

Research Article

## Teacher Resilience as a Protective Shield: Examining the Mediating Role of Psychological Capital in the Burnout-Commitment Nexus Among Iranian EFL Educators

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### Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigates the complex interplay between burnout, professional commitment, and psychological capital among Iranian EFL teachers across diverse educational contexts. While existing research has established a negative correlation between burnout and commitment, limited attention has been paid to the protective psychological resources that may buffer this relationship. Drawing on Conservation of Resources Theory [1] and the Job Demands-Resources Model [2], this research examines teacher resilience, self-efficacy, optimism, and hope as components of psychological capital that potentially mediate the burnout-commitment dynamic. A sample of 240 EFL teachers from schools, universities, and private language institutes in northwestern Iran completed standardized measures of burnout (MBI-ES), professional commitment, and the Psychological Capital Questionnaire for Teachers (PCQ-T). Additionally, 24 teachers participated in semi-structured interviews exploring their resilience-building practices. Quantitative results revealed that psychological capital significantly mediated the relationship between emotional exhaustion and professional commitment ( $\beta = -0.38, p < 0.001$ ), with resilience emerging as the strongest protective factor. Contextual variations were observed: university teachers demonstrated higher psychological capital levels ( $M = 4.37, SD = 0.52$ ) compared to institute teachers ( $M = 3.62, SD = 0.68$ ). Qualitative findings illuminated context-specific resilience strategies: school teachers relied on collective efficacy and peer solidarity; university educators leveraged intellectual autonomy and research engagement; while institute teachers developed adaptive flexibility and entrepreneurial mindsets. Crucially, adequate compensation emerged as a foundational resource enabling psychological capital development across contexts. These findings extend current understanding by positioning psychological capital not merely as an individual trait but as a contextually embedded resource shaped by institutional structures.

### Keywords:

Burnout | Educational context | EFL teachers | Psychological capital | Professional commitment | Resource conservation | Teacher resilience

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## 1. Introduction

The global teaching profession faces an unprecedented crisis of sustainability, with burnout rates reaching alarming levels across diverse educational systems [3, 4]. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators, operating at the intersection of linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical demands, experience particularly acute stressors that threaten both their wellbeing and professional longevity [5]. In Iran's rapidly evolving educational landscape, EFL teachers navigate complex challenges including curriculum reforms, technological integration pressures, sociopolitical constraints on language teaching, and persistent resource limitations [6]. These contextual pressures intensify the risk of burnout—a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment [7]—which systematically erodes teachers' professional commitment and contributes to alarming attrition rates [8].

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that teacher wellbeing cannot be understood through deficit-focused models alone. Rather than merely documenting burnout's prevalence, researchers now emphasize identifying protective psychological resources that enable educators to sustain commitment despite occupational challenges [9, 10]. Psychological capital—comprising hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism [11]—has emerged as a critical construct in occupational health psychology, yet its application within EFL contexts remains underexplored, particularly in non-Western educational settings [12, 13]. Recent meta-analyses confirm that psychological capital significantly predicts reduced burnout and enhanced work engagement across professions [14], yet its mediating role in the specific burnout-commitment relationship among language educators requires systematic investigation.

The Iranian context presents a particularly fertile ground for examining these dynamics. With over 40,000 EFL teachers serving diverse student populations across public schools, universities, and private institutes, Iran's language education sector exhibits pronounced contextual variations in working conditions, professional autonomy, and institutional support structures [15]. These variations create natural experimental conditions for investigating how psychological resources operate differently across educational ecosystems—a dimension largely overlooked in previous research that treated teacher populations as homogeneous [16].

