The Mediating Role of Teacher-Student Relationship in the Association between Emotion Regulation and Psychological Well-Being among Iranian EFL Teachers

Zahra Bayat[1*]   iD
Seyed Mohammad Reza Amirian[2]   iD
Seyedeh Khadijeh Amirian[3]   iD
Fatemeh Akbari[4]   iD

[*1]Ph.D. Candidate in Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

[2]Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

[3]Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

[4]Ph.D. Candidate in Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

ABSTRACT

Teaching is a complex profession demanding strong emotional regulation and interpersonal relationship skills, which are critical to teachers' psychological well-being (PWB). Based on positive psychology as well as Compassion-Based Language Education (CBLE), this research intends to examine the mediational role of teacher-student relationship (TSR) in the relationship between emotion regulation (ER) and psychological well-being of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Adopting SEM and with the help of established scales, the study searches for fresh insights about these core psychological processes to reveal the intricate associations between emotional regulation, relationships, and the psychological outcomes at work in the context of EFL instruction. A total of 243 Iranian EFL teachers were also randomly chosen based on the stratified random sampling technique with different professional experiences (that is, with different academic degrees and expertise). Broad experience and qualifications make our sample representative of Iranian EFL teachers and enhance the generalization of our findings. Stratification also helped in the coverage of aspects of age, education, and experience. Inter-variable correlations were strong, and TSR was a significant mediating variable, as indicated by the path coefficients. The direct effect of ER on TSR, indirect effect on PWB through TSR, and the total effect of ER on PWB were very significant according to AMOS 26 software. Notably, partial mediation was found where direct relationships of ER to PWB were still significant along indirect routes through TSR. This study offers unique avenues for future intervention efforts aimed at enhancing teacher well-being through relationship-oriented interventions.

KEYWORDS: EFL teachers, emotion regulation (ER), psychological well-being (PWB), teacher-student relationship (TSR)

1. Introduction

Teacher-student relationship (TSR) is crucial to impact academic achievement and PWB in EFL contexts. Studies show that positive interactions between teachers and students have the potential to significantly contribute to how well students perform academically, feel about themselves and are motivated (Jia et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Also, the connections affect so much more than language development, they impact the emotional well-being of students. Children who feel close and supported by teachers are more likely to develop self-confidence, enthusiasm, and a positive disposition toward school (Chen, 2025; Zhang, 2023).

New research shows that social relationships play an important role in learning in school. Strong associations between positive TSR and important educational outcomes such as decreased student burnout, increased learning motivation, and better academic achievement have been reported in a number of studies (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024; Yuan, 2024). These connections are more than just teaching encounters; they are vital emotional highways that significantly shape who you are and who you become.

Despite a growing body of knowledge, serious deficiency exists in the extent of knowledge regarding the mechanisms through which the TSR works that mediate between ER and PWB. The main focus of the most recent studies are the affective and engagement components of TSR (Shakki, 2022; Yuan, 2024), teacher self-efficacy (Xiyun et al., 2022) and the dynamics of classroom interactions (Zheng, 2022). However, there is a significant dearth of evidence regarding the exact role of the TSR in the relation between ER and PWB of Iranian EFL teachers.

Given the focus of this study, the theoretical framework of this study is based on positive psychology (Seligman, 2018) that highlights well-being and strength-based development. This view moves attention away from deficits and toward positive emotions and a richer view of the individual. we then lensing it to the domain of Compassion-Based Language Education (Mercer, 2025), emphasizing the importance of emotion and PWB in L2 learning. The CBLE model promotes a learning environment that speaks to empathy, diversity, and relationships beyond a focus on grammar and vocabulary.

Regarding Mercer (2025), the CBLE framework emphasizes the role of a trusting and inclusive relationship between teachers and learners. Our study adds to knowledge of how supportive relationships can alleviate negative impact on teacher well-being because these relationships mediate between teacher ER and PWB. This study also contributes to under-researched areas such as teacher self-compassion and fills gaps in the literature by exploring factors that contribute to teacher-student interaction, thereby supporting the principal goal of CBLE in promoting compassionate learning environments that enhance long-term student achievement. In particular, we intend to explore the direct and indirect effects of ER strategies on PWB, probe the mediating mechanisms of TSR, and identify the intricate pathways by which emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and workplace psychological states are related in the EFL teaching context.

2. Literature Review

The teacher-student relationship (TSR) plays a pivotal role in shaping both academic outcomes and psychological well-being (PWB) within the EFL context. Numerous studies emphasize that supportive TSRs significantly enhance students' academic achievement, self-esteem, and motivation (Jia, 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Beyond mere academic performance, the quality of these relationships is closely linked to students' emotional health. Positive, trusting bonds between teachers and students have been correlated with greater self-confidence, higher engagement in learning, and a more affirmative attitude toward school (Chen et al., 2025; Zhang, 2023).

It is increasingly evident that the social fabric of a school environment—especially interpersonal relationships—strongly influences educational experiences. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that constructive TSRs are associated with reduced student burnout, elevated motivation, and improved academic outcomes (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024; Yuan, 2024). These effects reach beyond classroom exchanges, reflecting deep-seated psychological processes that are essential to both personal and professional growth.

