

EFL Students' Experiences of Burnout in a 3-Semester Academic Year: The Role of Enjoyment and Grit*

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Abstract—This study takes a closer look at how grit, burnout, and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) interact among Saudi EFL learners over the course of a three-semester academic year. The research emphasizes just how much these factors can influence students' learning experiences and academic results. By focusing on grit and enjoyment as potential protective factors, the study sheds light on ways educators can better support student well-being and improve language learning outcomes. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the proposed relationships, the study found that enjoyment plays a key role in mediating the connection between grit and burnout. These findings provide valuable insights for EFL teachers and suggest strategies that could help reduce burnout and create a more positive learning environment.

Index Terms—burnout, foreign language enjoyment, grit, structural equation modeling

I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning is a multifaceted process that involves perseverance, passion, and emotional engagement. Central to this process is the concept of grit, defined as the determination and passion individuals possess for achieving long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Grit enables learners to persist and stay engaged when faced with challenges, making it a crucial factor in academic success and well-being.

There has been increasing interest in understanding the connection between grit and burnout among language learners for years. Burnout is defined as a state of physical and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to stressors (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) which poses a threat to students' academic performance and well-being. Research suggests that individuals with levels of grit may be less prone to burnout because they can maintain their perseverance and interest despite adversities (Datu et al., 2018).

However, the relationship between grit and burnout is complex and nuanced. While grit generally acts as a factor against burnout, specific circumstances, such as commitments, can intensify stress levels leading to burnout (Wolters & Hussain, 2015). Furthermore, the level of passion individuals have towards their goals, whether harmonious or obsessive, can influence the extent to which grit serves as a protective factor (Vallerand et al., 2003).

In addition to grit, there has been growing interest in the role of enjoyment in foreign language learning. Enjoyment, which is characterized by a sense of satisfaction and engagement in learning activities has been linked to higher levels of motivation, persistence and achievement among language learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2019). However, the extent to which enjoyment influences the relationship between grit and burnout remains underexplored in the literature.

The present study aims to bridge the existing research gap by investigating the complex interplay between grit, burnout, and enjoyment among Saudi EFL learners throughout a 3-semester academic year. It seeks to explore how these variables influence students' experiences and well-being in an intensive academic setting. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how educators and policymakers can create supportive environments that foster student success and reduce burnout.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Grit

* This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) (grant number IMSIU-DDRSP2501).

Grit, as defined by Duckworth et al. (2007) refers to the determination and passion individuals have, for achieving long term goals. It is a quality that enables people to persist and stay interested despite facing challenges. When examining the connection between grit and burnout studies suggest that individuals with levels of grit are less likely to experience burnout. Burnout refers to a state of physical and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Research conducted by Datu et al. (2018) discovered that teachers with levels of grit reported levels of burnout. They proposed that the perseverant efforts and consistent interest facilitated by grit protect against the high-stress levels that contribute to burnout. However, the relationship is more complex than initially perceived.

A study conducted by Wolters and Hussain (2015) showed that while grit relates inversely to burnout, it can also lead to over commitment and thus exacerbate stress under certain conditions. This finding raises doubts about grit always being protective against burnout, suggesting that the quality of grit must be considered—a passionate commitment (harmonious passion) may buffer stress, while an obsessive commitment (obsessive passion) may amplify it (Vallerand et al., 2003).

When it comes to enjoyment there seems to be a correlation with grit. The perseverance and determination to achieve long term goals can lead to a sense of accomplishment and thus enjoyment. Research conducted by Schmidt et al. (2017) found that students with levels of grit reported experiencing enjoyment in both academic and leisure activities. This could be because individuals with levels of grit are more likely to engage in tasks and find satisfaction in striving for mastery. This aligns with the principles of Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) which suggests that intrinsic motivation is fundamental for experiencing enjoyment.

