

## On the Relationship between Iraqi EFL Teacher' Autonomy, Job Satisfaction, and Burnout

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### Abstract

*The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between Iraqi EFL teacher' autonomy, their job satisfaction and their sense of burnout. The participants of this study were 200 male and female Iraqi EFL teachers who taught English at public schools and language institutes of Al-Diwaniya, Iraq. The participants' ages were range from 24- 45 and they had B.A and M.A. The research design that was used in this research was mainly quantitative and experimental types design for which related data were used to measure and describe the quantitative relationship and the Pearson correlation was made among the variables. Three instruments were used: First, The Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS) developed by Çolak (2016) was utilized to measure sampled EFL teachers' autonomy. Second, The Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (Pepe, 2011) which is a questionnaire aimed at measuring job satisfaction that has been specifically developed using in educational contexts. Third, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI): consists of 22 items divided into three dimensions, which were evaluated with a Likert-type scale. To test the hypotheses, the Pearson Correlation Analysis parametric tests were used. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between EFL teachers' autonomy and their sense of burnout. Also, the data indicated that there was no significant relationship between EFL teachers' autonomy and job satisfaction. The outcome revealed that there was no significant relationship between EFL teachers' autonomy and job satisfaction.*

## **Introduction**

Throughout the recent decades, a growing tendency toward the development of autonomy and autonomous behaviors in the field of education and language learning has tremendously increased. Even though some forms of autonomy, more clearly described as self-learning, had had an important role in language learning in non-formal educational contexts since the mid- seventies (see Benson and Voller, (1997); Benson (2001), Finch (2001) for discussions on this), the emphasis now is on promoting the development of autonomous behaviors inside the school or educational context, as an accompaniment to formal educational processes. The notion is to make the learners life-long learners, prepare to encounter modern life challenges and to continue learning beyond formal education. Therefore, diverse definitions have been provided in this concern.

Accordingly, the available researches regarding the teacher's autonomy indicate diverse definitions for this variable. Regarding language teaching, Smith (2003) defined it as a generalized 'right to freedom from control' (Benson 2000), to teachers' capacity to get involved in self-directed teaching to teacher's autonomy as learners (Smith 2000, Savage 2000)" (p. 1). In fact, a similar phenomenon happens in general education. Definitions of this autonomy differ from those that see it as the building process of personal identity as professionals in line with the educational interests' community, to those that relate it with teachers' isolation as a result of the way schools have been organized traditionally (Anderson, 1987; Lortie, 1975).

As the next variable of the study, based on Locke's definition (1976) job satisfaction, teacher job satisfaction could be labelled as teachers' positive emotional feeling stemming from their appreciation of being teachers. Therefore, improving teacher job satisfaction is significant since the literature indicated that younger teachers were more probable to get disinterested concerning their jobs due to low level job satisfaction, which, even will end in teacher shortage (Green-Reese, Johnson, & Campbell, 1991). On the contrary, teachers with a high level of job satisfaction provided higher quality teaching and their students were more successful (Demirtas, 2010), that is considered high teacher job satisfaction take advantage of education overall. In order to develop the teaching quality and provide a good

environment for teaching as well as a stress-free situation, it is very important to maintain teachers' high job satisfaction.

Moreover, as another variable of the study job burnout is referred to the negative senses felt by persons in their occupational centers. For example, physical and mental exhaustion, reduced job achievement, and reduced enthusiasm for work (Freudenberger, 1975). Recently, the dimension and measurement of job burnout have mostly been based on the theoretical model of Maslach (1981). She suggests that job burnout can be examined from three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy.

Therefore, in the present study, the kinds of literature and previous studies have not satisfied the researcher. So, he wants to fill the gap and finds the relationship between autonomy, job satisfaction and a sense of job burnout among the Iraqi EFL teachers.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Money, manpower, strategy, and material are thought of as four significant pillars of any organization, among which manpower is the most important one (Ghazi, Ali, Shahzada, & Israr, 2010). In addition, in a social institution like the classroom, teachers' vital role cannot be overlooked (Ghazi, et al. 2010). One of the valuable assets of any country is its quality teachers who form the strength of a nation in the progression of "human capital for a knowledge-based economy" (Kappagoda, 2011, p.1). This is a crucial role because without a combination of teachers' skills, knowledge and experience, we wouldn't have a coherent system to lead the students to a better achievement of their goals. This can be confirmed whether other research which found a strong relationship between the students' learning and their progress with teachers' expectations and their quality of teaching or not (Sammons, 2007; Sammons & Bakkum, 2012).

The studies conducted on teachers' autonomy might emphasize that learner autonomy is crucial to influential language learning, but simultaneously, they propose that thorough support is required. In fact, autonomy might help teachers to freely utilize the acquired knowledge and skills in the classroom in real-life situations that may directly

influence the learners. In the context of language teaching in Iraqi English teachers often are forced to follow some regular or obligatory rules that to some extent reduce the teachers' control over the learners. The problem diagnosed is that every individual has their method and because everyone is different. Thus, fostering the EFL teachers' autonomy seems to be a good solution for expanding the level of teachers' duty. Before implementing any interventions that aim at promoting autonomous teaching, many aspects need to be considered. One crucial option is to have enough information regarding the roles that teachers should adopt to foster the teachers' autonomy.

