

ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG ENGLISH TEACHERS: NAVIGATING INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This study investigates the ecological resilience of English teachers as they navigate institutional and social challenges in a private English course in Palembang, Indonesia. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the research examines how teachers maintain their professional commitment and well-being through the interplay between personal, institutional, and social systems. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from ten senior teachers at Gloria English Course through semi-structured interviews and documentation. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes related to teachers' resilience across ecological layers. The findings reveal that teachers encounter institutional challenges, including policy inconsistency, excessive workload demands, and limited resources, alongside social pressures from parental expectations and workplace dynamics. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated a strong adaptive capacity through personal strategies, including emotional regulation, self-reflection, and spiritual coping. Social and managerial support, especially collegial collaboration, empathetic leadership, and professional trust, played a vital role in maintaining teachers' motivation and stability. The results emphasize that resilience is not a fixed individual trait but a dynamic process shaped by reciprocal interactions between teachers and their environments. This study enriches the understanding of teacher resilience by emphasizing ecological perspectives within private educational contexts, an area that remains underexplored in Indonesian EFL research. Promoting supportive institutional systems and fostering collaborative work cultures can enhance teachers' resilience, improve well-being, and sustain professional quality in private language education.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia has become increasingly complex due to shifting pedagogical demands, rising stakeholder expectations, and rapid changes in educational policy and technology. English teachers are required to manage not only classroom instruction but also administrative duties, student assessments, and communication with parents and institutional stakeholders. These responsibilities become even more demanding in private English courses, where education operates within a market-oriented system that emphasizes customer satisfaction, performance results, and competitiveness. As a consequence, teachers often face institutional and social pressures that affect their well-being, professional commitment, and long-term sustainability in the profession.

Resilience, therefore, has emerged as a crucial factor in understanding how teachers adapt to multiple stressors. Earlier conceptualizations viewed resilience as an internal psychological trait enabling individuals to endure hardship and “bounce back” from challenges (Beltman et al., 2022). This traditional view emphasized personal qualities such as optimism, self-regulation, and emotional strength. However, this perspective has increasingly been criticized for placing the burden of resilience solely on individuals, while ignoring the broader social and institutional conditions that shape teachers’ experiences.

In recent years, scholars have reframed resilience as a dynamic, relational, and context-dependent process (Mansfield et al., 2021; Collie, 2022). This ecological perspective argues that resilience develops through supportive interactions within teachers’ environments, rather than solely through personal attributes. Teacher resilience is influenced by leadership support, collegial relationships, organizational policies, cultural expectations, and access to professional resources. Such a view is especially relevant in contexts where structural constraints and institutional instability are prevalent, such as private English courses in Indonesia.

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how different layers of the environment shape resilience. The microsystem includes teachers’ direct interactions with students, colleagues, and supervisors; supportive relationships within this system are known to buffer stress and enhance motivation (Collie, 2022). The mesosystem reflects interconnected relationships, such as cooperation between teachers and parents or teacher-management communication, which foster a sense of belonging and professional identity (Le Cornu, 2022). The exosystem involves institutional structures, managerial decisions, workloads, and policy implementation factors that indirectly yet significantly impact teachers’ resilience. The macrosystem encompasses cultural norms, religious values, and societal expectations that influence teachers’ behavior and coping strategies (Wijaya, 2023). Finally, the chronosystem captures changes across time, such as post-pandemic educational transitions and the digitalization of teaching practices (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023). Together, these systems illustrate resilience as a multi-layered process shaped by continuous interactions rather than an isolated psychological feature.

In the Indonesian context, most resilience studies have focused on public-school teachers or novice teachers adjusting to early-career challenges (Wijaya, 2023; Aulia, 2022). This leaves private English courses where teachers must navigate inconsistent policies, job insecurity, heavy workloads, and high parental expectations relatively underexplored. These institutions often face limited resources, rapid curriculum changes, student recruitment pressures, and performance-based evaluations, all of which significantly shape the teaching environment (Al-Jarf, 2024). Social challenges, such as fluctuating parental demands, workplace dynamics, and competition among language institutions, further influence teachers’ emotional and professional stability.