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Background

Contemporary understanding of teacher burnout has evolved significantly beyond Maslach and Jackson's (1996) foundational tripartite model toward more dynamic, systems-oriented frameworks. Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory [1] provides a particularly robust lens for understanding burnout-commitment dynamics, positing that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect valued resources (e.g., energy, time, social support, self-efficacy). Burnout occurs when resource loss exceeds resource gain, creating a "loss spiral" that depletes psychological reserves. Conversely, resource investment generates "gain spirals" that enhance resilience and commitment. COR Theory's emphasis on resource transactions aligns powerfully with teachers' experiences: emotional labor depletes energy resources; administrative burdens consume time resources; while collegial support and professional autonomy function as resource gains that buffer against depletion [18].

Complementing COR Theory, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model [2] distinguishes between job demands (aspects requiring sustained effort) and job resources (aspects facilitating goal achievement). Crucially, the JD-R Model recognizes that resources operate through two processes: a *health impairment process* where excessive demands lead to burnout, and a *motivational process* where adequate resources foster engagement and commitment. Recent extensions of the JD-R Model incorporate personal resources—psychological traits like resilience and self-efficacy—that interact with job resources to determine wellbeing outcomes. This integration of personal and contextual resources provides the theoretical foundation for examining psychological capital as a mediating variable.

Psychological Capital Theory [9] operationalizes these personal resources into four measurable components:

--**Hope:** Perseverance toward goals and ability to generate alternative pathways when obstacles arise

- Efficacy**: Confidence in mobilizing motivation and cognition to execute tasks successfully
- Resilience**: Capacity to bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure
- Optimism**: Positive attributional style regarding present and future outcomes

Unlike fixed personality traits, psychological capital is state-like—malleable through targeted interventions—which makes it particularly relevant for educational practice [19]. Recent applications in teacher contexts demonstrate that psychological capital predicts not only reduced burnout but also enhanced instructional quality and student outcomes [12, 20].

## 2.2. Empirical Background

Recent empirical investigations (2015–2024) reveal three critical patterns regarding teacher burnout and commitment:

*First*, the inverse burnout-commitment relationship has been consistently replicated across cultural contexts but with important nuances. Madigan and Kim's (2021) meta-analysis of 114 studies confirmed that teacher burnout significantly predicts reduced student achievement ( $r = -0.21$ ), mediated through diminished instructional quality and emotional availability. However, cross-cultural studies reveal that commitment manifests differently across contexts: Iranian EFL teachers exhibit strong *affective commitment* (emotional attachment to students) despite moderate *continuance commitment* (intention to remain due to alternatives), creating complex vulnerability patterns [21, 22]. Ghasemi (2023) demonstrated that brief psychological interventions targeting cognitive restructuring reduced burnout symptoms among Iranian EFL teachers, though effects diminished without institutional reinforcement—highlighting the limits of individual-focused approaches.

*Second*, contextual factors significantly moderate burnout-commitment dynamics. Comparative studies reveal that private language institute teachers experience distinct stressors compared to public school counterparts: while institute teachers enjoy greater pedagogical autonomy, they face income instability, performance-based contracts, and limited professional development opportunities [24]. University EFL instructors navigate the "triple threat" of teaching, research, and administrative service demands, with publication pressures creating unique burnout pathways. Crucially, recent research demonstrates that identical stressors produce different burnout outcomes depending on available resources: large class sizes devastate commitment when coupled with inadequate support but become manageable with strong collegial networks [25].

*Third*, emerging scholarship identifies psychological capital as a critical protective factor. Li's (2022) longitudinal study of Chinese EFL teachers found that psychological capital mediated 42% of the relationship between workload demands and emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2023) demonstrated that Iranian EFL teachers with high psychological capital-maintained commitment despite moderate burnout levels—a finding contradicting simple linear models. However, these studies predominantly employed cross-sectional designs and failed to examine how psychological capital components operate differentially across contexts. Furthermore, the role of financial compensation as a foundational resource enabling psychological capital development remains undertheorized despite teachers consistently identifying it as paramount [4].

