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Toward an Analysis of the Bond between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy among EFL Teachers

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy in 71 Iranian EFL teachers in private language institutes. The participants' EI and self-efficacy were rated through questionnaires. They were also administered a demographic sheet. The findings revealed that EFL teachers' EI was significantly and positively correlated with their self-efficacy, and it could also account for a considerable amount of variance in teachers' self-efficacy. Another line of the results showed significant differences in the teachers' EI and self-efficacy with respect to the demographics- marital status and years of teaching experience. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-efficacy, EFL Teachers

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Introduction

Recent research clearly indicates that teachers can highly affect students' educational outcomes (Anderson, 2004). Research also shows that schools make a difference in terms of student achievement, and the significant factor in that difference is that it can be attributed to teachers. Particularly, differential teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning (Darling-Hammond 2000). Research also reveals that there is a strong positive correlation between teacher effectiveness and student learning. Successful teachers believe that they can make a difference in student learning outcomes and they teach accordingly (Gibbs, 2002). Teacher effectiveness is also in close connection with their self-efficacy levels i.e., the belief teachers have about their teaching skills and capacities (Gibbs, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Bandura (1995) opined that people with high self-efficacy persisted with the task in the face of hardship and obtained better results with substantially lower levels of stress. In addition, self-efficacy beliefs can contribute to one's accomplishment and well-being in several ways (Pajares, 2002).

Dembo and Gibson (1985) argued that the issue of pinpointing antecedents of efficacy and the ways to augment teachers' sense of efficacy is of high importance and relevance. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) also opined that great amount of variation in teacher self-efficacy could be attributed to variance in teachers' emotions. This is specifically true with respect to careers such as teaching, with its affectively challenging disposition, high levels of emotional involvement, difficulty and continuous interaction. As such, research should investigate the relationship between teacher emotions and self-efficacy (Emmer & Hickman, 1991) to see whether and how they are related with each other. To this end, this study set out to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher self-efficacy among foreign language teachers in private language institutes in Iran.

Literature Review

Teacher self-efficacy

Research on teacher self-efficacy has been inspired by Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory. Bandura (1995) argued that self-efficacy can be referred to as people's beliefs about their potentiality to create expected levels of performance that exert influence on events that impact their lives, and that these beliefs indicate how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy set themselves more challenging goals and maintain stronger commitment to those goals than do people with lower levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995).

Teacher self-efficacy, refers to the extent to which teachers believe they can make change and impact on student behavior and learning outcomes (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Or as Tschannen-Moran et al (1998, p. 22) opined teacher self-efficacy is "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context". Teachers who have a high sense of self-efficacy about their teaching potentiality can enhance students' motivation and cognitive development (Bandura, 1995). The task of making environments suitable to learning depends on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers (Bandura, 1995).

Tschannen-Moran, et al, (1998) emphasized the importance of teacher self-efficacy and its connection with a broad range of teaching and learning outcomes. These outcomes embrace teachers' classroom behavior, effort and goal-setting, their openness to novel ideas and desire to try innovative methods, planning and organizational competence, perseverance, resilience, commitment and eagerness for teaching and longevity in their profession. Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy can influence student achievement, attitude and emotional growth and is related to the organization health, atmosphere in the school, classroom based decision-making and to student self-efficacy.

Atay (2007) also stated that teachers' self-efficacy can highly affect their instructional activities as well as student attitudes and achievements. Research findings also indicated that teacher efficacy affects teacher's control orientations and control behaviors; their use

of classroom discussions and creative teaching practices; their feedback to learners; stress level and their satisfaction with the teaching profession (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). However, little research has been conducted which examines EFL teachers' self-efficacy.

Emotional intelligence

EI has its root in the concept of "social intelligence" that was first identified by Thorndike (1920). Thorndike (1920) (cited in Wong & Law, 2002, p. 245) defined social intelligence as "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls –to act wisely in human relations".

