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# Teachers' Burnout and their Feedback-ability

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## ABSTRACT

The current study sought to investigate Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' willingness to receive feedback and its relation to burnout. To this end, Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale (TWRFS), along with Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were administered to 200 English language teachers working at different private language institutes of Mashhad. The data was analyzed by means of Pearson Correlation Coefficient, SEM Path Analysis, and Multiple Correspondence Analysis. Considering the directionality of feedback, the obtained results indicated a significant negative relationship between willingness to receive direct feedback and burnout; the more willing teachers are to receive direct feedback, the later they might experience burnout. With regard to the valency of feedback, willingness to receive negative feedback significantly predicted teacher burnout; that is, teachers who are more open to negative feedback seem to be more prone to burnout. Ultimately, the implications of these findings for the training and support of teachers were discussed, and interventions to treat or prevent burnout were put forward.

**Keywords:** feedback; teacher burnout; willingness to receive feedback (feedback-ability); teacher education

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## Introduction

Burnout is a psychological tension syndrome experienced by an individual in high emotional engagement demand for lengthy and constant periods (Blazer, 2010). Teachers' burnout takes place as a result of an imbalance between available supplies and disproportionate demands (Sovitriana et al., 2019). Regardless of the reason, nearly all teachers experience stress sometimes in their job, and if they fail to employ coping strategies successfully, they suffer burnout or emotional exhaustion (Jennett et al., 2003). A teacher who is experiencing burnout has low self-esteem, low self-confidence, and is physically exhausted, and teacher burnout is one of the most common reasons that teachers leave their profession (Roloff & Brown, 2011). Based on previous studies, numerous factors might contribute to teacher burnout, including lack of knowledge or experience in coping with students from different backgrounds (Taylor & Sobel, 2001), students' discourtesy, lack of discipline, and being noisy (Borg et al., 1991), dissatisfaction with working time or physical environment, lack of access to facilities (Friedman, 1991), and lack of support and role clarity, work pressure, values, and personality traits (Kahill, 1988; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

According to Chang (2009), the factors that lead to burnout in teachers can be categorized into three groups: (a) individual factors, (b) organizational factors, and (c) transactional factors. Individual factors include years of teaching experience, personality traits, marital status, and educational background. Organizational factors comprise large class sizes, work overload, student problems, and lack of resources. And transactional factors consist of teacher efficacy, peer and administrative support, and internal rewards (Cemaloglu & Sahin, 2007).

One of the features that might play a significant role in teachers' success or the reverse, i.e., teachers' burnout, is feedback. Feedback is extensively considered as a tool to boost performance and practice in numerous educational contexts. Therefore, it is recognized to be a salient element in enhancing cognitive, practical, and professional skills (Archer, 2010; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Veloski et al., 2006). Not only is feedback a key to prosperous learning (Ion et al., 2019; Winstone & Carless, 2019), but it also is an indispensable part of teaching; that is, the feedback teachers receive from learners, observers, tests, etc. assists them in comprehending how effective their teaching has been, and in what areas they need to make modifications (Chapman & Sammons, 2013; Coe et al., 2014; OECD, 2013).

From a psychological point of view, teachers might differ in how they react to the feedback received from learners or other interlocutors in EFL context. Based on the classification of personality traits in Big Five Model (McCrae & Costa, 2003; de Raad & Mlacic, 2015), the 'openness to experience' differs from individual to individual, i.e., some people are open to new thoughts and ideas, while others are reserved (Dörnyei, 2005). Therefore, teachers might react differently to feedback based on their personality traits and individual characteristics. In other words, some teachers might be more willing to receive feedback, while others might be reluctant and aloof (Cherasaro et al., 2016).

Feedback seems to be playing a crucial role not only in improving students' learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), but also in professionalizing teachers (Albashir et al., 2016); copious research has explored the effect of feedback learners receive (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Niknezhad Naeijabad et al., 2019; Rezazadeh et al., 2018); however, very few studies (e.g., Cherasaro et al., 2016; Yusoff, 2013) highlighted how feedback teachers obtain might positively or negatively influence their profession. Therefore, the current research aimed at reframing feedback considering the teachers' reactions to the feedback they receive from their students, colleagues, or supervisors.

