Research Paper

Contribution of Gender, Job Demands, and Resources to EFL Teachers' Work Engagement and Work-Related Identity

Masoumeh Bahramy Hidaji[1], Masoud Zoghi[2*], Nader Asadi[3]
[1]Ahar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahar, Iran
[2*]Assistant Professor, Ahar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahar, Iran
[3]Assistant Professor, Ahar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahar, Iran

Abstract

The relationships among variables involved in the construction of work-based identity and work engagement of EFL teachers have been left unnoted in the field of language education. The present study was an attempt to examine the nature of the existing relations among work-based identity and its major predictors - work engagement and job demands and resources in the domain of EFL teaching. The issue of gender in relations among work-based identity, work engagement, and job demands and resources was also the focus of the study. To achieve the objectives of the study, the predictive power of the job demands and resources (JD-R) model in EFL teachers' work engagement and work-related identity was tested via structural equation modeling and gender was considered as a moderating variable. The current study was carried out through cross-sectional field survey amongst 250 English teachers. Results demonstrated that work resources and demands had a direct effect on work-based identity; furthermore, work resources and demands had an indirect effect on work-based identity by interacting with job engagement whereas the proposed work-based identity model was invariant to gender. The research has some implications for theory and practice. The findings of the present study concerning the determinants of EFL teachers' work-related identity provide new and useful insights for the policy-makers, administrators, managers of educational institutes to improve work-related identity of their EFL teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' work stress, burnout and turnover are considered as common work-related problems on a global scale (Bottiani et al., 2019; Choi, 2018; Juliana et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2017). Teaching has been widely recognized as a stressful job and consequently long-time stress at work may cause serious mental health problems. Astrauskaitė et al. (2011) consider teachers "as a specific sample of employees, who have different operating conditions and experience higher levels of

*Corresponding Author's Email:
dr.m.zoghi@gmail.com

work-related stress in comparison with typical organizations' employees" (p. 42). Herman et al. (2018), in their research, reported that 93% of urban teachers had high level of job stress. High job stress and burnout among teachers is longitudinally correlated with both mental and physical ill-health (Choi, 2018). Current evidence also indicates that almost 50% of new teachers discontinue the profession during their first five years of teaching (Ryan et al., 2017). The range of teachers' responsibility as opposed to the other jobs' responsibilities is much broader and of various kinds. To fulfill their responsibilities,

teachers should overcome a lot of challenges at work.

Generally, work characteristics are classified into two distinct categories: job demands and job resources, as proposed in the JD-R Model of work engagement (Llorens et al., 2007). Job demands refer to a de-energizing process by which an employee's mental and physical resources are exhausted. Work demands such as lack of role ambiguity, role conflict, and job control are psychological, physical, social or organizational dimensions of a job which force an employee to be under sustained physical and/or psychological pressure for performing their tasks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Moreover, job resources like career opportunities, team climate, participation in decision making, autonomy, performance feedback positively affect employees and assist attain work aims and encourage personal growth, learning, and development.

Teachers usually confront high work demands, such as considerable workload, time pressure, and emotional pressure (Evers et al., 2016; Jansen in de Wal et al., 2020). There are, moreover, other factors such as pupils' disruptive behavior, low social support, personal work-related thinking, unsupportive colleagues, and uncooperative parents which could cause feelings of dissatisfaction (Berlanda et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2017; Nordhall et al., 2020). These high job demands cause a risk factor for teachers' psychological well-being by the help of fatigue, anxiety, cynical attitudes, and lack of job satisfaction. Therefore, teachers frequently show exhaustion so that they are not able to engage in work competently.

Work engagement is claimed to have positive outcomes for employees and organizations (Bakker et al., 2008; Greenier et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2019). The advantages of being engaged includes positive emotional outcomes (Schaufeli et al., 2008) as well as improving organizational performance (Harter et al., 2003). Research shows that disengaged employees are negatively influenced on their colleagues' engagement and that work disengagement results in great expenses for com-

panies (Schwartz et al., 2003). In addition, Cardwell (2011) emphasized that the quality of teaching is highly associated with the teacher professional engagement. Since teachers' engagement plays substantial role in the competency of their teaching, much of the recent research has been focused on the work engagement of ESL/EFL teachers and various factors which may contribute to EFL/ESL teachers' work engagement (e.g., (Greenier et al., 2021; Xie, 2021)). Similar to many other countries in the world, the field of EFL education in Iran is suffering from shortcomings in different respects. One of the major concerns of EFL institutions in Iran may be EFL teachers' work-related issues (Jofreh et al., 2013). In a study conducted on life quality and working conditions of Iranian English teachers, a hopeless socio-educational context became evident. The majority of teachers stated that there had not been any improvement in teachers' work conditions (Aflakseir & Nemati, 2018). The existing body of literature in the context of language education (e.g.,(Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2022; Zhaleh et al., 2018)) has mostly focused on negative occupational impacts like anxiety, stress, and burnout, whereas positive occupational impacts such as work engagement and psychological wellbeing were not significantly taken into consideration. As it seems, in the context of EFL teaching in Iran, there are few research studies, if any, on work-related issues such as EFL teachers' engagement from the perspective of teaching demands and resources.