Moreover, teacher Job Satisfaction (JS) is considered as “a predictor of teacher retention, a determinant of teacher commitment and a contributor to teacher effectiveness” which leads to the teacher’s performance enhancement and eventually the ability to have a positive effect on the students’ final performance (Shann, 1998, p. 67). Many teachers are believed to choose teaching as an occupation since they merit the innate rewards which they get and since they feel the pleasure of the emotional and personal advantages of the job itself, including personal improvement and a sense of success (Iwanicki, 2001). Indeed, most of the teachers choose this profession since they want to help others and look for the chance to improve personally and develop the public services (Jones, 2001).

What has made the researcher inclined to conduct this study is to reduce the job burnout on the part of the teachers by expanding their autonomy and discovers if this variable has a significant relationship with job burnout and job satisfaction, then, some solution was suggested to work on the Iraqi teachers' autonomy and expanding their autonomy by leaving them free and reducing the strict rules from their shoulders. For instance, some EFL teachers might like to adopt a learner-centered pedagogy, providing the pupils with the opportunity to select and produce classroom materials and to structure and present lessons.

Also, it is widely accepted that the quality of any education system depends largely on its teachers, and the quality of teachers is the most important school-related factor affecting student achievement (Gabriel, 2005; Aliakbari & Bozorgmanesh, 2015). Teachers contribute greatly to student learning and wellbeing, so it is vital for educational authorities at all levels to optimize the quality and effectiveness of teachers’ performance. Thus, to implement educational policies successfully and achieve associated educational targets, it is important to motivate and retain

teachers who are experienced, competent in their work, and able to perform their duties to a high standard (Rosenblatt and Shirom, 2005;

This was a reason for high motivation and involvement even for those who seldom take part actively in the tasks suggested by the teacher. To fill the gap and shed more light on the teachers' autonomy, the researcher intends to conduct this study and compensates for the paucity of the conducted studies.

### **Significance of the Study**

The finding of this study was valuable since these findings might help both theoretical and practical educational scopes. First, the results might highlight the consequence of teachers' job autonomy in enhancing their job satisfaction. Therefore, efforts would be concentrated to achieve teachers' job satisfaction through adopting autonomy principles and providing opportunities for the teachers to self-pace themselves. Getting them involved in educational decision making, changing the work environment, creating novel communications ways are some central strategies to attain teachers' job autonomy.

Besides, what the present study brought to the teachers and those involved in the education process was that teachers go through the process and ultimately get teaching jobs which essentially should make them happy and satisfied. The study provided teachers, head teachers and ministry officials in the Iraq with the opportunity to express their views regarding teacher job satisfaction, facilitating a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from these various perspectives.

There is a need to be carried out in country such as Iraq taking into consideration the reality of the Iraqi educational context to provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomena.

This had not been the case as witnessed infrequent studies conducted based on the literature concerning job satisfaction, teachers' autonomy and their sense of burnout. Likely, the reasons of making the teachers much more autonomous and unearth the reasons of their job satisfactions adequately. Therefore, in the current study the teachers' autonomy and the relationship between them aimed at having an in-depth investigation of hidden factors that

influence job satisfaction, foster autonomy amongst the EFL Iraqi teachers and their sense of burnout. Besides, the study was hoped to provide information that was useful in the determination of better working conditions by the teachers and enable teachers and students to be resolute in choosing and being on the job in order to achieve a high level of job satisfaction and good achievements

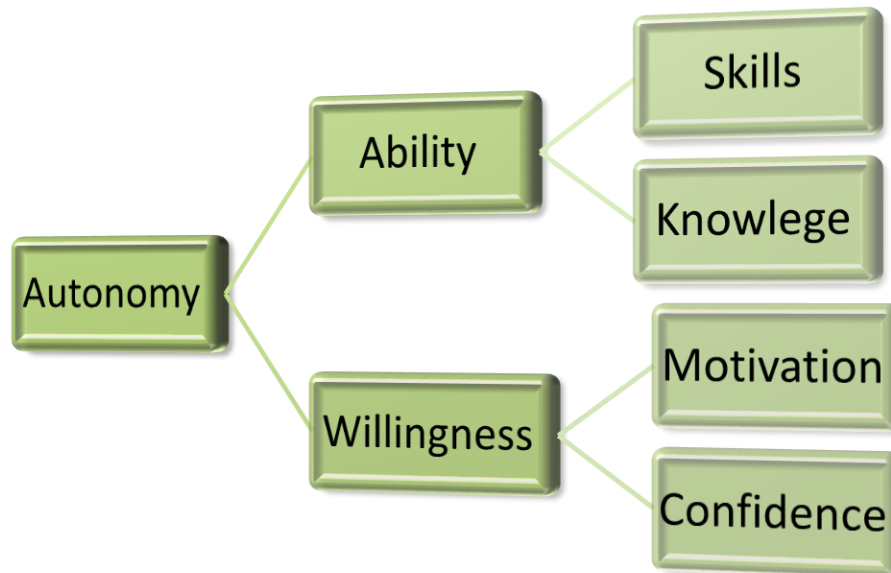
#### The Purpose of the Study

The full intention of teachers, educators, families and syllabus designers is an achievement in language; therefore, the present study aimed at concentrating on this end and unearthed the relationship between EFL Iraqi teachers' autonomy, job satisfaction and their sense of burnout.

