Research Paper

Effort-reward Imbalance and Burnout among EFL Teachers in Iran

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Abstract
Understanding the relationship between job stressors and burnout among English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher using the Effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model in Iran is under-researched. Through a cross-sectional research design, the study aimed at investigating the EFL teachers' burnout using the variables in ERI model. To this aim, 105 EFL teachers filled in ERI questionnaire and Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES). The quantitative data were analyzed through Pearson correlation coefficient analysis to examine the relationship between variables in ERI model and burnout dimension. The results indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between effort and overcommitment and all three burnout dimensions but a negative relationship between reward subscale and depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. The multiple regression analysis was also used to identify ERI subscales as predictors of burnout dimensions. The results revealed that ERI model variables had a moderate amount of variation in depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment and a small amount of variation in emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: *Teacher Burnout, ERI Model, EFL Teachers, Job Stress*

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رابطه بین عوامل استرس زای شغلی و فرسودگی شغلی در بین معلمان انگلیسی

درک رابطه بین عوامل استرس زای شغلی و فرسودگی شغلی در بین معلمان انگلیسی به عنوان یک زبان خارجی با استفاده از مدل در ایران مورد تحقیق قرار نگرفته است. از این رو از طریق یک طرح تحقیق مقطعی ، این مطالعه با هدف بررسی فرسودگی شغلی معلمان زبان انگلیسی با استفاده از متغیرهای موجود در مدل عدم تعادل تلاش-پاداش   انجام شد. برای این منظور ، 105 پرسشنامه عدم تعادل تلاش و پاداش و نظرسنجی فرسودگی شغلی توسط معلمان زبان انگلیسی پر شدند. داده های کمی از طریق تحلیل ضریب همبستگی پیرسون برای بررسی رابطه بین متغیرها در مدل عدم تعادل تلاش-پاداش و ابعاد فرسودگی شغلی تحلیل شد. نتایج نشان داد که بین تلاش و تعهد بیش از حد و هر سه بعد فرسودگی شغلی رابطه مثبت و معناداری وجود دارد اما بین خرده مقیاس پاداش و مسخ شخصیت و کاهش موفقیت شخصی رابطه منفی وجود دارد. از تحلیل رگرسیون چندگانه نیز برای شناسایی مهمترین تعیین کننده های زیر مقیاسهای مدل عدم تعادل تلاش-پاداش در فرسودگی شغلی استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد که متغیرهای مدل عدم تعادل تلاش-پاداش دارای مقدار متوسطی از تنوع در مسخ شخصیت و کاهش موفقیت شخصی و مقدار کمی تنوع در خستگی عاطفی را می باشند. نتایج نشان داد که عدم تعادل بین سیستم پاداش و تلاشی که معلمان در عمل انجام داده اند ، محتمل ترین دلیل فرسودگی شغلی آنها است.

واژگان کلیدی: فرسودگی شغلی، مدل عدم تعادل تلاش و پاداش، معلمان زبان انگلیسی، استرس شغلی

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Introduction

Teaching is a human service occupation (Skinner & Beers, 2016) replete with adversities and stressors. Teacher stress can be defined as the unpleasant emotions resulting from aspects of the work as a teacher (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The sources of stress are manifold in teaching contexts and one of the recent classifications has been documented by Greenberg, Brown, and Abenavoli (2016). These scholars have identified four major sources of stress teachers may face: 1) school organization (e.g., unfavorable working conditions and poor administrative support (Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020; Hong, 2014)); 2) job demands (e.g., heavy workloads, long working hours, and insufficient teaching time (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Rahmati, Sadeghi, & Ghaderi, 2019)); 3) work resources (e.g., lack of shared decision making and lack of personal autonomy (Skaalvik & Skaalvic, 2017)); and 4) social and emotional competence (e.g., conflicts with colleagues or parents (Cowie, 2011)). In addition, several empirical studies have also found the sources of stress in teachers, such as lack of consideration for the job of teaching, an inadequate salary in light of responsibilities, lack of facilities, student diversity, discipline problems, low student motivation, inappropriate supervision on teachers' work, value conflict, role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of feedback from colleagues and administration, lack of job mobility, and involuntary transfers (Schrier, 2008; Jones, 2016; Slišković, Burić, & Macuka, 2017; Haseli Songhori, Ghonsooly, & Afraz, 2018; Roohani & Dayeri, 2019; Chang & Taxer, 2020).

