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Building Teacher Immunity: Predictive Role of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy in Iranian Female EFL Teachers

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K E Y T E R M S

Emotional Intelligence
Self-Efficacy
Teacher Immunity
Female EFL Teachers
Interview

A B S T R A C T

Teacher Immunity, Self-Efficacy and Emotional Intelligence are key factors that influence the performance of EFL instructors. This research was a survey study which investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence and teacher immunity among female EFL teachers. The research also explored whether instructors' self-efficacy and emotional intelligence can predict their teacher immunity. This study involved a convenience sample of 211 female EFL teachers from Iranian EFL contexts. The participants were chosen from different English Language Institutes. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 28. The findings indicated a positive relationship between instructors' emotional intelligence and their teacher immunity, as well as a positive relationship between self-efficacy and teacher immunity among female EFL teachers. Furthermore, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of EFL teachers can predict their teacher immunity in educational contexts. The findings of the study suggest that enhancing self-efficacy and emotional intelligence among female EFL teachers can foster their teacher immunity in educational contexts.

1. Introduction

Teacher Immunity can be considered as one of the essential features that can affect EFL teachers' well-being in educational contexts. Many factors can affect teacher immunity (e.g., low income, employers' greed, and personal issues), and numerous research studies have been conducted to investigate these factors (Namaziandost & Heydarnejad, 2023; Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2023; Sariçoban & Kirmizi, 2021; Tonguç, 2024). Self-efficacy and Emotional Intelligence are pivotal for EFL teachers, influencing their performance in classroom contexts. Many experts and research scholars consider Self-efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, and Teacher Immunity as fundamental factors

(Darmawati, 2024; Saad et al., 2024; Abiodullah & Aslam, 2020; Wray, Sharma, & Subban, 2022; Fackler et al., 2021; Burić & Kim, 2020) in these educational contexts.

According to Hassanpour Souderjani et al. (2021), teacher immunity is developed through the emotional, psychological, and cognitive performance of EFL teachers in foreign language contexts. Furthermore, many studies have focused on factors predicting teacher immunity (Rahimpour et al., 2020; Beyranvand & Mohammadi, 2021; Gooran et al., 2023). Based on these predictors, language teacher education programs should consider these factors and raise EFL teachers' awareness of language teacher immunity (Rahmati et al., 2019) to enhance the quality of education. Emotional Intelligence and Self-efficacy are considered two main factors that affect teachers' performance in educational contexts (Wang, 2022). Noughabi et al. (2020) highlighted that the immunity of language teachers is closely associated with their autonomy, engagement, and overall emotional well-being. A deficiency in autonomy can hinder both innovation and reflective practices typically observed in teachers with strong teacher immunity (Hiver, 2017).

In Iranian EFL contexts, female teachers face various challenges that impact their professional well-being. A crucial issue is the lack of attention given to the teacher immunity and emotional intelligence of EFL instructors (Aminoleslami, 2021). Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in teachers' ability to understand and manage their own emotional feelings and to helpfully respond to the emotions of their students (Wang, 2022). Insufficient emotional intelligence may hinder female EFL teachers' ability to create a positive learning environment, subsequently decreasing student engagement and academic achievement. Thus, there is a need to investigate the emotional intelligence of female EFL teachers in Iranian EFL contexts and explore its impact on their teaching practices and EFL students' learning outcomes.

Another significant concern is the lack of self-efficacy in the teaching abilities of female EFL teachers (Fathi & Derakhshan, 2019). Self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs in their capacities to successfully fulfill teaching tasks and positively influence student learning (Perera & John, 2020). Low levels of self-efficacy among female EFL teachers can impede their motivation, confidence, and overall job satisfaction (Leshia, 2017). Therefore, examining the self-efficacy and emotional intelligence levels of female EFL teachers in Iranian EFL contexts is vital, along with determining how these variables relate to their teacher immunity. Addressing these issues can improve support mechanisms to enhance female EFL teachers' well-being and overall effectiveness in Iranian EFL contexts.

In the Iranian EFL context, various studies (e.g., Haseli et al., 2018; Namaziandost, Heydarnejad, & Rezai, 2023; Hesabi, 2020; Hassanpour, Heidari & Hosseinpour, 2021) have explored factors affecting language teacher immunity among EFL teachers. These instructors often cite the large number of unemployed educated EFL teachers, employers' greed, low income, and the low value of English education in Iranian society as primary reasons for weakened teacher immunity.