### **Teachers' autonomy**

A learners' dictionary definition of autonomy describes it very simply as: 'the capability to make your own decisions about what to do rather than being affected by anyone else or told what to do.' (Collins Cobuild English Dictionary 1995, p.100). More than this explanation, autonomy can be discussed in terms of attitudes knowledge, skills and also it was proposed by Littlewood (1996) ability can be divided into knowledge and skills. Knowledge would include an awareness of alternatives that might be chosen, and the skill to implement any choices made. The idea-based component of autonomy is elaborated by Littlewood under the heading of willingness. He explained that it is not enough to know the way of doing something. There must also be the motivation and confidence to do something. While discussing learners David Little (1990) describes how some aspects of autonomy could be recognized in treatment. Accordingly, decision making, he adds there should be a capacity for disinterest, critical thinking and acting independently. These would also be the characteristics of an autonomous teacher. Autonomy is not the same as

independent work and teachers may share autonomy in joint work (Judith Warren Little 1990). This latter point was discussed in the section on collaboration.



*Figure 2.1.* Littlewood's model

Teachers' autonomy (TA) is often associated with competence. Autonomy as a feature of professionals working in centers is represented in the researching centers. Bidwell (1965) makes note of this when he writes a significant characteristics of school-system organization is the autonomy granted to--or perhaps demanded by--the teacher as a professional to make discretionary judgments concerning procedures to be applied during the time a student group is in his charge (p. 975). Bidwell explains teaching as a profession and autonomy as a feature of this professional work.

It is unrealistic to expect teachers to develop a sense of autonomy unless they have themselves experienced teacher training, where an exploratory and evaluative approach to

learning and teaching have been key elements (Little, 1995; Castle, 2006; Marcosa, & Tilemab, 2006; Dam, 2007; Burkert, & Schwienhorst 2008).

De Vries and Kohlberg (1987, p. 380) give a picture of what an autonomous teacher looks like.

Language teachers without any autonomy-oriented training may experience difficulties in creating such a classroom culture. Hence, the earlier language teachers who are in support of the principles of autonomous learning are made aware of the importance and necessity of learner autonomy in their initial teacher training, the more easily they will be able to implement this approach in their own future classrooms. Likewise, Little (1995), Tort-Moloney (1997), McGrath (2000), Smith (2000), Aoki and Hamakava (2003), Huang (2005), Sert (2006), Viera (2007), Smith and Erdoğan (2007) and Burkert and Schwienhorst (2008) provide evidence that teachers who themselves are not autonomous language learners may have a negative influence on the development of autonomy in their students. Teaching is often affected by the personal history of the teacher, as in how s/he was taught in school and how s/he sees that history. Moreover, without personal experiences on autonomous language learning the concept might be more difficult to grasp. According to Little (1995, p. 175), learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy in two senses:

### **The significance of teachers' autonomy**

There are many reasons, which can be mentioned regarding the reasons why autonomy is regarded of high importance and most of these reasons are concerned with the question of teachers' jobs. However, are teachers like experts who utilize other people's decisions or are teachers 'professionals', in deciding for themselves? In fact, the answer to these questions influences on the idea that how teachers' work is programmed and what tasks and actions the teachers are likely to do. Thus, these expectations in turn can affect teachers' performance in the class as well as their insights of their job. As a result, Hoyle (1980) provided the following list concerning the teachers' performance:



- “A body of theoretical knowledge on which members of the profession base their practice
- A relatively long time spent in training
- A code of ethics regulating member behavior
- A means of controlling the admission of new members
- A high degree of autonomy in their work” (p. 43).

In general, these characteristics are commonly used by the professions as well as the individual practitioners. Thus, both the professional and the practitioner are able to adjust their own work free from external controls that might be policy makers, parents and the student in the context of teaching. In the distress for quality in education to be maintained, one of the demanding strategies is the greater professionalization of teaching and the continued proficiency of teachers. Therefore, attempts have been made to improve the status of teaching in general and in language teaching as a required basis for development and getting enough knowledge to communicate globally.

## **Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a positive delightful response an individual has for his or her occupation experience (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1988). Syptak, Marsland and Ulmer (1999, p. 23) proposed this definition for JS: “peoples’ affective relation to their work role, and a function of the perceived relationship between what they wanted from the job, and what they perceived it was offering”. According to Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, and Steca (2003) job satisfaction is “a decisive element” that has strong effects on teachers’ attitudes and even performance (p. 823).

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted construct with a variety of definitions and related concepts, which has been studied in a variety of disciplines for many years to now. Many theories and articles of interest to managers, social psychologists, and scholars, focus on job satisfaction because most people spend their life-time for work, and understanding of

the factors that increase satisfaction is important to improve the well-being of individuals in this facet of living (Gruenberg, 1997).

