .09). After removing another three burnout question items (i.e., items 11, 12, and 13) as they also showed relatively smaller factor loadings, the model indicated a better fit (*CFI* = .89, *RMSEA* = .08). However, it is noteworthy that omitting an excessive number of items might lead to decreased validity (Alam, 2022); therefore, it was necessary to keep as many items as possible. Thus, I decided to keep questions 11 and 12 to prioritize the validity of the model.

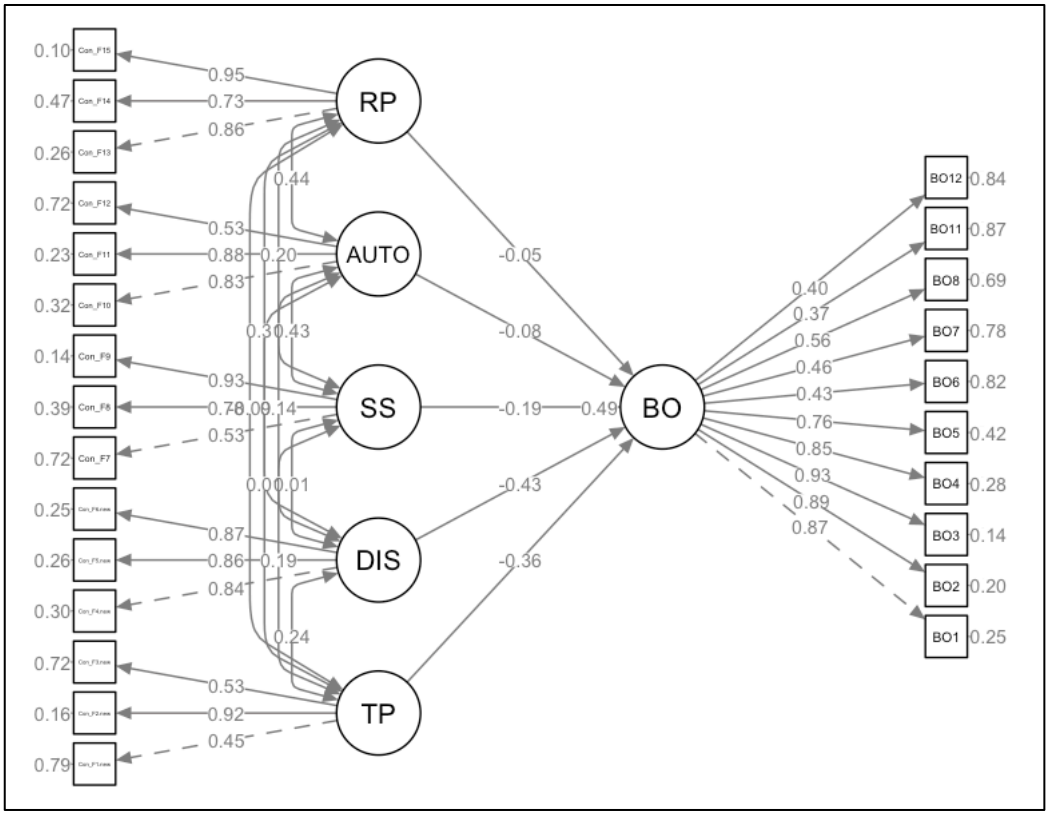
As a result, the model showed an acceptable fit (*CFI* = .86, *RMSEA* = .08) based on aforementioned Bong et al.' (2013) suggested cut-off values. It should be noted that question items in time pressure and discipline problems are all negative questions (See appendix A).

For example, three items regarding time pressure are: (1) Preparation for teaching is often done after working hours. (*mean* = 2.63), (2) Life at school is hectic and there is no time for rest and recovery. (*mean* = 3.00), and (3) Meetings, administrative work, and documentation take much of the time that should be used for preparing the teaching. (*mean* = 2.63). Hence, the scores in these two school contextual factors were all reversed in the process of analyzing data. Thus, the lower the values are, the more negative the results are.

Among five school contextual variables, as shown in Table 12, the strongest predictor of teacher burnout was students' discipline problems (r = -.43, p < .001). For one unit decrease (indicating worse) in discipline problems, there was an increase (indicating worse) in burnout by .42. Time pressure was the second strongest predictor of teacher burnout (r = -.36, p < .005). For one unit decrease (indicating worse) in time pressure, there was an increase (indicating worse) in burnout by .66. Third, teacher burnout and supervisory support were weakly but significantly related (r = -.19, p < .05). For one unit decrease (indicating worse) in supervisory support, there was an increase (indicating worse) in burnout by .30. Neither teachers' autonomy nor relationship with students' parents was related to teacher burnout.

Figure 12

Standardized Model of Teacher Burnout and Five School Contextual Factors (N=132)



Note. BO = Burnout; RP = Relation to students' parents; AUTO = Autonomy; SS = Supervisory support; DIS = Discipline problems; TP = Time pressure

Table 12

Correlations between Teacher Burnout and Five School Contextual Factors in SEM Analysis (N=132)

	Correlations	p-values
Burnout ~		
Time pressure	**-.361**	**.001
Discipline behavior	**-.426**	***.000
Supervisory support	**-.192**	*.034
Autonomy	-.084	.363
Relation to students' parents	-.055	.530

Note. Significant correlations are marked in bold.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .005$. ***$p < .001$.

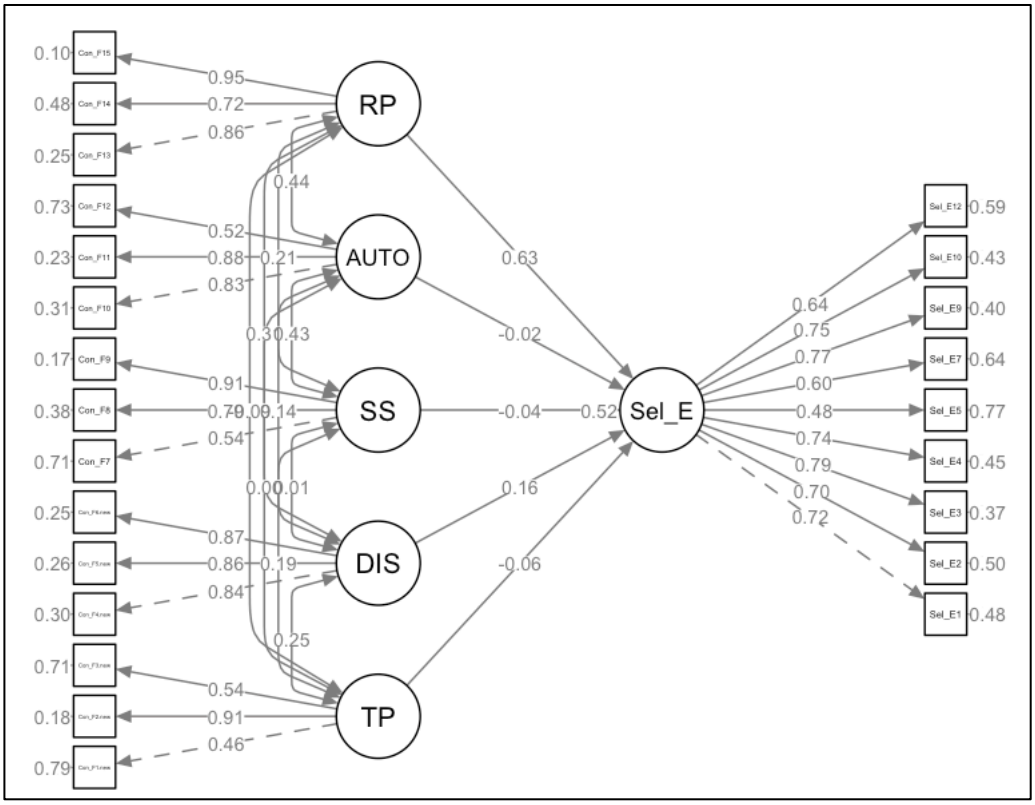
RQ4. How Do Five School Contextual Factors (i.e., (1) Time Pressure, (2) Discipline Problems, (3) Supervisory Support, (4) Autonomy, and (5) Relations to Parents), Impact Japanese EFL Teacher Self-Efficacy?

RQ4 investigated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and school contextual factors. Teacher self-efficacy was set up as an endogenous latent variable and the following five factors as exogenous latent variables: (1) time pressure, (2) students' discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) teachers' autonomy, and (5) students' parents (Figure 13). The first model showed a poor model fit (*CFI* = .80, *RMSEA* = .10). This led to modifications by reducing parameters with small factor loadings (i.e., self-efficacy questions 6, 8, and 11). As a result, the model showed a better fit (*CFI* = .89, *RMSEA* = .07).

Among the five school contextual variables, as shown in Table 13, the relationship with students' parents was significantly correlated with teacher self-efficacy ($r = .63$, $p < .001$). For one unit increase in the relationship with students' parents, there was an increase in self-efficacy by .528. The other four school contextual factors were not correlated to teacher self-efficacy.

Figure 13

Standardized Model of Teacher Self-efficacy and Five School Contextual Factors (N=132)



Note. Sel_E = Self-efficacy; RP = Relation to students' parents; AUTO = Autonomy; SS = Supervisory support; DIS = Discipline problems; TP = Time pressure

Table 13

Correlations between Teacher Self-efficacy and Five school Contextual Factors in SEM Analysis (N = 132)

	Correlations	p-values
Self-efficacy ~		
Time pressure	-.062	.480
Discipline behavior	.159	.070
Supervisory support	-.044	.630
Autonomy	-.020	.839
Relation to students' parents	**.633**	***.000

Note. Significant correlation is marked in bold.

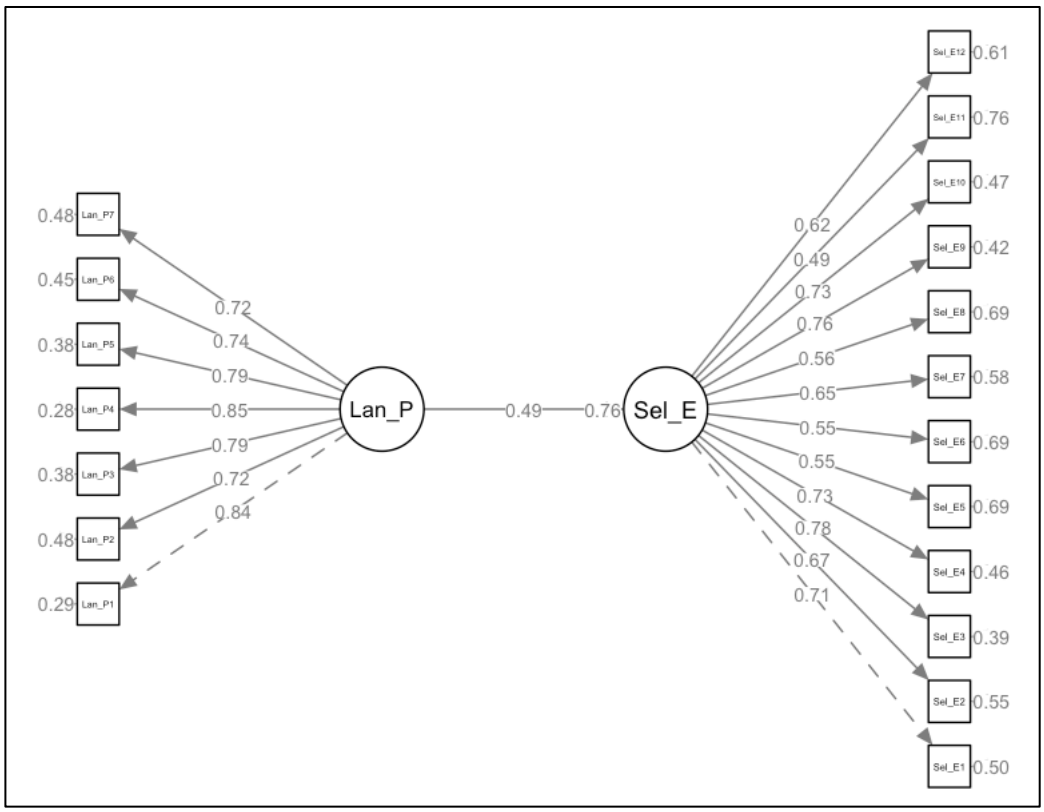
***$p < .001$.

RQ5. How Do Japanese EFL Teachers' Perceived English Language Proficiency Influence Their Self-efficacy?

RQ5 explored how Japanese EFL teachers' perceptions of their English language proficiency influenced their self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy was set up as an endogenous latent variable and their language proficiency as exogenous latent variables in single linear regression (Figure 14). Although the model showed a relatively weak model fit (*CFI* = .76. *RMSEA* = .13), especially for the RMSEA, the narrow confidence interval (*90% CI* = .123 to .149) was reported. According to Higgins (2011), if the confidence interval is relatively narrow (e.g., .70 to .80), the effect size can be known more precisely, meaning that the model is assumed to have a moderate fit, and this concept applies to the current model (See the Methodology chapter). Hence, teachers' language proficiency was found to be correlated to their self-efficacy ($r = .49$, $p < .001$) (Table 14). Additionally, through descriptive statistics (Table 15), it was found that teachers perceived themselves to be most proficiency in grammar (*mean* = 4.98, *SD* = 1.33) and least proficient in vocabulary (*mean* = 4.20, *SD* = 1.30).

Figure 14

Standardized Model of Teacher Self-efficacy and Their Language Proficiency (N = 132)



Note. Sel_E = Self-efficacy; Lan_P = Teachers' perceived English language proficiency

Table 14

Correlations between Teacher Self-efficacy and their Perceived Language Proficiency in Single Linear Regression Analysis (N=132)

	Correlations	p-values
Self-efficacy ~		
Language proficiency	**.492**	***.000

Note. Significant correlation is marked in bold.

***$p < .001$.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics on Japanese EFL Teachers' Perceived English Language Proficiency (N=132)

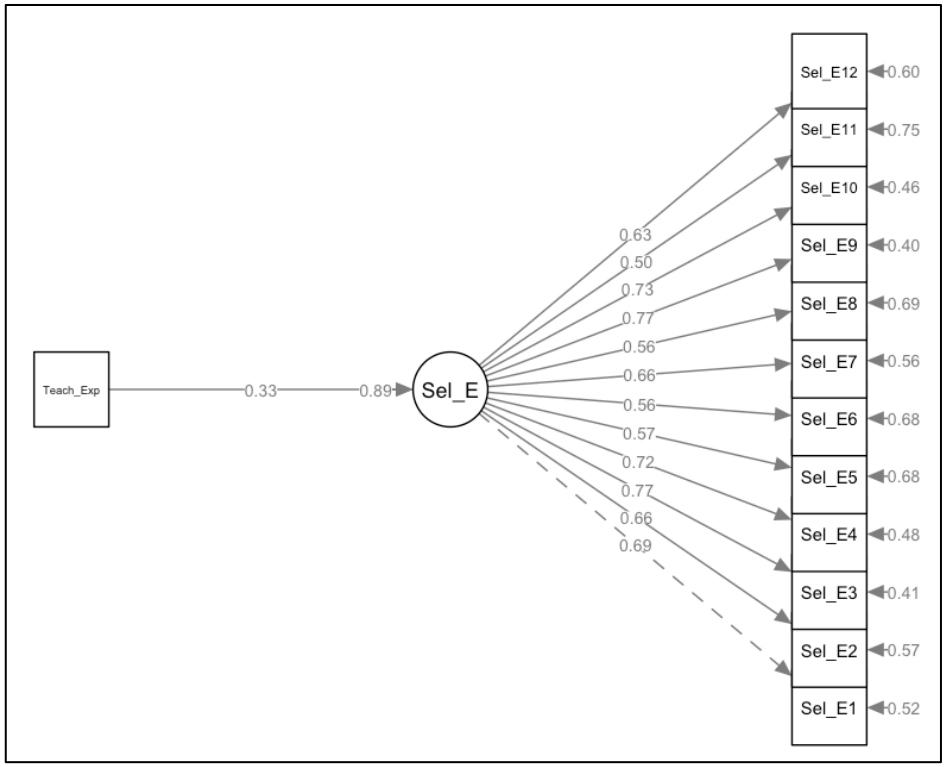
	Mean	SD
Speaking	4.39	1.53
Listening	4.76	1.40
Reading	4.85	1.30
Writing	4.43	1.35
Vocabulary	4.20	1.30
Pronunciation	4.74	1.58
Grammar	4.98	1.33

RQ6. Do Japanese EFL Teachers' (1) Education Level, (2) Teaching Experience, and (3) Experience of Going Abroad Correlate with Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-Efficacy?

Lastly, my interest was to explore whether the demographic variables correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. Using single linear regression, among all the relationships, a connection was found between teachers' teaching experience and teacher self-efficacy ($r = .33$, $p < .001$) (Figure 15). Although the goodness of fit indices showed a weak model fit (*CFI* = .70. *MRSEA* = .17), the relatively narrow confidence interval (*90% CI* = .154 to .192) was reported, suggesting the model is assumed to have a moderate fit. Thus, it was suggested that the two constructs have a circular relationship: the participating teachers' accumulated teaching experience positively influenced their self-efficacy.

Figure 15

Standardized Model of Teacher Self-efficacy and Their Teaching Experience (N=132)



Note. Sel_E = Self-efficacy; Teach_Exp = Teaching experience

Table 16

Correlations between Demographic Variables and Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-efficacy in Single Linear Regression Analysis (N=132)

	Correlations	p-values
Self-efficacy ～		
Education level	.141	.012
Teaching experience	**.328**	***.000
Experience of going abroad	-.003	.977
Burnout ～		
Education level	-.014	.875
Teaching experience	.000	.996
Experience of going abroad	.075	.401

Note. Significant correlation is marked in bold.

***$p < .001$.

The above result further led me to investigate the direct effect of teachers' teaching experience on the relationship between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. In order to investigate this, a mediation analysis was conducted by setting up teaching experience as a mediator. Mediation is the process by which one variable transmits an effect onto another through one or more mediating variables or mediators (Michalac, 2019) and sees how mediating variables can be caused by the independent variable or influence the dependent variable (Bhandari, 2022). In other words, a mediating variable (or mediator) explains the process through which two variables are related (Bhandari, 2022). In the present model, the two variables are teacher self-efficacy (independent variable) and teacher burnout (dependent variable), and the mediating variable is teachers' teaching experience. The finding revealed that the participating teachers' teaching experience did not have a strong impact as a mediator between their self-efficacy and their burnout. Thus, there was no sufficient data that teachers' self-efficacy was associated with their burnout via their teaching experience.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings of six research questions and is organized into six sections, each corresponding to the specific research question investigated. RQ1 examined the factors that contribute to burnout among Japanese EFL teachers. The results revealed a significant correlation between teacher burnout and both the impact of COVID-19 and teachers' inclination to leave the teaching profession.

RQ2 focused on the relationship between three dimensions in teacher burnout and three dimensions in self-efficacy. First, the findings indicated a modest correlation between emotional exhaustion (a dimension in burnout) and student engagement (a dimension in self-efficacy). Second, a moderate to strong association was observed between the lack of accomplishment, another dimension in burnout, and all three dimensions of self-efficacy. Last, depersonalization, a dimension in burnout, exhibited a moderate to strong correlation with all three dimensions of self-efficacy.

RQ3 explored how school contextual factors impacted Japanese EFL teacher burnout. Among five school contextual variables, the strongest predictor of teacher burnout was students' discipline problems, and time pressure was the second strongest predictor, followed by supervisory support. Neither autonomy nor relationship with students' parents was related to teacher burnout.

RQ4 aimed to examine the association between teacher self-efficacy and school contextual factors. Out of the five school contextual factors analyzed, the results revealed a

significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and the relationship with students' parents. However, no statistically significant relationship was observed between teacher self-efficacy and the remaining four contextual factors.

RQ5 explored how Japanese EFL teachers' perceptions of their English language proficiency influence their self-efficacy. The investigation revealed that these two factors were corelated with each other.

RQ6 examined whether Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. A connection was found between teachers' teaching experience and teacher self-efficacy. The following mediation analysis found that teaching experience did not have a strong impact as a mediator between teachers' self-efficacy and their burnout. The following Discussion chapter addresses these results in more detail.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Quantitative Survey

In the following chapter, I examine the results from the quantitative survey in Phase 1 in which teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy were found to be related to each other as well as to other variables. Since I used key findings from Phase 1 of the study to develop the interview questions (IQs) used in Phase 2, I also indicate the connection between findings and specific interview questions.

RQ1: Among (1) the Government Policy, (2) Teachers' Perceived English Language Proficiency, (3) Teacher's Intention to Leave the Profession, and (4) the Influence of COVID-19, Which Factors Predict more Japanese EFL Teacher Burnout?

RQ1 explored the relationship between teacher burnout and the following four factors: participating teachers' (1) attitude towards the government policy, (2) perceived English language proficiency, (3) intention to leave the teaching profession, and (4) attitude towards COVID-19. In answering this, both COVID-19 and teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession had a significant correlation with teacher burnout, whereas neither Japanese government policy nor participating teachers' perceived English language proficiency had a relationship with teacher burnout. Comprehensive explanation is presented below.

Teacher Burnout - COVID-19

There was a positive relationship between participating teachers' burnout and their attitude towards COVID-19. During the pandemic (i.e., 2020 through the time of this dissertation's completion), teachers around the world have faced many new demands. For example, Sokal et al. (2020) investigated how Canadian teachers' (N = 1626) resilience and burnout changed over time during the initial stages of the pandemic (i.e., April to June 2020). The ANOVA tests in their longitudinal study revealed that, in terms of teacher burnout, teachers were significantly more exhausted in June than in April, with the June mean score indicating teachers were feeling exhausted once per week to a few times per week. In a different study, Sokal et al. (2020) found, in the Canadian teaching context (N = 1278) during the pandemic period, that demands from a school's administrator or the government would be most strongly correlated with teacher exhaustion, followed by depersonalization, and then lack of accomplishment. These studies support Pressley (2021) positing that a variety of demands may lead to teachers' high stress levels.

In the Japanese context, too, since many school districts implemented alternative teaching approaches, including socially distanced classrooms or hybrid teaching, teachers were pushed to learn new virtual instruction methods and platforms, and they faced new requirements for instruction, job expectations, and classroom environments (Ogata & Saito, 2020). Furthermore, it is highlighted that a considerable number of students who suffer from the influence of COVID-19 (NHK News, 2021), contending that these individuals encounter challenges in fostering interpersonal connections within under certain regulations, such as maintaining social distance and wearing face masks. In addition, teachers face obstacles in effectively engaging with their students since they cannot see their facial expressions. It is worth noting that Japan, in comparison to other nations, has implemented relatively stringent measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, it was only in October 2022 that the Japanese government gradually eased immigration restrictions, a significantly delayed timeline in contrast to other countries. Furthermore, as of December 2023, people are supposed to wear a mask in public spaces, including public transportation and fitness centers. Consequently, COVID-19 continues to have a substantial influence on individuals and the broader society within Japan. Based on this finding and its implications, in the follow-up interview, I decided to ask the participating teachers how COVID-19 has impacted their teaching tasks and mental state.

Teacher Burnout - Teachers' Intention to Leave the Teaching Profession

There was a positive relationship between teacher burnout and their intention to leave the teaching profession. This result is identical to previous investigations. For instance, Koeske and Koeske (1993) found low levels of personal accomplishment (i.e., one of the three dimensions in burnout) in 91 social workers in U.S. led to an increased intention to leave. Further, O'Brien et al.'s (2008) found significant associations between all three dimensions in burnout and teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession in the Australian context ($N = 98$). These findings replicate the results of two other independent studies investigating turnover intention and the experience of burnout in beginning teachers working in Australian education systems (O'Brien et al., 2008).

