INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS' PREFERENCES AND CHALLENGES IN ONLINE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Nowadays, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers have a wide range of options to participate in Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) due to the availability of various online learning platforms. This study reports the results of exploring EFL teachers' preferences and challenges in using online learning platforms to elevate their teaching practices. Mixed-methods design with a survey for the quantitative element and semi-structured interviews for the qualitative element were used to obtain the data. The participants of the study were thirty Indonesian EFL teachers with active participation in using online learning platforms. The findings demonstrated that in OTPD, EFL teachers preferred to have synchronous interaction, digital reading materials, individual learning strategies, short course duration, a certificate-granting course, and a cost-free course. The findings also revealed the challenges that EFL teachers encountered in OTPD were unreliable internet connections, limited internet quota, lack of information about available OTPD, inadequate infrastructure during OTPD, lack of support from employer, and difficulties in sustaning motivation as well as commitment during OTPD. These results could be used as considerations in planning and implementing OTPD programs in the future. New OTPD programs should be specifically tailored to the preferences and challenges that EFL teachers have identified.

Keywords: Challenges, online teacher professional development, platforms, preferences

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Professional development (TPD) is crucial in empowering educators and enabling student success (Rahman et al., 2022). It means that in helping students to thrive in an ever-changing world, teachers must continually develop themselves professionally. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, TPD should be a top priority for EFL teachers because the benefits are extensive. Firstly, TPD helps EFL teachers to be well informed about current methodologies and technologies that can enhance their teaching practices as the EFL field is constantly evolving (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Through TPD, EFL teachers can upgrade their pedagogical content knowledge continuously. Secondly, TPD can improve teachers' EFL proficiency as they immerse themselves and communicate more often by using English in the TPD process

(Wulyani et al., 2019). Participation in TPD programs also enables EFL teachers to advance their career by adding certifications, credentials, and experience gained through TPD in their portfolios (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Effective teacher professional development arises in many forms. Activities such as conversing with fellow teachers, collaborating on team teaching, conducting research, participating in teaching association forums, partaking in seminars and workshops, joining courses, and looking for information through internet are among the initiatives that teachers follow to develop themselves professionally (Irmawati et al., 2017). However, it also comes with many limitations such time constrain, access, and availability (Sahu, 2016). In this case, between teaching, grading, meetings, and other responsibilities, EFL teachers have little time devoted to teacher professional development during work hours. It is also difficult for EFL teachers to give up evenings or weekends especially for those with families or second jobs. Moreover, access and availability are other issues for teachers in rural areas. A relevant and specialized TPD program is not always offered locally, and traveling to other locations is frequently not feasible.

To counter those constraints, Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) can be a flexible and self-paced option (Savithri, 2022). Savithri (2022) also stated that online platforms are a key solution for some common constraints in teachers' professional development, such as the lack of time and resources for teachers. With the convenience of technology, high-quality courses on teaching English can be accessed from anywhere. Many conferences, seminars, and workshops in English Language Teaching are accessible through web conferencing platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. Teachers may also get advantages from web-based platforms such as Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). There is Learning Management Systems (LMS), specifically designed to facilitate OTPD programs as well. For example, for Indonesian Teachers, a special LMS platform is offered in the Transformational Teachers Program (*Guru Penggerak*) Program, and another LMS platform in the National In-Service Teacher Certification Program (*Pendidikan Profesi Guru*) Program.

However, despite the increasing reliance on online teacher professional development platforms, research on EFL teachers' specific experiences and platform preferences remains scarce. In fact, very few researchers have looked into the kind of OTPD that teachers receive and their prior experiences with it (Sadeghi & Navaie, 2021). A study conducted by Alberth et al. (2018) showed that even online platforms such as social media can also be a medium for OTPD. Additionally, Silvia (2015) reported that teachers acknowledged they had gained meaningful learning experiences through OTPD. Therefore, Silvia (2015) suggested that this type of teacher professional development need to have more support from the educational stakeholders such as principals and policy makers. Besides, teachers also need support from their family, their colleagues, their students, the instructor of the program, and fellow participants of the program to ensure their well-being while participating in the OTPD (Ardi et al., 2023). However, Silvia's study only focused on one OTPD platform, which is a MOOC from Coursera.