Definitions of emotional intelligence widely vary. Some researchers see EI as an ability, which can be measured most precisely by a performance test (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The skill sets which are included in this explanation of EI are using emotion to facilitate thinking, understanding emotion, managing emotion, and perceiving emotion. Other researchers view EI as a mixed model, including both ability and dispositional traits (Goleman, 1995). Still, other mixed models take into account the factors of mood, motivation, social skills and well-being to define emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2007). Bar-On credits, Darwinism, Thorndike's theory of social intelligence, Wechsler's observation of non-cognitive factors, and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and others as major impacts on his famous model (Bar-On, 2007). Bar-On, Bar-On (1997) defined EI as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 14).

For testing individuals' emotional intelligence, Bar-On developed a 133-item self-report Emotional Intelligence scale. The Bar-On EI test, called the emotional quotient inventory (EQ-I), is a self-report measure of emotionally and socially intelligent behavior that offers an estimate of emotional-social intelligence (Bar-On, 1997). This test covers 5 major scales and 15 subscales contributing to the emotional energy and self-motivation required to deal with daily environmental challenges and obstacles as follows (see also Bar-On, 2000):

- (1) Intrapersonal: managing oneself, the ability to know one's emotions.
 - (a) Emotional self-awareness (the ability to be aware of, recognize and understand one's emotions).
 - (b) Assertiveness (the ability to express one's feelings, beliefs, thoughts and to defend one's right).
 - (c) Self-regard (the ability to be aware of, understand, accept and respect oneself).
 - (d) Self-actualization (the ability to realize and reach one's potential).
 - (e) Independence (the ability to be self-directed and self-reliant in one's thinking and actions and to be free from emotional dependency).
- (2) Interpersonal: managing relationships with others.
 - (a) Empathy (the ability to understand and appreciate others' feelings).
 - (b) Interpersonal-relationship (the ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by emotional closeness and intimacy and by giving and receiving affection).
 - (c) Social responsibility (the ability to demonstrate oneself as a cooperative, contributing and constructive member of one's social group).
- (3) Adaptability: ability to adjust to change.
 - (a) Problem solving (the ability to effectively solve problems).
 - (b) Reality testing (the ability to validate one's feelings and thoughts by assessing the correspondence between what is subjectively experienced and what objectively exists).
 - (c) Flexibility (the ability to adjust one's feelings/thoughts to change).
- (4) Stress management: controlling stress
 - (a) Stress tolerance (the ability to manage one's strong emotions, adverse events, and stressful conditions by positively coping with problems).
 - (b) Impulse control (the ability to control one's emotions and resist an impulse to act).

(5) General mood: the ability to be optimistic and positive as well as to enjoy life.

(a) Happiness (the ability to feel satisfied with life and to have fun).

(b) Optimism (the ability to look at the brighter side of life and maintain a positive attitude in the face of problems).

EI has been extensively under study both theoretical and experimental within the few last decades. It has been associated significantly and positively to enhanced adapted behavior such as: overall relationship satisfaction and stability (Gottman, et al., 2001), social life with higher quality social life (Lopes, et al., 2003), improved academic achievement (Nelson and Nelson, 2003; Parker et al., 2004), longer retention in the educational arena (Parker, et al, 2006), more satisfaction in one's life (Bastin, et al. , 2005) and the utilization of better adjusted coping strategies (Gohm & Clore, 2002; Matthews et al., 2006).

Moreover, teachers' EI, especially that of EFL teachers, has been under research scrutiny. Iordanoglou (2007), for instance, explored the relationship between EI, job commitment, leadership and satisfaction among Greek 332 primary education teachers. Findings revealed that EI could positively impact leadership effectiveness and is also closely related to teachers' satisfaction and commitment. The results insinuate that in addition to cognitive abilities, the selection criteria in education should also cover emotional competencies to ensure educators' acceptable performance.

Objective of the study

As noted earlier, much research has been done on EI (e.g., Brackett and Salovey, 2006; Schutte et al., 1998) and on self-efficacy (e.g., Ross, 1994; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), but little (Chan, 2004) has been conducted on the relationship between these two constructs. As long as these two coping resources, EI and efficacy, are of current concern in all areas of education (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) and since they contribute to teaching effectiveness (Mortiboys, 2005; Pajares, 1992), some research should be done in the EFL setting to investigate if and how they are related. Summarizing, the current

study aims at exploring the bond between EFL teachers' EI and self-efficacy.