It is quite noteworthy that burned-out teachers who lose motivation might display anger and violence towards learners and others they work with (Buck, 2006), become less sympathetic to the learners, and also less eager to prepare adequately for the class (Sovitriana et al., 2019), present lower tolerance for interruptions and disorder in classroom, and feel less dedicated and committed to teaching (Ozdemir, 2007), all leading to learners' development of a negative attitude towards their teacher and language learning, and ending up in demotivation (Afshari et al., 2019).

Moreover, it can be inferred that since 'personality traits' play a significant role in teacher burnout (Bakker et al., 2006; Storm & Rothmann, 2003), teachers' willingness to receive feedback (TWRF), an individual characteristic, might be of importance, too. However, a close examination of the literature on burnout and feedback reveals that there is the paucity of research on the relationship between these two features, namely TWRF or feedback-ability and burnout. Thus, the present study seeks to fill this gap by designing and validating a scale to initially measure teachers' feedbackability and then investigate the relationship between their feedbackability and burnout.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Feedback***

Generally, feedback is considered as information provided by an agent such as a teacher, a peer, a book, experience, a computer, a parent, or self, on one's performance or understanding, the aim of which is to lead the individual towards a desired performance by making subsequent improvements (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). According to Veloski et al. (2006, p. 120), feedback communicates an "individual status in relation to a standard of behavior or professional practice".

Although the impacts of feedback have been mainly reported for learning achievements, these results are not confined to learning and can be applied to the teaching context as well, due to the fact that teachers are always learning how to improve their teaching performance; therefore, feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing both learning and teaching in the classroom (Yusoff, 2013).

Based on the concepts mentioned, effective feedback is defined as the one that promotes one's performance and leads to positive and desirable accomplishments through information about previous performance and practice (Archer, 2010). In the context of higher education, effective feedback is an important approach to ensure a worthwhile teaching experience (Yusoff, 2013).

Teachers might receive feedback about their teaching performance in different forms, including student evaluation, self or colleague evaluation, and administration evaluation (Agheshteh & Mehrpur, 2021; Berk, 2005; Berk et al., 2004). In spite of all the debates in the past decades over the impact and value of each of these methods, 'student evaluation' has been suggested to be the main feedback method used to evaluate teachers' performance in comparison with other methods (Berk, 2005; Moore & Kuol, 2005), although teachers' skepticism and dislike towards student evaluation is substantially evident (Berk et al., 2004; Nasser & Fresko, 2002). It must be noted that since all methods of feedback have their strengths and drawbacks, the use of multiple evaluation methods is considered to be more acceptable (Epstein, 2007).

In spite of the important role students play in the feedback process, mostly 'teachers' are put at the center of attention (Lee, 2008), and students are merely considered as 'recipients' of feedback and not 'providers'; in other words, although students are usually willing to do evaluations and

can be active and proactive agents in the process of classroom feedback, their role is largely undermined (Spencer & Schmelkin, 2002). This study is about to shed more light on the feedback teachers 'receive' and how their willingness to receive such feedback might affect their burnout.

### ***Burnout***

Burnout has been defined by dictionaries as the "reduction of fuel or substance to nothing through use or combustion" (OED, 2005, p. 201); as a metaphor, however, burnout refers to the draining of energy (Schaufeli et al., 2009). According to Maslach (1984) burnout mainly refers to the lack of enthusiasm and engagement toward the people someone works with; i.e., the failure in being adequately concerned about the clients as a result of growing frustration, anxiety and tension (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008).

There are copious explanations for the concept of burnout. The term burnout was initially introduced and defined by Freudenberger in 1974 as "a state of exhaustion in which one is cynical about the value of one's occupation and doubtful of one's capacity to perform" (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 20). In 1983, Cherniss and Krantz defined burnout as "the loss of commitment and moral purpose in work" (p. 208). Pines and Aronson (1988) also described burnout as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion due to enduring involvement in emotionally demanding situations. Another definition of burnout has been put forward by Cooper, Dewe, and Driscoll (2000), stating that it is a chronic state of psychological tension and reduction of energy resources as a result of long-term exposure to stressors, specifically in the case of human resource professions. Along similar lines, Jennett et al. (2003) defined burnout as caused by prolonged occupational stress, particularly arising among human service workers, such as teachers, and Salahshour and Esmaili (2021) found factors such as institutional demands, discordant outlooks, interpersonal problems, lack of student motivation, and lack of institutional supports as associated with teachers' burnout.