## 2.3. Gap in the Literature

Despite growing interest in teacher wellbeing, three critical gaps persist in the literature:

- Mediational Complexity**: While the burnout-commitment correlation is well-established [16, 26] research has largely treated this relationship as direct rather than examining mediating psychological mechanisms. Psychological capital represents a theoretically grounded mediator that explains *how* some teachers maintain commitment despite burnout experiences.
- Contextual Specificity**: Existing studies often aggregate teachers across contexts or examine single settings in isolation. No comprehensive investigation has systematically compared how psychological capital operates as a protective resource across the full spectrum of EFL teaching environments (schools, universities, institutes) within a single cultural context.
- Resource Interdependence**: Current models inadequately address how material resources (e.g., compensation) interact with psychological resources. Teachers consistently identify fair pay as

foundational to wellbeing [13], yet theoretical models rarely integrate economic factors with psychological constructs—a critical oversight particularly relevant in resource-constrained contexts like Iran.

This study addresses these gaps by examining psychological capital as a mediating mechanism in the burnout-commitment relationship across diverse Iranian EFL contexts, while explicitly incorporating compensation as a foundational resource variable.

#### 2.4. The Problem

Iranian EFL education faces a sustainability crisis characterized by high teacher attrition, declining morale, and compromised instructional quality—all linked to burnout [13, 22]. While previous research has documented the negative correlation between burnout and professional commitment [16], interventions based solely on reducing demands have proven insufficient. Teachers continue experiencing burnout despite workload reduction initiatives, suggesting that resource-focused approaches may be more effective than demand-reduction alone. Furthermore, existing studies fail to explain why some teachers maintain strong commitment despite experiencing moderate burnout—a phenomenon requiring investigation of protective psychological resources. Without understanding these mediating mechanisms and their contextual variations, institutional interventions will remain generic and ineffective. This study addresses this problem by investigating how psychological capital components mediate the burnout-commitment relationship differently across educational contexts, providing evidence for targeted, context-sensitive resilience-building interventions.

#### 3. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the direct relationship between multidimensional burnout and professional commitment among Iranian EFL teachers across three educational contexts (schools, universities, private institutes).
- To investigate the mediating role of psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and professional commitment.
- To explore how institutional support and compensation moderate the psychological capital-burnout relationship across contexts.
- To identify context-specific resilience strategies employed by EFL teachers to maintain commitment despite occupational challenges.

#### 4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

**RQ1:** What is the nature and strength of the relationship between multidimensional burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment) and professional commitment among Iranian EFL teachers across different educational contexts?

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between burnout dimensions and professional commitment across educational contexts.

**RQ2:** To what extent does psychological capital mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and professional commitment among Iranian EFL teachers?

$H_{02}$ : Psychological capital does not significantly mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and professional commitment.

**RQ3:** How do institutional support and compensation moderate the relationship between psychological capital and burnout across educational contexts?

$H_{03}$ : Institutional support and compensation do not significantly moderate the psychological capital-burnout relationship across contexts.

#### 5. Significance of the Study

This research holds significance for multiple stakeholders. For *policy makers*, findings provide evidence for resource-focused rather than solely demand-reduction interventions, with compensation emerging as foundational to psychological resource development. For *teacher educators*, results inform resilience-focused professional development curricula that build state-like psychological capital rather than assuming fixed personality traits. For *school administrators*, contextual variations in protective factors offer guidance for context-sensitive support systems—peer collaboration for schools, research autonomy

for universities, adaptive flexibility training for institutes. Theoretically, the study advances burnout research by moving beyond correlation toward explanatory mediation models that reveal *how* commitment persists despite burnout experiences. Finally, by centering Iranian teachers' voices, the research challenges Western-centric wellbeing models and contributes to decolonizing teacher development scholarship.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1. Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design [27] with two integrated phases. Phase 1 utilized a cross-sectional correlational survey to quantitatively examine relationships among burnout, commitment, psychological capital, and contextual variables across 240 teachers. Phase 2 conducted in-depth interviews with 24 purposefully selected teachers to explain and contextualize quantitative patterns, particularly regarding resilience strategies. This design enabled statistical generalization while capturing the nuanced, context-dependent nature of psychological resource development. The sequential structure ensured qualitative inquiry was directly informed by quantitative results—interview protocols specifically probed unexpected statistical patterns and contextual variations.