Prolonged exposure to work stressors has been shown to be linked with a wide variety of adverse physical, psychological, and psychosocial health outcomes (Violanti et al., 2018). One of the most salient psychological repercussions of the exposure to the stressors in educational environments such as schools is teacher burnout. Teacher burnout is so pervasive that catalyzes unprecedented rates of teacher attrition (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017; Bayani & Bagheri, 2018), especially among novice teachers, with high estimates ranging between 30% and 50% in some English-speaking countries like US, UK, and Australia during their first five years in the profession (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Burnout is defined as a "psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 103) and has three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and (reduced) personal accomplishment (Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2019).

Several models have been proposed to explain burnout based on theories about job and organizational stress: The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model (Siegrist, 2017), the job strain model (Karasek & Theorell, 1990), the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker, & Demerouti, 2007), and the Areas of Work-life (AW) model (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). What all these models have in common is that they put forward similar factors for explaining burnout, such as imbalance between efforts and rewards, insufficient respect, esteem, and recognition (Fortunatti & Palmeiro-Silva, 2017). Although the factors proposed by each model seem similar, factors in ERI model have yielded stronger and more consistent results in explaining burnout (Jachens, Houdmont, & Thomas, 2019). Theoretically speaking, this study aims to be the first in shedding light on and understanding the relationship between job stressors and burnout among English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher using the ERI model in Iran. Some studies mostly conducted in Western societies have dealt with teachers' stressful work and their health (Siegrist, 2017) using ERI model to account for the consequences of the imbalance between efforts spent and costs gained in workplace on the psychological health of the teachers (e.g., Unterbrink et al., 2007; Lehr, Hiller, & Keller, 2009; Zurlo, Pes, & Siegrist, 2010). To date, no studies conducted in Iran have taken into account the exploration of EFL teachers' burnout using the variables in ERI model. Like other teachers, EFL teachers face general stress in the workplace. However, due to the specific nature of language teaching, EFL teachers may also encounter additional, specific

stressors (Brown, 2000). One stressor which is specific to EFL teachers is that, unlike the teachers of other subjects who use their native language to teach, EFL teachers are required to use the foreign language in teaching the language. Although they are trained to teach the language, they may not enjoy an acceptable mastery of it. Consequently, EFL teachers usually show negative feelings towards their language proficiency (Horowitz, 1996). Yet another stressor specific to EFL teachers is they mostly have to teach the language by utilizing modern teaching methods and technology (Wieczorek, 2016). Thus, considering the general stressors and language teaching-specific stressors that EFL teachers experience, investigating the psychological fallout of these stressors on EFL teachers warrants further research.

As mentioned above, regarding the lack of literature reporting associations between burnout and effort-reward imbalance among EFL teachers, this study is the first study to our knowledge to apply the theoretical ERI model of job stress for the development of burnout in EFL teachers. Thus, based on the exploratory nature of this study, we try to investigate the relationship between ERI and burnout dimensions among EFL teachers in the city of Kerman, Iran. Therefore, the following research questions are proposed:

1) Is there any significant relationship between ERI model subscales and burnout dimensions among EFL teachers?

2) Which ERI model subscales are the strongest predictor of burnout dimensions in EFL teachers?

Review of the Literature
Teacher burnout

Teaching is an emotional endeavor (Sutton & Harper, 2009) and teachers are constantly involved in emotion labor. Emotion labor is ubiquitous in the teaching profession because, according to Collie, Shapka, Perry, and Martin (2016), teaching is distinct from other professions in several ways. First, teachers establish relationships with their "clients" (i.e., students) that may be longer and more involved than in other professions. Second, teachers are isolated from their colleagues for much of the working day and their sense of relatedness with colleagues may be different from other professions. Third, teachers require levels of autonomy that are higher than many other professions. Fourth, teachers tend to experience higher levels of stress than workers in other professions which may in turn affect their motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction. Several studies have reported significant relationships between the emotion labor experienced by teachers and their burnout, and have indicated that the former encourages the existence of the latter ((Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006; Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012).

