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The Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Outcomes of EFL University Instructors' Relational Goals: Mediating Role of Teaching Self-efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Relational goals newly added to the teachers' goal orientation framework have been identified as one of the central features of effective teaching. However, little research has taken such goals into account, specifically in higher education contexts. Concerning the association between self-efficacy and goal orientations, this study was undertaken to investigate the predictive power of instructors' relational goals over teaching-related outcomes with teaching self-efficacy as a mediator. Three hundred thirty-eight Iranian EFL university instructors participated in the study. Their relational goals and teaching-related cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes were assessed through four scales (Instructors' Achievement Goals for Teaching, Attitudes towards Help-Seeking, Positive Affect, and SEEQ (Students' Evaluations of Educational Quality) Self-Reported Teaching Quality). Through a Structural Equation Modeling method, the proposed model was tested. The results confirmed the mediating effect of teaching self-efficacy on the relationship between instructors' relational goals and their teaching-related outcomes. Relational goal-oriented instructors with teaching self-efficacy viewed help-seeking (cognitive outcomes) as a beneficial performance rather than a threat. Regarding their positive affect (affective outcomes), the results indicated instructors' great enthusiasm for more effective teaching. Considering instructors' self-reported teaching quality (behavioral outcomes), their engagement and commitment in teaching were shown. In conclusion, the results emphasized the importance of instructors' relational goals in establishing high-quality learning and teaching environments.

Keywords: affective outcomes; behavioral outcomes; cognitive outcomes; relational goals; self-efficacy

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Introduction

Motivation is an influential feature leading individuals to their goals. It is the process underlying individuals' goal-oriented behaviors through which they, depending on specific situations, identify and select particular courses of activities to achieve their goals (Dresel & Hall, 2013). Through individuals' motivation conceptualized as psychological mechanisms, the foundation of different cognitive, affective, and behavioral performances is shaped. Thus, research on teachers' motivation affecting their instructional practices and teaching quality (Praetorius et al., 2017) is undeniable due to its various important contributions to education. However, the complexity of research in this field extends beyond the simple application of the concept of motivation (Dresel & Hall, 2013). Hence, achievement motivation was introduced by Atkinson and Feather (1966) entailing and activating various behavioral phenomena (Maehr & Sjogren, 1971). Achievement-motivated behaviors involve individuals' commitment to the standards of excellence, the evaluation of their performances, and the outcomes of those performances which entails the acquisition of the cognitive abilities during their development (Brunstein & Heckhausen, 2018).

Pertaining to this issue and considering the individuals' motivation as the whole processes which are involved in starting, maintaining, and regulating their goal-directed behaviors (Daumiller et al., 2020), Achievement Goal Orientation (AGO) Theory as a motivational (Dweck, 1986) or cognitive (Elliot, 2005) theory has been identified as an appropriate framework to designate teachers' motivation and explain their teaching-related outcomes (Crişan & Dragoş, 2020; Daumiller et al., 2016; Yıldızlı, 2021). Based on this theory, individuals' drives to achieve specific tasks or activities are termed AGO (Dweck, 1986). The theory's leading principle is that various motivational systems arise from different AGOs leading to numerous cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes (Elliot, 2005). Thus, it is considered as a powerful framework used to explain individuals' motivation in different contexts regarding their cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences (Dweck, 1986). AGO as the individuals' tendency to pursue different types of goals shapes their engagement in a wide range of achievement contexts (Janke & Dickhäuser, 2019) like classrooms for teachers in which different behaviors evoke. Such behaviors lead to teachers' execution of different actions derived from their adoption of different types of goals based on their motivation and attitudes towards their surrounding environments. Accordingly, research on teachers' AGO as a crucial motivational construct making differentiations among them concerning their cognitions and behaviors in their teaching processes (Daumiller et al., 2022) has emerged from the mid-2000s (Mascret et al., 2017). Early research mostly made a distinction between mastery and performance goals (Butler, 2007). Other researchers (Van Daal et al., 2014) employed a trichotomous framework (mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals). Others (Butler & Shibaz, 2008) investigated a four-factor framework (mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals). Another construct called work-avoidance goals, was also researched (Retelsdorf et al., 2010). Butler (2012) added Relational Goals (RGs) as the central feature in efficient teaching to teachers' AGO framework which were less researched and needed more meticulous attention. Thus, such important goals are specifically touched upon in the current study.

Literature Review

Teachers' RGs

RGs are the goals teachers adopt to make friendly and caring relationships with students (Daumiller et al., 2019b) or get along with them well (Janke et al., 2019). Since teachers are accountable for whatever they do in their teaching process and students' learning, it would be

better to create friendly relationships with students (Butler, 2012). Such relationships would lead to a stress-free classroom atmosphere, students' better engagement, their sense of belonging to the class, and their high-quality learning. Through fostering positive, close, and caring relationships with students, teachers would be able to teach effectively and create more encouraging classroom environments so that students' academic and emotional needs can be better fulfilled leading to their development.