Research, carried out so far, on job demands and resources, burnout, and work-based identity has brought into light how connected these work-related constructs are and how effective the educational decision-making and planning will be if various aspects and priorities on educational systems are taken into account. More appropriate policies might be adopted if accurate information of teaching job demands and resources for teachers is obtained. Therefore, the results of this research on these work-related constructs may help us have a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of their job demands and resources.

Work-related constructs are closely connected with the dominant culture in society. Societies might be distinct and unique in some ways from the others in these respected issues. Thus, this research with the purpose of examining EFL teachers' job engagement, EFL teaching job demands and resources, and EFL teachers' work-based identity in Iran could be seen as a distinct study. The findings obtained through this study could serve EFL teaching communities and organizations. In Iran, EFL teacher education centers could use the results for EFL teacher students' recruitment and employment of applicants in different grades. EFL teaching authorities could benefit from the potential outcomes of this study to take into considerationadequate resources and reasonable demands. Moreover, the involved organizations and institutes would be able to forecast and determine the problematic areas and have flexibility and control of situations in case of potential challenges.

The gender-based approach to this study could also provide information for employers to consider gender-related differences and set the teaching programs with taking teachers' gender into account – resources and demands should be determined and modified according to teachers' gender. This study views EFL teaching as an educational industry, an industry with ever-increasing clients/English learners. EFL teachers as the employees of teaching institutes and organizations are in direct connection with the clients. It is an EFL teacher who offers special services of a company. The quality of services, with no doubt, depends on teachers' well-being.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The current study has been established upon two theories, namely, social identity theory and positive psychology. We, therefore, elaborate on these theoretical stances and their potential linkage to variables presented in the study.

Identity is regarded as an underlying construct in social and behavior research (Hogg et al., 1995) which can define organizational behavior (Albert et al., 2000). As Ravishankar and Pan (2008) stated, it could be defined from two broad psychological viewpoints: the first description is the uniqueness of a personal or individual identity, answering the question, 'Who am I?' (Kirpal, 2004b). Also, it could include social identity, answering the question, 'Who are we?' which is an individual's identification with a particular social group and to his/her behavior as a member of that society (Kirpal, 2004b).

The term identity describes both a cognitive state (Pousseau, 1998) and a process (Porter et al., 2003). By cognitive state, it is a part of a person's social identity being derived from a social group such as an occupation or organization (Kreiner et al., 2006). By a process, it means to accept "influence in order to engage in a satisfying role-relationship with another person or group" (Porter et al., 2003). It is, therefore, assumed that doing a job is the same as accepting a role and being identified with that job (Kirpal, 2004a, 2004b; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Through the process of identity formation, specific social foci generate certain meanings, expectations, norms, beliefs and values (such as professions, careers, organizations, supervisors, work groups and work specifications); these are cognitively and hierarchically 'maintained' in prototypes or identity standards (Stets & Burke, 2000) and serve as behavior guides (Kirpal, 2004b). Work-based identity can be defined as a "multi-identity, multi-faceted and multilayered construction of the self which forms the roles of individuals being engaged in an employment context" (Lloyd et al., 2011). An employee's behavior is significantly under the impacts of work-based identity (Amiot et al., 2007). Accordingly, work identity has its influence on work outcomes.

In addition, the importance of psychological bonds between work and employees has been recognized and stressed in recent decades. The focus in old-fashioned traditional psychology is on hindering weak performance, disengagement, and low motivation, whereas positive psychology pays more attention to enhancement of positive perspectives which could be achieved through positive organizational behavior (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008).

Positive psychology goes beyond what is wrong with people and attempts to reach human full potential and optimal functioning (Luthans, 2002). Researchers have stressed the need for investigations on positive organizational behavior (Bakker et al., 2008). It is defined as "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace" (Luthans, 2002).

As stated earlier, previous studies indicate that work-based identity has a huge impact upon employees' behavior (Amiot et al., 2007; Barbieri et al., 2019; Bothma & Roodt, 2012; Nordhall et al., 2020), which in turn affects work quality and output. The fact that the work- based identity of the collective labor force can indirectly influence work quality is of great importance for organizational performance (de Braine et al., 2015).