However, it is important to consider that having levels of grit may not always correspond directly to high levels of enjoyment—especially if it leads to an imbalance in life domains, neglecting other areas for the sake of goal pursuit. Studies conducted by Salanova et al. (2013) highlighted that while work engagement shares similarities with grit it can lead to a detrimental neglect of other life facets if not tempered by work-life balance. Hence, it can be argued that if there is no balance, the relentless pursuit associated with determination could potentially reduce satisfaction in life.

B. Foreign Language Learning Burnout (FLLB)

Although early studies primarily investigated academic burnout among healthcare students (e.g., Wang et al., 2021; Alqifari et al., 2021; Aljadani et al., 2021; Sarcheshmeh et al., 2019), recent research has begun to explore burnout in the context of foreign language learning (e.g., Zhuojie, 2018; Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Li, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). However, studies specifically focusing on the relationship between burnout, grit, and enjoyment in language learning remain scarce, highlighting the need for further investigation.

Academic burnout is best conceptualized as a multifaced construct that consists of emotional exhaustion (i.e. prolonged periods of extreme tiredness, fatigue and apathy) cynicism (i.e. detachment, skeptical attitude toward study) and academic inefficacy (i.e. feeling of incompetence) (Liu et al., 2020). Unsurprisingly, it is linked to an array of negative outcomes in educational settings, it is associated with a higher rate of school dropout intention (Abreu Alves et al., 2022; Marôco et al., 2020; Bumbacco & Scharfe, 2020), a greater disengagement (Li, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2018), a lack of motivation (Shariffard et al., 2020; Ljubin-Golub et al., 2020), and a lower level of achievement (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Oyoo et al., 2020; Shariffard et al., 2020).

Buffering the effect of burnout on students' performance and achievement can be achieved in several ways. These include developing students' resilience or their ability to recover quickly from adversity (Gong et al., 2021; Karim & Fallah, 2019; Salgado & Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2021). Students who can cope with stress and better process the challenges they face have a better chance to avoid burnout. Motivating students intrinsically is also crucial for reducing the burnout symptoms they may experience (Chang et al., 2015; Karim & Fallah, 2019; Salgado & Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2021). Intrinsically motivated students are more likely to show greater persistence when facing difficulties or exposing to stressors as they have a strong sense of control and are not easily discouraged from pursuing their goals. Finally, teachers can play an important role in buffering the effect of burnout (Lou et al., 2016; Karim & Fallah, 2019; Salgado & Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2021). Creating a supportive learning environment, fostering positive teacher-student relationships and providing constructive and motivational feedback are the most effective techniques reported in the literature.

Despite its seriousness and prevalence among students, it is surprising that, to date, scant research is conducted to explain the potential relationships between burnout and students' L2 learning experience. Although one can easily assume that positive emotions, such as enjoyment, and grit can help students during times of skepticism and exhaustion from excessive academic demands, no empirical study, to the best of our knowledge, was carried out to explore such a relationship. This study aims to fill in the gap by shedding light on the possible buffering effects of enjoyment and grit on Saudi EFL students' burnout during a long and intensive academic year.

C. Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

Dewaele and his colleagues (e.g. Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele, 2022; Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019) were among the first who studied enjoyment in relation to L2 learners and learning development. This echoes the increasing scholarly attention to positive emotions and their roles in facilitating language learning and mitigating the effects of negative emotions on L2 experiences (Li et al., 2018). The initial attempt to define FLE was to distinguish it from the concept of pleasure

(Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). While pleasure is a result of performing or accomplishing a likable goal, enjoyment is the drive to exceed beyond that to achieve something innovative and unexpected. In other words, enjoyment is the “fuel that drives” (Dewaele, 2022, p. 198) learners to overcome challenges, widen their knowledge and enrich their learning experiences (MacIntyre, 2016).

FLE is one of the most investigated positive emotions in SLA. It is postulated as a pivotal emotional constituent of L2 learning that interacts with learner-internal as well as external factors. Literature on SLA presents empirical evidence of its positive impact on L2 learning, FLE is associated with a lower foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2019), a greater willingness to initiate and participate in L2 communication (Khajavy et al., 2018; Lee, 2022), a higher engagement, persistence and interest when performing L2 tasks (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Hosseini et al., 2022), a powerful motivational behaviour (Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2021; Liu, 2021; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021) and a better prediction of L2 achievement (Li & Wei, 2022; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018).