From the few studies that investigated RGs along with other identified goals, Han et al. (2015) scrutinized the relationship between teachers' AGOs, their engagement, and commitment to find out whether teachers' AGOs had an effect on their commitment to teaching with the mediating role of teacher engagement. RGs were positive predictors of teacher commitment to teaching along with other types of goals. The study revealed no notable correlation between teachers' RGs and their commitment to teaching, even when considering the mediating effect of teacher engagement.

In Daumiller et al.'s (2016) research, a significant relationship was reported between instructors of greater age and higher RGs in comparison to younger ones. Moreover, there was a positive relationship between RGs and other goals (mastery, performance-approach, and -avoidance goals). No significant relationship was observed between such goals and instructors' teaching (activity-related) enthusiasm and subject (topic-related) enthusiasm.

The results of George and Richardson's (2019) study indicated that teachers' self-reported classroom behaviors were positively related to their pursuit of RGs along with other goals. Also, the findings of Daumiller et al.'s (2019b) research showed that university instructors adopt different types of goals varying inter-individually and predicting their teaching-related outcomes. In their research, RGs accompanied by other goals were identified as positive predictors for instructors' positive affect. Furthermore, analysis of instructors' attitudes towards help-seeking behaviors indicated positive effects of RGs on perceiving help-seeking as useful. RGs were reported as positive predictors of teaching quality as well.

Daumiller et al. (2019a) also investigated the relationship between teachers' AGOs and their use of content-related humor in higher education context. The results indicated important effects of strong RGs on the teachers' use of content-related humor. Recently, Rinas et al. (2020) examined the relationship between university instructors' AGOs and their discrete emotions for teaching. RGs were reported to have a positive relationship with such emotional experiences as shame and boredom at work. Pertaining to these studies, the other enquiries' focus is on teachers' abilities to create a flexible teaching and learning context for students and establish a friendly and relaxing classroom environment so that students become motivated to actively participate in different activities. In such studies, teachers' self-efficacy is given greater emphasis concerning its association with teachers' performance, teaching quality, and students' achievement as crucial factors in educational contexts.

Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Over the past few decades, self-efficacy as individuals' specific set of beliefs in their own abilities to execute actions and behaviors necessary to produce different levels of performance (Yıldızlı, 2019), has been taken into specific consideration due to its positive association with motivation and achievement (Anderman, 2020). These beliefs are said to have great impacts on individuals' thought processes and feelings which affect their motivation (Berg & Smith, 2016). As such, individuals' self-efficacy is a dominant source of their motivations and perceptions for selecting specific tasks or activities and their persistence in accomplishing difficult tasks in various situations (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Thus, teachers' self-efficacy is defined as their beliefs about

their knowledge and competencies in employing efficient instructional practices to motivate students in their learning process and achievement (Chang & Hall, 2022). It underscores the amount of information, the level of attitudes as well as adequate skills and abilities they should possess in their teaching profession to achieve the related responsibilities and obligations efficiently (Dinçer, 2021). Consequently, teachers' self-efficacy as their attitudes towards their teaching productivity and effectiveness (Yıldızlı, 2019) is based on the assumption that their attitudes towards their own capabilities function as an important determining factor in their performance (Crişan & Dragoş, 2020). Hence, it is an essential aspect in explaining teachers' motivation (Daumiller et al., 2020) and clarifying the underlying reasons why some teachers' instructional practices, behaviors, and performance are more effective (Barni et al., 2019). It is also asserted that self-efficacy is a key teachers-related concept influencing all aspects of what they do in their profession leading to beneficial outcomes (Deng et al., 2022).

Accordingly, current motivational research paid specific attention to the self-efficacy concept and its cognitive, emotional, and motivational consequences concerning individuals' actions and behaviors (Bagci, 2018; Deng et al., 2022; Fathi et al., 2021; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023). Regarding the association between self-efficacy and AGOs as two teachers' motivational constructs (Daumiller et al., 2021; Huang, 2016), research indicated the effects of teachers' self-efficacy along with other variables on the relationship between teachers' AGOs and different factors including teachers' perceptions towards their profession (Yıldızlı, 2019), their students' learning experiences (Daumiller et al., 2021), their knowledge and use of teaching methods (Crişan & Dragoş, 2020), and their use of content-related humor (Daumiller et al., 2019a).

Considering the meaningful relationship between the two motivational constructs, the present study followed the pattern in which a linear relationship exists between the two constructs. The rationale for this linear relationship is that teachers' self-efficacy is slightly related to their differences in pursuing different types of AGOs (Gerhardt & Brown, 2006). Concerning the study's purpose, the researchers' point of view was based on different studies indicating various effects of teachers' self-efficacy on the relationship between their AGOs and their teaching-related cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes (Daumiller et al., 2021; Crişan & Dragoş, 2020; Yıldızlı, 2019). Since goals are associated with different types of functions in all individuals' psychological systems which control and adjust their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Brandstätter & Hennecke, 2018), such cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes are represented in the form of teachers' attitudes toward help-seeking, their positive affect (interest in teaching), and their self-reported teaching quality, respectively in this study (Daumiller et al., 2019b).