Maslach and Jackson (1981) identified three main elements for burnout: a) Emotional exhaustion, b) depersonalization, and c) personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion or the state of being physically exhausted is the first stage of burnout, which is identified with a lack of enthusiasm towards one's job. Prolonged job pressures and life changes result in daily stressors, and teachers who experience emotional exhaustion detach themselves emotionally from other colleagues and prefer to be on their own (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The second element of burnout is depersonalization that is identified with a negative and pessimistic attitude towards students, staff members, or administrators. The manifestation of the negative outlook is typically observed in handling work-related responsibilities. Depersonalization is also evident in destructive effects on the overall health of individuals, including depression, heart diseases, or high blood pressure (Maslach et al., 1996).

The third element of burnout is personal accomplishment, which includes a negative self-evaluation of an individual that results in decreased performance in one's job. Teachers experiencing burnout, generally lose their confidence in engaging with students and building successful rapport with them, and feel that they cannot be of any benefit in the development of students' knowledge. Farber (1991) contended that one of the tones employed by a teacher experiencing reduced personal accomplishment is, "I'll try but it's a losing cause" (p. 82).

Therefore, as teacher burnout plays a crucial role in educational system, it is quite essential to consider various factors that might affect it. Based on research (Chang, 2009), individual factors, such as personality traits, are quite significant in leading to teacher burnout; teachers' willingness to receive feedback can be considered as one of the influencing personality traits. The current

research attempts to design and validate a scale to measure teachers' feedbackability or their willingness to receive feedback, to explore the associations among the subscales of the TWRF, the predictability of its factors, and the influence of teachers' feedbackability on their burnout. Therefore, the present study addresses the following questions:

1. Does Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale demonstrate psychometric properties
2. Is there any significant relationship between TWRF and burnout, with regard to the valency of feedback?
3. Is there any significant relationship between TWRF and burnout, with regard to the directionality of feedback?

## Method

### Participants

The database used for analysis in the present study was derived from the participation of 231 EFL teachers (31 respondents were discarded from analysis due to missing data in their questionnaires) who were selected based on their willingness to participate in the research, from active teachers of 21 distinct private language schools in Mashhad. The data collection method was nonrandom convenience sampling, and prior to data gathering, the participants were all informed that their personal data would remain confidential and solely used for research purposes. Data collection commenced after ethics approval was obtained from participants.

The EFL teachers participating in the main data collection procedure were both males (N=36), and females (N=164), with a range of between 1 and 20 years of teaching experience (M=7.020, SD=5.109), and at B.A. (N=96), M.A. (N=80), and Ph.D. (N=24) levels. The demographic information of participants who took part in the research is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Distribution of Questionnaire Participants*

Gender	Educational Level		Teaching Experience		
Male	36	B.A.	96	1-5	89
Female	164	M.A.	80	6-10	62
		Ph.D.	24	11-15	41
Total	200			16-20	8

### Instruments

Two questionnaires were administered to the community sample to collect the required information: Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale (TWRF), and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

#### *Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale (TWRF)*

In order to investigate EFL teachers' conceptions of feedback and their willingness to receive feedback in the context of EFL teaching, a scale was designed and developed by the authors (in Persian), including 24 questions based on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 'strongly

disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'. Subsequently, the test run of the instrument took place, and the TWRF scale was piloted by 10 teachers. Based on the results of the pilot study, minor modifications in the wording of three ambiguous items were required, and clarifications were made in items that did not yield a thorough understanding of the pilot study participants. The reliability and content validity of the questionnaire were substantiated by four experts in the field afterward, to ensure the instrument was ready to be administered. Following this, the scale was administered to another group of teachers (N=60) to check the internal consistency of

the scale. Cronbach's alpha calculated for this sample was .87. At this point, researchers were given assurance that they can proceed in the process of data collection to assess teachers' willingness. In order to validate the scale, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. The reliability of the scale will be reported in detail in the results section.