In recent years, the significance of self-efficacy and emotional intelligence has gained considerable attention. Many researchers have investigated these aspects in second/foreign language contexts (e.g., Amiri, 2020; García-Álvarez, Hernández-Lalinde, & Cobo-Rendón, 2021; Wen et al., 2020). As female EFL teachers encounter myriad demands, expectations, and stressors, examining the predictive role of Emotional Intelligence and Self-efficacy in determining teacher immunity is crucial for educational policy. While the literature has extensively examined individual components of teacher well-being, a comprehensive investigation of Emotional Intelligence and Self-efficacy as

predictors of teacher immunity remains a scholarly gap. This study aimed to bridge this gap by investigating the potential predictive power of EFL female teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Self-efficacy on their teacher immunity.

Immunity can be defined as the state of resistance against negative influences, with roots in the Latin term "immunis" (Chiappelli & Liu, 2000, quoted in Hiver, 2016). It serves as a defense mechanism, safeguarding individuals from harmful effects in their environment. Similarly, "teacher immunity" describes how educators, particularly language teachers, establish defenses to mitigate disturbances that threaten their motivation and professional identity (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Teacher immunity theory, also referred to as Educator Immunity, is a legal concept that protects teachers from personal liability for actions undertaken during their professional duties.

Emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to identify, monitor, and regulate one's own emotions and those of others, differentiating between different emotions and aptly labeling them (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). It embodies a range of skills and aptitudes that facilitate the management of emotions (Drigas & Sideraki, 2021).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their competence to accomplish specific tasks or perform necessary behaviors to achieve performance goals (Bandura, 1977). According to Zhi et al. (2024), self-efficacy is essential for individuals to succeed in completing tasks and finding fulfillment in their work, influencing both cognitive and emotional states.

In a study conducted by Khazaenezhad and Davoudinasab (2022), the relationship between the personality types of Iranian EFL teachers and their teacher immunity was examined using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected from a random sample of 50 participants (19 male and 31 female teachers) across various language institutes in Iran through two teacher immunity questionnaires. The qualitative phase included phone interviews with eight EFL teachers to gather detailed insights about instructor immunity. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between personality types and aspects of teacher immunity, highlighting resilience and self-efficacy as the most dominant factors.

Moreover, a recent study by Zhi et al. (2024) explored the role of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in EFL teachers' technology adoption. In this quantitative study, 214 Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language provided responses via three questionnaires, with results indicating that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy predicted 89% and 63% of the variations in technology adoption, respectively, as revealed through structural equation modeling (SEM) and regression analysis. The study offered insights and implications for educators' understanding of instructional technology and emotions.

Additionally, research conducted by Ye et al. (2024) examined how teaching experience, self-efficacy, and emotional competence interact to influence preschool teachers' performance. Using a quantitative methodology, data were sourced from preschool instructors in Zhejiang province, China, grounded in Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy and Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory. Significant findings illustrated that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between instructors' performance and emotional competence, with teaching experience reducing emotional competence's impact on self-efficacy but not affecting the connection between teaching effectiveness and self-efficacy.

Lastly, Arlsan and Almacioğlu (2024) investigated how pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' teaching immunity is influenced by their reflections on teaching practices, also considering whether the facets of pre-service instructors' teaching immunity change over time. This study involved six EFL pre-service instructors from a Turkish public university, gathering data through semi-structured interviews and reflection sheets completed during instruction. The analysis yielded results indicating that reflection on teaching practices enhances teachers' awareness of their instructional methods, emotional dimensions, and professional growth.

Exploring the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence in relation to teacher immunity can offer important insights into female EFL teachers' resilience, well-being and teacher immunity. Consequently, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between Iranian female EFL teachers' Emotional Intelligence and their Teacher Immunity?

RQ2: Can Emotional Intelligence predict Teacher Immunity?

RQ3: Is there any significant relationship between Iranian female EFL teachers' Self-efficacy and their Teacher Immunity?

RQ4: Can Self-efficacy predict Teacher Immunity?

2. Methodology

The current study had a survey design. According to Dörnyei (2007), "Survey studies aim at describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group" (p.101). Survey research is a non-experimental research design in which the participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors are questioned (Ary et al., 2018; Hatch, & Lazaraton, 1991). At the survey phase of the study, the participants included female EFL teachers from language institutes. The EFL instructors were asked to fill out three questionnaires (i.e., Emotional Intelligence questionnaire, Self-efficacy questionnaire and Teacher Immunity questionnaire).

