

Exploring Emotional Intelligence Development of Iranian Male EFL Instructors through their Motivation and Resilience

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence plays a crucial role in practical language teaching in EFL settings. This study attempted to investigate the factors that positively influence Iranian male EFL instructors' Resilience and Motivation as predictors of their Emotional Intelligence in educational settings. For these objectives, a qualitative interview design was employed to answer the research questions. Furthermore, a convenience sampling method was implemented to select 30 male EFL teachers from several language institutes in Urmia and Tabriz cities. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the participants for the current investigation. Moreover, Thematic Data Analysis was applied to extract major themes from the participants' responses and related opinions. According to the analysis of the male EFL teachers' expressions, intrinsic motivation, personal goals, supportive work environment, and job security were factors related to motivation that can positively predict teachers' Emotional Intelligence. Additionally, coping strategies, hardiness, self-efficacy, and emotional self-regulation skills emerged as elements contributing to the participants' Resilience, which also predict their Emotional Intelligence in EFL contexts. The study's findings provide valuable insights for male EFL teachers, TEFL trainers, and policy makers by highlighting the role of teachers' Motivation and Resilience in enhancing their Emotional Intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Motivation; Male EFL Teachers; Resilience

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is very important for male EFL instructors in that male teachers face many challenges that affect their overall self-efficacy and

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their well beings in EFL contexts (Burić & Kim, 2020). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's opinions (Nousheen et al., 2024). in their ability to accomplish educational tasks, instruct comprehensively, and achieve their goals in specific domains. For male EFL teachers, self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping their teaching practices and their professional development in EFL contexts. Male teachers in various cultures face some unique challenges (Li, Xue & Li, 2023), which can affect their abilities and confidence levels in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Furthermore, EFL teachers with higher Self-efficacy are more likely to cope with difficulties in EFL classes (Woodcock, Hitches, & Jones, 2019). Some of the researchers claimed that various factors can affect self-efficacy. In this line, English Songs can play an important role in teachers' and learners' overall well-being and efficacy.

It should be noted that motivation and resilience play a crucial role in the professional success and well-being of teachers (e.g., Bektaş, 2022; Gooran et al., 2023; Sariçoban & Kirmizi, 2021; Zhang, Admiraal & Saab, 2021). Teachers' resilience is a recently approved factor in EFL contexts (Rezapoor & Mohammadzadeh, 2024). Furthermore, teacher resilience serves as a vital framework for effective teaching practices (Sariçoban & Kirmizi, 2021).

Bandura (1997) defined resilience as an individual's ideas, notions, and beliefs in his or her capacity to perform specific tasks and activities or to successfully execute behaviors that are necessary to produce performance attainments. Self-efficacy influences people's emotions and cognition (Zhi et al., 2023) and is considered as one of the vital features to achieve success in individuals' careers. Teachers' Self-efficacy pertains to a teacher's conviction in their adeptness to proficiently execute their instructional obligations and exert a constructive influence on EFL students' learning achievements. In this study, Self-efficacy refers to male EFL teachers' belief in their capability to handle educational demands in EFL classes.

Resilience is one of the most essential psychological characteristics that enables individuals to function successfully and persevere despite adversity or adverse circumstances (Masten et al., 1990, quoted in Hiver, 2016). It's a way to deal with hazards and dangers and be resilient by making good use of internal and external resources. Resilient teachers use the resources in their contexts to support students' learning in difficult situations (Day & Gu, 2013). In this study, teacher resilience means resistance against the hurtful, unfavorable conditions in EFL contexts.

Male EFL teachers face unique challenges that can impact their self-efficacy in educational contexts. Among numerous factors that can affect

male teachers' self-efficacy are motivation and resilience (Saniani & Azad, 2018). Moreover, the predictive relationship between motivation, resilience, and emotional intelligence has received limited attention in existing literature. This gap presents an opportunity to investigate how resilience and motivation of male teachers can predict their emotional intelligence in EFL contexts.

A number of empirical studies investigated teachers' emotional intelligence, motivation, and resilience (e.g., Bachtiar, 2024; Gan et al, 2024; Huang, 2022; Vonkova et al., 2021). However, the results of these studies are specifically related to their EFL contexts. For example, Bachtitar (2024) investigated teachers' resilience in the Indonesian EFL context. Through semi-structured interviews with 36 EFL teachers and the study's results show that various features of EFL teachers can pose significant barriers to their self-efficacy. These researchers confirm the relationship between Self-efficacy and other features of teachers. But in investigating male EFL teachers' motivation and resilience and how these features can relate and their emotional intelligence at a large scale in Iranian EFL contexts is a scholarly gap. No research, up to date, has investigated Iranian EFL contexts.