### **Sense of job burnout**

Teaching is a multifaceted and dynamic job with its challenges and EFL and ESL instructors also experience symptoms of demotivation and burnout. The high rate of teacher burnout has long been considered a problem in education and has become a global concern (Borg, 1990). Teaching indeed is a profession who can be pursued with mostly intrinsic motives but there exist a variety of negative influences that “systematically undermine and erode the intrinsic character of teacher motivation” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 168).

The notion of burnout is introduced by Freudenberg (1974, p.160) and he defines it as “the state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions of work”. He emphasizes that burnout is a challenge which workers face in human services professionals like nurses, teachers, social workers (Freudenberg, 1974). He described burnout as a situation of professionals’ exhaustion and suffering from feeling themselves under pressure because of acting their roles and helping others for many years in service (Dollard et al., 2003, p. 15).

Perhaps one of the most commonly used definitions of burnout comes from Maslach and Jackson (1981) who state, “Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (p. 99). Pines and Aronson (1988) defined burnout as, “a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations” (p. 9). In spite of the different definitions there is perhaps one agreed upon component of burnout which is emotional exhaustion (Cox, Tisserand, & Taris, 2005).

Accordingly, one of the situations that bring about mental tension and stress is an individual’s job and working environment. In general, the type and area of the profession, excessive demands for hard-work, physical dangers, and other kinds of long-standing maladjustment with one’s working area, are considered as "stressors" or “job tensions”(Dadsetan, 1998). Therefore, the main aspect of job stress, is the phenomenon of

"job burnout". According to research on "job burnout", it is defined as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion which results from long lasting and direct confrontation with people. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, feelings of failure in individual achievement and efficiency are three components of job burnout. Consequences of these components, could be "a feeling of separation from service receivers", "dislike of the environment", "disinterest or failure to engage in one's job and occupation", and "psychosomatic problems". Job burnout is observed by in-service providers in didactic and healthcare services.

## **Method**

### **3.1. Participants**

This study was conducted by selecting a population of 200 Iraqi EFL teachers from amongst the EFL Iraqi teachers who teaches English at public schools and language institutes of Al-Diwaniya, Iraq. The participants' ages were range from 24- 45 and they had B.A and M.A.

### **3.2. Design of the study**

The research design that was used in this research is mainly quantitative and experimental types design for which related data are used to measure and describe the quantitative relationship and the Pearson correlation was made among the variables.

### **3.3. Instrumentations**

#### **3.3.1. Teachers' Autonomy**

The Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS) developed by Çolak (2016) was utilized to measure sampled EFL teachers' autonomy. The scale consists of 18 Likert- type items and the scale items could be responded to by marking one of the options ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. There was no inversely scored item in the scale. A total score can be taken from the scale. Increasing scores taken from the scale means increasing autonomy behaviors of teachers. TAS has four sub-dimensions which are teaching autonomy (comprised of items 1,2,3, 4,7,9,10,11,13,15,16&17) curriculum autonomy

(comprised of 5,6,8,12,13, & 18), professional development autonomy (comprised of 19,20,21,22,23,24,25) and communication autonomy (comprised of 26,27,28,29,30,31 & 32).

## **Results**

### **4.1. Descriptive Statistics:**

#### **Section 1:**

Descriptive statistics related to the first Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS) questionnaire were shown in the chart below. The questionnaire contained 18 questions that include four types of questions: discipline, teaching and learning, and personal, which was scored from 1 to 5 based on the performance range.

As can be seen from the graph, the average score of the questionnaire for both groups of public school teachers and language teachers was 3.53 and 3.48, respectively, which was almost the same.