A number of studies have examined learners' enjoyment antecedents in L2 classes. Sources of FLE include perception of L2 teachers and their attitudes (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Dewaele & Lie, 2021). Teacher enthusiasm, friendliness, joking, interest and passion in teaching transmit to students and create a more enjoyable L2 learning experience. Besides, classroom atmosphere plays a vital role in L2 enjoyment (Khajavy et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Jiang, 2020). Supportive classrooms, collaborative peers, interesting and challenging activities, effective interaction and familiar topics foster students' engagement and produce higher levels of FLE. Academic curriculum and course content are other sources of FLE. Duration and number of classes, tiring exam schedules, workload such as assignments and term papers, task difficulty can cause students' exhaustion, stress and lack of enjoyment (Li et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021; Dewaele & Li, 2021).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

Dewaele (2022) encourages EFL teachers not to worry about their students' anxiety, but to focus their attention on boosting their FLE in order to achieve a greater learning experience and outcomes. Despite its significance, an EFL mitigating role in EFL Saudi exam-oriented contexts, where students are under high pressure to accomplish a lot during a short period of time while submitting a great deal of assignments and research papers, has not been tackled yet. This study aims to investigate that mediating role of EFL to illuminate the negative effects of academic loads and stress on Saudi EFL students during a three-term academic year by answering these research questions:

1. What is the structural relationship between burnout, foreign language enjoyment, and grit among EFL learners?
2. What role does foreign language enjoyment play in mediating the relationship between grit and burnout?
3. What is the role of L2 grit in relation to learners' enjoyment and burnout?

B. Hypothesized Model

The initial hypothesized model in this study was proposed by incorporating two positive emotions of enjoyment and grit to determine the EFL negative experience of learning, namely academic burnout, as an outcome variable. The construction of this model specifications was guided by theoretical assumptions rooted in the disciplines of educational psychology and individual differences in language learning that elucidate the relationship between the studied variables and draw upon the existing body of empirical research on academic burnout. That is, grit was anticipated to exert a direct influence on students' levels of burnout, given the widely recognized negative association between perseverance and burnout (Abreu Alves et al., 2022; Marôco et al., 2020; Bumbacco & Scharfe, 2020; Li, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2018). Additionally, grit was speculated to influence burnout indirectly through the mediation of enjoyment based on the empirical evidence that gritty students experience greater enjoyment due to their ability to sustain effort and overcome challenges. Enjoyment was, in turn, considering the finding of prior empirical investigations, expected to influence burnout (Dewaele, 2022; MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Hosseini et al., 2022; Liu, 2021; Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2021).

C. Participants

The study involved a total of 297 Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who were actively enrolled in the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) at a prominent Saudi university. The participants were selected from three distinct academic tracks, namely natural science, business, and nursing. The age range of the participants varied between 18 and 21 years. It is worth noting that all participants had received a minimum of seven years of formal English language instruction prior to their enrollment in the study.

The curriculum provided to the participants encompassed a comprehensive range of EFL courses, which included fundamental components such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar. Moreover, to cater to the specific needs of each academic track, major-specific courses were also included in the curriculum, all of which were conducted entirely in the English language. This ensured that the participants were exposed to a diverse range of linguistic experiences and academic content relevant to their respective fields of study.

Following a brief elucidation of the research objectives, all participants were administered a set of standardized instruments, namely the student demotivation scale, student burnout inventory, achievement goal orientation inventory,

and student perceptions of classroom activities questionnaire. Subsequently, participants were instructed to complete these measures. To ensure the collection of reliable data, the researchers provided a clear rationale for questionnaire completion and emphasized the confidentiality of responses by requesting participants to refrain from including their names. Participants were solely required to furnish demographic details such as gender, age, and educational majors.

Comprising approximately 27 items in total, the four scales necessitated approximately 15 minutes to complete comprehensively. The added advantage of delivering the questionnaires in respondents' native language (Arabic) expedited their response time. To optimize both the reliability and accessibility of participant responses, the questionnaires were given together in a single session.