The new perspectives on work-based identity can provide insights into how to better improve teachers' well-being and consequently teaching practice. Teachers typically integrate their work experiences into a self-image of themselves. Employees – in our case, EFL teachers – would be highly engaged in their career provided that they have a strong identity towards their work. The focus in this research is primarily on the work-related variables which exist in work contexts and could be either directly or indirectly observed. It attempts to delve into exploring intricate relations existing among different effective variables of job engagement and sense of work-based identity. To be precise, the current research concentrated on EFL teaching job demands and resources as effective and driving factors of job engagement which may have potential effects upon work-based identity development. Recent studies have shown that work resources such as social support from co-workers, learning opportunities, autonomy, skillfulness, and performance feedback are positively correlated with job engagement (Berlanda et al., 2019; de Braine et al., 2015; Gray et al., 2017; Nordhall et al., 2020). The current study based upon social identity theory

and positive psychology intends to offer a general comprehensive model of work-based identity predictors. Since work is cited in various research studies as central part of life by individuals (Lloyd et al., 2011), work-based identity could be regarded as one of the most salient identity types among various social identities one can assume. Individuals behave based on what they believe. The stronger work-based identity, the greater work performance.

The Current Study

Scholars have called for empirical investigations on work-based identity (Bothma & Roodt, 2012; de Braine et al., 2015; Nordhall et al., 2020; Walsh & Gordon, 2008). Hakanen and Roodt (2010) recommended that research should be carried out to examine the potential relationship between work-based identity and the JD-R model. The present study was a response to this call for research and expands upon the theory of the JD-R model. Our review of the relevant literature showed that to date, no study has explored the work-based identities of Iranian EFL teachers. Also, the potential moderating effect of gender on the relationships between job demands and job resources and work-based identity has not been explored in the literature. This dearth of research and the paramount significance of the issue motivated this study. This research aims to expand current literature on work-based identity by providing new insights from an unexplored area and testing the predictive power of the JD-R model with the Iranian EFL teachers. The latter is indicative of the methodological significance of the study since this has not been considered in previous studies. Additionally, the study's practical significance lies in the fact that the school managers and educational policy makers could use new insights provided by our study.

Overall, the current study attempted to find out the nature of the existing relations among work-based identity and its major predictors - work engagement and job demands and resources in the EFL teaching domain. The issue of gender as a moderating varia-

ble in relations among work-based identity, work engagement, and job demands and resources is also the focus of the study. This distinguishes the current study from other research studies on similar topics in different fields. Given these objectives of the current study, we addressed the following research hypotheses:

Ho1. *Work resources & demands have a direct effect on work-based identity.*

Ho2. *Job engagement has a direct effect on work-based identity.*

Ho3. *Work resources & demands have an indirect effect on work-based identity by interacting with job engagement.*

Ho4. *The proposed work-based identity model is invariant to gender.*

A basic model of the study founded upon the proposed hypotheses can be illustrated as Figure 1 below:
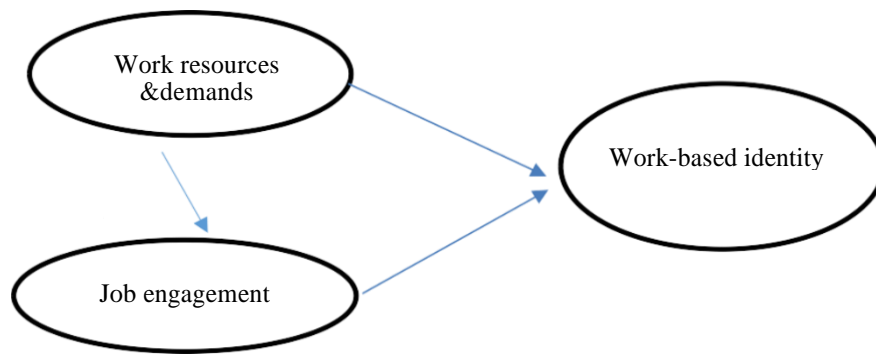
Gender
Figure 1
The Hypothesized Model of the Study

METHOD
Participants
The participants of this study were Iranian English language teachers teaching English in private institutes in the capital city of Tehran. Their participation was voluntary, and the participant could withdraw from the study at any stage of data collection. A convenience purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. The majority of participants worked on temporary work contracts. The sampling frame comprised 250 teachers (135 female and 115 male). One hundred and seventy-nine participants held bachelor degrees in English language teaching and 44 and 27 individuals master and doctorate degrees, respectively. As regards the participants' English language proficiency, 19 English instructors stood at the intermediate level, 46 at the upper-intermediate level, and 185 at the advanced level. The estimated mean age of participants was around 32, and their years of experience in the field ranged from 10 to 22.

As the literature suggests, in general sample sizes for structural equation modeling is in the range of 200 to 400 with models with 10 to 15 indicators. The least number is 100, and 200 is preferable number for cases. In accord with the acceptable sample sizes in research studies applying structural equation modeling, the sample size in this study was considered 250 English teachers (male and female teachers). To compensate for some participants' potential dropouts or some potential disqualified questionnaires, additional number of teachers was included in the sampling composition.