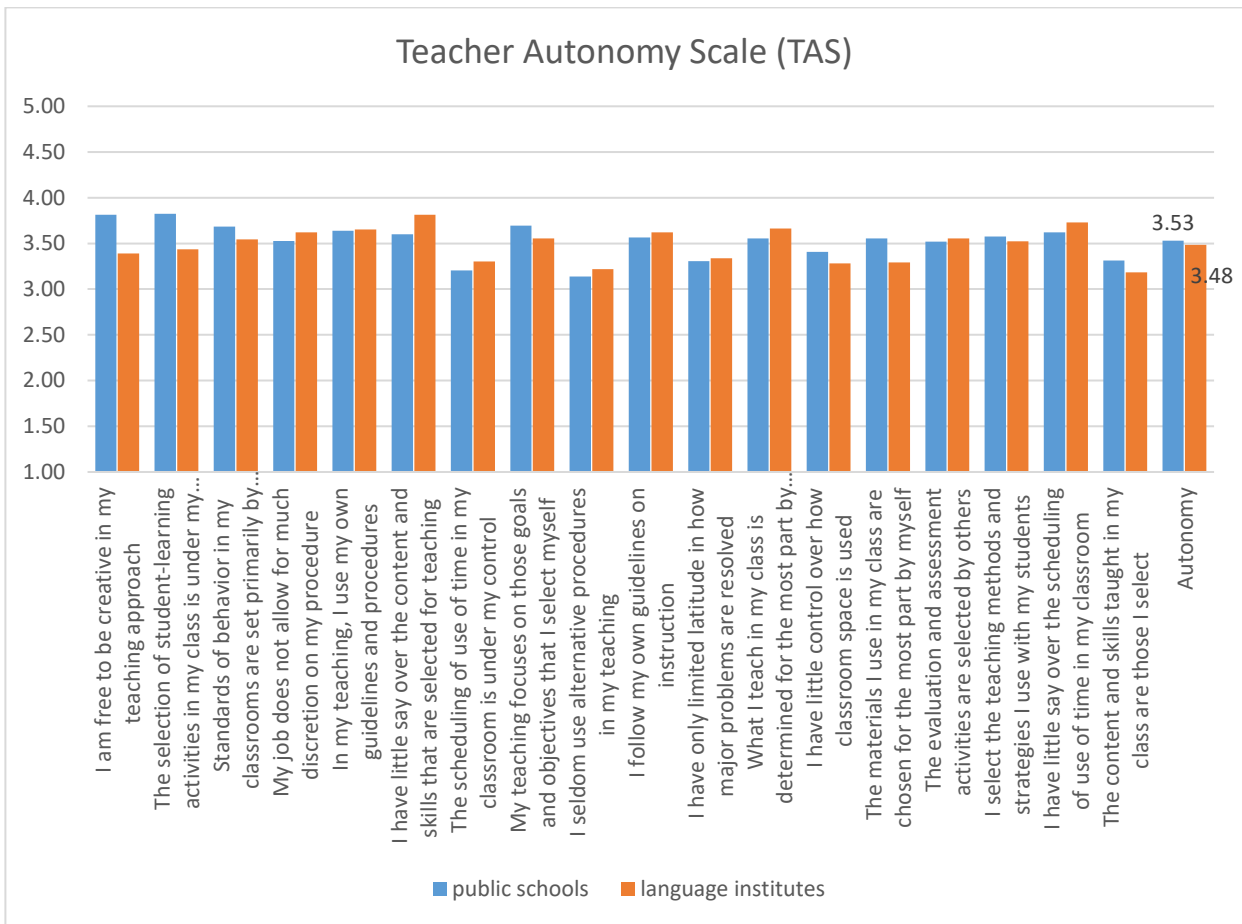


Figure 4.1: Teacher Autonomy Scale

Descriptive statistics for the second Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS) questionnaire were shown in the chart below. The questionnaire contained 9 questions that included three types of questions: satisfaction with co-workers (3 items), satisfaction with parents (3 items) and satisfaction with students' behaviors, which are scored from 1 to 5 based on the performance range.

As could be seen from the graph, the average scores of the language institute teachers' questionnaire and the scores of public school teachers were almost the same. Only in two questions related to satisfaction with students' behaviors (The extent to which students act in a self-disciplined manner and Your satisfaction with the behavior of students in your school) the scores of public school teachers were higher than those of private institutions and in other questions Teachers in private institutions showed more satisfaction.