It is noteworthy that while O'Brien et al.'s study (2008) investigated only beginner teachers' burnout levels, the present study encompassed both novice and experienced teachers at any age, throughout Japan. Additionally, as RQ6 (i.e., Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?) revealed, there was no significant relationship

between teachers' teaching experience and their burnout levels. Hence, both beginner teachers and experienced teachers feel burnout, meaning that teachers at any age might consider leaving their teaching profession due to burnout. Specifically, these results suggest the presence of certain negative factors that contribute to teacher burnout, which teaching experience alone is unable to mitigate. These factors, according to my own experience, could include time pressure, human relations, or lack of supervisory support. Therefore, in the follow-up interview, I asked the participating teachers whether they had thought of leaving the teaching profession and elicited the reason for their answers.

Teacher Burnout - Teachers' Attitude towards the Government Policy

There was no significant relationship between teacher burnout and their attitude towards the Japanese government policy. However, it is worth mentioning that there are several studies that have found a link between these two factors. For example, Kyriacou and Chien (2004) reported that 26% of their participating teachers considered the teaching profession to be very or extremely stressful due to changes in educational policies.

From a different standpoint, Nishino (2012) found that teachers' classroom practice, which is relevant to teacher self-efficacy, was influenced by socio-educational factors such as high-stakes entrance examinations and government policy. Nishino posited that teachers' beliefs and practices are situated in their own unique teaching contexts. Teachers design lessons based on their students' needs, abilities, motivation, and expectations. Thus, changes in educational policies by the government are stressful factors in teaching profession, which might lead to job dissatisfaction and possibly, teacher burnout.

In the Netherlands, Evers et al. (2002) explored participating teachers' beliefs (N = 490) when implementing a new educational system called Study-home[11]. They used the Dutch version of the MBI for teachers (Schaufeli & Van Horn, 1995) and a questionnaire on the teachers' attitudes concerning the usefulness and effectiveness of the Study-home as an educational innovation. Their regression analyses showed the more negative the teachers' attitudes towards the new system appeared to be, the more they appeared to suffer from emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and the lower they scored on the personal accomplishment dimension in burnout.

[11] Study-Home is a pupil-centered approach in which teachers help develop pupils' independent working and creative thinking in order to get them to take responsibility for their own academic achievements (Evers et al., 2002).

Overall, contrary to several previous studies, the present study did not find a significant relationship between teacher burnout and attitudes towards the government policy. This result could be attributed to a gap between the government policy and school policy/curriculum at each school. For example, there might exist some cases where although teachers agree with or support the Japanese government policy regarding English education, they lack supervisory support (e.g., advice from the school leadership, mutual trust with supervisors) to conduct their ideal English classes. Additionally, teachers' autonomy at their working environment might be restricted by school administrators or supervisors in terms of, for instance, selecting teaching methods and strategies or deciding what content to focus on in class. Thus, while teachers are in support of the government policy, it is probable that they are unsatisfied with their school educational policy or school administrators, which I examined more thoroughly in the follow-up interview.

Teacher Burnout - Teachers' Perceived English Language Proficiency

The present study concluded that there was no significant correlation between burnout among Japanese teachers and their English language proficiency. In the Iranian EFL context, however, researchers have reached different conclusions. First, Nayernia and Babayan (2019) found that 111 Iranian EFL teachers' speaking and listening skills predicted participants' personal accomplishment dimension in burnout. Further, Khani and Mirzaee (2015) conducted a study on the role of teacher self-efficacy, contextual factors, and stressors in Iranian EFL teacher burnout ($N = 216$). They argued that lack of English subject knowledge and lower English language proficiency can increase teachers' stress in response to negative contextual factors, which then exposes them to psychological burnout. Lastly, Akbari and Eghtesadi (2017) investigated the burnout coping strategies of Iranian EFL teachers within a qualitative research methodology. Correspondingly, they concluded that extending linguistic knowledge and developing language proficiency were two of the important burnout-coping strategies used by teachers not suffering from burnout.

The result of the present study contradicted the studies above as, I assume, subject instruction (i.e., English teaching) is relatively less prioritized than other teachers' duties such as homeroom management, ECAs, or even parent-related matters. Thus, even if teachers' English proficiency is high, they are not highly evaluated, but rather they are often evaluated by their homeroom management skills or ECA coaching skills. Alternatively, it could be predictable that teachers in Japan already experience burnout from other duties prior to feeling burnout from their English proficiency. As presented in the Introduction chapter,

teachers are required to cover a wide range of tasks from academics to school events: moral education, inclusive education, dealing with students' disciplinary behaviors, mental support for foreign students, and more (Senoo, 2022a). In particular, teachers in Japan spend 7.5 hours for ECAs per week (OECD, 2019), the longest among the OECD countries surveyed. Thus, the follow-up interview addressed teachers' wide range of workload that burden them.

RQ1. Summary

RQ1 investigated which factors predict more Japanese EFL teacher burnout. First, the present study found teacher burnout and COVID-19 had a significant correlation. Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers received a variety of demands by school administrators or/and the government, which may have contributed to teachers' high levels of stress and anxiety they reported in the questionnaire. Additionally, they were required to work with students who were also feeling fear and anxiety in relation to COVID-19, and the strict regulations on COVID-19 (e.g., keeping social distance, wearing a face mask) by the Japanese government might have prevented them from communicating or building relationships with their students.

Further, RQ1 found that teacher burnout and their intention to leave the teaching profession had a significant correlation. Single linear regression showed that both beginner and experienced teachers experienced burnout, indicating that teachers at any age might intend to leave the teaching profession. Considering these findings, I decided to ask the participating teachers the following IQs in the following individual interview.

Interview questions developed from RQ1

IQ1	How has COVID-19 impacted on your teaching, mental state, and so forth?
IQ2	Have you ever thought of leaving the teaching profession? Why? Why not?

RQ2: How Do Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-efficacy Correlate with Each Other?

Of particular interest in the present study is that the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic (November 2021 to February 2022). In the aforementioned study by Sokal et al. (2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic, they found teachers' resilience and level of burnout were significantly correlated with their efficacy. In the present study, correlations between teacher burnout and their self-efficacy were found as follows (See Figure 11 in the Results chapter): (1) emotional exhaustion in burnout and student engagement in self-efficacy, (2) lack of personal accomplishment in burnout dimensions and three dimensions in

self-efficacy, and (3) depersonalization in burnout and three dimensions in self-efficacy. Each relation is detailed below.

Emotional Exhaustion - Student Engagement

Emotional exhaustion in burnout dimensions was slightly correlated with student engagement in self-efficacy. This finding is in agreement with a study of Martin et al. (2012) who investigated the relationships among diverse variables including stressors. They found that lower levels of self-efficacy, particularly inefficacy in student engagement, could lead to more stress and emotional exhaustion. Further, Hong (2010) noted emotional burnout is a critical issue for beginning teachers' professional lives in the U.S context. Hong's semi-structured interview among 25 dropout teachers revealed a unidirectional relationship between teachers' emotion and their efficacy. In other words, it is probable that teachers' lack of efficacy was a contributing factor for their emotional burnout.

Examining the four question items related to student engagement in more detail, participating teachers were asked how confident they felt in terms of motivating their students to learn at school (Table 17). Generally, it is assumed that students taught by teachers who are inefficacious in motivating students do not get good grades. As a result, the teachers end up investing more time doing remedial lessons and supplementary exams for the students and counseling the students and their parents. These additional quantitative work demands might lead to teachers' emotional exhaustion.

Table 17

Items in Student Engagement in Self-efficacy

How confident are you that you can:	
Q9	Get students to believe they can do well on schoolwork?
Q10	Encourage your students to value learning?
Q11	Assist families in helping their children do well in school?
Q12	Motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?

It is also noted that in teacher training courses at university proposed by the Japanese government, although they offer a variety of courses such as ICT skills, counseling methods, curriculum development (MEXT, 2017b), they do not offer courses relevant to gaining knowledge on motivating learners (e.g., motivation theory, motivation management). Hence, it is plausible that the courses offered in teacher training program may have contributed to teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement. In line with this, if it is assumed that teachers

with sufficient knowledge on motivating learners would feel less emotional exhaustion, it is advantageous for the follow-up interview to further explore how teachers with higher self-efficacy in student engagement motivate their students.

Lack of Personal Accomplishment - Three Dimensions of Self-efficacy

Lack of personal accomplishment in burnout dimensions had a moderate to strong relationship with all three dimensions in self-efficacy: (1) instructional strategies, (2) classroom management, and (3) student engagement. Each relationship is addressed below.

Lack of Personal Accomplishment - Instructional Strategies

Considering the relationship between teachers' lack of personal accomplishment in burnout dimensions and their instructional strategies in self-efficacy dimensions, the present study found that teachers with strong instructional strategies have a higher sense of personal accomplishment. The four question items regarding teachers' instructional strategies asked how confident teachers felt in terms of their teaching (Table 18). Given this, the findings imply that if teachers can provide an alternative explanation or an example when students are confused, use a variety of assessment strategies, formulate good questions for their students, and implement alternative strategies in their classroom, they are more likely to feel personal accomplishment in their job.

Table 18

Items in Instructional Strategies

How confident are you that you can:	
Q1	Provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
Q2	Use a variety of assessment strategies?
Q3	Formulate good questions for your students?
Q4	Implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

This finding is indirectly consistent with a study that found a negative relationship between teacher burnout and their instructional strategies (Sarıçam & Sakız, 2014). They investigated the association between 118 Turkish teachers' sense of efficacy and their burnout. The structural model via SEM showed that the degree of stress felt by teachers was correlated with their perceptions of their own instructional abilities.

In the Japanese educational context, to the best of my knowledge, teachers who demonstrate adept instructional strategies tend to gain popularity among students and their

parents, particularly due to the influence of university entrance examinations. The university entrance examination holds significant importance in Japan's educational system as presented in the Introduction chapter. It is often considered an important milestone for students seeking admission to universities, and the results of this exam heavily influence the future educational and career paths of students. Therefore, it is assumed that teachers experience personal accomplishment by meeting the demand from their students (i.e., enrolling in university) and their parents.

This finding motivated me to ask teachers when, or after how many years of their teaching, they became confident in their teaching. If they are not confident in their teaching, I intend to ask how they think they can build up their self-confidence in their teaching skills.

Lack of Personal Accomplishment - Classroom Management

There have been other studies outside of Japan indicating the same correlation between teachers' lack of personal accomplishment and their classroom management. Aloe et al. (2014) adopted a multivariate meta-analysis for 16 studies that revealed a moderate relationship between classroom management and the three dimensions in burnout. The strongest correlation they found was between teachers' personal accomplishment in burnout dimensions and classroom management efficacy (r = .43). Moreover, in a longitudinal study conducted by Brouwers and Tomic (2000b), their analysis in SEM indicated that exhausted teachers had poorer efficacy for classroom management, which led to a loss of personal accomplishment.

In Japan's educational context, a homeroom teacher is generally assigned to each classroom to oversee the students (e.g., 35 students on average). A MEXT's extensive survey conducted in 2016 (MEXT, 2016c) among 10,687 middle school teachers in Japan, teachers worked 63 hours 20 minutes on average per week. In particular, the weekly allocation time of homeroom teachers' workload had increased significantly with increased time requirements for student counseling (92 minutes), classroom management (193 minutes), and meeting with students' parents (56 minutes). These data indicate that teachers invest a substantial amount of time in engaging with both their students and their parents. Consequently, teachers who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy in classroom management are more likely to establish trust with their students and experience a sense of achievement. In contrast, teachers who lack adequate classroom management skills may struggle to gain the trust of students and their parents, resulting in lack of accomplishment. Thus, it can be inferred that classroom management significantly impacts teachers' personal accomplishment, and ultimately

contributes to teacher burnout. Based on this finding, in the follow-up interview, I decided to explore teachers' perspectives on the most challenging aspects of classroom management.

Lack of Personal Accomplishment - Student Engagement

There was a link between teachers' lack of personal accomplishment in burnout dimensions and student engagement in self-efficacy dimension. This finding is consistent with Ross's review (1998) of the literature on teacher self-efficacy. Ross concluded that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy in relation to eliciting student engagement employ a variety of teaching approaches. Their employing various teaching instructions further influences their level of personal accomplishment. This conclusion was based on the assumption that highly efficacious teachers are more likely to try new instructional approaches and strategies with students (Ross, 1998). Similarly, other studies (Brewer & Clippard, 2002) found that teacher self-efficacy in relation to eliciting student engagement appeared to be a salient predictor of managing classroom interactions. As classroom management skill plays a pivotal role in teachers' personal accomplishment as discussed above, it can be assumed that student engagement skill can indirectly be a positive contributor to increasing their sense of personal accomplishment.

As mentioned in the previous section, the four question items in student engagement in self-efficacy dimensions asked the participating teachers how confident they felt in terms of motivating their students to learn at school (Table 17). In other words, it is assumed that teachers who are adept at encouraging students would also have a sense of accomplishment in their job. In the specific context of Japanese education, this perspective can be reinforced by the significant presence of the university entrance examination. Given the pivotal event of this examination within Japan's educational context, teachers who possess adequate knowledge and skills in effectively motivating their students are better able to establish a relationship based on trust with both students and their parents. Furthermore, it is likely that students are more inclined to follow and place their trust in teachers who demonstrate stronger academic guidance and leadership. These factors could increase teachers' personal accomplishment. Contrarily, teachers who lack the necessary knowledge or skills to effectively motivate their students could potentially face challenges in building credibility from both students and their parents. Consequently, such circumstances may contribute to lack of personal accomplishment.

Depersonalization - Three Dimensions in Self-efficacy

In the present study, burnout in depersonalization had a moderate to strong correlation with self-efficacy in all three dimensions: (1) instructional strategies, (2) classroom management, and (3) student engagement. The following three sections further outline these relationships.

Depersonalization - Instructional Strategies

It is revealed that teachers with strong instructional strategies are less likely to experience depersonalization towards their students. Based on my review of the literature, there are only two other studies that have exploring the relationship between these two factors. For example, Khani and Mirzaee (2015, p.105) argued that "teachers who were able to devise and employ a wider variety of instructional strategies in class suffered less from depersonalization." More recently, Fathi and Saeedian (2020) found a link between depersonalization and three dimensions of self-efficacy, namely classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies.

As there has been no literature which investigated this connection in the Japanese context, the finding of the present study provided a new aspect on this relationship. My perspective on this relationship rests on the assumption that teachers who demonstrate proficient instructional strategies tend to gain popularity among students and their parents within the Japanese educational context. Additionally, these teachers are often entrusted by school administrators to oversee in-school teacher training programs, which can further boost their confidence and sense of accomplishment, potentially reducing their experience of depersonalization.

Further, given that teachers' brushing up their instructional strategies buffers their burnout levels in depersonalization, there seems to be at least two approaches to increase teachers' instructional strategies. One potential approach involves enhancing pre-service teachers' instructional strategies within the curriculum of teacher training programs at the university level. Nevertheless, in contrast to courses relevant to student engagement, such as motivation theory or motivation management as mentioned above, it is noteworthy that a number of teacher training courses already offer instructional-strategy-related content (MEXT, 2017b). Hence, a recommended program involves increasing the range of in-depth courses for teacher trainees to cultivate their instructional strategies. Considering from the results of the survey of the present study, employing a variety of assessment strategies (i.e., Q2 in self-efficacy scale) or formulating good questions for students (i.e., Q3 in self-efficacy scale) are potential skills to increase teachers' instructional strategies skills.

The second approach involves brushing up in-service teachers' instructional strategies, by being encouraged to stay in the teaching profession for a longer period. This view is reinforced by the results of the Phase 1 survey, revealing that teachers' instructional strategies were significantly correlated with teachers' teaching experience. However, there exists a situation where substantial number of younger teachers leave the teaching profession within the first three years (See the Introduction chapter). Thus, it is inevitable to prevent it by new measurements. The implication for this is addressed within the implication sector in the Conclusion chapter.

Depersonalization - Classroom Management

With regard to the inverse relationship between depersonalization and classroom management, although it has a relatively small impact on teachers' burnout levels (r = -.23), this finding is in agreement with that of Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2007) study arguing that teachers' attitudes (e.g., low expectation) towards classroom management increases occupational stress and depersonalization.

Looking more closely at the question items regarding classroom management, one of the three dimensional skills in self-efficacy (Table 19), all of them are closely related to homeroom teachers' tasks. Significantly, MEXT's analysis of an extensive survey conducted in 2016 reveals that the responsibility of homeroom management carries substantial influence due to its unique system within the Japanese educational context. Notably, the allocation of weekly time for homeroom teachers' tasks has been increasing, as indicated by MEXT (2016c): 92 minutes for student counseling, 193 minutes for classroom management, and 56 minutes for meetings with students' parents per week. When teachers are burdened with heavy workload, it is likely that their sense of depersonalization may increase. Therefore, the time factor involved in classroom management emerges as a potentially influential contributor to teachers' experience of depersonalization.

Indeed, in Furutani et al.'s (2019) study among 93 Japanese primary and middle school teachers, they investigated how beginning teachers' depersonalization was correlated to the relationship with their students and students' parents. The findings revealed that there was a significant correlation between the two (r = .65, p < .01), exemplifying that teachers who did not establish a relationship with their students and students' parents felt more depersonalized.

The above data implies that homeroom teachers might experience more depersonalized considering the link between depersonalization and classroom management.

Thus, in the follow-up interview, I decided to ask what kind of school policy or support are necessary to alleviate teachers' workload in classroom management.

Table 19

Items in Classroom Management

How confident are you that you can:	
Q5	Get students to follow classroom rules?
Q6	Control disruptive behaviors in the classroom?
Q7	Establish a classroom management system with any group of students?
Q8	Calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?

Depersonalization - Student Engagement

Student engagement in self-efficacy dimensions had the strongest relationship with depersonalization. This is in line with the findings of Friedman (2003), Betoret (2006), and Khani and Mirzaee (2015), who found that teacher self-efficacy could significantly influence and reduce teacher burnout. In particular, Khani and Mirzaee (2015) showed the strongest associations between depersonalization and two self-efficacy categories in instructional strategies and student engagement. In the present study, the question items regarding student engagement asked how teachers encourage their students engage in their schoolwork (Table 17).

It is worth noting that assisting families in helping their children do well in school (i.e., Q11 in the self-efficacy scale) has a substantial impact on teachers' general tasks in the Japanese educational context. This indicates that matters related to parents may influence teachers' sense of depersonalization. This viewpoint is reinforced by the fact that approximately 5,000 public-school teachers in Japan take sick leave every year (MEXT, 2022b), and tragically, some teachers even suffer from pressure by students' parents, which has been cited as the motivation for suicide in some cases (Senoo, 2021). In fact, the relationship with students' parents accounts for approximately 20% of the reasons cited by teachers for taking sick leave (Senoo, 2021).

Taking an example of another context outside of Japan, Khani and Mirzaee (2015) found that teachers who had proper relationships with their students' parents developed a sense of belonging and were more satisfied with their job. Sokal et al. (2020, p. 72) also posited that "teachers with strong feelings of personal accomplishment and low levels of depersonalization would be more likely to perceive a high degree of support from students' parents and school administrators." Therefore, in the follow-up interview, I decided to ask

teachers about their relationships with their students' parents and any hardships they might have experienced in developing those relationships.

RQ2. Summary

RQ2 examined correlations between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. The results were essentially identical to findings from previous studies; teacher self-efficacy negatively correlated with teacher burnout (e.g., Evers et al., 2002; Friedman, 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Khani & Mirzaee, 2015; Fathi & Saeedian, 2020). In particular, teachers with high self-efficacy are not likely to experience job burnout compared to teachers with low self-efficacy. To sum up, teacher self-efficacy can be a protective factor against burnout, and thus, it is important to build teachers' self-efficacy to prevent them from experiencing burnout.

Examining the results more closely, the first correlation was found between emotional exhaustion in burnout dimensions and student engagement in self-efficacy dimension. This indicated that teachers who felt confident in motivating students to learn at school experience less emotional exhausted. Contrarily, teachers with insufficient knowledge on motivating students would feel more emotional exhaustion.

The subsequent analysis revealed three notable correlations involving a lack of personal accomplishment in burnout dimensions and the three dimensions of self-efficacy. First, teachers who possess strong instructional strategies exhibit a higher sense of personal accomplishment. This observation implies that teachers' instructional strategies play a pivotal role in mitigating their levels of burnout. Moreover, the present study uncovered a significant correlation between participating teachers' instructional strategies and their teaching experience. Consequently, it can be assumed that teachers' accumulated teaching experience facilitates the development of their instructional strategies. Second, concerning classroom management, it is important to note that the unique homeroom-teacher system in Japan contributes to increased workload for homeroom teachers. Building on the assumption that exhausted teachers show poorer efficacy in classroom management, thus leading to a lack of personal accomplishment, homeroom teachers are particularly susceptible to experiencing a lack of personal accomplishment. Last, teachers proficient in student engagement skills, such as effectively encouraging students, experience a heightened sense of personal accomplishment in their job. This observation aligns with prior studies (e.g., Brewer & Clippard, 2002; Ross, 1998) that have found the positive link between higher levels of self-efficacy in student engagement and higher sense of personal accomplishment.

Another three correlations were found between depersonalization in burnout dimension and all three dimensions in self-efficacy. First, teachers with effective instructional strategies are less likely to become depersonalized towards their students. This suggests that teachers who are able to employ various instructional strategies in class suffer less from depersonalization. In accordance with this view, professional development efforts that target teachers' instructional strategies could prevent them from experiencing depersonalization towards their students. Second, from the results showing the relationship between depersonalization in burnout dimensions and classroom management in self-efficacy dimensions, the present study implied that the homeroom-teacher system in Japan could impact classroom management rather strongly. This implication is reinforced by Furutani et al.'s (2019) study, implying that teachers who did not establish a relationship with their students and students' parents felt more depersonalized. Thus, the relationship with not only students but also students' parents plays a crucial role for buffering teachers' depersonalization. Third, student engagement, among the three self-efficacy dimensions, had the strongest relationship with depersonalization.

While developing the follow-up interview questions, I became particularly interested in the participating teachers' (1) student engagement skills, (2) confident levels in their teaching, (3) instructional strategies in English class, (4) classroom management skill, and (5) hardship in homeroom management including parent-related matters. Based on the above findings and my interests, the following IQs were developed.

Interview questions developed from RQ2

IQ3	How do you motivate your students to do schoolwork? Do you experience any hardships when motivating them?
IQ4	How much are you confident in your teaching? If the answer is positive, the following question will be "How many years did it take for you to be confident?" If the answer is negative, the alternative question will be "How do you think you can be confident in your teaching?"
IQ5	What is the hardest workload in classroom management as a homeroom teacher? *This question will be exclusively for homeroom teachers or teachers who have experienced having been a homeroom teacher.
IQ6	What kind of school policy or support do you think are necessary to alleviate workload in classroom management? *This question will be exclusively for homeroom teachers or teachers who have experienced having been a homeroom teacher.
IQ7	Do you experience any hardships when establishing a relationship with your students' parents?

RQ3. How Do Five School Contextual Factors (i.e., (1) Time Pressure, (2) Discipline Problems, (3) Supervisory Support, (4) Autonomy, and (5) Relations to Parents), Impact Japanese EFL Teacher Burnout?

Among five school factors, the strongest predictor of teacher burnout was students' discipline problems, and time pressure was the second strongest predictor. Furthermore, burnout and supervisory support were weakly, but significantly related.

Teacher Burnout - Students' Discipline Problems

The present study asked the following three questions regarding discipline problems (Table 20). The findings are in agreement with the ones of previous researchers who investigated burnout impacted by students' discipline problems. Hong's (2010) interview data to dropout teachers ($N = 27$) revealed that classroom management was one of the sources of burnout, and often teachers' lack of ability in handling disruptive behaviors led to emotional burnout. Moreover, other researchers (Covell et al., 2009) posited that dealing with problematic students, problems in interacting with students, student misbehaviors, confrontation by student dropouts, and student disengagement can deplete teachers' resources such as social skills, knowledge, or stamina. As a result, teachers cannot rely on assets or skills within themselves to take care of themselves.

