EFL Teacher Burnout: The Nexus of Emotional Intelligence, Self-concept, and Self-efficacy

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A B S T R A C T

EFL teacher burnout poses serious risks to well-being, job satisfaction, and instructional quality. This mixed methods study investigated how emotional intelligence and teacher self-concept relate to burnout, and whether self-efficacy mediates these relationships. Quantitative data from 319 public and private school EFL teachers were analyzed using Pearson correlations, Structural Equation Modeling, and Process v3.3. Results showed that higher emotional intelligence and a stronger self-concept were associated with lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and higher personal accomplishment. Self-efficacy partially mediated both relationships, underscoring its role in reducing burnout. The qualitative phase, based on semi-structured interviews, explored teachers' perceptions of burnout and contextual stressors. Public school teachers cited systemic challenges such as large class sizes and administrative burden, while private school teachers emphasized job insecurity and performance pressure. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of burnout, proposes a grounded model, and highlights the need for targeted interventions across different educational settings.

Keywords: burnout; emotional intelligence; self-concept; self-efficacy; SEM

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Introduction

Burnout is a psychological condition resulting from prolonged exposure to chronic interpersonal stressors in the workplace. It comprises three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or cynicism), and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This framework underscores the role of social context and self-perception in shaping burnout. Among teachers, especially early-career educators, burnout is increasingly common due to emotional labor, limited resources, challenging work conditions, and administrative burdens (Selhub, 2023; Yin et al., 2019). These stressors impair teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness, ultimately hindering student achievement (Friedman, 2003), and highlight the need for context-sensitive, preventative interventions within educational settings.

Previous research has extensively investigated teacher burnout as it may have considerable repercussions such as job dissatisfaction, detachment, physical and emotional ailments, and increased attrition rates among educators (Chan, 2006). Teachers experiencing burnout may exhibit emotional exhaustion, resulting in reduced enthusiasm for teaching, increased impatience, and a weakened ability to provide autonomy support and choice to their students (Shen et al., 2015). The emotional exhaustion can negatively influence teacher-student relationships and overall teaching effectiveness.

To better understand the psychological underpinnings of teacher burnout, the present study focuses on three interrelated constructs that have gained prominence in educational psychology: emotional intelligence (EI), self-concept (SC), and self-efficacy (SE). Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in oneself and in interactions with others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).In the teaching context, emotional intelligence enables educators to recognize and regulate their emotional responses to stressors, develop effective relationships with students and colleagues, and navigate the emotional demands of the profession (Brackett et al., 2011).

Teacher self-concept encompasses educators' beliefs, perceptions, and evaluations about their professional identity and competence (Yeung et al., 2014). This construct includes teachers' assessments of their professional competence, relationships with students and colleagues, and the value they place on the teaching profession (Villa & Calvete, 2001). A positive teacher self-concept has been associated with enhanced teaching effectiveness, better student-teacher relationships, and reduced vulnerability to burnout (Wang et al., 2019).

Teacher self-efficacy, although closely related to self-concept, specifically refers to educators' beliefs in their ability to influence student engagement, learning, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Rather than general self-perceptions, self-efficacy captures task-specific confidence and judgments about one's capabilities in handling distinct teaching challenges (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Research has consistently shown that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in protecting against burnout and promoting professional well-being (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Understanding these constructs in specific educational contexts is essential. In Iran, EFL teachers encounter institutional and cultural challenges that may intensify burnout and influence these psychological factors. Recognizing that foreign language education fosters interpersonal, intercultural, economic, and socio-political development, the Iranian Ministry of Education has adopted a communicative approach in English Language Teaching (ELT), promoting proficiency in all four skills (The National Curriculum of IRI, 2013). This shift represents a paradigm change from structural and reading-oriented methodologies to communicative practices in ELT (Asadi et al., 2016), significantly altering pedagogical expectations and contextual demands on Iranian EFL educators.

This transition, however, has imposed significant stress on public school teachers due to unrealistic demands and exclusion from the reform process, which followed a coercive-power model of change. The top-down approach overlooked teachers' expertise, creating a gap between policymakers and educators (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Already facing large class sizes, limited resources, and unmotivated students (Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020), teachers felt undervalued. Their professional agency was disregarded (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018), reducing motivation and engagement, and intensifying frustration and burnout among public school EFL teachers.

Iranian EFL teachers in private language schools face unique stressors linked to burnout. Often working without written contracts, they risk sudden dismissal for policy noncompliance (Gholaminejad, 2020). Despite benefits like flexible hours and smaller classes, teachers encounter professional challenges such as inconsistent compensation, fluctuating in structure, amount, and schedule, and limited autonomy due to rigid syllabi.

Supervisors, frequently lacking formal training, conduct regular evaluations, fostering pressure and insecurity. This combination of instability, lack of transparency, and strict oversight suppresses creativity and heightens stress, leading to increased burnout (Sadeghi & Richards, 2015).

Theoretical Model and Research Questions

While prior research has linked emotional intelligence (EI), self-concept (SC), and self-efficacy (SE) to teacher burnout, these variables are typically studied in isolation or pairs (e.g., Chan, 2006; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017), leaving a gap in integrative frameworks, especially in the Iranian EFL context. The present study proposes a theoretical model examining direct and mediated relationships among these constructs. EI refers to the ability to perceive, regulate, and use emotions; SC denotes generalized beliefs about professional identity and competence; SE reflects context-specific beliefs in teaching ability (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The model posits both direct and SE-mediated effects of EI and SC on burnout.

The current study's theoretical model integrates social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain relationships among emotional intelligence, self-concept, self-efficacy, and burnout. Social cognitive theory views self-efficacy as a proximal determinant of behavior and emotion, shaped by more distal personal resources. Emotional intelligence and self-concept function as foundational inputs influencing self-efficacy, which then affects burnout risk. Conservation of resources theory reinforces this hierarchy, proposing that emotional intelligence and self-concept form a "resource caravan" that supports self-efficacy as a secondary resource. Though presented linearly, the model allows reciprocal effects, where burnout may erode self-efficacy, creating a cyclical feedback loop.

The selection of variables is based on strong theoretical and empirical foundations (Sanchez-Gomez & Breso, 2020; Selhub, 2023; Wang et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016) to capture cognitive and affective factors influencing teacher burnout. Emotional intelligence is reliably linked to reduced burnout, especially in educational settings (Chan, 2006). Self-concept, integrating cognitive and emotional components, helps teachers interpret and manage stress (Villa & Calvete, 2001). Self-efficacy is similarly recognized as a protective factor, showing a robust negative correlation with burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Instruments are culturally adapted and psychometrically validated for Iranian EFL educators.

