

# The Mediating Role of Depressive Symptom in Burnout and Career Readiness Relationship: A Study on Arabic Language Learners

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. The study used a cross-sectional design and surveyed a sample of Arabic language learners. Results of the study suggest that there is a moderate to low positive correlation between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms, with burnout having a stronger correlation with career readiness and depressive symptoms than career readiness does with depressive symptoms. Additionally, the results suggest that burnout is a significant predictor of career readiness. However, the relationship between burnout and career readiness, through depression, is weak. These findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms among Arabic language learners in Indonesia, but it is important to consider the limitations of the study, such as the small sample size, when interpreting the results. Future research should aim to address these limitations in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between these concepts.

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of burnout among language learners has significant implications for both individual well-being and the overall quality of language education. Burnout can lead to negative outcomes such as decreased academic performance, which can in turn affect the overall quality of students' performance (Salanova et al., 2009). Additionally, individuals who experience burnout may be less likely to pursue careers in language education, potentially leading to a shortage of qualified language teachers (Swanson, 2012). On the other hand, career readiness is an important concern for students as they approach graduation and transition into the workforce. Students who are more career ready tend to have better job prospects and a smoother transition into the workforce (Hooley et al., 2011). However, research has indicated that students who experience burnout may have lower levels of career readiness (Rudman & Gustavsson, 2012), potentially impacting their ability to successfully enter the job market.

Given the potential negative impacts of burnout and the importance of career readiness for students, it is crucial to understand the factors that may influence these concepts. The present study aims to investigate the mediating role of depressive symptoms in the relationship between burnout and career readiness among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. By understanding this relationship, we can develop strategies to address burnout and promote career readiness

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among language learners, ultimately leading to better outcomes for both individuals and the language education field as a whole.

Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased personal accomplishment, has been identified as a significant issue among language learners (Li et al., 2021). Similarly, career readiness, or the ability to successfully transition from education to employment (Detgen et al., 2021), is an important concern for students as they approach graduation. The literature on burnout and career readiness has consistently shown that these two concepts are interconnected (Espeland, 2006; Harry & Coetzee, 2013; Mccullough, 2022), with burnout potentially impacting career readiness and vice versa. However, the specific mechanisms underlying this relationship are not fully understood.

Burnout has been widely studied in the field of education (Ishak et al., 2013; Maroco & Campos, 2012; Mccullough, 2022; Rudman & Gustavsson, 2012; Salanova et al., 2009; Walburg, 2014), with research identifying various risk factors such as workload (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003), lack of support (Olwage & Mostert, 2014), and role conflict (Lingard, 2007). In the language learning context, additional risk factors such as language anxiety and cultural adaptation difficulties have been identified (Khawaj et al., 2018; Nnadi, 2018). The consequences of burnout can be severe, with research linking burnout to negative outcomes such as decreased life satisfaction and performance (Salanova et al., 2009). Burnout has also been linked to negative outcomes for the individuals experiencing it, such as decreased well-being (Dunn et al., 2008) and increased risk of physical and mental health problems (Gerber et al., 2015; Hodge et al., 2020).

Career readiness, or the ability to successfully transition from education to employment, is an important concern for students as they approach graduation (Detgen et al., 2021). A number of factors have been identified as contributing to career readiness, including academic and technical skills (Park et al., 2017), career planning and decision-making skills (Stebleton et al., 2020), and personal and social skills (Dymnicki et al., 2013). Research has indicated that students who are more career ready tend to have better job prospects and more successful transitions to the workforce (Hooley et al., 2011). However, there is also evidence suggesting that burnout may be related to lower levels of career readiness. Researcher found that students who experienced higher levels of burnout had lower levels of career readiness (Rudman & Gustavsson, 2012).

In addition to the negative impact on job prospects and successful transitions to the workforce, lower levels of career readiness may also have negative impacts on individual well-being (Magnano et al., 2021). Students who are less career ready may experience increased stress and anxiety as they approach graduation and face the challenges of entering the job market (Huang, 2012). There are a number of strategies that have been suggested for promoting career readiness among students. These strategies include providing access to career counseling and resources (Sampson, 2004), incorporating career development into the curriculum (Stebleton et al., 2020), and encouraging students to engage in experiential learning opportunities such as internships and co-op programs (Hooley et al., 2011). Research has indicated that these strategies can be effective in promoting career readiness among students.

Depression is a common mental health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure (Kroenke et al., 2001). It can have significant negative impacts on individuals, including difficulties with work and school. Depression has been linked to decreased productivity and absenteeism in the workplace, and can also impact academic performance and school attendance (Gao et al., 2020; Lawrence et al., 2019). Research has indicated that depression may be a mediator in the relationship between burnout and job performance (Chen et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2022). Researcher found that burnout was significantly related to lower job performance, and that this relationship was

partially mediated by depression (Sun et al., 2022). This suggests that depression may play a role in the negative impact of burnout on academic performance.