Additionally, discipline problems or disruptive student behaviors are recognized as a serious work-related stressor, and significant correlations have been prominent between teacher burnout and student discipline problems (Kokkinos, 2007). Friedman and Farber (1992) also found that those teachers who considered themselves poor in maintaining discipline in the classroom reported higher levels of job burnout. Further, as presented in the Literature review chapter, teachers experience role conflict and role ambiguity; that is, although teachers are expected to discipline students, certain teachers do not see it as being part of their job (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). This gap might have induced the participating teachers become more likely to experience burnout.

Table 20

Items in Discipline Problems

Likert-type scale 1 to 7	
Q1	My teaching is often disrupted by students who lack discipline.
Q2	Some students with behavior problems make it difficult to carry out lessons as planned.
Q3	Controlling students' behavior takes a lot of time and effort.

The aforementioned MEXT's (2016c) extensive survey sheds light on the amount of time teachers in Japan dedicate to managing student discipline problems. The survey revealed an average of 6 hours and 40 minutes per week allocated to dealing with such problems, which was unchanged since the previous survey in 2006. Notably, addressing student discipline problems often extends beyond regular working hours. For example, in cases of student fights, which occur frequently, teachers assume the role of mediators, listening to each student's story and attempting to resolve conflicts. Given the numerous other responsibilities such as homeroom management or ECAs that occupy teachers' time during regular school hours, handling student discipline problems typically occurs after school. Moreover, teachers may need to contact the students' parents to inform them about the incidents. However, since some parents also work late hours, teachers may have to wait at school. In certain instances, such as when students get injured, teachers may even visit the students' homes to apologize, as it is an implicit assumption within the Japanese educational norm that teachers have responsibility for incidents occurring at school (Senoo, 2022). These multifaceted factors likely contribute significantly to teacher burnout, as supported by the findings of the present study.

In the present study, discipline problems could refer to disruptive student behavior, controlling students' behavior, responding to bullying, etc. Therefore, in the follow-up interview, I decided to address discipline problems and to discuss which types of discipline problems most deplete teachers. Moreover, I decided to address what types of support (e.g., supervisory support, administrative support) they need to alleviate their burden in coping with discipline problems.

Teacher Burnout - Time Pressure

Time pressure was the second strongest predictor of teacher burnout. This result is clearly supported by the above MEXT's (2016c) survey regarding teachers' extensive working hours. OECD (2016) also presented identical data, reporting that middle school

teachers in Japan work 11 hours 32 minutes on weekdays and an additional 3 hours and 5 minutes on weekends: the longest working hours among 48 countries surveyed. Based on this calculation, both middle school and high teachers, on average, have shorter than six hours of sleep: five hours 48 minutes and five hours 55 minutes, respectively (Benesse, 2016). As presented in the Literature Review chapter, numerous studies revealed that teachers encounter substantial pressure stemming from various aspects of their work, including long working hours.

The relationship between burnout and time pressure has been, by and large, found by a number of studies outside of Japan as well. In Iran, Khezerlou (2013) found the mandatory hours teachers are required to teach to be a critical factor causing emotional exhaustion among Iranian EFL teachers. Khezerlou reported that the difference between Iranian and Turkish teachers was more noticeable in emotional exhaustion than other variables. These differences could be attributed to the number of mandatory teaching hours in each context (Khezerlou, 2013). Iranian teachers who taught 24 hours per week were more susceptible to emotional exhaustion than their Turkish counterparts who taught 16 hours per week.

In another study among 2,249 Norwegian teachers, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) investigated the relationships among several variables, including burnout and school context. With regard to school context, they found a strong positive relationship between time pressure and emotional exhaustion in burnout dimensions. They assumed that as teachers experienced more time pressure, they would become more emotionally exhausted and, as a result, more dissatisfied with their job.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study resonate with other studies in terms of time pressure and teacher burnout; it is highly probable that the time factor can impact teacher burnout. Thus, in the follow-up interview, I decided to delve more into which teachers' tasks and workload make them the most depleted.

Teacher Burnout - Supervisory Support

Teacher burnout and supervisory support are weakly, but significantly correlated. Within the Japanese educational context, to the best of my knowledge, each school typically designates a team manager for every grade level. Of significant importance, these head teachers have substantial influence, either positively or negatively, over other teachers within the team. It is worth noting that while certain teachers within a particular team may benefit from sufficient support provided by their respective head teacher, other teachers in other teams may not receive the same levels of support. Furthermore, depending on the specific

school, particularly in private schools, the school principal and/or vice principal have absolute authority in shaping school curricula and formulating policies. Given that social hierarchy is relatively salient in Japan (Senesac, 2022), the relationship between teachers and their supervisors can be extremely important socially and culturally.

Taking several examples outside Japan in terms of supervisory support, lack of social support from supervisors, school administrators, and colleagues has been found to have a positive relationship with teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). Lee and Ashforth (1993) concluded that lack of social support from supervisors was responsible for 14% of the variance of emotional exhaustion, 6% of depersonalization, and 2% of personal accomplishment. Moreover, Ghanizadeh and Ghonsooly (2014) investigated attribution, self-regulation, and burnout among EFL teachers. They found, by employing SEM, that of all attributions, only the institutional supervision was a significant predictor of teacher burnout. Further, Alarcon (2011) disclosed that administrative support was most strongly and negatively associated with depersonalization in burnout dimensions. Hence, given the literature outside Japan, too, several studies demonstrated that social support is closely and strongly related to teacher burnout. Therefore, in the follow-up interview, I decided to ask the participating teachers regarding the type of supervisory support they have experienced and what kind they feel that they need.

Non-Significant Factors with Teacher Burnout

Both teachers' autonomy and the relationship with students' parents were found to have no impact on teacher burnout. With regards to teacher autonomy, the survey data revealed that while teachers may have the freedom to choose teaching methods, strategies, and content for their classes, as well as autonomy in determining their teaching styles, these factors do not alleviate teacher burnout. This could be attributed to the expectations placed on teachers by the school environment. Notably, in certain schools, particularly private schools where great emphasis is placed on students' academic performance, teachers are often encouraged by their supervisors and school administrators to guide their students towards enrollment in prestigious universities. Thus, even when teachers are afforded a certain level of freedom in selecting their teaching approaches, they may still experience an invisible pressure to prioritize preparing their students for entrance examinations.

Regarding the link between teacher burnout and the relationship with students' parents, the findings indicate a lack of significant association between them. However, it is important to acknowledge that even though a small proportion of teachers may experience

difficulties in their relationship with parents, the limited sample size might have hindered the statistical data from revealing a significant relationship. Particularly, unlike the predictable burden associated with ECAs, teachers often encounter unexpected and diverse demands from parents, which can have a substantial impact on their well-being due to the irregularity of these occurrences. Moreover, these demands from parents tend to arise outside of regular working hours, which can further contribute to teacher burnout. This aspect was explored in greater depth during the follow-up interview.

Interview questions developed from RQ3

From RQ3	
IQ8	What types of discipline problems most deplete you, and what types of support do you need to alleviate your burden in terms of students' discipline problems?
IQ9	What type of tasks/workload are most depleting? And why?
IQ10	What type of support from your supervisors/bosses do you think you need?

RQ4. How Do Five School Contextual Factors (i.e., (1) Time Pressure, (2) Discipline Problems, (3) Supervisory Support, (4) Autonomy, and (5) Relations to Parents), Impact Japanese EFL Teacher Self-Efficacy?

RQ4 examined how school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy. The findings revealed, among five school contextual factors, there was a positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and the relationship with students' parents.

Teacher Self-efficacy - The Relationship with Students' Parents

RQ4 in the survey revealed that the relationship with students' parents was significantly correlated with teacher self-efficacy. With this result in mind, it is assumed that teachers' positive relationship with their students' parents could have a positive influence on teacher self-efficacy. In other words, if teachers construct a better relationship with their students' parents, they are likely to have higher self-efficacy. This finding is identical to the aforementioned study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010). They found, in the Norwegian school context (N = 2,249 teachers), that the strongest predictor of teacher self-efficacy was teachers' relationship with their students' parents (r = .46). They postulated that building a positive relationship with parents is essential as the teacher-parent relationship may affect the student's attitudes towards school as well as towards teachers. Therefore, a positive relationship with parents may be an important determinant of students' motivation for schoolwork and students' behaviors at school. Their analysis of both direct and indirect

relations revealed that teachers' relations to parents stood out as the most important school contextual variable that affected teachers' job satisfaction (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010, p.1066).

However, it is worthwhile that teachers, students, and students' parents are closely knitted in the Japanese cultural context. To the best of my knowledge, almost every school in Japan holds a parent-teacher meeting every term (i.e., three times per year). These meetings are set up in order to share information with the parents regarding school academic plans (e.g., terms examinations, school curricula, etc.), non-academic plans (e.g., Sports Day, school excursion, extracurricular activities, etc.), and school policies on students' campus life, etc. In addition, individual parent-teacher (-student) meetings are also conducted a few times per year. Teachers are supposed to inform the parents of their child's academic goals (e.g., university entrance examination) and non-academic information (e.g., the relationship with other classmates, job search). In line with this, some parents have increasingly shown more active involvement in school, making demands about, for example, teachers' classroom management or teaching methods. Taken from a Japanese term for irrational parenting, "monster parents" are known for their bizarre blend of authoritarianism and overprotectiveness in raising their children (Vitelli, 2016). Due to this distinct cultural norm, teachers' tasks seem to have been increasing to meet diverse demands of the parents.

In fact, as previously mentioned, the teacher-parent relationship occupies approximately 20% of reasons for teachers to take sick leave. This data reinforces the following figures; teachers who left their teaching profession in their 20s and 30s significantly increased from 2016 to 2020 at 1.66 times in their 20s and 1.43 times in their 30s (MEXT, 2020), as the Introduction chapter presented. As turnover ratio among young teachers is a serious issue in Japan, it is an urgent matter to consider relieving stress or pressure generated from demands of their students' parents. Thus, in the follow-up interviews, I decided to explore teachers' tasks or workload which they would like to reduce in dealing with students' parents.

However, it is important to note that constructing a better relationship with students' parents also requires parents' understanding of how teachers, in general, experience their workload. Without mutual understanding, a constructive and healthy relationship will not be achieved. One solution is for schools to host workshops or seminars for parents to help them understand the curriculum, grading system, and educational expectations. This can potentially help parents appreciate the complexities of teaching. Moreover, teachers can share articles, research, or videos that highlight the demands on them and the importance of their role.

Additionally, schools can invite parents to volunteer in school events or activities, allowing them to experience firsthand the challenges teachers face. Overall, it is expected that building understanding between teachers and parents takes time and ongoing effort, but I believe highlighting the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers in the Japanese educational context is necessary.

Interview questions developed from RQ4

From RQ4	
IQ11	What are tasks/workload which you would like to reduce in dealing with students' parents?

RQ5. How Do Japanese EFL Teachers' Perceived English Language Proficiency Influence Their Self-efficacy?

RQ5 explored how Japanese EFL teachers' perceived English language proficiency influence their self-efficacy. The findings revealed that teachers' perceived language proficiency was found to be significantly related to teacher self-efficacy. There exist several studies which corroborate this result (Chacón, 2005; Lee, 2009). For example, Chacon's (2005) study targeting 104 EFL middle-school teachers in Venezuela, student engagement in self-efficacy dimensions was significantly correlated with all of the sub-skill areas of language proficiency such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Specifically for FL teachers, Chacón (2005) theorizes that if teachers' perceived efficacy in the four skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in the second language (L2) is high, they may be more likely to engage students in mastery experiences. In a similar vein, Eslami and Fatahi (2008) studied the relationships among self-efficacy, instructional strategies, and self-assessment of language proficiency among 40 Iranian high school EFL teachers. They found a positive relationship between teachers' self-reported level of language proficiency and their self-efficacy.

Examining each proficiency skill of the participating teachers in the present study in greater detail, as the descriptive statistics (Table 15) showed, amongst the proficiency-related skills, teachers ranked themselves the most highly for knowledge of English grammar (M = 4.98, SD = 1.33). A possible reason for this is concerned with English education the participating teachers have experienced as a learner and/or a teacher. In the EFL education in Japan, there has been a long tradition of foreign language learning called Yakudoku, a resemblance to the Grammar-Translation Method of the West (Hayashi, 2020). Although the current MEXT's English curriculum requires that oral communication at schools be

instructed in English, it is highly probable that the Yakudoku method remains deeply rooted. In fact, as the Literature Review chapter argued, Japanese teachers are less confident in their own English-speaking abilities, and are therefore uncomfortable teaching communicatively (Hirata, 2018).

Additionally, based on the findings of the present study, which indicate that grammar is the most robust skill among the participating teachers, it is assumed that the entrance examination variable directly influences teachers' perceived English language proficiency. This assumption arises from the specific context of Japanese education, where the university entrance examination holds significant prominence, as previously discussed (see the above discussion of RQ2 (i.e., How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?). Considering the prevailing trend that current English tests in the university entrance examination predominantly emphasize grammar and reading skills, it is presumed that students' expectations of mastering grammar in preparation for their university entrance examination might lead Japanese EFL teachers to employ teaching methods that maximize their grammatical knowledge and reading abilities. From the teachers' perspective, they may feel compelled to prioritize these two skills in order to meet their students' demands for success in the entrance examination. Consequently, students are more likely to follow teachers who possess higher English language proficiency, particularly in grammar and reading skills. The resulting trust from students, in turn, may positively impact teachers' self-efficacy. This assumption also led me to come up with one simple question for the follow-up interview: Which English skills would teachers like to instruct if they were not bound by the entrance examination?

Furthermore, the present survey revealed that teachers perceived their speaking proficiency (M = 4.39, SD = 1.53) as being the second weakest proficiency after vocabulary (M = 4.20, SD = 1.30). The result might be attributed to non-native EFL teachers' tendency to feel that they are measured negatively against native speaker norms, especially regarding their pronunciation and conversational fluency (Wyatt, 2018). Reves and Medgyes (1994) studied 216 native and non-native EFL teachers in different countries. Accordingly, they disclosed that 84% of the non-native teachers felt incompetent with regard to speaking, listening, writing, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Moreover, two studies (Cooke, 2013; Mills & Allen, 2007) explored the relationship between language proficiency and self-efficacy of French teachers who speak French either as a first or second language. Both studies found positive relationships between French language proficiency and self-efficacy beliefs; the native speakers of French reported feeling more efficacious. Hence, even to EFL teachers

with a high command of English, the native-speaker norms prevalent in the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) field (i.e., good English teachers speak Anglo-English like native speakers) are an enormous discouragement to establishing credibility as English teachers (Braine, 2010; Llurda, 2006). Thus, teachers' attitudes towards native norms may weaken the perceptions of their English language proficiency, and ultimately their self-efficacy.

Here, I would like to briefly mention the use of the terminology of native/non-native speakers. While some scholars assert that the binary distinction is breaking down in the field as a means to combat the stigmatization of bi/multilingual speakers/teachers, as mentioned by Ortega (2019), the native/monolingual bias continues to persist as a framework within the applied linguistic community. These terms are applied for various reasons: in some cases, for practical purposes, and in others, due to the ongoing stigmatization attributed to non-native speakers. This native/non-native dichotomy is retained, and the ambiguities in its definition are acknowledged, but efforts are made to deconstruct it further in order to embrace and empower non-native speaking teachers. Kiczkoviak (2019) even uses "native" and "non-native" with inverted commas to highlight the specific intention behind their use. In the Japanese context, there are also companies and educational institutions that exclusively recruit native speakers through Japanese job boards (e.g., Indeed, jREC-in). For these reasons, I have chosen to use the terminology of native/non-native speakers.

Considering the above findings and discussion, I intend to delve into the participating teachers' authentic thoughts on English education in Japan. Thus, the follow-up interview addresses the following IQ.

Interview questions developed from RQ5

From RQ5	
IQ12	Which English skills would you like your students to develop if there were not university entrance examination? What is your goal as an English teacher?

RQ6. Do Japanese EFL Teachers' (1) Education Level, (2) Teaching Experience, and (3) Experience of Going Abroad Correlate with Teacher Burnout and Teacher Self-Efficacy?

The present study investigated how Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad directly impact both teacher burnout and self-efficacy. The results showed that the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and their teaching experience was correlated ($r = .33$, $p < .001$,), which indicates the accumulated

teaching experience positively influences teacher self-efficacy. This finding is in accordance with previous studies (e.g., Choi & Lee, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). For instance, in a study of 447 Iranian EFL teachers, Akbari and Moradkhani (2010) revealed that there was a positive correlation between professional experience and teacher self-efficacy beliefs.

Considering the three dimensions in self-efficacy (i.e., instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement), it is probable that teachers would gain knowledge of instructional strategies and student engagement skills by conducting classes. Attending teacher training programs and seminars could also be a contributor to gaining knowledge of these two dimensions. As for classroom management, it is often mentioned that new teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a homeroom teacher after three years of experience. In line with this statement, out of the 132 teachers included in the study, 118 had more than three years of teaching experience at the time the data was collected. This factor might have had an influence on the results obtained.

The additional mediation analysis, however, reported that teaching experience did not have a statistical impact as a mediator between teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' burnout. Further, in order to delve into this finding, I explored which dimension in self-efficacy (i.e., instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement) is most closely related to teachers' teaching experience. The results of the single linear regression revealed, as shown in Table 21, student engagement was most relevant to teaching experience. In fact, student engagement was the only dimension, among the three dimensions in self-efficacy, that showed a significant relationship with all three dimensions in burnout. Hence, it is assumed that if teachers accumulate their teaching experience, they develop their student engagement skills, and once they develop their student engagement skills, they might eventually lower their burnout levels.

Table 21

Correlations between Teachers' Teaching Experience and Their Self-efficacy in Single Linear Regression Analysis (N=132)

	Correlations	*p*-values
Teaching experience ～		
Instructional strategies	**.273**	**.003
Classroom management	**.239**	*.008
Student engagement	**.317**	***.000

Note. Significant correlation is marked in bold.

$^{*}p < .01$. $^{**}p < .005$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Chapter Summary

RQ1 revealed that COVID-19 and teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession had a significant correlation with teacher burnout. Moreover, the analysis between teacher burnout and teaching experience suggested that both beginner teachers and experienced teachers experience burnout in the Japanese context.

RQ2 postulated a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout, aligning with findings from prior research. To summarize, first, teachers who possess confidence in their ability to motivate and encourage students at school exhibited reduced emotional exhaustion, a higher sense of personal accomplishment, and are less likely to experience depersonalization towards their students. Second, teachers who are skillful at classroom management reported an increased sense of personal accomplishment and less depersonalization. Third, teachers proficient in instructional strategies demonstrated higher levels of personal accomplishment and showed a reduced tendency towards depersonalization in their interactions with students. Remarkably, as teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy are the primary components within the present study, an in-depth exploration of these components is intended in the follow-up interview.

RQ3 found that, among five school contextual factors, students' discipline problems, time pressure, and supervisory support were significantly related to teacher burnout. Regarding discipline problems and time pressure, MEXT's (2016c) survey as well as the data by OECD (2016) substantiate these findings in terms of teachers' extensive working hours, which may lead to teachers' emotional burnout. Considering supervisory support, the finding

suggested that teachers need sufficient support from their team managers, supervisors, and school administrators to reduce their burnout levels.

RQ4 uncovered that teachers' relation to students' parents had a significant impact on teacher self-efficacy. Teachers' tasks and pressure from the demands of students' parents in the Japanese context are immense. This might urge younger teachers' turnover intention out of teaching profession. As the turnover ratio among young teachers is a serious issue in Japan, it is of great importance to consider reducing their tasks and pressure.

RQ5 found a significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and their English language proficiency. Above all, the present study found that the participating teachers' perceptions of grammar skill was the strongest and speaking skill was the second weakest. This result may be substantiated by English education system they experienced. On the one hand, "native-speaker norms" can be a factor that negatively influences teacher self-efficacy.

The findings of RQ6 revealed a significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teachers' teaching experience, suggesting a positive influence of accumulated teaching experience on teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, supplementary analysis identified student engagement within the dimensions of self-efficacy as being particularly pertinent to teaching experience. Consequently, it can be inferred that teachers' accumulated teaching experience has the potential to foster the development of their student engagement skills.

In conclusion, the above findings and discussion led me to create the prompts for the qualitative interview in Phase 2 in the present study. As a result, a total of 12 interview questions were developed (Table 22). As the Methodology and Analysis chapter presented, the interview was conducted in the teachers' first language (i.e., Japanese), via an online platform, Zoom. Each interview took between 36 and 95 minutes, totaling 940 min. All interviews were audio-recorded with the interviewees' permission. Detailed information about the participants can be found in the aforementioned Research Context.

Table 22

Interview Questions in Phase 2

From RQ1	
IQ1	How has COVID-19 impacted on your teaching, mental state, and so forth?
IQ2	Have you ever thought of leaving the teaching profession? Why? Why not?
From RQ2	
IQ3	How do you motivate your students to do schoolwork? Have you experienced any hardships when motivating them?
IQ4	How much are you confident in your teaching? If the answer is a positive response, the following question will be "How many years did it take for you to gain confident?" If the answer is a negative response, the alternative question will be "How do you think you can be confident in your teaching?"
IQ5	What is the hardest workload in classroom management as a homeroom teacher? *This question will be exclusively for homeroom teachers or teachers who have experienced having been a homeroom teacher.
IQ6	What kind of school policy or support do you think are necessary to alleviate workload in classroom management? *This question will be exclusively for homeroom teachers or teachers who have experienced having been a homeroom teacher.
IQ7	Do you experience any hardships when establishing a relationship with your students' parents?
From RQ3	
IQ8	What types of discipline problems most deplete you, and what types of support do you need to alleviate your burden in terms of students' discipline problems?
IQ9	What type of tasks/workload are most depleting? And why?
IQ10	What type of support from your supervisors/bosses do you think you need?
From RQ4	
IQ11	What are tasks/workload which you would like to reduce in dealing with students' parents?
From RQ5	
IQ12	Which English skills would you like your students to develop if there were not university entrance examination? What is your goal as an English teacher?

The next chapter addresses both the results and discussion of the qualitative interview. Based on my extensive reading on thematic analysis, I have chosen to integrate these two sections due to their advantages, which are also discussed at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter 6: Results and Discussion of Qualitative Interview

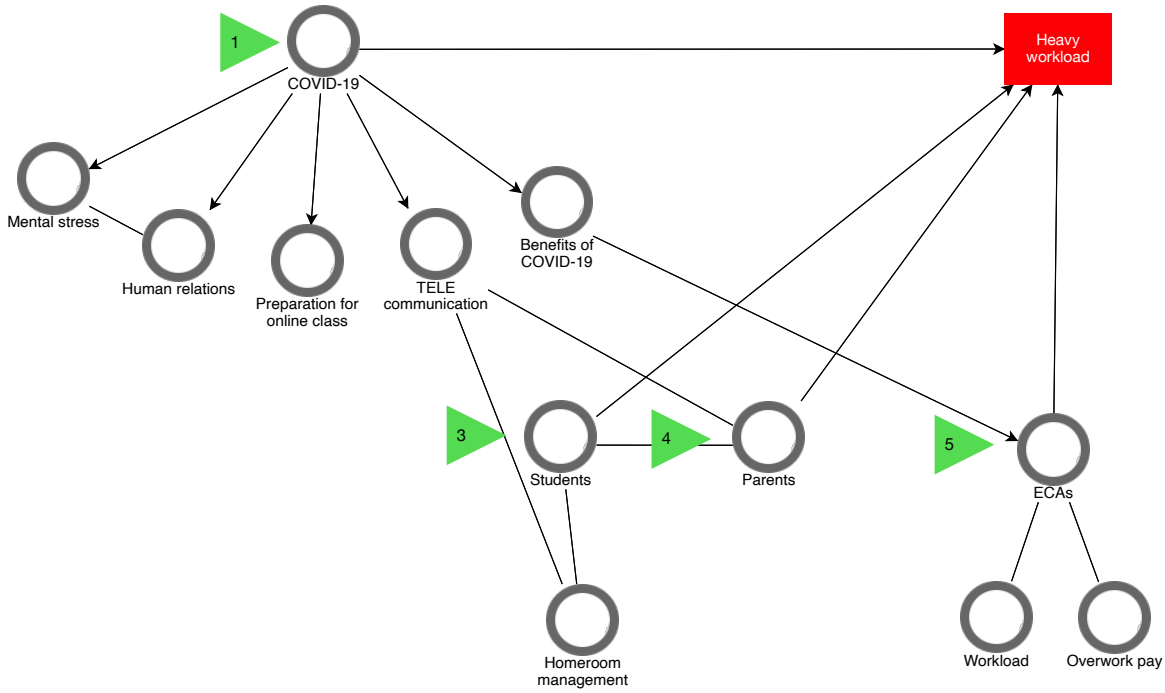
The following chapter combines the study's qualitative results and a discussion of those results. Although the traditional scientific model of research report is to separate these two sections, "this way of writing causes manuscript to likely be repetitive, and researchers have to determine whether the interpretative work of their qualitative analysis happens in both sections or primarily in the discussion" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 132). Braun et al. (n.d.) consider that separating results and discussion style substandard in thematic analysis because both are effectively treated as separate entities, with little specific connection between the particular analytic points developed through engagement with the data. On the other hand, an integrated approach of results and discussion sections works particularly well, in addition to avoiding repetition, when there are strong connections with existing research, and when the analysis is more theoretical or interpretative (Braun & Clarke., 2022, p. 133). Taking this into consideration, the present chapter integrates both results and discussion, covering six themes (i.e., the aforementioned theme 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7) in the following six analysis stages. It is noted that the participating teachers' input in theme 6 (i.e., supervisory support) is used as implications in the Conclusion chapter.