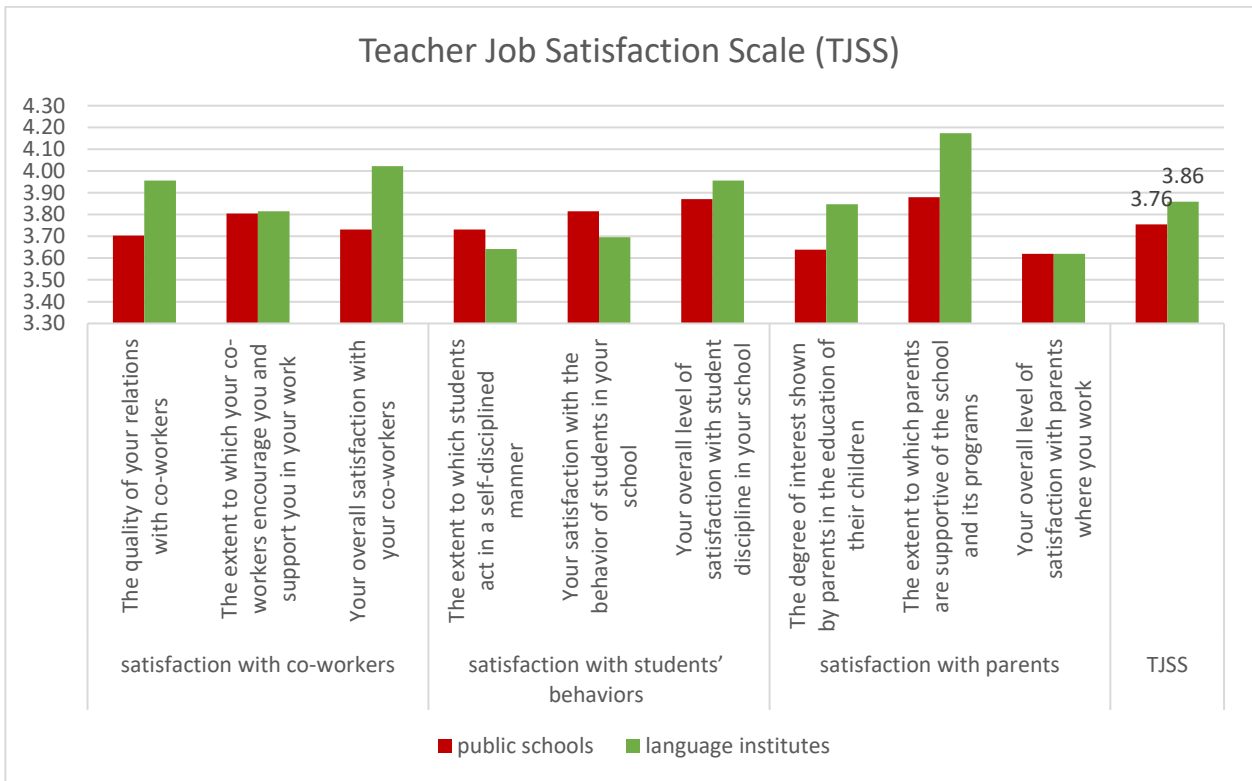


Figure 4.2: Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale

Descriptive statistics for the third Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaire were shown in the chart below. The questionnaire contained 22 questions that included four types of questions: satisfaction with co-workers (3 items), satisfaction with parents (3 items) and satisfaction with students' behaviors, which were scored from 1 to 7 based on the performance range.

As could be seen from the diagram, the average scores of the questionnaires of language teachers and public school teachers were almost the same and were equal to 4.39 and 4.43, respectively.

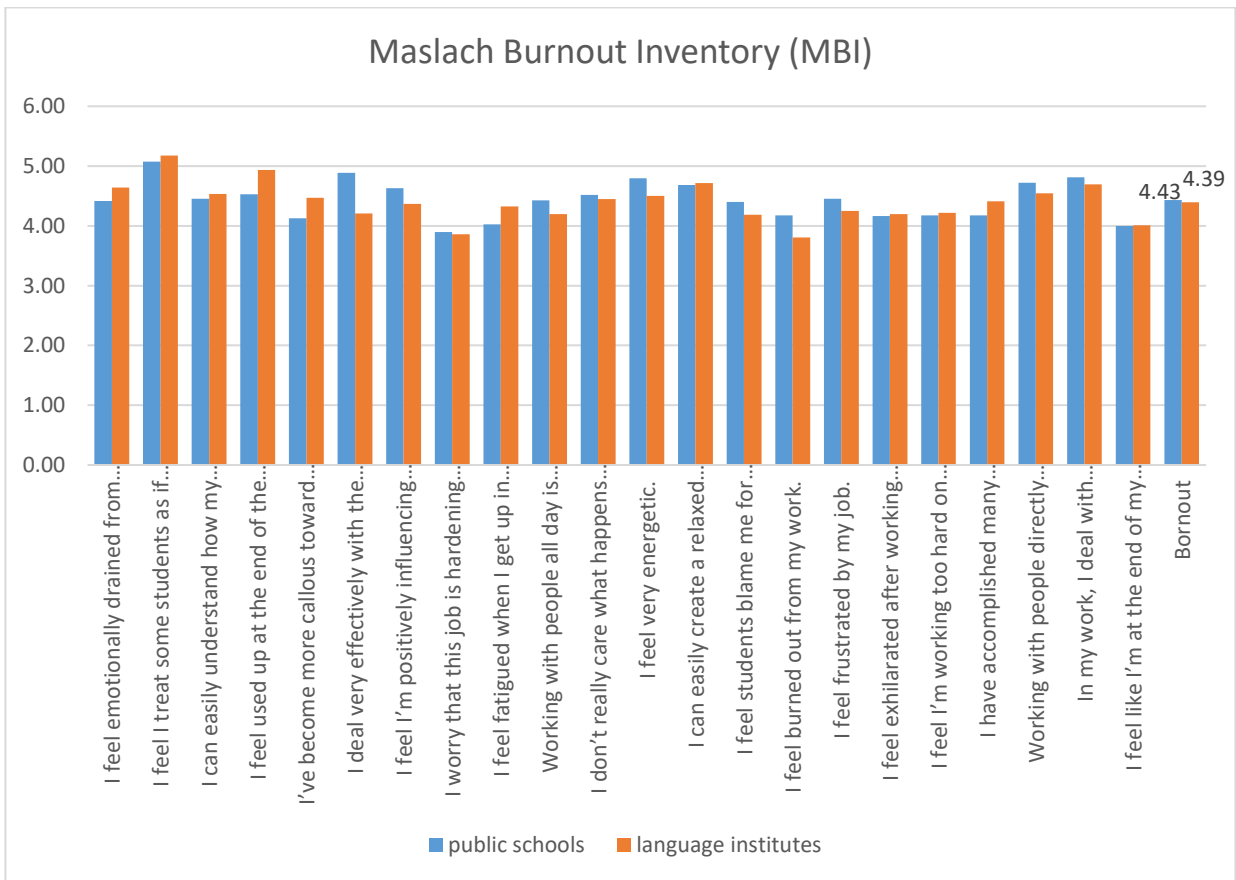


Figure 4.3: Burnout Inventory

4. The number of teachers in the present study was 200, of which 92 were teachers of language institutes and 108 were teachers of public schools.