D. Instruments

The data were gathered through administering Maslach Burnout Inventory-EFL Student Survey, Short Form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES) and Grit Scale-Short Version (Grit-S) scales. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree".

Maslach Burnout Inventory-EFL Student Survey: Learners' burnout was measured by Li et al.'s (2021) Maslach Burnout Inventory-EFL Student Survey. It includes ten items categorized into three sub-scales: Exhaustion (measured by four items including "I feel emotionally drained by my English studies" and "Studying or attending an English class is really a strain for me"), Cynicism (measured by three items including "I have become less enthusiastic about my English studies" and "I've become more cynical about the potential usefulness of my English studies"), and reduced efficacy (measured by three items including "I believe that I don't make an effective contribution to the English classes that I attend" and "I don't feel stimulated when I reach my goals in English study"). In the present study, the reliability estimate for the scale was 0.87.

Short Form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES): Learners' enjoyment was measured with Botes et al.'s (2020) the Short Form Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale. This scale consists of nine items extracted from the original scale developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). The items categorized into three sub-scales: teacher appreciation (measured by three items including "The teacher is encouraging" and "The teacher is friendly"), social enjoyment (measured by three items including "We form a tight group" and "We laugh a lot"), and personal enjoyment (measured by three items including "I enjoy it" and "In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments"). In the present study, the reliability estimate for the scale was 0.76.

Grit Scale-Short Version (Grit-S): Grit was measured using Duckworth and Quinn's (2009) Grit Scale-Short Version. The scale consists of eight items extracted from the original scale developed by Duckworth et al. (2007). The items categorized into two sub-scales: consistency of interests (measured by four items including "I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one" and "I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest"), and perseverance of effort (measured by four items including "Setbacks do not discourage me" and "I finish whatever I begin"). The scale is widely used by researchers such as Khajavy et al. (2021). In the present study, the reliability estimate for the scale was 0.88.

IV. RESULTS

A. Correlation Analysis

As presented in Table 1, burnout correlated significantly with both grit and enjoyment. Specifically, burnout was negatively linked with grit and enjoyment ($r = -0.43$, $p < .001$, $r = -0.47$, $p < .001$) respectively. Additionally, grit had a strong positive correlation with enjoyment ($r = 0.30$, $p < .001$).

TABLE 1
CORRELATION AMONG BURNOUT, GRIT AND ENJOYMENT

Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	-.429 ¹	-.472 ¹
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001
Grit	Pearson Correlation	-.429 ¹	1	.299 ¹
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
Enjoyment	Pearson Correlation	-.472 ¹	.299 ¹	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	

B. Structural Model Testing

To evaluate the validity of our model using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, we examined the validity of the hypothesised model using the chi-squared (χ^2) statistic and a range of goodness of fit measures such as normed χ^2 (χ^2/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), standardised root-mean-square residual (SRMR) and root-mean-square error approximation (RMSEA). According to Engel and Moosbrugger (2003), the ratio χ^2/df between 2 and 4 is indicative of a "good" or "acceptable" data-model fit, respectively. Values of

¹ Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

GFI, AGFI, and NFI that are greater than .95 are considered good fit. RMSEA and SRMR values lower than .08 are considered to be acceptable (Engel & Moosbrugger, 2003).

The preliminary model that was developed based on existing research literature demonstrated an acceptable goodness of model fit to the data as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
GOODNESS OF FIT INDICES FOR THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	AGFI	NFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Estimates	61.969	14	4.407	0.951	0.874	0.950	0.075	0.071
Interpretation	--	--	Acceptable	Excellent	Acceptable	Excellent	Acceptable	Acceptable

The proposed model accounted for up to 80% variances in learners’ burnout, indicating a high explanatory power of the model for the outcome variable. This shows that the model significantly and practically explains the variance in students’ burnout, grit and enjoyment.