Research Design and Instruments
Considering the research objectives, a quantitative methodological approach and a correlational, cross-sectional, survey research design was adopted in this study. The survey comprised two phases. In the first phase, participants' demographic information was gathered. In the second phase, the participants were requested to complete the intended questionnaires – (i) the job demands and the job resources scales, (ii) the job engagement scale, and (iii) the

work-based identity scale. The survey made up of closed-ended questions on a Likert scale. They are preferable because they result in a greater amount of uniformity in the given responses (Babbie, 1990) and make the coding process more convenient (Cozby, 2001). The reliability and validity of all the scales were confirmed via standard measurement models.

Research Procedure

First, we obtained approval from the head of language institutes. Then, the researcher explained the research procedure to each English language teacher and received the interested teachers' written consent for participating in the study. We ensured the participants that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants would be protected. At the next stage, the questionnaires were sent to the participants via email or a hard copy was given to each participant, depending on the participants' preferences. The participants emailed back or handed in the completed survey files to us. Some participants had long delays and were politely reminded of returning the completed questionnaires at their earliest convenience. Fortunately, the entire participants returned the completed questionnaires over a period of three months.

RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the sub-constructs of the study. Having confirmed the sub-constructs, the reliability (internal consistency) and validity (convergent and divergent) of constructs were confirmed in the next stage. Due to limitation of space and the fact that the second order construct was employed in structural equation modeling (SEM), only the second order confirmatory factor analysis of the sub-constructs are reported in this article. The coding of constructs and sub-constructs and related items are included
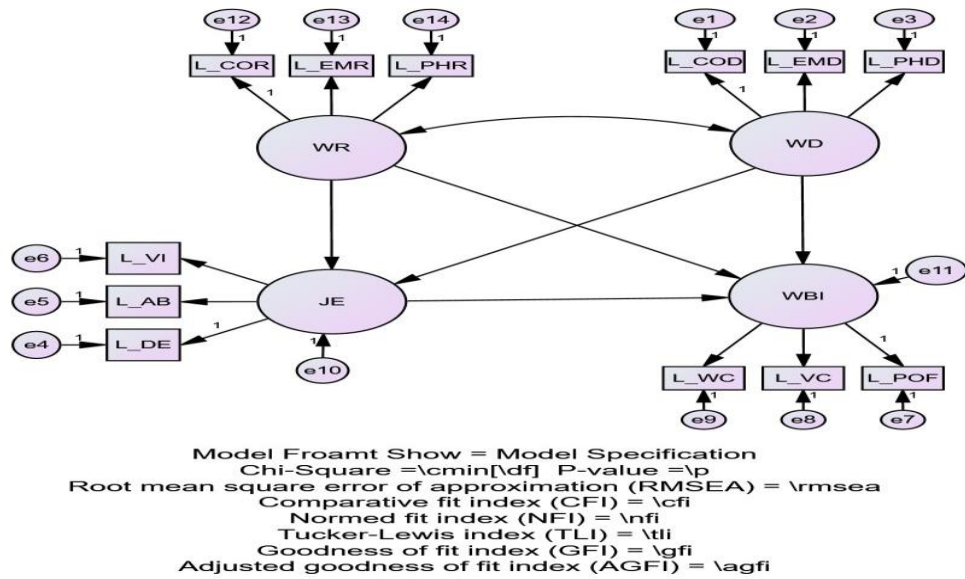
in Table 1.

Table 1
Coding of Constructs and Items in the Modeling

Factor and Sub-factor	Coding of Constructs
Work resources	WR
Work demands	WD
Cognitive	CO
Cognitive Demand	COD
Cognitive Resource	COR
Emotional	EM
Emotional Demand	EMD
Emotional Resource	EMR
Physical	PH
Physical Demand	PHD
Physical Resource	PHR
Job engagement	JE
Vigor	VI
Absorption	AB
Dedication	DE
Work-based identity	WBI
Work centrality	WC
Value congruence	VC