While prior research has addressed broad stressors such as discipline issues, time constraints, and low student motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020), the interplay of affective and cognitive dimensions in teachers' experiences remains underexplored. The present study moves beyond isolated analysis to emphasize the integrated functioning of emotional intelligence, self-concept,

and self-efficacy in relation to burnout. Earlier studies have examined these constructs individually or in pairs (Brackett et al., 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014), but few have proposed a unified model within the EFL context. The present model is based on theoretical and empirical findings that suggest a hierarchical structure. EI contributes to higher SE by maintaining perceived competence and enhancing task execution (Sanchez-Gomez & Breso, 2020), with emotional signals guiding competence evaluations (Bandura, 1997). SC, which is broader and more stable than SE, significantly influences efficacy beliefs by grounding them in prior experiences and self-evaluations (Wang et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2018). This structure underpins the proposed model shown in Figure 1.
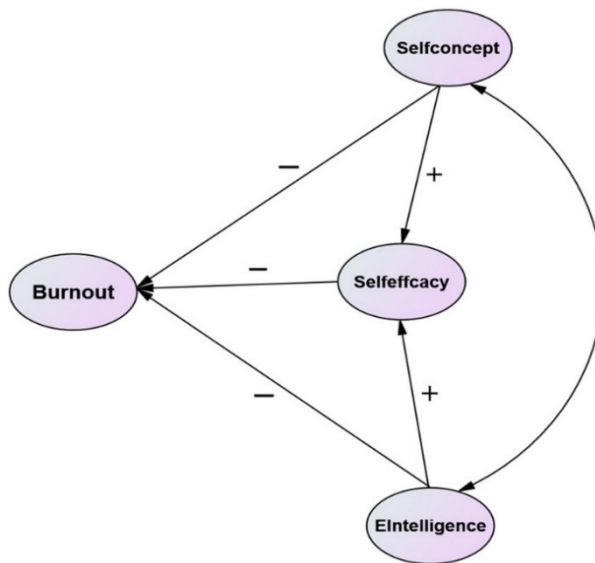

Figure 1. The proposed model

Applying this theoretical model to the Iranian EFL context is particularly relevant given the distinct challenges teachers encounter. Public school educators face reform-induced stress, while private institute teachers experience job insecurity, both placing psychological demands that interact with emotional and cognitive resources. High emotional intelligence supports stress regulation and fosters positive classroom climates (Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008), especially in overcrowded public classrooms. A strong professional self-concept provides resilience under constant evaluation in private institutes (Rad & Nasir, 2010). Data collection tools are adapted to Iran's linguistic, cultural, and organizational context, with expert review and pilot testing to ensure validity.

The dual focus on public and private language school contexts reflects substantial differences in teachers' working conditions, expectations, and challenges, including curriculum, pedagogy, class size, resources, job security, and student motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Mousavi et al., 2022). By incorporating both settings, the study enhances theoretical understanding of EFL teacher burnout in Iran, linking contextual distinctions to emotional intelligence, self-concept, self-efficacy, and burnout. Recognizing these nuances is crucial for interpreting the model's applicability and the significance of its proposed pathways.

Therefore, the present study investigates the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?

RQ2: Does teacher self-efficacy mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout?

RQ3: What is the relationship between teacher self-concept and teacher burnout?

RQ4: Does teacher self-efficacy mediate the relationship between self-concept and teacher burnout?

RQ5: What is the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout?

RQ6: How do EFL teachers perceive the differences in burnout levels between those working in public schools and private language institutes?

RQ7: What is the relationship between contextual factors and EFL teachers' job satisfaction and potential for burnout?

Review of Literature

Emotional intelligence, teacher self-concept, teacher self-efficacy, and burnout are interrelated constructs that significantly influence teachers' professional experiences and well-being. Understanding their interactions is crucial for comprehending the multifaceted nature of teacher burnout, particularly in the context of Iranian EFL teachers. This review examines these constructs and their relationships within an integrated theoretical framework, highlighting both established findings and recent developments in the field.

Burnout: A Multidimensional Construct in Teaching

Teacher burnout is a psychological syndrome characterized by three key dimensions: overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from work, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This syndrome manifests as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment, particularly among younger teachers (Selhub, 2023).

Research has consistently shown that burnout has considerable repercussions for educators, including job dissatisfaction, detachment, physical and emotional ailments, and increased attrition rates (Chan, 2006). Teachers experiencing burnout exhibit emotional exhaustion, resulting in reduced enthusiasm, increased impatience, and a weakened ability to provide autonomy support to their students (Shen et al., 2015). These consequences ultimately affect teaching effectiveness and student outcomes (Friedman, 2003).

Emotional Intelligence and Burnout

Emotional intelligence (EI), a subset of social intelligence, refers to the ability to monitor feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide thinking and actions (Brackett et al., 2011; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This capacity is particularly vital in teaching, where responding to students' emotional needs and managing interpersonal dynamics are part of daily classroom life. Teachers with high EI are generally better equipped to navigate these demands, as

research has shown a consistent negative correlation between emotional intelligence and various dimensions of burnout (Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017).

Building on this association, several studies (Alavinia & Ahmadzadeh, 2012; Geraci et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2023; Vaezi & Fallah, 2011) highlight how emotional intelligence serves as a protective factor against burnout. For instance, Alavinia and Ahmadzadeh (2012) and Mohammadi et al. (2023) found that Iranian EFL teachers with higher EI reported significantly lower burnout levels, emphasizing the role of EI in local educational contexts. Notably, Geraci et al. (2023) observed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, once EI was controlled for, differences in burnout between pre-pandemic and pandemic periods disappeared. This underscores emotional intelligence as a buffer during times of heightened stress, enabling teachers to maintain emotional stability even in crisis situations (Sanchez-Gomez & Breso, 2020).

Conversely, teachers with low emotional intelligence are more likely to experience elevated anxiety, depression, and stress, along with a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019). In this context, emotional intelligence acts as a resilience mechanism, helping teachers manage emotional labor more effectively and reducing the risk of emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout (Chan, 2006; Yin et al., 2019).

Teacher Self-Concept and Burnout

Teacher self-concept is a key component of professional identity, encompassing beliefs about instructional competence, relationships with others in the school, and the personal value placed on teaching (Villa & Calvete, 2001; Yeung et al., 2014). Unlike task-specific self-efficacy, self-concept reflects more stable, generalized perceptions shaped by personal and professional experiences. A positive self-concept has been linked to greater emotional resilience, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness (Zhu et al., 2018). It is also influenced by external factors such as school climate, student behavior, and access to professional development.

A strong teacher self-concept plays a crucial role in protecting against burnout, as it equips educators with confidence and resilience, supporting their ability to handle challenges and maintain career satisfaction (Rad & Nasir, 2010). Research has established an inverse relationship between teacher self-concept and burnout (Wang et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2018). A positive self-concept fosters more effective and adaptable teaching strategies, promotes positive interactions with students, enhances student motivation and classroom participation, and encourages teachers' continuous professional growth (Yeung et al., 2014).

Recent findings by Prasojo et al. (2020), based on a large sample of high school teachers, revealed that teacher self-concept directly impacts all three dimensions of burnout. In contrast, educators with negative or dysfunctional self-beliefs often view their work as unfulfilling or even detrimental to their well-being (Villa & Calvete, 2001). These teachers are more prone to persistent self-doubt and critical evaluations of their performance, which can intensify workplace stress and contribute to emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). As Wang et al. (2019) conclude, teacher self-concept acts as a psychological buffer that mitigates burnout and influences long-term career development.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Burnout

Teacher self-efficacy has been widely studied as a pivotal factor in educational outcomes and teacher well-being. Defined as educators' confidence in their ability to foster student learning and manage instructional demands, self-efficacy reflects task-specific assessments of teaching competence (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) emphasize that such

beliefs are context-sensitive, shaped by interactions with students, colleagues, and institutional structures. Empirical evidence links higher self-efficacy to reduced burnout, increased job satisfaction, and more resilient coping strategies (Zee & Koomen, 2016), underscoring its importance as both a motivational and protective construct in teaching.