As such, the following two research questions were addressed in the study:

- 1) Is there any statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among EFL teachers?
- 2) Is there any statistically significant difference in teachers' EI and perceived self-efficacy regarding demographics?

Methodology

Participants and procedures

Upon obtaining permissions from principals, 5 private language institutes were sampled based on accessibility criterion in Iran. Out of 103 recruited EFL teachers, 71 returned completed questionnaires (about 69 % return rate). Of the teachers who responded, 45 were male and 26 were female. Their ages ranged from 23 to 48 years old ($M= 34.36$, $SD= 9.36$) with a range of between 1 and 24 years of teaching experience ($M=10.18$, $SD=11.22$).

To get reliable data and comply with research ethics, the researcher explained the objective of the research to the subjects and informed them about the estimated time required to fill in the scales (about 25 minutes). Furthermore, all participants were assured that their taking part in the study would be anonymous and optional. It was also added that the findings would include group data and that individual participants and language institutes would not be publicized or known. This information was offered in an informed permission sheet that was submitted with the survey folder. The completion of the survey suggested implied consent and therefore no signed consent form was returned. Teachers were encouraged to contact the investigator if any questions or concerns showed up as a result of their participation in the research. They took the questionnaires home, completed them and submitted to the researcher within 2 weeks.

Finally, in order to answer the research questions, the responses received from the scales were arranged in tables and analyzed.

Instruments

EI and self-efficacy measures were utilized along with a demographic form asking about the participants' age, gender, marital status and years of teaching experience.

Emotional Intelligence Scale

To assess language teachers' EI, the researcher used Bar-On EI test (Bar-On, 1997). This test employs a 5-point response scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It consists of 5 major factors and 15 sub-factors or components. A Persian version of the EI scale with 90 items was used in this study (Appendix A). To analyze the norms of the Farsi version of the questionnaire, Samouei (2003) sampled 500 university students (with age range of 18-40 years) in Iran. He found that the test has appropriate internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and constructs validity. With the adapted Farsi version, the Cornbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.93 and the reliability index gained through odd-even, split-half method was [0.88].

Self-efficacy Scale

In this study, the short form of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was utilized (Appendix B). The short version of this scale consists of 12 items. Participants responded to the items by indicating their degree of agreement with each of the 12 statements using a five-point likert-type scale ranging from 1 (nothing) to 5 (a great deal). The reliability for the original 12-item scale is 0.90 (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In the current study, the reliability estimate of the scale was $\alpha = 0.86$.

Results

In order to investigate the relationships between teachers' EI and self-efficacy, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. The findings showed that there was significant positive correlation between these two constructs ($r = -0.71$, $p \leq 0.01$) (Table 1).

Table 1. *The Results of Correlation between Teachers EI and Self-efficacy*

Self-Efficacy
EI 0.71**

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

To analyze the data further, Regression Analysis was conducted. The results indicated that teachers' total score of EI was a positive predictor of the dependent variable (teacher self-efficacy). In this part of the research $R^2 = 0.50$ ($\beta = .71$, $t = 8.41$, $p < .01$, $F(1, 71) = 70.76$), indicating that 50 % of the variance in self-efficacy is explained by the independent variable, EI (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Regression Analysis Summary for EI Predicting Self-efficacy*

Predictor	R	R ²	F(1, 70)	B	SEM	Beta (β)	t
.71	.50	70.76**					
EI	9.69	14.85	.71	8.41**			

** $p < .01$

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to investigate the role of teaching experience in teachers' EI and self-efficacy. The results showed that teachers' years of teaching experience was positively related with their overall EI ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and self-efficacy ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) (Table 3).

Table 3. *Correlations of Teacher EI and Self-efficacy and Burnout with Years of Teaching Experience (YTE)*

	YTE
EI	0.42**
Self-Efficacy	0.62**

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

Finally, to explore whether there were significant emotional intelligence and self-efficacy differences among EFL teachers with respect to gender and marital status, two factorial ANOVA analyses

were conducted for emotional intelligence and self-efficacy separately with independent variables of gender and marital status. In this way, individual and joint effects of the two independent variables on the dependent variable could be checked.

