



## Probing the Relationship among Iranian EFL Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style, Immunity, and Goal Orientation

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### ABSTRACT

*The transformational leadership style, immunity, and goal orientation are three essential qualities and attributes of teachers that significantly influence the success or failure of language education programs. Although numerous studies have examined the individual significance of EFL teachers' Transformational Leadership Style, Immunity, and Goal Orientation in language teaching programs, there is a paucity of research on their interrelated and overlapping associations. This study aimed to investigate the relationship among Iranian EFL teachers' Transformational Leadership Style, Immunity, and Goal Orientation. Due to easy access, availability at the given time, and willingness to participate in the research, 100 subjects from different English language teachers' communities in Iran were selected through the convenience sampling method and participated in this study. Three questionnaires were administered, and Structural Equation Modeling was employed to evaluate the proposed model of associations. Upon validating the proposed model ( $\chi^2/df = 1.15$ ;  $RMSEA = .03$ ;  $RMR = .04$ ;  $GFI = .94$ ;  $AGFI = .92$ ;  $NFI = .95$ ;  $CFI = .95$ ;  $IFI = .95$ ), the researchers noted a significant intercorrelation among the primary variables and subscales of the study. These findings underscored their significant role in educational processes due to the interrelation of these variables. These results may offer multiple implications for educators and instructors.*

**KEYWORDS:** Goal Orientation; Immunity; Transformational Leadership Style

### INTRODUCTION

The psychological and personality traits of English language teachers are recognized and emphasized in the field of education. Researchers have not only scrutinized teachers' pedagogical competence and skills but have also evaluated their interpersonal components as essential factors in teacher success. Amirian et al. (2023) suggested that educators possess the ability to positively transform their students' lives. Consequently, educators must possess specific skills to be effective. Additionally, Gao (2021) noted that the influence of teachers' interpersonal variables on students' final achievement has been the primary focus of recent innovative research. A multitude of teacher characteristics has been examined to assess their impact on teacher success, among which Teacher Leadership Style, Teacher Immunity, and Teacher Goal Orientation (hereafter TLS, TI, and TGO, respectively) hold considerable importance.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) believed that TLS represents a continuous exchange of educators' performances intended to impact their peers, administrators, and other stakeholders within school communities to enhance student learning and achievement. Similarly, Erdel and Takkaç (2020) proposed that the ultimate objective of teacher educational leadership is to achieve beneficial enhancements in student education. They added that educational leadership is related to teacher-student interaction mostly happening in the classroom. Moreover, Jovanovic and Ciric (2016) declared that educational leadership is the power of visualization. They also believed that a leader should have a perfect vision of various subjects including the innovative aspects of performances, attainment of the anticipated state as well as generation of new schemes for teaching. According to Fullan (2005), TLS is necessary to guarantee positive student success. Marks and Printy (2003) reviewed the results of some studies and reported that various

empirical studies prove the remarkable impact of teachers' leadership on learners' education and academic attainment.

The natural flow of teaching is full of many sources of stress (Skinner & Beers, 2016) and EFL teacher immunity is considered an influential factor in shaping how teachers perform and react (Hiver, 2015b). Hiver (2017) explained TI as the protection mechanisms of teachers that are consciously or unconsciously applied to diminish the turbulences and damages inflicted on their enthusiasm, individuality, and practice. Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) pointed out that TI as an "armoring system" expedites the way to investigate the cognition, experiences, and professional distinctiveness of EFL teachers. Multiple types of research discovered the relationship between TI and some other important aspects of teachers' psychological factors. Amirian et al. (2023) highlighted the significant influence of language teacher immunity on work motivation.

It has been widely an accepted belief that generally in any educational context, and more specifically in language teaching and learning, the instructors are required to specify their goals. Educational goals are necessary to carry out the process of teaching and are related to the main goal of the learner to obtain knowledge, information, or skills. Dweck (1988) explained educational goals as the learners' plan to progress skills, information, or competencies. Their specific goals advance the process of learning and they enthusiastically join in any challenging tasks as an occasion for learning and take failures into account as a preliminary stage of education.

Despite the importance of TLS, TI, and TGO, there are many questions regarding them that are not answered yet, particularly in EFL/ESL situations. Although there is considerable separated literature on TLS, TI, and TGO as well as their relationship with different variables in many contexts, it can still draw the attention of some researchers in conducting some studies to assess their relationship with each other, especially in the context of Iran. Considering the above-mentioned discussion, current researchers attempted to pay attention to this issue and examine possible relationships among the TLS, TI, and TGO variables.

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

The literature contains numerous studies on individual teacher variations in general pedagogy and specifically in language instruction. Individual differences among teachers are widely regarded as crucial factors in professional education and teacher performance. Consequently, factors such as leadership style, immunity, and goal orientation influence the teaching and learning processes in the context of foreign language acquisition. The individual differences given below are briefly discussed.

#### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE (TRLS)**

Virkus (2009) declared that the concept of leadership was originally investigated in various settings such as the military. Later, some theories were established based on the findings of research in such domains but it is currently utilized in other areas such as education. As a result of new improvements related to language teaching, the concept of EFL/ESL teachers' leadership style emerged and the teachers are considered leaders in their classes.

Firmansyah et al. (2022) claimed that there is no complete agreement among researchers regarding leadership and leaders' responsibility in learning settings. For instance, Yukl et al. (2002) claimed that real leadership is the natural flow by which teachers affect others in the way that they realize and approve what should be completed and how it can be completed for effectiveness. On the other hand, Basar et al. (2021) believed that "leaders are people who are in a position of trust and are responsible for managing an organization" (p. 1940). Cooper and Nirenberg (2004) proposed that leadership responsibility is the fruitful practice of personal influence by someone to accomplish of common aims in a way that it cannot dissatisfy any stakeholders.