Burnout as a multidimensional syndrome and a psychological erosion process is associated with organizational and work stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2008) and is the result of the prolonged involvement in stressful environments (Richards, Levesque-Bristol, Templin, & Graber, 2016). Burnout comprises three core, interrelated components (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). *Emotional exhaustion* which is assumed to develop first (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) refers to "feeling emotionally and physically drained by one's work" (Richards et al., 2018, p. 3). Emotional exhaustion, then, precipitates *depersonalization* (also called *cynicism*) which relates to the negative, unsympathetic attitude toward others in the workplace (Richards et al., 2016). As depersonalization continues, one starts to develop critical attitudes toward their work (Richards, et al., 2018). This last component is *reduced personal accomplishment* which refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity in work (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Research indicates that these three dimensions of burnout work in tandem and mutually reinforce each other (Chan, 2003). Of the three dimensions, emotional exhaustion is considered

as a strong predictor of detrimental outcomes pertained to burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). For instance, Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli (2006) found out that there was a negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and teachers' self-reported well-being and commitment. Depersonalization is mostly associated with undesirable job behaviors such as absenteeism, intention to quit the profession, and actual job attrition (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Although a job may be emotionally draining, it is depersonalization that gradually diminishes the feelings of job commitment and satisfaction. Depersonalization and detachment can in turn become contagious, affecting and afflicting other colleagues in the same work environment (Maslach & Leiter, 2000). Finally, as teachers oftentimes work in challenging contexts with apathetic students, under intense pressure to increase students' achievement, and have little autonomy in the workplace (Gold & Roth, 2005), they suffer from reduced personal accomplishment, don't believe in their capabilities, and avoid responsibilities.

The reasons of burnout and the ways to prevent it or cope with it may differ from one educational system and socio-cultural context to another. This implies that the data and results obtained from local or national studies seem to provide more accurate data for the policy and decision makers in a given context. Therefore, Iranian educational system should pay heed to the issue of burnout based on studies conducted in Iran. Bayani, Bagheri, and Bayani (2003) examined which demographic information, such as age, gender, or years of experience was the most important determinant of burnout in EFL teachers. They collected data from 280 EFL teachers and found out that male teachers suffered more from burnout symptoms that their female counterparts. They zeroed in on the development and implementation of a well-structured program to reduce and prevent burnout among EFL teachers.

Roohani and Dayeri (2019) in a mixed method study investigated the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' burnout and motivation. The analysis of their quantitative data revealed that the EFL teachers had low levels of burnout and were autonomously motivated in their teaching. Correlation analysis also revealed negative relationship between autonomous forms of motivation and burnout. Moreover, multiple regression analysis demonstrated that the autonomous forms of motivation and external regulation could be better predictors of EFL teachers' burnout. The qualitative data from the interviews provided further insight into the quantitative results and explained some person- and work-related factors in relation to teacher burnout. They finally discussed some implications for decision-makers in the area of EFL pedagogy to improve EFL teachers' autonomous motivation to reduce their burnout experience.

In a qualitative study which investigated the reasons for burnout among Iranian EFL teachers, Akbari and Eghtesadi Roudi (2020) interviewed 15 male and female teachers from public high schools. The findings indicated that students' low proficiency, lack of support from administrators, student misbehavior, students' lack of interest in learning English, time limitation and class oversize were among the major reasons for Iranian English language teacher burnout. Their findings supported the recent renewal of the English language teaching curriculum for schools

Effort-reward imbalance model for teachers

The effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model is used as a theoretical approach to account for work-related stress. This theoretical approach aims to explain the lack of reciprocity at work and its adverse effects on health. The ERI model posits that lack of reciprocity between costs spent at work and the rewards gained in return may cause a state of emotional distress leading to an increased risk of ill health such as cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders (Jachens et al., 2019) as well as negative emotions of anger and frustration which lead to burnout (Siegrist & Li, 2020). According to Siegrist (2017), the imbalance between effort and reward at work takes

place under certain conditions. These conditions are: dependency (situations in which workers have no alternative choice in their work), strategic choice (situations where workers accept high cost/low gain condition with a future promotion prospect), and overcommitment (situations in which workers, due to their intrinsic motivation, expose themselves to high demands). The above conditions happen with varying frequencies in different occupations and contexts. Yet, these conditions make individuals vulnerable to burnout because they not only need more control and approval, but also exert huge efforts in low reward situations (Bakker, Killmer, Siegrist, & Schaufeli, 2000).