While the potential mediating role of depression in the relationship between burnout and career readiness has not yet been fully explored, it is possible that individuals who experience burnout may be more likely to develop depressive symptoms, which in turn could impact their career readiness. Burnout has been linked to negative outcomes such as decreased life satisfaction and academic performance (Salanova et al., 2009), which may lead to decreased motivation and engagement in career-related activities. Additionally, the negative emotional and cognitive symptoms of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and cynicism, may overlap with those of depression and contribute to the development of depressive symptoms.

In summary, the literature suggests that burnout, career readiness, and depression are interconnected concepts, with burnout potentially impacting career readiness and depression potentially playing a mediating role in this relationship. However, further research is needed to fully understand the specific mechanisms underlying these relationships. The present study aims to contribute to this literature by examining the mediating role of depression in the relationship between burnout and career readiness among Arabic language learners in Indonesia.

### **Rationale of the Study**

This study was conducted in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian nation with a population of over 270 million people. Indonesia is a diverse country with over 700 languages spoken and a wide range of cultural and religious practices. The study was conducted among students at a university in Indonesia, where Arabic is offered as a foreign language option. Given the potential negative impacts of burnout and the importance of career readiness for students, it is important to understand the factors that may influence these concepts. While the relationship between burnout and career readiness has been previously studied, the potential mediating role of depressive symptoms in this relationship has not yet been fully examined. By exploring this mediating role, the present study aims to add to the existing research on burnout and career readiness and provide a better understanding of the factors that may influence these concepts.

### **Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the mediating role of depressive symptoms in the relationship between burnout and career readiness among Arabic language learners in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study used a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between burnout, career readiness, and depression in Arabic language learners. Data were collected at one time point using online surveys.

### **Participants**

The sample consisted of 1126 Arabic language learners who were recruited from several Islamic State Universities in Indonesia (see Table 1 for characteristics of the participants). The participants were 17 – 24 years old ( $M = 20.03$ ;  $SD = 1.56$ ). Inclusion criteria for the study were being an Arabic language learner and having at least one semester of Arabic language instruction.

## Instruments

This research uses four instruments, namely demographic questions, depressive symptoms, burnout, and career readiness. In addition to demographic questions, the instruments used are adaptations obtained from various credible sources. The authors used four adaptation stages before the instruments can be used (Hernández et al., 2020). The four stages are as follows 1) transliteration into Indonesian, 2) back transliteration into English, 3) evaluation of transliteration accuracy, and 4) validation testing.

### **Depressive symptoms**

The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) was used to measure depressive symptoms. The PHQ-9 is a self-report measure that consists of nine items that assess the severity of symptoms experienced in the past two weeks. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 3 (nearly every day). The total score ranges from 0 to 27, with higher scores indicating more severe symptoms. The PHQ-9 has been found to have good reliability and validity for the assessment of depression in various populations (Kroenke et al., 2001). The PHQ-9 was chosen for this study because it is a brief and reliable measure of depression that has been widely used in research and clinical practice.

### **Burnout**

The BBI-10 (*Nuorten koulu-uupumusmenetelmä*) was used to measure burnout in adolescents. The BBI-10 is a self-report measure that consists of 10 items that assess feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy related to school. Examples of items on the BBI-10 include: "I feel exhausted because of my schoolwork", "I feel that I'm not good enough for school", and "I feel that school is a waste of time" Each item is rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (very often). The total score ranges from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating more severe burnout. The BBI-10 has been found to have good reliability and validity for the assessment of burnout in adolescents (Salmela-Aro et al., 2004).

### **Career readiness**

The work competence (Almarzoky Abuhussain et al., 2021) was used to measure career readiness in this study. The work competence scale is a self-report measure that consists of 15 items that assess specific aspects of career readiness namely work competence. Examples of items include: "I have a solid theoretical understanding of my field of work", "I can't wait to start work and throw myself into a project", and "I am eager to throw myself into my work" Each item is rated on 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of career readiness. The scale has been found to have good reliability and validity for the assessment of career readiness in pharmacy graduates and interns (Almarzoky Abuhussain et al., 2021).