The introduction of teacher leadership was necessitated by changes in educational settings. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) explained teachers' leadership as a process through which the teachers affect the members of the educational setting which consequently aims to endorse student learning. Certain scholars propose that providing a definitive and coherent definition of teacher leadership is unfeasible due to its varying meanings and functions across different contexts. Frost (2010) associated teacher leadership with initiating actions to enhance practice, strategically collaborating with colleagues to implement change, gathering and utilizing evidence in collaborative processes, and

facilitating the creation and dissemination of professional knowledge. To this definition, educators are advised to enhance their competencies and expertise in particular domains.

The concept of TRLS was originally proposed by Burns (1978), and then advanced by Bass (1985). He explained that TRLS is a skill that supports employees' responsiveness to the organization's benefits and encourages employees to mature in their interests. It has been stated that TRLS includes motivating others and predicting attractive and hopeful future states to inspire followers. Avolio and Bass (1991, 2002) developed the Full Range Leadership model. According to this model, three main sorts of leadership are introduced as follows.

1. Transformational
2. Transactional
3. Laissez-faire leadership

Hyseni Duraku and Hoxha (2021) assert that transformational and transactional leadership represent two opposing ends of a continuum. Consequently, their central variances are readily comprehensible. Bass (1997) explained that transactional leaders respond according to their members' actions and efforts with instantaneous prizes for the observed behaviors. Conversely, TRLS educates followers about the significance of the repercussions and provides assistance. These leaders enhance awareness in accordance with the organization's standards and assist supporters in elevating their needs to higher levels. TRLS is related to a leader's skill to create thoughts, inspire others, and change their aptitudes to reach special successes. Anjilus et al. (2019) reported that it can enhance the teachers' effective performance and guarantee their job satisfaction.

Burns (1978) highlighted the connection between leaders and followers across different leadership styles. TRLS, however, places significant emphasis on the topic of encouragement. Transformational leaders significantly inspire followers to fulfill higher needs and aspirations, ultimately advancing toward the complete development of the followers (Burns, 1978, p.4). Transformational leaders, through motivation, choose to cultivate and enhance their followers' sense of identity and self-awareness. The subsequent style, termed transactional leadership style, pertains to an exchange of valued entities (Stephenson, 2008). Bolden et al. (2003) elucidated that transactional leaders significantly influence others through the implementation of reward and punishment mechanisms. Furthermore, it significantly emphasizes a contractual framework through which leaders assess the loyalty or commitment of their followers.

### **TEACHER IMMUNITY**

Teacher immunity is a new metaphor originally borrowed from the field of medicine. Immunity stems from the Latin word "immunize" and designates the situation of resistance in contradiction of something (Hiver, 2016b). Hiver (2015) introduced the concept of Teacher Identity (TI) as a product of an interdisciplinary approach, necessitating careful examination to understand the factors influencing teachers' retention or resignation in their careers. According to Hiver (2017), TI is characterized as a "robust armoring system that emerges in response to high-intensity threats and enables teachers to sustain professional equilibrium and instructional effectiveness" (p. 669). Haseli Songhori et al. (2020) asserted that teacher immunity is a robust indicator of their success in overcoming adversity. Teacher immunity is introduced as a new concept termed "the self-established protective shield" (Sarıçoban & Kırmızı, 2021) that may "exert both benign and malign effects on the quality of the teaching profession" (Rahimpour et al., 2020, p. 74). "Teacher immunity may reconcile individual and situational issues in second language teacher education and the psychology of language instruction and acquisition" (Hiver, 2017, p. 669). The TI issue proposes a framework delineating the processes by which educators endeavor to establish a protective mechanism to mitigate the impact of adverse disruptions that may jeopardize their professional identity and motivation to teach. (Hiver, 2016b). MacIntyre et al. (2019) claimed that TI, in its constructive representation, protects teachers from the special effects of specific challenges arising from their personalities.

### **DIFFERENT KINDS OF TEACHER IMMUNITY**

Like any medicine that preserves humans and sometimes produces incurable damage to organs, TI can lead to negative results. Some researchers discussed two kinds of TI productive (positive) and maladaptive (negative). Haseli Songhori

et al. (2018) declared that productive or maladaptive symbols of TI refer to how teachers succeed in or fail to overcome hardships in language classes.

Hiver (2016b) proposed more global TI forms:

1. Productively immunized: teachers with a healthy system of teacher immunity
2. Partially immunized: teachers who have some flexible and beneficial elements of completely immunized teachers
3. Maladaptive immunized: teachers who have some counterproductive elements of teacher immunity
4. Partially maladaptive immunized: teachers who have partial features of the disadvantageous maladaptive system of teacher immunity
5. Immunocompromised teachers: teachers who have not any form of teacher immunity.

Hiver (2015b) explained productive immunity as a positive manner that offers confidence, eagerness, promise, pliability, and motivation for teachers, while maladaptive immunity leads to insensitivity, apathy, traditionalism, cynicism, and emotional and physical tiredness.

### TEACHER GOAL ORIENTATION

The objective is regarded as one of the most crucial factors in any educational environment. "Teachers' objectives have been demonstrated to significantly impact their commitment and are among the most critical motivational factors in their professional development" (Royaei et al., 2020, p.2). Block and Burn (1976) introduced the concept of TGO, which was thoroughly delineated by Butler (2007). Many years ago, Dweck (1988) asserted that TGO "can be defined as situated orientations for action in an achievement task" (Dweck, 1988, as cited in Ertem et al., 2021, p.205). TGO generally denotes that educators adhere to objectives within diverse social achievement contexts (Ames, 1992). Yıldızlı (2021) posited that goal orientations correlate with the objectives individuals establish for themselves and affect the actions they undertake to achieve those objectives. Pintrich (2000) posited that TGO is an exclusively motivational belief that addresses the following inquiries:

1. Why people need to complete a given task;
2. Why they need to be fruitful;
3. How they decide on the principles of achievement whilst ending the task.