The ERI model underscores social exchange processes between employees and the companies or institutions they work for. The basic principle of the ERI model is that as people exert effort on their job they anticipate to receive certain rewards in return, specifically money, esteem and job security (Gorgievski, Van der Heijden, & Bakker, 2019). If the reciprocity between effort and reward is digressed, those expectations are violated, which in turn culminates in strain. The model includes a famous thesis called 'external effort-reward imbalance' (Gorgievski et al., 2019). This thesis emphasizes the transactions between extrinsic effort and extrinsic reward. Extrinsic effort on the part of teachers includes working under time constraints, heavy workload, dealing with students' misbehavior, long working hours, and so on. Extrinsic reward includes respect and support from administrators and school principals, job security, promotion prospects, and social recognition, to name but a few. In addition to the extrinsic imbalance, the intrinsic imbalance aspect of the ERI model pertains to the personal differences related to employees' job commitment and their internally-driven investments at work (Bakker et al., 2000).

The relationship between ERI model and burnout has been documented in various studies that have dealt with human service occupations such as teaching (Zurlo, Pes, & Siegrist, 2010; Tang, Leka, & MacLennan, 2013; Loerbroks et al., 2014). In professions where human interaction is at its highest level, the effort-reward imbalance and its principles of reciprocity precipitate burnout (Marmot, Siegrist, & Theorell, 1999). Although teaching is not similar to other blue-collar occupations in terms of requiring heavy physical workload, handling toxic chemicals, or involving strenuous conditions, it has been associated with high levels of stress and teachers report high levels of burnout and depression symptoms (Kyriacou, 2001). According to Siegrist (2017), ERI model can be utilized for teachers to account for their burnout because teachers enter the profession with considerably high levels of intrinsic motivation and they spend high levels of effort at work despite the lack of external rewards. The efforts that teachers put into educational praxis are not immediately visible to significant others, thus they most often than not go through "a state of reward deficiency" (Siegrist, 2017, p. 226) compared to workers in other occupations. The stressors mentioned above as well as this state of deficiency as another form of stressor are all related to the assumptions of ERI model. Therefore, ERI model can be used to measure teachers' burnout based on the lack of reciprocity between the efforts they put into their praxis and the rewards they gain in return.

Methods

Participants

A total number of 105 participants were recruited through non-probability sampling (convenience sampling) because of their accessibility to the researcher. The potential participants were all EFL teachers working in state-run senior high schools in Kerman, Iran and their workload was 24 hours per week mandated by the Ministry of Education. These teachers were teaching in the central area of the city or the suburban areas. The inclusion criterion for the participants was to have a tenure (full time) position in teaching English. Of this sample, 65 (61.9%) of the participants were male and 40 (38.1%) were female. Moreover, 28 teachers were

in their 20s (26.7%), 37 (35.2%) were in their 30s, and 40 (38.1%) were in their 40s or above. Regarding their teaching experience, 15 (14.3%) have taught for less than 5 years, 40 (38.1%) 6–10 years, and 50 (47.6%) have taught for more than 10 years. Furthermore, with respect to their educational level, 85 (81%) were holding BA, 15 (14.2%) were holding MA, and 5 (4.8%) were either PhD holder or PhD student. The majority of them were Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL), while a few had English Translation or English Literature degrees.

Instruments
Effort-reward imbalance (ERI) questionnaire

The long, English version of Siegrist's ERI questionnaire including 22 Likert-scale items was employed in this study. The items are scored on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The first scale of ERI questionnaire is effort (six items, α=0.79) which pertains to the demanding facets of the work, for instance, 'I am often pressured to work overtime', or 'My job is physically demanding'. The next scale is reward (ten items, α=0.77) which is divided into three subscales: (i) esteem (four items, α=0.75) and includes items such as, 'I receive the respect I deserve from my collegues', (ii) promotion prospects (four items, α=0.69) comprising items like 'Considering all my efforts and achievements, my job promotion prospects are adequate', and (iii) job security (two items, α=0.66) which is comprised of items such as, 'My employment security is poor'. The final scale is overcommitment (six items, α=0.81). Overcommitment deals with the coping strategies employed to tackle work demands and includes items such as, 'I get easily overwhelmed by time pressures at work', or 'Work rarely lets me go, it is still on my mind when I go to bed'. The global Cronbach's Alpha of ERI model ranges from 0.590 to 0.840 (Ren et al., 2019).

Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES)

The MBI-ES is a version of the original MBI (Maslach & Jackson,1986) and is generally used for educators, including teachers, principals, administrators, and other staff members working in educational settings. This version of MBI consists 22 items that fall on three scales: emotional exhaustion (EE) (nine items, α=0.85; for instance, 'I feel emotionally drained from my work'); depersonalization (DP) (five items, α=0.71; for instance, 'I don't really care what happens to some students'); and reduced personal accomplishment (PA) (eight items, α=0.77; for instance, 'I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job'. The global Cronbach's Alpha of ERI model ranges from 0.71 to 0.85 (Bakker et al., 2000). All the items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*every day*). High scores on EE and DP scales and low scores on PA scale show that an individual is suffering from burnout. Table 1, taken from Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1996, p. 6), displays the cutoff points for burnout scores which are high, average, and low.

Table 1
Cutoff points for burnout scores

MBI-ES scales	Low	Average	High
Emotional exhaustion	≤ 16	17-26	≥ 27
Depersonalization	≤ 18	9-13	≥ 14
Personal achievement	≥ 37	36-31	≤ 30

Procedure

In order to assess the reliability of both questionnaires, a total of 55 male and female EFL teachers working in high schools in Kerman filled in the questionnaires in black and white. Then, the data obtained from the questionnaires were fed into SPSS 23 and the reliability of both questionnaires was measured through Cronbach's alpha analysis. The alpha scores for each scale in both questionnaires were reported in the 'instruments' section. The reliability index for BMI-ES questionnaire was .77 and for ERI questionnaire .75 which were acceptable.

For the purpose of the final data collection, an online version of both ERI and MBI-ES questionnaires was prepared using Google Docs. Both questionnaires were inserted in one Google Doc file. Then, the link of the questionnaires was sent to EFL teachers via their E-mails or via Whatsapp or Telegram applications. The link was shared in Whatsapp and Telegram groups in which EFL teachers were members or it was sent to individual teachers. The participants were assured that their information would remain confidential. The completed questionnaires were sent to the researcher's E-mail. In total, 105 completed questionnaires were received. The data were then fed into SPSS 23 for analyses.

Data Analysis

In this study, the scales in ERI questionnaire were the independent variables and the scales in MBI-ES questionnaire the dependent variables. Also, the information regarding age, gender, and years of experience in teaching were used as covariates. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationship between burnout dimensions with the predicting variables. The predicting variables were the ERI questionnaire subscales. Then, multiple regression analyses were also conducted to identify ERI subscales as predictors of each burnout dimension.

Results

Sample characteristics

Since many parametric statistical methods require that the dependent variable be approximately normally distributed for each category of independent variable, the normality test was run for three burnout dimensions, namely, EE, DP, and PA. Table 2 show the descriptive statistics for each burnout questionnaire dimension. The skewness value for each burnout dimension (i.e., EE, DP, and PA) was .08, -.19, and .15. Also, the kurtosis values were -.47 for EE, .11 for DP, and -.60 for PA. According to Cramer and Howitt (2004), the skewness and kurtosis values that fall within the range of -1.59 to +1.59 are indicative of the normality of variances. Therefore, the data regarding the dependent variables of the study were normally distributed.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for MBI-ES dimensions

Dimensions	*N* of items	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
EE	9	21	42	30.34	5.37	.08	-.47
DP	5	7	24	15.97	3.18	-.19	.11
PA	8	18	42	28.94	4.99	.15	-.60

Note: EE= Emotional Exhaustion; DP= Depersonalization; PA= Personal Accomplishment

Correlations among variables

In order to estimate the probable relationship between burnout dimension and ERI subscales, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed so as to find significant relationships.

Table 3 presents the coefficient correlations between the ERI subscales and the three dimensions of burnout.