Despite substantial research, important gaps persist regarding the intricate mechanisms underlying TSR—particularly its mediating function between emotional regulation (ER) and PWB. Existing literature has focused on the emotional and participatory aspects of TSR (Shakki, 2022; Yuan, 2024), teacher self-efficacy (Xiyun et al., 2022), and classroom interaction patterns (Zheng, 2022). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding about how TSR mediates the relationship between ER and PWB, especially among Iranian EFL teachers.

This research draws from the theoretical foundation of positive psychology (Seligman, 2018), which prioritizes the cultivation of individual strengths and well-being. The Compassion-Based Language Education (CBLE) model, as described by Mercer (2025), operationalizes this perspective by highlighting the essential role of empathy, cultural awareness, and supportive relationships in language learning. The CBLE framework underscores the significance of trust and rapport within teacher-learner dynamics. Rather than solely examining whether and how ER affects teacher well-being, this study explores how positive interpersonal relationships may buffer educators against negative outcomes and foster resilience.

Additionally, this investigation addresses less-explored domains such as teacher self-compassion, aiming to fill existing gaps in the literature by analyzing the determinants of effective teacher-student interaction. In doing so, it supports the CBLE vision for empathetic educational environments that contribute to sustained student achievement.

In summary, this study seeks to examine both the direct and indirect effects of ER strategies on PWB, clarify the mediating role of TSR, and elucidate the complex interplay among emotional management, interpersonal relationships, and psychological outcomes within the EFL teaching context.

2.1. Teacher-Student Relationship

Teacher-student relationship (TSR) is a singular learning factor with an enormous effect on both psychological well-being (PWB) and academic achievement indirectly by way of frequent instructional and emotional interactions in between. Different studies demonstrate that positive, respectful teacher-student relationships enhance students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Mastrokoukou et al., 2025; Roorda et al., 2017; Spilt et al., 2011). These positive relationships also enable students to build self-esteem and experience reduced stress (Gehlbach et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2024; Longobardi et al., 2016). The proof is evident to everyone that the quality of TSR plays a pivotal role in students' academic and psychological growth.

Studies that have been more recent have also discovered that high-quality TSR has the potential to serve as protection against adversity and academic failure. For example, Ren et al. (2025) set out that strong student-teacher relationships negate the negative impacts of bullying on mathematics performance. Teachers' emotional intelligence also mediates TSR and reduced student burnout, as well as higher learning enjoyment (Li & Zhang, 2024). The classroom environment, which is closely interlinked with TSR, has been shown to significantly predict student performance (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024), and this recognizes how pivotal these relationships are to scholarly progress.

Well-being and motivation are also impacted by TSR. Zou et al. (2024) identified teachers' motivational styles as a key means of transferring intrinsic motivation, which suggests the potential to train teachers to build effective teacher-student relationships. Fang et al. (2024) argued that building close relationships can enhance resilience and motivation in students, triggering shifts towards strengthening these relationships.

Longobardi et al. (2024) identified the student-teacher relationship as a significant learning achievement mediator and referenced that positive relations can surmount prejudice and enhance achievement where teacher training facilitates it. Yuan (2024) demonstrated how robust student-teacher relations significantly influence motivation and attainment, especially in high school and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Together, these studies show firm evidence that teachers' relationship skills are most crucial in boosting students' intrinsic motivation and happiness and consequently highlight the importance of certain teacher training.

Following studies by Wang et al. (2024) and Su et al. (2024) confirm the positive effect of teacher-student relationships on the commitment, emotional lives, and willingness to transfer knowledge of students, particularly of pro-active students. The effect of TSR has also been investigated with respect to teachers themselves. Zhang (2023) suggested a negative correlation between job burnout and teachers' social-emotional competence, moderated by TSR. Xiyun et al. (2022) and Zheng (2022) referred to the fact that positive interpersonal behavior and teacher self-efficacy positively affect teacher and student well-being. Shakki (2022) emphasized that positive TSR supports student engagement, especially in language learning settings. Together, these studies highlight the two-way dynamic of TSR: supportive teacher behavior benefits students, which in turn supports teacher efficacy and well-being.

Besides short-term impacts on academics, Deng et al. (2018) indicated that TSR indirectly supports student performance by influencing self-efficacy, academic feelings, and motivation. Ma et al. (2018) pointed out that English competence enhances through positive teacher-student relationships that enhance self-efficacy and learning dispositions. Aldrup et al. (2018) indicated that positive interactions within the classroom are also essential to the psychological well-being of teachers, which is maintained through positive student relationships.

Despite all this enormous mass of research, there is still a critical gap regarding the mediating role of TSR on emotional regulation (ER) and psychological well-being (PWB) for Iranian EFL instructors. As a result of differential cultural and contextual nature of the Iranian EFL context, there is a need to examine the dynamics of TSR and their impact on teachers' well-being in this specific context. This research gap underscores the necessity of more specific studies on the emotional experiences of teachers in the Iranian EFL context.

