

Identifying The Factors Which Contribute To Iranian EFL Teachers' Online Burnout And Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Teachers are of the major factors playing a critical role in the success or failure of any educational system; thus, it is vital to investigate those variables that can impact teachers' performance. The present study attempted to identify the factors contributing to Iranian EFL teachers' online burnout and job satisfaction. The study's population comprised 48 EFL teachers aged 24 to 45, 22 men and 26 women of similar socioeconomic backgrounds. They were the researchers' colleagues, teaching at Iran Language Institute (I. L. I.), where the researcher has been teaching for ten years. They were chosen based on convenience sampling, since they were the most available teachers to be asked to fill the study questionnaires. Two main instruments were used to collect the study data: job burnout and job satisfaction questionnaires. The first is composed of 22 and the latter of 40 items. The questionnaires used Likers scales to estimate the teachers' attitudes. Based on the study achievements collected via analysis of the two questionnaires, it could be concluded that the variables of job satisfaction and job burnout negatively impact each other during the Covid 19 pandemic. In other words, as one variable increases, the other one decreases. Based on the above assumption, it can be claimed that the two variables are closely interrelated, indicating that if the language institutes' chairpeople try to eliminate the factors leading to their teachers' online burnout, they may naturally increase the teachers' satisfaction with their work.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Online Burnout, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

There is significant evidence that teachers experience great stress during their careers (e.g., Byrne, 1999; Jennett et al., 2003). For example, when demands increase, responsibilities get more sophisticated. Knowledge constructions continue, and many teachers face professional stress and burnout while experiencing difficulties in addressing students as they used to do earlier, partially because, according to several researchers (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Fiorilli et al., 2017), they require the support and capacity to create positive learning contexts. According to Cheriness (1985), being affected by job stressors will usually lead to depression, exhaustion, weak performance, and changes in attitude and personality. As a result, this phenomenon has long been termed 'burnout,' which refers to the 'long-term endurance of stress resulting directly from working with people' (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Job burnout and dissatisfaction are the main problems that EFL teachers may face as they follow their hard job of teaching online for a long time (Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2019). Teaching is a stressful job in which it is very important to know what will lead to job burnout. Because teaching is one of the occupations with the highest levels of job stress (Chaplain, 2008; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008), teachers dealing with online teaching are in greater danger of burnout than other workers (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Different studies in different parts of the world confirm this idea (e.g., Byrne, 1999; Chaplain, 2008), including in the context of Iran (e.g., Alavinia & Ahmadzadeh, 2012; Ghonsooly & Raeesi, 2012; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2014). Because burnout is "destructive" (Knepper, 2013) and can cause serious harm, an urgent need is felt to identify and eliminate the major factors leading to teachers' burnout worldwide. To the best of the present researchers' knowledge, several Iranian researchers have tried to investigate teachers' job burnout and satisfaction from different perspectives; however,

few of them have attempted to detect the most important factors contributing to English language teachers' potential problems leading to their job burnout and satisfaction.

According to Almiala's findings (2008), "many newly qualified teachers often resign from their teaching job within first few years because of low salary and burdening workload" (Almiala 2008, pp.6-7). Many studies have concentrated on teachers' problems and found many of the problematic factors resulting in the educational systems' facing many different kinds of problems; however, still so much information about the elements which result in job satisfaction or dissatisfaction in teachers is needed to improve the educational systems. Thus, it is important to identify the obstacles and limitations that might impact teachers' satisfaction working online and the factors that might lead to their burnout and finally leaving their job.

1.1. Research Questions

This study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward online teaching burnout during Covid 19 pandemic?
2. What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward job satisfaction in online classes during Covid 19 pandemic?
3. Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction and their burnout while teaching online?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The study's population comprised 48 EFL teachers aged 24 to 45, 22 men plus 26 women. They were teaching at Iran Language Institute (I. L. I.), where the researcher has been teaching for ten years, and the teacher participants were her colleagues chosen based on their availability (convenience sampling).

To carry out the study, the researcher informed her colleagues about the study's goal and asked them to fill in the questionnaires that were mailed to them or, if available, provided to them in person. They were assured about the confidentiality of the questionnaires and that the study's goal was merely investigating opinions on the given variables.

