
Against All Odds: Exploring Indonesian Teachers' Emotional Geographies in Online Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract

This study explores the emotional experiences of a successful Indonesian in-service EFL teacher participating in an online teacher professional development (OTPD) program amid the dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and Cyclone Seroja. While prior research has explored teacher emotions during emergency remote teaching, little is known about how teachers negotiate emotional resilience under simultaneous global and local disasters. Using narrative inquiry and Hargreaves's emotional geography framework, data were collected through virtual interviews and messaging, and then analyzed thematically. The findings highlight five emotional dimensions—physical, moral, sociocultural, professional, and political—that shaped the teacher's journey. Despite life-threatening challenges, the participant demonstrated emotional resilience through intrinsic motivation, strong social support, and deep religious faith. These coping strategies enabled him to continue his professional development against tremendous odds. This study emphasizes the significance of acknowledging emotional geographies in OTPD, particularly in disaster-prone regions. It offers practical implications for educational institutions and policymakers to enhance teacher well-being by fostering empathy, flexibility, and support systems in professional learning programs.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Cyclone Seroja, EFL teacher, emotional geography, OTPD

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1. Introduction

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the traditional education system worldwide, necessitating a rapid transition to online platforms (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Mahmood, 2021). One significant shift has been the rapid expansion of online teacher professional development (OTPD), an essential means of reinforcing educators during this crisis (Morgan, 2020; Taguchi, 2020). OTPD refers to courses, workshops, or learning modules delivered in asynchronous, synchronous, or blended modes for teachers to achieve particular purposes, goals, content subjects, pedagogies, and delivery methods (Powell & Bodur, 2019). OTPD can be in formal or informal forms, such as online professional learning communities (Syahria et al., 2024). Further, a plethora of studies show that OTPD has offered new opportunities for sharing, interacting, reflecting, and collaborating among teachers (Dille & Røkenes, 2021), improving teachers' performance in terms of content, pedagogical abilities, and skills as well as minimizing geographic boundaries (Mailizar et al., 2021), distance collaboration (Lay et al., 2020), and providing time and setting flexibility (Tina et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the literature on OTPD shows that teachers have also faced considerable challenges in sustaining effective instruction while navigating the complexities of OTPD during the pandemic. An (2021) noted that teachers had to leave their comfort zone and perform online teaching in a short time, mostly without sufficient preparation (Lie et al., 2020) due to their lack of technological competence (Atmojo, 2021).

Not only did teachers face many technical constraints in OTPD during the time of COVID-19, but they also experienced uncomfortable psychological aspects. Due to the sudden alteration from traditional, face-to-face to online learning mode, teachers dominantly felt negative emotions in the form of anger and frustration (Santihastuti et al., 2022) because of the multiple roles and responsibilities they had to perform (Isaee & Barjesteh, 2023). Teachers' feelings lonely, demotivated, and separation when participating in OTPD regarding the isolation regulation by the government were also reported by Truong and Murray (2019). Different findings were reported by Gu et al. (2022), who mentioned that teachers experienced mixed feelings, with negative emotions being more dominant than positive emotions. However, how teachers perceived the difficult situations determined their eventual emotions. Xu et al. (2024) argued that positive perceptions of online teaching influenced results in constructive emotional experiences, which subsequently led to motivational stimulations in more creative and productive classroom practices. On the contrary, teachers who had negative perceptions of online teaching tended to experience more unpleasant, vulnerable emotions.

For Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers, this transition to emergency remote teaching was further intricate by natural disasters, such as the devastating Cyclone Seroja, which exacerbated the challenges of online teaching and professional development, particularly in the north-eastern part of the country. So far, the literature on

teacher emotion in OTPD during the COVID-19 pandemic emphasizes the importance of addressing the emotional dimension of professional development has been well documented, but still, there is a lacuna regarding teachers' sustainable adaptation through negotiated emotional changes in their emergency remote teaching and other disasters at the same event. Given the relative scarcity of available research in this context, the primary aim of this study is to explore the emotional experiences of an Indonesian in-service EFL teacher participating in online teacher professional development (OTPD) 'against all odds', which means overcoming life-threatening problems amid catastrophes to sustain participation in OTPD. The added pressures of the pandemic and Cyclone Seroja present unique emotional challenges and complex environments that warrant thorough investigation.