From the review of previous studies, topic related to teachers' preferences in OTPD have not been reported. Also, the previous studies only focused on platforms such as social media and MOOC. Therefore, it is necessary to fill in the gap by capturing EFL teachers' preferences in using online

platforms for their OTPD. It is also necessary to capture the perspective of EFL teachers who have experience in using other online platforms, as Taloko et al. (2024) argue that even though OTPD shared the common goal to improve the teachers' qualities, it has its uniqueness from one another. The present study also examines about challenges that EFL teachers face while they participate in OTPD. Taken together, it can provide a clearer picture of effective online platforms for EFL teachers based on their preferences and challenges that they encounter. To guide the investigation, the present study will focus on the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' preferences in the use of learning platforms for online teacher professional development?
2. What are the challenges that EFL teachers face in online teacher professional development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Characteristics of Online Teacher Professional Development

Fundamentally, teacher professional development programs can improve the teaching and learning process both inside and outside of classrooms as well as teachers' growth, awareness, and skills (Monica, 2023). Besides, those programs enable teachers to be connected with a community of fellow educators (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In this area, programs in the form of Online teacher professional development (OTPD) for EFL teachers refer to the use of online platforms and resources to improve the knowledge, abilities, and teaching strategies of EFL teachers. It encompasses various modes of professional learning through wireless mobile connection network technologies and gadgets such as computers, tablets, and smartphones (Sadeghi & Navaie, 2021). The nature of interactions, learning materials, and learning strategies, as well as

the length of the course, certificates, and cost, are all characteristics of OTPD for EFL teachers in an EFL context (Ansyari et al., 2022). According to a study on OTPD preferences conducted by Ansyari et al. (2022), among Indonesian university EFL teachers, teachers opted for synchronous interaction, short-term, certificate-granting, and cost-effective programs. This study also revealed EFL teachers do not preferred OTPD with the use digital reading materials and individual learning. Furthermore, this study emphasized that in terms of the certificate, university teachers, especially full-time permanent teachers, favored to have a certificate after participating in OTPD.

In the context of OTPD, participants in synchronous learning collaborate and interact in real time (Benedicto et al., 2023). Online platforms such chat rooms, video conferencing, and virtual classrooms, make this kind of interaction possible and encourage participation and quick responses. Meanwhile, asynchronous interaction offers flexibility as well as enabling teachers to participate in discussions and content at their own pace. This type of interaction allows for flexible scheduling and time zone adjustments while promoting reflective learning (Ikhsanudin, 2021). Then, there are two types of learning materials such audio-visual and digital reading. EFL teachers can access a vast array of academic articles or e-books through digital reading. On the other hand, audio-visual materials are any type of multimedia content that includes visual, audio, and occasionally interactive components like animations, interactive software, and videos. The creation of audio-visual learning materials is another strategy to improve learning and strengthen digital literacy, particularly in the context of online distance learning (Mirwanto & Bawono, 2022). While some teachers may consider it more comfortable to learn through videos, others might be better off using text-based

resources or a mix of the two (Sadeghi & Navaie, 2021).

Furthermore, OTPD for EFL teachers incorporates both collaborative and individual learning strategies. Research suggested that collaborative strategies can greatly enhance teachers' collegial relationships and classroom practices (Simiyu et al., 2021). Meanwhile, self-paced courses, webinars, online tutorials, and reflective writing exercises are examples of individual learning strategies (Ma et al., 2020). With the assistance of these techniques, teachers can study at any point in time they choose, which is especially beneficial for those with hectic schedules or limited time for professional growth. After that, duration in OTPD such as short and long period is also significance. According to Asnyari et al. (2022), a short period of time is a training that lasts a few hours or days, like a two-day or six-hour session. While a course that lasts for several weeks or months, such as two or three months, is referred to as a long period. Besides that, certificate programs in OTPD are crucial because they offer official validation of the abilities and information gained from these kinds of programs. These certifications can strengthen teachers' resume, show that they are dedicated to their professional development, and even open doors for career progression.

Benefits and Challenges in Online Teacher Professional Development

OTPD emerged with several benefits for EFL Teachers. At its core, participating in OTPD enables teachers to have reflective practice. In this instance, teachers' knowledge can be shaped and reshaped through reflective practice which produces a variety of improvements (Oktama et al., 2023). In addition, OTPD can improve EFL teachers' motivation and offer opportunities for collaborative learning in virtual environments (Truong & Murray, 2019).

Research have indicated that OTPD yield favorable outcomes for educators in terms of their perspectives, lesson planning, efficacy as teachers, and career opportunities (Yıldırım, 2022). Although an OTPD certificate can improve teachers' careers, some teachers may prefer free courses because of financial constraints, while others may place a higher value on the caliber and applicability of the material regardless of cost (Ansyari et al., 2022).