Of the 56 questionnaires, only 48 were sent back, and thus they were submitted for content analysis. Thus, the study sample was composed of 48 teachers who responded to all the questions.

2.2. Instrumentation

Two main instruments were used to collect the study's data: a job burnout questionnaire and a job satisfaction questionnaire.

2.2.1. Job Burnout Questionnaire

For the burnout part, the questionnaire used by Maslach and Jackson (1986) in their own study was implemented for the present study. This questionnaire represented three subscales: emotional exhaustion (9 items), measuring feelings of tiredness at work; personal accomplishment (8 items), assessing feelings of competence and achievement in teachers; and depersonalization (5 items), reflecting teachers' impersonal responses to students. The items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (every day). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were well established (Akbari et al., 2011; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Schutte et al., 2000). Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analytic techniques, Kokkinos (2007) supported the three-factor structure of the construct. What's more, the reliability index estimated via Cronbach Alfa for the current study was acceptable (0.76).

2.2.2. Job Satisfaction Questionnaire

This study used the questionnaire implemented by Kassabgy et al. (2001) for the job satisfaction section. It had 40 items which sought the respondents' attitudes on job satisfaction, covering different aspects of a teacher's job. The questionnaire used 5 points Likert scales as follows: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. No idea 4. Agree, and 5. Strongly agree.

The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach Alfa, which came to be 0.89, high enough for this study. Since the teachers who established the study subjects were at a level to understand the questions without difficulty, there was no need to have them translated.

2.3. Design of the Study

This quantitative study used a survey to explore EFL teachers' attitudes on two aspects of their job: the level of satisfaction and burnout. To this goal, teachers running online classes in ILI were asked to respond to the questionnaires submitted via the internet or in person.

To ask the teachers to respond to the questionnaires, the researcher personally talked to them, and during their class time, they were directed in how to answer the questions. Not all of the teachers returned their questionnaires. Finally, out of the 56 distributed questionnaires, only 48 ones were returned having been completed properly, that were used for statistical analysis.

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

Two questionnaires were used to collect the data: one job satisfaction questionnaire and the other job burnout. The burnout questionnaire composed of 22 items, and the job satisfaction questionnaire of 40 items. The questionnaires used Likers scales to estimate the teachers' attitudes. After the data being gathered, the responses were analyzed, and the results interpreted.

2.5. Data Analysis Procedures

SPSS 21 software was used to analyze the data of the two questionnaires. For this purpose, some statistical analyses were run.

3. Results

3.1. Question one: What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward burnout during Covid 19 pandemic?

The data from the burnout questionnaire were used to answer this question. The questionnaire represented three subscales: emotional exhaustion (9 items), measuring feelings of tiredness at work; personal accomplishment (8 items), assessing feelings of competence and achievement of teachers; and depersonalization (5 items), reflecting teachers' impersonal response to students.

The questionnaire used a seven-point Likert scale: 1. Never 2. A few times 3. Once a month 4. A few times a month 5. Once a week 6. A few times a week 7. Everyday

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were well established before (Akbari et al., 2011; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Schutte et al., 2000). However, the reliability index estimated via Cronbach Alfa for the current study was also acceptable (0.76).

The relevant reliabilities of subscales were estimated to be .91, .84, and .79 for each scale, which was acceptable for this study.

3.1.1. Test of Normality

As the first step, the researcher using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical procedures examined the normality of the burnout questionnaire. According to the data in table 4.2, the spread of responses was normal since, in all cases, the relevant significance was bigger than .05.

According to the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov, the responses to the burnout questionnaire were also normal (Sig= 0.32>0.05).

3.1.2. Data of Online Burnout Questionnaire

Table 1 presents detailed data on the online burnout questionnaire. The mean for each question tells us about the degree of satisfaction with the given items. As the mean for each item increases, more agreement can be expected. For instance, the mean for item one was calculated to be 4.95, indicating relative agreement with the idea that the subjects have felt drained from work.

Table 1. Data on online Burnout Questionnaire.