### 6.2. Corpus of the Study

Participants included 240 Iranian EFL teachers (132 female, 108 male) from three educational contexts in northwestern Iran: public schools ( $n = 85$ ), universities ( $n = 78$ ), and private language institutes ( $n = 77$ ). Participants' ages ranged from 24 to 58 years ( $M = 36.7$ ,  $SD = 8.4$ ), with teaching experience from 3 to 28 years ( $M = 11.3$ ,  $SD = 6.2$ ). Systematic random sampling ensured proportional representation across contexts based on population distributions in the region. For Phase 2, 24 teachers (8 per context) were purposively selected to represent variation in burnout levels (high/low) and psychological capital scores (high/low), enabling comparative analysis of resilience strategies across experience profiles. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board; all participants provided informed consent with guarantees of anonymity and voluntary participation.

### 6.3. Instruments

**Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES; [5])** measured burnout across three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (9 items,  $\alpha = 0.88$ ), Depersonalization (5 items,  $\alpha = 0.76$ ), and Personal Accomplishment (8 items,  $\alpha = 0.79$ ). Items used a 7-point frequency scale (0 = never to 6 = every day). Following convention, Personal Accomplishment scores were reverse-coded so higher scores indicated greater burnout across all dimensions.

**Professional Commitment Scale for Teachers (PCST; [28])** assessed commitment across five dimensions: dedication to students, community, vocation, excellence, and core human values (45 items total). Items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The Persian adaptation demonstrated strong reliability ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ) and construct validity in prior Iranian studies [22].

**Teacher Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-T; adapted from [9])** measured four components with 6 items each: hope (e.g., "I can think of many ways to reach my teaching goals"), efficacy ("I feel confident presenting difficult material to students"), resilience ("I usually manage to bounce back quickly after stressful teaching situations"), and optimism ("When facing teaching challenges, I expect positive outcomes"). Items used a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The adapted Persian version showed excellent reliability ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) and factorial validity ( $CFI = 0.94$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.04$ ) in pilot testing.

**Contextual Support Scale (CSS; researcher-developed)** measured institutional resources across three dimensions: administrative support (5 items,  $\alpha = 0.82$ ), collegial collaboration (4 items,  $\alpha = 0.78$ ), and compensation satisfaction (3 items,  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Items used a 5-point scale assessing perceived adequacy of resources.

**Semi-structured Interview Protocol** included 12 open-ended questions exploring: (a) experiences of burnout and commitment fluctuations, (b) strategies for maintaining resilience during challenging periods, (c) institutional factors enabling or constraining resource development, and (d) the role of compensation

in psychological wellbeing. Interviews lasted 45–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim.

#### 6.4. Model of the Study

The study tested a moderated mediation model (Figure 1) where:

--Emotional exhaustion (independent variable) negatively predicts professional commitment (dependent variable)

--Psychological capital (mediator) explains this relationship

--Institutional support and compensation (moderators) strengthen the psychological capital-burnout relationship

--Educational context functions as a grouping variable for comparative analysis

This model extends COR Theory by specifying *which* psychological resources mediate resource loss spirals and *under what conditions* these resources are most protective.

#### 6.5. Data Collection Procedures

Phase 1 data collection occurred over eight weeks during spring 2023. Researchers contacted educational institutions through official channels, explaining the study's purpose and procedures. Teachers received paper-based questionnaires during scheduled professional development sessions or via secure online links for remote participants. Questionnaires included demographic items and four standardized scales administered in counterbalanced order to minimize fatigue effects. Completion required approximately 25 minutes.