Royaei et al. (2020) claimed that TGO is a motivation-related notion affecting professional performance and attainment. To achieve final educational aims, many variables are interacting with each other. To Ucar and Yazıcı (2016), the main variables that influence individuals in this regard are "goal orientation constructs" (p.15). Furthermore, the curriculum and pedagogical autonomy of educators is associated with their goal orientation" (Ertem et al., 2021, p.203). Kalali Sani et al. (2021) assert that it is essential for EFL/ESL educators to establish their professional objectives "to be regarded as professionals" (p. 139). Additionally, Yildizli et al. (2016) believed that TGO determines why teachers select a goal, how they gain it, and how the presentation is assessed. Nitsche et al. (2011) asserted that individuals' goal orientation significantly influences their competence development. Retelsdorf, et al. (2010) asserted that the goal construct is instrumental in assessing individuals' motivation. Royaei et al. (2020) emphasized that the goal orientation of EFL/ESL teachers significantly influences the quality of their commitment and is a crucial motivational factor in their professional development (p.2).

A substantial amount of prior research has focused on students' goal orientation (Nitsche et al., 2011). Butler (2007) posited that achievement goal theory is relevant for clarifying teacher motivation and its consequences, founded on the notion that schools and classrooms function as achievement contexts for both students and educators. Research indicates that achievement goal orientation, a theory of academic motivation, significantly influences the teaching and learning environment (Ucar & Yazıcı, 2016). This concept pertains to the commitments and objectives individuals hold within a profession. This concept has primarily been employed to evaluate learners' motivation for learning, but it has more recently been utilized to assess teachers' motivation (Butler, 2007).

### EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Hassanalipour Shahrabadi et al. (2023) performed a study to examine the correlation between the language proficiency, teaching experience, and leadership style of Iranian EFL teachers. The Pearson correlation coefficient

indicated a substantial correlation between TRLS factors and teaching experience. Regression analysis revealed that the primary predictor of teachers' TRLS was their years of experience. A substantial correlation was observed between TRLS elements and participants' proficiency levels, offering new insight for policymakers and educators. Gumah et al. (2021) analyzed the impact of supervisors' leadership styles on teachers' self-efficacy. Reports indicate that supervisors' leadership styles significantly enhance teachers' self-efficacy. Moreover, leadership style profoundly impacts the quality of feedback. Basar et al. (2021) aimed to determine the relationship between Teacher Leadership Styles (TLS) and job satisfaction among educators. Their findings demonstrated that TRLS substantially affects teachers' job satisfaction. Noland and Richards (2014) proposed a positive correlation between teachers' transformational leadership and students' effective learning outcomes. Bogler et al. (2013) examined teachers' leadership styles in virtual environments and found a positive correlation between teachers' transformational leadership and student satisfaction. Khany and Ghoreishi (2013) aimed to identify a relationship between EFL teachers' leadership styles, classroom management strategies, and reflective thinking. The findings demonstrated a substantial internal correlation between the primary and secondary scales of the study.

In a study, Khazaenezhad and Davoudinasab (2022) found a noteworthy positive correlation between TI facets and personality kinds. The most dominant TI facets and personality types were teaching conscientiousness and self-efficacy. In another study, Rahimpour et al. (2020) tried to propose a model of factors forecasting language teacher immunity. Their participants were 483 Iranian teachers. They reported that job insecurity meaningfully generates maladaptive immunity and reflective teaching advanced adaptive immunity. Ordem (2017) examined the immunity and motivation of Turkish language educators utilizing semi-structured interviews, diary entries, and online student feedback. The case study illustrated the adverse impact of student demotivation on the teacher, leading to erratic behavior and reduced teacher motivation. The findings indicated the teacher's continual contemplation of past actions and the potential ideal self within the classroom environment. Haseli Songhori et al. (2020) examined teacher identity among Iranian EFL educators to identify its origins, impacts, and developmental trajectory. They performed qualitative research to address the gap in the current literature on TI. Their objective was to examine potential sources of TI among English educators, the effect of immunity on teachers' classroom practices, and intervention strategies proposed by English teachers to enhance immunity development. The researchers interviewed 13 seasoned high school EFL teachers and identified four primary stressors contributing to maladaptive teacher identity: organization-based, personal-level, school-level, and sociocultural stressors.

Royaei, et al. (2020) researched the contribution of EFL teachers' attitudes toward their learners' attainment of their TGO. Moreover, by correlational analysis, they searched for the connection between their TGO and organizational commitment. The final results revealed that mastery of TGO had a constructive association with teachers' organizational commitment. Further, based on the teachers' views of their students' attainment, results revealed that learner-related elements had a high relation with mastery TGO. Kalali Sani et al. (2021) investigated the correlation between the professional identity of Iranian EFL teachers (TPI) and teacher growth orientation (TGO). The objective was to ascertain the relationship between the professional identity of Iranian EFL teachers and TGO. The final results indicated a significant and positive correlation between TGO and TPI. Furthermore, personal teaching efficacy was established as the most significant predictor of TPI. Ucar and Yazıcı (2016) investigated the self-efficacy perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers and TGO. Their final results revealed that several participants exhibited multiple specific TGOs. The performance and proficiency of TGO exhibited various aspects of motivation. Furthermore, the findings indicated multiple positive correlations between self-efficacy beliefs and TGO. Moghimi (2020) conducted a study asserting that students' goal orientation is an aspect of educational motivation that clarifies the reasons for their engagement in achievement tasks. The main objective was to identify the significant achievements of goal orientation among Iranian EFL learners while examining the relationship between students' progress goals, learning strategies, and academic performance. The final results revealed that mastery goal was the primary goal orientation among Iranian EFL learners.

Considering the importance given to TI, TRLS, and TGO, as was put above, the present study aims to examine their relationships by applying SEM. Although there is considerable literature on TI, TRLS, and TGO as well as their relationship with different variables in many contexts, it can still draw the attention of some researchers in conducting some studies to assess their relationship with each other, especially in Iran. These variables have gained significance in the recent decade and researchers focused on the issue and explored different components of them about other variables. Consequently, the current research expanded upon prior studies by proposing a model of potential



relationships among specified variables utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM). A more detailed model (Figure 1) was employed to examine the potential relationship among teachers' transformational leadership style, goal orientation, and immunity.

#### Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style, Immunity, and Goal Orientation

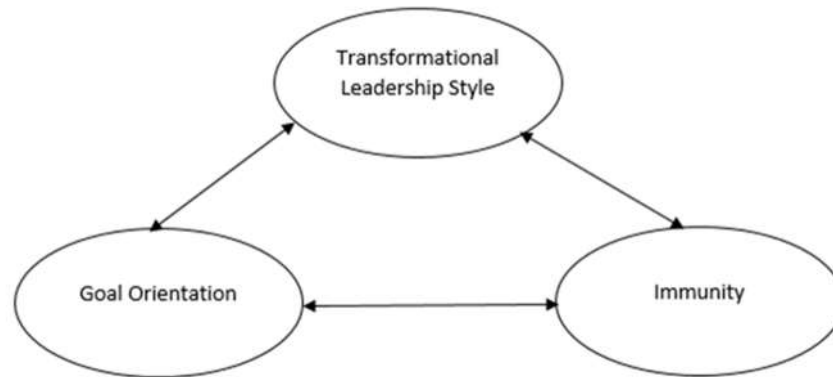


Figure 1: *The Initial Hypothesized Model of the Relations among the Main Variables*

This study posed the following research question concerning Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style, Goal Orientation, and Immunity:

Is there any significant relationship among Iranian EFL Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style, Immunity, and Goal Orientation?

## METHODOLOGY

### PARTICIPANTS

Totally 100 Iranian English teachers participated in this study. They were selected through the convenience sampling method due to easy access to them, their availability at a given time, and their willingness to participate in the research. The utmost effort was made to choose those who had studied TEFL, but since this sample could hardly be gathered, others who had studied other majors but had gained a relevant teaching certificate were not excluded. Most of them had at least three years of EFL teaching experience. The subjects were chosen from different parts of Iran, mostly from Mashhad, Bojnord, Ilam, Sari, and Tehran cities.

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 1 shows information about the participants' gender, work context, academic degree, academic major, and years of experience. As can be seen, 40% of them were male and 60% female. They worked in different types of contexts: 51% of them taught in state schools, 21% in private schools, 17% in language institutes, and 11% in colleges. 55% of teachers held a BA, 35% MA, and 10% PhD. Regarding the subjects' academic major, most of them had studied English Language Teaching (75%), 10% of them English Literature, but the fewest Linguistics (5%). 10% of the teachers had a major irrelevant to English. The participants were instructed to assess their teaching experience in five-year increments. 30% possessed less than five years of experience, 20% had between six and ten years, 25% between eleven and fifteen years, 10% between sixteen and twenty years, and 15% had over twenty-one years of teaching experience.

**Table 1**

*Demographic information of participants*

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Valid	Male	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
		Female	60	60.0	60.0	100.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Work Context</b>	Valid	State School	51	51.0	51.0	51.0
		Private School	21	21.0	21.0	72.0
		Language Institute	17	17.0	17.0	89.0
		College	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Academic Degree</b>	Valid	Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)	55	55.0	55.0	55.0
		Master of Arts (M.A.)	35	35.0	35.0	90.0
		Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Academic Major</b>	Valid	English Language Teaching	75	75.0	75.0	75.0
		English Literature	10	10.0	10.0	85.0
		Linguistics	5	5.0	5.0	90.0
		Other	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Experience (in years)</b>	Valid	0-5	30	30.0	30.0	30.0
		6-10	20	20.0	20.0	50.0
		11-15	25	25.0	25.0	75.0
		16-20	10	10.0	10.0	85.0
		21-25	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### INSTRUMENTATION

In order to conduct this study, three instruments were applied, each of which will be explained below.

#### MULTIFACTOR LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE (MLQ) FORM 6S

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, developed by Bass and Avolio in 1993, was used in this study. It consists of seven dimensions: idealized influence behavior (3 items), inspirational motivation (3 items), intellectual stimulation (3 items), individualized consideration (3 items), contingent reward (3 items), management-by-exception (3 items), and Laissez-Faire leadership (3 items). The instrument includes 21 items evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale defined as follows: 1 (not at all), 2 (occasionally), 3 (sometimes), 4 (fairly often), and 5 (frequently, if not always). The documented reliability of this questionnaire varies between .74 and .94 (May, 2010; Sutherland, 2010). Bagheri et al. (2015) assessed the reliability of MLQ-6S in the context of Iran using Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients. They reported that it achieved good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.719$ ; split-half = 0.664), meeting common psychometric standards. They also examined the tool's validity and the values of GFI=94.0, AGFI=91.0, CFI=88.0, NFI=85.0, IFI=87.0, RMR=04.0, and RMSEA= 06.0 confirmed its validity.

#### TEACHERS' IMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

The instrument consisted of 39 items and seven subscales: teaching self-efficacy (e.g., "I possess sufficient training and experience to address nearly any learning issue in the classroom."), burnout (e.g., "I perceive that teaching is desensitizing me emotionally."), resilience (e.g., "Setbacks enhance my determination to excel as an educator."), attitudes toward teaching (e.g., "Teaching is my vocation, and I cannot envision relinquishing it."), openness to change (e.g., "I remain patient when confronted with ambiguous answers or solutions to my teaching challenges."), classroom affectivity (e.g., "During teaching, I frequently experience feelings of depression."), and coping (e.g., "In times of

significant stress, I tend to evade contemplation or action regarding the situation."). Participants indicated their agreement with the items using a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 displayed strong agreement and 6 displayed strong disagreement. Using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, the reliability index of .82 ( $r = .82$ ) was obtained. To test the validity of the questionnaire, the present study conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA results demonstrated that the goodness of fit indices indicated a good model fit ( $X^2 /sd = 1.75$ ; RMSEA = .05; CFI = .94; GFI = .87).