	N	Min.	Max.	M	Std. Deviation
1. In online classes, I feel emotionally drained from my work.	48	2.00	7.00	4.9545	.78542
2. When being in an online class, I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal	48	3.00	5.00	4.3182	.56790

objects.					
3. I can easily understand how my students feel about things in online classes.	48	1.00	7.00	4.8636	.94089
4. I feel used up at the end of any online class.	48	1.00	6.00	5.9091	1.10880
5. I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.	48	3.00	5.00	6.3182	.56790
6. I deal very effectively with my students' problems when dealing with online classes.	48	3.00	6.00	4.0455	.72225
7. I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	48	3.00	6.00	4.0909	.75018
8. I worry that online teaching is hardening me emotionally.	48	4.00	7.00	4.5000	.51177
9. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day teaching online.	48	2.00	5.00	5.8636	.83355
10. Working online all day is a strain for me.	48	2.00	6.00	4.9091	.92113
11. I don't care what happens to students in online classes.	48	2.00	5.00	3.0455	.95005
12. When being online, I feel very energetic.	48	2.00	5.00	5.7727	.86914
13. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students when being online.	48	4.00	7.00	5.5000	.51177
14. I feel students blame me for some of their online problems.	48	2.00	6.00	4.6818	1.21052
15. I feel burned out from my online classes.	48	4.00	5.00	6.5000	.51177
16. I feel frustrated by my online classes.	48	2.00	5.00	6.2273	.92231
17. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students online.	48	2.00	7.00	6.9143	.84515
18. I feel I'm working too hard online.	48	4.00	7.00	5.9238	.51177
19. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.	48	3.00	5.00	4.2381	.62488
20. Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.	48	4.00	7.00	6.5238	.51177
21. I deal with emotional problems very calmly in my online classes.	48	3.00	7.00	6.0952	.53896
22. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.	48	3.00	7.00	5.3810	.58959
Valid N (listwise)	48				

In the same way, items 20 and 21 show high agreement with the idea that working with people can be a source of stress for the teachers and that teachers deal with many emotional problems in their jobs. Feeling tired and exhausted can be a major source of online burnout among teachers. The high mean of 6.9 for item 17 indicates that the teachers of this study felt tired and bored with their job and thus thought they were burning out due to too much tiredness. Item 15 directly told us that the teachers of this study with a high mean of 6.5 felt burnt out and had serious problems with their job in online classes. All these could be the causes of online burnout among the teachers of this study.

3.2. Question Two: What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward job satisfaction in online classes during Covid 19 pandemic?

The second research question sought to investigate the EFL teachers' attitudes toward job satisfaction during Covid 19 pandemic. It meant to know if teachers felt satisfied; although, they felt burnt out or not. For this purpose, the job satisfaction questionnaire was implemented. The data related to the questionnaire are presented below by referring to the mean of each item. The higher the mean, the higher the teachers' job satisfaction level.

3.2.1. Normality of Job Satisfaction Questionnaire

Before everything, the normality of response distribution was examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical procedures, based on whose result, responses distribution was normal (Sig= 0.110>0.05).

Table 2 offers the descriptive data on teachers' views on job satisfaction. The means present the level of satisfaction. The higher means show higher level of satisfaction toward their job and vice versa.

Table 2. Data on Job Satisfaction Questionnaire.