After assessing the overall model, we evaluated the path coefficients for their effect size and significance. Direct effects between variables in the model are illustrated in Figure 1. The model shows that enjoyment had the largest significant direct positive effect on learners’ burnout with a relatively moderate size ($B=0.398$, $CI=.137$ to $.518$), followed by Grit ($B= 0.287$, $CI=.082$ to $.488$).

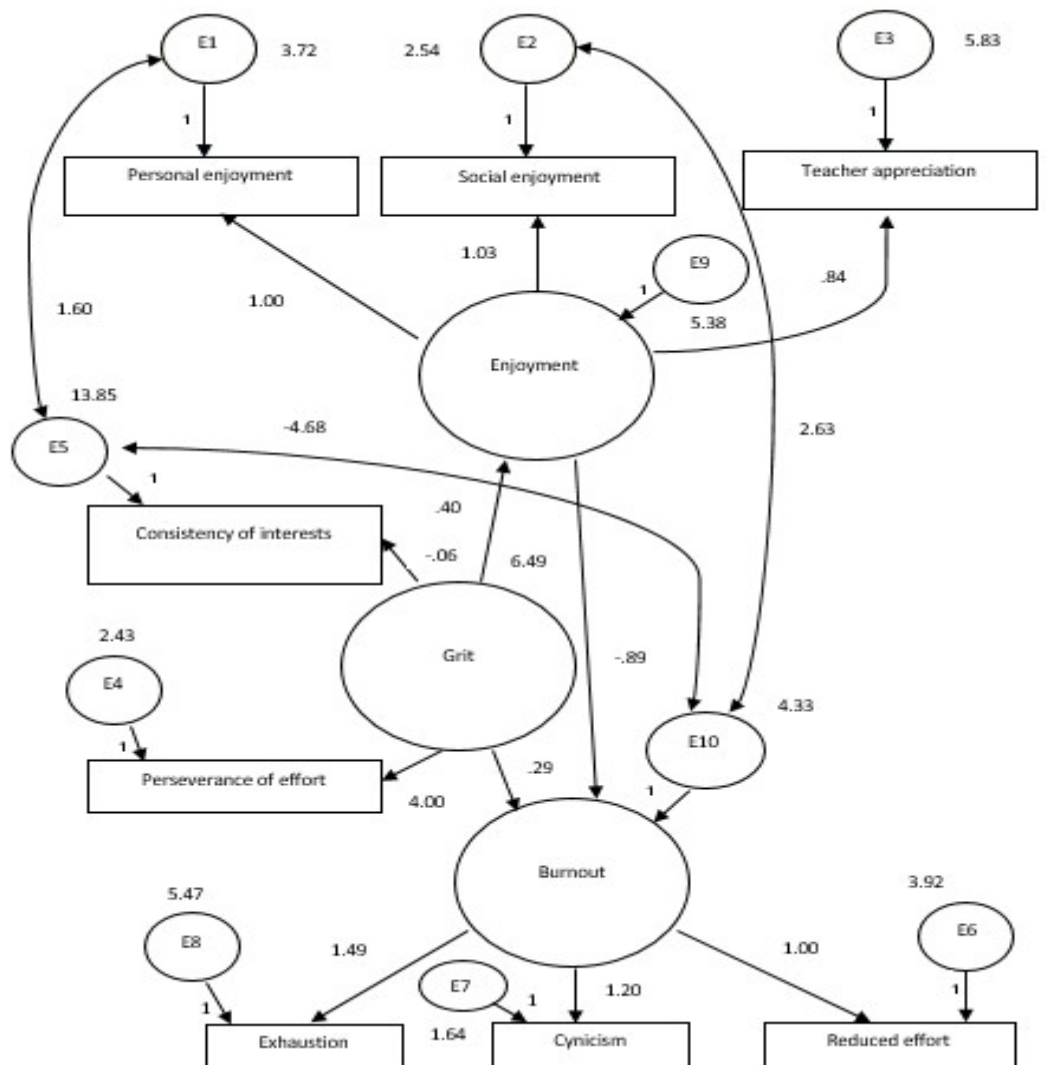


Figure 1. Direct Effects Between Variables in the Model

For every association, the p-values, or significance levels, are given. Generally, a statistically significant link is shown by a p-value of 0.020 or less. A 95% confidence interval (CI), or range of values within which we may be 95% certain that the real parameter value resides, is given for each association.