### **TEACHERS' GOAL ORIENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire comprises 16 items related to teaching methodologies (4 items on mastery approaches and 5 items on performance approaches) and the efficacy of personal teaching (7 items), exhibiting acceptable reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha = 0.69, 0.69, and 0.74, respectively). The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was acceptable (0.90). Confirmatory factor analysis showed that the scale had an appropriate goodness of fit ( $X^2 /sd = 1.75$ ; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .86; GFI = .89).

### **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Access to the participants was possible via social media. In order to gather and classify the data, the researcher used Google forms and first included immunity questionnaire items. The link to the Google form was shared among EFL teachers in all cities via email and groups on Telegram and WhatsApp. The link was sent to teachers in other provinces and they were asked to share it in Telegram and WhatsApp groups, too. All the questions were answered based on a 6-measure scale.

To prevent the tiredness of participants as well as increase their focus on the items, the next questionnaire was administered after some days. Like the administration of the immunity questionnaire, the same procedure was used for gathering the data from Iranian EFL teachers in different provinces regarding their goal orientation and transformational leadership style. After asking for their demographic information, they answered the items on the Google forms, being marked as required to avoid having missing data. The link was shared among them in their groups accompanied with the researchers' instructions explaining how they could fill the form.

After finishing the data-gathering phase, the researchers converted the spreadsheets, containing the data obtained from the forms, to values defined in SPSS to examine the association among variables. Meanwhile, the researchers proposed a model based on structural equation modeling to connect the subscales and clarify the type of relationships among variables and their components by means of Amos software.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

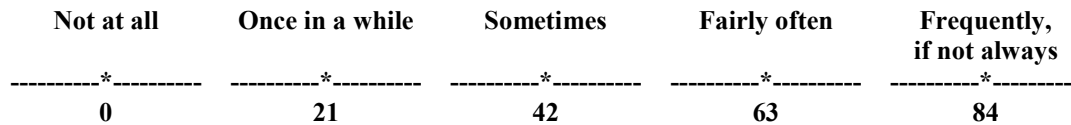
Structural Equation Model analysis was conducted utilizing AMOS version 21 to evaluate the relationships within our path model. We used AMOS because it excels in covariance-based SEM, offering extensive tools for confirmatory factor analysis and structural modeling. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) comprises two phases: exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis encompasses statistical methods, including the KMO-Bartlett Test and Reproduced Correlation Matrix, utilized to ascertain the optimal number of variables in a study. Confirmatory factor analysis seeks to validate the proposed model by assessing the relationships among the primary scales and subscales through goodness of fit indices. Hoyle and Panter (1995) utilized the following fit indices to evaluate the hypothesized model: RMSEA  $\leq .06$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999), chi-square ( $\chi$ , e.g., Bollen, 1989a), goodness-of-fit index (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996), normed fit index (NFI)  $\geq .90$  (Segars & Grover, 1993), Incremental Fit Index (Bollen, 1989b), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI, Bentler, 1990). The GFI, IFI, and CFI values span from 0 to 1.0, with values approaching 1.0 typically signifying superior model fit (Holl & Panter, 1995). Moreover, loading factors demonstrate strong correlations between each subscale and the latent variables. Additional statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation, were conducted to demonstrate the model's path estimates. The results are elaborated in the subsequent section.

### **RESULTS**

Several statistical methods were employed to address the question raised in the present research. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the Transformational Leadership Style variable and its associated scales. The



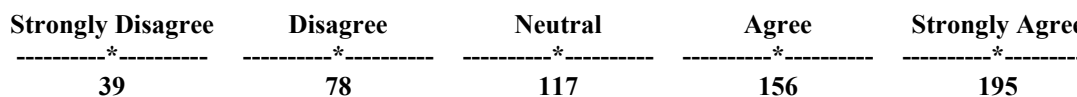
Transformational Leadership Style of educators was evaluated utilizing the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, consisting of 21 items on a 5-point Likert scale, which includes the following dimensions: idealized influence behavior (3 items), inspirational motivation (3 items), intellectual stimulation (3 items), individualized consideration (3 items), contingent reward (3 items), management-by-exception (3 items), and Laissez-Faire leadership (3 items). A score of 78 signifies the highest level in this table, while 61 denotes the lowest rate. The mean is 69.12. The data plotted on the axis below indicates that the Mean of Transformational Leadership Style is at an average level. Upon comparing the means of the scales to the relevant minimum and maximum scores, it is evident that they also align with the average level.



**Table 2**  
*Descriptive statistics for Transformational Leadership Style*

Variables	N (Ss)	N (Items)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Min.	Max.
Transformational Leadership Style	100	21	69.12	3.98	.02	61.00	78.00
Idealized Influence	100	3	9.55	2.21	.07	4.00	15.00
Inspirational Motivation	100	3	10.50	1.60	1.01	8.00	15.00
Intellectual Stimulation	100	3	8.55	2.79	.10	3.00	15.00
Individual Consideration	100	3	10.65	1.53	.69	8.00	15.00
Contingent Reward	100	3	9.45	1.91	1.12	7.00	15.00
Management-by-Exception	100	3	10.55	1.81	.54	8.00	15.00
Laissez-Faire Leadership	100	3	10.50	1.66	.56	8.00	15.00

The Teachers' Immunity was assessed using the Teachers' Immunity Questionnaire, comprising 39 items across seven dimensions: Teaching Self-efficacy (7 items), Burnout at School (5 items), Resilience (5 items), Attitudes toward Teaching (5 items), Openness to Change (6 items), Classroom Affectivity (6 items), and Coping (5 items). As can be seen in Table 3, the highest score is 139, and the lowest score is 122 with a Mean of 130.15. If we draw the data on an axis, the Mean of Teachers' Immunity is at the average level. If we Compare the Means of scales to the pertinent minimum and maximum scores, we can see that they fall at the average level too.