Analysis Stage 1. COVID-19

As the Figure 16 shows, there are four sub-themes under the theme COVID-19: (1) Mental stress and Human relations, (2) Preparation for online class, (3) Tele communication, and (4) Benefits of COVID-19. It is noted that "Tele communication" is in relation to "Homeroom management," which is under the third theme (i.e., Students) and "Parents" which is the fourth theme. Moreover, "Benefits of COVID-19" is in relation to the fifth theme (i.e., Extracurricular activities).

Figure 16

Concept Map: COVID-19



Mental Stress and Human Relations

COVID-19 brought substantial mental stress to the teachers. First, they were impacted by restrictions such as social distancing, air ventilation, sanitization, etc. They also expressed their frustration regarding the sudden cancellation of important events (e.g., a graduation ceremony, a school trip). Teacher 16 (Leaver-27 years old) mentioned:

> I finally became a teacher, but I couldn't see my students at all, and I was worried about when the school would start… Actually, I've never led a school trip. Actually, I was going to lead a study abroad program in Australia, which was our biggest school trip, but I wasn't able to do that either, due to COVID-19. Some parents even asked me when the event would resume, which I don't know. (Teacher 16, L-27)

Moreover, a specific feature of language education (e.g., repetitive practice, conversation practice) during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the quality of their English classes. Teacher 13 (In-service teacher-51 years old) shared their difficulty in conducting an English class during the pandemic:

> During the English class, I couldn't give an instruction anything like "read it with your friends" or "talk with the person next to you." My students were not allowed to speak out in class although I wanted them to do a choral repetition practice. The

> classes weren't fun, and my students couldn't even talk, so it was really stressful. (Teacher 13, IN-51)

Teacher 6 (L-27) shed light on a cultural aspect of Japan, emphasizing the worsening of teachers' work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a scarcity of opportunities and places for stress relief. This was attributed to the prevailing social and peer pressures inherent in Japanese society, as previously discussed in the Introduction chapter. Noticeably, teachers often face strong peer pressure: they cannot always take a sick leave even when necessary. Teacher 6 (L-27) underscored the restrictive influence of social pressure, particularly arising from students' parents, which limits the range of activities available to teachers. Hence, even not being able to visit a restaurant after work became a source of frustration for teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

COVID-19 also seems to have an impact on human relations. In particular, due to the severe restrictions, according to Teacher 3 (L-31), they tried not to talk more than necessary, which might have led to a lack of communication among teachers. Teacher 3 (L-31) mentioned that they no longer try to communicate voluntarily compared to before the pandemic. Teacher 17 (Mover-52) also shared their view on peer pressure which impacts human relations:

> Peer pressure at work has simply increased. Honestly, I can't do anything more freely than I used to, and I simply feel that it's getting harder and harder to be at my workplace. We are becoming less tolerant of so-called individual personalities or characteristics. This applies to not only teachers, but students as well. In other words, it is a microcosm of Japanese society. It's unique to Japan, but I feel peer/social pressure is gradually increasing due to the pandemic. Let's say, once they start something, they have to continue it without stopping because they are afraid of doing something else. This happens at school too; we still wear masks all the time in class, and everyone eats lunch with their faces facing forward even after the restrictions have been loosened. (Teacher 17, M-52)

Peer and social pressures, as mentioned above, may be one of the cultural aspects in Japan. Teachers feel pressure from society as well as from their workplaces. In other words, teachers' creating a healthy working environment may largely depend on how they face these pressures.

Preparation for Online Class

The COVID restrictions also forced a majority of teachers to shift to a remote class. Consistent with this, they had a lot of materials to prepare as most schools in Japan did not have WI-FI as of 2020. For instance, they had to distribute an email address to every student,

check if each student's laptop or computer had a security software, helped students set up Chromebook, etc. Above all, some teachers had to visit each student's home to deliver a router if they did not have sufficient Internet environment. The teachers interviewed mentioned that even after they resumed in a remote environment, they suffered from a stressful online environment (e.g., weak WI-FI, students' limited packet data, a time-lag, a hybrid class, etc.). According to Teacher 15 (M-49), for students who were not able to attend online due to poor Internet connection, teachers visited their students' home to deliver learning materials.

Teacher 1 (M-41) commented that in addition to supporting their students, they had to help their coworkers who were not familiar with the online teaching environment. Concurrently, Teacher 10 (IN-26) mentioned that teachers without IT knowledge seemed to have more stress till they got used to online content delivery. Teacher 9 (M-29) described the situation where they had to do online and hybrid classes at the same time as being very stressful.

Sokal et al. (2020, p. 7) insist that it is important to address teachers' thoughts and feelings about remote teaching as well as their exhaustion in order to mitigate their continued progression towards burnout. They even mention that this goal can be accomplished by supervisory support. However, several teachers did not receive support from their supervisors. Teacher 12 (IN-31) showed their irritation against school administrators who left everything to them without a specific set of guidelines.

Tele communication

Effective communication with parents is a pivotal aspect within the Japanese educational context, with Tele communication (i.e., communication by phone) being no exception. For instance, in cases where a student fails to attend the morning assembly, it is imperative for the homeroom teacher to promptly contact the student's parents to confirm the reason for their absence. Notably, during the pandemic, Teacher 12 (IN-31) reported that such communication became even more prominent, as school administrators showed higher sensitivity towards COVID-19-related circumstances, such as the prevalence of cases. Homeroom teachers were additionally required to submit supplementary reports to their supervisors and school administrators in the event that one of their students tested positive for the virus. Furthermore, they were obliged to contact each family on a daily basis to provide updates. Overall, Tele communication constituted a substantial part of a homeroom teacher's responsibilities, often demanding as much as one to two hours of their daily workload. A

story shared by Teacher 1 (M-41) further revealed the busyness experienced by homeroom teachers during the pandemic:

> In terms of percentages, when the coronavirus started, the amount of work was already 120%. When the school was closed, I called my students' parents during that period, and asked them if the students had any problems, especially their mental health. That mental care depleted me, yes, it was 120% of workload, I think… As a homeroom teacher, I think I'm a "frontman," so I think it's very hard to deal with that kind of thing. Teacher 1 (M-41)

Frequent Tele communication, as observed in the Japanese educational context, can be considered a distinctive cultural norm. Neglecting this form of communication as a homeroom teacher can lead to a deterioration of the teacher-parent relationship, which worsens the stress associated with classroom management. As highlighted in the Discussion chapter of Phase 1, parents have a considerable degree of authority within the Japanese context. This observation is supported by the data that among approximately 5,000 public-school teachers in Japan who take a leave of absence due to mental health concerns every year (MEXT, 2022b), some teachers even commit suicide due to pressure from their students' parents (Senoo, 2021). The Analysis Stage 4 delves more into Tele communication with parents.

Benefits of COVID-19?

The only positive aspect found in terms of COVID-19 was reducing working hours in extracurricular activities (ECAs). ECAs have had a substantial impact on teachers' workload since they were implemented as part of school program in the 1970s (See the Introduction chapter). The OECD survey (2019) reported that secondary school teachers in Japan spend 7.5 hours for ECAs per week, which is substantially longer than the OECD average (i.e., 1.9 hours). Three teachers (i.e., Teacher 4 (L-26), Teacher 8 (L-49), and Teacher 14 (IN-48)) confessed that thanks to COVID-19, the excessive workload in ECAs were significantly reduced, as in this example:

> For me, Corona simply brought a positive influence. If I remember correctly, the school was closed in March, April, and May of 2020. At that time, I took a day off during Golden Week[12] for the first time in my 25-year teaching career. Teachers in charge of ECAs sarcastically call it "Black Week" though, because there are club activities games, competitions, and expeditions. Since then, to be honest, I was glad that the time per week for ECAs was limited. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

[12] Golden Week is a period that has cluster of national holidays around the end of April and beginning of May, and many Japanese workers get about a week off. WebJapan (2020)

Teacher 2 (L-47) pointed out that there are a number of meaningless events in the educational context in Japan, and these events were simplified because of the COVID-19. One of them is ceremonial gatherings which sometimes take several hours. Teacher 2 (L-47) shared one example:

> Even during the current pandemic, we will have a graduation ceremony this year (i.e., March 2023) as well, but for the past three years, the entrance ceremony and graduation ceremony have been simplified thanks to the COVID-19. There were no speeches from local governments or people on the board of education that, in fact, almost no one listens to. I thought that was a great graduation ceremony ever. Teacher 2 (L-47)

Summary for the Analysis Stage 1

COVID-19 had serious impacts on the participating teachers as well as their coworkers. First, they suffered from mental stress due to severe restrictions under the pandemic. Pressure from society, especially from students' parents might have contributed to teachers' poor work-life balance. In addition, human relations at workplace deteriorated in terms of lack of communication. One teacher insisted that peer pressure, which is culturally strong in Japan, further increased over the pandemic, and they could not do anything freely that they used to do. Second, due to the shift to a remote setting, teachers had plenty of tasks to prepare for online classes. One teacher mentioned that their school administrators were of little help since they did not provide a specific set of guidelines in transitioning to online classes. Third, Tele communication with the students' parents also depleted them in light of time. Specifically, homeroom teachers had to send out additional report to their supervisors and school administrators if one of their students got tested positive, and they also had to call each family every day for the update. Fourth, the only positive influence was restrictions of ECAs, which lightened teachers' workload. In other words, ECAs have been unchangeably a heavy burden for teachers since they were implemented as part of school program in 1970s.

It is noteworthy that none of the teachers mentioned that COVID-19 affected their intention to leave their teaching profession, implying that there are other factors that might cause teachers to leave their profession. Thus, I intend to explore them in the following analysis stage: the Analysis Stage 2.

Analysis Stage 2. Intention to Leave the Teaching Profession

As outlined in the Methodology chapter, Phase 1 of this study involved administering a quantitative survey to the participating teachers, drawing implication from O'Brien et al.'s

(2008) study. This survey aimed to understand the teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession. Respondents expressing a serious intention to leave their current position were further asked regarding their plans to seek alternative teaching positions (i.e., movers) or pursue non-teaching opportunities (i.e., leavers).

In Phase 2, during the interview stage, all 17 participants were asked about their intention of leaving the teaching profession, with the question prompting them to elaborate on their reasons for considering such a move, as well as their reasons for remaining in the profession. The findings revealed that 14 out of the 17 teachers had indeed considered leaving the teaching profession. This observation underlines that, irrespective of whether they expressed an intention to move or leave, all participants had thought the possibility of leaving their current teaching positions. Consequently, this stage of analysis delves into the various factors that contributed to their choices, categorized into the following four sub-themes: (1) Human relations and mental stress, (2) Workload, (3) Work-life balance, and (4) No choice but teaching.

Human Relations and Mental Stress

Even before the pandemic, issues in human relations and teachers' mental stress were deeply rooted in Japanese school culture. Teacher 8 (L-49) mentioned that they were fed up with their working environment, especially based on their relationship with their supervisors. Teacher 15 (M-49) emphasized that a substantial number of their coworkers suffered from mental health issues and took sick leave every year due to human relations. In fact, Teacher 3 (L-31) decided to take a year leave from the following year (i.e., April 2023) due to human relations with their coworkers to human relations and a sense of distrust towards school policy. Although government data officially does not reveal the number of teachers who return to their jobs after they leave, it is assumed many of them leave without returning to school (Senoo, 2021). This view is supported by Teacher 11's (L-58) comment, "Many of my coworkers took a leave of absence as they experienced severe mental illnesses, but they never returned." Teacher 9 (M-29) showed their positive attitude towards teaching but suffered from human relations at school, and thus, they decided to leave for another prefecture to find a new teaching position.

Unhealthy human relations sometimes influenced teachers both mentally and physically. Teacher 13 (IN-51) experienced sudden deafness due to overwork, and especially stress from human relations:

> There have been times when I wanted to quit. Even before the pandemic, one year at the very end of March, I suddenly lost hearing in one ear in the morning. I didn't really understand what happened to my body, but the doctor says one of the causes seems to be stress. To be honest, I still want to quit if I can even now. Teacher 13 (IN-51)

In fact, a recent survey by the city board of education in Yamagata (Toyokeizai, 2023) revealed the data showing that the number of teachers who left the profession due to mental illnesses increased from 2017 to 2021. In particular, the number of young teachers who quit within their fifth year of teaching in the prefecture more than doubled from 13 in 2017 to 30 in 2021. A prefectural board of education official commented regarding the data as follows:

> While listening to the voices of each individual, we have to prepare a healthy working environment for new teachers. Resolving labor issues will make the teaching profession more attractive to university students, which will lead to an increase in the number of aspiring teachers. (a prefectural board of education official in Yamagata)

Workload

Workload can be significant contributor to teachers' motivation to continue their career. Particularly, duties that are irrelevant to teaching (e.g., ECAs, homeroom management, etc.) are a huge amount of work. For example, Teacher 14 (IN-48) mentioned that some teachers are in charge of two ECAs. Teacher 10 (IN-26) expressed their serious concern by mentioning that they got assigned as a baseball coach in the first year of teaching when they had not yet got used to the working environment. As mentioned in the Analysis Stage 1, when teachers are in charge of ECAs, especially sports clubs (i.e., baseball, volleyball, badminton, etc.), no holiday is guaranteed because they have practice, games, competitions, and expeditions during the weekends and long vacation (See Analysis Stage 5). Teacher 15 (M-49) told that they took only three days of rest that year due to heavy workload and lost health under stress by being in charge of two ECAs.

Another example of teachers' additional tasks is the home visit. Homeroom teachers visit each student's home with the aim of supporting children's school life a few times per year (See the Analysis Stage 4 for more detail). Additionally, at some schools, the principal regularly asks homeroom teachers to visit their student's home if they are absent for three consecutive days (Makiuchi, 2023). Due to enormous workload, some teachers stay at school until midnight to prepare for the next day:

> There was an overwhelming amount of workload that I could not handle with my own efforts. No matter how efficiently I handled it trying not to work overtime as much as possible, the amount of work that far exceeds it rushed in. During busy times, there were times when I couldn't prepare for the next day unless I stayed until midnight. It was something I couldn't control, so I thought it would be very painful mentally and physically. Teacher 6 (L-27)

In fact, the recent survey in 2022 by MEXT (2022a) revealed that approximately 37% of public secondary school teachers work additional 80 hours per month, which is extremely serious when it comes to teachers' well-being. The Analysis Stage 3 examines teachers' workload in great detail.

Work-life Balance

As the Introduction chapter presented, 66.1% of middle school teachers and 53.1% of high school teachers in Japan are not content with the work-life balance (Benesse, 2016). Teacher 12 (IN-31) shared their story which supports the data above:

> About four or five years ago, there was a time when I thought it would be difficult to continue as a teacher. When I got married and had a child, it was difficult to find time spending at home. So, things weren't so good at home. At my school, supplementary lessons started at 7:45 in the morning, and I was assigned to be a coach of the soccer club, so I was at work until around 19:30. I was at school for about half the day. That's why I discussed it with my partner about another career. Teacher 12 (IN-31)

Further, Teacher 14 (IN-48) expressed their irritation against lack of support by both school administrators and local government:

> My mother was hospitalized after a brain hemorrhage in April of last year (2022), and my husband and I managed to take care of her. My husband is also a teacher, so he was very busy, the school and didn't support me. In the end, I used a system of staggered working hours, and somehow managed each day by not having classes in the first period from Tuesday to Friday. At some point, however, I wondered if there was any meaning in working this way. I still want to quit honestly. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

If fact, Teacher 1 (M-41) left their teaching position due to their notorious working conditions, and Teacher 4 (L-26) left Japan to find a teaching position at a local Japanese school abroad. Thus, the deterioration of their working situation, which brings an unhealthy work-life balance, might spur teachers to leave the teaching profession.

Additionally, the new policy regarding the retirement age was implemented in April 2023. The retirement age of civil servants including teachers in public schools was extended in stages from 60 until the age of 65. The background issue of this stems from the pension

system in Japan; the age at which public pensions begin to be paid has been raised in stages from 60 to 65 (Nogawa, 2022). Thus, it has become necessary to link the employment of civil servants and pensions to prevent periods of no income. This critical change will have a significant impact on teachers. For instance, teachers who are presently 55 years old have received unexpected news that their retirement will occur in 10 years, contrary to their anticipation of 5 years. Moreover, if these teachers hold administrative roles, they are required to return to the classroom. This situation substantially contributes to heightened stress, increased burnout, and, ultimately, a disruption in their work-life balance.

No Choice but Teaching

There could be multiple reasons for teachers to stay in the teaching profession. The interview phase found that there are at least two perspectives regarding why teachers stay in their profession. First, they aimed to be a teacher and thus stayed in the teaching profession, or second, they became a teacher anyway but cannot leave the teaching profession for some reason. The first perspective applies to two teachers, Teacher 5 (IN-25) and Teacher 7 (IN-33), and they have two things in common. First, they have never thought that other occupations are more attractive than teaching. Teacher 7 (IN-33) shared their story regarding the values of teaching:

> Ever since I was a university student, I thought that making money or running a business was not my area. I thought that I would not be able to maintain my motivation in a company that prioritizes making profits, so I do not think about anything other than teaching. Teacher 7 (IN-33)

Second, these two teachers receive generous support from their supervisors and coworkers. Teacher 5 (IN-25) mentioned that they were fortunate enough to build a healthy relationship with their coworkers, and both coworkers and supervisors provided them with advice whenever they needed it.

The second perspective is more complex. Teacher 17 (M-52) stayed in the teaching profession since the teaching position at public school guarantees stable income. Other teachers regretfully commented that they were too old to find other occupations. This idea was expressed by two teachers. Teacher 15 (M-49) said, “I saw a lot of younger teachers change their careers. I would also like to do if I were young.” Teacher 13 (IN-51) commented:

> I don’t want younger in-service teachers to quit, but if I were them, I would quit. If I were still in my 20s, I think I would definitely quit. At this moment, I really can't stop

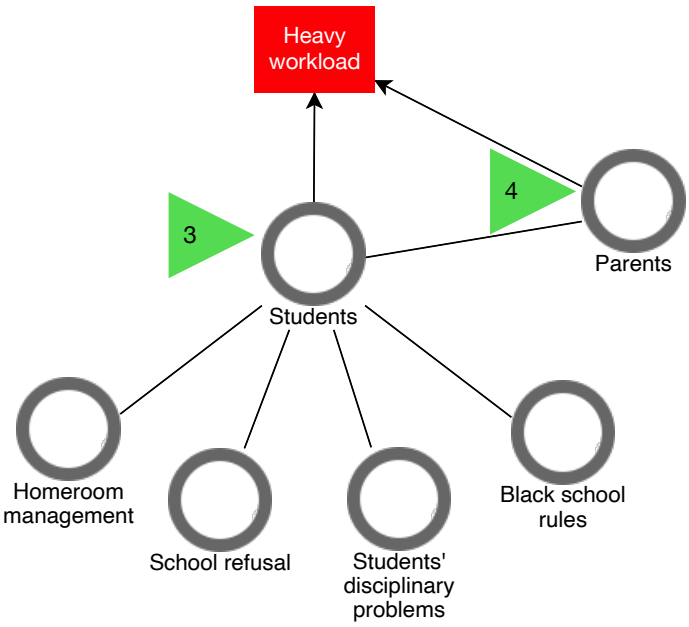
> anymore. It's hell to both advance or retreat. That's why, I think that the number of people who want to get into this profession will definitely decrease in the future. Teacher 13 (IN-51)

Analysis Stage 3. Student-Related Matters

Teachers are having to cope with an ever-expanding workload as the demands from the society to school has been increasing (Senoo, 2022). This analysis stage delves into teachers' workload related to their students. As the concept map below describes (Figure 17), the theme "Students" consists of four sub-themes; (1) Homeroom management, (2) Students' school refusal, (3) Students' disciplinary problems, and (4) Black school rules. It is also noted that the theme 3 "Students" is in relation to the theme 4 "Parents" which is explored in the Analysis Stage 4.

Figure 17

Concept Map: Students



Homeroom Management

Homeroom management requires teachers to devote considerable time to it, and indeed, it depletes teachers as Teacher 2 (L-47) said, "It is mentally exhausting." Teacher 9 (M-29) added, "Our overall amount of work would become half without homeroom management." In fact, teachers in Japan often work extensive hours, with certain teachers working up to 12 hours per day or more (the Japanese government, 2016). Based on a typical day of homeroom teachers reported by MEXT (TBS News, 2023), they arrive at school

before 8:00 a.m. and leave school after 9:00 p.m. (Table 23). Considering that they teach three to five classes per day, their day is packed with a variety of tasks and workload.

Table 23

Typical Schedule of Teachers

7:15 a.m.	Arrive at school
7:30 a.m.	Morning practice in ECAs
8:10 a.m.	Morning meeting
8:30 a.m.	Morning reading in the classroom
8:40 a.m.	Morning assembly in the classroom
8:50 a.m.	Classes
0:45 p.m.	Lunch break in the classroom
1:45 p.m.	Classes
3:30 p.m.	Cleaning
3:55 p.m.	Afternoon assembly
4:10 p.m.	ECAs, meetings, deal with students' disciplinary problems, etc.
6:00 p.m.	Check students' assignments, prepare for the classes, etc.
9:15 p.m.	Leave school

In addition to lesson planning and grading as subject teachers, homeroom teachers issue classroom newsletters regularly (e.g., some teachers issue it every day), collect funding from students' parents, write a comment on students' report cards, send reference letters to high school and/or university, teach an ethics class, organize school events such as a chorus competition, a sports day, a school festival, etc. Teacher 11 (L-58) shared a story by telling how busy they are even during the lunch break:

> On a day I have a lot of classes, it's quite difficult to read the diaries of 40 students. I eat lunch in the classroom because fights may break out if nobody supervises them. There are students who get sick, and there are bullies, so I eat lunch in 3 minutes while keeping an eye on them. I also check the quiz and write comments in the students' diaries, you know. Plus, helping the students practice for the speech contest, meeting at the students' committee, planning collecting PET bottles, refilling the soap liquid, etc., so I have literally no time at all. Teacher 11 (L-58)

How can the burden on teachers be alleviated? The TBS News (2023) asked teachers which miscellaneous tasks they would like to reduce in the questionnaire (See Table 24). As

the results show, teachers do tasks that are outside teaching, and to make matters worse, some of these tasks are done outside working hours, which is a serious social problem.