2.2. Emotion Regulation

The concept of emotion regulation (ER) involves deliberate and automatic processes for coping with psychological experiences, where deliberate strategies of controlling affective responses (Gross, 2002). Scholars have elaborated extensively on its multifaceted role at the workplace and life. Evidence from recent studies suggests that ER significantly contributes to PWB and professional effectiveness of educators. Empirical studies indicate that strategic emotional regulation is able to alleviate work stress and develop psychological resilience in language teachers (Ma & Liu, 2024; Namaziandost et al., 2024). This demonstrates the potential broad applicability of ER as a work stressor buffer. According to Ma and Liu (2024), their final model highlights the interplay between emotional management and overall well-being in mitigating burnout among teachers and how positive emotional experiences may promote resilience.

Their guideline suggests that, in creating long-term support programs, teachers are to be empowered with effective ER strategies towards the overall creation of a healthier and more sustainable learning environment. In addition, Zhi and Derakhshan (2024) noted that interrelatedness of ER to building resilience with the development of PWB with self-efficacy playing an

important role as the mediating factor. The authors suggest that training for teachers to build up resilience and emotional abilities be instituted in order to enhance the general well-being and efficiency of teachers in the classroom. These investigations underscore the importance of ER not just as an individual skill, but as a fundamental aspect of systemic support for educators. Recent research has confirmed fine-grained strategies in ER like contextual accommodation, cognitive reinterpretation, and attentional modulation (Heydarnejad et al., 2021). These strategies result in higher-order interpersonal relationships and professional performance.

The model suggested by Ismail et al. (2023) illustrates the way ER, reflective teaching, self-efficacy, and identity influence teachers' PWB in its entirety, underlining the importance of emotion management and reflective practice. The authors suggest incorporating training programs on these elements into teacher education to promote overall well-being and professionalism. This suggests that ER is not a monolithic construct, but a set of adaptive strategies which can be tailored to unique situations and individual needs. More advanced studies by Derakhshan et al. (2023) highlight ER's central role in work engagement, highlighting its salience above psychological mechanisms acting at the individual level. The increasingly subtle understanding of ER still illuminates human adaptive capacity and professional achievement (Sutton et al., 2009). Moreover, Ma et al. (2018) emphasized the critical role played by robust TSR in the attainment of academic success via various mediating pathways. According to the authors, what matters is trying to maximize efforts at creating these relationships as they can lead to improved student education outcomes.

Based on these findings, ER stands as the basis of individual well-being and high-quality teaching practice and possesses strong associations with TSR and student achievement. Although previous studies have discussed ER and TSR in depth individually, there is still an important research gap to identify the exact mediating mechanisms that link these constructs in the context of EFL instruction. More specifically, how teachers' emotional regulation influence students' relationship and vice versa, and which influence their own psychological health. There is no macro-level framework within current literature that systematically investigates the mediation function of TSR dynamics for how ER strategies might interact with PWB factors for language teachers.

2.3. Psychological Well-Being

The concept of psychological well-being (PWB) is a broad concept suggesting the overall quality of life and contributions made by a person to society within the context of using all parts of personal and work experiences (Zakaria et al., 2021). In school environments, particularly language instruction, it suggests teachers' life satisfaction and job satisfaction in general (Zhang, 2023). This suggests the dual nature of PWB, including personal satisfaction and professional competence.

Ryff's (1989) initial model outlines PWB in terms of six highly correlated dimensions of self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships, personal autonomy, environmental mastery, existential purpose, and ongoing personal development. Empirical research indicates that high-PWB teachers are more effective in pedagogy, thereby facilitating better learning in students (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012).

Contemporary studies characterize workplace PWB in terms of subtle sub-scales of organizational integration and perceived professional recognition (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). More recent studies have indicated robust correlations between PWB and its related constructs such as emotional intelligence and professional commitment (Cankir & Sahin, 2018; Joo et al., 2017). Owing primarily to greater academic interest, the construct remains vibrant and more studies are warranted, particularly in second language teaching environments. This indicates that PWB is a dynamic interaction of personality traits and environmental factors rather than a fixed state, and so is especially applicable to the challenging environment of language teaching. Bonjakhi et al. (2024) further posited that PWB plays a significant role in teachers' continuous professional development (T-CPD) since it bears a transformative influence on their ability to update subject matter knowledge and teaching skills effectively. The study indicates that PWB, together with other traits such as grit and organizational support, bears a predictive role in T-CPD via work motivation. This underscores the need to guarantee teachers' mental well-being and overall well-being to enhance quality in education and students' achievement.

In a parallel SEM analysis, Aldrup et al. (2018) highlighted a model that focuses on prioritizing the central position of the TSR in protecting the well-being of teachers from student misbehavior challenges. The authors recommend using steps to foster stronger relationships because that can increase the willingness of teachers to be resilient and satisfied at work. These researches highlight the reinforcing cycle between PWB, quality teaching, and facilitative relationships, arguing that interventions targeting any of these variables can be cascading. Past research on PWB among teaching environments indicates a prevailing research gap in the case of intricate mechanisms linking TSR, ER, and PWB specifically in EFL pedagogical contexts. Understanding these processes is crucial for the development of focused interventions aimed at maintaining the well-being of EFL instructors and improving instructional proficiency.