Despite the benefits of OTPD, the challenges surrounded the process of OTPD are also present. Based on the study by Wynants and Dennis (2018), OTPD provides benefits as well as challenges. The benefits include continued access to resources, flexibility, and control over pace and attention. Nonetheless, it was found that the participants of the study had difficulties finishing their OTPD because they missed social presence, intrinsic motivation, and commitment. The study also noted that a major drawback of the online program was the absence of social connections. In addition, according to the study by Atmojo (2021), English teachers in EFL context participate in a range of OTPD activities, including having casual discussions with coworkers, viewing tutorials, and creating lesson plans. Nonetheless, they encounter challenges when attempting to give presentations at virtual conferences or webinars, conducting joint research, taking part in online classes, and serving as mentors in virtual mentoring. In addition, Atmojo (2021) lists a few other elements that might cause obstacles for an effective OTPD process, including erratic internet connections, time constraints, inadequate internet quota, low interaction during the course, difficulty in posing questions about tutorials or videos, and lack of facilities and infrastructure.

Online Learning Platforms

Teachers and students around the world were engaged in online learning situation because of the Covid-19 outbreak (Rojabi & Femilia, 2023). However, in post pandemic era, the use of online learning is not as massive as in the pandemic era. But even though it no longer immense for the process of teaching and learning, for TPD, online learning is always a good choice to increase teachers' knowledge of language teaching, improve teachers' teaching techniques, and it provide opportunity to work with other teachers in order to create a learning community (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). As EFL teachers strive for excellence in their classrooms, it becomes imperative to provide them with effective and tailored professional development opportunities. Technology plays a pivotal role in modern professional development. Online platforms and digital tools offer convenient and accessible avenues for teachers to engage in self-paced learning. From webinars and online courses to virtual conferences, these resources enable educators to explore emerging pedagogical approaches and stay updated with the latest methodologies and trends in English Language Teaching (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). Additionally, technology facilitates networking and knowledge sharing among educators worldwide, promoting a global community of practice (Tasdemir & Karaman, 2022).

The rapid advancement of technology in the field of education has caused growth to a numerous of tools and frameworks that are integral to contemporary pedagogy. A wide range of platforms have been used in OTPD, including web-based platforms, Learning Management Systems (LMS), and web conferencing platforms. In OTPD, web-based platforms refer to online learning environments that provide teachers with resources and instructional content. These platforms can include static pages like printed course materials, discussion boards, video conferences, live lectures, and online course content (McKimm et al., 2003). A learning management system (LMS) is a website or computer program that can facilitate to plan, organize, and conduct any kind of online course (Potter, 2023). The term web conferencing platforms in OTPD refers to the use of online communication tools to support teacher professional development activities. Teachers can participate in a range of activities with these platforms, including knowledge sharing, reflective practice, opportunities for multifaceted learning, and just-in-time support (Beach et al., 2021).

Teacher Perception in Online Learning

In the field of English language teaching, research about teacher perceptions is highly significance in order to comprehend teacher practices (Borg, 2009). Therefore, understanding teacher point of view in online learning can provide information on conceptual and methodological issues surrounding OTPD (Borg, 2009). It also highlights the positive sides of OTPD. A study from Dash et al. (2012) about the effect of online TPD toward the quality of teacher and the achievement of student showed that teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and pedagogical methods can improve with rigorous, ongoing, content-focused online professional development. However, Powell and Bodur (2019) in their study about teachers' perceptions about OTPD revealed that teachers voiced that it necessary to involve them in creating and applying the professional development activities so it can be suitable with what teachers actually need in order to improve their teaching practices. Besides that, teachers also expressed that it's important to comprise relevancy, authenticity, practicality, teamwork and communication, reflection, and setting in

designing professional development activity (Powell & Bodur, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. At first, we gathered quantitative data in the form of a survey. Then, we obtain the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. This study used convenience sampling to select the survey respondents. Besides, to be included as the survey respondents, they must be suitable with three criteria. The selection criteria included the teachers' educational background, teaching background, and TPD background. In more detail, for education background, participants need to hold degree in English language teaching. For teaching background, teachers much have more than one year teaching experience in public schools, private schools, or English courses or other institutions. In terms of their professional development background, teachers must have experience in using online platforms for teacher training, workshop, seminar, and other professional development. Hence, 30 Indonesian EFL teachers were involved as the survey respondents as they had the willingness and fulfilled the criteria to participate in this study.