Table 24

Miscellaneous Tasks Teachers Would Like to Reduce (TBS News, 2023, April 28)

44%	Morning patrol in a school zone *before working hours
59%	Night patrol *after working hours
66%	Collecting school revenue and PTA[13] fees from students' parents
50%	Working with local volunteers

Students' School Refusal

The analysis of interview data revealed that one of the most challenging responsibilities associated with homeroom management pertains to addressing students' truancy or school refusal. Various factors contribute to students' inability to attend school. For instance, depression resulting from human relations, familial issues, academic underperformance, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are frequently cited as reasons for students' absence from school (ESSE online, 2023). It is noteworthy that schools are expected to assign school counselors (SCs) and/or social workers (SWs) on a full-time basis; however, as of 2021, a significant proportion (77.3%) of high schools employ them for four hours or less per week (MEXT, 2023). Consequently, homeroom teachers, and occasionally school nurses, take the responsibility of addressing students' school refusal and attending to their mental well-being. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider that homeroom teachers lack specialized training in this specific domain and are already overwhelmed with the aforementioned tasks. Furthermore, some teachers experience emotional exhaustion when solely burdened with the responsibility of supporting students' mental health. Teacher 8 (L-49) conveyed their feeling when confronted with students with school refusal:

> This year, I am in charge of several students who can't attend school. I have a completely different kind of fatigue. Calling parents of my students who can't come to school, emailing them, and taking care of their mental health generates a different kind of difficulty than usual. I myself got infected with corona recently, and I felt depressed during that time, so I think the same applies to students with school refusal. When I deal with these students who get depressed, and further, when I talk with my

[13] PTA= Parent-Teacher Association. See the Analysis Stage 4 for more detail.

> students' parents who also get depressed because their child can't go to school, I find myself empathetic and my feelings are falling too. You know, I'm not a robot. When these hectic days piled up, I felt like I couldn't do anything anymore. That's the biggest fatigue this year. Teacher 8 (L-49)

Making matters worse, the number of students' school refusal seriously increased during the pandemic. According to a survey released by the Japanese government in October 2021, approximately 196,000 elementary and middle school students do not attend school, an increase of nearly 15,000 from the previous year, and this is the highest number ever (NHK News, 2021). Teacher 14 (IN-48) shared a narrative that they experienced during the pandemic, concerning about both students' and their parents' mental health:

> After the pandemic, the number of students who can't come to school has increased a lot. After the school was closed due to COVID-19 (in 2022) and classes started little by little in May, there were several students crying in the parking lot of the school because they didn't want to get out of the car. I saw that scene for the first time in my teaching career. Also, every time I have students who can't come to school in my class, what I am careful about is keeping in touch with the parents of the students and listening to them. I think it's the parents who get most vulnerable because they have to take care of their children. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

Another survey by the government revealed that approximately 70% of the 8,000 elementary and middle school students surveyed expressed experiencing feelings of stress, while 38% reported their school absenteeism (NHK News, 2021). Moreover, a non-profit organization (NPO) specializing in providing assistance to families with children facing difficulties attending school reported a significant number of calls from parents seeking mental support, particularly after the pandemic (NHK News, 2021). It was further revealed that more than 20% of these parents ultimately made the decision to quit their jobs due to the psychological strain caused by their children's school refusal.

Students' Disciplinary Problems

The interview data implied that students' disciplinary problems were more serious in public schools than private schools as students who enroll in private schools aim for passing university entrance exams, meaning they are, to some degree, motivated to focus on their schoolwork. In fact, in public schools that admit students with lower/lowest academics, teachers are frequently struggling with their students' disciplinary behaviors. Teacher 6 (L-27), who works at a public middle school, mentioned that they sometimes stay at teachers' room even after midnight due to students' fight:

> If students fight and get hurt or something is broken, teachers have to contact their parents. In that case, we may not be able to leave school that day until we reach the parents. If a student gets hurt, teachers go to the student's house to apologize for what has happened. That is, if a student's parents do not come home until after 10:00 p.m., we wait at school in a suit and go to apologize after the parents come home. I wish we could do it by phone, but some parents may get upset unless we apologize in person. Teacher 6 (L-27)

Teacher 11 (L-58), who is also a teacher at a public middle school and decided to take early retirement, shared their 34 years of teaching experience, particularly regarding dealing with the students' disciplinary problems:

> In some schools I worked at, students stole money without hesitation or bullied others. Every time some problems happened, we teachers had a meeting and listened to each student's story, like a police officer. In the end, teachers had to contact the student's parents, which made us leave school late at night. Teachers are, what is called, jacks-of-all-trades. We have to do everything. I know that teamwork among teachers is important, but all the teachers are so busy with their hectic working environment that they don't have time to help each other. Preparing for class is least prioritized. That's why some teachers take sick leave every year and then quit. Teacher 11 (L-58)

Teacher 2 (L-47), who also works at a public middle school, thinks that dealing with students' disciplinary problems depletes teachers. They shared their experience in their 20s:

> Back in those days, I probably didn't have the skills I should have had, but when I wanted to quit the teaching job the most, dealing with students' disciplinary problems was extremely hard and time-consuming. I used to get back home around 1:00 a.m. every day. Sometimes, the students' parents called me at 6:00 a.m. Teacher 2 (L-47)

The last line of the extract of Teacher 2 (L-47) implies that students' parents largely get involved in their child's disciplinary problems, especially with a confrontational attitude towards school and teachers. This unique feature of parents' intervention in the Japanese educational context is more detailed in the Analysis Stage 4 (i.e., Parent-related matters).

Black School Rules

Each school, either public or private schools, has their own specific school rules that students follow. Primarily, the school rules were intended to teach students the importance of following the rules when they work in society, and to prevent students from being involved in incidents and accidents (Tasaka, 2022). However, in the 1980s, school rules were more strictly categorized with the aim of managing school violence and delinquency. These

excessive school rules are called "black school rules[14]." For example, at some schools, the school rules control students' hair color, hair style, the length of the skirt, the color of their socks, etc. In recent years, black school rules have been featured in the media because it might hurt the dignity of the students and can lead to harassment (Tasaka, 2022). In addition, black school rules are also stressful for teachers as there are certain teachers who oppose black school rules, and persuading their students to follow school rules which teachers themselves cannot agree with is stressful. The teachers interviewed in the present study seemed to have mixed feelings regarding guiding students based on school rules because some school rules, they mentioned, are irrational. Here are two extracts from the teachers who struggle with guiding students because of black school rules:

> In the first place, I think that the school rules are too much. It is stressful for me about how to maintain consistency when my personal view and my view as a teacher diverge. If you express it from a student's point of view, "Some rules are absolutely stupid." In the past few years, the expression "black school rules" has become spread in the media, but there are still a lot of such rules in my school, so it's difficult to suppress my feelings and how to get along as a teacher, as a member of the organization. I have a conflict and I'm very tired of it. Teacher 8 (L-49)

> Recently, even the TV news and newspapers have reported that the school rules are too strict or black school rules are illogical. As a teacher, it is very difficult to instruct my students to follow the rules about personal appearance such as hair color or the colors of the coat. I think that some students may think, "That school rule is strange and irrational" when teachers give students a warning for their appearance (e.g., the color of their coat should be black or gray). Teacher 7 (IN-33)

Summary for the Analysis Stage 3

The third theme "Students" consists of four sub-themes; (1) Homeroom management, (2) Students' school refusal, (3) Students' disciplinary problems, and (4) Black school rules. Homeroom management depletes teachers mentally and physically. First, some teachers stay at school more than 12 hours to complete their daily tasks (e.g., writing a comment on students' diaries), to manage their classroom (e.g., observing students during the lunch break), to supervise ECAs, to prepare for classes, etc. Second, school refusal is also a significant contributor to teachers' mental stress or burnout, particularly because there is lack of SSs and SWs in the Japanese school institutions. Child's school refusal also influences their parents, and indeed, some of them quit their jobs. Third, students' disciplinary problems occur more frequently in public schools. If some problems occur (e.g., fight, bullying, etc.),

[14] The term "black" in Japanese is often used to describe negative or undesirable aspects of something, especially in the context of work environments or organizational practices (Tsuyama, 2023).

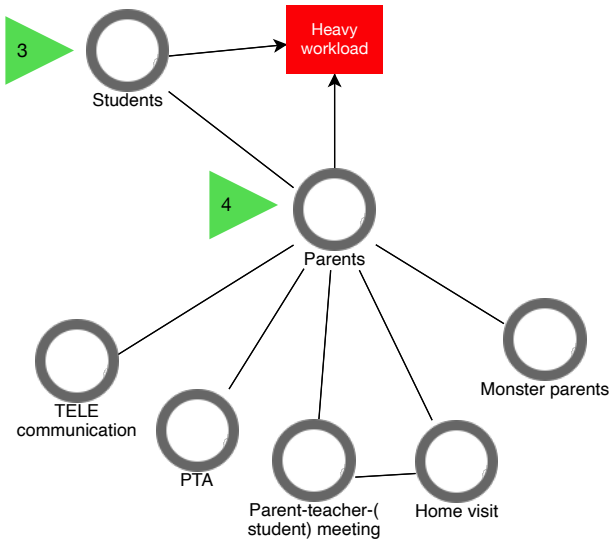
teachers contact the students' parents and, in the end, they have to visit their home to apologize. Some teachers, in fact, took a sick leave due to students' disciplinary problems, but they did not come back. Black school rules itself is currently under debate at school and in the media since some of the school rules are irrational and illogical for students to follow. These rules also cause teachers reluctant to instruct their students to follow the school rules, which might create a situation that builds up teachers' stress.

Analysis Stage 4. Parent-Related Matters

In the 2000s, excessive demands from students' parents became social problems, and thus, teachers were expected to deal with a variety of complicated problems that occured at school (See the Introduction chapter). IQ7 in Phase 2 in the present study asked the participating teachers regarding their hardship when establishing a relationship with their students' parents, and IQ11 uniquely asked them to discuss tasks which they would like to reduce in dealing with students' parents. Given this, as Figure 18 describes, four sub-themes emerged: (1) Tele communication, (2) Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), (3) Parent-teacher(-student) meeting and Home visit, and (4) Monster parents.

Figure 18

Concept Map: Parents



Tele Communication

As the Analysis stage 1 introduced, regular communication with students' parents is a unique cultural aspect and it is vital in the educational context in Japan. Without it,

homeroom teachers might lose parents' trust and be unable to build a stable relationship with them. Younger or novice teachers with less teaching wonder how constantly they are supposed to call their students' parents. This concern is expressed by an extract of Teacher 16 (L-27):

> It is difficult to know how often I should contact my student's parents by phone. When I listen to what other teachers do, some of them give me advice like, "You should call each family, even if it's only for five minutes, and tell the parents what's good about their child." On the other hand, some teachers say that it is better not to contact the parents too often because they are busy. In my school, some teachers frequently contact parents and others rarely, so it's difficult to find a balance. Teacher 16 (L-27)

However, consider a scenario where a homeroom teacher is responsible for managing a classroom of 35 students, making a weekly five-minute phone call to each student's parents. Simply reaching out to parents consumes a substantial amount of time, totaling 175 minutes. It is important to put this timeframe into context when considering teachers' daily workload; high school teachers work for approximately 11 hours and 33 minutes per day (N = 9,744), while middle school teachers work for approximately 12 hours and 30 minutes per day (N = 4,414) (MEXT, 2016c). Hence, the expenditure of 175 minutes on phone calls is a significant amount of time to save. Indeed, in the present study, when asked about the most challenging task of their workload, Teacher 7 (IN-33) emphatically responded that making phone calls to students' parents was an exhausting task. They explained that this burden arises from parents' late work schedules, which results in phone calls being answered only during the evening or late at night, which requires teachers to extend their working hours. However, Teacher 3 (L-31) contended that frequent communication is essential to avoid any misunderstandings among parents stemming from students' misleading information:

> I think it is important for parents to understand what is happening at school, even the little things. For example, even when I give my student a warning for their bad behavior at school, I immediately contact the student's parents afterward because the student may rephrase it to their advantage when they get home, which can lead to misunderstanding between the parents and me. Teacher 3 (L-31)

Despite the deeply rooted presence of Tele communication within the Japanese educational context, certain teachers maintain a perspective that Tele communication may not always generate favorable outcomes. For instance, Teacher 12 (IN-31) believes that minimizing interactions with students' parents is advantageous, as they often make calls concerning trivial matters. Additionally, Teacher 16 (L-27) adheres to the notion that teachers are not

obligated to engage in work-related tasks beyond working hours. Consequently, they refrain from calling students' parents or responding to their calls outside of regular working hours:

> At my school, the official working hours ends at 18:00 on time. I try not to make phone calls after 18:00 because I feel like I'm working overtime. In the first place, my supervisors are understandable and encourage us to finish work at 18:00. Teacher 16 (L-27)

On the whole, Tele communication in the context of schools is a controversial subject due to its potential to establish a stable rapport with students' parents, along with the demand which is placed on teachers to work beyond their working hours. Given the overarching objective of the present study, which is to explore ways for alleviating teachers' workload, the following chapter proposes a prospective solution with regard to Tele communication.

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is a non-profit organization composed of teachers and parents. The primary purpose of the PTA is for teachers and parents to work together to enrich an educational environment for the students (Nakatsugawa, 2022). Generally, almost all schools in Japan have a PTA or a similar kind of association (PTA in Japan, 2022). Although parents do not need to belong to it, they are encouraged to join the PTA in order to support activities planned for the students (Nakatsugawa, 2022). Further, two or three PTA committee members are selected from parents of each classroom at the first parent-teacher meeting in the new school year, and all the committee members at school plan activities and prepare budgets for them. According to PTA in Japan (2022), they organize activities such as:

- patrolling around the school zone in the morning and at night
- doing chores for school events such as sports day, cultural festival, exhibition
- organizing bike-parking lots when the school has an event
- cleaning inside and outside school on weekends
- collecting recyclable goods such as PET bottles, cans, etc.
- preparing gifts for graduates in the graduation ceremony
- collecting the PTA fee

As mentioned, although the PTA is a voluntary organization, membership is almost compulsory for teachers and parents depending on school. This has become a social problem

as both teachers and parents do not want to spend time on the above activities as volunteers, especially on weekends (Nakatsugawa, 2022). As below, I intend to summarize how teachers in the present study feel about the PTA and in which direction they want it to go.

First, teachers feel stressed when selecting the parent committees from each classroom because even parents are reluctant to join the PTA. Teacher 8 (L-49) mentioned that selecting the PTA committee members from their classroom is one of the toughest moments when it comes to homeroom management. Teacher 1 (M-41) showed their irritation:

> I wish the PTA itself should be gone. At the last school I worked for, although the PTA membership was voluntary, my administrator was trying to force students' parents to join it, just because the school can secure the budget. That's why, on the day of the entrance ceremony, the parents are encouraged to join the PTA and I have to collect the membership fee. The school uses that kind of money for anniversary events and graduation gifts for graduates, for example, a Japanese name stamp, although I don't think they need to use it anymore today. Teacher 1 (M-41)

Second, plenty of activities and workshops led by the PTA are held before or after working hours or on weekends. Teachers complain about the fact that those activities include cleaning tasks because cleaning is not relevant to their teaching job. For example, Teacher 6 (L-27) and Teacher 11 (L-58) said:

> There are several departments in the PTA. One department manages the school environment, another department supports annual events, etc., and teachers must also participate in one of them. For example, teachers and parents get together from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. to fix the benches on campus, wash and dry the curtains in each classroom, and arrange and renovate the entrance of the school. We do these tasks three or four times a year, but I do wonder, "Is it really our job?" Because of cleaning tasks, I clean the staff restrooms too. Teacher 6 (L-27)

> In the PTA, teachers, students and their parents have a lot to do. Weeding bugs on campus, picking up rocks in a school zone, and collecting old newspapers for recycling, etc. We did these volunteer activities quite often, many times a year, usually on weekends. It's very hard when it's hot in the summer. Teacher 11 (L-58)

The PTA organizes a variety of seminars and events, including a drinking session (i.e., dinner party), with the aim of fostering socialization and mutual understanding between teachers and parents. The interview revealed that for some teachers who are poor at socializing, this drinking session is the one they want to avoid:

> After regular PTA meetings, we have a drinking session. It's a good opportunity to get to know the PTA committees and to have them understand the work of teachers,

> and I understand it's a good chance to get the parents of the students on our side in terms of conducting a smooth homeroom management, but I have to be extremely considerate of parents' feelings during the session. I can't say any bad things. To be honest, I don't need that drinking session. Teacher 13 (IN-51)

On the other hand, it is noted that there are advantages in the PTA. Hayashi (2023) mentioned that some events organized by the PTA make communication among parents smooth and enable parents to exchange information. Moreover, patrolling around the school zone in the morning and at night may be necessary to ensure students' safety. However, whether those are indeed the teacher's job should be reconsidered. In particular, concerning patrolling, if a student, for instance, were to be involved in a car accident while walking home from school during the academic year, it could become the school's responsibility. This perspective originates from the notion that schools and teachers are expected to address all matters involving students (TBS News, 2023). This cultural norm should be reevaluated to alleviate the heavy workload of teachers.

Parent-teacher(-student) Meeting and Home Visit

A parent-teacher meeting, or sometimes parent-teacher-student meeting, is one of the academic events in the Japanese school context. As introduced in RQ4 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?) in the Discussion chapter, the teachers' role in the meeting is to provide information about the student to their parents. Teachers inform the parents of their child's academic goals (e.g., university entrance examination) and non-academic information (e.g., the relationship with other classmates, job search). This meeting is especially important for teachers in charge of 9th grade students and 12th grade students as students decide their future paths (e.g., taking an entrance exam, searching for a job, etc.). The interview in the present study revealed that the parent-teacher meeting is extremely time-consuming, and parents' demands to school have been growing.

First, scheduling for meeting parents takes considerable time because the meeting is conducted individually. A homeroom teacher sends the parents a notification letter with their availability time slots for the meeting. These times slots are usually limited because, as aforementioned, teachers usually teach three to five classes per day, and thus, they set them up after their working hours (e.g., 19:00). Once the parents submit their availability dates, teachers adjust every parent's schedule. Consider if teachers have 35 students in their classroom, they meet and discuss with 35 parents in person for approximately half an hour to even one hour. As some parents are available only on weekends, teachers come to school

even on weekends without overwork pay. Teacher 14 (IN-48), who is a homeroom teacher of 12th graders, shared their experience:

> The meeting with the parents of 12th graders takes long because they decide their future. I also have classes even during the meeting week, so the meetings are held in the evening or at night. Completely outside working hours. It is really a volunteer work. I know I have to do it anyway, but honestly, it's just a burden to have the meeting outside working hours. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

Teacher 3 (L-31) also struggles with scheduling for the meeting:

> We have a parent-teacher-student meeting twice a year, but I think it's okay to not have it. The parents' schedules don't fit well even though I politely ask them to come during the meeting-week period set by the school. Because they can't come during the meeting period, I have to replace it later, meaning I have to do overtime work. Scheduling is quite annoying, and on top of that, parents' schedules may change at the last minute, so I think it's quite a hassle. Teacher 3 (L-31)

Second, the demands from the students' parents have been increasing. Thus, it takes considerable time to prepare for the parent-teacher meeting. For instance, Teacher 12 (IN-31) mentioned:

> At my school, we have a parent-teacher-student meeting twice a year, once in the first semester and once in the second semester. How can I say, there are some parents who are not satisfied unless we show data, so I feel that the parents' demands have increased. They ask me which subject [of their child] has the lowest percentile and what measures should be taken for each subject. Instead of saying, "Student A seems to be weak at Japanese language," I respond with something like, "Since Student A's percentile is about this level, it's still a bit low." I wonder how to express, but I think that the information that parents are asking for is probably quite diversified as information technology advances today. Teacher 12 (IN-31)

Third, teachers began visiting their students' homes starting in the 1950s with the aim of supporting children's school life (Hino, 2021). Thus, the visit's aim has a lot in common with the parent-teacher-student meeting except that teachers visit each student's home. It is easily imaginable that the home visit is more time-consuming in that teachers leave school, use public transport, and visit each family. Nowadays, although this custom has been diminishing depending on the area, it is still deeply rooted in the educational context in Japan. The home visit is an academic event mostly at elementary and middle schools. However, even some high schools which are proud of sincere care for its students have this custom. Teacher 4 (L-26), who worked at high school, shared their story that describes how

hard it is to deal with both the parent-teacher-student meeting and a home visit during the short period of time:

> Although I worked at high school, we made a home visit, so it was very tough because I had to interact with the students' parents a lot. For example, only a month after the home visit, the parents came to school for the parent-teacher meeting. I had to interact with the parents frequently, so my first year as a homeroom teacher was particularly tough. In addition to heavy workload, I cared about the parents. It was even harder because I wasn't used to it. Teacher 4 (L-26)

Monster Parents

Taken from a Japanese term for irrational parenting, "monster parents" are known for their bizarre blend of authoritarianism and overprotectiveness in raising their children (Vitelli, 2016, See also RQ4 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?) in the Discussion chapter). As a result, diverse demands from the parents have been irrationally growing. For example, even after working hours, the parents call homeroom teachers to confirm if their child leaves school on time. Further, Teacher 2 (L-47) mentioned that one parent called them at 6:00 a.m. to complain about school. This school culture, in which teachers should be responsible for everything at any time, further deprives teachers of time. One day, Teacher 1 (M-41) received a phone call from the police:

> One of my students ran away from home and I got a phone call from the police. I contacted the student's parents, but I couldn't get in touch with them for a few days, so our school decided to take that student to a temporary child custody center. Later, that student's mother called me, shouting at me angrily, "Why did you put my child in such a place without permission?" and she even sued the board of education. Teacher 1 (M-41)

Teacher 14 (IN-48) shared their coworker's experience dealing with the parent's demand:

> We have one case that is still unsolved, and I think it's bullying if it's categorized. There were some troubles between students within the same ECAs, and their parents were also involved. The parents of the student who was bullied strongly insisted that the other student be expelled from school and that the teacher in charge of the ECAs should quit. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

Through the interviews, I found that novice teachers struggle more when coping with the parents' demands compared to experienced teachers. For instance, Teacher 4 (L-26), who has a four-year teaching experience, mentioned:

> It is difficult to meet the needs of the students' parents. In particular, students these days tell their parents about everything, so we have a lot of demands from the parents,

> such as “I want you to do this and this.” That’s pretty tough, yes. I’m not very experienced as a teacher, and I can’t give proper answers, so it was mentally tough for me. I think that experienced teachers would probably be better at dealing with these kinds of things, and building better relationships with the parents, but I don’t have enough experience in this area. Teacher 4 (L-26)

As Teacher 4 (L-26) mentioned, experienced teachers might have more techniques to deal with the parents as they literally have more experience. Teacher 14 (IN-48), who has a 25-year teaching experience, shared their technique to handle the complaints from the parents:

> In any case, it is important to listen to what the parents want to say without denying it… When I first take action on something about monster parents, I listen to everything that they tell me, and I never make any judgments about it on my own, but I keep a record of what I hear. From then on, the entire school should deal with it. Surprisingly, some parents just wanted to be listened, not complain. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

Thus, when this issue is viewed from the micro perspective, if experienced teachers share their techniques to deal with monster parents with novice teachers, novice teachers may find some solutions or clues to deal with parents. However, this is not a fundamental solution in terms of teacher support and reducing teachers’ workload. At the same time, there may be some or more experienced teachers who also suffer from monster parents as Teacher 4 (L-26) does. Therefore, this issue should be viewed from macro perspective so that any teacher should be supported. The next chapter provide detailed implications to deal with this issue.

Summary for the Analysis Stage 4

The Analysis Stage 4 addressed parents’ related matters, and there are four sub-themes. First, Tele communication is a unique culture in Japan and teachers have nuanced sense of mission even though they have a negative attitude towards it as some parents are available only after working hours. Given teachers’ working hours, Tele communication is the one they would like to reduce or omit from their tasks. In fact, some teachers have a mindset that they do not call or answer the phone from parents after working hours.