Building on a thorough literature review, the researchers concluded that despite the relatively large number of research on teachers' AGOs and self-efficacy, tapping into such important issues seems to be neglected in higher education settings including the Iranian ones. Daumiller et al., (2019b) also highlighted the need for extensive research into university instructors' AGOs. Additionally, university instructors' self-efficacy related to AGOs needs much attention since it is declared that research on teachers' AGOs and self-efficacy was mostly done in pre-tertiary than tertiary education (Crişan & Dragoş, 2020) leading to thought-provoking topics for research in higher education contexts (Daumiller et al., 2021). Accordingly, to the researchers' knowledge, the Iranian higher education context has not been examined in terms of instructors' AGOs, particularly their RGs and self-efficacy. Identifying it as a research gap, the present study aimed to address it. Furthermore, the significance of this study stems from its focus on a specific domain-EFL university instructors- distinguishing it from previous research that covered various fields (Crişan & Dragoş, 2020; Yıldızlı, 2019).

Research Hypothesis

The following research hypothesis has been formulated considering the study's main objective which is shedding light on the AGO field, particularly within the Iranian higher education context. Regarding the postulated hypothesis, the proposed path diagram causal model is also provided as illustrated in Figure 1.

H: Iranian EFL university instructors' teaching self-efficacy is anticipated to mediate the relationship between their RGs and their teaching-related outcomes.

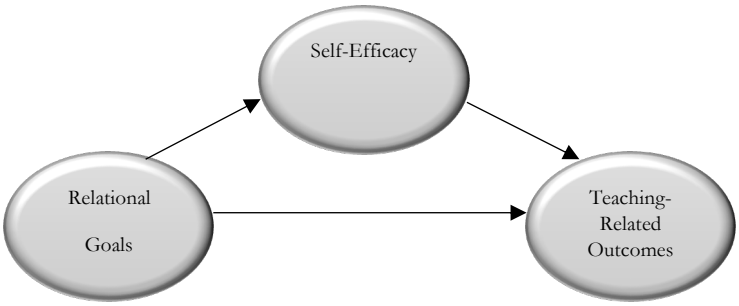

Figure 1. The Path Diagram Causal Model

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 338 Iranian EFL instructors (males = 177, females = 161) in different fields (Literature, Teaching, Translation, and Linguistics) with different academic ranks (instructors with/without a PhD, assistant, associate, and full professors, those possessing postdoc). Their teaching experience ranged between 1-30 years. Through nonprobability sampling including different nonrandom procedures (purposive and snowball sampling), the researchers selected the participants from 45 Iranian state universities all over the country and 5 accessible non-state universities in Shiraz in which EFL majors are offered. Through purposive sampling, the researchers could select participants who were supposed to be representative of all EFL university instructors by considering their specialized fields in the EFL context.

Instruments

To assess instructors' RGs, an *Achievement Goals* scale and to measure their teaching-related outcomes, three other scales (*Instructors' Positive Affect, Attitudes towards Help-Seeking*, and *SEEQ Self-Reported Teaching Quality*) were adopted from Daumiller et al. (2019b). The *Self-Efficacy for Teaching* scale taken from Daumiller et al. (2021) was employed to assess instructors' teaching self-efficacy. Except for the *SEEQ Self-Reported Teaching Quality* scale ranging from (1) very bad to (5) very good, all the scales were based on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from (1) do not agree at all to (5) agree completely.

RGs as one of the subscales of the *Achievement Goals* scale, consisted of 4 items (e.g., "In my current teaching activities, my main concern is to have a friendly relationship with students").

Positive Affect scale consisted of 3 items (e.g., "I really enjoy teaching"). *Attitudes towards Help-Seeking* scale consisted of 8 items for two subscales, Perceived Threat (e.g., "When I seek help as an instructor, this only shows that I have faults") and Perceived Usefulness (e.g., "Obtaining help increases my understanding and makes me a more experienced instructor").

The *SEEQ Self-Reported Teaching Quality* scale comprised ten items. Each one considered a specific aspect of teaching quality with its explanation in brackets (e.g., "Engagement of students [the extent to which you encourage your students to participate during your courses; for instance, contributing their own knowledge, asking questions, participating during discussions, etc.]").

Self-Efficacy scale consisted of 12 Likert scale items ranging from (1) not well at all to (5) very well, including three subscales of efficacy for instruction (e.g., "How well can you respond to a difficult question from your students?"), efficacy for motivation (e.g., "How well can you help your students value learning?"), and efficacy for classroom management (e.g., "How well can you get students to follow classroom rules?").

Regarding the scales' validity, convergent and discriminant validity were measured. To examine each scale's convergent validity, two criteria (the average variance extracted (AVE) and indicators' loadings) and to assess the indicators discriminant validity, three criteria (the cross-loadings criterion, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations criterion) were considered. Such scales were also assessed on their internal consistency reliability through measuring Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability, separately.