Understanding how resilience and emotional intelligence predict and interact with emotional intelligence can provide valuable insights into the resilience, well-being, and motivation of teachers. To the researchers' knowledge, few up-to-date studies, investigated factors that positively contributed to male EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and Self-Efficacy as Predictors of their Teacher Immunity. Therefore, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What factors positively contribute to male EFL teachers' Motivation as a predictor of their Emotional Intelligence?
2. What factors positively contribute to male EFL teachers' Resilience as a predictor of their Emotional Intelligence?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Resilience

Resilience is defined as a individual's perspective, notion, and belief in their own competence to carry out particular tasks or to successfully carry out behaviors that are required to achieve performance goals (Bundara, 1977). According to Zhi et al. (2023), self-efficacy is a critical component that helps people succeed in finishing tasks and finding meaningful work since it affects people's cognitive and emotional states.

According to Masten (2009) and Wu et al. (2013), teachers who are resilient hold positive self-perception, optimism, emotional regulation

skills, independence, high levels of self-efficacy, and coping mechanisms. Resilient EFL instructors are also willing to communicate with learners, make an effort to understand students' needs, and encourage one another because they are ready to collaborate with other teachers to aid one another (Bobek, 2002).

2.2. Motivation (Self-Determination Theory)

Self-determination theory highlights a continuum of various types of motivation, which depend on the level of a person's propensity to self-regulate (i.e., determine, manage) their overall behavior (Ryan et al., 2021). Intrinsically motivated persons chase an activity, such as teaching, cooperating, assessing, for its own sake or for the inherent satisfaction of carrying out the activity and task.

2.3. Empirical Studies in Resilience, Motivation, and Emotional Intelligence

Regarding Emotional Intelligence, in a recent qualitative investigation, Khabazian and Kashef (in press) attempted to explore the role of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on female EFL instructors' teacher immunity. For this aim, 15 female EFL teachers were chosen from Urmia Institutes. The findings of this study revealed self-awareness, effective communication, building a good rapport, conflict management, teaching experience, and persuasion of instructors as factors that could affect the female EFL instructors' teacher immunity in Iranian EFL contexts.

Furthermore, a recent study was designed by Rezapoor and Mohammadzadeh (2024) investigated any possible relationships or correlations between emotional intelligence, instructor immunity, and resilience among Iranian EFL instructors. In this way, 90 EFL teachers from various Gorgan city English language institutes were selected through using a convenience selection technique. The Pearson correlation test was utilized to investigate the connections between teacher emotional intelligence and immunity, teacher emotional intelligence and resilience, and teacher immunity and resilience. The results showed a strong and positive correlation between teacher immunity and resilience, as well as a good association between emotional intelligence and teacher resilience. Regarding educational consequences, teachers with lower immunity and resilience levels should be advised about specific strategies to empower these traits, such as exercising to improve their resilience.

In this line, Khazaeenezhad and Davoudinasab (2022) investigated the association between the personality types of Iranian EFL instructors and

their immunity. The method of study was mixed-method. Two immunity questionnaires were utilized to gather data for the study. 50 participants (19 male teachers and 31 female teachers) were chosen through random sampling. The participants were EFL teachers in various language institutes in Iran. The results showed a positive relationship between personality types and aspects of their instructor's immunity. Furthermore, self-efficacy was the most important immunity facet and personality type in this research study.

In another study conducted by Calkins et al. (2024), the study investigated the motivations for becoming an instructor. In this research, the relationship between motivations and teachers' self-efficacy was explored using data from the TALIS 2018. The data included answers from 1933 United States teachers with six years of teaching experience in educational contexts. Results proved that motivation for becoming a teacher is positively correlated to teacher self-efficacy of classroom management, instruction, student engagement, and multicultural classrooms.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This qualitative study had an interview design (Mackey & Gass, 2015), and a semi-structured interview with an identical set of questions for each of the participants (Ary et al., 2018; Dörnyei & Griffee, 2010) was used to investigate the participants' perspectives.

3.2. Participants

Through the Convenience Sampling Technique, 30 male EFL teachers were chosen from the foreign language institutes of Urmia city, Iran. Furthermore, the participants were all male EFL teachers from different foreign language institutes, and the EFL teachers were native speakers of the Azeri language. These male EFL teachers had at least two years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language in different institutes. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 25. They held English classes for students with different proficiency levels (e.g., basic classes, elementary classes, intermediate and advanced level classes). The participants had a B.A. or M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

3.3. Instrument

In the current study, 30 male EFL teachers were interviewed, and after gathering the raw data, the qualitative data were transcribed for initial data coding and Thematic Data Analysis.