Phase 2 interviews occurred four weeks after survey completion to allow time for preliminary analysis. Participants were selected based on extreme and typical case sampling to capture variation in burnout-commitment patterns. Interviews occurred in locations of participants' choosing (private offices, quiet cafés, or via encrypted video calls). All interviews were conducted in Persian by bilingual researchers, audio-recorded, and transcribed within 48 hours. Member checking was employed: transcripts were returned to participants for verification and elaboration.

#### 6.6. Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 28.0 and PROCESS macro v4.0. Preliminary analyses included descriptive statistics, reliability checks, and tests of normality (Shapiro-Wilk). Pearson correlations examined bivariate relationships. To test  $H_{01}$ , multiple regression analyses compared burnout-commitment relationships across contexts. To test  $H_{02}$ , PROCESS Model 4 tested psychological capital's mediating role with 5,000 bootstrap samples for confidence intervals. To test  $H_{03}$ , PROCESS Model 7 tested moderation effects of institutional support and compensation. Significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase approach: (1) transcription and familiarization, (2) initial coding using NVivo 14, (3) searching for themes across codes, (4) reviewing themes against dataset, (5) defining/naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Two researchers independently coded 20% of transcripts to establish intercoder reliability ( $\kappa = 0.87$ ). Analysis specifically sought patterns explaining quantitative mediation effects—particularly how teachers with high psychological capital-maintained commitment despite burnout experiences.

### 7. Results

#### 7.1. Statistical Results of the First Research Question

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations appear in Table 1. All burnout dimensions significantly correlated with professional commitment: emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), depersonalization ( $r = -0.54$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and reduced personal accomplishment ( $r = -0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Emotional exhaustion demonstrated the strongest negative relationship with commitment, supporting its status as the core burnout dimension [5].

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations (N = 240)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Emotional Exhaustion</b>	3.42	1.18	—				
<b>2. Depersonalization</b>	2.17	0.94	0.58**	—			
<b>3. Reduced Personal Accomplishment</b>	2.89	1.05	0.49**	0.41**	—		
<b>4. Professional Commitment</b>	3.94	0.87	-0.68**	-0.54**	-0.61**	—	
<b>5. Psychological Capital</b>	4.05	0.76	-0.59**	-0.47**	-0.52**	0.73**	—

Note. \*\*p < 0.001

Contextual comparisons revealed significant differences in burnout levels ( $F(2, 237) = 14.37, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.11$ ). Institute teachers reported highest emotional exhaustion ( $M = 4.12, SD = 1.03$ ), followed by school teachers ( $M = 3.58, SD = 1.11$ ), with university teachers lowest ( $M = 2.64, SD = 0.89$ ). However, the burnout-commitment correlation strength did not differ significantly across contexts (Fisher's Z tests: all  $p > 0.15$ ), rejecting  $H_{01}$  and confirming a robust inverse relationship regardless of setting. Multiple regression controlling for demographics confirmed emotional exhaustion as the strongest predictor of commitment ( $\beta = -0.52, p < 0.001$ ), explaining 46% of variance in commitment scores.

### 7.2. Statistical Results of the Second Research Question

Mediation analysis (PROCESS Model 4) confirmed psychological capital significantly mediated the emotional exhaustion-commitment relationship (Figure 2). The total effect of emotional exhaustion on commitment was significant ( $c = -0.63, p < 0.001$ ). When psychological capital was included, the direct effect decreased substantially ( $c' = -0.25, p < 0.001$ ), while the indirect effect through psychological capital was significant ( $ab = -0.38, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.47, -0.31]$ ). Psychological capital accounted for 60.3% of the total effect, indicating partial mediation.

Component analysis revealed resilience as the strongest mediator ( $ab = -0.19, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.26, -0.13]$ ), followed by efficacy ( $ab = -0.11, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.17, -0.06]$ ), hope ( $ab = -0.06, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.11, -0.02]$ ), and optimism ( $ab = -0.02, ns$ ). This pattern held across contexts but with variations: resilience mediated 72% of the relationship for school teachers versus 58% for institute teachers, suggesting contextual differences in which psychological resources prove most protective.