Burnout is conceptualized as a breakdown in a person's sense of professional efficacy (Friedman, 2003). A strong sense of efficacy shapes the effort teachers invest in their work, the goals they pursue, and their overall ambition (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Educators who believe in their capacity to engage students and manage classroom behavior tend to experience greater job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout, consistent with extensive findings on teacher self-efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016). These positive beliefs also enhance teachers' confidence in applying instructional strategies and maintaining effective classroom environments (Klassen & Tze, 2014).

Building on earlier findings, recent studies have further confirmed this negative association between self-efficacy and burnout. Weißenfels et al. (2021) found that higher levels of burnout were associated with smaller gains in teacher self-efficacy, reinforcing the inverse relationship even during times of crisis. Similarly, Li (2023) demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy not only directly mitigates burnout but also does so indirectly by fostering greater resilience. These findings reinforce the understanding that educators with lower self-efficacy are more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Aloe et al., 2013).

Interrelationships Among Key Constructs

Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Emotional cues, emotional arousal, and positive emotions, key components of emotional intelligence, have been linked to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). These elements offer critical information for assessing teaching tasks and shaping self-perceptions of teaching competence. Moreover, emotional intelligence contributes to higher professional efficacy by maintaining the perception of continued effectiveness at work and enhancing overall performance (Sanchez-Gomez & Breso, 2020).

Recent research strengthens our understanding of this relationship. Wang and Wang (2022) found strong correlations between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and reduced burnout among foreign language teachers, suggesting self-efficacy may mediate this relationship. Teachers' emotions, such as optimism within the teaching environment, influence their efficacy beliefs by fostering self-assurance and anticipating future success, thereby improving performance through focused attention on tasks (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Yang and Du (2024) further demonstrated that emotion regulation, a facet of emotional intelligence, mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and digital burnout, indicating complementary pathways that highlight the interplay of these constructs.

Teacher Self-Concept and Teacher Self-Efficacy

While both teacher self-concept and teacher efficacy involve perceptions of competence, they differ in several aspects. Self-concept refers to teachers' general perceptions of their teaching competence, which precedes and significantly contributes to their self-efficacy, context-specific beliefs about their instructional capabilities (Zhu et al., 2018). This hierarchical relationship is supported by Zhu et al.'s (2018) comprehensive study of 1892 Chinese teachers, which found that teacher self-concept influenced all three dimensions of burnout via teacher self-efficacy.

Self-concept, which is stable over time and influenced by social comparisons, assists teachers by providing a basis for evaluating their efficacy, drawing on past experiences and self-assessment (Wang et al., 2019). Consequently, self-concept significantly influences instructional effectiveness, classroom management, and student engagement (Poulou, 2007). This aligns with the integrated model of teacher efficacy proposed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), which distinguishes teacher efficacy from perceptions of teaching competence.

A positive self-concept can enhance teacher efficacy by fostering a belief in one's ability to successfully manage teaching tasks and meet goals, whereas negative self-appraisals can undermine efficacy and contribute to burnout. This relationship was further substantiated by Prasojo et al. (2020), who found that teacher self-concept indirectly influences burnout through teacher efficacy.

Contextual Factors in Iranian EFL Teaching

The Iranian educational context presents unique challenges that contribute to burnout among EFL teachers. In public schools, systemic issues such as large class sizes, inadequate resources, and administrative overload are common (Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Centralized decision-making further complicates the situation by restricting teacher autonomy, particularly in public schools where reforms are imposed with minimal input from educators, undermining their sense of self-efficacy (Ghasemzadeh et al., 2019; Soleimani & Hakimzadeh, 2024).

In private language institutes, the challenges differ but remain significant. Teachers often face job insecurity, lack of contractual protection, and performance-based pressure, with dismissal as a real risk for those not meeting institutional demands (Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020; Gholaminejad, 2020). Moreover, poor work-life balance has been identified as a key contributor to emotional exhaustion (Kazemi, 2025). Cultural expectations also shape teacher experiences; within Iran's collectivist culture, emotional restraint and professionalism are highly valued, which may discourage open expression of stress. This stigmatization can limit the effectiveness of emotional intelligence as a coping mechanism (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011), potentially leaving teachers more vulnerable to burnout.

The Framework for an Integrated Model

The relationships among emotional intelligence, teacher self-concept, teacher self-efficacy, and burnout are best understood within an integrated framework informed by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Social cognitive theory views self-efficacy as a proximal determinant of behavior and emotional responses, shaped by foundational traits such as EI and TSC. These personal resources support the development of TSE, which acts as a protective factor against burnout. Conservation of resources theory further suggests that EI and TSC bolster TSE as part of a "resource caravan" guarding against resource loss. Although previous studies have examined these constructs in isolation or pairs (e.g., Chan, 2006; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017), this model highlights their interdependence and collective impact on EFL teacher burnout, offering a more comprehensive perspective on how cognitive and emotional traits interact to influence resilience and well-being in teaching contexts.

Method

The present study adopted a mixed methods sequential explanatory design to address the research questions comprehensively. This approach integrates quantitative and qualitative data in a structured sequence, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the research problem. The initial

quantitative phase identifies patterns, relationships, and statistical trends, which are subsequently examined in depth through qualitative inquiry. The qualitative phase provides contextual insight into experiences, motivations, and perspectives not fully captured by quantitative measures (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design facilitates triangulation, addressing the limitations of single-method approaches and enhancing the study's validity. By first analyzing broad trends statistically, then exploring participant perspectives, the study achieves a more comprehensive understanding. The sequential structure also allows qualitative data collection to be refined based on quantitative results, increasing methodological rigor. This layered strategy ensures that both empirical generalizations and individual experiences inform the interpretation, strengthening the overall credibility and depth of the research.

Participants

Quantitative Phase

Due to the large-scale scope of the study, researchers contacted 2,755 Iranian EFL teachers via a social networking platform, including educators from public and private high schools and language institutes. The population was considered largely homogeneous based on key criteria: all participants were Iranian EFL teachers operating under a centralized curriculum and standardized teaching protocols, and all belonged to a professional group reflecting shared pedagogical interests and commitment to development. Membership required at least a bachelor's degree in English language teaching or a related field. Despite varied teaching contexts, these shared features supported the population's professional and systemic homogeneity.