**Table 3**  
*Descriptive statistics for Teachers' Immunity*

Variables	N (Ss)	N (Items)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Min.	Max.
Teachers' Immunity	100	39	130.15	4.02	.03	122.00	139.00
Teaching Self-efficacy	100	7	21.05	3.29	.25	15.00	28.00
Burnout at school	100	5	15.20	2.99	1.81	11.00	25.00
Resilience	100	5	18.25	3.16	-.15	12.00	25.00
Attitudes toward Teaching	100	5	16.04	2.11	-.23	10.00	21.00
Openness to Change	100	6	59.12	7.25	-1.85	30.00	30.00
Classroom Affectivity	100	6	61.12	4.26	.79	14	23
Coping	100	5	17.13	3.97	.87	12	25

Teachers' Goal Orientation was measured by a Goal Orientation Questionnaire having 16 items with the following subcategories: Mastery Approaches (4 items), Performance Approaches (5 items), and Personal Teaching Efficacy (7 items). As can be observed in Table 4, the highest score is 59, the lowest score is 42, and the Mean is 50.82. If we draw the data on an axis, the Mean of Teachers' Goal Orientation is at the average level. Comparing the Means of scales to the pertinent minimum and maximum scores, we can see that they fall at the average level too.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-----*	-----*	-----*	-----*	-----*
16	32	48	64	80

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive statistics for Teachers' Goal Orientation*

Variables	N	N (Items)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Min.	Max.
Teachers' Goal Orientation	100	16	50.82	4.07	-.08	42.00	59.00
Mastery Approaches	100	4	13.37	1.34	.68	12.00	16.00
Performance Approaches	100	5	15.10	2.57	-.09	10.00	20.00
Personal Teaching Efficacy	100	7	21.91	3.77	-.98	13.00	28.00

Table 5 shows correlations among the main variables of the study, namely, transformational leadership, goal orientation, and immunity. As can be observed, there is a statistically significant correlation of .41 between teachers' transformational leadership style and their immunity at the .01 level. A correlation of .28 signifies a statistically significant relationship between teachers' goal orientation and immunity at the .01 level. Goal orientation and transformational leadership style are also related meaningfully ( $r = .37, <.01$ ).

**Table 5**  
*Correlation matrix of the main variables*

	Transformational Leadership Style	Goal Orientation	Immunity
Transformational Leadership Style	1		
Goal Orientation	.37**	1	
Immunity	.41**	.28**	1

We evaluated the goodness of fit indices for the model utilizing the maximum likelihood estimation method in AMOS version 21. To evaluate the sufficiency of the proposed model, the following fit indices were utilized: chi-square ( $\chi$ ), RMSEA  $\leq .06$ , goodness-of-fit index (GFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Normal Fit Index (NFI)  $\geq .90$ , and comparative fit index (CFI). GFI, IFI, and CFI values range from 0 to 1.0, with values closer to 1.0 often indicating better fitting. Table 6 demonstrates that eight statistical metrics evaluated the model's fit.

**Table 6**

*Structural Equation Model: Fit statistics*

Evaluation	Acceptable level	Current level	Fit statistics
Normal chi-Square	$(\chi^2/df) < 5$	1.15	Accept
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation	RMSEA $< .05$	.03	Accept
Root Mean Squared Residual	RMR $\geq 0$	.04	Accept
Goodness-of-Fit Index	GFI $> .9$	.94	Accept
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index	AGFI $> .85$	.92	Accept
Normal Fit Index or Bentler-Bonett Index	NFI $> .90$	.95	Accept
Comparative Fit Index	CFI $> .90$	.95	Accept
Incremental Fit Index	IFI $> .90$	.95	Accept

Table 6 demonstrates that all indices are satisfactory for the transformational leadership style, goal orientation, and immunity model ( $\chi^2/df = 1.15$ ; RMSEA = .03; RMR = .04; GFI = .94; AGFI = .92; NFI = .95; CFI = .95; IFI = .95). Figure 2 presents the schematic representation of the model along with the standardized path correlations among the primary variables and subscales. Insignificant pathways were excluded from the final model.

#### **TEACHERS' TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE, GOAL ORIENTATION, AND IMMUNITY**

As it is illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 5, positive inter-group correlations were found ( $r = .41$  between transformational leadership style and immunity,  $r = .37$  between transformational leadership style and goal orientation, and  $r = .28$  between goal orientation and immunity). At the same time, significant correlations are observed between the main variables and their pertinent subscales. Transformational leadership style and its 7 subscales are highly correlated; the same is true with goal orientation and immunity.