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I have a good salary.	48	1.00	4.00	1.0167	1.8542
2. I have flexible working hours.	48	1.00	4.00	2.2917	.76790
3. I have good job security.	48	1.00	2.00	1.7083	.52089
4. There are clear rules and procedures at work.	48	1.00	3.00	2.6667	1.10880
5 I have a manageable work load.	48	1.00	5.00	2.1667	1.7231
6. I am fairly treated in the organization.	48	1.00	3.00	1.5833	.91219
7. I work for a reputable educational organization.	48	1.00	3.00	3.0833	.41765
8. Teaching English is a prestigious profession.	48	1.00	4.00	4.5000	.81177
9. My job title is satisfactory.	48	2.00	5.00	2.4583	.83355
10. Creativity is emphasized and rewarded.	48	1.00	3.00	1.7917	.32113
11. I can introduce changes without going through many red tapes.	48	1.00	3.00	1.8750	2.3095
12. I have a job where I can perform to the best of my ability.	48	1.00	3.00	2.6250	1.5678
13. I have prospects for promotion.	48	1.00	5.00	2.7500	1.2875
14. My job is challenging.	48	1.00	3.00	1.0000	1.21052
15. My job provides scope to learn and develop my abilities to my full potential.	48	1.00	4.00	2.8333	1.51177
16. I have sufficient opportunities for contact with professionals in the field of English teaching.	48	1.00	4.00	2.3333	.92231
17. I receive frequent enough feedback about the effectiveness of my performance.	48	1.00	5.00	2.7500	.84515
18. Independence and initiative are rewarded.	48	1.00	5.00	2.5833	1.5177
19. My students evaluate me positively.	48	1.00	5.00	4.5833	.92488
20. My supervisor evaluates me positively.	48	3.00	5.00	3.3750	.51177
21. Teaching accomplishments are recognized.	48	1.00	5.00	2.8333	.53896
22. I know I am helping my students learn English.	48	2.00	5.00	4.0833	.58959
23. I have good relationships with colleagues.	48	1.00	4.00	4.3333	.86465
24. I have a friendly relationship with my students.	48	2.00	4.00	4.7917	.70034
25. The emphasis is on teamwork.	48	1.00	5.00	1.5000	.82839
26. My work is enjoyable and stimulating.	48	2.00	5.00	3.0417	1.5112
27. My job is fun.	48	3.00	5.00	3.6250	.36291
28. I'm relaxed and have peace of mind in my job.	48	3.00	5.00	2.2083	.40237
29. I am truly satisfied with my profession as a teacher.	48	1.00	3.00	2.1667	.7465
30. I will change my career if I have the	48	1.00	4.00	4.2500	.41358

opportunity to do so.					
Valid N (listwise)	48				

The mean for item one was calculated to be 1.01, which is very low. The question challenges the salary teachers receive, and the low mean of 1.01 indicated that the teachers participating as the present study samples were unsatisfied with the salary they received. Thus, this only item can be the first main cause of dissatisfaction among the teachers. The other source of dissatisfaction with a low mean of 1.7 was teachers' job security. As the small mean told us, teachers were worried about and unsatisfied with the poor security of their job. The other low mean was related to the discrimination in their job environment. The low mean of 1.5 indicated that the teachers were not treated fairly by the institute where they worked. The next very low item that showed the high dissatisfaction among the teachers was lack of teamwork. The low mean of item 25 proved that there almost no teamwork existed among the teachers taking part in the present study. Item 29 sought a general view of the teachers' job satisfaction levels. With the low mean of 2.1, it could

It can cautiously be concluded that the teachers in the present study disliked their job in terms of the payment, collaboration among teachers, job security, etc.. On the other hand, the high mean of 4.2 for item 30 told us that teachers liked to change their job if they were offered better opportunities during Covid 19 pandemic.

Table 3. Comparison of both questionnaires.

Questionnaires	Means	Std. Dev.
Burnout	4.6733	1.2771
Satisfaction	2.8321	.93288

Table 3 presents the general mean for both questionnaires. As the means show, the high mean of 4.6 indicates that the level of burnout among the teachers is significantly high; and moreover, the low mean of 2.8 tells that the teachers are not satisfied with their job condition and level in general.

3.3. Question Three: Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction and their burnout?

Table 4. Paired Samples T-Test for the two Questionnaires.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Burnout and Satisfaction	-.91643	2.10878	.56359	-2.13400	.30114	-1.626	47	.002

Table 4 shows the data of the t-test on burnout and satisfaction questionnaires. The results indicated that the difference between the two questionnaires' means was significant (Sig= 0.002<0.05), and that chance played little role in the answer to this equation. Therefore, it can be claimed that there a meaningful relationship existed between the two questionnaires.

Table 5. Correlation between Job Burnout and Job Satisfaction.

Variables	Pearson Correlation	P-Value	N
Job Burnout and Job Satisfaction	-0.624	0.0005	48

On the other hand, Table 5 presents a correlational analysis of the two questionnaires. According to the given result, there a negative correlation was present between the two variables: -0.624, indicating that increase in any of the variables results in decrease of the other and vice versa. Consequently, according to the present study findings, as teachers' burnout increases, their level of satisfaction decreases. Thus, it can be concluded that these two variables strongly impact each other.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the study achievements collected via analysis of the two questionnaires, it can be concluded that the variables of job satisfaction and job burnout impact each other negatively during the Covid 19 pandemic. In other words, as one variable increases, the other one decreases.