A questionnaire was developed to gain data on the teachers' use of online platforms, which is used as one of the criteria for the selection of the participants. The questionnaire consists of three parts: (1) Demographic data and online platforms used by the teachers, (2) The teachers' preferences on OTPD seen from a number of aspects, and (3) The challenges faced by the teachers in OTPD. To explore the teachers' preferences, we referred to the work of Ansyari et al. (2022), which went through a modification process to make it appropriate for the current study to obtain data about teachers' preferences. Meanwhile, we developed eight new questions to gain data about the challenges that teachers faced in OTPD through online platforms. The eight new questions have been tested with a validity and reliability test. Both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires were used to gather the data.

From the questionnaire responses of the 30 teachers, it was identified from the first part of the questionnaire that the majority of EFL teachers (90.3%) use web video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams for their OTPD. Then, it is followed by Learning Management Systems (LMS) platform such as National Geographic Learning, or Canvas (48.4%). After that, there is Web-based platform such as Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) (41.9%). Next, some teachers had experience with LMS for Teachers Professional Education or Teacher Leaders programs (29%). In addition, one teacher has exposure with other platforms such as Quizizz (3.2%) and Edmodo (3.2%).

The questionnaire explores the teachers' preferences in terms of six aspects of OTPD: interaction (synchronous or asynchronous), learning materials (digital reading or audio-visual), learning strategy (individual or collaborative), duration of course (short period or long period), certificate (yes or no), and cost (free or paid). In addition to exploration of teachers' preferences, the questionnaire ask the teachers to give their responses in the form of Likert Scale with four options, each with its own value: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). The teachers are given a number of statements containing some issues which might be challenges in joining OTPD. The issues in the statements include: (1) Internet connection instability, (2) Limited internet quota, (3) Limited infrastructure, (4) Difficulties in using online platforms, (5) Difficulties in understanding the materials,

(6) Lack of information about latest professional development opportunities, (7) Lack of employer support, and (8) Lack of motivation and commitment.

In addition to the development of the questionnaire items on the online platforms used by the teachers, preferences and challenges, interview questions were formulated to investigate EFL teachers' preferences and challenges in OTPD. 3 EFL teachers from the survey respondents participated in the interview. They were chosen based on maximum variation sampling. The 3 teachers were from three different levels of education. Teacher 1 (T1) was an EFL teacher at Elementary School, 1-5 years teaching experiences, and 3-6 times participation in OTPD. Teacher 2 (T2) was an EFL teacher at Junior Highschool, 1-5 years teaching experiences, and 3-6 times participation in OTPD. Teacher 3 (T3) was an EFL teacher at Senior High school, more than 5 years teaching experiences, and more than 7 times participation in OTPD.

We employed several procedures namely sampling phase, permission phase, data sources phase, the phase of recording the data, and the process of administering data collection. In mixed methods with explanatory sequential design, quantitative data gathering and analysis took place first. It was followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. Therefore, the qualitative data explained and contextualize the quantitative findings. In this method, the qualitative and quantitative databases were examined independently. Then, we made connection between the quantitative findings to the qualitative data gathering to merge the two databases. The integration point in an explanatory sequential design occurred at this point. The qualitative follow-up was subsequently planned using the quantitative results. One crucial point was that the quantitative findings can guide the sampling strategy as well as the kinds of qualitative

inquiries to pose for participants in the second phase.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were divided into two parts: EFL teachers' preferences in OTPD to answer the first research question and the challenges that teachers encountered in OTPD to answer the second research question.

EFL Teachers' Preferences in Online Teacher Professional Development

This section aimed to provide answers about EFL teachers' preferences while using online platforms for their professional development. Their preferences were examined from different characteristics such as the modes of interactions, the kinds of learning materials, the types of learning strategies, the duration of the course, the availability of certificate, and the cost of participation.
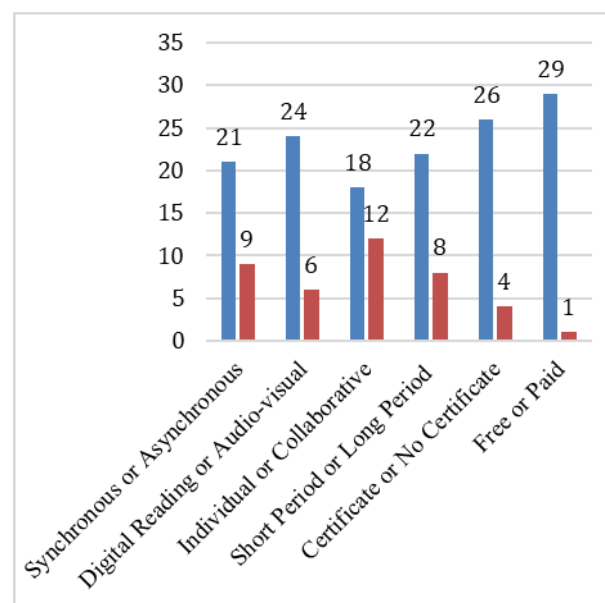