Since all the prerequisite ANOVA assumptions - Independence of observations, Normality, and Homoscedasticity - were met. First, a 2X2 ANOVA was run to explore the impact of gender and marital status on self-efficacy. The results revealed statistically significant main effect for marital status ($F(1, 71) = 13.75, P = .001$), and the effect size was ($\eta^2 = 0.17$). It was shown that married teachers' self-efficacy ($M = 144.35, SD = 21.51$) was noticeably higher than that of unmarried participants ($M = 125.57, SD = 17.23$). However, the main effect for gender ($F(1, 71) = 1.63, P = 0.26, \eta^2 = .02$), and the interaction effect (Gender * Marital Status) ($F(1, 71) = 1.29, P = 0.25, \eta^2 = .01$) did not reach statistical significance (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics (Dependent Variable: Self-Efficacy)

Gender	Marital Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Female	Married	137.33	19.75	12
	Single	125.14	15.33	14
	Total	130.76	18.23	26
Male	Married	148.78	21.90	19
	Single	125.80	18.46	26
	Total	135.51	22.84	45
Total	Married	144.35	21.51	31
	Single	125.57	17.23	40
	Total	133.77	21.26	71

Table 5. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Dependent Variable: Self-Efficacy)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	7128.81 ^a	3	2376.27	6.495	.001	.22
Intercept	1173243.43	1	1173243.43	3206.94	.000	.98
Gender	597.58	1	597.58	1.63	.206	.02
Marital Status	5031.77	1	5031.77	13.75	.000	.17
Gender * Marital Status	473.66	1	473.66	1.29	.259	.01
Error	24511.57	67	334.45			
Total	1302232.00	71				
Corrected Total	31640.39	70				

a. $R^2 = .25$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .19$)

To explore the impact of gender and marital status on Emotional intelligence among EFL teachers, another two-way between-group ANOVA was conducted. The results indicated a statistically significant main effect for marital status ($F(1,71) = 9.73$, $P = .003$, eta squared = 0.12) with married teachers' EI ($M = 362.61$, $SD = 45.88$) significantly lower than that of single teachers ($M = 331.02$, $SD = 33.25$). But no significant gender effect ($F(1, 71) = 6.95$, $P = .32$, eta squared = 0.01) and interaction effect ($F(1, 71) = .69$, $P = .40$, eta squared = 0.00) was noticed. In other words, the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable did not depend on the level of the second independent variable (Tables 6 and 7).

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Table 6. Descriptive Statistics (Dependent Variable: EI)

Gender	Marital Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Female	Married	353.41	30.62	12
	Single	328.214	27.97	14
	Total	339.84	31.36	26
Male	Married	368.42	53.32	19
	Single	332.53	36.21	26
	Total	347.68	47.21	45
Total	Married	362.61	45.88	31
	Single	331.02	33.25	40
	Total	344.81	42.03	71

Table 7. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Dependent Variable: EI)

Source	Type Sum Squares	III df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	19252.25 ^a	3	6417.41	4.11	.010	.15
Intercept	7775136.66	1	777513.66	498.00	.000	.98
Gender	1519.56	1	1519.56	.97	.327	.01
Marital Status	15177.13	1	15177.13	9.735	.003	.12
Gender * Marital Status	463.96	1	463.96	.29	.58	.00
Error	104458.36	67	1559.08			
Total	8565518.00	71				
Corrected Total	123710.62	70				

a. $R^2 = .15$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .11$)

Discussion

The current study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and the extent to which these two constructs are moderated by gender, teaching experience, and marital status in a sample of Iranian ELT teachers. The results revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between EI and teaching efficacy. In other words it was shown that the higher teacher EI, the higher their self-efficacy. Further, EFL teachers' EI proved to be a potent predictor of teacher self-efficacy. This is consistent with previous theoretical and empirical studies, though limited in TESOL context.