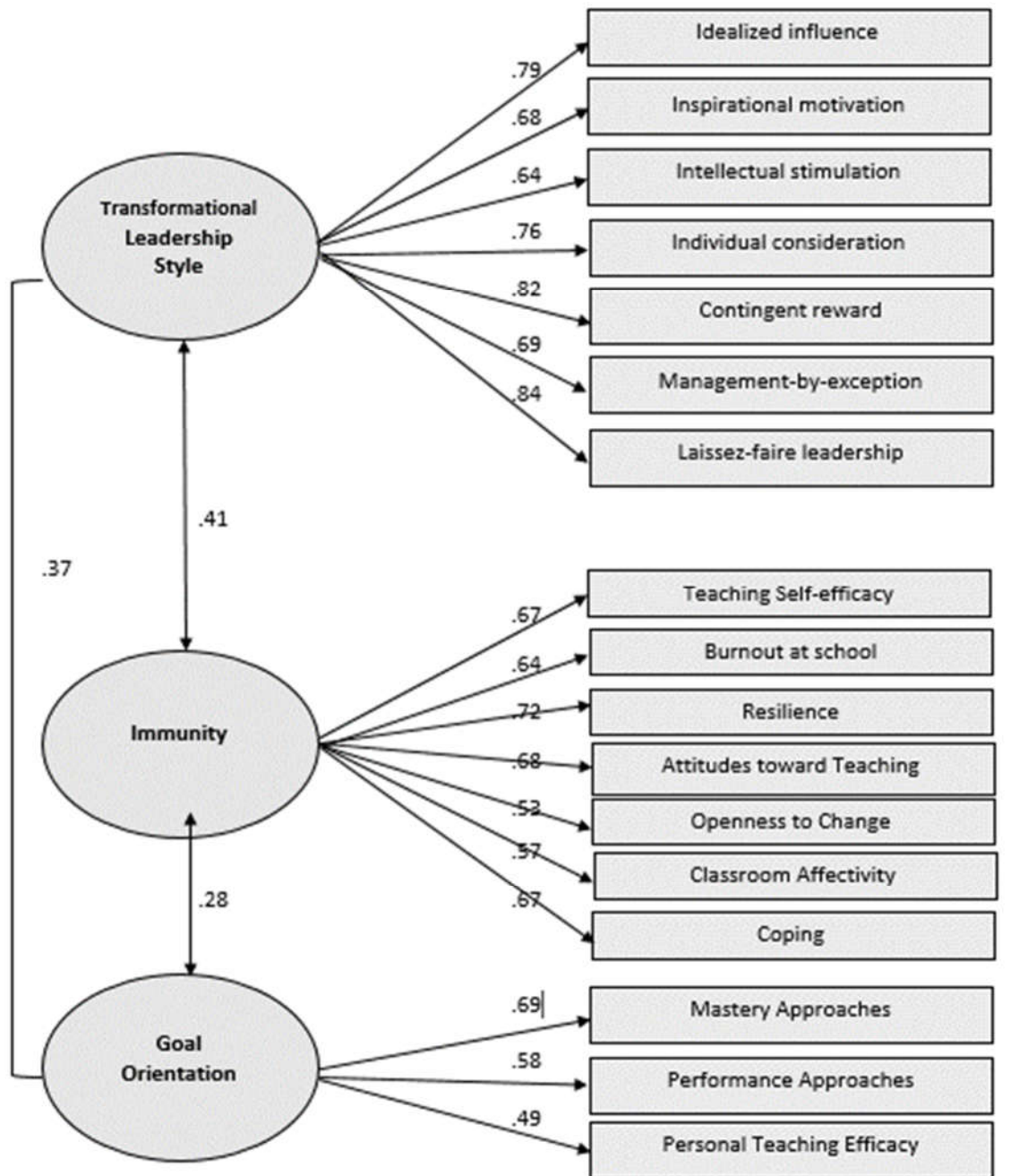


Figure 2: Structural Equation Modeling in Standardized Estimate

### DISCUSSION

This study's results indicated that teachers' transformational leadership style was correlated with both their immunity and goal orientation, as well as the specific categories associated with each. They exhibited a significant correlation between teachers' transformational leadership style and their immunity and goal orientation, as well as between their immunity and goal orientation. Consequently, the proposed model received validation.

This finding aligns with the results of many research projects which have been done so far (Ahmadi et al., 2020; Azari Noughabi et al., 2022; Gumah et al., 2021; Haseli Songhori et al., 2018; Herzberg et al., 1959; Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, 2021; Khany & Ghoreishi, 2013; Khazaeenezhad & Davoudinasab, 2022; Maghsoudi, 2021; Ordem, 2017; Rahimpour et al., 2020; Rahmati et al., 2019; Salinas, 2012; Sariçoban & Kırmızı, 2021). The research findings indicate that school administrators had better create conditions that enable teachers to perform optimally in the classroom. Schools have transitioned from conventional management styles to a transformational approach, resulting in enhancement. Conversely, managers may exemplify motivation and exemplary performance to positively impact the engagement and motivation of teachers as a behavioral paradigm.

As the first finding of this study, the transformational leadership of teachers was found to correlate with their immunity which is reflected in some other studies too. Gumah et al. (2021) reported that supervisors' leadership styles had a significant positive effect on teachers' self-efficacy. Bateh and Heyliger (2014) demonstrated that faculty members who recognized transformational leadership as predominant exhibited enhanced performance. Herzberg et al. (1959) demonstrated that TLS significantly influences teachers' job satisfaction. Salinas (2012) concluded that teacher effectiveness is significantly correlated with transformational leadership. He added that teachers with transformational leadership styles enjoy higher satisfaction and perceived effectiveness. Khany and Ghoreishi (2013) found that reflective thinking and TLS advance teachers' effectiveness in classroom management and teaching. Hyseni Duraku and Hoxha (2021) also found that transformational leadership features predict independent inspiration in teachers. It should not be forgotten that the implementation of teachers' leadership style should be adjusted according to the conditions that exist in today's educational institutions. Effective leadership depends on the context or situation. The Fiedler Contingency Model (Fiedler, 1967), for instance, emphasizes the match between a leader's style and the demands of the situation. Every leader is expected to have an ideal leadership style based on the conditions and demands of the age. In addition to the lack of awareness of leaders about the changing teacher leadership in the 21st century, not all teachers have the ability to adapt to the demands of change. Different leaders should adapt to the demands of society and current conditions. Ideal leadership arises from the teachers' competence in managing their classes. Since teachers are role models for other teachers, students, and all members of the school, having this character competence is very important for leaders. A teacher, as a leader, must be able to prevent conflict in the school from occurring in the first place, and in cases where this is not possible, must be able to demonstrate a high degree of conflict management with a high degree of tolerance. To achieve high levels of performance, a teacher needs the ability to manage conflict in his work, because human life is full of conflict situations. Okwechime (2009) says "From the moment we open our eyes at dawn to the point at which we click off at night we are engaged in situations of conflict and conflict resolution" (p. 191).