Current research provides no clear understanding of whether teacher-student relationships would mediate the intricate relationships between emotional management techniques and factors that affect teachers' PWB in EFL contexts. The primary aim of this study was to investigate TSR as a mediating factor on the relationship between ER and PWB factors among Iranian EFL teachers. By applying SEM analysis and using existing measures, the research was intended to contribute new knowledge regarding these vital psychological processes and ultimately inform insights to enhance educational practices and teacher support systems.

3. Methodology

Considering the above findings of the previous research, the current study attempts to address the following research questions and verify the proposed model (Figure 1), which has been formulated from the above theoretical background and literature review with the quantitative analytical approach.

The theoretical framework highlights the supreme mediating function of the TSR within the ER and PWB relationship in the EFL work environment concerning the above studies (Aldrup et al., 2018; Fang et al., 2024; Haghgooyan & Zal Ebadi, 2025; Ismail et al., 2023; Longobardi et al., 2024; Ma & Liu, 2024; Ma et al., 2018; Ren et al., 2025; Su et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024; Zou et al., 2024). The nature of this interpersonal relationship influences an EFL teacher's work fit, well-being, feelings of competence, perceived recognition, and willingness to participate. (Fang et al., 2024; Longobardi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). ER is found to have a direct and indirect impact on these essential aspects of PWB (Ismail et al.; 2023; Ma & Liu, 2024; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024), and TSR is mediating the indirect path (Aldrup et al., 2018; Zou et al., 2024).

This study employs positive psychology and CBLE because of their applicability, strengths-based, and holistic focus on compassionate relationships in EFL classrooms in guiding the focus on TSR's mediation role. This integrative framework emphasizes workplace well-being's complexity and TSR's key role in exacerbating or buffering the impact of ER on work experience and outcomes (Ma et al., 2018).

Research question 1: Are there significant positive correlations among teacher-student relationship (TSR), emotion regulation (ER), and psychological well-being (PWB)?

Research question 2: To what extent does the teacher-student relationship (TSR) mediate the relationship between emotion regulation (ER) and psychological well-being (PWB) among Iranian EFL teachers?
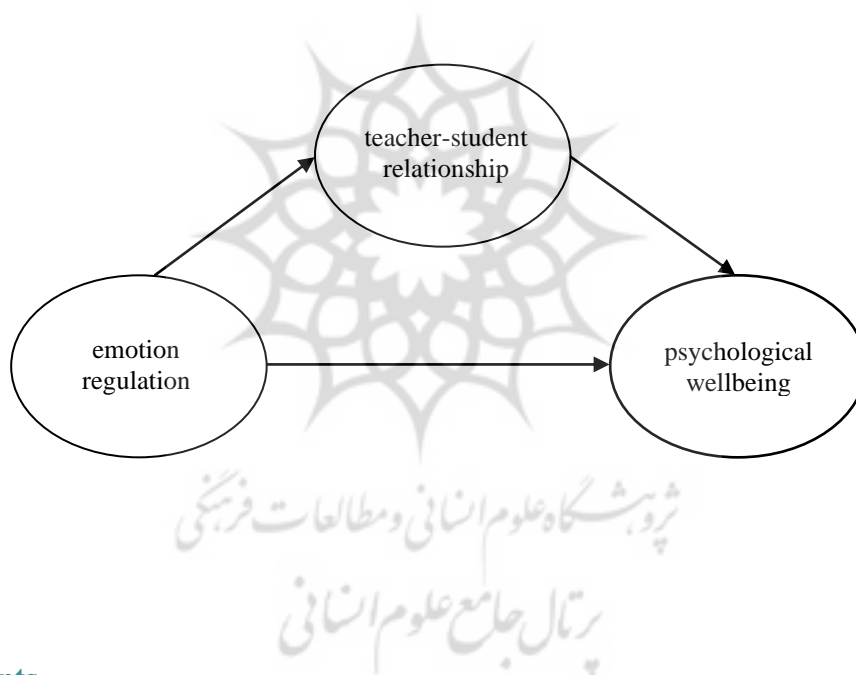

Figure 1.

The Proposed Model

3.1. Participants

The accessible population from which the participants were chosen was all Iranian EFL teachers working in public and private schools across Iran. Participants were selected from this available population via stratified random sampling. The participants to this study comprised 243 Iranian EFL teachers chosen based on stratified random sampling technique as a representative professional group. Stratification was done based on age, educational level, and teaching experience in years to allow for representation by these defining variables. A sample size of 243 was deemed adequate for SEM analysis, by recommendations suggesting a minimum of 10-20 participants per parameter estimated in the model (Kline, 2023). Given the complexity of our model, this sample size provides sufficient statistical power to determine significant relationships between these variables. The sample was female (61.32%), and their ages were mostly between 30-49 (70.3% combined). A Bachelor's degree was possessed by half of the sample (50.20%), followed by a Master's degree (45.26%), with a minor percentage (4.52%) possessing a doctoral qualification. Professional experience was balanced, with 40.74% of 11-20 years, 33.33% of 21-30 years, and 25.92% of 1-10 years. The majority were English language teachers (68.72%), and the majority of their activity took place in school settings (69.13%), focusing on teaching English, translation studies, and English literature. This broad representation ensures a solid and diversified research of the major actors, consistent with the professional profile of language education professionals.