Based on the above assumption, it can be claimed that the two variables are closely interrelated, indicating that if the managers of language institutes try to eliminate the factors that lead to their teachers' burnout, they may naturally succeed in increasing the satisfaction of the teachers from their work, too.

This study's finding corroborated Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki's (2015) study results which indicated that underpayment and heavy workload were the most important factors contributing to the teachers' burnout.

Another influential factor resulting into the teachers unsatisfaction and burnout, according to the respondents, was the unfriendly atmosphere they experienced every day at their workplace, which was the offspring of their colleagues or students' behavior. Although some teachers shouldered the responsibility for such a bad relationship, others blamed their colleagues and students for this problem. As mentioned before; actually, there could be many factors like economical and financial problems, which could stiffen the situation more than before even.

Another important source of problem was teachers' lack of job security. They, in fact, were not certain about their future and the security they needed in their job, which can establish more problems in the teaching context.

Based on the teachers' responses to the questions, it was found that most of them viewed low income as one of the most important factors contributing to their burnout. Furthermore, the teachers referred to overwork as the second major factor. Some teachers, for instance, believed that there was no logical relationship between what teachers do and the amount of money they receive. Others referred to low income as a demotivating factor. This finding corroborates Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki's (2015) results, which indicated that underpayment and heavy workload were the most important factors contributing to the teachers' burnout.

Moreover, the other finding was that, Iranian teachers are not provided with the opportunity to promote to higher levels in their careers, which may also lead to feelings of demotivation and disappointment in teachers. This lack of promotion opportunities is also one of the factors mentioned by the participants of this study, which has been overlooked in the previous studies on teacher burnout in the context of Iran. This may be the cause of experiencing burnout because of the sense of failure in their career. Teachers try hard to teach their students and use different methods, but they are not supported by the institute and feel dissatisfied due to their basic needs being disregarded. To put it in a nutshell, the study results highlighted some of the main factors contributing to the Iranian EFL teachers' burnout from their own point of view. Based on their remarks, low income, overwork, unfriendly workplace atmosphere, and lack of promotion opportunities constituted the major factors leading to burnout in teachers. Among these factors though, low payment and lack of promotion opportunities are the main factors that have repeatedly attracted the attention of Iranian researchers. Nevertheless, the results of this study demonstrated that the issue of burnout is worth further attention and investigation and paved the way for more studies on burnout from diverse perspectives.

The study results showed a strong relationship between intention to leave and burnout without the role of job satisfaction, implying that the EFL instructors' intention to leave is highly correlated with their burnout at work. This finding fits well with that of Zhongzeng and Xiting (2005), who revealed an association between burnout and dissatisfaction. The results are also in accordance with those of Altunoglu and Sarpkaya (2012), who found that depersonalization and emotional exhaustion (dissatisfaction) as components of burnout predict intention to leave. Overall, the achievements of this study are compatible with other previous studies, such as Johnsrud and Rosser (2002) and Leung and Lee (2006). They revealed that not all teachers experiencing burnout stay in their jobs. This finding agrees with those of Goddard and Goddard (2006). They supported the claim that there is a significant relationship between the intention to leave teaching and burnout among teachers at the beginning of their teaching profession.

However, this finding ran counter to that of Hughes' (2001) study in which he found that many teachers bore the

destructive consequences of burnout and stayed in occupation. As to the relationship between burnout and intention to leave, there seem to be inconclusive results. This could be justified in terms of teachers' years of service, meaning that experienced teachers suffering from burnout are less likely to take risks in leaving their teaching careers. The reason behind this might be the effect of a tight job market. However, there is evidence that one dimension of burnout, personal accomplishment, does not significantly impact the intention to leave (Altunoglu & Sarpkaya, 2012). One explanation might be that instructors who enjoy status and recognition as two elements of personal accomplishment are less likely to leave their jobs.

5. Implications of the Study

Based on this study's achievements, it can be claimed that teachers' income is the main source of complaint among them. Thus, the most important solution to the problem of low income is a reasonable salary. The institutes need to know that they should pay teachers more following our inflation rate.

The results can be used to remove the possible obstacles and problems that teachers deal with in their teaching carrier. Moreover, authorities should motivate teachers with good salaries and good job facilities. Thus, responsible authorities and managers of institutes should help teachers more than before in terms of promoting them, and this will lead to their motivation growth.

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