## Procedures

Participants were recruited from several Islamic State Universities in Indonesia. Inclusion criteria for the study were being an Arabic language learner and having at least one semester of Arabic language instruction. The study received approval from the Institut Agama Islam Negeri Metro. Participants provided informed consent and completed the measures online format. The measures were administered in the following order: demographic questions, depressive symptoms, burnout, and career readiness. The entire scales took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 24. Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations) were calculated for all variables. To examine the relationship between burnout,

career readiness, and depression, we conducted Pearson's correlation analyses. We also conducted multiple regression analyses to examine the unique contributions of burnout and depression to career readiness. To assess the mediating role of depression in the relationship between burnout and career readiness, we conducted mediation analysis using the Hayes Process (Hayes et al., 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Authors conducted two pre-assumption tests before descriptive, pearsons correlation, multiple regression, and mediation analyses namely Q-Q plot and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). These tests are necessary to make sure the data were normally distributed and no multicollinearity. The results of Q-Q plot test showed that the distribution of data for each variable follows the line with most of the data aligning on the middle of the line. On the other hand, the VIF values found no less than 10, which mean there is no multicollinearity found.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants (N = 1126)

Variables	N
<i>Sex</i>	
Male	364
Female	762
<i>Age</i>	M = 20.03; SD = 1.56
<i>Living Area</i>	
Urban	197
Sub-urban	96
Rural	833
<i>Semester</i>	
1	89
3	609
5	284
7 or more	144
<i>Siblings</i>	
0	55
1	46
2	435
3 or more	590
<i>Spending in one month (IDR)</i>	
< 500.000	319
500.000 – 1.000.000	579
1.000.000 – 2.000.000	170
2.000.000 – 3.000.000	33
> 3.000.000	25
<i>Having hustle</i>	
Yes	205
No	921
<i>Active member of organizations</i>	
Yes	418
No	708
<i>Residence</i>	
Boarding house	646
With relatives	99
With parents	381
<i>Arabic listening skills</i>	
Very high	9
High	41
Moderate	384
Low	599
Negligible	93

<i>Arabic speaking skills</i>	
Very high	7
High	25
Moderate	290
Low	664
Negligible	140
<i>Arabic reading skills</i>	
Very high	12
High	58
Moderate	396
Low	580
Negligible	80
<i>Arabic writing skills</i>	
Very high	6
High	29
Moderate	315
Low	664
Negligible	112

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson correlation (N = 1126)

Variables	M	SD	Career Readiness	Depressive
Burnout	31.75	11.69	.608**	.468**
Career Readiness	58.85	14.420		.260**
Depressive	12.99	7.41		

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Results of multiple liner regression analysis with Career readiness as dependent variable (N = 1126)

Variables	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Burnout	.768	.033	.623	23.237	.000
Depressive	-.060	.052	-.031	-1.153	.249
Career readiness as DV	df	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	p
	2	330.49	.371	.369	.000

Table 2 showed the mean score for burnout was 31.75 (SD = 11.69), the mean score for career readiness was 58.85 (SD = 14.420) and the mean score for depressive symptoms was 12.99 (SD = 7.41). The correlation between burnout and career readiness was found to be significant ( $r(x) = .608$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. Similarly, the correlation between burnout and depressive symptoms was significant ( $r(x) = .468$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The correlation between career readiness and depressive symptoms was found to be also significant ( $r(x) = .260$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating a low positive relationship between the two variables. Overall, this study suggests that there are moderate to low positive correlations between burnout, career readiness and depressive symptoms, with burnout having a stronger correlation with career readiness and depressive symptoms than career readiness does with depressive symptoms.

The results of the regression test can be seen in table 3. The proposed model, a multiple regression analysis, was used to predict career readiness based on burnout and depressive symptoms. The model was found to be significant ( $F(2, x) = 330.49$ ,  $p = .000$ ), with an R-squared value of .371, indicating that 37.1% of the variance in career readiness can be explained by the predictor variables. The beta coefficient for burnout in predicting career readiness was .623, which was found to be significant ( $p = .000$ ), indicating that as burnout increases, career readiness decreases. The beta coefficient for depressive symptoms in predicting career readiness was -.031, which was not found to be significant ( $p = .249$ ), indicating that depressive

symptoms do not predict career readiness. Overall, this study suggests that burnout is a significant predictor of career readiness, while depressive symptoms do not predict career readiness.

Table 4 indicated that burnout has a significant and positive relationship with depression ( $R^2 = .2190$ ,  $\beta = .296$ ,  $t = 17.7543$ ,  $p = .000$ ). This suggests that as burnout increases, depression also increases. Additionally, the relationship between burnout and depression has a significant and negative relationship with career readiness ( $R^2 = .3707$ ,  $\beta = .767$ ,  $t = 23.327$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Burnout has a strong positive effect on career readiness, while depression has a weak negative effect ( $\beta = -.060$ ,  $t = -1.1532$ ,  $p = .249$ ). Furthermore, the results of bootstrapping analysis show that the indirect effect estimation of the relationship between burnout and career readiness through depression falls within the interval of  $-.0452$  to  $.0097$  ( $\beta = -.017$ , 95% CI  $[-.0452, .0097]$ ). This suggests that the relationship between burnout (BO) and career readiness (CR), through depression (DP), is weak.