1.1. Research question

Hence, the current study seeks to answer two-fold research questions:

1. What emotional experiences were discovered in the narratives of the teacher when the pandemic and Cyclone Seroja hit his region?
2. How did the teacher manage the emotional challenges arising from the incidents?

By addressing these emotional experiences, this study aims to elucidate a nuanced understanding of the emotional geographies of OTPD, offering valuable insights for education policymakers, program designers, and support systems in Indonesia and similar contexts.

1.2. Literature review

1.2.1. Teacher emotions in online teacher professional development (OTPD)

The emotional dimension of teaching has long been acknowledged as an integral part of teachers' professional lives (Hargreaves, 2001; Liu, 2016). The role of teacher emotion in sustaining such development has been increasingly gaining prominence (Gu et al., 2022). Teacher emotions refer to a teacher's emotional well-being, directing them to recognize potential situations, fashioned and influenced by various social, cultural, and political factors (Zembylas, 2007). From the point of view of social construction, emotions are a primary part of human life and are subject to personal lived experiences that are fundamentally understood, mediated, and shaped by engagement with others and directly connected to their relationship and interpretation of their experience (Keller et al., 2014; Saunders, 2013). The affective domain of emotions, such as restlessness, nervousness, and anxiety, is considered the core component of emotions (Keller et al., 2014; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). Unearthing teacher emotions is crucial as emotions apprehend an essential part of teachers' identity and agency, which determines their teaching practices and future careers (Ubaidillah et al., 2023). In addition, teacher emotions play a pivotal role in the teachers' critical profession-related decisions to either retain the job or quit permanently (Keller et al., 2014).

The emotional experiences of teachers worldwide engaging in OTPD during the pandemic reveal a complex interaction between technological, pedagogical, and emotional factors. Gu et al. (2022) found out due to the pandemic situation, which forced Chinese teachers to implement livestream teaching, the teachers had mixed emotions, which influenced their teachers' identity. It motivated the teachers to take more positive actions by deepening their understanding of livestream teaching. Also, abrupt changes from traditional, face-to-face teaching to online mode of instruction caused Indonesian teachers to experience frustrating situations (Santihastuti et al., 2022). Teacher emotional labour occurred due to students' misbehaviours (dishonesty, demotivation, and rudeness). Another problem was unequal distribution of resources, as not all students could access the internet and online interactive tools and platforms due to technical issues with the gadgets they used. Time management also complicated the situation as teachers had to accommodate students' different learning styles. It took more time and effort to prepare conduct online teaching. Those lead the teachers had to manage their negative emotions by employing different strategies, such as surface acting, deep acting, and genuine expressing. A phenomenological study by Isae and Barjesteh (2023) also concluded that Iranian EFL teachers felt uncomfortable in teaching online during the pandemic because of the many roles and responsibilities. The teachers opined that they needed to acquire many skills for implementing online instruction. Those skills were pedagogical, content skills, design and technological skills, communication and social skills, and classroom management skills.

1.2.2. Managing emotional challenges in online teacher professional development (OTPD)

Addressing emotional challenges in Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) is a growing area of research. Recent reviews highlight key issues such as emotional sensitivity, regulation strategies, and the impact of particular interventions. This section of the literature review combines insights on teachers' coping mechanisms and the effectiveness of support frameworks in OTPD. Numerous studies highlight the importance of teachers addressing their psychological barriers by fostering second language (L2) motivation related to their learning experiences (Truong & Murray, 2019), maintaining positive relationships with mentors and colleagues (Nurhadi et al., 2024; Tina et al., 2010), and receiving personalized mentoring and assistance within online communities of practice (Hafez & El-Din, 2021; Leary et al., 2020; Syahria et al., 2024). Truong & Murray (2019) stated that in-service EFL educators in Vietnam engaged in OTPD with instrumental motivation due to their institution's obligation to participate in the program. Their motivation ultimately changed to a more intrinsic drive as they realized that the program's final results would boost their professional knowledge. This type of motivation, combined with ongoing technical support, enabled teachers to complete OTPD. In the Indonesian context, Nurhadi et al. (2024) showed that teachers who participated in virtual teacher professional development (VTPD) during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced mixed positive and negative emotions. Not only did they experience the feelings of seriousness, happiness, success, and satisfaction, but also

insecurity, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and impatience. The research observed that teachers' efforts to adjust their positive emotions with mentors and other participants were crucial for success in virtual TPD. This research echoed Syahria et al. (2024)'s findings, which indicated that teachers receiving support from peers in online professional learning communities assisted them in navigating their emotional and technical challenges.