2.1 Participants and Setting

In the current study, for the survey stage, 211 participants were chosen from different English language institutes. The participants were all female EFL teachers from different Iranian cities (e.g., Urmia, Tabriz, Tehran, Karaj and Sanandaj) and the EFL teachers were native speakers of Azeri, Persian, Kurdish. These female EFL teachers had at least two years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language in different institutes. They held English classes (e.g., basic classes, elementary classes, intermediate and advanced level classes). The participants had B.A or M.A in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Inexperienced female teachers who did not have teaching experience and male EFL teachers were not chosen for this study. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 28. Table 1 summarized the female EFL teachers' characteristics.

Table 1*Demographic Background of the Participants*

No. of teachers	211
Age	19-28 years old
Gender	Female
Mother tongue	Azeri, Persian, Kurdish
Academic field	B.A and M.A in TEFL

2.2 Instrumentation

In the current study, Correlational and Regression Analyses were used for the prediction purposes and elucidating relationship between the research variables. Also, after gathering the raw data, Statistical Package for the Social and Sciences (SPSS) was used to quantify data at this phase of the study. Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy and Teacher Immunity questionnaires were utilized for the purposes of the survey phase of the research.

2.2.1 Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

The researchers adopted the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), which was created and validated by Sherer, et al., (1982), to measure the general self-efficacy of the female EFL teachers. There are fifteen items on the self-report GSES questionnaire in this study. Based on a Likert scale, overall self-efficacy is scored as follows: one to five points are given (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5). With regard to the reliability scale, the results of Cronbach's alpha revealed a 0.83 coefficient.

2.2.2 Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

The researchers adopted EI Questionnaire based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original model of emotional intelligence, the Assessing Emotions Scale is also known in certain publications as the Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, or the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale. According to this concept, emotional intelligence is comprised of the following: expressing emotion, evaluating emotion in oneself and others, controlling emotion in oneself and others, and applying emotion to problem-solving. overall Emotional Intelligence is scored as follows: one to five points are given (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5). The reliability of the Emotional Intelligence questionnaire was estimated through Cronbach's alpha formula and the alpha turned out 0.81.

2.2.3 Teacher Immunity Questionnaire

The educator immunity questionnaire created by Hiver (2017) was utilized for collecting the data required for the quantitative portion of the current investigation. There were 39 Likert-scale items in this questionnaire. Seven points were created for the possibilities in order to elicit the opinions of the

participants. The order in this questionnaire was Strongly disagree, Rather disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Rather agree, Strongly agree. Furthermore, concerning the reliability of the teacher immunity questionnaire, the results of Cronbach's alpha indicated a coefficient of 0.85.

2.3 Procedure

In this survey study, as the female EFL teachers were from different Iranian cities, soft copies of the questionnaires were sent via E-mail because data would be gathered from many participants within a short period of time. Completion of the questionnaire would take approximately 30 minutes and the participants were requested to mail back the answers to the questionnaires within one week. Also, Google Docs was created to collaborate data from the participants who could not mail back their answers. Female EFL teachers could easily answer the questions through Google Docs and when EFL instructors answered the questionnaires, their answers were mailed to the researchers by Google Docs. As this study focused on female EFL teachers, some of demographic information about teachers such as gender, age and years of teaching English language, university majors included in the first page of the questionnaires. These data were used to answer to the research questions and hypotheses of the study at the quantitative stage. The study commenced in May 2024 and concluded in June.

3. Data Analysis

In order to investigate female EFL teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy as predictors of their Teacher Immunity, various types of statistical analyses were run. At survey phase of the study, Correlational and Regression analyses were used for the prediction purposes and elucidating relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy and Teacher Immunity. The obtained data was analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.1 Descriptive Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive indexes of teachers' emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and their teacher immunity.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of the Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy and Immunity

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	St.D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotional intelligence	211	2.64	3.88	3.26	.24	.17	-.25
Self-efficacy	211	1.93	3.47	2.68	.22	.35	.80
Teacher immunity	211	2.77	4.83	3.50	.38	.78	.83

Table 2 shows the mean for variables including emotional intelligence (3.26), self-efficacy (2.68), and teacher immunity (3.50).