Figure 1. EFL teachers' preferences in OTPD

The figure above illustrates that the majority of EFL teachers prefer synchronous interaction, digital readings, individual learning, short course duration, the inclusion of a certificate, and a free course on the

online platforms for OTPD. A closer inspection of the figure displays dominant perceptions in terms of a free course. It can be seen that the majority of 29 EFL teachers prefer a free OTPD, and just 1 EFL teacher opted for paid OTPD. Also, pertaining to the certificate, 26 EFL teachers wanted to obtain a certificate of participation after OTPD, and only 4 EFL teachers chose not to obtain a certificate. Besides, regarding the duration of the course, 22 EFL teachers leaned toward OTPD with a short period, which lasts for several hours or a few days. Meanwhile, 8 EFL teachers favoured OTPD with a long period, such as for several weeks or months. It demonstrates that EFL teachers targeted a free course with a short duration but still intended for gaining a certificate. Furthermore, strong perceptions of EFL teachers were shown in the interaction formats, with 21 EFL teachers preferring to have synchronous interaction in OTPD, while 9 EFL teachers chose asynchronous. Also, in terms of learning materials, 24 EFL teachers favoured digital reading such as e-books and PDF materials, whereas 6 EFL teachers picked audio-visual materials, such as video clips, for their preference in learning materials. It indicates a growing familiarity with real-time online meetings that replace face-to-face interaction and with digital materials that substitute printed materials. Meanwhile, in learning strategy, the perceptions of EFL teachers were more divided compared to the other characteristics of OTPD. It occurred that 18 EFL teachers would rather have individual learning, and 12 EFL teachers opt for collaborative learning.

To support data from the questionnaire, qualitative data about EFL teachers' preferences from semi-structured interviews are also presented. In terms of interaction, T1 prefers synchronous interaction because she can interact in real-time with the instructor during OTPD. On the other hand, T2 preferred asynchronous interaction as she expressed that this interaction provide more space for her to do the OTPD based on her own paced. This is apparent from what the teacher has stated in the interview:

"I prefer synchronous interaction because when we need to confirm or ask something, the instructors can give direct and comprehensive feedback to the teachers. Meanwhile, when you have asynchronous meeting, there will be a delay between questions and answers or feedback." (T1)
"I prefer to have asynchronous because we can have self-paced learning, flexible time, easier to access, and we can adjust our conditions. The synchronous needs more strict rules and we have to attend the meeting at specific time." (T2)

In terms of learning materials, T1 pointed that there is a relation between her preference in learning materials and duration of course. As she stated that she preferred digital reading compared to audio-visual because it is time consuming to watch the video. She also explained that she preferred short course over long course because she has limited time to participate in TPD. Meanwhile, T3 would prefer to have OTPD with audio-visual reading materials due to her lack of interest to read long reading materials. It is shown as the teachers elaborated in the interview:

"Digital reading is preferred since the teacher can scan the text to get overview, while audio-visual with long duration is not effective. We don't have much time. Also, short period of learning is preferred because again, limited time that the teachers have." (T1)
"I prefer audio-visual over digital reading because I get bored more easily when I have to read a long passage." (T3)

While about learning strategy, T1 opted for individual leaning because it that way, she could focus on her own progress. She also expressed that for her own track; certificate is necessary as the prove that she participated in OTPD and it can be useful for her career advancement. However, she admitted that participating in TPD can be expensive if it is a paid course. That is why she favoured free course. This is revealed from what teacher said in the interview:

"Individual learning is preferred. We can focus on what we want to learn than following the group's need. Also, certificate is needed to prove that we followed OTPD. It is helpful for my resume. However, sometimes, the cost for OTPD is expensive. I preferred the program that doesn't require payment." (T1)

Besides the preferences such as interaction, learning materials, learning strategy, duration, certificate, and price for OTPD, T1 and T2 offered recommendations related to their preferences in online platforms for TPD. T1 voiced out that she preferred to participate in TPD where the it has certified instructors and the instructors have extensive teaching experiences. Meanwhile, T2 said that she would like to have post activities of as the requirement to finish the TPD such as cascading the new knowledge she gained in social media to encourage other teachers to participate in TPD. Their voices are captured in these excerpts:

"Besides those preferences, I need to have the instructor that has been certified in the field. Also, the instructor must have long period of teaching experience." (T1)
"The post activities, such as we have to make something or share our experiences in social media to persuade more teachers to join the TPD itself." (T2)

The Challenges in Online Teacher Professional Development

This section is intended to provide answers concerning the challenges that EFL teachers encountered in online teacher professional development. The most difficult constraint came from the instability of the internet connection. Then, it is followed by other problems such as limited quota to access the internet, lack of information about the available OTPD, inadequate infrastructure to facilitate the OTPD, the lack of support from the employer, the lack of motivation as well as commitment to finish the OTPD, and the struggle to understand the OTPD materials. Surprisingly, the most striking result to emerge from the data is that none of the EFL teachers have a problem in using online platforms during their OTPD exposure. It demonstrates the capability of the EFL teachers in navigating the technological aspect to maximize their professional development. The table below presents the detailed discoveries of the challenges.

Table 1. Challenges in OTPD

Challenges	Frequency	Percent	Options
Internet connection instability	8	26.7	Strongly Disagree
	6	20.0	Disagree
	9	30.0	Agree
	7	23.3	Strongly Agree
Limited internet quota	9	30.0	Strongly Disagree
	12	40.0	Disagree
	7	23.2	Agree
	2	6.7	Strongly Agree
Limited infrastructure	12	40.0	Strongly Disagree
	10	33.3	Disagree
	7	23.3	Agree
	1	3.3	Strongly Agree
Difficulties in using online platforms	17	56.7	Strongly Disagree
	13	43.3	Disagree
Difficulties in understanding the materials	12	40.0	Strongly Disagree
	16	53.3	Disagree
	2	6.7	Agree
Lack of information about the latest professional development opportunities	12	40.0	Strongly Disagree
	9	30.0	Disagree
	8	26.7	Agree
	1	3.3	Strongly Agree
Lack of employer support	9	30.0	Strongly Disagree
	15	50.0	Disagree
	6	20.0	Agree
Lack of motivation and commitment	10	33.3	Strongly Disagree
	14	46.7	Disagree
	6	20.0	Agree

The data in the table above proves that the major challenge that EFL teachers faced during the use of online platforms for OTPD is internet connection instability, as 16 EFL teachers agreed with this notion. It remains a classical problem as the internet accessibility across the archipelago is diverse. Meanwhile, 9 EFL teachers agreed that limited internet quota and lack of information about OTPD opportunities also posed challenges. Besides, 8 EFL teachers agreed that limited infrastructure, such as an uncomfortable learning environment, was an undesirable situation that they encountered. In OTPD, 6 EFL teachers also admitted that they have a challenge from the lack of support from their employer. In addition, 6 EFL teachers agreed that a lack of motivation and commitment posed a challenge in sustaining their participation in OTPD. Lastly, even though most of the EFL teachers did not experience trouble in understanding the OTPD materials, the small portion consist of 2 EFL teachers admitted that they have struggle in comprehending the materials. It revealed that most of external problems and some of internal problems emerged as challenges for EFL teachers in OTPD.

To add the perspective, T1 and T2 elaborated about their challenges in OTPD process through online platforms. T1 said that her biggest challenge is the deficiency of motivation and commitment to finish the OTPD. She correlated this problem with immerse workload as a teacher that is why OTPD cannot be her top priority. Similarly, T2 stated that she might lost her motivation and commitment as OTPD progress. She also associated this problem with the amount of workload at school. Their statements about these challenges are stated in the interview:

"The challenge will be lack of motivation and commitment. Teacher is overwhelmed with bunch of work. Therefore, sometimes OTPD program is not the priority. In my case, limited time will be the most challenging. We don't have much time to join OTPD." (T1)

"About the commitment, several times I registered OTPD program but I was just excited at first but in the middle of the process I lost my excitement so that I did not continue the program till the end. Maybe it was also because of the work load in the school." (T2)

Besides that, T2 acknowledged that internet connection posed as significant challenge for her. She shared her experience during the Teacher Professional Education Program, she was in the area with poor internet connection in a condition and she has to do presentation through web conferencing platform, Google Meet. At that time, she kept being logged out from the online meeting and it was unpleasant experience for her. In line with T2, T3 voiced out that web conferencing platform is an interactive platform to use in her OTPD but she admitted that unstable internet connection can hinder the flow of this experience. In relation about challenges in internet connection, T2 and T3 represent problems that are encountered by EFL teachers that live in rural areas with unstable internet connection. T3 also exposed that even the condition of weather such as rain can caused problem in internet connection. This is evident from what the teachers explained in the interview:

"The challenge was internet connection instability. When I had PPG; most of the learning were synchronous via Goggle Meet. I was in an area with unstable internet connection so when I was having the class, I got logged out of the meeting several times and it was so frustrating." (T2)

"Web Conferencing Platform is an interactive platform but we need a really stable internet connection. Internet

Connection Instability depends on the weather. So, when it's raining, sometimes we'll have a bad internet connection." (T3)

Lastly, T2 stated that the other challenge in OTPD through online platform is lack of awareness about the importance of OTPD for teachers. This sense brought interesting point that she has difficulties in maintaining her commitment in OTPD if it is not compulsory. This is evident in what teacher has confirmed in the interview:

"About the self-awareness in having the TPD, I usually lost excitement at the middle of the process, I can consider that I am having low self-awareness that OTPD program is important but if it is not compulsory, it was just so easy to break the first commitment." (T2)

Discussion

The present study has explored EFL teachers' preferences and challenges in OTPD. EFL teachers have stated their preferences and reasons in terms of interaction, learning materials, learning strategy, duration of the program, certificate, and price in OTPD. Most EFL teachers preferred synchronous interaction, short period duration, obtain certificate, and free program These results support evidence from a previous study by Ansyari et al. (2022) that synchronous interaction, short-term courses, certificate-granting, and cost-effective programs were the programs of choice for Indonesian university EFL teachers. Therefore, even though the participants of the previous study were university EFL teachers and the participants of the present study were EFL teachers in various teaching background from schools, higher education, and English courses, they shared the same preferences. However, the findings concerning EFL teachers' preferences in learning materials and learning strategies contradicted with a

study conducted by Ansyari et al. (2022). This is because EFL teachers in the present study choose digital reading compared to audio-visual materials and they lean on more toward individual strategy than collaborative strategy.

In particular, a teacher expressed her preference for synchronous interaction through web conferencing platforms, citing the ability to communicate with the instructor in real time during OTPD and receive direct feedback from them as reasons why she preferred this interaction. These results reflect those of Benedicto et al. (2023), who also found that real-time collaboration and interaction between participants can be facilitated through synchronous interaction. In this instance, web conferencing platforms like Zoom enable this kind of communication and promote involvement and prompt responses. Meanwhile, a teacher with digital reading preference in OTPD stated that this type of material is not as time consuming as watching videos in audio-visual materials. On the other hand, a teacher that favored audio-visual materials reason out that her preference is caused by her disinterested in reading long passages. This result is in line with prior study from Sadeghi and Navaie (2021) that some teachers may consider that watching videos is easier, while others might do better with text-based resources.

Following this, a teacher argued that individual learning strategies can be more convenient in OTPD because she can focus on her own progress. This is confirmed previous study by Ma et al. (2020) that mentioned OTPD with individual learning strategy provided more spaces for teachers to follow OTPD in their own pace and time. Besides, a teacher explained that she preferred short duration for the course due to time constraints that triggered by a lot of workloads at school. Then, a teacher exposed that certificate from OTPD is necessary as a prove for her participation in the program

and it also can add positive contribution toward her resume. This is in line with empirical study which explained that OTPD is not only improve perspectives, lesson planning, and effectiveness as teachers, but also help them build a stronger resume, which can help them advance in their career (Yıldırım, 2022). Also, a teacher stated that she preferred free OTPD because OTPD that required payment can be quite expensive. This is similar to a previous study conducted by Ansyari et al. (2022), which confirmed that because of their insufficient funding, some teachers might prefer free courses.

With regard to challenges that EFL teachers faced in OTDP, the findings highlight the major difficulties related to how to maintain motivation and how to keep the commitment. The difficulties noted are consistent with previous research by Wynants and Dennis (2018), who reported that teachers encountered challenges finishing their OTPD as a result of a decline in commitment. This is consistent with the current study, which showed that teachers' capacity to successfully complete their professional development initiatives is directly impacted by their level of commitment and motivation. The connection found in Wynants and Dennis's (2018) research supports the idea that maintaining commitment is essential for OTPD success. Teachers who struggle to stay committed experience a reduction in their general motivation, which in turn makes it more difficult for them to finish their OTPD. Interestingly, a teacher stated that the loss of commitment in finishing the OTPD is more prominent if their participation was based on their own initiative and not compulsory. Notably, the current study found that excessive workloads in school settings may be the cause of teachers' low motivation and commitment to finish their OTPD. The results of this study support Atmojo's (2021) observations about the barriers to effective OTPD because they identify time constraints as a major factor preventing OTPD initiatives from being as successful as they could be. The correlation this study established between teachers' commitment in participating in OTPD and with time constraints due to workloads highlights the complex issues surrounding professional development initiatives.