The Gloria English Course (GEC) in Palembang represents a relevant site for examining these dynamics. As a long-standing private English institution with high expectations, diverse learners, and a performance-driven culture, GEC places significant demands on teachers. Senior teachers at GEC often juggle instructional tasks with administrative duties, parent communication, and adaptation to limited facilities. Yet, many remain committed to the institution and demonstrate strong ecological resilience through emotional regulation, mutual support, and culturally grounded coping strategies. Understanding how this resilience develops and is sustained across ecological systems can provide valuable insights for fostering teacher well-being in similar private educational settings.

Despite growing interest in teacher resilience, the ecological dimensions of resilience among private English course teachers in Indonesia remain underexplored. There is a limited understanding of how institutional and social pressures interact with personal and environmental factors to shape teachers’ resilience. Moreover, few studies integrate

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework to analyze the multi-system processes that contribute to resilience within market-driven educational environments. Therefore, a deeper examination of resilience in this context is needed to address theoretical gaps and inform institutional practices. Based on this background and the research gap identified, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What institutional and social challenges do English teachers at GEC face?
2. How do English teachers at GEC build resilience in facing these challenges?
3. How do the ecological systems in Bronfenbrenner's Theory contribute to the resilience of English teachers at GEC?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the ecological resilience of English teachers at the Gloria English Course (GEC) in Palembang. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms in authentic professional settings. Rather than measuring attitudes numerically, qualitative inquiry provides rich insights into how teachers interpret institutional and social pressures and how they negotiate these challenges within their ecological environments. The case study design was deemed appropriate because teacher resilience is a context-dependent phenomenon influenced by complex interactions between individuals and their surroundings. Through this design, the study captures how ecological systems shape teachers' adaptive processes within the unique working culture of a private English institution. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and supported by documentation to achieve triangulated and comprehensive findings.

Research Design

The case study focused on one private English institution, Gloria English Course (GEC), which served as the bounded system of inquiry. This design enabled the researcher to investigate how teachers at GEC construct and maintain resilience in the face of challenges such as excessive workload, limited facilities, and parental expectations. The study did not aim for statistical generalization but for analytical depth and transferability. Through this case study, the researcher aimed to construct a comprehensive understanding of how ecological systems impact resilience in a private language teaching context. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and supported by documentation to gain extensive and triangulated insights.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of ten senior English teachers who were purposively selected based on specific criteria: (1) having at least ten years of teaching experience, and (2) having maintained continuous employment at GEC. These criteria ensured that participants possessed extensive professional experience and long-term exposure to institutional and social challenges that shape resilience. Such teachers were assumed to have developed adaptive coping mechanisms through sustained engagement with their professional environment. The participants' backgrounds varied in terms of age and teaching levels, but all had extensive experience in private language instruction. Their insights provided a nuanced understanding of resilience within an educational setting where job stability, professional development, and social expectations differ significantly from those in public schools.

Instruments

Two instruments were employed in this study, namely semi-structured interviews and documentation, to obtain rich and comprehensive data. The semi-structured interviews were designed using a guide consisting of 23 open-ended questions that were developed based on the research questions and grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as the

conceptual framework. This approach enabled the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth while maintaining a clear connection to the study's objectives. The interview questions focused on institutional and social challenges encountered by teachers, the strategies they employed to sustain motivation and resilience, and the ecological support systems that influenced their professional lives, including support from colleagues, school management, family members, the wider community, and cultural values. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to articulate their perspectives freely and elaborate on meaningful experiences, while still ensuring consistency across interviews (Bauer & Gaskell, 2021).

In addition to interviews, documentation was used to support and triangulate the data. The documentation comprised photographs, teachers' written reflections, and brief field notes that captured classroom settings, professional interactions, and daily institutional practices. Analyzing these documents enhanced data credibility and provided deeper contextual insights, thereby strengthening the overall trustworthiness of the findings (Harrison & Clark, 2021).

Data Analysis

In Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure: (1) reading and familiarizing with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report. After transcription, the researcher read all interview data repeatedly to identify meaningful patterns. Codes were created to represent key ideas related to teachers' challenges, strategies, and environmental supports. Themes were developed inductively from the data, meaning that they emerged naturally rather than being predetermined. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was then used as a lens to interpret how these themes connect across different ecological levels. Manual coding was chosen to allow the researcher to stay close to the data and fully engage with participants' narratives (Saldaña, 2021). To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied by combining interview and documentation data. Member checking was also conducted by sharing summarized results with the participants, allowing them to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation. The final analysis produced four main themes that describe the nature of teachers' ecological resilience: institutional challenges, social challenges, personal strategies, and ecological support systems. These themes provided a comprehensive understanding of how resilience operates in the daily realities of private English teachers in Indonesia.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section presents the study's findings from the thematic analysis of interviews and documentation collected from 10 senior teachers at the Gloria English Course (GEC). Four main themes emerged: Institutional Challenges, Social Challenges, Personal Strategies, and Ecological Support Systems. These themes provide insights into how teachers manage pressures within their ecological environments and develop resilience across different system levels. The findings are organized to align with the study's three research questions, highlighting the key factors influencing teachers' experiences and strategies in navigating the complexities of their professional contexts.