#### *Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)*

Along with TWRFs, another questionnaire was administered to participants in order to determine their level of burnout, i.e., the Persian adaptation of Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach & Jackson, 1981, see Appendix II), which displayed accurate indexes of reliability and validity (Gargari, 1995). The reliability of the instrument varied from .74 to .84, and the factorial structure was congruent with the original version (Gargari, 1995). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient estimated for this study was equal to .79. The 22-item inventory measures three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The items are rated based on intensity; that is, they are scored on an 8-point scale ranging from (0) 'none' to (7) 'very much.' The higher the scores in both frequency and intensity, the more the participants experience the feeling of burnout.

#### *Procedure*

Data collection commenced with handing the two questionnaires, namely TWRFs and MBI, to all EFL teachers, both in their mother tongue in order to preclude the possibility of misunderstanding. The questionnaires were administered in two ways:

- (a) face-to-face administration (print form), and (b) administration via an electronic fillable PDF document.

After data collection, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was conducted in order to figure out whether there is any association between teachers' willingness to receive feedback, and their burnout. Then, Path Analysis, a special case of structural equation modeling (SEM) that is used to describe the directed dependencies among a set of variables, was run. Path analysis is SEM with a structural model but no measurement model; other terms used to refer to path analysis include causal modeling, analysis of covariance structures, and latent variable models. Ultimately, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was conducted to explore the relationship between burnout and feedback constructs / components (direct, indirect, positive, and negative). MCA, also referred to as Principal Component Analysis (PCA) or homogeneity analysis, is a graphical representation of nominal data that is used to analyze the pattern of relationships of several categorical dependent variables (Abdi & Valentin, 2007). MCA is conducted when the variables are categorical instead of quantitative and are mapped together with a similar profile (Takane & Hwang, 2006).

## Results

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient*

Initially, the obtained results were analyzed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with principal component analysis and varimax rotation in order to assure the construct validity of the Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback questionnaire.

The assumptions of EFA were met in this study. KMO was .72, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant. Scree plot and eigenvalues above 1 were examined to determine the number of factors. Moreover, the highest loading for each item was considered the appropriate factor for that item. Cross-loadings and loadings less than .30 were removed, that is, item 19 was deleted. Results of the EFA are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup> for TWRFS*

Item	Component			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Q2</b>	.55			
<b>Q 4</b>	.46			
<b>Q 10</b>	.71			
<b>Q 13</b>	.33			
<b>Q 16</b>	.36			
<b>Q 21</b>	.41			
<b>Q3</b>		.39		
<b>Q6</b>		.45		
<b>Q7</b>		.38		
<b>Q11</b>		.59		
<b>Q12</b>		.74		
<b>Q14</b>		.36		
<b>Q8</b>			.67	
<b>Q15</b>			.74	
<b>Q18</b>			.88	
<b>Q20</b>			.69	
<b>Q22</b>			.57	
<b>Q1</b>				.34
<b>Q5</b>				.59
<b>Q9</b>				.79
<b>Q17</b>				.54
<b>Q23</b>				.81

The four constructs that the Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale claims to measure include: (1) Receiving Indirect Feedback, (2) Receiving Negative Feedback, (3) Receiving Positive Feedback, and (4) Receiving Direct Feedback. All the six items of 'Receiving Indirect Feedback' subtest loaded on the first factor. All the six items of 'Receiving Negative Feedback' subtest loaded on the second factor. Among the six items of the 'Receiving Positive Feedback', five items loaded on the third factor. Lastly, among the six items of the 'Receiving Direct Feedback', five items loaded on the fourth factor.

After running EFA, in order to measure the internal consistency of TWRFS, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated once for the scale, and once for each of the four subscales. As displayed in Table 3, items related to Receiving Direct Feedback were found to be highly reliable (5 items,  $\alpha = .86$ ). Cronbach's alphas for subscales 2 and 3, i.e., Receiving Negative Feedback, and Receiving Positive Feedback, were .81 and .79, respectively. Receiving Indirect Feedback subscale also

indicated good reliability (6 items,  $\alpha = .85$ ). Therefore, TWRFS appeared to have good internal consistency (22 items,  $\alpha = .79$ ).