Table 1.

The Participants' Demographic Information (N=243)

Demographic factor	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-29	30 EFL teachers	12.3%
	30-39	74 EFL teachers	30.4 %
	40-49	97 EFL teachers	39.9 %
	50-59	42 EFL teachers	17.28 %
Gender	Male	94 EFL teachers	38.68 %
	Female	149 EFL teachers	61.32 %
Degree	B.A.	122 EFL teachers	50.20 %
	M.A.	110 EFL teachers	45.26 %
	Ph.D.	11 EFL teachers	4.52 %
Experience	1-10 years	63 EFL teachers	25.92 %
	11-20 years	99 EFL teachers	40.74 %
	21-30 years	81 EFL teachers	33.33 %
Major	Teaching English	167 EFL teachers	68.72 %
	Translation Studies	34 EFL teachers	13.99 %
	English Literature	42 EFL teachers	17.28 %
Workplace	School	168 EFL teachers	69.13 %
	Institute	32 EFL teachers	13.16 %
	Both	43 EFL teachers	17.71 %

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. The Emotion Regulation (ER) Scale

To quantify the ER of the participants, the ER scale of Gross and John (2003) was employed. The 10-item ER scale is rated on a 7-point Likert scale with a response from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Table 2). It consists of two sub-scales: Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression. The ER scale was validated in a substantial amount of research that established its capacity to quantify the complexity of emotion regulation strategies. The scale had satisfactory internal consistency as reflected in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above the general consensus of 0.7. Besides, the scale design, discriminating easily between cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, enables detailed assessment of participants' emotional regulation skills and hence serves as a valid instrument for measuring ER in EFL teachers (Azari Noughabi et al., 2022).

Table 2.

Illustration of the ER Scale

Sub-scale	Sample item	Response scale
Cognitive Reappraisal	When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)
Expressive Suppression	I control my emotions by not expressing them.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)
Expressive Suppression	When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to show them.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)

3.2.2. The Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) Sub-Scale Taken from the Teacher Critical Pedagogy Scale (TCP)

We employed the 7-item TSR sub-scale of the Teacher Critical Pedagogy Scale (TCP) developed by Roohani and Haghparast (2020) to quantify Iranian EFL teachers' critical pedagogy in the current study. The 35 TCP items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = disagree completely, 5 = agree completely) (Table 3). Though the entire scale has multiple components (philosophical orientation, program structure, curriculum and materials, teacher development, TSR, and evaluation), our particular interest lies in the TSR component, which is also critical to pedagogical dynamics. The validity of the TCP has been determined through content, face, and construct validity measures, and factor analysis using AMOS 26 software that indicated a good model fit. In addition, the scale was also found to be reliable on the scale since it had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient over the acceptable threshold of 0.7, hence being a reliable tool to assess the TSR in EFL environments (Roohani & Haghparast, 2020).

Table 3.

Illustration of the TSR Scale (Taken from the TCP Scale)

Sample item	Response scale
I often try to learn new things from my students and share the responsibilities in the class.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In my class, I transmit knowledge and students receive knowledge.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In the process of language teaching and learning in the class, my students and I collaborate with each other to come to a conclusion when facing a problem.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In my class, I often do not allow all students to express their opinions on the topics, materials, methods, etc.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In my class, whenever possible, I let my students take the teacher's role.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)

3.2.3. The Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale

To assess the PWB of Iranian EFL teachers, the experimental version of the PWB scale developed by Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012) was administered. It includes 25 items rated on a 6-point scale with answers provided from 0 (disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It assesses five significant dimensions: work interpersonal fit, work thriving, work perceived competence, work perceived recognition, and work desire for involvement. PWB scale has also shown high reliability and validity in measuring PWB among Iranian EFL teachers with a high internal consistency score ($\alpha = 0.95$) (Wang et al., 2022).

Table 4.

Illustration of the PWB Scale

Sub-scale	Sample item	Response scale
Interpersonal Fit at Work	I value the people I work with.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Thriving at Work	I find my job exciting.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Feeling of Competency at Work	I know I am capable of doing my job.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Perceived Recognition at Work	I feel that my work is recognized.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Desire for Involvement at Work	I want to take initiative in my work.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)

3.3. Procedure

All Iranian EFL instructors in this study were informed about the aim of the assessment and provided electronic permission. The research employed four electronic questionnaires for demographic information, TSR, ER, and PWB. All instruments applied were carefully designed and translated to provide comprehensive knowledge in linguistic context. Clearance was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Sabzevar and Hakim Sabzevari University prior to commencing the study.