Above all, the current study addresses the practical difficulties faced by EFL teachers in rural area as a result of unstable internet connections that are made worse by weather-related conditions like rain. The result of this investigation is consistent with the findings from Atmojo (2021), who noted that internet connectivity had a significant influence on how effective OTPD was. The current study provides additional evidence for this claim by identifying a particular environmental factor such as rain as a contributing factor to EFL teachers in rural area inconsistent internet connections. This discovery highlights the complex relationship between internet connectivity problems and how weather and location can have a major impact on OTPD. Thus, even though synchronous interaction in OTPD provides opportunities for live interaction and real-time engagement, the constraints imposed by inadequate internet connectivity during synchronous OTPD sessions pose significant challenges that impede the smooth exchange of knowledge and the overall efficacy of professional development initiatives for EFL teachers in these areas. In addition, the present study also found that problems such as insufficient internet quota, lack of infrastructure such as comfortable places or environment to have OTPD and lack of employer support are existed among the major challenges in OTPD. Whereas difficulties in using the online platforms and struggle in understanding the materials in OTPD also present as the challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study has identified the voices of EFL teachers in relation to their preferences and challenges in using online platforms for OTPD. It has discovered different preferences among EFL teachers by examining six important aspects related to teachers' preferences namely interaction, learning materials, learning strategy, course duration, certification, and cost. Their preferences included synchronous communication, electronic reading materials, individual customized study plans, accelerated course lengths, certification, and free OTPD courses. These results indicate complex preferences of EFL teachers regarding OTPD. For instance, the preference for synchronous learning provides insights into the needs of EFL teachers to learn in groups and to communicate in a real-time format without geographical constraints. This mode of learning required teachers to be committed to a certain learning schedule. On the other hand, they also prefer OTPD with digital learning material and an individual learning approach. It demonstrates their desires as an adult learner to take control of their own learning process and to learn at their own pace. It implies that in creating the OTPD, the fair distribution between synchronous learning and independent study needs to be balanced. That way, teachers can learn with guidance from the instructor and have interaction with fellow participants while at the same time, they do not see OTPD as an additional burden to the amount of their other responsibilities.

Furthermore, the study emphasized that the main challenge faced by EFL teachers in OTPD is erratic internet access. In addition to the main obstacle, inadequate internet data, limited access to information about available OTPD, insufficient infrastructure that caused discomfort during OTPD, the shortage of support from the employer, and difficulties in maintaining motivation as well as commitment during OTPD also contribute to challenges in OTPD. In this context, the challenges that EFL teachers faced have to be taken into consideration as one of the aspects in implementing OTPD effectively. In particular for EFL teachers with difficult internet access, the application of OTPD has to be tailored with several considerations, such as the availability of recorded sessions of the online meeting, to make sure that teachers with erratic internet access can have a backup to catch up on the materials that they missed during the live sessions. Besides, offline supervision from the instructor is necessary to ensure that the teachers with difficult internet access can actually absorb the learning process. These customized approaches should take place to accommodate a wide range of EFL teachers and get around roadblocks in the way of fruitful OTPD.

However, there are some limitations to the current investigation. Firstly, the sample size of 30 EFL teachers was used in the study through convenience sampling. As a result, it indicates the need for larger participant groups to extract a wider range of perspectives regarding the preferences and challenges of EFL teachers in OTPD. Secondly, the data collection methods of the present study were limited to a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Therefore, additional instruments such as classroom observation or teachers' written reflections on their experiences with OTPD can be used by future researchers in obtaining the data. Additionally, the present study concentrated on six aspects of teachers' preferences, consisting of interaction, learning materials, learning strategy, length of course, certification, and cost. Therefore, future researchers should focus more intently on a specific preference in order to gain a more complex understanding of the specific characteristic of OTPD. Furthermore, in

terms of challenges, future researchers should examine OTPD barriers associated with insufficient internet access, especially for EFL teachers in rural areas, to provide a viewpoint on the cause and more recommendations to tackle this issue.

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