Given the standard factor loading coefficients and the values of goodness of fit indices (Appendix), i.e., RMSEA, CFI, NNFI, GFI, and AGFI related to the second order factor analysis of work demand, work resource, job engagement, and work-based identity, it became evident that the models were at an acceptable level. Only chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) were found to be significant. The chi-square statistic is not seen as a useful measure of model fit, probably due to its sensitivity to sample size.
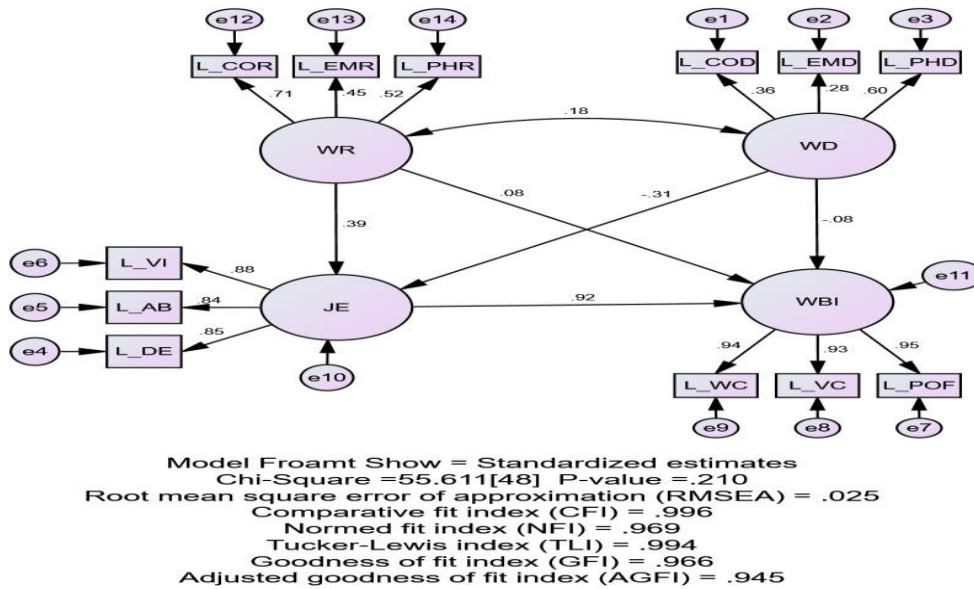
Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the accuracy of the proposed conceptual model. To conduct SEM based on the collected data, we used AMOS software. The conceptual model of the research, where the notations of previous parts have been employed, is represented in Figure 2.

Model Froamt Show = Model Specification
Chi-Square =\cmin[\df] P-value =\p
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = \rmsea
Comparative fit index (CFI) = \cfi
Normed fit index (NFI) = \nfi
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = \tli
Goodness of fit index (GFI) = \gfi
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = \agfi

Figure 2
Conceptual Model of the Study

Figure 3 shows the conceptual model of the study with standard factor loadings.

Following that, Table 3 provides information on indices of goodness of fit.

Model Froamt Show = Standardized estimates
Chi-Square =55.611[48] P-value =.210
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .025
Comparative fit index (CFI) = .996
Normed fit index (NFI) = .969
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .994
Goodness of fit index (GFI) = .966
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = .945

Figure 3
The Executed Conceptual Model of the Study with Standard Factor Loading

As Table 2 reveals, the values of goodness of fit indices, i.e., RMSEA, CFI, NNFI, GFI, and AGFI suggest that the model was at an acceptable level. Only the chi-square ($\chi 2/df$) was be significant. As noted earlier, the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size.

Table 2
Goodness of Fit Indices of the Conceptual Model of the Study

Goodness of Fit Indices Type	Thresholds for Good Fit	Observed Goodness of Fit Index	Decision
X2/d.f.	< 3.00	5.00	Bad fit
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.03	Good fit
CFI	> 0.95	0.99	Good fit
NFI	> 0.95	0.99	Good fit
GFI	> 0.90	0.96	Good fit
AGFI	> 0.95	0.94	Acceptable fit

Table 3 below shows data on the estimation of the direct effects and significance of each direct path proposed in the conceptual model of the study.

Table 3
Significance of Direct Paths Coefficients Related to Direct Effects of Conceptual Model of the Study

P- value	Statistics	Standard error estimate	Standard Path Coefficients	Un Standard path coefficients estimate	Path		
<0.05	-2.37	0.51	-0.31	-1.20	WD	→	JE
<0.05	3.64	0.17	0.39	0.62	WR	→	JE
0.16	-1.41	0.35	-0.08	-0.49	WD	→	WBI
<0.05	16.79	0.09	0.92	1.53	JE	→	WBI
0.08	1.78	0.13	0.08	0.23	WR	→	WBI
			0.36	1.00	WD	→	L_COD
<0.05	2.40	0.45	0.28	1.07	WD	→	L_EMD
<0.05	2.50	0.74	0.60	1.84	WD	→	L_PHD
			0.85	1.00	JE	→	L_DE
<0.05	16.74	0.07	0.84	1.17	JE	→	L_AB
<0.05	18.15	0.07	0.88	1.31	JE	→	L_VI
			0.95	1.00	WBI	→	L_POF
<0.05	29.64	0.03	0.93	0.94	WBI	→	L_VC
<0.05	30.32	0.09	0.94	2.84	WBI	→	L_WC
			0.71	1.00	WR	→	L_COR
<0.05	4.45	0.14	0.45	0.61	WR	→	L_EMR
<0.05	4.69	0.14	0.52	0.66	WR	→	L_PHR