Table 3  
*Reliability of the Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Questionnaire*

Subscale	Item No.	Reliability
<b>Receive Direct Feedback</b>	1, 5, 9, 17, 23	.83
<b>Receive Negative Feedback</b>	3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14	.81
<b>Receive Positive Feedback</b>	8, 15, 18, 20, 22	.79
<b>Receive Indirect Feedback</b>	2, 4, 10, 13, 16, 21	.85
<b>Total TWRF</b>	1, ..., 23 (except 19)	.79

### *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient*

Table 4 displays descriptive statistics of Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale and the comprising factors of it. In other words, 'Receiving Direct Feedback', 'Receiving Indirect Feedback', 'Receiving Positive Feedback', and 'Receiving Negative Feedback'. The distribution of the items with regard to the four subscales was as follows: Direct Feedback (5 items,  $M=13.7$ ), Indirect Feedback (6 items,  $M=19.9$ ), Positive Feedback (5 items,  $M=14.9$ ), and Negative Feedback (6 items,  $M=19.1$ ). As displayed below, the number of participants in the present study was 200, and the possible range of score for Receiving Direct Feedback was between 10 and 19, for Receiving Indirect Feedback was between 15 and 24, for Receiving Positive Feedback was between 12 and 18, and for Receiving Negative Feedback was between 15 and 23.

Table 4  
*Descriptive Statistics of TWRF Factors*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Direct</b>	200	10.00	19.00	13.705	2.177
<b>Indirect</b>	200	15.00	24.00	19.970	2.163
<b>Positive</b>	200	12.00	18.00	14.945	1.349
<b>Negative</b>	200	15.00	23.00	19.125	2.042
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As demonstrated in Table 5, the highest correlation is between 'Receiving Direct Feedback' and teachers' burnout ( $r = -.631$ ,  $p = .000$ ), and the lowest correlation is between 'Receiving Positive Feedback' and teachers' burnout ( $r = -.056$ ,  $p = .201$ ). Moreover, the table shows that among the four sub-factors of the teachers' willingness to receive feedback questionnaire, there was only a high negative and significant relationship between 'Receiving Direct Feedback' and total burnout ( $r = -.631$ ,  $p = .000$ ), and a moderate positive and significant relationship between 'Receiving Negative Feedback' and total burnout ( $r = .458$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 5  
*A General Schematic Representation of the Relationships between EFL Teachers' Burnout and Subscales of TWRFF*

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Burnout</b>	1				
<b>2. Direct</b>	-.631 <sup>**</sup>	1			
<b>3. Indirect</b>	.098	.280 <sup>**</sup>	1		
<b>4. Positive</b>	-.056	-.300 <sup>**</sup>	-.028	1	
<b>5. Negative</b>	.485 <sup>**</sup>	.285 <sup>**</sup>	.478 <sup>**</sup>	-.149 <sup>*</sup>	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01

\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

In order to describe the directed dependencies among the variables under study, i.e. teachers' willingness to receive feedback and burnout, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted, indicating the schematic representation of the relationships between them. A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit, that is, the chi-square magnitude which should not be significant, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI) with the cut value greater than .95, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of about .06 or .07 (Schreiber et al., 2006). The acceptable criteria for fit indices are presented in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Acceptable Criteria for Fit Indices*

Chi-square $\chi^2$	Not significant
Chi-square/df ratio	≤ 2 or 3
RMSEA	< .06 or .08
CFI	≥ .90% or 95%
GFI	≥ .90% or 95%

Figure 1 indicates the schematic representation of the relationships among the subscales of TWRFFS and burnout. As demonstrated, the chi-square value (18.72), the chi-square/df ratio (2.35), RMSEA (.07), GFI (.96), and CFI (.90), all the fit indices lie within the acceptable fit thresholds. Hence, it can be concluded that the proposed model had an acceptable fit with the empirical data.