Institutional Challenges

Institutional challenges were identified as the primary pressure impacting teachers' resilience. Participants expressed concerns about policy inconsistency, managerial expectations, and inadequate teaching facilities. Teachers highlighted frequent changes in institutional guidelines, which created a sense of instability and uncertainty. Additionally, the increased workload and performance-based expectations placed added stress on teachers, requiring them to constantly adapt their strategies and teaching methods. These challenges

created significant pressure, making it difficult for teachers to maintain consistent performance and cope with the evolving demands of their roles. Overall, institutional issues were a key factor in shaping teachers' resilience.

Table 1
Coding Summary for Institutional Challenges

Participant Code	Key Expressions	Sub-Themes
P1, P2, P7	Frequent policy changes, unclear guidelines	Policy inconsistency
P4, P8	Limited teaching facilities and technology	Resource limitations
P3, P9, P10	Balancing workload, achieving promotion targets	Managerial pressures

For example, P7 explained that constant changes in class management procedures created emotional strain and disrupted teaching routines. P8 highlighted that limited technological resources hindered interactive learning. These findings indicate that institutional instability at GEC affects teachers' professional confidence and increases emotional tension.

Social Challenges

Teachers also reported that their resilience is shaped by interactions within the social environment, including colleagues, students, and parents. While some teachers experienced supportive relationships, others encountered pressure and interpersonal challenges.

Table 2
Coding Summary for Social Challenges

Participant Code	Key Expressions	Sub-Themes
P3, P6, P9	Maintaining harmony with colleagues and students	Collegial interaction
P5, P7, P8	Managing parents' high expectations	Parental pressure
P4, P10	Limited support, feeling socially isolated	Social strain

Parental pressure emerged as a consistent challenge faced by teachers, particularly in a customer-driven educational environment like the Gloria English Course (GEC). Teachers, such as P7, reported that parents often expected rapid progress in their children's English proficiency, viewing the course not just as an educational setting but as a service that must meet their specific demands. This customer-service mindset placed immense pressure on teachers to deliver quick results, which was difficult to achieve in a complex and nuanced learning process. The constant need to satisfy these external expectations contributed to heightened stress and emotional strain. Additionally, some teachers, like P4, described feelings of isolation, especially during periods when their responsibilities increased, such as during administrative duties or curriculum adjustments. This lack of social support during intense periods further exacerbated their stress levels. These social dynamics, driven by both parental pressure and feelings of isolation, significantly impacted the teachers' emotional well-being, requiring them to develop effective coping strategies to maintain their motivation and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

Personal Strategies

Participants shared several strategies to maintain enthusiasm and cope with stress while managing a healthy work-life balance. Emotional regulation was a key approach, helping them stay calm and focused during stressful situations. Time management also played a significant role, enabling them to balance their teaching responsibilities with personal life. Many teachers emphasized the importance of engaging in relaxing activities outside of work, such as hobbies, spending time with family, or exercising, to recharge. Additionally, maintaining a positive

attitude and finding personal meaning in their teaching roles were essential for sustaining motivation and commitment, even in challenging circumstances.

Table 3
Coding Summary for Personal Strategies

Participant Code	Key Expressions	Sub-Themes
P4, P6, P9	Viewing pressure as a challenge, staying optimistic	Positive mindset
P3, P5, P7	Managing time and separating work from personal life	Work-life balance
P8, P10	Relaxing through music, social media, or café time	Self-care routines

For instance, P6 stated that gratitude and consistency helped her maintain motivation over 17 years of teaching. Others, like P8 and P10, preferred using leisure activities such as listening to music or hanging out with friends to manage work pressure.

Social Support

Support systems from colleagues, supervisors, and management were identified as a crucial element in maintaining resilience. Most participants reported that encouragement, collaboration, and recognition from others provided motivation to continue improving as teachers.