As for the effect of work demand (WD) on job engagement (JE), the regression equation of this relationship is as follows:

As is evident in Table 3, WD affects JE significantly and indirectly ($p < 0.05$). With regard to the significant indirect relationship of regression coefficient of WD on JE, it can be stated that by a unit rise in WD, JE decreases about 0.13 on average. When the effect of work resource (WR) on JE is taken into account, the regression equation of this relationship is as follows:

According to Table 3, the effect of WR on JE is significant and direct ($p < 0.05$). Thus, a unit increase in WR results in 0.39 increase in JE. Also, for the effect of WR on Work-base Identity (WBI), the regression equation of this relationship is as follows:

The effect of WD on WBI, as Table 3 shows, is significant and indirect ($p < 0.05$). This finding means that by one unit rise in WD, a fall of 0.08 is expected in WBI. Similarly, for the effect of JE on WBI, the regression equation of this relationship is, Table 3 represents the effect of JE on WBI as signifi-

cant and direct ($p < 0.05$). Considering the significant and direct relationship of JE regression coefficient on WBI, it can be noted that one unit rise of JE results in an increase of 0.92 in WBI. Finally, the regression equation of the relationship between WR and WBI is as follows:

As indicated in Table 4, the effect of WR on WBI is direct and significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be said that WBI would rise about 0.08 on average in return of one unit rise in WR.

In addition, SEM helped us determine (i) the indirect and total effect of independent variables, and (ii) the most important effective variable which affects the main dependent variable. Routine estimation methods like MLE (Maximum Likelihood Estimation) are not able to estimate these effects. The common technique is to use the bootstrap method. In fact, bootstrapping is applied to estimate indirect and total effects. After estimating the indirect effects, the most important effective factor influencing dependent variable can be determined, as well. Considering the complexity of the conceptual model in this study, bootstrapping was conducted 10000 times (to achieve the most efficient results). The results of bootstrapping are reported by computing 90% confidence interval through the bias-corrected (BC) confidence interval method.

Table 4

Bootstrapping Estimation of Standardized Indirect Effect, Direct Effect and Biased-corrected CI

Explanatory Variable	Indirect Effects Estimation (SE), 90% BC-CI (lower bound, upper bound)	p-value	Total Effect Estimation (SE), 90% BC-CI (lower bound, upper bound)	p-value
WR	0.356(0.08),(0.23, 0.51)	<0.01	0.44(0.09), (0.31,0.62)	<0.01
WD	-0.258(0.10),(-0.47,-0.13)	<0.01	-0.37(0.13), (-0.62,-0.17)	<0.01
JE	-	-	0.92(0.04), (0.83,0.95)	<0.01

As can be seen in Table 4, the indirect and total effects of WRs on WBI are both direct and significant (0.356 and 0.44 p > 0.05, respectively). Therefore, it can be concluded that WRs variable directly affects WBI. In other words, WRs boost positive impact on WBI. The indirect and total effects of WDs on WBI are both indirect and significant (-0.258 and -0.37 p> 0.01, respectively). Thus, it can be argued that WDs variable indirectly affects WBI. In other words, this result suggests that a high level of WDs cause a lower level of WBI. Considering the conceptual model, JE does not have indirect effect on WBI; hence, the total effect of this variable on WBI is direct effect. Under such circumstance, the total effect of JE on WBI is significant and direct. Therefore, it can be leniently concluded that a significant increase of JE can potentially enhance WBI. According to the standard estimations of total effect, the most effective variable is JE. WRs and WDs are placed as the second and third effective variables, respectively.

After confirming the model and examining the significance of the relationships, the multi-group analysis (MGA) was used to investigate the significance of the differences of the relationships among variables across genders (i.e., measurement invariance); this analysis makes it possible to examine the moderating role of the teachers' gender. The MGA was conducted by AMOS software using Gaskin's Stat Tools package. Prior to conducting the MGA, the stability of the invariance, i.e., compositional, configural, and equal mean values and invariances—was checked and, consequently, verified.