These results reject  $H_{02}$ , confirming psychological capital—particularly resilience—as a critical mediating mechanism explaining how some teachers maintain commitment despite emotional exhaustion.

### 7.3. Statistical Results of the Third Research Question

Moderation analysis (PROCESS Model 7) revealed compensation satisfaction significantly moderated the psychological capital-burnout relationship ( $b = -0.24, p < 0.001$ ). At high compensation levels (+1 SD), psychological capital strongly predicted reduced emotional exhaustion ( $b = -0.58, p < 0.001$ ); at low compensation levels (-1 SD), this relationship weakened substantially ( $b = -0.21, p = 0.032$ ). Institutional support showed similar but weaker moderation effects ( $b = -0.17, p = 0.008$ ).

Contextual analysis revealed compensation's moderating role was strongest for institute teachers ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.14, p < 0.001$ ) compared to school ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.07, p = 0.012$ ) and university teachers ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.04, ns$ ). This pattern reflects institutes' performance-based compensation structures where income volatility directly impacts psychological resource development. Figure 3 illustrates this interaction: institute teachers with high psychological capital but low compensation showed burnout levels comparable to teachers with low psychological capital and adequate compensation—demonstrating compensation's foundational role.

These results reject  $H_{03}$ , confirming that material resources (compensation) fundamentally enable or constrain psychological resources' protective function.

### 7.4. Qualitative Findings Integration

Interview data illuminated mechanisms behind statistical patterns. Teachers with high psychological capital despite burnout described *active resilience practices* rather than passive traits:

"Burnout isn't something that disappears. Last semester I taught 28 hours weekly with three new curricula. I was exhausted daily. But I maintained commitment through small rituals: 15 minutes of reflection after each class, weekly coffee with two trusted colleagues where we shared struggles without judgment, and reminding myself why I chose teaching when student feedback arrived. Resilience isn't about avoiding exhaustion—it's about having practices that reconnect you to purpose when exhaustion hits." (Female school teacher, 14 years' experience)

Context-specific strategies emerged:

--**School teachers** emphasized *collective resilience*: "Our department created an informal 'wellbeing pact'—we cover each other's classes during crises, share lesson plans to reduce preparation time, and celebrate small victories. Alone I'd have quit years ago; together we sustain each other."

--**University teachers** leveraged *intellectual autonomy*: "Research provides psychological oxygen. When teaching drains, me, diving into scholarly work renews my sense of purpose. Sabbaticals aren't luxuries—they're essential maintenance for commitment."

--**Institute teachers** developed *adaptive entrepreneurship*: "I've learned to diversify my skills—teaching IELTS, developing digital materials, even basic counseling for anxious test-takers. This flexibility creates income stability that buffers against burnout. When one stream dries up, others sustain me."

Critically, all groups identified compensation as foundational:

"You cannot build psychological capital on empty pockets. When I worry whether next month's rent is covered, resilience becomes a luxury I cannot afford. Fair pay isn't about greed—it's the bedrock that allows me to invest emotionally in students rather than constantly calculating survival." (Male institute teacher, 9 years' experience)

## 8. Discussion

### 5.1. Discussion Related to the First Research Hypothesis

The strong negative correlation between burnout and commitment ( $r = -0.68$ ) confirms and extends previous findings [16, 29] while revealing emotional exhaustion as the primary driver—a pattern consistent with global meta-analyses [1]. However, the consistency of this relationship across contexts challenges assumptions that institutional differences fundamentally alter burnout-commitment dynamics. Rather than contextual variation in the *relationship*, our findings suggest variation in *antecedents*—institute teachers experience higher exhaustion due to workload instability, yet the exhaustion-commitment pathway remains structurally similar. This aligns with COR Theory's principle that resource loss operates through universal psychological mechanisms regardless of loss source [18].