Additionally, the results of descriptive statistics regarding the shape of normal distribution of data for all variables are reported in Table 2. Skewness and Kurtosis values should be within the range ± 2 to accept the shape of normal distribution of data. According to Table 2, all skewness and Kurtosis

values located in range between ± 2 . Therefore, the shapes of data distribution for all variables are normal.

In order to the first research question on the relationship between female EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their teacher immunity, Pearson correlation coefficient was carried out. The results of correlation coefficient are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation Results for Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Immunity

	Emotional intelligence	
Teacher immunity	Pearson Correlation	.48**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	60

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Table 3, Pearson correlation shows that there was a significant positive relationship between female EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their teacher immunity ($p = 0.001$, $r = 0.48$).

Thus, the first research question was answered ($p < 0.05$). So, it means that as the female EFL teachers have more emotional intelligence, they have more teacher immunity. In the present study, the predictive relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher immunity was examined using a simple linear regression model. A dataset encompassing 211 female teachers was analyzed, correlating emotional intelligence to teacher immunity values. The average emotional intelligence score within the sample was 3.26 years ($SD = .24$), and the average teacher immunity was 3.50 ($SD = .38$). The results of correlation coefficient, basic descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Simple Linear Regression Results Predicting Teachers' Immunity

Predictors	r	β	SR	t	P	R ²
Intercept (model)	-	1.06	.31	3.42	0.001	0.22 %
Emotional Intelligence	.48**	0.75	0.09	7.94	0.001	

Table 4. shows that The simple linear regression analysis revealed a statistically significant model ($F(1, 209) = 63.11$, $p < .001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.22. This finding suggests that emotional intelligence accounts for approximately 22% of the variance in teacher immunity among the female EFL teachers.

Furthermore, the regression coefficient for emotional intelligence was found to be 0.75, with a standard error of 0.09. This indicates that for each additional one unit of emotional intelligence score, there is an average increase of 0.75 units in teacher immunity. This positive relationship between

emotional intelligence and teacher immunity was found to be statistically significant ($t(209) = 7.94, p < .001$), affirming the predictive power of emotional intelligence and teacher immunity. So, it means that the teachers' emotional intelligence can significantly predict their Teacher Immunity. In order to investigate the third research null hypothesis on the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their teacher immunity, Pearson correlation coefficient was carried out. The results of correlation coefficient are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlation results for Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Teacher Immunity

		Self-efficacy
Teacher immunity	Pearson Correlation	.38**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Table 5, Pearson correlation shows that there was a significant positive relationship between female EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their teacher immunity ($p = 0.001, r = 0.38$). Thus, it means that as the female EFL teachers have more self-efficacy, they have more teacher immunity.

In the present study, the predictive relationship between female EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their teacher immunity was examined using a simple linear regression model. A dataset encompassing 211 female EFL teachers was analyzed, correlating self-efficacy to teacher immunity values. The average self-efficacy score within the sample was 2.68 years ($SD = .22$), and the average teacher immunity was 3.50 ($SD = .38$). The results of correlation coefficient, basic descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Simple Linear Regression Results Predicting Teachers' Immunity

Predictors	r	β	SR	t	P	R ²
Intercept (model)	-	1.72	.29	5.82	0.001	0.14 %
Self-efficacy	.48**	0.66	0.11	6.04	0.001	

Table 6, shows that The simple linear regression analysis revealed a statistically significant model ($F(1, 209) = 36.51, p < .001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.14. This finding suggests that self-efficacy accounts for approximately 14% of the variance in teacher immunity among the female teachers.

Further, the regression coefficient for self-efficacy was found to be 0.66, with a standard error of 0.11. This indicates that for each additional one unit of self-efficacy score, there is an average increase of 0.66 units in teacher immunity. This positive relationship between self-efficacy and teacher immunity was found to be statistically significant ($t(209) = 6.04, p < .001$), affirming the predictive power of self-efficacy and teacher immunity.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study revealed that emotional intelligence among female EFL teachers correlated positively with their teacher immunity. In other words, there was a positive relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their teacher immunity in educational settings. Additionally, emotional intelligence could be predictive of teacher immunity in these EFL contexts for female EFL instructors. Regarding other studies on the same issue, Rezapoor and Mohammadzadeh (2024) concluded in their study that there is a positive relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their teacher immunity. Furthermore, their research highlighted a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience among EFL teachers in educational settings.