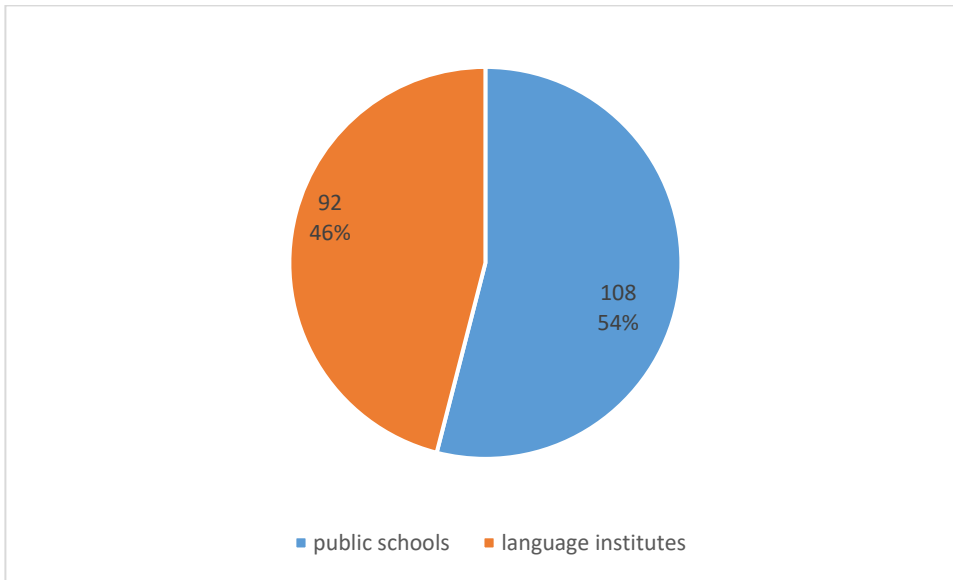


Figure 4.4: percentage of teachers

## Section 2:

1- Independent T-Test was used to examine the differences in Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS) between teachers of language institutions and public schools. First, descriptive statistics were presented and then their equality of variance was checked:

Table 4.1

*Group Statistics of Autonomy*

		Group Statistics			
	type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Autonomy	public schools	108	3.5303	.50155	.04826
	language institutes	92	3.4843	.43319	.04516

According to the information in the table above, the average score of the questionnaire by the teachers of public schools and language institutes was 3.53 and 3.48, respectively. One of the hypotheses of the Independent T-Test was the equality of variances, for which Levene's Test was used.

Table 4.2

*Independent Samples Test Autonomy*



### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Autonomy	Equal variances assumed	4.007	.047	.689	198	.492	.04605	.06687	-.08583	.17793
	Equal variances not assumed			.697	197.958	.487	.04605	.06610	-.08429	.17640

According to the test results, the confidence level was  $\text{sig} = 0.047$ , which was less than 0.05, and it could not be accepted that the variances of the two groups are equal and the second row of the table was accepted. According to the second row of the table and  $p\text{-value} = 0.487$ , which was more than 0.05, it could be said that there was no difference between teachers of language institutes and public schools.

2. In order to examine the differences in the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS) between teachers of language institutions and public schools, the Independent T-Test was used. First, descriptive statistics were presented and then their equality of variance was checked:

Table.4.3  
*Group Statistics Job Satisfaction Scale*

		<b>Group Statistics</b>			
	type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
satisfaction with co-workers	public schools	57	3.8304	.77440	.10257
	language institutes	50	3.7333	.85184	.12047
satisfaction with students' behaviors	public schools	57	3.8304	.61439	.08138
	language institutes	50	3.7667	.67428	.09536
satisfaction with parents	public schools	57	3.6901	.77116	.10214
	language institutes	50	3.9200	.72393	.10238
TJSS	public schools	108	3.8179	.39829	.03833
	language institutes	92	3.7850	.39389	.04107

Based on the information in the table above which compared the public schools and language institutes in terms of satisfaction (co-workers, students' behaviors and parents) and as general TJSS, the average questions followed in:

The satisfaction with co-workers section was 3.83 for public school teachers and 3.73 for language teachers.

The satisfaction with students' behaviors section was 3.83 for public school teachers and 3.77 for language teachers.

The satisfaction with parents section was 3.69 for public school teachers and 3.92 for language teachers.

In general, it was 3.82 for public school teachers and 3.77 for language teachers.

One of the hypotheses of the Independent T-Test was the equality of variances, for which Levene's Test was used.

Table.4.4

*Independent Samples Test*

<b>Independent Samples Test</b>	
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differen ce	Std. Error Differen ce	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
satisfaction with workers	Equal co- variances assumed	.185	.668	.617	105	.538	.09708	.15723	-.21468	.40883
	Equal variances not assumed			.614	99.871	.541	.09708	.15822	-.21683	.41098
satisfaction with students' behaviors	Equal variances assumed	.061	.806	.512	105	.610	.06374	.12459	-.18331	.31079
	Equal variances not assumed			.508	99.967	.612	.06374	.12536	-.18497	.31246
satisfaction with parents	Equal variances assumed	.038	.846	-1.583	105	.116	-.22994	.14522	-.51789	.05801
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.590	104.500	.115	-.22994	.14462	-.51671	.05683
TJSS	Equal variances assumed	.024	.876	.585	198	.559	.03288	.05622	-.07799	.14375
	Equal variances not assumed			.585	193.629	.559	.03288	.05617	-.07791	.14366

According to the test results:

In the question section of satisfaction with co-workers, the confidence level was sig = 0.668, which was more than 0.05, and it could be accepted that the variances of the two groups were equal and the first row of the table was accepted. According to the first row of the table and p-value = 0.538, which was more than 0.05, it could be said that there was no difference between teachers of public institutions and teachers of private institutions.