Regarding the scales' convergent validity, most of the constructs indicators loadings were from 0.70 to 0.96 suggesting a sufficient level of convergent validity for such constructs. However, in *Instructors' Positive Affect* scale, only one indicator was removed from the scale since its loading was 0.34. Regarding *Instructors' Self-Reported Teaching Quality* scale, since its AVE was lower than 0.50, four indicators with low loadings were removed from the scale. Consequently, the AVE reached higher than 0.50 suggesting a satisfactory level of convergent validity for this scale as well.

Concerning the second criterion for measuring the scales' convergent validity, the obtained indices for AVEs represented a higher level of convergent validity for such scales as well (see Table 1).

Table 1
Constructs' AVEs

Constructs	AVE
RGs	0.62
Self-Efficacy	0.65
Positive Affect	0.81
Help-Seeking: Threat	0.88
Help-Seeking: Useful	0.78
Self-Reported Teaching Quality	0.53

Considering the scales' discriminant validity and regarding the cross-loadings criterion, all the indicators' loadings were from 0.45 to 0.96 which showed that all the indicators' loadings on their associated constructs were greater than all of their cross-loadings on other constructs suggesting that the discriminant validity was well established for all the scales.

Regarding the Fornell-Larcker criterion, all the square roots of the AVE values for all the constructs were greater than the correlations of those constructs with other related constructs which signified that such constructs discriminate well with other constructs in each scale. This shows that the discriminant validity for all the constructs in each scale was established, too.

Based on the HTMT criterion, the gained results for all constructs revealed that most of the HTMT values were from 0.14 to 0.70. This shows that such constructs were conceptually distinct from each other. Thus, the discriminant validity for such constructs in each scale was also well established.

As indicated in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability values for all constructs ranged from 0.72 to 0.96 which suggested that the internal consistency reliability of such constructs was established well.

Table 2
Constructs' Cronbach's Alpha, Rho_A, and Composite Reliability Values

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
RGs	0.81	0.85	0.87
Self-Efficacy	0.72	0.75	0.84
Help-Seeking: Threat	0.95	0.95	0.96
Help-Seeking: Useful	0.90	0.91	0.93
Positive Affect	0.77	0.78	0.89
Self-Reported Teaching Quality	0.82	0.82	0.87

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected both electronically and manually. Instructors' e-mail addresses were collected from their university sites to gather data from all Iranian state universities that offer EFL majors across the country. From 45 universities, only 517 instructors' e-mail addresses were available and identified. The online questionnaire was sent to instructors separately to respond to it at their most convenient time. To collect data from non-state universities, the researchers searched for all the available non-state universities in Shiraz, Iran offering EFL majors, visited them, and asked the related instructors to fill out the questionnaire either electronically or manually. Moreover, the link of the online questionnaire was sent to EFL instructors with accessible contact addresses, enabling them to fill out the questionnaire and forward it to their colleagues, thereby extending access to the survey.

Data Analysis Procedure

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was used to determine the path coefficients of the suggested model and test the causal model. Additionally, to investigate the mediating effect of the mediator variable, Bootstrapping method was employed.

To conduct the SEM analysis, the data was first checked concerning various SEM assumptions and prepared using SPSS software. Subsequently, the suggested path model was drawn in SmartPLS 3 software. Before the model testing, it was needed to specify how well the theory fitted the data through assessing the reliability and validity of the reflective measurement models, separately.

For the structural measurement model's evaluation, the predictive capabilities of the structural model and the relationships between the constructs were scrutinized. Finally, the model fit index was assessed.

Results

Descriptive Findings of the Research Variables

Table 3 shows the research variables' descriptive indicators.

Table 3
Research Variables' Descriptive Indicators

	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
RGs	Relational	14.15	3.29	8	20
Self-Efficacy	Self-Efficacy	49.40	6.02	32	60
Affective Outcome	Positive Affect	13.80	1.06	10	15
Cognitive Outcome	Help-Seeking: Threat	9.74	4.91	4	20
	Help-Seeking: Useful	16.46	2.67	7	20
Behavioral Outcome	Self-Reported Teaching Quality	42.26	3.79	30	50

Note. RGs: Relational goals

Zero-order Correlation Matrix of Research Variables

Table 4 indicates the results of the research variables zero-order correlation matrix in which the significance level regarding the correlation between the variables is also illustrated.

Table 4
Research Variables Zero-order Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. R	1					
2. SE	.24**	1				
3. PA	.13*	.26**	1			
4. HS: T	-.27**	-.67**	-.16**	1		
5. HS: U	.10	.47**	.07	-.61**	1	
6. SRTQ	.26**	.65**	.41**	-.52**	.33**	1

Note. R: Relational; SE: Self-Efficacy; PA: Positive Affect; HS: Help-Seeking; T: Threat; U: Useful; SRTQ: Self-Reported Teaching Quality.
** $P < .01$, * $P < .05$