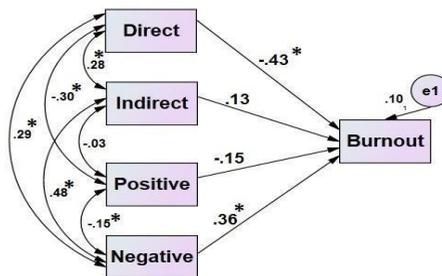


Figure 1. The schematic representation of the relationships among teachers' willingness to receive feedback and burnout

The results display that among the four sub-factors of the teachers' willingness to receive feedback questionnaire, 'Receiving Direct Feedback' negatively and significantly predicts teachers' burnout ( $\beta = -.43, p < 0.01$ ), and 'Receiving Negative Feedback' positively and significantly predicts teachers' burnout ( $\beta = .36, p < 0.01$ ).

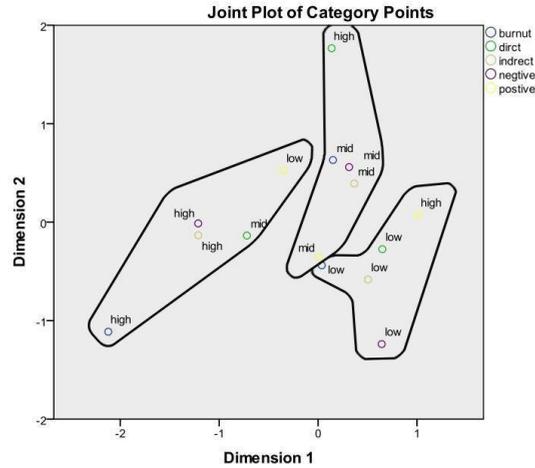


Figure 2. Teachers' willingness to receive feedback

Figure 2 illustrates the graphic representation of the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) using the scores of willingness to give feedback and burnout for teachers. In the model, four dimensions of willingness to give feedback and burnout are examined that is, direct, indirect, positive, and negative feedback. The Cronbach's Alpha for this model was equal to 0.81. The analysis presented a 77% level of adjustment, which manifests the accuracy of mapping. In order to facilitate the interpretation of the results, individuals with a similar profile in their answers to the questions were grouped together, and the results were partitioned into three groups, labeled Group A, Group B, and Group C (Gifi, 1990; Hoffman & de Leeuw, 2011).

## Discussion

Since the issue of teacher burnout came to public's attention in 1970s, much research has been done in this area, though the problem seems to persist. Making an effort to alleviate the problem in the context of Iran, the present study attempted to shed light on Iranian EFL teachers' burnout and its relationship with their willingness to receive feedback.

With regard to the first goal, the results indicated that considering the two subscales of the valency of feedback (positive and negative feedback), a significant relationship existed between receiving negative feedback and teacher burnout. This finding can be expounded from two broad perspectives, neurologically and culturally.

From a neurological point of view, it seems that teachers who claim to be willing to receive negative feedback from their students, colleagues, or other interlocutors may ostensibly bear the load of threats to their emotions and personality but are unable to digest it neurologically. In other words, when individuals receive signals of negative emotions, a neural change will invoke a negative effect in their brains, and this will in turn weaken their motivation (Geake, 2009).

More precisely, giving rewards and positive feedback on success has been heralded to trigger the release of dopamine -a type of hormone and a neurotransmitter that facilitates the transmission of signals between brain cells (Beaulieu & Gainetdinov, 2011; Fellous & Suri, 2003). Likewise, receiving negative feedback would result in low levels of dopamine (Geake, 2009); since this neurotransmitter is involved in various brain functions (Ojeda & Avila, 2019; Niyonambaza et al., 2019), the low density of dopamine receptors can lead to several problems including demotivation and lack of creativity (Bechtereva et al., 2004). When teachers evaluate themselves negatively and lose motivation in their job, burnout would be predictable (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Moreover, rewards and threats can differently affect the emotionally mediated decision-making processes carried out by the brain's separate systems (Berns et al., 2001). To clarify, "the brain uses emotions to create feelings in the subcortical limbic system which mediate our decision making, undertaken in the frontal lobes" (Geake, 2009, p. 115); as a result, feelings and emotions can largely affect our rational decision-making. Therefore, it can be inferred that receiving negative feedback and low levels of dopamine in teachers' brain, can also lead to indecisiveness, which seems to be a major cause of teacher burnout (Maslach et al., 1996).