The study targeted a large, relatively homogeneous group of 2,755 Iranian EFL teachers from both public/private high schools and language schools. All participants were members of a professional social networking group and held at least a BA in English-related fields, ensuring a shared professional background. Using equiprobability systematic sampling, every 5th teacher from a randomized list was selected. Of the 551 contacted, 319 teachers from 28 provinces voluntarily participated (58% response rate). A summary of participant demographics is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Quantitative Phase Participant Demographics

Variable	Category	Percentage/Count
Age Distribution	20–30 years	25%
	30–40 years	38%
	40–50 years	32%
	Over 50 years	5%
Gender	Female	71% (227 teachers)
	Male	29% (92 teachers)
Teaching Context	Public/Private High Schools	54%
	Public/Private English Language Schools	46%
Professional Experience	1–10 years	41%
	10–20 years	32%
	20–30 years	23%
	Over 30 years	4%
Educational Qualifications	BA	24%
	MA	63%
	Ph.D.	13%

Note: 319 teachers from 28 Iranian provinces participated in this phase.

Qualitative Phase

For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was used to recruit 10 EFL teachers with diverse educational and professional backgrounds from the larger pool of 319 participants in the quantitative phase. While small, this sample size conforms to qualitative research standards, where 6–15 participants are often sufficient for in-depth exploration of nuanced perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample was balanced in terms of gender and teaching context and included a range of teaching experience (1 to 26 years). This variation allowed for a rich exploration of EFL instructional practices across contexts. Detailed demographic information for the qualitative sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Qualitative Phase Participant Demographics

Variable	Category	Count
Academic Qualifications	Bachelor's Degrees	7
	Master's Degrees	3
Teaching Context	Public High Schools	5
	Private Language Schools	5
Gender	Female	5
	Male	5
	1–9 years	4
Teaching Experience	10–20 years	4
	20–26 years	2

Note: This phase involved purposive sampling of 10 EFL teachers with diverse backgrounds.

The present study followed the ethical principles of the Belmont Report (National Commission, 1979) to ensure the protection of human subjects. Participants received comprehensive information and voluntarily consented without coercion. Informed consent included researcher identities, participant selection criteria, study purpose and benefits, the right to ask questions, and the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. Anonymity was guaranteed, and participants were assured that no disclosed information would cause harm. This process ensured participants fully understood the study and their rights before participation, aligning with established ethical standards for behavioral and biomedical research involving human subjects.

Instruments

Quantitative Phase

Teacher burnout. Teacher burnout was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators' Survey (Maslach et al., 1996). This 22-item measure is specifically designed to evaluate burnout syndrome among educators, capturing manifestations such as elevated emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished levels of personal accomplishment.

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was assessed through the 33-item self-report emotional intelligence scale created by Schutte et al. (1998) which comprised of four underlying factors of 'optimism/mood regulation', 'appraisal of emotions', 'social skills', and 'utilization of emotions in thinking and solving problems'.

Teacher Self-Efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the 24-item Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), originally comprising six dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed cross-loadings among items related to "Adapt Instruction to Individual

Needs" and "Motivate Students," leading to the exclusion of these two factors. The final version retained four factors across 16 items.

Teacher Self-Concept. Finally, teacher self-concept was assessed using the Teacher Self-Concept Evaluation Scale (Villa & Calvete, 2001), covering six dimensions of professional self-evaluation. The "satisfaction" factor was excluded due to low factor loading in the SEM model. Internal consistency for all instruments, evaluated via Cronbach's alpha, ranged from 0.891 to 0.936, indicating high reliability.

Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase of the study utilized semi-structured interviews for data collection. The interview protocol comprised five open-ended questions organized into three distinct sections: (a) two questions for warm-up and introduction, (b) three questions addressing burnout levels among teachers in public schools versus private language institutes and the role of contextual factors, and (c) two closing questions. To enhance the depth and richness of the data, participants were afforded the opportunity to provide written responses to the interview questions, mitigating potential biases associated with verbal interviews and providing participants with additional time for introspection.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Phase

Pearson Product-Moment correlations were used to examine relationships among variables. To ensure univariate and multivariate normality and data validity for SEM, linear regression with bootstrapping was conducted. Structural Equation Modeling was then performed using AMOS 26. Model fit indices, reflecting the model's correspondence with the data, were evaluated using several indicators. The chi-square test was applied to assess the independence of relationships among variables. Indirect effects of variables on burnout, mediated by teacher self-efficacy, were estimated using Hayes' (2008) Process v3.3 through linear regression with bootstrapping, conducted in SPSS software to analyze mediation effects.

Qualitative Phase

In the qualitative phase, thematic and content analyses were employed to examine participants' written interview responses and extract recurrent themes. Thematic analysis identified and interpreted patterns in teacher experiences of burnout in EFL contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2012), while content analysis systematically categorized specific words and ideas (Krippendorff, 2018). Together, these methods offered both interpretive depth and structural clarity. To reinforce findings, frequency analysis was conducted to identify the most commonly expressed responses, highlighting dominant beliefs among EFL teachers and lending empirical support to the themes and categories emerging from the thematic and content analyses.

Results

Quantitative Phase

Pearson Correlations

The Pearson correlation matrix (Table 3) revealed key negative relationships between burnout (BS) and several psychological constructs. Among emotional intelligence components, optimism (Op) had the strongest negative correlation with BS, while utilization of emotions (UOE) showed the weakest. Moderate negative correlations were found for social skills (SS) and appraisal of emotions (AOE). All components of emotional intelligence showed stronger correlations with reduced personal accomplishment (RPA) than with depersonalization (De) or emotional exhaustion (EE).

In the domain of teacher self-concept, relationship with pupils (RWP) showed the strongest negative correlation with BS, followed by interpersonal perception (IP), and competence (Co), while self-acceptance (SA) was the weakest. As with emotional intelligence, self-concept components were more strongly associated with RPA than with De or EE.

Teacher self-efficacy variables also correlated negatively with BS. The strongest was instruction (In), followed by cooperate with colleagues and parents (CWCAP), while the weakest was cope with change (CWC). These components were again more strongly related to RPA than to the other burnout subscales. Additionally, EI variables such as SS and Op were positively correlated with teacher self-efficacy dimensions like CWCAP and In.

Finally, all self-concept components positively correlated with self-efficacy variables. For example, Co was highly correlated with In, while IP and RWP showed strong links with CWCAP. These results suggest that higher levels of emotional intelligence, positive self-concept, and self-efficacy are consistently associated with lower levels of burnout.