Based on Table 4, the results presented a significant positive relationship between the exogenous variable (*RGs*) and *Self-Efficacy* as a mediating variable. Significant positive correlations were found between the exogenous variable and two of the endogenous variables measuring teaching-related outcomes (*Positive Affect*, *Self-Reported Teaching Quality*). A significant negative relationship was indicated between *RGs* and *Help-Seeking: Threat* as another variable measuring teaching-related outcomes. No relationship was shown between *RGs* and *Help-Seeking: Useful*. The results revealed significant positive relationships between *Self-Efficacy* as a mediating variable and *Positive Affect*, *Help-Seeking: Useful*, and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality* as endogenous variables. A significant negative relationship was also specified between *Self-Efficacy* and *Help-Seeking: Threat*. Concerning the correlations between all the endogenous variables, significant negative and positive relationships were found between *Positive Affect* and *Help-Seeking: Threat and Self-Reported Teaching Quality*, respectively. No relationship was shown between *Positive Affect* and *Help-Seeking: Useful*. Significant negative relationships were also indicated between *Help-Seeking: Threat* and *Help-Seeking: Useful* as well as *Self-Reported Teaching Quality*. A significant positive relationship was found between *Help-Seeking: Useful* and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality*. In general, achieving such results concerning the correlation matrix of the research variables made the SEM analysis possible.

Model Testing

Before testing the suggested model, different PLS-SEM assumptions were checked (Hair et al., 2017). The missing value analysis was conducted using SPSS software and no missing values were indicated. To identify the suspicious response patterns, the standard deviation for each construct or its indicators was obtained, separately and no suspicious responses were detected. To find the outliers, the box plots for each construct were obtained through SPSS software and the only identified outlier was shown for *Help-Seeking: Useful* construct. However, it was retained in the analysis adhering to Hair et al.'s (2017) recommendation to preserve exceptional values when they lack a clear explanation as they may represent a distinct subgroup within the population. Considering the data distribution assumption, each construct's data normality was checked through different methods by SPSS software, separately including histograms, Q-Q plots, skewness, kurtosis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and Shapiro-Wilks test. Indeed, different results for each method were obtained. However, according to Hair et al. (2017), as PLS-SEM is a nonparametric technique, the distributional assumptions are not considered to be very important. Therefore, the lack of normality in some or all constructs in each method does not cause any serious problems in the PLS-SEM analysis. Moreover, when the sample size is relatively high, the related data is closer to the statistical population; thus, the normality issue becomes less important.

Finally, to examine the collinearity assumption between each set of predictor variables in the structural model, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) criterion was considered. The results indicated that all the VIF values for the inner model were below the threshold value of 5 signifying that the collinearity issue did not occur regarding the existing predictor variables in the model (*RGs* as exogenous variables, *Self-Efficacy* as a mediating variable predicting *Positive Affect, Help-Seeking: Threat, Help-Seeking: Useful,* and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality* as endogenous variables). As the assumptions were confirmed, the path diagram causal model drawn in SmartPLS 3 software was tested.

Hypothesis: Iranian EFL university instructors' teaching self-efficacy is anticipated to mediate the relationship between their RGs and their teaching-related outcomes.

The predictive capabilities of the structural measurement model and the constructs relationship were examined to inspect the formulated hypothesis regarding self-efficacy as a mediator between instructors' RGs and cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes. By running PLS Algorithm,

the path coefficients in the structural model were first obtained. In this way, only the path coefficients in terms of their being weak, moderate, and substantial were determined. However, the path coefficients' significance level in the structural model representing the hypothesized relationships among the constructs was not attained. Thus, to evaluate the path coefficients, the following three issues were taken into consideration for all the structural path coefficients in the model.

1. Assessing the Beta coefficients (β values)
2. Assessing the significance level (*p* values)
3. Assessing the t-test (*t* values)

Accordingly, the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships were evaluated using the Bootstrapping method. This was done at a 5% significance level or *p* values smaller than 0.05, with a 95% confidence interval and *t* values of 1.96 or higher for two-tailed testing. The results are presented in Table 5.

The structural model's predictive power was evaluated by means of the obtained coefficients of determination. Figure 2 shows the results of the path coefficients (β values), level of significance (*p* values), and the coefficients of determination (R^2 values) in the structural model.