It is also noteworthy that there are separate neural systems for the emotions underpinning motivation, and since 'self-esteem' can be regarded as a non-specific or general motivation (Baumeister et al., 2003), getting demotivated would incorporate lack of self-esteem. Furthermore, as Cigman (2004) maintains, self-esteem is a crucial component of confidence and has an immediate effect on personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion and a long-term effect on depersonalization (Jarvis, 2005). Therefore, receiving negative feedback seems to result in demotivation, and in turn, brings about a lack of self-esteem -an important factor for job satisfaction and job performance (Bowles et al., 2001)-loss of which leads to burnout (Labone, 2002; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

From a cultural point of view, although some Iranian EFL teachers claimed that they were open to negative feedback in the foreground of mind, their 'cultural upbringing' seemed to stand out in the background (Norouz Kermanshahi, 2016). Simply put, because in the formal educational system of Iran, teaching is considered a sacred job, comparable to that of prophets, teachers are highly respected and adulated (Pishghadam & Norouz Kermanshahi, 2011). While teachers asserted that they would not feel indignant at being negatively evaluated, and some even went further to mention they are much more willing to receive negative feedback (Norouz Kermanshahi, 2016), it seems that their cultural background and views of a teacher as dominant prevail, since these teachers appear to experience burnout sooner.

Considering the second goal of the research, this study sought to investigate the relationship between teachers' willingness to receive feedback and their burnout with regard to the directionality of feedback. The obtained results indicated that a significant negative relationship existed between willingness to receive direct feedback and teacher burnout. The more willing teachers are to receive direct feedback, the later they seem to suffer burnout.

Casting a glance on major sources of teacher burnout, it becomes evident that when teachers face ambiguity, they are susceptible to burnout (Kahill, 1988; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Therefore, teachers seem to face less vagueness and uncertainty when direct feedback is provided, which form the breeding ground for job burnout (Yunus & Mahajar, 2015). Moreover, from a psychological point of view, ambiguous feedback is considered as fruitless (Mustafa, Sheynin, &

Myers, 2015), and is associated with anxiety and anger (Furnham & Marks, 2013); therefore, it is quite clear why teachers who opt for receiving direct feedback seem to be less prone to burnout.

## Conclusion

The findings of the present study contribute to the current literature on feedback and EFL teacher burnout in several ways. It is noteworthy that when recruiters wish to screen candidates for a job opening, much effort and care is given to make sure the applicants possess the necessary qualifications, for instance, through proficiency and competency tests, C.V. requests, obligatory Teacher Training Courses, live demonstrations, etc. (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Pishghadam et al., 2011), though all might be fruitless in case the employed teachers are at the risk of burnout. Therefore, first and foremost, the obtained results might give English language institutes the predictive power to deduce what types of teachers are more prone to burnout and whether or not to employ them.

Second, these findings might be infused in initial teacher education and in-service training programs for experienced teachers to raise their awareness of the ongoing burnout process, contributing factors to teacher burnout, cultural dimensions that are associated with and predict burnout, and strategies to tackle with, or prevent burnout causes, all of which can contribute to stronger professional development and efficacy of teachers (Makkonen 2005; Richin et al., 2003). Numerous studies (e.g., Bluestone et al., 2013; Chan 2010; Jones, 2006) have supported the effectiveness of interventions and in-service training designs to bring about consciousness-raising of teachers, and provide useful strategies for educators.

Though the current research findings offer an important contribution to the burnout research field, given that almost no studies have previously considered the role of willingness to receive feedback in teacher burnout, the obtained results should be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, it must be kept in mind that the data was collected from a sample of Iranian EFL teachers in Mashhad, which would probably limit the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, this study relied on teachers' reflections on their willingness and self-conceptions of burnout; these findings need to be replicated with other samples and measuring instruments before drawing firm conclusions about the relationship between feedback and burnout.