Bandura (1997) opined that somatic information caused by physiological and emotional states affected efficacy beliefs (p. 106). Also part of the variation in teacher efficacy is the result of variance in teachers' emotions (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003). Along the same line, Chan (2004) found that components of EI could significantly predict self-efficacy. The results of the present study corroborate those of Penrose et al. (2007) indicating that there is a moderate association between EI and teacher self-efficacy of primary and secondary school teachers. Therefore, it is interesting and useful to curriculum planners, teacher educators and language teachers that EI and self-efficacy are positively correlated, because each of them has the potentiality to be ameliorated, and each can positively affect the other. Put it another way, increasing EI during teacher education programs can help to the burgeoning of teachers' self-efficacy and vice versa.

The results also revealed a positive correlation between participants EI and years of teaching experience. In other words, teachers' emotional experiences are likely to increase with every year of teaching. This is in accordance with previous research indicating that EI is acquired and enhanced through learning and continuous experience (Goleman, 1995). Bar-On (2000) also argued that EI can be ameliorated through training, programming and therapy.

As for the influence of gender, it was shown that there was no significant difference between EI and self-efficacy of male and female teachers. It shows that, disregarding experience, both male and female teachers can be triumphant in their career. These results corroborated

those of Gencer and Cakiroglu (2007). These findings were also in line with the findings of Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) while in discordance with those of Ciarrochi, Chan and Bajgar (2001) which showed that there were significant differences between females and males, with females reporting higher EI levels. This conflict may be connected to cultural and environmental issues. Another reason for this lack of gender difference is that female teachers might underrate their competence or men might overrate theirs or both. Whether there were no real gender differences, or the real gender differences could not be noticed by self-report scales in the current lines of results has to await further research.

Finally, the results revealed significant EI and self-efficacy differences with respect to marital status among EFL teachers, such that married teachers' EI and Self-efficacy were significantly higher than those of single teachers. One plausible explanation for these findings is that marriage could offer an emotionally fulfilling intimate association, meeting the need for social connection and involvement, which could have implications for both physical and mental health (House, Umberson & Landis, 1988). Research shows that marriage reduces depressive symptoms in both men and women (Simon, 2002). As such, married teachers can more efficiently avail themselves of their emotional resources in coping with stressful situations in EFL context. Moreover, the influence from the people in one's life, family, occupation or education, can estimate the level of self-efficacy in that person (Bandura, 1997). Likewise, married teachers' responsibilities on parenthood, marital life and occupational affairs yield a high self-efficacy.

Conclusion and implications

In essence, the findings of the present study suggest that ameliorating teachers' emotional intelligence might positively influence their self-efficacy. These findings may have implications for teachers' well-being, pro-social behavior, motivation and teaching effectiveness and accordingly students' achievement. As Bar-On (2000) argued, EI develops gradually and can be enhanced via educational programs and therapy. As such, the findings underline the

importance of establishing and developing pre-service and in-service programs for teachers to focus on the skills related to emotional management and regulation. According to Moafian and Ghanizadeh (2009, p. 715), “these courses are expected to help teachers manipulate their emotions appropriately, shift undesirable emotional states to more productive ones, understand the link between emotions, thoughts and actions, attract and sustain rewarding interpersonal relationships in the classroom, and be sensitive to students’ emotions.”

In addition, based on the results of this research, it is not equitable to judge a teacher based on only one of his/her characteristics. Each teacher with certain kinds of demographics is unique and no over-general statements can be made about him/her. Thus, educational stakeholders can help teachers to surmount their problems better by knowing how different teachers are and how these differences lead to different performances, outcomes and perceptions in the school and classroom arenas.

In the current study, the participants were not diverse enough. Therefore, any generalization of the findings to other contexts should be done with caution. It is recommended that the present study be replicated with a larger and more representative and diverse sample of the EFL teacher population. Also Future research should utilize measures based on objective performance along with self-reporting measures to gain a more precise estimate of teacher EI and self-efficacy. Future research should also examine demographic variables such as academic subjects taught, grade level taught, and economic status. Last but not the least, in future research, different dimensions of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy should be taken into account. In the current study only overall measures of teacher self-efficacy and EI were considered.

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