Questionnaires were created using Google Forms, with three primary instruments originally in English and augmented with Persian translations. Translation was done according to cross-cultural adaptation guidelines (Beaton et al., 2000), including forward translation by two independent translators, reconciliation of the translations, back-translation by a translator not exposed to the original English language version, and review by an expert committee to ensure semantic, idiomatic, and conceptual equivalence. 30 EFL teachers took part in a pilot study to validate the clarity and understandability of the translated questionnaires and lead to slight modifications before actual data collection. Participants were thoroughly explained the instruments and research objectives. More precisely, an opening page on Google Forms stipulated the study's aim, assured confidentiality and anonymity, and provided contact information of the researchers in case they require elucidation or questions. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. The questionnaire was to be filled in approximately 15 minutes, with data collection spanning a two-month duration from November 2024 to December 2024. A link was shared online for convenient participation by the 243 Iranian EFL teachers included in the study. To ensure high response rates, reminder emails to participants were dispatched two weeks after sending out the survey link for the first time. Technical assistance was also offered to assist participants in resolving any difficulties encountered during the process of completing the questionnaires. The strategy allowed for participant involvement, linguistic usability, and total data collection through an effective electronic survey process. Through the use of straightforward instructions and ease of use, the study maximized potential participant response and data quality.

3.4. Data Analysis

Following the data collection procedure, intensive statistical analysis was carried out. The descriptive statistics were run using SPSS software version 26 to obtain data regarding participants' demographic background, i.e., establishing the major factors such as age, gender, degree, experience, major, and work setting. This statistical procedure gave an impression of sample makeup, comprising underlying trends and demographic characteristics.

Then, extensive SEM Analysis was performed by utilizing AMOS 26 software and applying Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) to test the hypothesis and to validate the research model developed. By utilizing this sophisticated statistical technique, extensive examination of interrelationship among variables was formed, demonstrating direct as well as indirect effects in the conceptual framework.

In comparison to Meyers et al. (2008) and Pallant (2020), the MLE method ensured methodological precision by offering fit indices of equal or higher than commonly accepted cut-offs for optimal model fit (e.g., p-value of chi-square > 0.05, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) > 0.9, Normed Fit Index (NFI) > 0.9, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) > 0.9, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.9, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.06). Through the use of different analytic techniques, the research team formulated a rich analytic model that nicely shed light into the intricate relationships within the data set, finally educating the primary research goals of the study in methodological maturity.

4. Results

In order to ascertain that the three scales utilized in this study were valid, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the items of each scale was conducted prior to conducting the SEM analysis. Even though the original scales were elsewhere validated and constructed, it was important to verify that they could be used and were valid within the Iranian EFL context. The results are presented in Table 5. TSR sub-scale, which was constructed based on the TCP scale, consists of 7 items and shows CFI of 0.936, GFI of 0.967, and RMSEA of 0.045. The ER scale has 10 items with CFI of 0.981, GFI of 0.959, and RMSEA of 0.043. The 25-item PWBW scale demonstrates a CFI of 0.928, a GFI of 0.937, and an RMSEA of 0.044. These CFA results confirm that the scales have good model fit in the Iranian EFL context, validating their construct validity for this sample. The reliability of the scales in this context was also tested and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (presented in the Methods section) were greater than 0.7, which indicates good internal consistency. Overall, all of these scales indicate good fit indices based on the criteria: CFI >0.9, GFI >0.9, and RMSEA <0.06 for assessing good model fit for SEM analyses.

Table 5.

Validation of Indices for Each Scale

Scales	number of items	CFI	GFI	RMSEA
The TSR scale	7	0.936	0.967	0.045
The ER scale	10	0.981	0.959	0.043
The PWB scale	25	0.928	0.937	0.044
Total	42			
Acceptable fit indices		>0.9	>0.9	<0.06

4.1. Preliminary Analysis (Descriptive Data and Response to the First Research Question)

Descriptive statistics for the aforementioned components are given in depth. The sampled participants numbered 243 and were distributed across three key components: TSR, ER, and PWB. TSR possessed a moderate range of 16.00 to 30.00 with a mean of 21.44 and a standard deviation of 2.20, indicating moderate consensus among the participants' perceptions. ER demonstrated the most variability with scores between 10.00 and 35.00, mean 24.75, and the highest standard deviation of 5.07, indicating large individual differences in emotional management approaches. Scores for PWB varied between 9.00 and 30.00, mean 24.35, and standard deviation 4.46, indicating moderate variability in general psychological functioning among participants (Table 6).

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics

Components	Skewness	Kurtosis	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3
Teacher-student relationship	243	-0.80	2.41	21.4403	2.20432	-	
Emotion regulation	243	-0.14	-0.37	24.7510	5.07151	455**	-
Psychological well-being	243	-0.73	1.31	24.3451	4.46432	.648**	387**

Addressing the first research question, the correlation matrix Table 6 illustrates that TSR, ER, and PWB are all significantly correlated with some unexpected distribution characteristics. Skewness and kurtosis statistics pick up irrelevant deviations from normality: TSR has a negative skewness of -0.80 and kurtosis of 2.41, ER extremely low negative skewness of

-0.14 and extremely low negative kurtosis of -0.37, and PWB extremely high negative skewness of -0.73 and kurtosis of 1.31. Statistically, they also correlate positively with one another, TSR and PWB correlating strongly (r = .648, p < .01), ER and PWB correlating positively (r = .387, p < .01), and TSR and ER correlating moderately (r = .455, p < .01). These outputs suggest that all of the variables are within good ranges of normality (kurtosis -7 to +7, skewness -2 to +2) and are supportive of the interrelated construct nature of these psychological processes and their emphasis on the dynamic interplay between relational processes, emotion regulation, and psychological adjustment.