With regard to the limitations of this study, and bearing in mind that there are much more uncovered sources of burnout, future research is called for to examine whether similar results would be obtained if this study were replicated in other contexts and cultures, and to shed more light on the cross-cultural issues. Moreover, it is suggested to conduct future studies on larger samples of EFL teachers in order to have a solid understanding of the relationship between willingness to receive feedback and burnout. Additionally, a longitudinal study design is recommended to investigate the dark facets of teacher burnout to better understand the antecedents and correlates of burnout. Ultimately, since the issue of feedback and its effectiveness warrant increased attention from teachers, learners, and teacher educators, future research should further explore the types of feedback provided in EFL context and how they influence effective teaching.

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**Appendix I: Teachers' Willingness to Receive Feedback Scale (TWRFS)**

ضمن قدردانی از همکاری صمیمانه شما، پرسشنامه ای که به حضورتان تقدیم می گردد به منظور انجام یک پژوهش علمی تهیه گردیده است. لذا خواهشمند است با دادن پاسخ های دقیق خود، ما را در انجام این تحقیق یاری رسانید. لطفا میزان موافقت یا مخالفت خود را با علامت ✓ مشخص کنید. توجه داشته باشید جواب صحیح یا غلط وجود ندارد.

بازخورد مجموعه ای از رفتارها یا هرگونه عکس العمل است که به عملکرد، دانش، رفتار، و یا نگرش دیگران نشان می دهدیم و می تواند شامل اصلاح کردن، انتقاد کردن، تعریف و تمجید کردن ... باشد.

جنسیت: خانم  آقا  سابقه تدریس: .....(سال سن): ..... تحصیلات: .....  
 آدرس ایمیل (اختیاری، جهت اعلام نتایج): .....

کاملا مخالفم	مخالفم	نظری ندارم	موافقم	کاملا موافقم	
					۱. بطور کلی دوست دارم بازخورد مستقیم دریافت کنم.
					۲. ترجیح می دهم شاگرد به من بازخورد مستقیم دهد.
					۳. اگر همکارم به من بازخورد مستقیم بدهد، ناراحت نمی شوم.
					۴. اگر شاگرد در کلاس به من بازخورد مستقیم بدهد، ناراحت می شوم.
					۵. ترجیح می دهم شاگرد خارج از کلاس به من بازخورد مستقیم بدهد.
					۶. به نظر من بازخورد مستقیم از مدیر سازنده نیست.
					۷. کلا دوست دارم بازخورد غیر مستقیم دریافت کنم.
					۸. وقتی شاگردم به من بازخورد غیر مستقیم می دهد برام خوشایندتر است.
					۹. اگر همکارم به من بازخورد غیر مستقیم بدهد، می پذیرم.
					۱۰. اگر شاگرد در مقابل سایر فراگیران به من بازخورد غیر مستقیم بدهد، اشکالی ندارد.
					۱۱. بازخورد غیر مستقیم شاگرد اگر بیرون از کلاس باشد بهتر است.
					۱۲. ترجیح می دهم از مدیر بازخورد غیر مستقیم دریافت کنم.
					۱۳. از این که بازخورد مثبت دریافت کنم، خوشحال می شوم.

					دوست دارم شاگردم به من بازخورد مثبت دهد.	۱۴.
					اگر از همکارم بازخورد مثبت دریافت کنم احساس خوبی خواهم داشت.	۱۵.
					ترجیح می دهم در کلاس از شاگردم بازخورد مثبت دریافت نکنم.	۱۶.
					ترجیح می دهم خارج از کلاس از شاگردم بازخورد مثبت بگیرم.	۱۷.
					دریافت بازخورد مثبت از مدیر به من انگیزه می دهد.	۱۸.
					به طور کلی بازخورد منفی مرا ناراحت می کند.	۱۹.
					اگر شاگرد به من بازخورد منفی دهد، موضع گیری می کنم.	۲۰.
					دوست ندارم همکارم به من بازخورد منفی بدهد.	۲۱.
					اگر شاگرد در مقابل دیگران به من بازخورد منفی بدهد احساس بدی خواهم داشت.	۲۲.
					اگر شاگرد بیرون از کلاس به من بازخورد منفی بدهد، ناراحت نمی شوم.	۲۳.
					اگر مدیر به من بازخورد منفی بدهد ممکن است ناراحت شوم.	۲۴.