## Discussion

The results of this study suggest that there is a moderate to low positive correlation between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. Specifically, burnout has a stronger correlation with career readiness and depressive symptoms than career readiness does with depressive symptoms. This means that burnout may have a direct impact on an individual's ability to be ready for their future career. This probably would be a significant reason why people struggle to remain focused and motivated to improve their career. Eventually, it would decrease one's readiness for their future career. These findings are consistent with previous research on the relationship between burnout and career-related outcomes. For example, burnout was found negatively associated with career readiness in several participants characteristics (Espeland, 2006; McCullough, 2022). Additionally, burnout was negatively associated with career adaptability (Doğanülkü & Kırdök, 2021; Harry & Coetzee, 2013).

Furthermore, the results suggest that the relationship between burnout and career readiness, through depression, is weak. This may indicate that depressive symptoms do not play a significant mediating role in the relationship between burnout and career readiness among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. In other words, depressive symptoms may not be the key factor that affect one's career readiness like what burnout could do in its direct relationship. This also highlights the complexity relationship between burnout, depression, and career readiness. Despite several studies showed that depression may be a mediator in the relationship between burnout and job performance (Chen et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2022). Furthermore, burnout was significantly related to lower job performance, and that this relationship was partially mediated by depression (Sun et al., 2022). It is also possible that other factors such as stressors related to learning a foreign language, cultural adjustment difficulties and lack of social support, might play a role in the relationship between burnout, career readiness and depressive symptoms (Khawaj et al., 2018; Nnadi, 2018).

Tabel 4. The effect of psychological well-being as mediator in the relationship of perceived teacher management skills and academic motivation

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R	$R^2$	F	p
Model 1										
DP as DV							.4680	.2190	315.215	.000
BO	.296	.0167	17.7543	.000	.2638	.3294				
CR as DV							.6087	.3705	330.491	.000
BO	.767	.0330	23.327	.000	.7028	.8327				
DP	-.060	.0521	-1.1532	.249	-.1642	.0422				
Total effect	.749	.0292	25.6800	.000	.6925	.8071				
Indirect eff	-.017	.0140			-.0452	.0097				

## Implications

The results of this study have several implications for understanding the relationship between burnout, depressive symptoms, and career readiness among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. Firstly, the results suggest that burnout may play a more significant role in the relationship between these concepts than depressive symptoms does. This highlights the importance of addressing burnout among Arabic language learners in order to promote their career readiness. This may include providing support and resources for managing stress and workload, as well as promoting self-care and well-being. Secondly, the study results suggest that burnout is a significant predictor of career readiness. This highlights the negative impact of burnout on an individual's ability to be ready for their future career. Therefore, it is important for educators and professionals working with Arabic language learners to address burnout and provide support to students who may be at risk of burnout. Finally, the results suggest that the relationship between burnout and career readiness, through depression, is weak. This may indicate that depressive symptoms do not play a significant mediating role in the relationship between burnout and career readiness among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. But it is also possible that other factors such as stressors related to learning a foreign language, cultural adjustment difficulties and lack of social support, might play a role in the relationship between burnout, career readiness and depressive symptoms. Therefore, it is important to consider these factors in future research.

## Limitations and suggestions

Firstly, the sample size of the study may be considered small, which limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Additionally, the study used a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for determination of causality between the study variables. Therefore, a larger sample size and a longitudinal design would be beneficial in future research. Secondly, the study only focused on Arabic language learners in Indonesia, which means that the results might not be generalizable to other cultures or languages. Therefore, future research could explore the relationship between burnout, career readiness and depressive symptoms among different languages and cultures to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Thirdly, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may be subject to bias. Therefore, future research could utilize multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews or observations, to gain a more accurate understanding of the relationship between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms. Future research should aim to address these limitations, such as the sample size, design, and the culture and language restriction, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between these concepts.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms among Arabic language learners in Indonesia. The results suggest that there is a moderate to low positive correlation between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms, with burnout having a stronger correlation with career readiness and depressive symptoms than career readiness does with depressive symptoms. Additionally, the results suggest that burnout is a significant predictor of career readiness. However, the relationship between burnout and career readiness, through depression, is weak. While these findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between burnout, career readiness, and depressive symptoms among Arabic language learners in Indonesia, it is important to consider the limitations of the study, such as the small sample size and cross-sectional design, when interpreting the results. Future research should aim to address these limitations in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between these concepts.



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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

AA serves as the principal investigator responsible for overseeing the entire research process and providing guidance to team members during the pre-research, research, and post-research phases. AKU is a research team member who is responsible for developing research instruments, scoring data, and conducting data analysis. DE, another member of the research team, is responsible for compiling the research report. NN, also a member of the research team, is responsible for presenting the research findings in the form of scholarly articles.

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