Table 4
Coding Summary for Social Support

Participant Code	Key Expressions	Sub-Themes
P5, P6, P9	Sharing experiences and advice with peers	Collegial support
P3, P4, P10	Guidance, appreciation, and rewards from management	Institutional support
P7, P8	Appreciation and cooperation from students' parents	External emotional support

Teachers such as P9 and P10 described their working relationships as family-like, where supervisors offered both professional and emotional support. Many also highlighted that recognition and simple appreciation from parents and students strengthened their motivation to stay in the profession. Overall, the findings show that English teachers at Gloria English Course demonstrate resilience through a combination of personal, social, and institutional factors. Although challenges such as limited facilities and policy shifts persist, teachers actively construct resilience through social collaboration, self-regulation, and adaptive problem-solving.

Discussion

The study on the ecological resilience of English teachers in Indonesia, particularly at Gloria English Course (GEC), sheds light on how institutional and social challenges shape teachers' ability to sustain their motivation and professional identity. This research, grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, provides a comprehensive understanding of teacher resilience, emphasizing the dynamic interactions between individual teachers and the various systems they interact with. At the heart of the study is the finding that institutional challenges, including policy inconsistencies, heavy workloads, and limited resources, significantly impact teachers' resilience. Teachers at GEC, a private English institution, were often caught in a constant flux of changing policies, which led to a sense of instability and uncertainty about their roles. These challenges were exacerbated by high performance expectations and scarce teaching resources, contributing to stress and burnout. The findings align with previous research, such as the work by Al-Jarf (2024) and Mansfield et al. (2021), which highlighted that such institutional pressures can undermine teachers' well-being and

professional satisfaction. These pressures also echo the findings of Le Cornu (2022) regarding the instability caused by shifting institutional guidelines in educational settings.

Social challenges, particularly parental expectations and workplace dynamics, also emerged as significant factors affecting teachers' resilience. In a highly competitive and customer-driven educational environment, teachers at GEC faced intense pressure from parents who expected quick improvements in their children's language skills. This "customer service" mindset often led to increased stress as teachers were caught between meeting parental demands and maintaining their professional standards. Social relationships, including those with colleagues and school management, provided both support and additional challenges. On one hand, collegial interactions and leadership support were seen as crucial for maintaining motivation. On the other hand, interpersonal dynamics sometimes added pressure, particularly when teachers felt isolated or unsupported during periods of increased responsibility. This reflects the findings of Collie (2022) and Gu & Day (2021), who emphasized the role of social and emotional competence in teachers' overall well-being.

Despite these challenges, the teachers in the study demonstrated remarkable resilience, which was bolstered by personal strategies such as emotional regulation, self-reflection, and spiritual coping. Teachers employed various techniques to manage stress, including maintaining a positive mindset, engaging in self-care activities, and balancing work with personal life. These personal strategies allowed them to reframe pressure as a challenge, which contributed to their emotional regulation and continued commitment to their roles. Such findings are consistent with the work of Beltman et al. (2022) and Fredrickson (2001), who suggested that positive emotions and reframing can significantly enhance resilience.

Another important aspect highlighted in the study is the role of ecological support systems. The teachers' resilience was not solely a product of their personal coping mechanisms but also a result of the support they received from their social and institutional environments. Support from colleagues, empathetic leadership, and recognition from parents and school management played a pivotal role in sustaining teachers' motivation. These social networks served as emotional anchors, providing teachers with the strength to navigate the stresses of their profession. The findings align with the perspectives of Wijaya (2023) and Pozo-Rico et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of supportive relationships and institutional structures in fostering teacher resilience.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory proved to be an effective framework for understanding the complex interactions that influence teachers' resilience. At the microsystem level, the supportive relationships teachers had with their colleagues and supervisors helped buffer the stress created by institutional and social challenges. These positive relationships fostered a sense of professional identity and belonging, which strengthened their motivation to continue teaching. At the mesosystem level, the communication between teachers, parents, and management played a dual role. While parental demands sometimes increased stress, effective communication and support from management helped mitigate these pressures and promoted teachers' professional growth. At the exosystem level, institutional factors such as policy inconsistency and workload pressures were shown to constrain resilience, echoing the findings of Al-Jarf (2024). However, the presence of supportive management and recognition from students' families illustrated that institutions can play a significant role in enabling resilience. At the macrosystem level, cultural values such as respect and humility provided emotional grounding, which helped teachers cope with the pressures they faced. This finding is consistent with the work of Wijaya (2023), who discussed the role of cultural values in supporting teachers' emotional well-being.