Essentially, this synopsis delineates diverse correlations among distinct characteristics (e.g., enjoyment, burnout, grit, etc.) and furnishes statistical metrics (β coefficients, confidence intervals, and p-values) to appraise and comprehend the intensity and import of these correlations, see Table 3. With a p-value of 0.050, the association is just marginally significant. A negative correlation, with a parameter estimate of -0.741, exists between enjoyment and burnout. There is

a statistically significant negative correlation ($p = 0.007$), as indicated by the estimate's 95% confidence interval, which is between -0.889 and -0.567 . Based on these relations, enjoyment plays a partial mediator role in this study.

TABLE 3
INDIRECT AND DIRECT EFFECT ON BURNOUT

Parameter	Paths	β	95 % CI		P
			Lower	Upper	
ENJOYMENT	<--- GRIT	.398	.137	.518	.020
BURNOUT	<--- GRIT	.287	.082	.488	.020
BURNOUT	<--- ENJOYMENT	-.886	-1.162	-.782	.020
Personal enjoyment	<--- ENJOYMENT	1.000	1.000	1.000	.000
Social enjoyment	<--- ENJOYMENT	1.033	.994	1.342	.020
Teacher appreciation	<--- ENJOYMENT	.841	.714	1.095	.020
Consistency of interests	<--- GRIT	-.061	-.278	.148	.232
Reduced effort	<--- BURNOUT	1.000	1.000	1.000	.000
Cynicism	<--- BURNOUT	1.199	1.125	1.361	.020
Exhaustion	<--- BURNOUT	1.491	1.389	1.691	.020
Perseverance of effort	<--- GRIT	.398	.137	.518	.020

C. SEM and Mediation Analysis

For every link between components, Table 4 presents estimates, standard errors (SE), critical ratios (CR), and significance levels of the proposed model (Figure 2). Asterisks denote the significance level, with *** denoting strong significance. Understanding the connections between the variables and their effects within the framework depends on these findings as shown also in Figure 3. L2 grit has a direct significant impact ($\beta=-0.478$, $t=-3.006$, $p<0.05$) on the burnout it supports Hypothesis (H_1).

L2 grit has also an indirect significant impact on burnout. So foreign language enjoyment plays partial mediator role between L2 grit and burnout it supports (H_2).

TABLE 4
ESTIMATED PARAMETERS OF SEM MODELS AND MODERATION

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
FLE	<---	L2Grit	.890	.109	8.177	***	
Burnout	<---	FLE	-.556	.077	-7.257	***	
Burnout	<---	L2Grit	-.478	.159	-3.006	.003	