Table 3
Correlations for ERI and Burnout subscales

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Effort	−	-.061	.364**	.337**	.437**	.454**
2 Reward	-.061	−	.101	.067	-.063	-.123
3 Overcommitment	.364**	.101	−	.230*	.008	.306**
4 EE	.337**	.067	.230*	−	.302**	.445**
5 DP	.437**	-.063	.008	.302**	−	.291**
6 PA	.454**	-.123	.306**	.445**	.291**	−

* p < .05; ** p < .01

As Table 3 displays, there were a number of significant relationships between the ERI and burnout subscales. Statistically significant positive relationships were identified between effort and each burnout dimension, namely emotional exhaustion ($r = .337$, $p = .001$), depersonalization ($r = .437$, $p = .001$), and reduced personal accomplishment ($r = .454$, $p = .001$). Also, reward had a negative correlation with both depersonalization ($r = -.063$, $p = .534$) and reduced personal accomplishment ($r = -.123$, $p = .220$). Moreover, the third ERI subscale, overcommitment, was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion ($r = .230$, $p = .021$), depersonalization ($r = .008$, $p = .213$), and reduced personal accomplishment ($r = .306$, $p = .002$). In general, the results revealed that there were mostly positive correlations between ERI subscales and burnout dimensions.

Multiple regression analyses

Three multiple regression analyses were calculated to examine the effects of the three predictor variables (i.e., effort, reward, and overcommitment) on each burnout dimension. The aim of these analyses was to figure out which ERI subscale could predict the EFL teachers' burnout. The model summary of the first regression analysis for the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout is presented in Table 4, and the results of regression coefficients are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4
Model summary for emotional exhaustion

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.36	.13	.10	5.08

a. Predictors: (Constant), effort, reward, and overcommitment
b. Dependent variable: emotional exhaustion

Table 5
Regression coefficients for the predictors of emotional exhaustion

Method	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Part Correlation
	β	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	10.72	6.47		1.65	.101	

Effort	.64	.21	.30	2.94	.004	.279
Reward	.15	.19	.07	.77	.440	.073
Overcommitment	.28	.26	.11	1.10	.274	.104

a. Dependent variable: emotional exhaustion

As Table 4 displays, the multiple regression analysis results revealed that the ERI subscales accounted for 13% of the variation regarding EFL teachers' emotional exhaustion score (R2 = .13) which was a small percentage. Also, according to Table 5, only effort was a strong predictor of emotional exhaustion (Beta = .30, P = .004) and reward and overcommitment were not statistically significant in predicting emotional exhaustion.

The model summary of the second regression analysis for the depersonalization dimension is reported in Table 6, while Table 7 shows the results of regression coefficients.

Table 6

Model summary for depersonalization

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.46	.21	.19	2.86

a. Predictors: (Constant), effort, reward, and overcommitment
b. Dependent variable: depersonalization

Table 7

Regression coefficients for the predictors of depersonalization

Method	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Part Correlation
	β	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	9.57	3.64		2.62	.010	
Effort	.63	.12	.49	5.13	.001	.461
Reward	-.01	.11	-.01	-.16	.870	-.015
Overcommitment	-.26	.14	-.37	-1.76	.001	-.158

a. Dependent variable: depersonalization

As Table 6 reveals, 21% (R2 = .21) of the variance in depersonalization could be explained by the model. According to Table 7, effort and overcommitment enjoyed the largest Beta values (.49 and -.37, respectively), indicating that they had the strong unique contribution to the depersonalization.

The last multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the contribution of the ERI subscales to personal accomplishment, the third burnout dimension. model summary and regression coefficients for personal accomplishment are presented in Table 8 and Table 9, respectively.

Table 8

Model summary for personal accomplishment

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.49	.24	.21	4.41

a. Predictors: (Constant), effort, reward, and overcommitment
b. Dependent variable: personal accomplishment

Table 9

Regression coefficients for the predictors of personal accomplishment

Method	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Part Correlation
	β	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	14.25	5.62		2.53	.013	
Effort	.76	.19	.38	3.99	.001	.761
Reward	-.22	.17	-.11	-1.32	.189	-.227
Overcommitment	.42	.22	.27	1.87	.004	.427

a. Dependent variable: personal accomplishment

According to Table 8, the R^2 value indicated that 24% of the variance in the participants' personal accomplishment could be explained by the three ERI subscales. Effort, with the Beta value of .38, made a positive unique contribution to explaining the EFL teachers' personal accomplishments. Overcommitment, with the Beta value of .27, was another significant contributor to the EFL teachers' personal accomplishment. In short, the results showed that the ERI model accounted for 13% of the variance in EFL teachers' emotional exhaustion, 21% of the variance in their depersonalization, and 24% of the variance in their personal accomplishment.