Second, teachers' immunity was also found, in this research, to be correlated with their goal orientation. This finding actually confirms the results of previous studies. Khazaeenezhad and Davoudinasab (2022) revealed a noteworthy positive correlation between TI facets and personality kinds. The most dominant TI facets and personality types were teaching conscientiousness and self-efficacy. Their findings may assist EFL teachers in understanding how to address diverse challenging and adverse situations in English instruction based on their personality and TI types. Azari Noughabi et al. (2022) found that EFL teachers' immunity was significantly affected by their work engagement and L2 grit. Furthermore, the work engagement of EFL teachers was discovered to be a less significant predictor of their teacher identity than L2 grit. Maghsoudi (2021) asserted that a positive or productive type of immunity predominated among the student-teachers. Meanwhile, the results showed that the years of education were noteworthy to determine the immunity levels of the student-teachers. Rahimpour et al. (2020) reported that job insecurity meaningfully generates maladaptive immunity and reflective teaching advanced adaptive immunity. Rahmati et al. (2019) identified low self-confidence, lack of student motivation, low income, restricted opportunities, insufficient time for English instruction, parental expectations, and negative attitudes toward English as the primary factors affecting language teachers' immunity. Ordem (2017) demonstrated the detrimental effect of students' lack of motivation on teachers, resulting in erratic behavior and diminished teacher motivation. The findings indicated the teacher's continual contemplation of his past actions and his potential ideal self within the classroom environment. Haseli Songhori et al. (2018) discovered that incompatible security was prevalent among Iranian English educators. Haseli Songhori et al. (2020) determined that altruistic motivation is the sole factor contributing to the expansion of positive teacher identity in EFL educators. In addition, they concluded that positive TI among EFL teachers leads them to keep working successfully in their language classes, while maladaptive TI among EFL teachers leads to a





state of meaninglessness towards their learners and satisfaction without exercising intervention. Furthermore, the results showed that to influence the dissemination of adaptive TI, the financial situation of teachers should be strengthened by increasing their income, admiring their efforts, creating practical lessons for in-service teacher training, and helping them in schools by other education officials.

Next, teachers' transformational leadership was discovered to be correlated with their goal orientation. This investigation's findings indicated a robust correlation between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy which is consistent with Khany and Ghoreishi's results (2013). Consequently, school administrators are anticipated to motivate teachers to reassess fundamental assumptions, promote diverse perspectives on issues, propose innovative methodologies, and evaluate task execution and completion (Ucar & Yazıcı, 2016). The aforementioned causes the opening of new horizons in the way of looking at problems and how to do work, creating new knowledge in the field of existing problems and activities, and easier acceptance of proposed solutions by teachers and empowering them in turn. Thus, school managers are expected to draw hopeful futures for inspiring teachers. Hope for the future is one of the mechanisms emphasized by new leadership theories. In this regard, it is necessary for school managers to emphasize the importance of foresight, by formulating high-level and achievable goals, to arouse seriousness and enthusiasm in teachers and to create optimistic views about the future in them (Yildizli, 2021). It has also been discovered that transformational leadership has a good and remarkable influence on teachers' efficiency. If transformational leadership is implemented well, it will increase the performance of teachers (Retelsdorf, et al., 2010).

Another finding of this investigation was that goal orientation factors were significant in shaping the Iranian EFL teachers' immunity. Among the factors, the highest correlation was associated with personal teaching efficacy and immunity. Based on this, school administrators are expected to monitor all teachers and learn about their status and conditions. Managers should recognize the needs, abilities, and creativity of teachers while knowing their individual situations and allocating time to guide and train them, and setting plans for the development and expansion of these abilities. Accordingly, school administrators are expected to strengthen their tools of influence on teachers and provide their own role models. In order to develop and create an ideal influencing factor, school administrators can consider the following: Disregarding personal interests for the sake of group interests, showing strength and self-confidence, communicating with teachers by talking about their basic beliefs and values, facilitating greater cooperation and participation of teachers with administrators by creating a common vision and clarifying the importance of a strong commitment to the goal, creating a healthy competitive atmosphere to develop the potential capacities of employees by providing material and spiritual rewards to teachers and superior groups, strengthening the spirit of collectivism instead of individualism by creating work teams and providing rewards based on the participation and cooperation of team members. These actions can lead to increasing cohesion among members.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study provides empirical evidence on the relationship among Iranian English language teachers' transformational leadership style, immunity, and goal orientation. The results derived from the structural equation modeling approach indicated a significant correlation among these variables. The findings highlight the importance of encouraging transformational leadership style, immunity, and goal orientation to increase student engagement and improve language learning outcomes. They demonstrate the significant roles of these variables in educational enterprises due to their interrelation.

Such results undoubtedly provide for educational practitioners and teachers several implications:

1. Given the significant correlation between transformational leadership style and immunity with goal orientation, it is advisable for educators to assess these personal attributes of teachers and provide training prior to their employment.
2. The transformational leadership style of teacher leaders should be supported in education institutions.
3. In many cases, distributing administrative responsibilities among instructors can save on overall personnel costs.
4. Effective teacher leadership models and practices should be replicated in educational institutions.
5. Policymakers should provide adequate pre-service training for would-be teachers to make them aware of the challenges they may encounter in their profession, positive coping strategies to deal with these problems, and the concept of teacher immunity.



6. Educators should create a supportive learning environment that encourages skill development, personal growth, and the value of effort. By encouraging mastery goals, teachers can encourage students to take risks, engage deeply with content, and pursue challenges.

Ultimately, we must address the limitations of the current investigation. The study variables account for the majority of the observed variance, as demonstrated in the results section. This does not and should not mislead us to ignore other factors that may be explained by other individual attributes. The current study attempted to discover the hypothesized relationships among the variables; though for finding out cause-effect relations among them, one needs to plan experimental designs. It would also be useful to specify if other variables affect teachers' transformational leadership style, assertiveness, and goal orientation. The analyses in this study relied on self-reported data; various researchers, however, have reported the need to complement self-reported data with classroom observations to overcome the validity challenges of teachers' self-reports (e.g., Dignath & Veenman, 2021)

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