Table 5
Moderator Analysis Results

			Male		Female		
			Estimate	***p***	**Estimate**	***p***	**z-score**
JE	<---	WD	-0.935	0.049	-1.392	0.009	-0.643
JE	<---	WR	0.453	0.002	0.675	0.000	0.939
WBI	<---	WD	-0.535	0.406	-1.428	0.357	-0.531
WBI	<---	JE	1.417	0.000	0.846	0.324	-0.603
WBI	<---	WR	0.338	0.177	0.736	0.298	0.531
L_EMD	<---	WD	1.698	0.029	1.029	0.022	-0.745
L_PHD	<---	WD	1.283	0.033	1.668	0.002	0.479
L_AB	<---	JE	1.197	0.000	1.203	0.000	0.023
L_VI	<---	JE	1.637	0.000	1.069	0.000	-1.807
L_VC	<---	WBI	0.876	0.000	0.868	0.000	-0.074
L_WC	<---	WBI	2.842	0.000	2.668	0.000	-0.531
L_EMR	<---	WR	0.471	0.002	0.838	0.000	1.580
L_PHR	<---	WR	0.672	0.000	0.539	0.000	-0.598

As presented in Table 5, the effect of WD on JE is significant in both groups; however, with regard to *z* scores, the effect intensity difference between two groups is not significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect intensity (the effect of WD on JE) is significantly invariant. The results in Table 5 demonstrate that the effect of WR on JE is significant in both groups; but, with regard to *z* score, the difference of the effect intensity is not significant. Thus, the intensity of effect in both groups (the effect of WR on JE) is significantly invariant. The effect of WD on WBI, as shown in Table 5, in both groups is not significant. Furthermore, regarding *z* score, the difference of the effect intensity is not significant; it could be stated that the intensity effect of WD on WBI between males and females is significantly invariant. Results also show that JE affects WBI in males significantly, but it is not the case for females. Also, *z* score of the effect intensity between males and females is insignificant; it could be stated that the intensity effect of JE on WBI is significantly invariant. Ultimately, as displayed in Table 5, in both groups, the effect of WR on WBI is insignificant. Also, taking *z* score into consideration, the effect intensity of WR on WBI is insignificant; therefore, it could be said that the intensity effect of WR on WBI is significantly invariant.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the predictive power of the JD-R model in EFL teachers' work engagement and work-related identity was tested via structural equation modeling. The observed data confirmed our hypothesized model. This finding lends support to previous findings and confirms the proposed model's external validity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Cao et al., 2020; De Carlo et al., 2019; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Yin et al., 2018), as the potentiality of the JD-R Model was supported with Iranian EFL teachers. As it is the case with job demand, job resource, job engagement, and work-related instrumental models, our findings support the argument that the JD-R Model can be employed in modeling the effects of job demand, job resource, and job engagement on work-related identity in various types of jobs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hakanen & Roodt, 2010; Lee & Eissenstat, 2018; Schaufeli, 2017).

As for the first hypothesis, it was found that work resources & demands have a direct effect on work-based identity. This finding is in line with previous literature (e.g., (Bakker et al., 2011; De Carlo et al., 2019; Kirpal, 2004a; Wingerden et al., 2016) lending support to the potentiality of the JR-D model in affecting EFL teachers' work-based identity. This is a unique contribution of our study since no previous study has tested the effects

of work sources and work demands on EFL teachers' work-based identity through the application of the JRD model. One possible explanation for this finding might be that, in certain circumstances, teachers directly benefit from job resources, while confront with high job demands at work. Leniently speaking, this result suggests that enhancing the positive effect of job resources and reducing negative effect of job demands paly important role in teachers' work quality and outcome. In general, this result can be extended to the teaching profession, the findings of seminal work by Bakker and colleagues, who argued that "the JD- R model provides a fruitful framework for explaining which particular job designs facilitate, or instead prevent, work–home interference" (Bakker et al., 2011). Therefore, based on the JD-R model and result of the present study it can be concluded that the accurate and adequate information about the specific job resources and demands help policy-makers and administrators in strengthening work-related identity.

Concerning the second hypothesis, the finding supports our postulate related to the direct effect of work engagement on work-related identity. Work-based identity and engagement are considered as two potentially significant predictors of task performance and revenue. Engagement, in different conceptualizations, is seen by practitioners and academic researchers as an essential determinant of employee behavior (Bakker et al., 2008; Bothma & Roodt, 2012; Harter et al., 2003). Other researchers view work-based identity as a significant construct that influence work-related behaviors (Buche, 2008; Pratt et al., 2006; Walsh & Gordon, 2008). Our results support previous conceptualization of the effect of engagement on work-related identity and make a significant contribution to this area of research by filling the gap in the literature on EFL teachers' work-based identity.

Considering the third hypothesis, the results show the indirect effect of work resources and demands on work-based identity by interacting with job engagement. One possible reason for this finding might be that work engagement alone does not guarantee work-related identity in teachers' development programs. For example, it can be argued that job demands may decrease

teachers' level of dedication to their current jobs and pursue new job opportunities and consequently it can reduce job engagement. This result is in line with the finding of Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) study in that the concept of job engagement was developed in integration with the job demands-resources model. They further noted that all aspects in work environments can be categorized at the heart of the JD-R model that both positively and negatively affect job engagement. Therefore, it is highly suggested that managers consider the job demands given to their teachers.