Second, the PTA is a non-profit organization composed of teachers and parents of the students, and its aim is to develop students’ educational environment. However, the fact is that both teachers and parents are unwilling to join it simply because the activities organized by the PTA are held outside their working hours or on weekends. Thus, certain teachers feel stressed when they have to encourage the parents to join the PTA, and above all, when they have to select the PTA committee members from their classroom. This school culture, which forces teachers and parents to participate in the PTA, gives them a headache.

Third, as for the parent-teacher meeting, teachers are required to spare considerable time to meet each student's parents twice or three times per year. Since they have almost no extra time within their working hours and some parents work on weekdays, teachers set up the meeting after working hours or on weekends. Additionally, the parents' demands to school have been increasing, thus causing teachers to take more time to prepare for the meeting. These difficulties also apply to the home visit by teachers; rather, the home visit is more time-consuming in that teachers visit each family. As a result, these two academic events increase teachers' workload.

Lastly, some parents called "monster parents" make irrational demands to school and teachers. Teachers, especially younger teachers with less experience, seem to have hard time dealing with them. On the one hand, some experienced teachers seem to be better at managing them. Either way, this issue should be addressed from a macro point of view so that every teacher will not experience burden from it.

Analysis Stage 5. ECAs

As discussed in the Introduction chapter, teachers' workload significantly increased after ECAs were implemented as part of school program in 1970s. This is not an exception for the participating teachers in the present study. The Analysis Stage 1 presented benefits of COVID-19, the restriction of which greatly contributed to reducing teachers' engagement in ECAs. In the Analysis Stage 5, I intend to investigate teachers' workload in managing ECAs and overwork pay for it.

Teachers' Workload in ECAs

First of all, as a premise, almost all the teachers are assigned to one or two ECAs (See the Introduction chapter). In particular, teachers who are in charge of sports clubs (e.g., baseball, soccer, badminton, etc.), have a heavy burden physically and mentally. Two teachers shared their hecticness when they are/were in charge of sports clubs:

> ECAs are physically tiring. We have a practice on weekends in addition to weekdays. Before, I was put in charge of the baseball club despite my lack of expertise. I have never played baseball! It was a rainy season in June, and all weekends were filled with games. There was no day off because June has no national holidays, so it was tough. Teacher 2 (L-47)

> I told my boss that I didn't want to have ECAs and they said ok, but they ended up making me a coach to the volleyball club. I thought it was a different story. It's especially hard to have a practice at night. A colleague of mine has a child, so they

> bring him to the gymnasium and take care of him while coaching their students. Teacher 6 (L-27)

Further, teachers' workload in ECAs include a myriad of paperwork, accounting tasks for club expenses, budget reports, financial reports, and more. Taking an example of applications to a competition, teachers have to check the name list, confirm each student's participating events, go to the bank to pay the entry fee, attend a coach meeting in the school district after working hours. On the days of events, which are held on weekends, teachers lead their students to the competition venue and serve as a referee for all day even in midsummer without additional pay or a compensation day-off. Teacher 14 (IN-48) strongly insisted that ECAs decrease teachers' quality of life:

> Many teachers take it for granted that they should be in charge of ECAs, but I think it's strange. I do not understand. ECAs are involved in things outside working hours, so the quality of life of teachers reduces. I think ECAs are actually related to (un)happiness as a teacher. It's not at all uncommon for one person to have two club activities, sports clubs. But my colleague who was in charge of two sports clubs took a leave of absence and still hasn't come back. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

Overwork Pay

Even if teachers are in charge of ECAs after working hours, they do not get paid an overwork pay due to the fact that it is already included in teachers' salary as an equivalent to 4% of basic pay (See Kyutoku-hou in the Introduction chapter). It should be noted, however, that the 4% of the basic salary is equivalent to eight hours of extra work. As the Introduction chapter addressed, this amount of overwork pay is not fair in terms of teachers' overwork time. The recent survey by MEXT (2022a) revealed that 77.1% of public middle school teachers work additional 45 hours per months, which is by far longer than eight hours. Indeed, a survey conducted in Kumamoto prefecture in 2022 (N = 2,479 teachers) indicates that over 70% of teachers answered that they do not want to coach ECAs even if they get paid (RKK Kumamoto, 2023). The city board of education in Kumamoto analyzed that coaching club activities on weekends and leading the students to competitions are a heavy burden.

In fact, among the teachers interviewed, no one teacher complained about not being paid. Rather, they showed their hecticness getting involved in ECAs after working hours and on weekends. Teacher 17 (M-52) pointed out that fatigue in ECAs is even greater if teachers

coach a club without any past experience or prior knowledge. Since teachers cannot choose ECAs to coach, it might be even more stressful to be assigned to ECAs with which they have no experienced.

Analysis Stage 6. Teaching Skills

The results obtained from the Phase 1 survey indicated that teachers who possessed higher self-efficacy in instructional strategies had a beneficial influence on two of the three dimensions associated with burnout (See Figure 11). In particular, these teachers showed a higher sense of personal accomplishment and were less likely to be depersonalized towards their students, as addressed in RQ2 (i.e., How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?) in the Results chapter. Additionally, RQ6 (i.e., Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?) in Phase 1 revealed that teachers' accumulated teaching experience can be a positive contributor to three dimensions in teacher self-efficacy.

Building upon these findings, IQ4 during the Phase 2 interview addressed teachers' self-rated proficiency in English teaching skills on a seven-point scale. Subsequently, if teachers responded positively (i.e., scoring 5 or higher), they were asked regarding the duration it took for them to develop confidence in their teaching skills. My aim was to gain insights into the time required for teachers to attain a level of confidence that could potentially impact teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout. During the interviews, I found three crucial factors for teachers to enhance their self-efficacy levels: (1) teaching experience, (2) active engagement in teacher seminars and workshops, and (3) student engagement skills.

Growth by Experience

Table 25 presents the participating teachers' perceived rate concerning their teaching skills and the timeframe at which they started to gain confidence in their skills. The middle column indicates the perceived ratings reported for their initial year of teaching. However, it is worth noting that the data's validity is compromised as some information was inadvertently missing, resulting in blanks within the table. Additionally, the right column lists English skills each participating teacher would like to focus on in their English classes, as addressed in IQ12 (i.e., Which English skills would you like your students to develop if there were not university entrance examination?) in the interview phase.

In the first instance, it is evident from the middle column that the participating teachers' perceived ratings for their first year of teaching are comparatively low. This finding corroborates the above finding from Phase 1, which suggests that teachers' teaching skills evolve over time as a result of their accumulated experiences. Second, regarding the timeframe at which teachers develop confidence in their teaching skills, with the exception of one outlier (i.e., the 15th year), it appears that teachers could typically gain confidence within a range of five to 10 years of teaching experience. This perspective is further reinforced by the following two extracts from younger teachers:

> In my first year as a teacher, I had just graduated from university, so I was like I tried everything I wanted to do because I thought that was the right thing to do, but most of them didn't work. There was a gap between theory and reality… Gradually, I began to bridge that gap, and now, even during repetitive practice in class, for example, I was able to aim for that effect. It was the 4th or 5th year that I felt that I became a full-fledged teacher. Teacher 9 (M-29)

> Over the past three years to the current 4th year, I have experienced a three-year cycle at high school and was in charge of a variety of student groups, so I think I learned many teaching methods. Over that cycle, I feel that I grew as a teacher. Teacher 5 (IN-25)

Table 25

Teachers' Rate on Their Teaching Skills

	Current rate	In their first year	When they gain confident	English skills they would like to teach
Teacher 1 (M-41)	*__7.0__	1.0	6th year	Conversation skill Survival/Travel English
Teacher 2 (L-47)	*__5.5__	1.0	10th year	Output practice
Teacher 3 (L-31)	2.0		n/a	Communication skill
Teacher 4 (L-26)	4.0		n/a	Communication skill using CLIL strategy
Teacher 5 (IN-25)	*__5.0__	lower than 5	4th year	Speaking skill Presentation skill
Teacher 6 (L-27)	4.5	1.0-2.0	n/a	Conversation skill
Teacher 7 (IN-33)	*__5.0__	lower than 5	5th year	Recitation practice with novels and articles
Teacher 8 (L-49)	4.5		n/a	Autonomous learning Use English as a tool
Teacher 9 (M-29)	4.0	lower than 4	n/a	Use English as a tool CLIL strategy
Teacher 10 (IN-26)	4.0		n/a	Speaking skill
Teacher 11 (L-58)	*__6.0__	lower than 6	5th year	Communication skill
Teacher 12 (IN-31)	*__5.0__	3.0	6th year	Communication skill
Teacher 13 (IN-51)	4.5		n/a	Basic grammar knowledge Actual English usage
Teacher 14 (IN-48)	*__5.0__	2.0-3.0	10th year	Communication skill
Teacher 15 (M-49)	*__6.0__		10th year	Integrating four skills
Teacher 16 (L-27)	3.5		n/a	Linguistic expression
Teacher 17 (M-52)	*__6.5__	1.0	15th year	Reading skill

*scores 5.0 or higher

Taking these findings and extracts into consideration, they offer valuable insights that could potentially create a conducive teaching environment for novice teachers. One noteworthy suggestion by Teacher 6 (L-27) involves school administrators focusing their

attention towards encouraging novice teachers with less than five years of teaching experience to focus primarily on subject instruction:

> As for the percentage of work, subject instruction occupies only about 10%. So, at least, for example, until the 3rd or 5th year, schools should not give a new teacher a homeroom teacher management and just let them focus on teaching class and study teaching materials, which enable them to brush up their teaching skills and be confident. I believe that an integral part of our job is to teach English. It is impossible to do everything from the beginning. Teacher 6 (L-27)

Growth by Participating in Seminars and Workshops

The interview phase revealed that a large proportion of the participating teachers, specifically seven out of the total 17, attributed the development of their teaching skills to their active engagement in seminars, workshops, and even conferences. Teacher 11 (L-58) specifically highlighted the progressive acquisition of teaching techniques through attending seminars as well as having the role of a model teacher for a seminar:

> I had an opportunity to be in charge of a teacher training seminar, and I had other teachers observe my classes and receive their feedback. Also, I think I was able to brush up on my teaching skills at workshops and gradually acquire pedagogical skills. I also actively participated in academic conferences. Teacher 11 (L-58)

It is probable that these seminars played an important role for the development of teacher self-efficacy in instructional strategies. Further, for some teachers, these opportunities marked a significant turning point to grow their mindset as a professional:

> There was a time when I went to a teacher training seminar several years ago, and I felt that the way I approached my classes has room for growth. It made me realize that I hadn't thought too deeply about how to develop my teaching skills. From that turning point, I have reviewed the points that could be improved even right before the class… My awareness towards my class has changed a lot. Teacher 13 (IN-51)

Although participation in seminars and workshops provides teachers with opportunities to foster the development of their instructional strategies, it is important to highlight that teachers are frequently burdened with responsibilities beyond subject instruction, as evidenced by previous stages of analysis. While teachers acquire valuable teaching skills through engagement in these professional development activities, the availability of sufficient time to fully prepare for their ideal classes becomes a serious concern. Indeed, Teacher 13 (IN-51) further commented on this matter:

> Through the seminar, my awareness as an English teacher changed a lot. On the contrary, once it changes, I found that I had no time to prepare for my ideal class in terms of time and my physical strength. If I can't do what I want to do, every class becomes very painful. Besides, classes come one after another like waves. Teacher 13 (IN-51)

Student Engagement Skills

Student engagement skills was the only one dimension, among three self-efficacy dimensions, that met a correlation with all three burnout dimensions (See Figure 11). This implies that, as the summary in the Discussion chapter addressed, teachers who feel confident in motivating or encouraging students to learn at school: (1) feel less emotionally exhausted, (2) have a sense of personal accomplishment in their job, and (3) have less experience depersonalization towards their students. Hence, IQ3 (i.e., How do you motivate your students to do schoolwork? Have you experienced any hardships when motivating them?) in Phase 2 addressed participating teachers' student engagement skills.

I explored how teachers with higher self-efficacy, in particular, with higher scores in their student engagement skills (Table 16), employ their teaching pedagogy to get students to engage in their learning at school. In doing so, first, I sorted out all the 17 teachers by their scores of four items in student engagement skills. Second, I decided a threshold line which is 20 or higher out of 28 points (i.e., 5 out of 7 on average per item). This process let me reach out to four teachers: Teacher 1 (M-41) with 21 points, Teacher 11 (L-58) with 25 points, Teacher 13 (IN-51) with 20 points, and Teacher 17 (M-52) 23 points. In fact, these four teachers have a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience, which supports the results of RQ6 (i.e., Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?) reporting that student engagement was most relevant to teaching experience among the three dimensions of teacher self-efficacy (See the Discussion chapter). Third, I re-read their interview scripts to find out some similarities in their teaching styles.

Although they utilize different teaching methods and approaches in their classes, I found one overarching teaching objective they have in common: stimulating students' intrinsic motivation. Teacher 1 (M-41) mentioned that some students start learning English with a negative attitude towards it, and thus, teachers have to use interesting and authentic material to motivate their students. For instance, Teacher 1 (M-41) spends the first five minutes of each class introducing English songs, movie trailers, etc. Teacher 11 (L-58) mentioned that they primarily employ a communicative approach which encompasses activities, games, drawings, and more, highlighting that English learning should be fun for

students. Further, Teacher 17 (M-52) emphasized the importance of learners' intrinsic motivation:

> I think intrinsic motivation is the most important theme in English education. The stronger the motivation is, the better. I think the most important skill for teachers is how to reinforce students' motivation. So, to put it the other way around, the job of an English teacher is half done if you can achieve that… Since external motivation is temporary, that is why, I place great importance on stimulating the intellectual curiosity of my students. Teacher 17 (M-52)

Lastly, Teacher 13 (IN-51), an experienced teacher, shared their teaching technique. They posited the importance of teachers' patience to wait for students to grow their motivation themselves:

> I feel that there are always students who are not good at studying in any subject. Rather, there are students who show lower motivation for school life itself, so it's kind of difficult to explain, but I just deal with them like other students without forcing them to do extra work. We don't have to rush. It's important for teachers to wait. Teacher 13 (IN-51)

Chapter Summary

Through the discussion regarding the selected themes, plenty of issues have come to light. First, teachers in Japan often work long hours, with some teachers working up to 12 hours per day or more, which can impact their work-life balance. Second, teachers work longer as they are responsible for a wide range of tasks, including lesson planning, grading, ECAs, the PTA, a home visit, etc., but most of them are tasks outside teaching and done after working hours or on weekends without overwork pay. These tasks are overwhelming and can lead to physical and mental exhaustion. In fact, a lot of teachers who take a sick leave do not come back to the teaching profession. Third, cultural norms are significant contributors to teachers' heavy workload and mental stress. For instance, peer and social pressures lead to unhealthy human relations which influence teachers both mentally and physically. In particular, pressure from students' parents increases teachers' tasks, which further depletes them. Last, the interview phase illustrated that teachers have developed their teaching skills with their teaching experience as well as through teacher seminars and workshops, which could potentially mitigate teachers' burnout levels. Moreover, it is implied that teachers with higher self-efficacy in student engagement prioritize stimulating students' intrinsic motivation in their classes. However, it is highlighted that other duties except subject instruction deprive them of the necessary time to adequately prepare their ideal classes.

Considering that teachers' extensive workload constitutes the overarching theme within Phase 2, and with the objective of the present study being to contribute to teacher support, it is of highly important to critically reassess the necessity of the current tasks assigned to teachers and determine whether they should indeed be exclusively carried out by teachers themselves. Consequently, the following Conclusion chapter delves into practical implications intended to alleviate the burden of teachers' excessive workload. Furthermore, I aim to examine implications from the perspective of enhancing teachers' self-efficacy and reducing their levels of burnout based on the findings in both phases, given that these represent the two principal theoretical components addressed in the present study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Implications

This chapter begins with an overview of the present study, summarizing its key findings and the scholarly contributions it brings to the realm of teacher support concerning teacher burnout, teacher self-efficacy, and other relevant factors, particularly within the educational context of Japan. Subsequently, the practical implications are presented by revisiting the overarching theme determined through thematic analysis, namely, teachers' heavy workload. Drawing upon the results of the present study, these implications are presented with the objective of alleviating the burdens placed on teachers. Finally, in concluding the chapter, the limitations of the present study are deliberated, and potential areas for future research regarding teacher support, which align with the primary aim of this study, are discussed.

Summary of the Present Study

Japan is currently facing a pronounced teacher attrition rate and a shortage of teachers. An extensive literature review and a comprehensive analysis of existing academic works revealed that teacher attrition is predominantly triggered by an unhealthy working environment, which ultimately can lead to teacher burnout. Thus, the main objective of the present study is to explore the factors associated with teacher burnout, ultimately shedding light on the underlying causes of teacher attrition in Japan. By systematically investigating these factors, the present study aimed to enhance the understanding of teacher support, foster an improved working environment, and mitigate the sharply elevating teacher attrition rate.

Prior research has indicated that teacher burnout is influenced by various factors, including teacher self-efficacy and school contextual factors, among others. To investigate the specific factors impacting teacher burnout, six research questions were formulated, as detailed in the Methodology chapter, and a quantitative survey was administered to 132 Japanese teachers during Phase 1 of the study.

Employing structural equation modeling (SEM), the study conducted correlation analyses, mediation analysis, and single linear regression analysis, providing the following key findings. RQ1 (i.e., Among (1) the government policy, (2) teachers' perceived English language proficiency, (3) teacher's intention to leave the profession, and (4) the influence of COVID-19, which factors predict more Japanese EFL teacher burnout?) established a significant correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession, and teacher burnout. Consistent with prior research, RQ2 (i.e., How do

teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?) revealed a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout. RQ3 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors (i.e., (1) time pressure, (2) discipline problems, (3) supervisory support, (4) autonomy, and (5) relations to parents), impact Japanese EFL teacher burnout?) identified three school contextual factors (i.e., students' discipline problems, time pressure, and supervisory support) as significant contributors to teacher burnout, among the five factors examined. RQ4 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?) highlighted the significant impact of teachers' relationships with students' parents on their teacher self-efficacy. RQ5 (i.e., How do Japanese EFL teachers' perceived English language proficiency influence their self-efficacy?) demonstrated a significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and English language proficiency. Lastly, although RQ6 (i.e., Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?) revealed a significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teachers' teaching experience, it concluded that neither (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, nor (3) experience of going abroad mediated the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout.

Drawing from the insights gained through the quantitative survey, 12 interview questions (IQs) were developed for Phase 2 of the study, as outlined in the Appendix E. In this subsequent phase, a total of 17 teachers were interviewed, including (1) in-service teachers, (2) teachers who intended to move out of their current schools (movers), and (3) teachers who intended to leave the teaching profession (leavers).

The interviews revealed several significant findings. First, teachers in Japan frequently endure extended working hours, with some individuals laboring for up to 12 hours or more a day. Typically, they arrive at school before 8:00 am and leave after 8:00 pm. This hard work often leads to physical and mental exhaustion, compromising work-life balance. For instance, Teacher 13 (IN-51) suddenly suffered hearing loss in one ear due to extreme stress at work. Furthermore, teachers carry a wide array of responsibilities, including lesson planning, grading, extracurricular activities (ECAs), participation in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and even home visits. These duties often extend beyond their regular teaching hours and are typically completed after work or on weekends, without additional compensation for overtime. The resulting workload can be overwhelming and contribute to mental health issues, prompting some teachers who take sick leave to ultimately leave the profession.

It is noteworthy that cultural aspects significantly contribute to the heavy workload and mental stress experienced by teachers. Particularly, peer and social pressures foster unhealthy interpersonal relationships that profoundly impact teachers' mental and physical well-being. Of particular concern is the escalating pressure and demands from students' parents, which exacerbate teachers' workload and further deplete them. In one interview, Teacher 1 (M-41) mentioned that a parent sued the board of education due to the school's inadequate response to the child's running away from home.

By synthesizing the quantitative and qualitative analyses of teacher burnout and related factors, aligning them with the objective of the present study (i.e., addressing the increasing teacher attrition rate and teacher shortage), and recognizing the overarching theme of Phase 2 (i.e., teachers' heavy workload), the intention of this chapter is to present practical implications aimed at alleviating teachers' excessive workload.

Contributions of the Present Study

The present study has filled a notable gap in knowledge by integrating both teacher burnout scale and self-efficacy scale within the quantitative survey, which, to the best of my knowledge, has not been previously explored in the context of Japanese education.

Additionally, the categorization of participating teachers into distinct groups, including in-service teachers, leavers, and movers, during the individual interviews has provided valuable insights. This categorization shed light on a novel perspective, revealing that in-service teachers, who desire to remain in the teaching profession, receive considerable support from their supervisors and coworkers (See the Results/Discussion chapters).

Furthermore, the individual interviews included specific inquiries regarding supervisory support, encompassing topics such as classroom management (i.e., IQ6 (What kind of school policy or support do you think are necessary to alleviate workload in classroom management?), managing students' disciplinary issues (i.e., IQ8 (What types of discipline problems most deplete you, and what types of support do you need to alleviate your burden in terms of students' discipline problems?)), and interacting with students' parents (i.e., IQ11 (What are tasks/workload which you would like to reduce in dealing with students' parents?)). By integrating teachers' authentic experiences and insights with existing and current literature, I aim to present the following implications.

Moreover, although the interviews did not explicitly explore aspects of Japanese culture, they became noticeable during the interviews. In particular, they play a crucial role in

the consideration of teacher support. Therefore, several implications in the present study encompass the cultural aspects prevalent within the Japanese context.

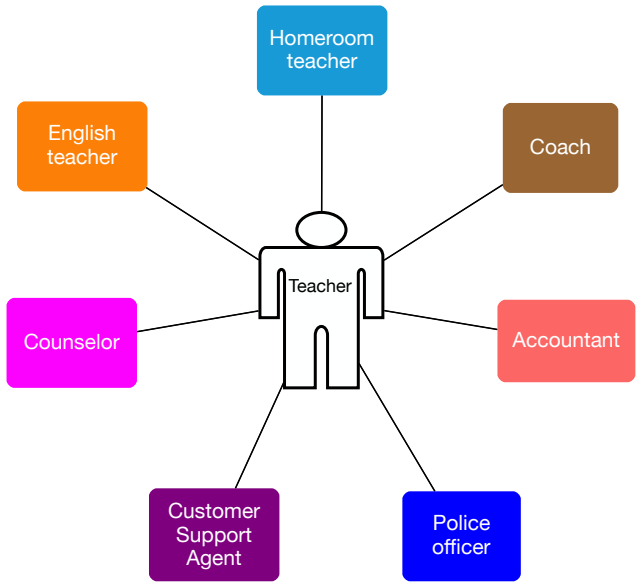
Implications

The findings presented in the Phase 1 survey have revealed that a wide variety of factors (e.g., COVID-19, students' disciplinary problems, time pressure, teaching experience, students' parents, etc.) have an impact on both/either teacher burnout and/or teacher self-efficacy, which are two primary components in the present study. Particularly, teacher self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in reducing teachers' burnout levels.

Additionally, the findings presented in the Phase 2 interview have illuminated the diverse range of responsibilities teachers in Japan are responsible for. They are no longer confined to the role of educators but have assumed multiple occupations, serving as coaches, homeroom teachers, English instructors, counselors, accountants, customer support agents for students' parents, police officers of disciplinary problems, and even cleaning staff (Figure 19).

Figure 19

Teachers with Multiple Occupations



The objective of this implication sector is to propose actionable measures based on the findings of both phases that can be undertaken by the government, school administrators, and teachers collectively to alleviate the burden of teachers' heavy workload. The following

sections outline a comprehensive set of nine implications that have been developed in accordance with the above objective.