Over time, the teachers in this study demonstrated an evolving resilience, shaped by their accumulated experiences and the continuous adaptation required in the face of institutional changes and societal shifts. The chronosystem, representing changes over time, revealed that

resilience is not a static trait but a dynamic process that develops through ongoing interaction with various ecological systems. The teachers' ability to adapt to changing policies, integrate new teaching technologies, and manage fluctuating student expectations reflected the broader processes of teacher development discussed by Pozo-Rico et al. (2023).

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on teacher resilience by highlighting the ecological nature of resilience and its dependence on multiple layers of support and challenge. It emphasizes the importance of understanding teacher resilience not as an individual trait but as a dynamic process shaped by continuous interaction with various ecological systems. The findings suggest that fostering teacher resilience requires a multi-faceted approach, including stable institutional policies, strong social support networks, and personal coping strategies. Moreover, the study provides valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in private language institutions, offering practical recommendations for improving teacher well-being and sustaining professional commitment. The study underscores the need for institutional support, such as clear policies and recognition, and the importance of fostering a collaborative work culture that values both personal and professional resilience. By promoting these factors, private educational institutions can better support their teachers and improve the overall quality of education.

This research also opens avenues for further investigation into the ecological resilience of teachers in other contexts, such as public schools or other countries with different educational systems. Future studies could expand on the ecological framework to explore how resilience develops in diverse educational settings and how institutional and social factors interact to shape teachers' experiences across different cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the ecological resilience of English teachers in a private educational setting, particularly within the Gloria English Course (GEC) in Palembang, Indonesia. The findings highlight the complex, multi-layered nature of teacher resilience, shaped by the dynamic interplay of institutional, social, personal, and cultural systems. The study challenges traditional views of resilience as an isolated personal trait and instead emphasizes its relational and context-dependent nature. By using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the research illustrates how resilience is not merely an individual characteristic but a process influenced by the various ecological layers that teachers interact with, including their relationships with colleagues, students, and institutional structures. Institutional challenges, such as policy inconsistency, workload pressures, and limited resources, were identified as significant stressors that affect teachers' emotional and professional well-being. However, social and institutional support systems, including collegial collaboration, empathetic leadership, and recognition from management and parents, were crucial in buffering these challenges and sustaining teachers' motivation. These findings reinforce the importance of a supportive work environment in fostering teacher resilience, especially in private institutions that often face higher demands and resource constraints.

The study also underscores the significance of personal strategies, such as emotional regulation, time management, and self-care, in enhancing teachers' ability to navigate the pressures they face. The teachers at GEC demonstrated remarkable adaptive capacities, using positive reframing and maintaining a healthy work-life balance to cope with stress and maintain their commitment to teaching. These personal strategies were further supported by strong ecological networks, such as supportive interactions with colleagues and management, which served as emotional anchors and helped build a sense of professional identity and stability. The findings suggest that fostering resilience in teachers requires a comprehensive approach that addresses not only personal coping mechanisms but also the broader institutional and social contexts that influence teachers' experiences. By promoting supportive institutional policies, encouraging collaborative work cultures, and recognizing the importance of cultural values and

emotional well-being, private educational institutions can enhance teacher resilience and ensure sustainable professional development. These insights are particularly valuable for educational policymakers and administrators aiming to improve teacher retention and professional satisfaction in private English language courses. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for an ecological approach to teacher well-being, one that considers the interconnectedness of personal, social, and institutional factors in shaping teachers' resilience and overall professional growth.

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This study was conducted without any external funding. All aspects of the research, including data collection, analysis, and report writing, were carried out using personal resources. Despite the lack of funding, the study was completed successfully, relying on available tools and a cost-effective approach to gather and analyze the necessary data.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Before the data collection process began, all participants were clearly informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the research. Each participant provided explicit consent before taking part in the interviews. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any point during the study without any negative consequences. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used instead of real names, and all personal identifiers were removed from transcripts and reports. All data were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes in accordance with ethical research standards.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical considerations to protect participant confidentiality. All interview transcripts and supporting documentation are securely stored by the researcher. However, access to anonymized data may be provided upon reasonable request, subject to approval by the relevant institutional ethics committee. This ensures that all data sharing complies with ethical regulations and respects participants' informed consent.

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