Finally, as for the fourth hypothesis, it was found that our hypothesized work-based identity model is invariant to gender. To date, little research has explored the moderating role that gender may play in the work-based identity. The literature, however, indicates that work identities are gender-based (Bothma & Roodt, 2012; Buche, 2008; Metcalfe & Dick, 2002); men and women are inclined to choose particular professions (Buche, 2008). Also, previous research shows that women especially have to deal with both mothering and work duties (Johnston & Swanson, 2007). Our finding of EFL teachers' work-based identity expands previous lines of research by providing new understanding with a new group of employees and from a totally different context. These two factors, data from a new group of employees and from a new context, might provide the explanation for our contrasting findings that work based identity is invariant to gender.

In addition, it was found in the study that the most effective variable with regard to standard estimations of the total effect calculated is job engagement. It is worth noting that the reason why job engagement is the most effective variable in this study is that it plays crucial roles teachers' behavior, organizational performance, and creating positive work environment since they are considered as the high level of employees' energy to improve EFL teaching engagement and work-related outcomes of Iranian English language teachers such as job commitment and job satisfaction. Moreover, it should be noted that work resource and work demand, stood at the second

and the third places, respectively. These findings are also the significant unique contributions of our study that supports previous conceptualizations along with the JR-D model (Bakker et al., 2008; Cao et al., 2020; De Carlo et al., 2019; Harter et al., 2003; Yin et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

In this study, the multi-faceted nature of EFL teachers' work-based identity was validated, and the predictive power of the JD-R model was confirmed. The significant role of job resources in building strong work-related identity and buffering the adverse effects of job demands highlights the paramount importance of providing EFL teachers with sufficient appropriate job resources. This could facilitate their achievement of educational goals.

We hope that our study could make a distinctive contribution to the study of EFL teachers' work-based identity based on the JD-R model by lending support to the following claims made in the literature: (i) job demands and job resources are work features that act together with the individual's own resources to build work-based identity (Kirpal, 2004a), and (ii) work-based identity development is ascribed to the process of job crafting through which employees influence job demands and job resources (by decreasing or increasing them) to accomplish work duties (Tims & Bakker, 2010). This process could lead to the development of work-based identity (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Implications of the study

The success of any program especially educational ones relies on the strong work identity of those who implement the programs. Teachers are the key executives or facilitators of educational programs. Therefore, identifying factors predictive of teachers' strong work identity is of paramount significance. The findings of this study concerning the determi-

nants of EFL teachers' work-related identity provide the policy-makers, administrators, managers of educational institutes with insights to take concrete steps to improve work-related identity of their EFL teachers. In other words, they can use the JD-R model to study their EFL teachers' work-related identity and plan accordingly. In this way they can boost their employees' work- related identity and, in turn, enhance the quality of education. On a practical side, it is essential that organizations interested in language pedagogy realize the value of providing EFL teachers with sufficient job resources as they increase strong work identities. It seems necessary for human resource managers to identify the resources that facilitate employees' work-related identity in order to achieve work goals (Hakanen & Roodt, 2010).

Limitations and recommendations

EFL teachers' work-based identity was theorized by considering various facets. However, the personal identity of teachers that my influence work-based identity (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) was not included in the proposed model. Therefore, future research is warranted to study the role of EFL teachers' personal identity in building their work-based identity. A quantitative, correlational design was adopted for this research; future studies can expand this line of inquiry by adopting a qualitative approach. EFL teachers' lived experiences may shed more light on their work-based identity. The study was conducted with teachers working in private language institutes. Hence, generalization of the findings should be treated cautiously. Further research can explore work-based identity of teachers like school or university EFL instructors working in various educational contexts. Also, comparative studies of EFL teachers' work-based identity across various cultures are recommended as they may function differently in different cultures. This could contribute to our understandings of EFL and ESL teachers' work-based identities.

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Biodata

Masoumeh Bahrami is a PhD candidate in Teaching English as Foreign Language at Islamic Azad University, Ahar Branch. She's done her master's program in Translation Studies at Islamic Azad University, Science and Reseach Campus University in Tehran. Her Research interests revolve around teacher education, English teachers professional and work-based identity. In terms of professional background, she's accumulated more than 15years of productive experience in teaching English both for general and specific purposes.
Email: *Masi_bahramy@yahoo.com*

Masoud Zoghi is Assistant Professor at the Department of ELT - Islamic Azad University, Ahar Branch. He has taught courses on research methodology, psycholinguistics, and language testing at the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in ELT and General Linguistics. His current research and teaching focus include research methodology in applied linguistics, psychology of language (esp. affective variables), and language assessment.
Email: *dr.m.zoghi@gmail.com*

Nader Assadi is Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics & Certified Translator at Ferdows Official Translation Bureau at Tabriz, Iran. His research interests are language education and discourse analysis.
Email: *naderasadi@yahoo.com*