In the satisfaction questions with students' behaviors section, the confidence level was  $\text{sig} = 0.806$ , which was greater than 0.05, and it could be accepted that the variances of the two groups are equal and the first row of the table was accepted. According to the first row of the table and  $p\text{-value} = 0.610$ , which was more than 0.05, it could be said that there was no difference between teachers of public institutions and teachers of private institutions.

In the question section of satisfaction with parents, the confidence level was  $\text{sig} = 0.846$ , which was more than 0.05, and it could be accepted that the variances of the two groups were equal and the first row of the table was accepted. According to the first row of the table and  $p\text{-value} = 0.116$ , which was more than 0.05, it could be said that there was no difference between teachers of public institutions and teachers of private institutions.

And in general, the result of the confidence level test was  $\text{sig} = 0.876$ , which was more than 0.05, and it could be accepted that the variances of the two groups were equal and the first row of the table was accepted. According to the first row of the table and  $p\text{-value} = 0.559$ , which was more than 0.05, it could be said that there was no difference between teachers of public institutions and teachers of private institutions.

3- Independent T-Test was used to examine the differences in Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) between teachers of language institutes and public schools. First, descriptive statistics were presented and then their equality of variance was checked:

## **Discussion**

Based on the result of first hypothesis, there was a positive and a relatively strong relationship between EFL teachers' autonomy and their sense of burnout. This finding was consistent with Javadi's (2014) study in which revealed that the elements of burnout were significant predictors of teacher autonomy. It was also found out that the components of burnout such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment are strong predictors of teacher's perceived sense of autonomy. However, contrary to the present study, a recent study by Esfandiari and Kamali (2016) showed that there was no relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. Likewise, the

result was not in line with Schermuly, Schermuly, and Meyer's (2011) study that there was no relationship between teacher burnout and teacher autonomy that burnout takes plenty of time to develop (Friesen, Prokop, & Sarros, 1988).

Although Lortie (1969) considers a distinction between power and autonomy, where the former relates to the ability to establish one's own goals and the latter is the freedom to choose among selected goals. It might be confirmed that attitude of teachers towards autonomy were not the same in different context that automatically affects other factors.

Many studies emphasize the importance of teacher autonomy referring to having control over their school environment and liberty in decision making on the most parts of their job (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Somech, 2016). Remarkably, the main reason of the result of this study could be that the autonomy accommodated continuous changes and continues to evolve over the years (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). This was confirmed by Benson (2010), who suggested teacher autonomy also "depends on the interests and internal capacities of individual teachers" and "is related to individual biographies and identities, which influence both the capacity and desire to create spaces for autonomy and what teachers decide to do with them" (p.273). Akbarpour-Tehrani and Mansor (2012) also claimed that "only the sources of knowledge which have been selected autonomously by teachers may follow to make changes in teachers' attitude and class practice" (p. 552). Javadi (2014) suggested that teachers' work conditions should be improved and their feelings of autonomy should be considerate to progress the quality of the teaching and learning process.

Prichard and Moore (2016) indicated some barricades to teacher autonomy in foreign language teaching. The number of the courses, the large number of students, class sections, succeeding the similar program across the session, being required to teach around the standardized exams, and top-down harmonization might impede teachers from making and utilizing their own activities and resources. Lastly, socio-cultural features might also prevent teacher from autonomy. To demonstrate, in Arab societies, where the relationships were based on pyramid, teachers were anticipated to display respect and obedience to their

leaders and questioning them might be perceived as a sign of disregard and challenge (Littlewood, 1999; Anderson, 1999 as cited in Yu-hong & Ting, 2012). Teaching in a society where teachers could not express their opinions was a hindrance to the development of autonomy.

## **Conclusion**

Effective teachers had a fundamental character in the performance and success of educational systems and different psychological and sociological factors could impact on their success and failure. For this reason, the present research intended to investigate three important factors influencing the performance of EFL teachers

Providing teachers with abundant technical and pedagogical knowledge was not enough for improving teaching effectiveness. It was essential to motivate and prompt the development of psychological characteristics such as emotions, feeling, and how they communicate with each other, and the extent to which these emotions influenced their performance. This information supports teachers use proper procedures and plans in order to reduce their feeling of burnout and increase the sense of satisfaction they got from their job.

Pedagogically, being cognizant of the complexity of the constructs of emotional and effective factors helped teachers and educators in understanding what actually prompts students learning. This required the discovery and reduction of forces that diminished the scope and effect of teacher education practices.

Teacher autonomy was not a static entity that some people possess whilst others do not. It was an instable condition that changed across different areas of teachers' decision making and in harmony with situational, personal, and external constraints.

Teacher autonomy did not refer to an absolute condition of freedom from limits. It referred to the responsible exercise of discretion within the limits of school stakeholders' interest and needs.

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