Institutions that allowed their teachers to participate in OTPD might responsibly assist them to succeed in this program. This kind of support from schools was categorized as vertical support, as opposed to horizontal support from peers or colleagues (Dille & Røkenes, 2021). Avillanova & Kuswando (2019) highlighted that EFL teachers joining teacher professional development encountered various obstacles, including clashing schedules between teaching hours and home duties, insufficient prerequisites for the program, lack of institutional assistance, costly programs, unsuitable programs offered, and limited information regarding the program. To address these issues, schools might implement ongoing institutional support (Leary et al., 2020; Powell & Bodur, 2019). This support could include financial assistance and allocated teaching hours so that teachers could concentrate more on meeting the program's requirements (Powell & Bodur, 2019). Research by Beach et al. (2020) and Lay et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of "just-in-time" school assistance by providing responsive emotional and professional support outside regular working hours effectively and promptly, whether during or outside their working hours. It involved a variety of activities, including technological start-up, techno-emotional monitoring, troubleshooting and reconstruction of technical problems, planning and coordination of learning activities, pedagogical support and guidance, and reflection on experience. They noted the interplay between technology and pedagogy while, at the same time, technological support contributed to pedagogical development. By exploring how emotional sensitivity, regulation strategies, and the impact of school interventions, the present study aims to reveal how an Indonesian EFL teacher joining OTPD during the devastating Cyclone Seroja and the COVID-19 pandemic navigates his emotional challenges to overcome his life-threatening situations.

1.2.3. Emotional geographies

According to Sutton & Wheatley (2003), emotion was the ability of an individual to engage within another's emotional field and experience the similar experiences felt by that other person. Hargreaves (2001, p. 1061) argued that emotional geographies were defined as,

The spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and color the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other.

Emotional geographies identify the supports for and threats to the basic emotional bonds and understandings of people that arise from forms of distance or closeness in their

interactions or relationships with the environment (Hargreaves, 2001). These geographies encompass five dimensions of emotions, mainly sociocultural, moral, professional, political, and physical.

First, physical geography refers to the proximity and/or gaps that occur due to the dimensions of space and time. Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic country that has more than 17,000 islands and spans a distance equivalent to one-eighth of Earth's circumference. It is so wide that it has three different time zones (eastern, central, and western Indonesian time zones), each of which has an hour difference. Thus, during OTPD, instructors of OTPD had to consider this time difference so that participating teachers from the other zones were able to join the online events. The unequal geographical conditions from one island to another also cause unequal facilities and internet connectivity, which makes the teachers face problems in attending the online classes (Lie et al., 2020).

Second, moral geography refers to the closeness and/or disparity that occur due to different goals and desires to achieve professional practice. Being a professional teacher is the dream of a highly dedicated teacher. The teacher is also proud of him/herself if he or she can reach it, indicated by receiving a certification from the government upon the completion of OTPD. Teachers certainly feel ashamed if they fail in this program.

Third, sociocultural geography relates to proximity and/or disparity due to differences in gender, race, ethnicity, language, and culture. Indonesia is placed second in the world in terms of linguistic diversity, with over 700 indigenous and heritage languages after Papua New Guinea (Zein et al., 2020). Those languages co-exist with the Indonesian language as the main official language. In terms of classroom-related behaviors, a study by Liu and Littlewood (1997) indicates that the tendency of 'listening to teachers' is the most common classroom experience in East Asian classes as a result of the students' reluctance to take more active roles in classrooms. Another reported behavior is students' reticence and passivity (Shao & Gao, 2016).

Fourth, professional geography relates to closeness and/or gaps due to different understandings of professional norms and professional practice. In order to become professional teachers mandated by the law, they must join the teacher certification program. The goals of such a program are to ensure that the teachers perform their job properly, to improve the quality of education, to improve teachers' professionalism, and to show that the teachers have already obtained sufficient competency to perform as teachers (Avillanova & Kuswandono, 2019). A teacher is a professional educator under the condition that he or she masters four competencies, namely: pedagogy, professionalism, social, and personality.