4.2. SEM Analysis (Response to the Second Research Question)

To answer the second research question, the hypothesized model was tested by passing the model under statistical testing using the Amos 26 package. As evident from the table, the chi-square value of 0.171, calculated in this case, was seen to be non-statistically significant, indicating a good fit of the model. Additionally, all the model fit indices, i.e., GFI = 0.946, NFI = 0.968, IFI = 0.971, and CFI = 0.931, were higher than the optimal cut-off of 0.9, which characterized a well-fitting model. Still, the RMSEA = 0.046 was smaller than the cut-off value of 0.06, which also characterized the perfect model fit. All these discoveries collectively validate the accuracy and sufficiency of the model to describe the structure that exists inside the data.

Based on our statistical figures established in Figure 2, path coefficients estimated through Amos 26 analysis shows that there are critical associations between the involved variables. With coefficients of 0.47 to 0.68, the coefficients suggest that TSR mediates very strongly the ER-PWB relationship among Iranian EFL instructors. Partial mediation is also present, which means TSRs are an important ingredient in this equation but that there also exist direct routes from ER to PWB. This would suggest that the quality of the TSR is an important ingredient to understand how ER influences PWB in this sample.

Table 7.

Goodness of Fit Indices

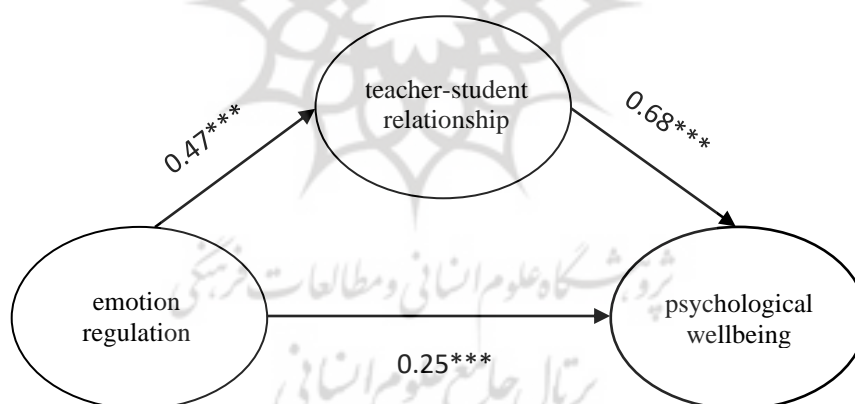|	P(chi-square)	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	>0.05	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.06
Model	0.171	0.946	0.968	0.971	0.931	0.046

Figure 2.

*SEM Results. Path Coefficients are Presented at Standard Coefficients. ***<0.001*

Concerning the bootstrapping analysis in Table 8, SEM analysis confirms significant and statistically high interrelations between ER, TSR, and PWB. Direct influence of ER on TSR has a moderate positive path coefficient of β = 0.31 (p < 0.001) with 95% CI [0.21; 0.41], indicating a significant relationship. The indirect influence of ER on PSW through TSR has a path coefficient of β = 0.11 (p < 0.001) with a 95% interval of confidence [0.07; 0.15] not containing zero, thus confirming the statistical significance of the mediation path. Notably, the total effect of ER on PSW is significant, with path coefficient β = 0.71 (p < 0.001) and a 95% confidence interval [0.61; 0.81] pointing towards ER having a significant effect on PWB directly and indirectly through the mediation role of TSR.

Table 8.

Direct and Indirect Effects of SEM Analysis

Path	*B*	SE	95% CI [Lower bound; Upper bound]	*P*	*Decision*
Direct Effects					
ER→TSR	0.31	0.05	[0.21; 0.41]	<0.001	Supported
TSR→PSW	0.52	0.05	[0.49; 0.69]	<0.001	Supported
ER→PSW	0.30	0.05	[0.20; 0.40]	<0.001	Supported
Indirect Effects					
ER→TSR→PSW	0.11	0.02	[0.07; 0.15]	<0.001	Supported
Total Effects					
ER→PSW	0.71	0.05	[0.61; 0.81]	<0.001	Supported

In sum, our results revealed strong statistical correlations between Iranian EFL teachers' TSR, ER, and PWB. Fit indices for the model were exemplary, with many of them surpassing the suggested thresholds. Path coefficients illustrated the strong mediating effect of the TSR, both direct and indirect effects. The analysis placed ER in a significant relationship with PWB, and TSR proved to be a significant intermediary factor. These findings illuminate the multifaceted interdependence among these factors in the context of the EFL classroom, which provides rich psychological terrain for language instructors to negotiate.

5. Discussion

The general purpose of the current study was to investigate the mediating role of the teacher-student relationship (TSR) between emotion regulation (ER) and psychological well-being (PWB) in Iranian EFL instructors. Structural equation modeling was used as the study's methodology in an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate psychological processes behind teacher-student relationships in academic environments.