Implication 1. Allowing Five Years for Novice Teachers to Develop their Self-Efficacy

RQ2 (i.e., How do teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy correlate with each other?) in Phase 1 demonstrated a positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and a reduction of three dimensions associated with burnout. In particular, instructional strategies and student engagement skills in self-efficacy dimensions were found to have a mitigating effect on teachers' burnout levels (Table 11). Further, RQ6 (i.e., Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?) in Phase 1 revealed that teacher self-efficacy could improve with their accumulated teaching experience. Building on these insights, IQ4 (i.e., How much are you confident in your teaching?) in Phase 2 revealed that teachers typically develop confidence in their teaching skills after approximately five years of experience. Consequently, the first implication derived from these findings suggests that school administrators allow five years for novice teachers to gradually enhance their self-efficacy levels within the first five years of their teaching career.

I propose that teachers with less than five years of teaching experience should have their workload reduced in two specific areas. The first area pertains to homeroom management, which has been extensively addressed in previous chapters. In the Japanese educational context, homeroom management requires excessive time and mental effort from teachers. While some schools assign novice teachers as assistant homeroom teachers for the first few years to alleviate these tasks, others immediately assign novice teachers as homeroom teachers in their first year of teaching. Therefore, by assigning novice teachers as assistant homeroom teachers for the initial five-year period, for example, school administrators can minimize the risk of teachers encountering unreasonable demands from parents (See "monster parents" section in the Results/Discussion chapters). Reducing the frequency of interactions with students' parents is also advantageous in terms of alleviating teachers' mental burden, particularly since younger teachers in their 20s and 30s have been experiencing challenges in the teacher-parent relationship, as indicated in the Discussion chapter. Additionally, as demonstrated in the results of RQ4 (i.e., How do five school contextual factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?) in Phase 1, teachers' relationship with students' parents showed a significant correlation with teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, allowing novice teachers to gradually develop their self-efficacy over the course

of the initial five years can facilitate the establishment of a stable rapport with students' parents, promoting positive teacher-parent interactions.

The second responsibility that should be alleviated for novice teachers is ECAs. Although ECAs were originally initiated in 1970s with the aim of reducing students' delinquency, nowadays both students and their parents expect participation for skill development in various clubs (e.g., soccer, tennis, tea ceremony) as well as for enhancing social skills. Some schools even take pride in providing future students with opportunities to enroll in their programs. Thus, reducing societal expectations for ECAs in Japan seems challenging. Additionally, considering that almost all teachers are currently allocated to ECAs (MEXT, 2022a), in addition to the existing shortage of teachers in Japanese schools, it appears impractical to completely exempt novice teachers from duties in ECAs. Instead, it is recommended that novice teachers be relieved of their responsibilities in overseeing sports clubs. As indicated by the findings from Phase 2, teachers in charge of sports clubs experience a greater physical and mental burden. Following this view, MEXT's survey (2016c) revealed that middle school teachers (N = 10,687) dedicate 41 minutes every weekday and 1 hour and 54 minutes on weekends to sports clubs, while spending 24 minutes every weekday and 27 minutes on weekends for culture clubs. Consequently, novice teachers focusing on culture clubs could generate favorable outcomes in terms of time allocation for ECAs.

In conclusion, by relieving novice teachers of the aforementioned two responsibilities, namely homeroom management and ECAs, they are provided with a favorable working environment that allows them to focus primarily on subject instruction, which can enhance their instructional strategies and student engagement skills. This arrangement can possibly develop their self-efficacy and subsequently lower the risk of burnout, based on a postulation that the most effective way of developing strong efficacy beliefs is through the accumulation of successful experiences (Bandura, op.cit, as cited in Choi & Lee, 2018, p. 183).

Implication 2. Improving English Proficiency

RQ5 (i.e., How do Japanese EFL teachers' perceived English language proficiency influence their self-efficacy?) in Phase 1 revealed a significant relationship between teachers' language proficiency and their self-efficacy, implying that enhancing English proficiency among teachers could potentially contribute to the improvement of their self-efficacy. Various effective strategies can be employed by teachers to achieve this goal. First, it is advisable for teachers to participate in English language workshops or seminars. Numerous

professional development opportunities are available that focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and general English language skills improvement. Several organizations, language schools, and universities offer workshops or seminars specifically designed for EFL teachers, aiming to enhance their English proficiency. For instance, the British Council (2023) frequently organizes EFL training courses that can be accessed both in-person and through online platforms. Engaging in these opportunities can provide valuable insights and practical techniques for improving teachers' language abilities.

Second, it is recommended that school administrators establish in-school teacher workshops during long vacation periods. The principal advantage of conducting these workshops within the school settings is the familiarity of the teaching environment. As teachers work within the same school, they possess a comprehensive understanding of the specific English proficiency skills and teaching strategies necessary for effectively teaching their students. In support of this notion, Teacher 5 (IN-25), during the Phase 2 interview, expressed gratitude towards their coworkers for providing guidance on teaching methods. This highlights the potential benefits of using the expertise and experience of fellow teachers within the same school.

Third, at the individual level, teachers can consider participating in conversation groups or language exchange programs. They have the option to seek out such groups or programs within their local community or explore online platforms that facilitate language exchanges. One notable example is the online platform "Conversation Exchange (2021)," which offers a global gathering where language learners can mutually help each other in acquiring their respective target languages. These platforms provide valuable opportunities for teachers to engage in conversations with native English speakers or fellow English learners. Through these interactions, teachers can enhance their speaking and listening skills while also offering their expertise to assist others in practicing the Japanese language in return.

There exist alternative ways for enhancing English skills beyond the aforementioned suggestions. These methods include activities such as reading English literature, newspapers, or online articles, listening to English podcasts or radio programs, and watching English movies or television series. Consistently engaging with the English language in daily life helps teachers to reinforce their language proficiency. However, regardless of the specific strategies, teachers must allocate dedicated time for English language practice. This issue of time allocation was raised in the extract by Teacher 13 (IN-51) during the interview (See the Results/Discussion chapters): they do not secure sufficient time for their self-improvement,

which might as well be a concern for other teachers. In line with this concern, the Implication 3 and subsequent implications focus on how teachers can alleviate their workload with the assistance of governmental entities, including local governments, school administrators, and supervisors.

Implication 3. Allocating School Counselors (SCs) and Social Workers (SWs)

Currently, the majority of high schools hire school counselors (SCs) and social workers (SWs) only for four hours or less per week (See the Results/Discussion chapters); thus, homeroom teachers are often responsible for providing mental health support to students. In addition to caring for their students' mental health needs, teachers may also be called upon to provide support to the parents of their students as parents may experience significant stress related to their child's issues, primarily school refusal. To break this cycle, experts and researchers recommend that governments and school administrators, including those at the local level, prioritize the employment of enough SCs and SWs to provide comprehensive support to students and their families (3keys, n.d.).

SCs are responsible for providing support and guidance to students in their personal, social, and academic development (Kudo, 2018a). They work closely with teachers, administrators, and parents to ensure that students receive the support they need to succeed in school life. They may provide individual counseling to students who are experiencing personal or academic difficulties, and they may also lead group counseling sessions or provide classroom instruction on topics such as mental health, stress management, and study skills (Kusumi & Takahashi, 2019).

Further, SWs play an important role in addressing school refusal and disciplinary behaviors among students in Japan. In terms of school refusal, SWs work with students who are reluctant to attend school due to anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues. They may provide individual counseling or group therapy to help students manage their emotions and develop coping strategies (Nishina & Nishina, 2016). When it comes to disciplinary behaviors, SWs may work with students who are engaging in disruptive or harmful behaviors. They provide counseling or therapy to help the student to understand the impact of their actions and develop more positive coping strategies (Okada, 2019). SWs also work with teachers and administrators to develop interventions or support plans to address the underlying causes of the behavior. In addition to providing individual support, they manage to create a positive school environment that promotes student well-being and positive behavior (Sakurai & Hishinuma, 2018). They may collaborate with teachers and

administrators to develop policies and programs that support positive behavior and prevent school refusal and disciplinary issues (Japan Association of School Social Work, 2021).

Overall, by allocating full time SCs and SWs at school, students and their parents receive professional mental health support, and schools can reduce the amount of work of teachers and allow them to focus on their primary role as teachers. This could also help to improve teacher well-being and reduce the risk of burnout and stress-related illness. Thus, hiring SCs and SWs can have significant benefits for teachers at schools in Japan.

Implication 4. Hiring School Support Staff (SSSs)

A survey conducted by OECD in 2018 examined the number of class hours per week that elementary and middle school teachers worked across 48 countries and regions (Financial field, 2022). The findings revealed that, in Japan, elementary school teachers dedicate 23 hours, while middle school teachers spend 18 hours on teaching. In comparison to the OECD average of 20.3 hours, the difference is relatively insignificant. However, it is noteworthy that Japanese teachers expend nearly double the time on miscellaneous tasks such as morning patrol in a school zone or collecting school revenue, as indicated in the Homeroom management section of the Results/Discussion chapters.

Aligned with teachers' increasing tasks, MEXT has embarked on a mission to increase the number of School Support Staff (SSSs) at public elementary and middle schools, with the aim of promoting work style reforms for teachers. The role of SSSs encompasses tasks such as preparing handouts, grading quizzes, answering telephone queries, and implementing disinfection protocols to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Notably, a teacher's license is not required for assuming the position of SSSs, and the labor expenses are paid by a combination of the national government, which covers one-third of the cost, and prefectures and cities, which are responsible for the remaining cost (JIJI, 2022).

Regarding theme 6 of the thematic analysis, which pertains to supervisory support, the present study sheds light on several advantages that teachers benefit from the assistance of SSSs. First and foremost, by delegating the task of telephone queries from students' parents to SSSs, teachers can avoid the need to engage in direct communication with parents, which alleviates the amount of their work. This, in turn, can lead to a reduction in the stress levels experienced by teachers, as several teachers mentioned during the interview phase. In fact, Teacher 2 (L-47), Teacher 10 (IN-26), and Teacher 15 (M-49) suggest that schools establish a customer support center to handle parents' complaints. Such an approach could also serve as a protective measure against teacher burnout caused by challenging interactions

with overly demanding parents. As noted by Teacher 14 (IN-48), some parents simply want a sympathetic ear and are not necessarily complaining (See the Results/Discussion chapters).

Second, the present study highlights that accounting-related tasks can be particularly stressful and time-consuming for teachers, as indicated by Teacher 2 (L-47), Teacher 10 (IN-26), and Teacher 14 (IN-48) during the interview phase. The interview data revealed that teachers struggle to allocate sufficient time to manage accounting tasks related to homeroom management, ECAs, and PTA affairs. Leaving such responsibilities to SSSs can significantly alleviate teachers' burden. In fact, as reported by Teacher 14 (IN-48), the implementation of SSSs at their school has yielded benefits in this regard:

> In my school, the PTA secures a budget to hire SSSs. We can leave SSSs tasks that used to be done by teachers, such as accounting tasks for the PTA and school events. Recently, I heard some schools also have started to hire SSSs or a similar kind of supporting staff, and they do miscellaneous tasks such as the printing work. I think it's a big difference just because the homeroom teacher doesn't have to do the printing. Teacher 14 (IN-48)

Third, SSSs can also play a role in diminishing teachers' involvement in PTA-related tasks. IQ11 in Phase 2 specifically inquired about tasks or workload that participating teachers wished to reduce when interacting with students' parents. The findings revealed that seven out of 17 teachers cited PTA-related tasks as being irrelevant to their primary teaching responsibilities and suggested that such tasks could be eliminated. For instance, tasks such as conducting morning and night patrols in a school zone, collaborating with local volunteers, and performing cleaning tasks on weekends, such as washing and drying curtains in each classroom, can be assigned to SSSs other than teachers. By reducing these non-teaching duties through the assistance of SSSs, teachers can devote more time and effort to teaching.

Implication 5. Hiring Pre-service Teachers

The availability of budget for hiring SSSs is a notable concern, as indicated by the fact that only two out of 17 teachers in the interview phase reported they have access to SSSs. It is likely that many schools across Japan have not yet implemented this system as of 2023 due to financial constraints. For schools with limited budgets, one potential solution is to hire university students enrolled in teacher education programs (i.e., pre-service teachers) who are interested in gaining practical experience as future teachers. As part of a program called "University Students School Supporter (USSS)," this program was piloted in six high schools in Ehime prefecture (Ehime NNN, 2022). The program aims to alleviate teachers' workload by assigning tasks such as providing supplementary lessons, supporting school events,

assisting with paperwork, checking homework, and supervising exams to USSS. Tokumoto (2022, as cited in Ehime NNN, 2022), a high school teacher at one of the schools that implemented USSS, expressed enthusiasm about the potential benefits of this program:

> Before adopting this program, I thought I had to do everything myself, but I realized that I didn't necessarily have to. Rather, I think that there are many positive aspects for my students, such as counseling, which university students provide. (Tokumoto, 2022)

Additionally, it is important to note that the USSS program provides university students with an opportunity to gain practical experience prior to becoming teachers themselves. Ms. Miyazaki, a university student from the USSS, stated that they participated in this program to gain insight into the aspects of teaching that cannot be experienced during the typical three-week teaching practicum. Existing literature supports the benefits of this program. Kawano et al. (2015) found that new teachers in Japan experience a mental health issue known as "Reality shock" due to the significant gap between their ideal expectations and the actual realities of teaching. In fact, the interview data in the present study also revealed that Teacher 1 (M-41), Teacher 8 (L-49), and Teacher 10 (IN-26) experienced Reality shock in terms of a mismatch between their desired service offerings and the expectations set by their respective schools or local governments. Therefore, the USSS program brings dual advantages for both teachers and university students.

However, as mentioned above, a lack of human resources in rural and mountainous regions is more salient (JIJI, 2023). Hence, this program may not be possible to support schools that are located more than two hours away from a university, and additional supports for such rural and remote schools should be addressed in future research.

Implication 6. Hiring a Coach and/or School Alumni for ECAs

As the Results/Discussion chapters noted, the OECD survey conducted in 2019 revealed that middle school teachers in Japan allocate 7.5 hours per week to ECAs, which is significantly higher than the average of 1.9 hours reported among OECD countries. The participating teachers in the present study also attested to the demanding nature of their roles with regard to ECA management, citing their involvement in these activities outside of regular working hours and on weekends.

MEXT has initiated a policy aimed at reducing the burden on teachers and their long working hours (Financial field, 2022). Specifically, MEXT is considering the involvement of community members in charge of ECAs, rather than relying solely on teachers. This policy is

intended to encourage greater participation in educational activities from local residents (Financial field, 2022). Indeed, MEXT subsidizes personnel expenses to ensure that coaches with specialized expertise, such as employees of local sports clubs, can supervise students during activities (JIJI, 2023). In line with this, Fukuoka prefecture has initiated a "regional shift" of ECAs, whereby the coaching of ECAs at public middle schools on holidays is entrusted to local sports clubs (RKB News, 2023). This initiative began in April 2023 and is considered a "reform promotion period" for the transition, spanning three years. The Fukuoka Prefectural Board of Education has identified five municipalities in the prefecture as models for implementing this transition in the current fiscal year.

There are, however, notable challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve a successful transition to the regional shift of ECAs. First, local governments have expressed concerns regarding a lack of human resources in rural and mountainous regions (JIJI, 2023). Second, although ECA coaches are a valuable asset in the field of education, particularly in terms of reducing teachers' workload related to ECAs, there is a shortage of individuals willing to accept this role, primarily due to their designation as part-time employees, and the relatively low payment of 4,800 yen per day (i.e., 35 US dollars as of May 2023), with a restricted working period of 45 days annually (RKB News, 2023). These issues present significant hurdles that must be overcome in order to successfully implement the regional shift of ECAs.

To address the challenge of a shortage of human resources willing to serve as ECA coaches due to low wages and limited working days, some schools have adopted a strategy of hiring alumni or university students as ECA coaches. The key advantage of this approach is that alumni and university students are already familiar with the latest school culture as they graduated from high school a couple of years ago and may be more likely to accept the job due to the flexibility of their schedules (RKB News, 2023). Local governments in Fukuoka prefecture have also implemented this approach by hiring university students in the region to serve as ECA coaches. Inui (2023, as cited in RKB News, 2023) noted that there is a high likelihood that university students will be able to receive training to become effective ECA instructors thanks to their schedule flexibility.

Implication 7. Reviewing the Fixed Homeroom Teacher System

As evidenced in the Introduction chapter, a concerning 45.6% of new employees to the education industry in Japan leave their profession within the first three years (MHLW, 2021). The Discussion chapter also highlights a significant increase, at 1.66 times, in the ratio

of teachers in their 20s and 30s leaving the profession between 2016 and 2020. Further, the interview phase in the present study revealed that teachers who take sick leave often find it challenging to return to the teaching profession. One of the primary factors contributing to this trend is the heavy workload in homeroom management. As multiple novice teachers attested in the interview, homeroom management can be exhausting teachers, both mentally and physically. For instance, Teacher 12 (IN-31) referenced the challenges of handling both homeroom management and subject instruction, noting that schools in other countries have separate teachers for each responsibility:

> Overseas, I heard there are specialists who are in charge of homeroom management, and there are teachers who are in charge of each subject such as English or history, and each receives a salary. But there is no such system in Japan, so I think Japanese teachers are extremely busy. It would be good if we could divide the responsibilities so that the homeroom management and subject instruction are done by different specialists. Teacher 12 (IN-31)

However, implementation of this proposal could pose challenges, given the current teacher shortage in Japan. In light of this, I intend to present two specific suggestions for supporting teachers, especially novice teachers, in homeroom management.

Suggestion A. Assign two homeroom teachers to one classroom. Teachers often find themselves burdened with parent-related matters, especially with monster parents causing particular stress for novice teachers. Even if schools delegate telephone queries from students' parents to SSSs to alleviate teachers' workload, homeroom teachers still end up communicating with parents. In order to reduce the burden on novice teachers, it may be beneficial to assign two homeroom teachers to one classroom, with one experienced teacher to support the novice teacher (Toyokeizai, 2023). This approach is supported by the interviews with two teachers, which revealed that novice teachers struggle more when dealing with parent demands compared to experienced teachers who have developed techniques for managing parent complaints. Concurrently, by asking experienced teachers to mentor young teachers, it is possible to stimulate the joy of teaching in experienced teachers while supporting novice teachers (Kudo, 2018b).

As teachers accumulate experience, their self-efficacy levels tend to increase, as revealed by the positive impact of accumulated teaching experience on teacher self-efficacy in the survey of the present study (i.e., RQ6 (Do Japanese EFL teachers' (1) education level, (2) teaching experience, and (3) experience of going abroad correlate teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy?)). Moreover, as indicated by RQ4 (i.e., How do five school contextual

factors impact Japanese EFL teacher self-efficacy?), the relationship between teachers and students' parents has a significant impact on teacher self-efficacy, teaching experience may help shield novice teachers from the negative impact of irrational demands from parents. Given this perspective, to assign two homeroom teachers to one classroom would be greatly effective. However, not all schools may have the budget to assign two teachers to one classroom; and thus, a second suggestion is proposed below.

Suggestion B. Implement an all-homeroom-teacher system. In Japan, it is common that a single teacher assumes the role of classroom management, also known as the fixed homeroom teacher system. However, in situations where problematic situations arise, such as dealing with challenging behaviors of students, school refusal, and parental issues, the responsibility ultimately falls on the homeroom teacher. In this regard, novice teachers expressed their concerns regarding their capability to handle such complex matters on their own:

> Although each class has one homeroom teacher and one assistant homeroom teacher, in the end, the homeroom teacher is responsible for everything that happens. I wish I could share the amount of work and responsibilities with all the teachers of the grade. There were quite a few cases where I thought it would be better if the head teacher of the grade or administrators could support me more, but I ended up dealing them because I was a homeroom teacher. Teacher 9 (M-29)

Addressing the concern expressed by novice teachers regarding the fixed homeroom teacher system, one potential solution is the implementation of a system where all teachers serve as homeroom teachers. This approach was implemented by a middle school in Tokyo in 2018, led by Principal Kudo. According to Kudo (2018b), this system offers several benefits, including the reduction of individual teachers' workload and mental burden by sharing responsibilities among teachers. With this system, when novice teachers encounter issues related to students or parents, they can receive support from other teachers, including experienced ones. This approach allows for a collaborative and supportive learning environment, which is beneficial for novice teachers (Kudo, 2018b). Further, Kudo (2018b) claims that this system can reduce the risk of class disruption, which tends to occur when there is a large disparity between well-managed and unruly classes. At Koujimachi middle school in Tokyo, for instance, six homeroom teachers manage four classes by cooperating with each other. Additionally, this system can be beneficial for students by enabling them to interact with a wider range of teachers, thereby broadening their sense of values (Kudo,

2018). This perspective is also supported by the view of Teacher 16 (L-27) in the interview phase:

> Only one homeroom teacher is not enough to meet students' demands. I think it would be better if there were more than one teacher who could communicate with students. I think it would be more beneficial for students to have several teachers they can consult with in addition to their homeroom teacher. Teacher 16 (L-27)

According to Kudo (2018b), the implementation of an all-homeroom teacher system resulted in a significant improvement in teacher communication, as teachers meet once per week to share information about students on a daily basis. This frequent communication among teachers has led to a more cohesive and effective approach to student support and has resulted in a more efficient system for managing student-related issues (Kudo, 2018b). Such improvements in communication and information sharing are essential for maintaining a supportive and collaborative school environment (Kudo, 2018b).

Implication 8. Using Internet Technology

Internet technology (IT) has brought about numerous benefits to schools. With the internet, students and teachers have access to a vast amount of information that can aid their learning and teaching (Yamada, 2016). This implication section presents three suggestions to reduce teachers' workload by the use of IT at school.

Suggestion A. Digitize paper documents. Japan's digitalization efforts have been observed to lag behind, as evidenced by its decline in rankings on the World Digital Competitiveness Ranking. In 2022, Japan dropped to the 29th position, marking a decrease of seven places since its highest ranking in 2018 when it placed 22nd (Mailmate, 2022). This downward trend has persisted for four consecutive years. Within the context of education, many schools in Japan continue to rely on paper documents, with little adoption of digital tools and technologies. Furthermore, there exists a prevalent cultural belief that handwriting is superior, leading to some teachers not using digital platforms such as Excel or Word (TBS News, 2023).

During the interview phase, Teacher 14 (IN-48) highlighted a notable benefit of employing SSSs, namely the alleviation of printing tasks for homeroom teachers. Nevertheless, with the advent of digitalization, even SSSs can avoid the need for document printing, thereby allowing them to engage in other tasks. Several schools in Japan have utilized online platforms to disseminate announcements, share schedules, and establish remote communication channels with students' parents (Makino & Handa, 2018). The use of

digitalization is expected to contribute to a reduction in the amount of work faced by teachers.

Suggestion B. Conduct parent-teacher meetings and home visits on request basis via online platforms. Within the framework of the present study, it is important to acknowledge that not all teachers perceive parent-teacher meetings as necessary, as Teacher 3 (L-31) shared their perspective in the Results/Discussion chapters. In fact, among the 17 teachers interviewed, five participants expressed a desire to decrease the frequency of parent-teacher meetings due to their time-consuming factor and scheduling them outside of working hours. Consequently, Teacher 12 (IN-31) mentioned that the implementation of optional parent-teacher meetings would yield advantages for both teachers and parents:

> Some parents are not particularly interested in this meeting, so I think it would be good to make interviews on request basis. In the first place, the teachers have classes even during the meeting period, and it takes about 20 minutes per person with almost no breaks, but it's pretty tough, to be honest. I think there are probably some parents who want to talk a little more, or want to consult more. Considering we can only spare about 20 minutes, it's better for both of us to set aside more time for parents who asks more serious advice, I think. Teacher 12 (IN-31)

Moreover, it is recommended that parent-teacher meetings, along with any necessary home visits by teachers, be conducted exclusively through online platforms, in addition to being available on request. The considerable advantage of this approach is the conservation of time. By eliminating the need for in-person meetings, parents of students do not need to travel to the school, while teachers can significantly reduce their commuting time for home visits. Additionally, teachers who traditionally hold meetings at the school during the weekends can potentially conduct them from home. Furthermore, as mentioned in the aforementioned Suggestion A, the utilization of an online scheduling form instead of distributing a notification letter provides a time-saving option.