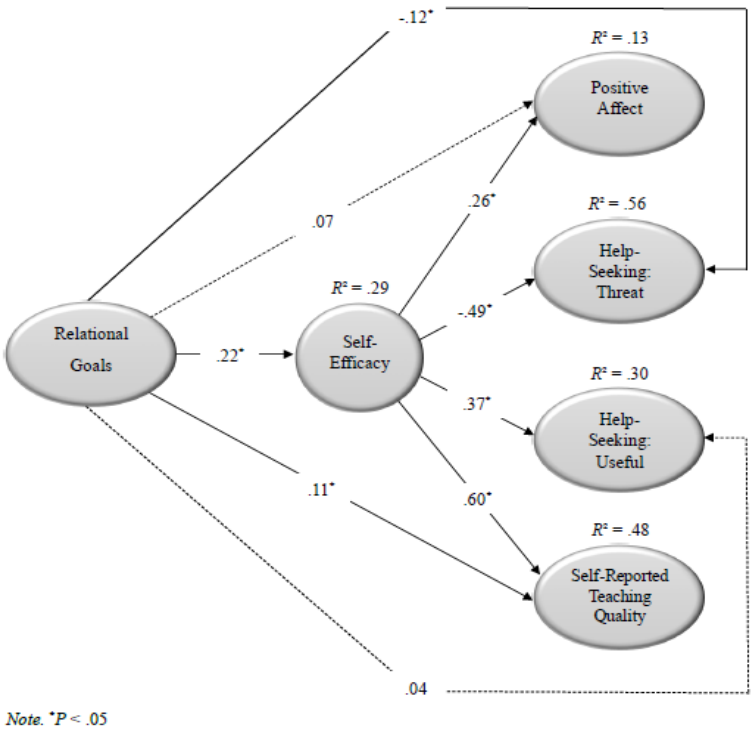

Figure 2. The Final Model Representing RGs' Predictive Power over Teaching-Related Outcomes by the Mediating Role of Teaching Self-Efficacy

As indicated in Figure 2, the results showed that from the hypothesized nine direct paths in the structural model, only seven of the paths (direct effects) were significant. However, as illustrated with the dotted arrows, the other two direct effects were not significant (*RGs → Positive Affect*, *RGs → Help-Seeking: Useful*).

More specifically, the relationships between *RGs* and *Help-Seeking: Threat* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 3.13$), *RGs* and *Self-Efficacy* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 4.85$), *RGs* and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 2.54$), *Self-Efficacy* and *Help-Seeking: Threat* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 11.17$), *Self-Efficacy* and *Help-Seeking: Useful* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 6.26$), *Self-Efficacy* and *Positive Affect* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 4.09$), and *Self-Efficacy* and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 14.36$) were significant. However, no relationships were indicated between *RGs* and *Help-Seeking: Useful* ($p > 0.01$, $t = 0.79$) as well as *RGs* and *Positive Affect* ($p > 0.01$, $t = 1.34$).

The findings confirmed the mediating role of *Self-Efficacy* in the model. Also, all four indirect paths in the model were significant. That is, the relationships between *RGs* and *Help-Seeking: Threat* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 4.49$), *RGs* and *Help-Seeking: Useful* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 3.89$), *RGs* and *Positive Affect* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 3.04$), *RGs* and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality* ($p < 0.01$, $t = 4.77$) were significant. The indirect effects and total effects are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
The Significance and Relevance of the Structural Model Relationships (t, p, and β Values)

Path Coefficients	Direct Effect			Indirect Effect			Total Effect		
	β	*t*	*p*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*β*	*t*	*p*
R → HS: T	-0.12	3.13	0.00	-0.11	4.49	0.00	-0.23	5.31	0.00
R → HS: U	0.04	0.79	0.42	0.08	3.89	0.00	0.13	2.37	0.01
R → PA	0.07	1.34	0.17	0.06	3.04	0.00	0.13	2.51	0.01
R → SE	0.22	4.85	0.00	---	---	---	0.23	4.85	0.00
R → SRTQ	0.11	2.54	0.01	0.13	4.77	0.00	0.25	4.68	0.00
SE → HS: T	-0.49	11.17	0.00	---	---	---	-0.49	11.17	0.00
SE → HS: U	0.37	6.26	0.00	---	---	---	0.37	6.26	0.00
SE → PA	0.26	4.09	0.00	---	---	---	0.25	4.09	0.00
SE → SRTQ	0.60	14.36	0.00	---	---	---	0.60	14.36	0.00

Note. R: Relational; SE: Self-Efficacy; PA: Positive Affect; HS: Help-Seeking; T: Threat; U: Useful; SRTQ: Self-Reported Teaching Quality. ** $P < .01$, * $P < .05$

Based on Figure 2 and concerning the endogenous variables obtained R^2, the results indicated that the model had the most variance explanation power for *Help-Seeking: Threat*, negatively ($R^2 = 0.56$) and *Self-Reported Teaching Quality*, positively ($R^2 = 0.48$).

Table 6 shows that R^2 values for all the endogenous and mediator variables were significant suggesting the structural model's predictive power.

Table 6
The Coefficients of Determination (R² and P Values)

Latent Variables	Variance Explained (R^2)	*p*
Positive Affect	0.13	0.00
Help-Seeking: Threat	0.56	0.00
Help-Seeking: Useful	0.30	0.00
Self-Reported Teaching Quality	0.48	0.00
Self-Efficacy	0.29	0.00

Assessing the Model Fit Index

To specify how well the proposed structural model fits the empirical data, the model fit index was assessed by considering the SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) criterion. The obtained value for SRMR was 0.08. Although the threshold value should be lower than 0.08, it is placed on the borderline indicating that this proposed structural model is considered to have slightly arrived at a satisfactory model fit.