Finally, political geography is the proximity and/or disparity that occurs due to different understandings of power, i.e., how others who hold certain positions are perceived. In the year of 2005, the Ministry of Education and Culture implemented TPD by launching the

Teacher and Lecturer Law number 14/2005 (Chang et al., 2014). The law states that a teacher is a professional career that requires teachers to obtain a teaching certificate to become professional teachers. The preparation of teachers to become professional teachers is mandated in the Government Regulation 19/2017, which states that teachers have to be prepared through a professional education program after a bachelor's degree program (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan [Ministry of Education and Culture], 2020). In order to realize this mandate, the government sets up the Teacher Profession Education (TPE) Program in the form of the TPE Study Program. The main purpose of this program is to prepare teachers who can prepare their students to face more complex real-world problems in the 21st century, as well as to contribute positively to the nation's capacity building. The program is well-known as Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG, henceforth). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was delivered in an online mode. This study was dedicated to this context.

Emotional geographies have been in the literature to shed some light on multiple perspectives, such as teacher-parent relations (Chen & Wang, 2011), parent-teacher candidate interactions (Dotger et al., 2011), teachers' exclusion at a multicultural school (Zembylas, 2011), language teaching (Liu, 2016a), and teachers in emergency remote teaching (Ubaidillah et al., 2023), and many others. Taloko et al. (2020), for example, investigated the emotional geographies of an Indonesian female PhD student in New Zealand when the pandemic hit that country. It was revealed that possessing emotional intelligence was a critical element (Extremera, 2020) so that she could manage her stress and fear in proper ways to cope with such life-threatening situations. Her external and internal motivations also played important roles in maintaining her anxiety and well-being. This research contributes to policymakers, such as the government and universities, to produce policies that aim to maintain the mental health of their citizens, especially international students. In addition, international students need to be encouraged to have emotional intelligence to maintain their mental health well through activities that are beneficial for themselves and others.

2. Method

2.1. Research design

This study employed narrative inquiry to delve into how people make sense of their lived experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2007). It makes it possible for the subjectivity of meanings derived from the participant's lived experiences (Barkhuizen, 2008). The data were collected via a virtual interview with Google Meet on November 11, 2021. Multiple follow-ups using WhatsApp were then used to obtain further confirmation. The recorded interview was transcribed and analyzed, along with the WhatsApp messages were sent back to the participant for final confirmation before thorough analysis was conducted (Widodo, 2014).

2.2. Participant of the study

A male participant named Pesona (pseudonym), in his late thirties, was the main participant of the study. He had the characteristics suitable for the study: (1) joining the online PPG in 2021 amidst the pandemic, (2) experiencing the Cyclone Seroja two days before the commencement of the program, and (3) passing the PPG when the interview was conducted. However, ethical approval and informed consent had not previously been sought from participant due to abrupt changes to online learning and the temporary situations after the disaster. The author understood this as a limitation of the study and recognized the importance of following ethical standards in research involving human participants.

2.3. Instruments

The main instrument for data collection of this study was the online video conferencing application, Google Meet. It enabled the participant to narrate his personal experiences and thoughts verbally and to have a two-way recorded interaction with the researcher. The subsequent instrument was WhatsApp, a free messaging app, which allowed the researcher to maintain written communication with the participant for further confirmation.

2.4. Data analysis techniques

For data analysis, the recorded conversation was transcribed using Widodo's (2014) interview data transcription techniques, consisting of: listening to talking data, shaping talking data, communicating talking data with an interpretative intent, reproducing or (re)constructing talking data, and building data credibility. Afterwards, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied for deeper data analysis, involving six steps: familiarizing, coding, looking for themes, reviewing themes, naming themes, and writing. First, the fully edited transcript and written text messaging were read a least three times to familiarize oneself with the data. Next, patterns that were suitable for the dimensions of emotional geographies were identified. Third, the researcher started to code by grouping similar utterances, expressions, and phrases into a table. Fourth, themes were formed after analyzing the relevant codes. Fifth, the themes were categorized based on emotional geographies categorization. Lastly, the final themes were categorized into five dimensions of emotional geographies.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Physical geography: "We were a big family."