Table 3
Pearson Correlations Matrix for The Measured Variables

	BS	EE	De	RPA	Op	AOE	SS	UOE	In	MD	CWCAP	CWC	Co	IP	AOR	RWP
EE	0.85															
De	0.69	0.56														
RPA	0.74	0.33	0.31													
Op	-0.56	-0.41	-0.35	-0.52												
AOE	-0.33	-0.10	-0.20	-0.46	0.49											
SS	-0.42	-0.19	-0.28	-0.52	0.50	0.57										
UOE	-0.17	-0.04	-0.11	-0.25	0.31	0.27	0.40									
In	-0.43	-0.27	-0.29	-0.44	0.42	0.42	0.43	0.33								
MD	-0.35	-0.20	-0.16	-0.42	0.36	0.30	0.38	0.24	0.49							
CWCAP	-0.41	-0.26	-0.24	-0.43	0.46	0.36	0.44	0.27	0.56	0.58						
CWC	-0.32	-0.16	-0.19	-0.36	0.29	0.31	0.26	0.19	0.56	0.50	0.50					
Co	-0.43	-0.28	-0.27	-0.44	0.50	0.41	0.50	0.32	0.47	0.40	0.39	0.42				
IP	-0.46	-0.30	-0.29	-0.47	0.46	0.35	0.53	0.30	0.46	0.38	0.49	0.38	0.61			
AOR	-0.39	-0.30	-0.20	-0.36	0.49	0.35	0.31	0.23	0.37	0.26	0.32	0.27	0.53	0.47		
RWP	-0.55	-0.40	-0.31	-0.52	0.52	0.40	0.53	0.36	0.48	0.45	0.48	0.30	0.64	0.59	0.43	
SA	-0.37	-0.25	-0.22	-0.38	0.51	0.37	0.44	0.33	0.40	0.31	0.26	0.29	0.52	0.46	0.49	0.48

Normality Assessment

Given that maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) requires multivariate normality, we first assessed this assumption. With 319 cases, the data showed significant non-normality (kurtosis = 65.758; CR = 24.468). To address this, we identified and removed six multivariate outliers based on Mahalanobis d-squared values. This reduced both the kurtosis and critical ratio by about half. However, despite this adjustment, the data continued to violate the assumption of multivariate normality, suggesting that MLE's assumptions were not fully met.

Regression Analysis

As a result, we ran the model with the bootstrap technique. As Table 4 illustrates, the regression weights were determined using bootstrap method with 5000 bootstrap samples, ensuring a 95 bias-corrected confidence level, all estimates fell within a confidence interval that did not include zero. Thus, we could conclude that based on the bootstrapping technique to normalize the data, our estimates were valid for conducting SEM.

Table 4
Regression Weights

			Bias	S.E.	Lower	Upper	P
Bootstrapping procedure through maximum likelihood estimation method							
Self-efficacy	<	EIntelligence	.000	.054	0.636	0.851	.000
Self-efficacy	<	Selfconcept	.000	.049	0.641	0.834	.000
Burnout	<	Self-efficacy	.000	.042	-0.503	-0.339	.000
Burnout	<	EIntelligence	-.001	.051	-0.668	-0.482	.000
Burnout	<	Selfconcept	-.002	.049	-0.707	-0.519	.000

Model Fit Statistics

Using AMOS, we also checked the fitness indices to see whether the total structure of the proposed model closely fitted the data. As Table 5 demonstrates, all fit indices were at an acceptable level showing our proposed model closely approximated the patterns observed in the collected data.

Table 5
Model Fit Summary

Index	Current level	Accepted level	Evaluation
CMIN	277.986	p > .05	Acceptable fit
CMIN/DF	2.837	<3	Acceptable fit
IFI	.921	≥.90	Acceptable fit
TLI	.902	≥.90	Acceptable fit
CFI	.920	≥.90	Acceptable fit
GFI	.900	≥.90	Acceptable fit
PCFI	.752	>.60	Acceptable fit
SRMR	. 052	<.90	Acceptable fit
RMSEA	.077	<.08	Acceptable fit

Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to investigate the relationships between Self-concept, Self-efficacy, and Emotional Intelligence (EI) as predictors of Burnout. All observed indicators significantly loaded onto their respective latent constructs, and each structural path to Burnout was statistically significant. Higher levels of Self-concept (β = -0.42), Self-efficacy (β = -0.15), and EI (β = -0.63) were associated with lower Burnout, confirming the hypothesized negative associations, with EI showing the strongest inverse relationship. Significant interrelations were also

observed among exogenous variables: Self-concept correlated positively with Self-efficacy (r = 0.53), and EI was moderately correlated with Self-efficacy (r = 0.38). Collectively, these findings validate the model and highlight the protective functions of all three variables in reducing Burnout.
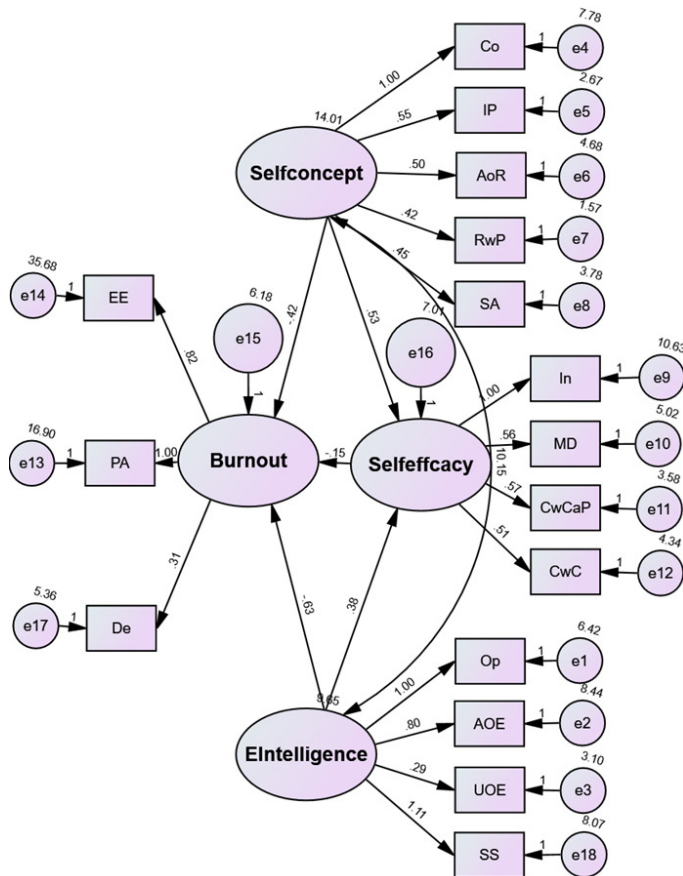

Figure 2. The model of relationships among observed variables

Mediation Assessment

We estimated the indirect relationship using Hayes (2008) Process v3.3 for mediation through conducting linear regression with bootstrapping using 5000 bootstrap samples at 95 bias-corrected confidence level in SPSS software. Table 6 shows that the indirect association of self-concept with burnout through teacher self-efficacy was present as zero fell outside the upper and the lower bounds. Obviously, since self-concept and burnout were directly correlated, teacher self-efficacy only partially mediated the relationship between self-concept and burnout.

Table 6
Indirect Effect of X (Self-Concept) on Y (Burnout)

	Indirect effect of X on Y			
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TSE	-.1232	.0361	-.1957	-.0539

Similarly, we estimated the indirect association of emotional intelligence with burnout through teacher self-efficacy. The analysis showed that since emotional intelligence and burnout were directly correlated and zero fell outside the lower, and upper limits, teacher self-efficacy partially mediated emotional intelligence and burnout (Table 7).