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between ERI and burnout subscales among EFL teachers in the city of Kerman, Iran. We hypothesized that the subscales in ERI model are positively related to emotional exhaustion (EE) and depersonalization (DP) and negatively related to reduced personal accomplishment (PA). We also tried to examine the effects of the predictor variables in the ERI model (i.e., effort, reward, and overcommitment) (Siegrist, 1996) on the EFL teachers' burnout dimensions (Maslach et al., 1996).

Regarding the first research question, the results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed that ERI subscales of effort and overcommitment had positive significant relationships with the EFL teachers' emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, but the reward subscale had negative relationships with depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. The results indicating the positive relationship between all burnout dimensions and effort and overcommitment and negative relationship between reward and the burnout dimensions were not far from expectations because expending effort and overcommitment at work coupled with the lack of reward in return would most often than not lead to burnout (Rahmati et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2018). Teachers who work in environments in which they have little or no agency and autonomy in their profession and are exposed to high levels of pressure from different fronts are more prone to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment or professional efficacy. This is in line with previous findings (e.g., Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020; Haseli Songhori et al., 2018), indicating that two important factors rarely mentioned in the literature and specific to Iranian context are unfair treatment and teachers' dissatisfaction with teachers' annual appraisal lead to burnout. This is directly related to effort-reward imbalance model in that teachers who enter the teaching profession with high levels of motivation and enthusiasm, if faced with unfair treatment from authorities and their efforts throughout an academic year are not fairly appraised, they lose their motivation and become susceptible to burnout. This finding is also related to the social competence model of burnout (Harrison, 1983). The model posits that if people enter the human service professions like teaching with high levels of enthusiasm and motivation and are faced

with lack of value for their efforts and their hope for achieving it diminishes, burnout is very likely to afflict them.

As to the predictive power of the variables in ERI model on the EFL teachers' burnout dimensions, the multiple regression analysis results revealed that ERI model variables had a moderate amount of variation in depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment and a small amount of variation in emotional exhaustion. However, this small contribution of ERI model variables to the EFL teachers' emotional exhaustion should not be overlooked. A closer look at the results indicated that effort and overcommitment variables in ERI model were significant predictors of all three dimensions of burnout. Effort and overcommitment are regarded as coping behaviors which are based on the need and search for approval and respect (Siegrist, 1996). If the individual's need for approval and respect is not satisfied, burnout will be the most expected result to happen to the person. As mentioned above, Iranian context is specific for its lack of value and respect for teachers', including EFL teachers, effort and overcommitment. So, it is not far from expectation that EFL teachers would suffer from burnout. Future research is required to confirm the results of the study and investigate the role of effort-reward imbalance as a risk factor for the development of burnout. It is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to explore the role of different types of rewards in burnout experience and uncover the causal relationship between ERI and burnout among EFL teachers. By doing so, it becomes clear which group of EFL teachers is more liable to lose interest and enthusiasm in their work. Additionally, some other psychological variables such as teachers' personality can be investigated with respect to teacher burnout. Future studies in the context of the present research can also be carried out to see whether demographic variables can moderate the relationship between ERI and teacher burnout. This study was conducted with English language teachers in public schools, while there is another population of English language teacher working in private language institutes. Future research can, thus, investigate the possible relationship between ERI model subscales and burnout among these teachers to see if these specific group of teachers are also prone to burnout due to the imbalance between their efforts and reward and what may be the causes of their burnout regarding the different context in which they teach.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that ERI model variables have a relationship with and are predictors of EFL teachers' burnout. This study emphasized that the important role effort-reward imbalance plays in the development of burnout among EFL teachers in Iran. This implies that in order to prevent or reduce burnout among EFL teachers, some intervention programs should be implemented to focus on restore the balance between EFL teachers' efforts and their rewards. One way to achieve this balance is to lower teachers' efforts and strains or to increase their rewards or improve their reward system. In addition, authorities should pay heed to teachers' efforts in training the future citizens of the Iranian society and they should try to tweak the reward system for EFL teachers as well as to make their utmost effort to enhance EFL teachers' social status, their annual appraisal mechanisms, their possible job insecurity, and role conflict. ⁎ By paying more attention to the above factors which still afflict the EFL teachers, their burnout level can be expected to lessen.

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