Learning in online mode did not stop Pesona from building good communication with his online classmates who lived in different parts of the country to share opinions and discuss content-related issues. His constant communication with them via web conferencing tools and an instant messaging application (WhatsApp or WA) made them close and build a sense of becoming a big family. He said:

With my online classmates, we always shared our thoughts and gave our feedback and input, anything related to our tasks. We also created a WA group where we communicated all matters concerning our learning activities. We built our communication daily, which made us very close to one another. Whenever we had problems, other peers would help us out. It made me think that we were like a big family, although we had never met in person before.

The feeling of having a big family was also felt by Pesona, and his family appeared when his neighbor saved his family by providing their house as a haven for his family. It happened when the cyclone was tearing down his house. He further mentioned:

I fled my house together with my wife and my two daughters at four in the morning because the roof was ripped off and flew away. We were scared that it would fall upon us. It was very dark outside with very heavy rain and strong winds. We ran to our neighboring house to seek shelter. We waited there until the situation was better. We were lucky to have a neighbor who was like our own family.

3.1.2. Moral geography: “I had to succeed to achieve higher things”

His strong desire to pass PPG to be a professional teacher was challenged by his situation when he had to take care of his family and his broken house after the cyclone. He happened to think of quitting the program; however, his wife and big family provided him with support to continue his program. He also realized that this disaster could be a test for him to succeed in the future. He explained:

I had mixed feelings. There were times when I felt I had to give up at that point, but there was something inside me saying that this situation could be a stepping stone in order to succeed and achieve higher things. I had to take care of my devastated house and renovate it. My feelings were truly mixed up. However, my wife reminded me that we had prayed for PPG before, and God answered our prayers. It then became my challenge, gravel that I had to overcome so that I could obtain something bigger God had provided for me. My greatest support came from my wife, and my big family made me keep going.

3.1.3. Sociocultural geography: “We’re tough, warrior-typed people who are shaped by our language, accent, and environment.”

Sociocultural approach views individuals as ‘somewhat passive carriers of culture, where culture is a set of rituals, beliefs, and fixed traits’ (Nasir & Hand, 2006). The traits of his tribe were described by Pesona as tough and religious, which helped him pass the obstacles. He explained:

We are tough, warrior-type people who are shaped by our language, accent, and environment. Our parents always taught us not to be spoiled children but to depend on God in any situation. No matter how difficult the situation we are in, God will make

His way to help us. It becomes our strength, as my parents always say, that we must surrender to God's will.

3.1.4. Professional geography: “If they could become professional teachers, why couldn't I?”

Pesona described himself as a mediocre teacher, apart from being a professional teacher like his peer teachers at school, who had passed the program and had become better teachers. It triggered him to join PPG to learn new things and become a professional teacher like his colleagues at school. He said:

Joining PPG was a real challenge for me, as I had wanted to be a professional teacher, not an awkward teacher. I had been a mediocre teacher for almost two decades. It's a common practice here to copy-paste lesson plans or any other documents and teach in the same way all the time. This situation motivates me to learn new things. I witnessed my peer teachers who had passed PPG become remarkable teachers. They could develop their knowledge, not like me. So, I thought if anybody else could do it, I could do the same thing as well.

3.1.5. Political geography: “They understood our situation here.”

As a student of the program, Pesona reported his current situation to his faculty. His situation made it possible not to join the learning process smoothly. Luckily, the faculty members understood his condition and did not demand too much from him. He mentioned:

I was grateful that the university did not demand too much from me since they realized our situation here with this extraordinary cyclone. I told my lecturers about my condition here, and they understood it very well.

It is the government's responsibility to ensure the citizens' well-being, especially after any incidents of natural disasters. The government repaired some vital infrastructures around the governmental offices so that they can serve the impacted society. They rebuilt the electricity and internet connection facility in order for the local people to communicate with other people. Pesona made use of the facility to join PPG, despite his surroundings.

The network connection at that time was unstable because the damage covered 80-90% of the area. There were a few places, like governmental offices, which had been repaired. So, I went to a government complex area to get an internet connection. Luckily, I knew an officer there who gave me Wi-Fi access. It was pretty crowded as many people went there to get an internet connection or charge their mobile phones since the electricity coverage was limited. That governmental area was open to the public. Thus, I had to arrive there early in the morning to find a convenient place to join PPG.