Table 7
Indirect Effect of X (Emotional Intelligence) on Y (Burnout)

	Indirect effect of X on Y			
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TSE	-.1719	.0396	-.2521	-.0957

Qualitative Phase

For the qualitative phase of this study, we conducted thematic and content analysis on the responses provided by EFL teachers from public high schools and private language institutes in interviews. The analysis yielded the following results:

Perceived Differences in Burnout Levels in Public and Private Schools

The majority of respondents reported higher burnout levels in public schools compared to private language institutes. Four out of five public school teachers attributed this to larger class sizes, limited resources, and administrative burdens. Below is an excerpt instantiating that trend:

> *In my opinion, burnout is more severe in public schools. We have to manage large classes with limited resources, which is exhausting... Here, we're constantly tired from excessive workload and inadequate pay, which makes it challenging to stay motivated. (Interviewee 1)*

In contrast, private school teachers presented more varied views; some found their working conditions less stressful, while others emphasized different challenges. A subtle yet recurring theme emerged from the interviews, highlighting that while burnout is prevalent in both private and public schools, its nature and contributing factors differ significantly between the two settings. This was particularly evident among more experienced teachers, as in the excerpt below:

> *In private institutes, we're burnt out from continuous evaluations, sudden supervisions, and changing schedules. Public school teachers might feel more burnt out from dealing with unmotivated students and rigid rules. (Interviewee 10)*

This comparative perspective underscores the need for context-sensitive approaches to address teacher burnout.

Association of Contextual Factors with Burnout

Analysis of interviews revealed several recurring themes across both school types, though the intensity and form of each varied between public and private settings.

Job Security and Financial Concerns. Public school teachers expressed dissatisfaction with salaries but generally felt more secure in their roles. Private school teachers frequently cited job insecurity as a major source of stress. Below is an excerpt illustrating this concern:

> *The most significant issue in private schools is the lack of job security. We don't have long-term contracts, so we're always concerned about our future. The salary is also not enough to make a living, so we always worry about our future. (Interviewee 8)*

This contrast reflects how institutional frameworks influence the nature of stress experienced in each setting.

Workload and Resource Availability. Public school teachers reported consistently higher stress due to large class sizes and limited teaching materials. This concern was expressed by a 31-year-old female teacher with 7 years of experience as follows:

> *The worst issue for me is the large class sizes. It's exhausting to manage so many students, and I can't give them the individual attention they need.... Moreover, we lack quality textbooks and teaching materials for English. (Interviewee 2)*

The emotional tone of this statement suggests not only physical exhaustion but also a sense of professional inadequacy. In contrast, while private school teachers typically managed smaller classes with better resources, they faced challenges related to irregular hours and strict supervision.

Curriculum and Teaching Methodology. Public school teachers described a lack of autonomy due to rigid curricula and standardized testing. One participant noted:

> *In public schools, we must stick to strict curricula and teach to standardized tests. This makes our job more stressful and boring. I feel more burnt out because I can't teach in the way I believe is most effective. (Interviewee 2)*

In contrast, private school teachers, though enjoying greater flexibility, faced intense performance pressure, creating a different kind of constraint on their professional practice.

Professional Development and Support. Both groups of teachers highlighted the lack of professional development and institutional support as major contributors to burnout. As stated by a 53-year-old male public school teacher with 26 years of experience:

> *After all these years, I find the lack of support to be the most challenging aspect. We don't receive enough training to improve our teaching methods, and there's little help when we face problems. (Interviewee 5)*

This sentiment was echoed across roles and settings, suggesting professional isolation is a shared concern among EFL teachers.

Work-Life Balance. Private school teachers particularly noted challenges in balancing work and personal life due to irregular and extended working hours. One teacher expressed this clearly:

> *We always worry about losing our positions if students are dissatisfied.... Additionally, we work evenings and sometimes even weekends, which makes it challenging to maintain a work-life balance. (Interviewee 7)*

This combination of performance anxiety and time pressure appears to be unique to private settings.

Parental and Administrative Pressure. Teachers in both contexts reported pressure from parents and school leadership. In public schools, this often manifested as diminished professional respect, whereas in private schools, the pressure centered on client satisfaction and competition among teachers:

> *I find the endless need to please students and parents tiring. We're always worried about negative feedback. There's also a lot of competition between teachers, which creates an uncomfortable atmosphere. (Interviewee 9)*

In conclusion, both public and private school EFL teachers encounter distinct challenges that contribute to burnout. Public school teachers struggle more with overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and rigid systems, while private school teachers face job insecurity, demanding clients, and competitive environments. Figure 3 illustrates the key burnout factors and the number of teachers affected by each.
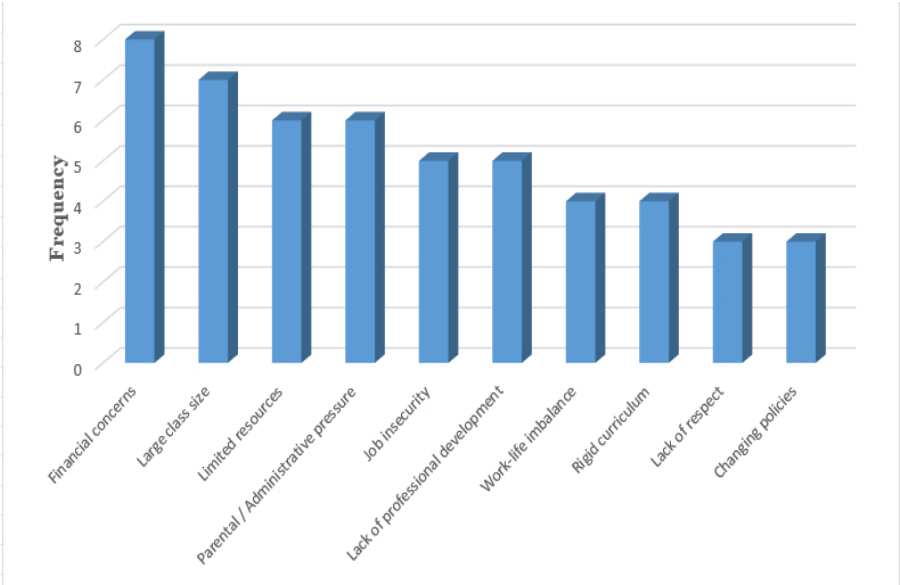

Figure 3. Contextual factors contributing to EFL teacher burnout

Discussion

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

As emotional intelligence (EI) provides a framework for adaptively managing emotions, and prior research links emotional appraisal and utilization to burnout dimensions (Chan, 2006), RQ1 explored the correlation between EI and teacher burnout. Statistical analysis revealed a significant negative relationship, aligning with previous findings (e.g., Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Geraci et al. (2023) also found that teachers with higher EI reported lower burnout during the

COVID-19 lockdown. When EI was controlled for, differences in burnout between pre- and during-pandemic periods became statistically insignificant, reinforcing EI's protective function.

This pattern suggests that teachers with high emotional intelligence possess psychological resources to manage occupational demands, thereby mitigating emotional exhaustion (Sanchez-Gomez & Breso, 2020). Research focused on Iranian educators also supports this conclusion. Vaezi and Fallah (2011) found that higher EI among Iranian teachers correlated with lower burnout levels, reinforcing the view that emotional intelligence serves as a protective factor against occupational stress in educational contexts. Thus, emotional intelligence serves not only as a direct buffer against burnout but also as a foundation for other protective factors such as self-efficacy.