Discussion

The relationship between Iranian EFL instructors' RGs and their teaching self-efficacy is justifiable regarding the association between individuals' AGOs and their self-efficacy (Daumiller et al., 2021; Huang, 2016). Indeed, individuals pursuing RGs as approach-based goals (Daumiller et al., 2019b), tend to approach success or move towards desirable outcomes in specific achievement settings (Daniels et al., 2019). Thus, RG-oriented teachers are more interested in developing a positive relationship with students to achieve more effective instruction and students' learning. Moreover, individuals' self-efficacy plays an important role in their behaviors leading to perform differently to achieve their desired outcomes (Crişan & Dragoş, 2020). Therefore, teachers with high self-efficacy are more interested in teaching leading to more well-organized and effective teaching and learning processes (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2011).

Accordingly, by pursuing RGs and creating a friendly and supportive classroom atmosphere accompanied by teaching self-efficacy, EFL instructors might create high-quality learning and teaching environments. Since they might have more tendency toward effective teaching, they are likely to put more effort into different activities and even continue their efforts while facing difficulty (Berg & Smith, 2016). Such interpretations are supported by Bandura and Locke (2003) believing that individuals' self-efficacy contributes to their selection of specific tasks and their persistence in accomplishing difficult tasks. In line with this, teachers with high teaching self-efficacy are reported to have more tendency towards implementing new strategies, putting more effort into their teaching practices, and helping students in their learning processes better (Fisher, 2020).

Additionally, the relationship between instructors' RGs and their teaching self-efficacy means that they might both manage the classroom and cope with different students better. This inference is supported by Barni et al. (2019) asserting that teachers' self-efficacy indicates their beliefs in their own ability to cope with the tasks and challenging situations related to their profession. Specifically, through having self-efficacy and establishing a positive relationship with students, they might motivate the students and even find the existing personal reasons behind the unmotivated ones to help them gain their motivation once more, value learning, and participate in the class activities leading to their success. Such claims are supported by research on teachers' self-efficacy in which teachers were capable of making teaching and learning environments more adaptive to different groups of students, creating friendly and positive relationships with students, encouraging them to participate effectively in the class and group work activities (Choi & Lee, 2020; Siwatu, 2011), employing effective teaching practices leading to better classroom management, and making students more motivated and engaged in the learning processes (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

The relationship between instructors' RGs and their help-seeking perceptions as a threatening act indicates that EFL instructors pursuing RGs might not have negative attitudes toward help-seeking. Such a deduction is in line with Daumiller et al.'s (2019b) research reporting that RG-

oriented instructors viewed help-seeking positively suggesting that in a friendly environment, they are more likely to seek help while encountering a problem rather than keeping it to themselves.

The results of the relationship between EFL instructors' RGs and their attitudes toward help-seeking through the mediating effect of self-efficacy show that RG-oriented instructors with teaching self-efficacy view help-seeking as a useful act rather than a threat. According to Daumiller et al. (2019b), instructors' positive attitude toward help-seeking is a very fundamental feature for their self-regulated learning since in different learning situations they need to consult with others, specifically with their colleagues to solve their problems and improve themselves professionally. Moreover, individuals' motivations in performing specific tasks or activities are more related to the beliefs they hold about their own abilities in accomplishing such actions (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, it is documented that their capability known as self-reflection enables them to evaluate and change their behaviors including their perceptions of self-efficacy which serve as a bridge between their knowledge and subsequent behaviors and actions (Sharma & George, 2016).

Accordingly, it is inferred that EFL instructors' help-seeking positive perceptions (cognitive outcomes) are more likely to result in obtaining help and making them more experienced instructors. While instructors try to make a friendly classroom environment and care more about their students, they might create a feeling of trust in them. Thus, they might not only gain help from their students and cooperate with them in their teaching processes, but also consult with them, learn new materials, and improve their teaching quality. While encountering a problem, they might also consult with their colleagues to make use of their experiences and increase their understanding in finding out the best and most suitable solution to the problem. Such interpretations are in line with Daumiller et al.'s (2019b) research reporting that university instructors' RGs had positive effects on their perceiving help-seeking to be beneficial.

The findings concerning the relationship between instructors' RGs and their positive affect through the mediating effect of self-efficacy suggest that RG-oriented instructors having self-efficacy might enjoy their teaching profession and teach with great enthusiasm. Hence, EFL instructors' positive affect (affective outcomes) is indicated to result from their caring and considerate features accompanied by having teaching self-efficacy. Such instructors are likely to manage the class in a way that students feel at ease and become interested in learning. By making friendly and caring relationships with students and getting along with them well, they might create a relaxing and stress-free context so that students get motivated, value learning, attend their classes continually, and learn more effectively. On the one hand, based on Daumiller et al.'s (2019b) study, the results show that this is one of the characteristics of such instructors being interested in teaching and always enjoying teaching their students new things and conveying their knowledge to them. On the other hand, RG-oriented instructors along with having efficacy for instruction, motivation, and class management to generate such a calm, friendly, and comfortable classroom atmosphere might be able to teach more enthusiastically. Such interpretations are supported by Butler's (2012) study specifying the positive association between teachers' RGs and their instructional performance and behaviors. Likewise, in Daumiller et al.'s (2019b) research, RGs were identified as positive predictors for instructors' positive affect.