Notably, our effect size ( $r = -0.68$ ) exceeds many Western studies (typically  $r = -0.40$  to  $-0.55$ ), potentially reflecting Iran's resource-constrained educational environment where teachers face compounded stressors: economic pressures, sociopolitical constraints on English teaching, and limited institutional support [4]. This contextual intensification of the burnout-commitment relationship underscores the importance of culturally situated research that avoids universalizing Western findings.

### 8.2. Discussion Related to the Second Research Hypothesis

The confirmation of psychological capital as a significant mediator (60.3% of total effect) represents a theoretical advance beyond correlational models. By demonstrating *how* commitment persists despite burnout—through active psychological resource deployment—this study addresses a critical gap in teacher wellbeing literature. The primacy of resilience as a mediator aligns with recent scholarship positioning resilience not as a fixed trait but as a dynamic process of navigating adversity through available resources [7, 8].

Our finding that resilience operates differently across contexts extends current understanding. School teachers' reliance on collective resilience practices reflects the communal nature of school environments where interdependence is structurally embedded [30]. Conversely, institute teachers' individualized resilience strategies mirror their precarious employment conditions where collective bargaining is limited. This contextual variation challenges universal resilience training programs and supports context-sensitive approaches—a finding resonating with recent calls for "situated resilience" models in teacher education [31].

Crucially, our results contradict deficit-focused interventions that target burnout reduction alone. Teachers described maintaining commitment *despite* ongoing exhaustion through psychological resource activation—a pattern suggesting wellbeing interventions should focus on resource development alongside demand reduction. This dual-focus approach aligns with JD-R Model extensions emphasizing that sustainable wellbeing requires both reducing demands *and* enhancing resources [2].

### 8.3. Discussion Related to the Third Research Hypothesis

The moderating role of compensation represents perhaps our most significant finding, challenging psychological capital's conceptualization as purely intrapsychic. When compensation was inadequate, psychological capital's protective effects diminished substantially—particularly for institute teachers whose income directly correlated with teaching hours. This finding resonates with Maslow's hierarchy applied to occupational contexts: material security constitutes a foundational resource without which higher-order psychological resources cannot be effectively deployed [2].

Our results extend COR Theory by demonstrating resource hierarchies: material resources (compensation) function as *enabling resources* that determine whether psychological resources can be activated. This challenges purely psychological models of teacher wellbeing that ignore economic structures—a critical oversight particularly relevant in Global South contexts where teacher salaries often fall below living wages [6]. Recent Iranian policy debates framing teacher attrition as a "motivation problem" rather than a "compensation crisis" exemplify this theoretical blind spot our research addresses.

The contextual variation in compensation's moderating strength further illuminates structural inequities: institute teachers' vulnerability reflects neoliberal educational policies that externalize risk onto individual educators through performance-based contracts [24]. Our findings thus carry political implications, suggesting that psychological interventions cannot substitute for fair labor practices—a conclusion aligning with recent critical scholarship on teacher wellbeing [32].

## 9. Conclusion

This study advances understanding of teacher wellbeing by positioning psychological capital—particularly resilience—as a mediating mechanism in the burnout-commitment relationship. Three conclusions emerge:

First, the burnout-commitment relationship operates through universal psychological mechanisms (resource loss spirals) but is intensified in resource-constrained contexts like Iran, necessitating culturally situated interventions.

Second, psychological capital functions not as a fixed trait but as an active, context-dependent practice. Resilience manifests differently across settings: collectively in schools, intellectually in universities, and entrepreneurially in institutes—demanding context-sensitive rather than one-size-fits-all interventions.

Third, and most critically, material resources—especially compensation—function as foundational enablers of psychological resources. Without adequate compensation, resilience becomes a luxury few can afford, rendering purely psychological interventions ineffective. These findings challenge deficit-focused narratives blaming teachers for "lack of resilience" while ignoring structural inequities.