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

Building on Sanchez-Gomez and Breso's (2020) proposition that emotional intelligence (EI) enhances professional efficacy, sustaining perceived effectiveness and improving performance, and Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) cyclical model identifying teacher emotion as a predictor of teacher efficacy, Research Question 2 (RQ2) explored whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between EI and burnout. Statistical analysis confirmed this mediation, supporting Bandura's (1997) assertion that emotional arousal, optimism, and positive emotions in instructional contexts influence perceived teaching competence. Teachers' social and emotional competence fosters self-awareness, interpersonal connection, and effective classroom management (Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008), reinforcing the role of self-efficacy as a critical mediator.

Recent studies substantiate this mediation effect. Wang and Wang (2022) identified strong correlations between EI, self-efficacy, and reduced burnout in foreign language teachers, suggesting, though not explicitly testing, a mediating role for self-efficacy. Similarly, Li (2023) emphasized that self-efficacy not only correlates with reduced burnout but also potentially serves as a buffer in emotionally demanding settings; a dynamic further explored in our mediation analysis. Yang and Du (2024) further revealed that emotion regulation, an EI component, mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and digital burnout, presenting a complementary mechanism. Together, these findings affirm that fostering EI can directly lower burnout, while enhancing teacher self-efficacy provides an additional, mediating pathway to mitigate stress and sustain professional well-being.

Research Question 3 (RQ3)

Drawing on the premise that a positive professional self-concept serves as a protective factor against burnout (Wang et al., 2019), while a troubled self-concept may lead to crises of confidence and meaning, thereby exacerbating burnout (Selhub, 2023), Research Question 3 (RQ3) examined the relationship between teacher self-concept (TSC) and teacher burnout. We hypothesized that a more functional TSC would correlate with lower emotional exhaustion, reduced depersonalization, and heightened personal accomplishment. Our findings confirmed a significant inverse correlation between these variables, supporting the hypothesis and aligning with previous studies (e.g., Rad & Nasir, 2010; Wang et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2018).

Further evidence is provided by Prasojo et al. (2020), whose study of 876 Indonesian high school teachers revealed that TSC directly influences all three components of burnout and indirectly through teacher efficacy (TE), with TE mediating each relationship. This highlights the essential role of TSC in buffering burnout. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) further observed that dysfunctional self-beliefs lead teachers to negatively evaluate their professional performance, amplifying school-related stressors. By reinforcing positive perceptions of competence, teacher self-concept not only contributes to lower burnout but also indirectly bolsters efficacy and long-term engagement.

Research Question 4 (RQ4)

Informed by the view that general perceptions of teaching competence (self-concept) precede and significantly shape specific beliefs about instructional capability (self-efficacy), which in turn influence vulnerability to burnout (Zhu et al., 2018), Research Question 4 (RQ4) examined whether teacher self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between self-concept and burnout. We hypothesized that self-concept predicts future capability and is linked to burnout through self-efficacy. Statistical analysis confirmed this hypothesis, supporting the partial mediating role of teacher self-efficacy.

This finding supports Zhu et al. (2018), who tested the same model using structural equation modeling on data from 1,892 Chinese teachers across seven regions, demonstrating that teacher self-concept affected all three burnout dimensions via self-efficacy. The mediation held consistently across gender and teaching experience, indicating the robustness of the relationship. This is further supported by Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) model, which differentiates teacher efficacy from broader competence perceptions, and Poulou's (2007) assertion that self-perceptions of competence contribute to efficacy beliefs. Thus, teacher self-concept serves as a protective factor against burnout by informing self-efficacy through reflective evaluation of past experience and perceived instructional capability (Wang et al., 2019).

Research Question 5 (RQ5)

Research Question 5 (RQ5) investigated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and burnout. This was grounded in prior evidence that positive self-efficacy beliefs enhance teacher behavior and classroom quality by improving psychological well-being through increased personal accomplishment, job satisfaction, and commitment (Zee & Koomen, 2016). We hypothesized a direct, negative correlation between these constructs. Statistical analysis confirmed this, revealing significant inverse correlations across all self-efficacy components, consistent with previous research (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

This relationship is further explained by the way low self-efficacy intensifies stress responses, making teachers more vulnerable to the cumulative effects of burnout (Aloe et al., 2013). Consistent with Fathi et al. (2021), our findings confirmed that higher self-efficacy is associated with lower burnout levels, highlighting its role as a protective factor. When self-efficacy is low, emotional strain may be internalized, increasing the risk of disengagement and attrition (Chan, 2006). Teachers may also become fixated on perceived inadequacies, heightening sensitivity to classroom challenges and reducing expectations for success. This may, in turn, amplify fears of student misbehavior, academic failure, and interpersonal conflict (Bandura, 1997).

Recent studies reinforce this inverse relationship: Weißenfels et al. (2021) found that higher burnout levels predicted smaller gains in self-efficacy, even under crisis conditions. Similarly, Li (2023) demonstrated that self-efficacy mitigates burnout directly and indirectly by promoting resilience, further emphasizing its protective role in sustaining teacher well-being and professional commitment.

Research Question 6 (RQ6)

Analyzing teachers' responses provided valuable insights into burnout differences between public schools and private language institutes in Iran. Most respondents perceived higher burnout levels in public schools, which is consistent with findings from Iranian studies (e.g., Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020; Mousavi et al., 2022). They attributed this to systemic issues such as large class sizes, lack of resources, and administrative burdens. This is consistent with with international research

(e.g., Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) indicating that lower teacher self-efficacy is strongly associated with higher levels of burnout, particularly in challenging contexts. These conditions reflect what Maslach and Leiter (2016) describe as organizational causes of burnout. Teachers also expressed frustration with standardized testing, echoing critiques of rigid, test-driven education (Au, 2011).

While public school burnout is often tied to institutional strain, private language institutes present a different landscape of stress. Teachers in these settings face job insecurity and intense performance pressure, which also contribute to burnout. Iranian studies (e.g., Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2020) indicate that teachers working under contractual conditions must deliver rapid student progress to retain employment. Mercer (2020) supports this, citing precarious conditions, low pay, lack of benefits, and seasonal contracts, as major burnout drivers in the private sector. These findings affirm that burnout is context-dependent (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), underscoring the need for interventions tailored to the specific challenges of each educational setting.

These contextual differences stem from broader cultural norms and institutional structures in Iran, where centralized decision-making and hierarchical authority define the educational system, limiting teacher autonomy (Soleimani & Hakimzadeh, 2024). In public schools, top-down reforms often exclude teacher input, undermining self-efficacy (Ghasemzadeh et al., 2019). These systemic constraints restrict the implementation of competency-aligned strategies, weakening self-efficacy's protective role and intensifying burnout, even among highly self-efficacious teachers (Bayani & Baghery, 2020).

Cultural expectations of emotional restraint and professional composure further influence how stress is experienced and expressed. In this collectivist context, discussing emotional exhaustion may be stigmatized, reducing the effectiveness of emotional intelligence (EI) as a coping mechanism (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). Gender norms compound emotional strain, especially for female teachers balancing professional and family roles, heightening susceptibility to burnout via self-concept and efficacy. These sociocultural dynamics critically mediate and moderate the psychological processes underlying teacher burnout in the Iranian educational system.