The relationship between instructors' RGs and their self-reported teaching quality through the mediating effect of self-efficacy shows that RG-oriented instructors having self-efficacy are probably more committed to teaching leading to their well-organized, effective and high-quality teaching. This inference is supported by different researchers who advocated RGs as positive predictors of teachers' commitment to teaching (Han et al., 2015), their teaching quality (Daumiller et al., 2019b), and their self-reported classroom behaviors (George & Richardson, 2019). Thus, it is inferred that EFL instructors' self-reported teaching quality (behavioral outcomes) might result from their engagement and commitment to their profession. Due to such

commitment, RG-oriented instructors with teaching self-efficacy might create a friendly classroom environment, show their interest in students, and take their concerns into consideration seriously with the aim of motivating and causing them to value themselves and their learning, and consequently, have an effective teaching. In agreement with this inference, Butler (2012) also asserted that teachers pursuing RGs tend to establish personal relationships with their students so that they perceive their own values as individual learners.

RG-oriented instructors with efficacy for instruction might also take different perspectives into account while teaching. It is documented that teachers with high self-efficacy and those who are more interested in teaching have positive attitudes toward new teaching styles and try to make use of innovative instructional methods to have more effective teaching (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2011). Accordingly, it is implied that RG-oriented instructors with efficacy for instruction might plan fun and humorous tasks or activities and build a friendly and stress-free classroom atmosphere so that students' engagement in doing such activities increases. Consistent with this deduction is Daumiller et al.'s (2019a) study specifying the significant influence of teachers' strong RGs on their use of content-related humor in higher education context.

Concerning instructors' efficacy for classroom management, the results show that RG-oriented instructors through establishing an amicable and welcoming atmosphere might also make their expectations clear regarding classroom rules and students' behaviors. They might also get along with the most difficult students and even control unexpected disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Such claims are supported by Klassen and Chiu's (2010) ideas regarding teachers' beliefs about their capabilities in controlling troublemaking students showing disruptive behaviors in the class as well as obliging them to follow the rules to have an organized classroom.

Conclusion

EFL instructors pursuing RGs tend to approach more adaptive, favorable, and desirable outcomes. The results emphasized the importance of instructors' RGs in establishing high quality learning and teaching environments. Instructors being more interested in and committed to their teaching profession, have more tendency to create a friendly and stress-free atmosphere to motivate and encourage students in their learning processes leading to their better understanding and achievement. When students find themselves in the safe, trusted, and supportive environment, not only their anxiety would decrease, but also their attention would increase promoting their learning. Such instructors are also eager to be more organized in their instructional practices and classroom management in a way that they might make their teaching processes more attractive and challenging leading to high-quality teaching. Thus, they try to obtain help, when necessary, without feeling of embarrassment or fear of being judged negatively. This positive perception towards help-seeking would result in not only solving their encountered problems, but also developing their knowledge leading to their effective performance.

Instructors' great motivation and tendency toward more effective teaching arise from their teaching self-efficacy. Their caring and considerate characteristics, their ways of thinking, beliefs, and behaviors in the class accompanied by their enthusiasm, engagement, and commitment to their work determine their positive teaching-related outcomes. Thus, through establishing more amicable, caring, and supportive classroom atmosphere and using their professional knowledge and competencies in creating a variety of efficient strategies, they would be able to manage the classroom and their instructional practices well.

The findings would carry significant implications for university instructors playing important roles in any domain, specifically in EFL contexts. They are always supposed to do their best to fulfill

the expected requirements in the higher education context. Therefore, the findings would provide them with a clear picture of their RGs as one of the identified motivational predictors affecting their teaching-related outcomes. By being aware of such goals and reflecting on themselves in their teaching process, they would better meet the expected requirements in the education setting. Additionally, being an effective instructor compared with others needs meticulous attention to the self and at the same time how to manage it in specific situations. Therefore, instructors' beliefs about their own learning and teaching abilities and how to handle their thoughts, feelings, and actions in accomplishing different tasks would have a tremendous impact on their effective teaching. Accordingly, the results concerning instructors' teaching self-efficacy would provide them with valuable information about the importance of self-efficacy in their commitment to effective teaching. Thus, they would make better decisions to engage in activities in which they are more competent to accomplish their instructional tasks effectively.

The limitation of this study deals with the sample selection technique. In fact, before starting the investigation, it was supposed that the participants be selected based on a stratified sampling technique. However, it was not possible in practice to divide the accessible population into different subgroups.

In this study, the researchers employed only a questionnaire to investigate EFL university instructors' cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes which have been derived from their pursuit of RGs in conjunction with their teaching self-efficacy. Thus, interested researchers are suggested to consider other factors such as cultural and contextual factors and as a result, add an interview section to the data collection procedure adding to more comprehensive results to the qualitative phase of the study. Concerning the limitation related to the sample selection technique that might influence the generalizability of the findings, another suggestion for further research is that the representative sample would be better selected based on both randomization and categorization (i.e., stratified sampling) so that the samples be the best representative of all the EFL instructors.

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