3.3.1. Semi-Structural Interview

An Emotional Intelligence question designed and validated by Jalili, Sepehri, and Shafiee (2023) was adopted to collect the data required for the qualitative portion of the current investigation. The semi-structured interview questions were employed to ascertain responses to the study's qualitative inquiries. Furthermore, in order to improve reliability, the semi-structured questions were subjected to pilot testing prior to the execution of the research.

3.4. Data Collection

In this research, through convenience sampling, 30 male EFL teachers were chosen for the semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. The researchers interviewed the participants face-to-face in their institutes. Furthermore, the participants were informed about the objectives of the study. During these interviews, the participants expressed their ideas through providing comments and expressions, and highlighted some key factors related to their motivation and resilience, and how these factors can affect teachers' emotional intelligence.

3.5. Data Analysis

As the male EFL teachers responded to the questions during the interviews, their answers were recorded and transcribed for initial coding and Thematic Data Analysis. NVivo was utilized for qualitative analysis in this study. Through Thematic Data Analysis, the researchers attempted to elicit positive factors that contributed to male EFL teachers' motivation and resilience as predictors of their emotional intelligence.

4. Results

Qualitative research question 1 aimed to explore and investigate the factors related to the Motivation of male EFL teachers, with a particular focus on their roles as predictors of Emotional Intelligence in EFL contexts. To achieve this objective, the participants, who were male EFL teachers, were interviewed and requested to provide their insights in the form of comments. Through the thematic analysis of their responses, four significant themes emerged, shedding light on the factors contributing to

motivation among male EFL teachers as predictor of their emotional intelligence.

4.1. Results of Research Question 1

Table 1 highlights the major themes that emerged from the teachers' responses related to the Motivation factors that can predict the male EFL teachers' Emotional Intelligence in their educational Contexts.

Table 1. List of Themes Related to Motivation Factors as Predictors of Emotional Intelligence

Number	Themes
1	intrinsic motivation
2	supportive work environment
3	personal goals
4	job security

4.1.1. Intrinsic Motivation

One of the male EFL instructors believed that intrinsic motivation can play an important role in enhancing teachers' Emotional Intelligence, as the participant stated that:

Extract 1: *For me, it's an intrinsic desire that helps me to have better emotional feelings about my students and English classes. I really love my job. Personal interest in teaching can be very important.*

4.1.2. Supportive Work Environment

Mehrdad in Aflakian Institute highlighted the significance of a supportive work environment as one of the key motivational factors related to the emotional intelligence of the teachers, as mentioned that:

Extract 2: *In our institute, there is a great environment for teachers. EFL instructors can ask for time off whenever they face personal problems. Also, if they need any support, their colleagues and officials are very supportive. That's why I think having a supportive environment is a crucial factor for teachers' emotional well-being.*

4.1.3. Personal Goals

One of the participants with several years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language stated that personal goals can have a crucial effect on teachers' emotional intelligence, as expressed:

Extract 3: *I have several years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language, and for any teacher like me, personal aims in education can affect their emotional condition and well-being. When a teacher tries to become an expert in his career, his emotions can be far different of one who only wants to remain an ordinary instructor.*

4.1.4. Job Security

The last theme that emerged from the participants' expressions and comments was job security. Several male EFL teachers believed that job security has an important role in teachers' emotional intelligence. Ali stated that:

Extract 4: *There are many factors that can play a role in teachers' emotional conditions. The most important one can be job security. When a teacher knows that he's not going to be fired for no reason, then he will definitely feel safe, and this can have a positive effect on his emotions in classrooms. Another male EFL teacher expressed:*

Extract 5: *Among all the factors, job security is more important than others. Because when a teacher fears that any day can be his last day in his career, then will face lots of emotional problems.*

From the above-mentioned comments, it can be inferred that Job security is one of the motivational factors that can predict teachers' emotional intelligence in their educational settings.

4.2. Results of Research Question 2

Table 2 outlines four major themes associated with resilience factors in male EFL teachers that can influence their emotional intelligence in their educational contexts.

Table 2. *List of Themes Related to Resilience Factors as Predictors of Emotional Intelligence*

Number	Themes
1	Hardiness
2	coping strategies
3	emotional regulation skills
4	self-efficacy

4.2.1. Hardiness

A 25-year-old EFL teacher expressed his ideas about hardiness and how this factor can affect male teachers' emotional intelligence. He mentioned:

Extract 6: *When it comes to English classes, I think that commitment and hardiness can be considered as key factors for any male teacher. The reason is that when a teacher does not have commitment to his job and he is not hard enough to keep that career, he cannot have a good emotional attachment in EFL classes.*

4.2.2. Coping Strategies

Reza, an experienced teacher in EFL, believed that if instructors utilize various Coping Strategies, then they can boost their emotional well-being. **Extract 7:** *I face many problems in my English classes with students. But when I use good strategies like changing topics, giving positive marks to learners, I can most of the time cope with difficult challenges, and it makes me feel better.*