Research Question 7 (RQ7)

The relationship between contextual factors and EFL teacher burnout is multifaceted. In Iran, public school teachers, while dissatisfied with pay, reported a sense of job stability, which Bayani and Baghery (2020) emphasize as crucial to mitigating job burnout and enhancing professional well-being. In contrast, private school teachers cited employment insecurity as a major source of stress, leading to burnout and weakened institutional commitment. Supporting this, recent Iranian studies (e.g., Mousavi et al., 2022) further demonstrate that perceived job security is a strong predictor of burnout, particularly among EFL educators facing economic pressures in private educational contexts.

A key theme is the imbalance in workload and resources between public and private schools. Public school teachers reported high stress due to large class sizes and limited resources, findings consistent with Iranian studies such as Mousavi et al. (2022), which highlight low pay and excessive workload as major contributors to teacher burnout. In contrast, private school teachers, though better resourced, faced irregular hours and pressure from students and parents. This highlights the context-specific nature of burnout. Other recent studies in Iran (e.g., Soleimani & Bolourchi, 2021) confirm that resource limitations and workload imbalance drive burnout in public schools, while flexible scheduling and parental expectations place unique strains on private educators.

Public school teachers expressed frustration with rigid curricula and standardized testing requirements, perceived as limiting their teaching effectiveness and creativity, resonating with

critiques of standardized education policies (Au, 2011). Private school teachers, while enjoying more methodological flexibility, faced pressure to produce quick results, highlighting the double-edged nature of autonomy in teaching contexts. In the Iranian context, rigid educational policies and overemphasis on standardized assessments diminish teachers' autonomy and further exacerbate burnout (Gholaminejad, 2020).

Both groups highlighted the lack of adequate professional development opportunities and support systems as factors contributing to job dissatisfaction and potential burnout. This corresponds with Mousavi et al. (2022), which emphasizes the importance of ongoing training and organizational support in preventing teacher burnout. This pattern is also evident in recent findings from Iranian educational settings, where improved institutional support and targeted professional development have been linked to reduced burnout symptoms among EFL teachers (Rezazadeh et al., 2023). Targeted interventions to enhance professional growth opportunities could significantly improve job satisfaction and reduce burnout risk across both public and private educational settings.

Private school teachers reported difficulties maintaining work-life balance due to irregular hours and high emotional demands, reflecting concerns about work-related stress and insufficient time for recovery (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Emotional labor to meet student and parent expectations, especially in private schools, was a key contributor to burnout risk, consistent with findings on teaching's emotional demands (Yin et al., 2019). Recent studies in Iran further identify work-life imbalance as a critical predictor of emotional exhaustion among EFL educators, reinforcing the need for targeted policies to support improved work-life integration in the educational sector (Kazemi, 2025).

Conclusion

The present study builds on prior research emphasizing the critical role of teacher self-efficacy in mediating the relationship between teacher self-concept, emotional intelligence, and burnout among Iranian EFL instructors. It contributes to theoretical knowledge by proposing a structurally grounded model explaining EFL teacher burnout. Importantly, the study identifies significant differences in burnout between public school and private language institute teachers in Iran, highlighting that burnout is not solely an individual issue but also shaped by broader organizational and societal contexts. These findings reinforce the context-dependent nature of burnout and the importance of situating teacher well-being within institutional frameworks.

The results indicate that EFL teachers with higher emotional intelligence experience greater feelings of personal accomplishment. Therefore, educational administrators should create a tranquil and secure environment essential for promoting a positive outlook toward the profession. Such an atmosphere enables teachers to refine their social skills, assess students' emotions accurately, and establish strong relationships with stakeholders, which is crucial given the influence of emotional exhaustion on teachers' perceptions of students, parents, and administrators (Chan, 2006).

Given the significant negative correlation between self-concept and burnout, it is vital for teacher educators and professional development coordinators *to* offer EFL teachers professional development opportunities to enhance their skills, confidence, and competence. These opportunities facilitate productive relationships with students, encourage risk-taking, and support initiatives. School leaders should promote collaboration with experienced colleagues and participation in teacher education courses to enrich EFL teachers' professional experience, help them develop a unique teaching style, and garner peer recognition, thereby enhancing their self-concept and reducing burnout risk.

Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-concept, and burnout. Teacher training programs should implement targeted interventions to equip EFL teachers with tools to enhance teaching effectiveness, manage classroom discipline, cope with change, and collaborate with colleagues and parents. Educational supervisors should encourage systematic analysis of classroom interactions and teaching effectiveness to help integrate experiential knowledge into practice. Educational institutions should provide incentives for professional development to motivate teachers to seek continuous improvement, optimizing self-efficacy and reducing burnout.

To reduce teacher burnout across public and private settings, policymakers should address systemic challenges in public education, including large class sizes and administrative overload. Context-specific interventions are needed to manage pressures unique to private institutes. Educational organizations must enhance professional development, support systems, and work-life balance, while improving resource distribution and addressing job insecurity. These measures are critical to managing emotional demands and stress. Additionally, teachers can benefit from cultivating emotional regulation, time management, and boundary-setting strategies tailored to their teaching environments, helping to protect their well-being and sustain professional engagement amid varying institutional pressures.

While the present study offers valuable insights into the relationships among emotional intelligence, self-concept, self-efficacy, contextual factors, and teacher burnout, several limitations must be acknowledged. The small sample size in the qualitative phase may limit the transferability of those findings to the broader population of EFL teachers. This constraint could have affected the statistical power of the analyses, particularly in the complex mediation models assessing how self-efficacy mediates the relationships between emotional intelligence, self-concept, and burnout. Moreover, the study's focus on high school and private language school teachers may limit applicability to educators in other contexts, such as elementary schools, universities, or vocational institutions, where organizational structures and professional stressors differ considerably.

Significant differences between public and private schools in Iran highlight the challenge of generalizing these findings beyond the sampled population. The study's reliance on self-reported data introduces potential bias, as participants' emotional states may have influenced responses, especially regarding the links between emotional intelligence, self-concept, and burnout. Cultural specificity is another limitation; Iran's educational system, shaped by centralized curricula, administrative structures, and cultural norms, may affect variable interactions in ways not applicable elsewhere. Additionally, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference. While findings suggest that emotional intelligence and self-concept influence burnout via self-efficacy, reverse or reciprocal effects are also possible. Unmeasured contextual factors may further contribute to burnout, underscoring the need for longitudinal and cross-cultural research to clarify these relationships.

In light of the limitations, future studies should include a larger, more diverse sample of EFL teachers across various educational levels, contexts, and cultural backgrounds to enhance generalizability. Researchers are encouraged to examine the role of cultural factors in teacher burnout and well-being, and to conduct cross-national comparisons to identify both universal and culture-specific contributors. Longitudinal or experimental designs could help establish causal links among emotional intelligence, self-concept, self-efficacy, contextual factors, and burnout. Finally, comparing EFL teachers with those in other subject areas may offer further insights into the unique challenges and protective factors within the language teaching profession.

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