In response to the first research question about the magnitude of relationships among TSR, ER, and PWB, the findings are consistent with previous research. The study revealed high correlations consistent with Li and Zhang (2024) and Luo and Derakhshan (2024), showing high relationships between the variables. Thus, the findings confirmed Yuan's (2024) findings on interpersonal dynamics influencing motivation and learning performance. Zhang et al.'s (2023) findings of the negative correlation between social-emotional competence and job burnout were further substantiated, with the study providing further clarity on the intricate interrelations among these variables. To answer the second research question on the extent of mediation by the TSR, this study extended those of Aldrup et al. (2018) and Deng et al. (2018).

The findings established that the TSR is a strong mediator in the ER-PWB relationship. This result is in line with the research by Ma et al. (2018), which highlighted the classroom interpersonal dynamics in shaping psychological processes. In addition, the current study reaffirmed Xiyun et al.'s (2022) results regarding the impact of ER on teachers' PWB but with a deeper comprehension of the mediating processes. Based on our findings and on the tenets of CBLE, the results underscore the applied significance of creating supportive TSR in EFL contexts. Since CBLE emphasizes emotional regulation and empathetic interaction, our research demonstrated how enhancing positive relations among educators and students has direct impacts on teachers' PWB by decreasing job burnout and enhancing emotional regulation.

This emphasizes the integration of CBLE principles in teacher preparation courses and professional development classes to foster more sustainable and emotionally enriching teaching cultures. In addition, our findings indicate that interventions to enhance TSR can indirectly optimize learning performance through enhanced teacher PWB. By emphasizing trust building, care, and consideration, teachers can establish healthy environments in which they and their students can develop emotionally and intellectually. This has implications for policy and curriculum, suggesting that education policy addresses the creation of conditions conducive to positive interpersonal relationships in the classroom in an effort to construct a more humane and productive language learning environment in keeping with the overall goals of CBLE.

The comprehensive study approach elevates previous research by Ma and Liu (2024) and Zhi and Derakhshan (2024), offering a richer model of TSR's interaction with ER and its effects on PWB. By identifying direct and indirect effects, the study provides valuable information about the complex mechanisms of learning interactions to ultimately deepen understanding of psychological processes in the construction of EFL learning settings. These overall findings from our investigation highlight the vital role of positive TSR in overcoming professional difficulties, minimizing employment burnout, and cultivating respectful learning environments. The present study provides an in-depth examination of the complex psychological forces driving fruitful educational encounters, paving the way for future research and applied practices in EFL classroom settings.

6. Conclusion

The study delved into the complex relationships between teacher-student relationship (TSR), emotion regulation (ER), and psychological well-being (PWB) of Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The study creates meaningful relationships that enhance our knowledge of psychological dynamics in classrooms.

The outcomes indicate that TSR is an essential mediator between ER and PWB. By using structural equation modeling, this research verifies prior research by Li and Zhang (2024), Luo and Derakhshan (2024), and others in suggesting intricate psychological mechanisms that affect teaching professionals' lives. The research revealed that ER had high correlation with PWB, and TSR was a significant mediating factor. This corroborates earlier research by Zhang (2023) and Xiyun et al. (2022) in providing deeper insight into the manner in which social processes influence psychological outcomes within the workplace. Of special note, the study identified ER's direct and indirect effects on PWB. TSR represents a key mechanism by which these effects are channeled, confirming and building on earlier research by Ma et al. (2018) and Aldrup et al. (2018). Limitations include its somewhat small sample size, self-report measures, and cross-sectional design, which may restrict generalizability to other settings.

But the study implications in research are important on the practice side of education, indicating the necessity for intensive professional practice and methodology aimed at strengthening teacher-student relationships. The findings emphasize the significance of interpersonal relationships in learning environments. They demonstrate that TSRs are much more than instructional transactions, they are meaningful psychological channels that condition professional performance pervasively, emotional fulfillment, and learning accomplishment. This study shows that such interventions to improve teacher ER skills, if in turn supported by methods to build positive TSR, have the potential to make a significant contribution to teachers' well-being and indirectly the quality of education students experience.

These results have several applied uses. To start, teacher preparation courses need to include instruction on teaching ER and interpersonal skills. Secondly, schools should provide teachers with professional development on a consistent basis so that they may develop these abilities during their careers as teachers. Thirdly, school administrators should build positive school climates that prioritize teacher happiness and support healthy teacher-student relationships. Overall, this piece belongs to the growing literature emphasizing teacher well-being as a key element in teaching effectiveness. By situating TSR as a mediator, this study points to the need for an integrated model of teacher support that addresses both their affective concerns and interpersonal relationships with students. Long-term effects of such intervention on teacher turnover, student achievement, and school climate may be the future area of research. Future research needs to prioritize longitudinal work, cross-cultural comparisons, and a more heterogeneous sampling plan to be able to extend these findings and validate and generalize them. By further investigating these complex interactions, researchers will be in a position to establish more effective support systems for teachers and continue to enhance the overall quality of opportunities to learn.

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