3.1.6. On handling emotional challenges: “God and family are the keys to my success.”

Not only did Persona put strong emphasis on believing in God, but he also put stress on obtaining support from family and friends as the primary factors of his success to overcome all obstacles. He further articulated:

I always try to be optimistic and resilient, to keep trying. The most important thing is to rely on God. He is the one who is capable of determining what is best for our lives. We must try the best we can, but God will eventually decide. My lecturer in PPG once said: Do your best and God will do the rest. That’s the motto I hold. Joining PPG amid the COVID-19 pandemic and powerful Seroja truly took my energy, time, and emotions. So, I also asked my family and close friends to support me in their prayers. I think it’s the key to my success”.

3.2. Discussion

This study reveals the multiple lived emotional geographies and emotional labor experiences of an EFL in-service teacher during the pandemic and the natural disaster when he was taking online PPG. Three major aspects could be drawn throughout Pesona’s story to communicate and make sense of his world, which in turn changed his behavior. First of all, it was related to the feeling of anxiety and fear. Extremera (2020) noted that anxiety and fear were natural responses when individuals were situated in life-threatening experiences. The simultaneous impact of a global pandemic and a severe natural disaster created a compounded effect on stress levels. The teacher juggled urgent personal and family concerns with professional responsibilities. On one hand, he had to deal with practical tasks of repair of his damaged home, provided essential needs and ensured the safety of his family; on the other hand, he was obliged to complete his online course and attend virtual classes to maintain his professional duties which directly impacted his sense of safety and security. In addition, the cyclone affected internet connectivity and access to resources needed for online professional development. Pesona’s dealing with unstable connections or power issues exacerbated frustration and fear about failing to meet requirements or losing progress. These feelings are natural responses to managing professional growth in the face of concurrent, large-scale stressors. It is then crucial for teachers in such situations to receive empathy, support, and flexible approaches from their educational institutions (Rahayu & Asanti, 2023) to help mitigate these impacts.

The second aspect points out the importance of intrinsic motivation, family support, and friendship. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to engage in an activity for its inherent satisfaction and personal reward, rather than for external rewards or pressures (Byrd et al., 2007; Thomson & Turner, 2019). For teachers, intrinsic motivation can be a crucial source of strength when participating in professional development during turbulent times. Despite the challenges posed by global and/or local disasters, teachers who have a passion for their profession and a genuine desire for self-improvement are more likely to persist.

Extremera (2020) suggested that having strong determination and motivation, as well as emotional intelligence to fight against obstacles, helps individuals to overcome depressive situations with the right attitude and actions in order to achieve goals. Pesona had a strong motivation to become a professional teacher as he considered himself a mediocre teacher at that time. He wanted to be a better teacher like other teachers who had passed the development program. His commitment to enhancing his teaching skills and adapting to new methods reflected a strong sense of purpose and dedication to his students' outcomes. Family support is another critical factor of success (Garssen et al., 2021; Ozcan et al., 2021) for teachers facing increased anxiety and fear. It encompasses the emotional, practical, and sometimes financial assistance provided by family members. Having understanding and encouragement, particularly from loved ones, can help teachers feel emotionally balanced and less isolated (Chen, 2019; Li & Craig, 2019). Pesona received strong support from his wife to keep on joining online PPG to pursue his professional achievement. Positive reinforcement and reassurance from family members boosted his morale. Knowing that their efforts are recognized and appreciated at home can be a powerful motivator, helping teachers stay committed even when external conditions are difficult.

Next, friendship can also empower teachers to endure significant hardships (Wei & Wang, 2023). It refers to the supportive and trusting relationships between individuals who provide companionship and mutual assistance (Gu et al., 2022; Purwanti et al., 2023; Saunders, 2013). When his home was severely damaged by the cyclone, Pesona and his family were saved by his neighbor by allowing them to save their life in their house until the situation was conducive. The emotional and physical support from friends can help teachers process their stress more effectively when dealing with simultaneous challenges like a pandemic and a natural disaster. In general, intrinsic motivation, bolstered by family support and friendship, can empower teachers to sustain major difficult events. These combined factors create a support system that raises resilience, perseverance, and hope. With intrinsic motivation, teachers remain driven by their individual and professional goals. The support from family and friends provides the necessary emotional and practical aid to navigate difficult times, making it possible for teachers to engage in meaningful learning and adaptation despite external challenges. Ultimately, while teachers may face substantial challenges during crises such as COVID-19 and Cyclone Seroja, these three factors can be powerful forces that help them stay engaged, maintain their well-being, and complete their professional development journey (Guerin et al., 2015).