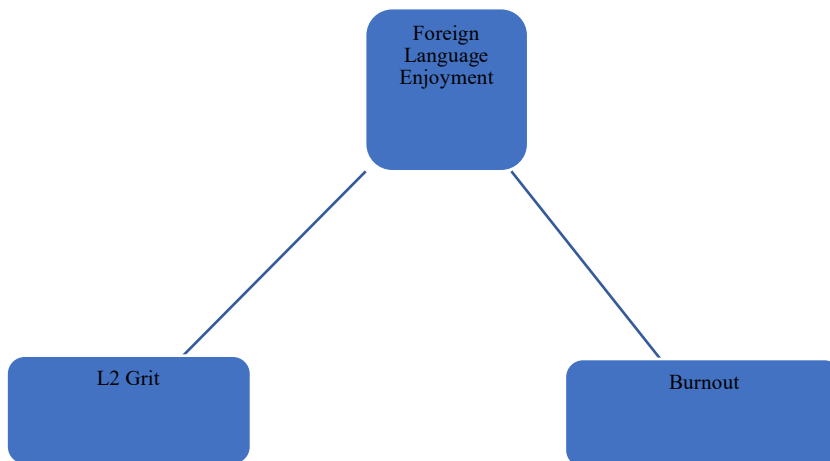


Figure 2. Proposed SEM Model With Network Support as a Moderator

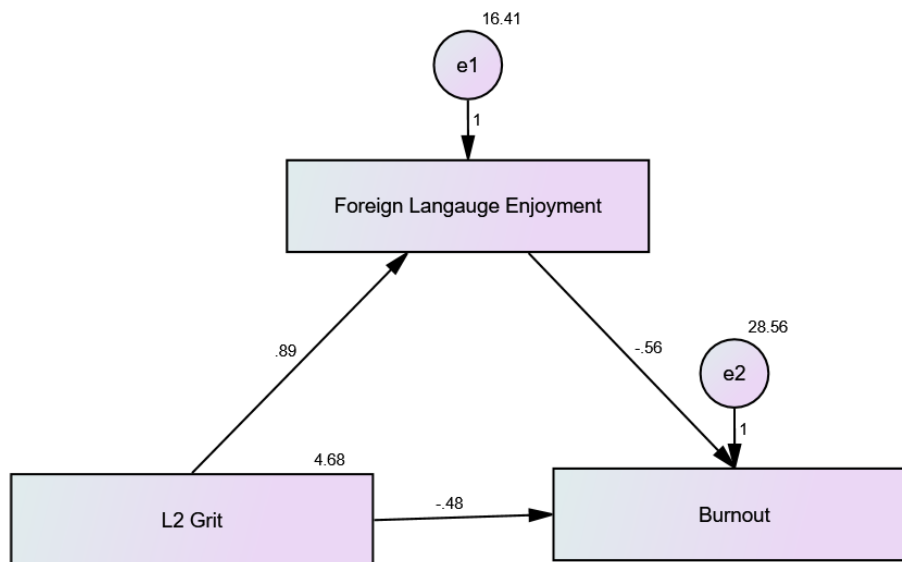


Figure 3. Estimated Proposed SEM Model and Moderation Using AMOS

V. DISCUSSION

This section delves into the intricate relationships between grit, burnout, and enjoyment in the context of foreign language learning among Saudi EFL students, specifically in an intensive three-semester academic year. The discussion integrates findings from the study with relevant literature to offer a comprehensive analysis of the results and their implications.

A. What is the Structural Relationship Between Burnout, Foreign Language Enjoyment, and Grit Among EFL Learners?

The findings indicate a clear pattern: higher levels of grit are associated with lower burnout among learners. This outcome supports previous research suggesting that students who show greater persistence and passion for long-term goals are less prone to burnout. For instance, Datu et al. (2018) and Wolters and Hussain (2015) observed that a strong sense of grit helps learners handle academic challenges more effectively. Moreover, placing the study in a language learning context adds new insights, as burnout in such settings has not been extensively explored. The results thus align with Zhuojie (2018) and Karimi and Fallah's (2021) work, which suggests that grit plays a crucial role in language learning by mitigating feelings of emotional exhaustion and academic inefficacy.

The study also reaffirms the value of foreign language enjoyment (FLE) as highlighted by Dewaele et al. (2019) and Li (2021). It shows that FLE significantly lowers burnout levels among EFL students by buffering the effects of academic stressors. This finding supports the idea that positive emotions can counterbalance negative outcomes like burnout, a concept theorized by Vallerand et al. (2003) and further applied to language learning by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014).

B. What Role Does Foreign Language Enjoyment Play in Mediating the Relationship Between Grit and Burnout?

The study reveals that FLE serves as a crucial mediator between grit and burnout. Students who display high levels of grit and simultaneously experience enjoyment in their language learning show the lowest burnout levels. This suggests that FLE not only complements grit but also enhances its protective effects against burnout. This conclusion is consistent with the theoretical framework outlined in the literature, which posits that enjoyment boosts intrinsic motivation and perseverance, as noted in Ryan and Deci's (2000) and MacIntyre's (2016) studies.