This study's findings indicated a positive correlation between the self-efficacy of female EFL teachers and their teacher immunity in educational settings. Additionally, the research found that the self-efficacy levels of female EFL teachers could predict their teacher immunity. As to other related studies which investigated the same issue, Khazaenezhad and Davoudinasab (2022) concluded that there is a positive relationship between different aspects of teacher immunity and personality traits. Furthermore, teachers' self-efficacy and conscientiousness emerged as the most prevalent facets of both teacher immunity and personality types. For this study, 50 participants (19 male and 31 female) through random sampling were chosen from different Iranian EFL institutes. In another study, Noughabi, et al., (2020) concluded that autonomy, emotions, and engagement might play crucial roles in predicting language teachers' immunity. Particularly, the results highlighted that teacher autonomy was the most influential factor in explaining teachers' immunity of experienced in-service English as a foreign language teacher. Other researchers such as Jalili et al. (2023) and Arlsan and Almacioğlu (2024) have also presented the same findings.

This study aimed to investigate how the self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of female EFL teachers related to their immunity in EFL classrooms. The study also sought to investigate whether self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of female EFL instructors could predict their teacher immunity. To achieve the purpose of survey phase of this study, three instruments (three questionnaires) were distributed among 211 female EFL teachers through using Google Docs and the participants' E-mail addresses. The participants were chosen through convenience sampling from Iranian EFL contexts.

To realize the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of Iranian female EFL instructors with their teacher immunity Pearson Correlation Coefficient was carried out (Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, to examine whether self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of Iranian female EFL teachers could predict their teacher immunity Simple Linear Regression was used (Ary, et al., 2018). The results of the current study revealed that there was a positive relationship between female EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their teacher immunity. Also, there was a positive relationship between female EFL educators' self-efficacy and their teacher immunity. As well, the present study revealed that female EFL teachers' emotional intelligence could predict their teacher immunity. Additionally, EFL instructors' self-efficacy could predict their teacher immunity.

Teachers need to take into account the significant role of their self-efficacy as a predictor of their teacher immunity. In EFL classes in particular, teachers' self-efficacy is very important since it affects their resilience and their capacity to deal with the demands of language education. Teachers who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy are able to maintain confidence in their abilities to

positively influence students learning outcomes in the face of challenges and setbacks (Lesha, 2017). Teachers who have confidence in their abilities are able to withstand the difficulties that come with teaching English language, as it acts as a safeguard against stress or burnout and enhances EFL teachers' immunity (Khazaenezhad, & Davoudinasab, 2022). Teachers who possess self-awareness in their abilities to teach English as a foreign language are able to control classrooms, modify teaching methods, and keep students motivated, all of which contribute to creating a more favorable learning environment.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence of teachers plays a critical role in EFL educational contexts and affects EFL instructors' teacher immunity. A teacher with strong emotional intelligence is able to both comprehend and effectively control their own emotions, as well as sympathize with their students. A friendly and conducive learning environment can be helpful for EFL learners as teachers can use their persuasion techniques to engage students with English language. Also, teachers with high emotional intelligence can manage classrooms well, and adapt their teaching plans to fit the requirements of varied learners. Strong emotional intelligence helps EFL teachers become more resilient to stressors or failures and aid the female EFL educators to improve their overall teacher immunity.

The present study, like many other research endeavor, was constrained by numerous delimitations set by the researchers to enhance the study's validity and reliability. In the present study the EFL teachers were reluctant to fill the three questionnaires carefully and 25 of them were discarded from the data. The last delimitation of the study was the fact that the researchers excluded the female EFL teachers' English language proficiency level from this research. The reason behind this decision was the assumption that the teachers who had BA and MA in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) were chosen for the study and thus were assumed to be almost at advanced level of proficiency. However, language proficiency can be included by future studies.

Further studies are required to investigate the impact of self-efficacy, emotional intelligence and teacher immunity on EFL teachers within their educational settings, as these factors hold significant importance for EFL instructors. Also, it is suggested that findings of this study be employed to predict EFL instructors' teacher immunity in EFL classes. Furthermore, the main focus of the current study was only on female EFL teachers and how their self-efficacy can affect their teacher immunity. However, it is recommended that other researchers explore how English as a foreign language (EFL) learners can impact the teacher immunity of these EFL instructors.

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