Our refined theoretical model integrates COR Theory with contextual resource analysis, demonstrating that sustainable teacher commitment requires simultaneous attention to material conditions, institutional structures, and psychological capacities. As one participant poignantly stated: "You cannot pour from an empty cup. First fill the cup with fair pay and respect; then we can discuss how to pour generously for students."

### 9.1. Implications of the Study

**9.1.1. Pedagogical Implications:** Teacher education programs should integrate resilience-building practices as core curriculum rather than add-on workshops. Crucially, these should be context-specific: school-focused programs emphasizing collective efficacy strategies; university programs balancing teaching-research identities; institute programs developing adaptive flexibility without normalizing precarity. Critically, programs must address compensation literacy—helping teachers understand their economic rights and negotiate fair contracts.

**9.1.2. Practical Implications:** Administrators should implement context-sensitive support systems: structured peer collaboration time for schools; protected research time for universities; income stability mechanisms (e.g., minimum hour guarantees) for institutes. Most fundamentally, policymakers must recognize compensation as foundational to wellbeing—not an optional benefit but a prerequisite for psychological resource development. Incremental salary increases may prove more effective for commitment than expensive resilience workshops.

## 10. Suggestions for Further Research

Future research trajectories in teacher wellbeing scholarship would benefit from several promising avenues of inquiry. Longitudinal investigations could illuminate the dynamic evolution of psychological capital throughout teachers' professional lifespans, capturing not merely static snapshots but the nuanced trajectories of resource accumulation and depletion across career stages. Such studies would prove especially valuable during critical transition points—such as when educators shift from stable public-school positions to the precarious employment conditions of private language institutes—revealing how institutional contexts reshape teachers' psychological resource portfolios over time and whether protective capacities transfer across settings or require context-specific reconstruction.

Intervention research addressing the perennial tension between structural and psychological approaches to wellbeing represents another vital direction. Rigorous experimental designs could directly compare the efficacy of material interventions—such as meaningful compensation increases or income stabilization mechanisms—against purely psychological interventions like resilience training workshops. This comparison addresses a fundamental policy dilemma: whether investing in teachers' economic security yields greater wellbeing returns than channeling resources into individual-focused psychological programs. Such evidence would provide crucial guidance for educational administrators and policymakers navigating constrained budgets while seeking sustainable solutions to the teacher attrition crisis.

Cross-cultural comparative studies offer fertile ground for examining how macro-level welfare state architectures mediate the relationship between material and psychological resources. By juxtaposing contexts with robust social safety nets and professionalized teaching careers—such as Scandinavian nations—with resource-constrained environments like Iran where teachers navigate significant economic precarity, researchers could discern whether psychological capital functions universally or operates contingently upon foundational material security. These comparisons might reveal that resilience resources flourish primarily within institutional ecosystems that provide baseline economic stability, challenging assumptions about the transferability of Western-developed wellbeing models to Global South contexts.

Critical ethnographic approaches could productively shift the analytical lens from individual adaptation to collective agency, documenting how teachers organize horizontally to transform the material conditions producing burnout rather than merely developing personal coping strategies. Such research would attend to teacher unions, informal solidarity networks, and grassroots professional communities that challenge precarity through collective action—perspectives largely absent from contemporary wellbeing literature's predominant focus on individual psychological traits. This orientation aligns with emerging critical scholarship that reframes burnout not as a personal deficiency but as a structural phenomenon requiring structural remedies.

Finally, post-pandemic educational landscapes demand investigation into digital resilience resources—those technological affordances, platforms, and practices that mediate resource transactions in hybrid teaching environments. As educators navigate blended instructional modalities, research could explore how digital tools function as either resource drains (through surveillance, constant connectivity demands, and technical friction) or resource gains (through community-building platforms, automated administrative relief, and flexible pedagogical spaces). Understanding technology's dual potential to either exacerbate or alleviate burnout would inform institutional decisions about digital infrastructure investment and professional development, ensuring that technological integration enhances rather than erodes teachers' psychological resource bases.

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