These results further contribute to the growing research on the impact of positive emotions on learning outcomes. By confirming that FLE mediates the grit-burnout relationship, it becomes evident that fostering enjoyment in the classroom can strengthen the buffering effects of grit, offering dual protection against burnout. This expands on findings by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) and Hosseini et al. (2022), who emphasized that positive emotions like enjoyment are vital for student well-being and academic performance.

C. What is the Role of L2 Grit in Relation to Learners' Enjoyment and Burnout?

This study shows that L2 grit has a strong influence on how students experience enjoyment and burnout while learning a new language. In line with previous research, L2 grit is characterized by persistence and staying committed to goals (Duckworth et al., 2007) stood out as a key factor that shapes how students handle academic stress and emotional ups and downs during their studies. This finding backs up the work of Datu et al. (2018) and Wolters and

Hussain (2015), who found that students with more grit are better at keeping a positive attitude and staying motivated, even when things get tough. This ability to keep going reduces their chances of experiencing burnout.

L2 grit does not just help prevent burnout—it also boosts students' enjoyment. As noted in earlier research, students with grit tend to get more satisfaction out of their studies because they are more willing to put in the time and effort needed to overcome challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This study shows that in the context of learning a foreign language, students with higher levels of L2 grit are more likely to feel enjoyment because they stick with their goals and work steadily towards achieving them. Schmidt et al. (2017) pointed out that the perseverance aspect of grit helps learners feel a sense of achievement and pleasure as they tackle obstacles, which is key for keeping them motivated and emotionally engaged.

D. The Impact of a Three-Semester Academic Year

The compressed and demanding structure of a three-semester academic year creates unique stressors that can elevate burnout risk. Findings from the study align with conclusions drawn by Wang et al. (2021) and Liu et al. (2020), who noted that increased academic demands and compressed timelines are primary contributors to burnout. While burnout has been extensively studied in health care and traditional academic settings, its examination in intensive language learning environments is limited. This study builds on Zhuojie's (2018) and Karimi and Fallah's (2021) work by highlighting how such academic structures affect learner motivation and well-being.

Additionally, the study finds that the high-pressure environment of a three-semester year influences the interaction between grit, FLE, and burnout. Consistent with Salanova et al. (2013) and Liu et al. (2018), learners with strong grit and FLE levels are better equipped to meet the rigorous demands of such an academic setup. However, compressed schedules and heavy workloads may still lead to negative outcomes like emotional exhaustion and reduced efficacy, as indicated by Li et al. (2021) and Madigan and Curran (2021). This suggests that while grit and enjoyment are beneficial, they may not entirely mitigate the adverse effects of an intensive academic schedule.

VI. CONCLUSION

Over the course of an intensive three-semester academic year, this study examined the interactions between grit, burnout, and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) among Saudi EFL learners. The results indicate that grit and FLE can prevent burnout and promote student well-being and academic success. Students with high grit levels are more resilient to academic pressures, while those who find enjoyment in language learning experience lower levels of burnout.

The study also suggests that the relationship between grit and burnout is not straightforward but varies depending on enjoyment levels. When learners are passionate and persistent in their studies, they benefit more from positive emotions, which in turn reduces burnout symptoms. These findings underscore the importance of creating a learning environment that fosters perseverance while enhancing the enjoyment of learning.

Although this study offers valuable insights, its focus on Saudi EFL learners within a specific academic structure may limit its applicability to other contexts. Future research could replicate this study in various cultural and educational settings to confirm these findings. Longitudinal research would also be beneficial for understanding how the relationships between grit, burnout, and enjoyment evolve over time, particularly in response to different educational interventions.

The findings have significant implications, especially in high-stress environments like a three-semester academic year. Educators and policymakers should focus on interventions that promote both grit and FLE. These interventions might include curriculum designs that encourage perseverance and foster enjoyment, teaching strategies that create engaging learning environments, and support systems that help students manage stress. Emphasizing positive teacher-student relationships, as suggested by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and Dewaele and Dewaele (2020), is also crucial for enhancing student well-being and academic outcomes.

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