Suggestion C. Create an online inquiry form. As the primary contact for students' parents, teachers often receive the weight of criticisms from parents regarding various aspects of homeroom management and school educational policies (See the Results/Discussion chapters). Consequently, schools are encouraged to prioritize providing adequate support for teachers' communication with parents. As suggested by Teacher 7 (IN-33), one effective approach is the establishment of an online inquiry form, which enables teachers to avoid the first contact from students' parents. This approach, along with the assistance provided by the SSSs in addressing telephone inquiries from parents, can effectively alleviate the burden placed on teachers in handling parent-related matters.

The online inquiry form will particularly be beneficial for novice teachers, offering advantages in two key aspects. First, it allows them to seek guidance and advice from more experienced coworkers and administrators prior to independently addressing students' parents' inquiries. As highlighted by Teacher 4 (L-26) during the interview (See Analysis Stage 4 in the Results/Discussion chapters), novice teachers often face significant mental challenges when attempting to provide appropriate responses to parents' demands over the phone, especially when comparing themselves to experienced teachers. However, they can obtain valuable insights and suggestions from coworkers before they reply, by setting up an online inquiry form. Second, the use of Tele communication may occasionally result in misinterpretation or miscommunication with parents. Acknowledging this issue, Teacher 8 (L-49) sincerely admits instances where important cues and messages from students and parents have been unintentionally overlooked:

> If I don't have the mental space, I can't sincerely communicate with my students. Sometimes, I miss the signs and messages from my students and their parents that I don't usually overlook. Teacher 8 (L-49)

With this regard, an online inquiry form keeps a record of what the parents and teachers write, which can prevent unnecessary troubles with parents.

Implication 9. Expecting Supervisory Support to Offset Peer and Social Pressures

Aspects of Japanese culture are a significant influence on the excessive workload and psychological stress experienced by teachers in Japan. Notably, the phenomenon of peer pressure and social pressures, as described in several preceding chapters, has emerged as a prominent cultural characteristic in Japan. This social dynamic compels teachers to abstain from sick leave, even when it may be necessary, owing to the weight of expectations from their peers (See the Introduction chapter). Furthermore, social pressure constrains the range of activities teachers engage in, limiting their choices (See the Results/Discussion chapters). Ultimately, these pressures lead to unhealthy interpersonal relationships that affect teachers' mental and physical well-being. Further, a recent survey (N = 1400) regarding mask-wearing guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hiroyuki, 2023) indicated that 31% of respondents continued to wear masks during post-pandemic due to social pressure, far surpassing the 18% who answered wearing masks solely for the purpose of preventing coronavirus infection.

As Teacher 17 (M-52) described during the interview, there exists a prevalent tendency among individuals and the government to perpetuate measures or policies without

abolishing them, driven by concern arising from peer and social pressures. This notorious repetitive cycle likely plays a role in the escalating workload burdens at school. It is noteworthy that the quantity of strict regulations within schools, referred to as "black school rules" (See the Analysis Stage 3 in the Results/Discussion chapters), has shown an apparent increase. Teacher 2 (L-47) supports this perspective, underscoring the importance of supervisory leadership in this context:

> There are systems and rules in schools that have remained long because once the school implements them, they never change them. Those rules have remained long time even if we do not understand the original purpose of them. If there are systems and rules without knowing the clear purposes, we should abolish them. But in the end, I think the administrators the ones who make a decision. Teacher 2 (L-47)

Within the interview phase of the present study, it is noteworthy that a few teachers demonstrated a strong mindset to resist yielding to peer and social pressures. Teacher 16 (L-27) expressed a notable perspective, stating their reluctance to make phone calls after working hours, although their coworkers do. However, undertaking individual action in an environment where peer and social pressures are strong proves to be exceedingly challenging. Consequently, supervisory support assumes utmost importance, as school administrators play a pivotal role in creating a positive school environment. Markedly, Teacher 2 (L-47) greatly appreciated a transformative measure implemented by their administrators that the telephone in the teachers' room is switched to an answering machine at 6:30 p.m. Principal Kudo (2018b), previously mentioned in the Implication 7, advocates for the need to change conventional systems under the guidance of effective supervisory leadership:

> A fixed homeroom teacher system has existed in the long history of school education in Japan, and has continued till now without question. Systems need to be changed with the times. Principals and administrators should have the flexibility to change them even if they have been in place for 100 years, unless they are the best methods for the purpose of school education. (Kudo, 2018b)

Considering the aforementioned factors, it is evident that teachers bear a considerable burden of tasks stemming from the influence of cultural elements. Consequently, it is imperative to assess the necessity of these tasks in the context of modern educational objectives. One such area worthy of consideration is the existence of "black school rules." School administrators have the responsibility of critically evaluating all regulations within schools (e.g., students' hair color, hair style, skirt length, and similar aspects) to ensure their relevance in present-day society. Another example lies in the realm of PTA-related tasks

(e.g., cleaning tasks, accounting-related responsibilities, etc.). These tasks need not necessarily be performed by teachers alone. Instead, they could be outsourced or delegated to SSSs or potentially eliminated altogether if unnecessary. It is administrators that provide effective leadership in conducting such reforms and change cultural aspects in a positive way, which will eventually create a positive school environment.

Limitations and Future Research

First, the present study acknowledges its limitation in terms of limited access to interview in-service teachers, despite addressing their intention to leave the teaching profession. Undoubtedly, obtaining additional information concerning the nature of this intention, particularly in relation to teacher burnout, would be highly valuable. Therefore, conducting exit studies with teachers who have already left the profession would serve as a crucial tool for gaining insights into the pervasive nature of the burnout phenomenon. Exit studies have the potential to gather relevant information and identify effective strategies that alleviate burnout and possibly build resilience. Such studies would greatly contribute to the body of knowledge considering teacher attrition and the factors that impact their well-being and job satisfaction.

Second, the findings of the present study are derived from data collected from Japanese EFL teachers, based on the assumption that these teachers face heavier workload and experience greater demands and peer and social pressures (See the Introduction chapter). However, as I proceeded with the analysis of both the quantitative data and qualitative interviews, supplemented by a review of current literature, it became clear that the heavy workload experienced by teachers have a distinct negative impact on their mental well-being. Bearing this in mind, it is recommended that future research broaden their focus to encompass teachers of other subjects. Moreover, it is important to recognize that these findings are specific to EFL teachers in middle or high schools in Japan. During the data analysis process, I encountered a range of negative literature highlighting the challenges faced by teachers in elementary schools, such as mental illnesses and excessive overtime work. Thus, future research should strive to address these limitations and explore these aspects in greater depth.

Third, the quantitative survey conducted in the present study did not include a specific question regarding the participants' teaching affiliations, namely whether they work in public schools or private schools, and even prefectures they work in. Given the strong predictive relationship between students' disciplinary problems and teacher burnout (See the Results

chapter), and the indication from the interview data that students' disciplinary issues are more prevalent in public schools in rural areas compared to private schools in urban area, it would be worthwhile for future studies to categorize teachers based on their school type and prefectures. By incorporating this distinction, a clearer understanding can be obtained regarding the necessary support from government bodies and educational administrators. This differentiation would contribute to the development of targeted strategies and interventions aimed at addressing the specific challenges faced by teachers in different educational settings.

Fourth, the present study did not include or categorize teachers in terms of minority populations (e.g., Ainu people, Ryukyu, LGBTQ individuals). Additionally, the present study did not inquire about the participants' language variations. Individuals who do not speak the Japanese language spoken in Tokyo might experience burnout more significantly than their counterparts. Therefore, categorizing participants will be a focus of future research to better understand the factors that influence teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy.

Fifth, while the present study extensively engaged with the perspectives of teachers, it did not incorporate the viewpoints of school administrators. This point is noteworthy as it is crucial to consider the experiences and perspectives of educational administrators, given their crucial role in creating school environments. A survey conducted by MEXT (2016c) examined the working hours of administrators in public middle schools in Japan, revealing that they spend an average of 12 hours and 6 minutes on their daily duties, which is comparable to that reported by teachers (i.e., 12 hours and 30 minutes). These findings imply the significance of investigating the underlying factors contributing to administrators' extended working hours. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that future research focus on exploring the workload and challenges faced by school administrators, shedding light on their experiences and providing valuable insights into their demands and pressures.

Sixth, on May 10, 2023, the Japanese government presented a proposal focused on increasing the "teaching adjustment amount" (See "Kyutoku-hou" in the Introduction chapter) allocated to public school teachers' salaries, instead of overtime pay, from the current 4% of monthly salaries to a minimum of 10% (FLASH, 2023). Their objective is to enact the revision of this regulation by 2024. Nevertheless, the government has faced criticism for potentially justifying teachers' excessive working hours. It is important to note that this proposal, while addressing financial compensation, does not provide a comprehensive solution, as no participating teacher in the present study expressed dissatisfaction with their payment. Rather, they showed their hecticness regarding their heavy workload. Thus, there is a significant gap between teachers' demands for a healthier working

environment and the government policy. Consequently, further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness and potential drawbacks of the government's lasting policies that have remained unchanged for a significant period of time.

Seventh, the findings of the present study have found significant insights into the crucial need for mental health support among in-service teachers, as well as among parents who experience mental illnesses due to their children's school refusal. Consequently, it is recommended that future research explore potential strategies and interventions that governmental bodies, local governments, and school administrators can implement to provide effective support in these areas. A comprehensive investigation into this matter will contribute to the development of policies and initiatives aimed to address the mental health needs of both teachers and parents in educational settings.

Eighth, the findings of the present study may not apply to prospective teachers since the present study elicited in-service teachers' thoughts on burnout and self-efficacy. In order to better understand prospective teachers' burnout and self-efficacy, the future research should target pre-service teachers. In particular, the timing of the research should be during or at the end their three-week teaching practicum as they experience teaching practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey questions in Phase 1

Demographic information - 6 items

1. Please indicate your age in years ( ) (e.g., 39 years old >>> 39)
2. Please select your gender (Female/Male/Other or prefer not to respond)
3. Please select your completed education (B.A / M.A / Ph.D. / other ____)
4. Your experience of staying in an English-speaking country for study (e.g., 3 years and 2 months)
5. Your teaching experience including part-time teaching (e.g., 20 years and 4 months)
6. Which school level do you teach at currently? (Middle school/High school/Both/Other)

Burnout scale - 14 items

Reference: Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, Friedman, 2003)

Likert-type scale 1 (never) to 7 (always)

(1) Exhaustion

1. I feel exhausted from teaching.
2. I feel burned out from teaching.
3. I feel worn out from teaching.
4. I feel wiped-out by the end of a day of teaching.
5. I feel physically worn out by teaching.

(2) Lack of Accomplishment

6. I feel I could have better used my professional and personal capabilities in a profession other than teaching.
7. I do not feel that I fulfill myself in teaching.
8. I feel that I am not doing very well as a teacher.
9. I think that if I had to choose again, I would still choose teaching.*
10. I feel my expectations of teaching have not been met.

*Item scores reversed.

(3) Depersonalization (having an unfavorable attitude toward students, lacking kindness or concern)

11. I feel that my students do not really try enough.
12. I feel that my students do not really care about being good students.
13. I feel that my students do not really want to learn.
14. I think that I would rather have better students than those I have now.

Teacher self-efficacy scale - 12 items
Reference: The short version of TSES (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001)
Likert-type scale 1(not at all) to 7 (a great deal)

How confident are you that you can:

1. Provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused? (IS)
2. Use a variety of assessment strategies? (IS)
3. Formulate good questions for your students? (IS)
4. Implement alternative strategies in your classroom? (IS)
5. Get students to follow classroom rules? (CM)
6. Control disruptive behaviors in the classroom? (CM)
7. Establish a classroom management system with any group of students? (CM)
8. Calm a student who is disruptive or noisy? (CM)
9. Get students to believe they can do well on schoolwork? (SE)
10. Encourage your students to value learning? (SE)
11. Assist families in helping their children do well in school? (SE)
12. Motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork? (SE)

Instructional strategies (IS) Classroom management (CM) Student engagement (SE)

Attitude towards government policy - 3 items
Reference: Nishino's (2012) study (modified)
Likert-type scale 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

1. The national curriculum guidelines influence my English courses.
2. The possibility of abolishment of the Center Test by the government has influenced or is influencing my English courses.
3. The possibility of replacement of the Center Test with another type of test (e.g., TOEIC, TOEFL, EIKEN) has influenced or is influencing my English courses.

English language proficiency scale - 7 items
Reference: Choi and Lee's (2016) English language proficiency survey

Rate your ability of the following skills/knowledge from 1 (very weak) to 7 (very strong).

1. Speaking skills
2. Listening skills
3. Reading skills
4. Writing skills
5. Vocabulary
6. Pronunciation
7. Grammar

School contextual factors - 15 items
Reference: Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2010) study

Likert-type scale 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

(1) Time pressure

1. Preparation for teaching is often done after working hours.
2. Life at school is hectic and there is no time for rest and recovery.
3. Meetings, administrative work, and documentation take much of the time that should be used for preparing the teaching.

(2) Discipline problems

4. My teaching is often disrupted by students who lack discipline.
5. Some students with behavior problems make it difficult to carry out lessons as planned.
6. Controlling students' behavior takes a lot of time and effort.

(3) Supervisory support

7. In educational matters, I can always seek help and advice from the school leadership.
8. My relation with the principal is one of mutual trust and respect.
9. The school leadership is supportive and praise good work.

(4) Autonomy

10. In my daily teaching, I am free to select teaching methods and strategies for my class.

11. In the subject(s) that I teach, I feel free to decide what content to focus on.
12. I feel that I can influence my working conditions.

(5) Relation to parents

13. I feel that the students' parents have trust in my teaching.
14. I feel that the students' parents are easy to work with.
15. I feel that the students' parents trust and accept my decisions.

Intention to leave the teaching profession - 2 items
Reference: O'Brien et al.'s (2008) study (modified)

Likert-type scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

1. You are seriously considering leaving your current job.

If your answer is 5 or above, do you consider yourself as a mover (seeking another teaching opportunity) or a leaver (seeking a non-teaching alternative)?

2. If you could begin your career again, would teaching be your first choice?

COVID-19 scale - 7 items
Reference: The Fear of COVID-19 Scale (FCV-19S) developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020)

Likert-type scale 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

1. I am afraid of COVID-19.
2. It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19.
3. My hands become clammy when I think about COVID-19.
4. I am afraid of losing my life because of coronavirus-19.
5. When watching news and hearing/reading stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become nervous or anxious.
6. I cannot sleep because I'm worried about contracting COVID-19.
7. My heart races or palpitates when I think about contracting COVID-19.

Appendix B: Recruiting letter to a representative in EFL teachers' associations

[Japanese translation was used]

To whom it may concern,

I am Kensaku Ogata in the PhD program in the Department of Integrated Educational Studies at McGill University. My Ph.D. project is supervised by Dr. Susan Ballinger, associate professor at McGill University. I am writing because I would like to distribute a survey to Japanese EFL teachers who belong to (the name of association). I need your permission to distribute a recruiting letter online to EFL teachers in (the name of association).

As part of my doctoral work, I am conducting a study that seeks to better understand the impact of teacher burnout on teacher attrition. I hope that this study will help me understand how/why Japanese EFL teachers in Japan experience burnout and its relationship with increasing teacher attrition rates over the past decade in Japan.

Teachers will be asked to complete an on-line questionnaire using Microsoft Forms regarding teacher burnout and other relevant factors (e.g., teacher self-efficacy, COVID-19, Government policy). It will take teachers approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the analysis of the questionnaire, an individual interview will be also conducted targeting at those teachers who agree to join. Teachers may skip any question in the questionnaire, and they may quit the survey if they wish. If teachers do not formally submit their survey responses, or decide to exit the browser, partial answers will not be saved and thus they will not be qualified to receive a reward: an amazon gift card (500 yen).

This study will be conducted completely online, and every effort will be made to ensure that participants' confidentiality and privacy are protected. The participants' names, personal, and institutional information will not be disclosed in my dissertation and published articles. In the survey, only numerical data will be used for analysis and any identifiable information will be stored separately in a password-protected folder on One Drive. Regarding the interview, I will also need each participant's permission to record his/her interview via audiotape for accuracy in analysis. I will assign pseudonym; thus, their identities will not be associated with the interview transcripts. I do not foresee any potential risks or discomfort to participants as a result of participating in this study. The participation is entirely voluntary.

I will be more than happy to share my findings with participants, and my results will be submitted for peer review and publication in academic and professional journal(s) and/or newsletters, and/or an academic presentation. Thank you for considering this request. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this endeavor. If you have any questions about this study or future related studies, please contact Kensaku Ogata via e-mail at kensaku.ogata@mail.mcgill.ca.

Sincerely,

Kensaku Ogata
PhD Candidate, Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
3700 McTavish Street 3801 University Street
Montreal, QC Canada H3A 1Y2
kensaku.ogata@mail.mcgill.ca

Appendix C: Consent Form for Quantitative Survey and a Qualitative Interview

[Japanese translation was used]

Dear participant,

I am Kensaku Ogata in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Integrated Educational Studies at McGill University. My Ph.D. project is supervised by Dr. Susan Ballinger, associate professor at McGill University. As part of my doctoral work, I am conducting a study that seeks to better understand the impact of teacher burnout on teacher attrition. I hope that this study will help me understand how/why Japanese EFL teachers in Japan experience burnout and its relationship with increasing teacher attrition rates over the past decade in Japan.

There are two parts in this study, and you can select to join either the first part or both parts. In the first part, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire regarding teacher burnout and other relevant factors (e.g., teacher self-efficacy, COVID-19, Government policy). It will take teachers approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. You may skip any question, and you may quit the survey if you wish. If you do not formally submit your survey responses, or decide to exit the browser, partial answers will not be saved and thus you will not be qualified to receive a reward: an amazon gift card (500 yen).

In the second part, after the analysis of the questionnaire, an individual interview (50-60 minutes) will be also conducted targeting those participants who agree to join. In this interview, I would like to ask you follow-up questions in order to clarify your primary survey. All interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for accuracy. The interview will be conducted on Zoom. During the interview you can turn off your camera if you wish so. The cloud recording option will be turned off on Zoom and the recording will be saved only on my personal computer hard drive and McGill secure OneDrive. You will be provided an amazon gift card of 2000 Japanese yen by email immediately after the interview if you participate in this follow-up interview.

This study will be conducted completely online, and every effort will be made to ensure your confidentiality and privacy is protected. Your name, personal, and institutional information will not be disclosed in my dissertation and published articles. In the survey, only numerical data will be used for analysis and any identifiable information will be stored separately in a password-protected folder on OneDrive. Regarding the interview, I will also need your permission to record your interview via audiotape for accuracy in analysis. I will assign a pseudonym; thus, your identity will not be associated with the interview transcripts. I do not foresee any potential risks or discomfort to you as a result of participating in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary.

I will be more than happy to share my findings with you, and my results will be submitted for peer review and publication in professional journal(s) and/or newsletters. Thank you for considering this request. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this endeavor. If you have any questions about this study or future related studies, please contact Kensaku Ogata via e-mail at kensaku.ogata@mail.mcgill.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger at **susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca** if you have any concerns about this study. Should you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation

in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

I have read the above and I understand all of the above conditions. I freely give consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

1) I agree to participate in the questionnaire. YES / NO
2) I consent to be audio-taped in the individual interviews.
YES / NO / I will not join the interview / I am not sure if I can join the interview
3) I consent for my de-identified data to be used for future related studies. YES / NO

Please check the box(es) below if you are interested in:
□being contacted for a follow-up interview
□receiving the study results
□receiving Amazon Gift Card (500yen)

Name (please print or type) _____
Email address _____
Signature _____ Date _____

Sincerely,
Kensaku Ogata
PhD Candidate, Department of Integrated Studies in Education,
McGill University
3700 McTavish Street 3801 University Street
Montreal, QC Canada H3A 1Y2
kensaku.ogata@mail.mcgill.ca

Appendix D: Recruiting Email Message for the Individual Interview

[Japanese translation was used]

Dear participant,

I am Kensaku Ogata in the PhD program in the Department of Integrated Educational Studies at McGill University. Thank you very much for completing the survey last year. I am sending this message as you checked off the box indicating you are interested in being contacted for a follow-up interview. This individual interview (50-60 minutes) will be conducted to better understand the impact of teacher burnout on teacher attrition. I hope that this study will help me understand how/why Japanese EFL teachers in Japan experience burnout and its relationship with increasing teacher attrition rates over the past decade in Japan.

In the interview, I would like to ask you in-depth open-ended questions concerning factors (e.g., teacher self-efficacy, COVID-19, Government policy) that can make Japanese EFL teachers stay in or leave the teaching profession. All interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for accuracy. The interview will be conducted on Zoom. During the interview you can turn off your camera if you wish so. The cloud recording option will be turned off on Zoom and the recording will be saved only on my personal computer hard drive and McGill secure OneDrive. You will be provided an amazon gift card of 2000 Japanese yen by email immediately after the interview.

This study will be conducted completely online, and every effort will be made to ensure your confidentiality and privacy is protected. Your name, personal, and institutional information will not be disclosed in my dissertation and published articles. Regarding the interview, I will need your permission to record your interview via audiotape for accuracy in analysis. I will assign a pseudonym; thus, your identity will not be associated with the interview transcripts. I do not foresee any potential risks or discomfort to you as a result of participating in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary.

I will be more than happy to share my findings with you, and my results will be submitted for peer review and publication in professional journal(s) and/or newsletters. Thank you for considering this request. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this endeavor. If you have any questions about this study or future related studies, please contact Kensaku Ogata via e-mail at kensaku.ogata@mail.mcgill.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger at **susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca** if you have any concerns about this study. Should you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

I have read the above and I understand all of the above conditions. I freely give consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

1) I agree to participate in the individual interview and consent to be audio-taped.
   YES _____ NO _____
2) I consent for my de-identified data to be used for future, unspecified uses.

Yes_____ NO_____

Please check the box below if you are interested in:
□receiving the study results
□receiving Amazon Gift Card (2000yen)

Name (please print or type) _____
Email address _____
Signature _____ Date _____

Sincerely,
Kensaku Ogata
PhD Candidate, Department of Integrated Studies in Education,
McGill University
3700 McTavish Street 3801 University Street
Montreal, QC Canada H3A 1Y2
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Appendix E: Interview questions in Phase 2

From RQ1	
IQ1	How has COVID-19 impacted on your teaching, mental state, and so forth?
IQ2	Have you ever thought of leaving the teaching profession? Why? Why not?
From RQ2	
IQ3	How do you motivate your students to do schoolwork? Have you experienced any hardships when motivating them?
IQ4	How much are you confident in your teaching? If the answer is a positive response, the following question will be "How many years did it take for you to gain confident?" If the answer is a negative response, the alternative question will be "How do you think you can be confident in your teaching?"
IQ5	What is the hardest workload in classroom management as a homeroom teacher? *This question will be exclusively for homeroom teachers or teachers who have experienced having been a homeroom teacher.
IQ6	What kind of school policy or support do you think are necessary to alleviate workload in classroom management? *This question will be exclusively for homeroom teachers or teachers who have experienced having been a homeroom teacher.
IQ7	Do you experience any hardships when establishing a relationship with your students' parents?
From RQ3	
IQ8	What types of discipline problems most deplete you, and what types of support do you need to alleviate your burden in terms of students' discipline problems?
IQ9	What type of tasks/workload are most depleting? And why?
IQ10	What type of support from your supervisors/bosses do you think you need?
From RQ4	
IQ11	What are tasks/workload which you would like to reduce in dealing with students' parents?
From RQ5	
IQ12	Which English skills would you like your students to develop if there were not university entrance examination? What is your goal as an English teacher?

Appendix F: Concept map of initial themes