The last aspect encompasses the importance of faith. Faith often serves as an emotional anchor, providing people with psychological and physical well-being (Byrd et al., 2007; Garssen et al., 2021; Ozcan et al., 2021). In the face of the insecurity brought by both the pandemic and Cyclone Seroja, faith can help teachers maintain a sense of calm and hope. A study by Ozcan et al. (2021) showed that a faith-based and spiritual approach helped female

aid workers feel grounded, calm, and resilient in difficult situations. Garssen et al. (2021) proposed three mechanisms to correlate how religion or spirituality interacts with mental health: social support and cultural embeddedness, meaning-making, and self-regulation. Firstly, gaining social support, security, and comfort is subject to an instrumental motive of external religious motivation (Park, 2021) and creates a community connection. Cultural embeddedness plays a vital role in Pesona's case as the characteristics of his tribe were tough and having strong faith in Christianity, assisting him to receive mental, social, and physical support from his family and community.

Secondly, believing in God to achieve a higher purpose or divine support can empower teachers to stay motivated despite overwhelming external stressors. This sense of resilience can help them approach professional development with perseverance, viewing difficulties as temporary or meaningful within a larger framework "to strive for and experience a connection with the essence of life" (Garssen et al., 2021), which is referred to by Park (2021) as intrinsic religious motivation. Finally, having balanced mental health scaffolds self-regulation. Research has shown positive relationships between mental health with the regularity of personal prayers (Maltby & Lewis, 1999; Suprihatin et al., 2020) and attendance of religious services (Dein et al., 2012). Garssen et al. (2021) found that regular church presence and other related events with associated believers might amplify the amount of social support and relationships with family members, friends, and religious persons. Religion, as a result, provides a crucial coping mechanism for better psychological outcomes. In sum, faith can be a genuinely personal and powerful source of strength that complements intrinsic and extrinsic religious motivation, family support, and friendship. It helps teachers navigate their professional development journey with hope, patience, and a sense of purpose, even during the most challenging times.

4. Conclusion

The present study sheds light on the mixed emotional geographies of a successful Indonesian in-service EFL teacher pursuing his professional career by joining a national online teacher professional development (OTPD) when the global COVID-19 pandemic hit this country and Cyclone Seroja devastated some parts of the southeastern islands in Indonesia. How the teacher negotiated with the hardship is also explored. This study, in addition, offers having strong faith in God as a key novelty in emotional management when coping with life-threatening situations, while other studies, such as Albin-Clark (2020), Chen & Wang (2011), Suprihatin et al. (2020), Taloko et al. (2020), Ubaidillah et al. (2023) emphasized governmental support, intrinsic motivation for academic achievement, and coping strategies with negative emotions and turning them into positive one, as the ways to regulate their emotions.

This study has two implications for institutions offering OTPD and for teachers. OTPD institutions, schools and the government should ensure teacher wellbeing and resilience by

providing autonomy-supportive leadership, referring to actions by institution leaders and instructors that promote empowerment and self-initiation among teachers (Rahayu & Asanti, 2023; Slep et al., 2018), including: listening to teachers' needs, acknowledging 8 issues from teachers' points of view, such as providing teachers chances to express their difficulties and opportunities that evolve when taking OTPD, and building social support from peer teachers. Furthermore, teachers should seek social support from people around them and have adaptability to regulate their thoughts, actions, and emotions to cope effectively with new, ever-changing situations (Astutik & Hapsari, 2022; Taloko et al., 2020).

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His courage, authenticity, and reflective account not only offered a vital perspective but also underscored the resilience and dedication of teachers navigating extraordinary situations. His story serves as a powerful reminder of the human element behind professional and personal struggles in times of crisis.

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