4.2.3. Emotional Regulation Skills

The next theme that emerged from the participants' expressions was Emotional Regulation Skills that can influence male EFL teachers' emotional intelligence. The participant commented that:

Extract 8: *For my emotional condition in EFL classes, one of the challenges that I face is arguments with students. I try some skills and strategies to avoid the problems. In most of the conditions, through Emotional Regulation, I can thoughtfully answer my learners and avoid any kind of unnecessary conflict.*

4.2.4. Self-Efficacy

The last theme related to resilience factors that can affect the teachers' emotional intelligence was Self-efficacy. Erfan, an EFL teacher in Aflakian, expressed that:

Extract 9: *Controlling my emotional feelings, self-efficacy, and ability in organizing my actions is the most effective factor. As I always try to have power over my actions, especially in the classroom, I can easily control my English learners and classes, which helps me to improve my positive emotional feelings in EFL classes.*

Going through the expressions of the male EFL teachers, Hardiness, Coping Strategies, Emotional Regulation Skills, and Self-Efficacy are the themes related to the participants' resilience factors that can predict their emotional intelligence.

5. Discussion

In the present study, an attempt was made to investigate how the motivation and resilience of male EFL teachers related to their emotional intelligence in EFL classrooms. The study also sought to investigate whether the motivation and resilience of male EFL instructors could predict their emotional intelligence. Additionally, the qualitative study delved into the factors of motivation and resilience that could positively predict male EFL instructors' emotional intelligence in EFL classes. Furthermore, to achieve the objectives of the investigation, one instrument (i.e., semi-structured interview questionnaire) was used to interview 30

male EFL teachers who were chosen through convenience sampling from Urmia and Tabriz cities, Iran. Thematic Data Analysis was employed to extract key themes from the comments and expressions of the male EFL teachers.

Based on themes that emerged from EFL teachers' words and comments, intrinsic motivation, supportive work environment, personal goals, and job security were factors related to motivation that could positively predict EFL instructors' Emotional Intelligence. In addition, hardiness, coping strategies, emotional regulation skills, and self-efficacy were the factors of male EFL teachers' resilience that could positively predict their emotional intelligence in EFL contexts. Based on the outcome of the study, it can be concluded that male EFL teachers' motivation and resilience can positively predict instructors' Emotional Intelligence in Iranian educational settings. Our results can also benefit male EFL teachers and educational policymakers, as they can be informed about which factors of motivation and resilience can affect emotional intelligence. This insight can inform targeted strategies to enhance these constructs, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of educational quality in EFL contexts.

The findings of this study were backed by Khabazian and Kashef's (in press) investigation, which explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and teacher immunity among Iranian female EFL instructors. According to findings, there was a relationship between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, with the female instructors' teacher immunity. In this line, the findings of the current study were supported by Calkins et al., (2024) research, which investigated the motivations for becoming an instructor. In this investigation, the relationship between motivations and teachers' self-efficacy was explored using data from the TALIS 2018. The data included answers from 1933 United States teachers with six years of teaching experience in educational contexts. The findings proved that motivation for becoming a teacher is positively correlated to teacher self-efficacy of classroom management, instruction, student engagement, and multicultural classrooms.

6. Conclusion and Implications of the Study

Investigating the factors that influence the emotional intelligence of EFL instructors can empower them to enhance both their personal and professional well-being within the educational contexts. This study attempted to investigate the factors related to the EFL teachers' motivation and resilience as predictors of their emotional intelligence. To obtain the objectives, 30 male EFL instructors were chosen through

convenience sampling from several foreign language institutes in Urmia and Tabriz cities, Iran. The participants were native speakers of the Azeri and Persian languages. The age of the teachers ranged from 20 to 25. Additionally, they held English classes for students with different proficiency levels (e.g., basic classes, elementary classes, intermediate and advanced level classes).

Furthermore, to elicit the participants' perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate their opinions. The EFL teachers' answers were recorded and transcribed for thematic data analysis. Moreover, NVivo was utilized for qualitative analysis in this study. Through analysis of the data, eight major themes emerged from the participants' expressions and comments related to their motivation and resilience as predictors of their emotional intelligence (i.e., intrinsic motivation, supportive work environment, personal goals, job security, hardiness, coping strategies, emotional regulation skills, and self-efficacy). This research can also benefit male EFL teachers and educational policymakers, as they can be informed about which factors of motivation and resilience can affect emotional intelligence. Like other studies, this investigation had its own limitations. First of all, the study attempted to investigate the perspectives of only male EFL teachers, and female instructors were not included. Furthermore, the themes were extracted based on the comments of 30 participants, and the findings may not represent the target population of the male EFL teachers in educational contexts.

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