

The relationship among self-efficacy, self-concept, and burnout among Iranian EFL teachers: A structural equation modelling analysis

Jalil Fathi¹
Mehran Samadi²
Saeed Nourzadeh³
Arash Saharkhiz Arabani⁴

Received: 09/05/2020
Accepted: 31/08/2020
Article Type: Research

Abstract

It should be noted that every teacher has his/her particular personality factors, value systems, ideologies, and cognition which greatly influence the decisions they make and the activities they do in the classroom (Donald, 2000). As a result, a bulk of studies have been carried out to shed more light on the individual and psychological variables of teachers. In this line of inquiry, the investigation of the associations among some teacher-related variables such as teacher self-efficacy, burnout, emotional intelligence, commitment, resilience, and job satisfaction has enjoyed much research attention.

Grounded in social cognitive theory and first introduced by Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is defined as “belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p.3). As far as educational contexts and teachers are concerned, self-efficacy was defined by Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) as “the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p.22).

As another teacher-related variable, burnout is defined as a dysfunctional response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors at work. It occurs more in interpersonally oriented occupations such as the teaching profession (Maslach, 1999; Maslach & Leiter, 1999). Individuals who burn out are enduring stress overload and devaluating others as well as themselves, accordingly, they show a syndrome of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DE), and reduced personal accomplishment (RPA) (Maslach, 1999).

¹ Assistant Professor in TEFL, University of Kurdistan (corresponding author);
j.fathi@uok.ac.ir

² MA student in TEFL, University of Kurdistan; saeednourzadeh@du.ac.ir

³ Assistant Professor in TEFL, Damghan University; mehransamadi@uok.ac.ir

⁴ Assistant Professor in TEFL, Rasht Branch, Islamic Azad University;
saharkhiz.arash@iaurasht.ac.ir

Teacher self-concept can be broadly defined as teachers' self-perceptions of their teaching effectiveness. Researchers have emphasized the importance of teachers' competence beliefs (often labeled as self-efficacy or self-concept), which may influence teacher-related psychological variables (Devos, Dupriez, & Paquay, 2012). Overall, the purpose of the present study was set to investigate the role of teachers' sense of efficacy and self-concept as predictors of teacher burnout in the Iranian EFL context.

To this end, three validated scales measuring these variables were administered to 184 male and female teachers. The collection of the required data was initiated by distributing the questionnaires of the three variables to the participants. To ease the data collection procedure, both online and paper-and-pencil versions of the questionnaires were used. As the participants had a good command of English proficiency, the English version of the questionnaires was administered to the EFL teachers. The online versions of the questionnaires were created by placing the items of the questionnaires on Google Docs and then shared on internet channels and groups in which Iranian EFL teachers from various parts of the country are joined.

The gathered data were analyzed by the SPSS AMOS 20. First, the dataset was examined with regard to the missing and outlier values. The analysis initially indicated that there were no wrongly coded data. Additionally, while analyzing the missing values, few missing items were randomly assigned through the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm. Afterward, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to examine the prediction of independent over dependent variables and various goodness of fit indices were analyzed.

The results indicated that teacher self-concept accounted for 14.5% of the variance, and teacher self-efficacy accounted for 22.6% of the variance in burnout. Although both variables had a unique effect on teaching burnout, teacher self-efficacy turned out to be a stronger predictor of burnout. Concerning the implications of this study, teacher education programs should pay more serious attention to teacher self-efficacy and self-concept as they proved to play a significant role in reducing teacher burnout. From this perspective, EFL teacher educators are recommended to adopt a practical course of action to foster both teacher self-concept and self-efficacy in order to help both pre-service and in-service teachers to cope with stressful situations in a more effective way. To this end, teacher education programs should focus on teachers' professional identity which is closely associated with both teacher reflection and self-efficacy. Development of teacher identity requires interpretation and reinterpretation of who the teacher is and whom he aspires to be. Through this process of identity re-construction, ELT teachers can become more reflective, thereby becoming more emotionally attached to their jobs (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). If the Iranian ELT community gets closer to professionalism by re-constructing identities of ELT practitioners more effectively, enhanced teachers' self-efficacy and their improved reflectivity would reduce their stress and burnout.

As for the suggestions for further research, the generalizability of these findings can be enhanced if future researchers utilize qualitative or mixed methods research designs. Such studies are likely to provide a more in-depth understanding of the variables influencing teaching burnout in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Burnout, EFL Teachers, Structural Equation Modelling, Teacher Self-Concept, Teacher Self-Efficacy