

An Investigation into the Relationship between Iranian High school EFL Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and their Self-efficacy

By

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Abstract

One of the immense contributions of the field of psychology to EFL pedagogy has been the introduction of the constructs of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy as two focal socio-cognitive aspects of human characteristics. Despite the significance of the possible linkage between these two constructs, very few studies have been implemented focusing on Iranian EFL teachers. In this regard, the objective of the present study is to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (EI) of Iranian EFL teachers in high school and to probe the influence of EFL teachers' age and gender on their EI and self-efficacy. For this purpose, 100 male and female Iranian EFL teachers teaching English as a foreign language in Birjand, Iran were selected on the availability sampling procedure and were required to fill in two questionnaires pertaining to self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. Running SPSS programs as correlation and independent t-test, the study revealed that first; There was a strong positive correlation between the two variables (self-efficacy and emotional intelligence) of Iranian EFL teachers. Second, strong positive relationships between the self-efficacy of language teachers and their age was observed and also between their emotional intelligence and age. Third, the study showed that the difference between the two groups of male and female teachers is significant in terms of their self-efficacy and the male Iranian EFL teachers had higher degree of self-efficacy in comparison to their female counterparts.

Keywords: *Self-Efficacy; Emotional Intelligence; Iranian EFL Teachers; Correlation*

1. Introduction

It is explicit and outspoken that emotions are inseparable constituents of human beings; nevertheless, they have been amply disregarded in academic disciplines until recently. During the last two decades, interest in emotions and emotional intelligence (EI) fostered by modern psychology were deployed to compensate for such negligence. A host of studies (for example, Fox & Spector, 2000; Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010, Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2011) have focused on EI and diverse aspects of different professions. Furthermore, since teachers and their emotions have rarely been investigated in terms of EI and its position in diverse aspects of teaching profession (Sarkhosh & Rezai, 2014; Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009; Siamakinia, Tabrizi, & Zoghi, 2013), a new trend of studies has concentrated on EI and its relationship with diverse dimensions of teaching profession. Previous research implied that emotional intelligence is associated with the sense of accomplishment in many aspects, including effective teaching (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010), students' optimal learning (Brackett & Mayer, 2003), and desirable academic performance (Gil-Olarte, Palomera, & Brackett, 2006).

EI is often delineated as "one's tendency to distinguish, evaluate and handle emotional status of his own and others' to attain certain objectives". (Choudary, 2010, p. 3). Another definition of this important construct in human resource management, referred to EI, can be referred as the designated ability to make use of the emotional condition of an individual, group or own-self to attain a certain goal or a set of goals or objectives (Fox & Spector, 2000). This concept could be reflected upon as the ability to appreciate the emotions and categorize their possible outcomes and finally through this knowledge attain expected goals (Choudary, 2010).

Emotional intelligence is also a must for EFL teachers since they need to deal with students coming to class with negative feelings toward learning a foreign language. Teacher should be aware of emotional intelligence and strive to reduce the anxiety of students when they are supposed to learn a foreign or second language.

On the other hand, self-efficacy, as another variable of this study contributes significantly to achieve success and competency and is basically built upon the principals of positive psychology. Bandura(1997) withheld that the main sources of accomplishment for learners is their conceptualizations from their potentials in doing a task, i.e., the sense of self-efficacy beliefs . To put it more simply, self efficacy refers to strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete a task and achieve goals. Choudary (2010), elaborate on self efficacy as one's determination to encounter challenges and difficulties in life. Gist and Mitcell (1992) conceptualized it as, one's belief, to get the things right with respect to a particular job. This concept revolves around the highly diversified factors, encompassing the qualification, competency, ability and experience of an individual under consideration. The significant aspect identified here is the self confidence of an individual to overcome a certain challenges or obstacles.

Nevertheless, the problem arises when some teachers cannot sort out the multiple and contradictory feelings of their students, they also have low self awareness and these lead to a disruptive condition for optimal learning. Without EI teachers are not able to perceive and manage the probable complexities in their career. Hence, they should draw on their emotions to eradicate ensuing hurdles and try to advance their career horizons, adjust their own moods, and not let the confusion weaken the power of thinking and empathy with students.

Founded on what was above-mentioned, the fundamental aim of the present study was to investigate the linkage between self-efficacy and EI of EFL teachers in high school and also to probe the influence of EFL teachers' age and gender on their EI and self-efficacy. Accordingly, the current study aimed at finding answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between EI of EFL high school teachers and their self-efficacy?
2. Is there any relationship between EI of EFL high school teachers, self-efficacy and age?
3. Is there any relationship between EI of EFL high school teachers, self-efficacy and gender?
4. Does gender has any significant effect on the participants' self-efficacy or not?

2. Review of Related Literature

The brief history of EI emerged from the notorious concept of social intelligence with roots in behaviorist psychology. Thorndike (1920) as one of the key figures in the respected field, speculated EI through the lens of social intelligence and maintained that those endowed with social intelligence have the potential capacity to gain self-awareness and empathize with others and act more efficiently in human relationships (cited in Goleman, 1998), However, these prolific views were not taken into account until years later. For decades, emotionally-based capacity of human thinking was adopted as an entity highly subordinated to the umbrella term of general intelligence. No serious effort was made in this regard until 1980's, when Thorndike's view burgeoned again in the inspiring works of Bar-on (Goleman, 1998). Bar-on (1998) put forward eight different types of intelligence, one of which, the personal intelligence, set the stage for the development of EI concept for the next generation of psychologists.

Finally, Mayer and Salovey (1991) introduced their comprehensive model of EI and defined it with respect to Gardner multi-componential view of intelligence. Generally, there is a plethora of research available on emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1997; Cooper and Swaf, 1997; Goleman, 1998), its linkage to leadership (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997; Goleman, 1998) and its utter impact on the organizational texture in corporations, however, limited number of research are conducted on emotional intelligence and its association with higher education leadership and organizational texture (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2003).

The literature concerning emotional intelligence reveals that there exist multitude definitions for what constitutes emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a dynamic and multifaceted construct influenced by diverse biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. EI has been extensively approved as the ability to sort out and adopt the knowledge generated from our emotions to aid effective functioning, reduce the impact of stress, and promote relationships. Salovey and Mayer (1990) made inspirational contribution to the EI literature by considering emotional intelligence as the “ability model” which included specifications such as perceiving emotions, using and understanding of emotions, and finally managing them to fulfill the intended functions.

In the same line, Goleman (1998) withheld that emotional intelligence is a multi-componential construct that can be defined as the persons’ ability to identify, perceive and understand the innermost feelings of the self and others to enrich the process of thinking and emotional judgment. In order to evaluate emotional intelligence from this perspective, the multidimensional models have broadly made use of self-report measures by incorporating an array of perceived abilities and traits.

Bar-on (2004) broadened the scope of the emotional intelligence by introducing the notions of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. He maintained that at the intrapersonal level, EI entails the ability to be aware of oneself and ones strengths and weaknesses and to express ones feeling while the interpersonal level refers to the ability to be aware of others emotions, feelings and needs and to establish and maintain cooperative, constructive and mutually satisfying relationships.

Evan (2007) in her landmark article probed the behaviors associated with emotional intelligence (EI) and determined if there were specific dimensions of a leader’s EI that would envisage the development of an employees’ trust in their leader and an employee’s willingness to perform organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

It should be noted that self-efficacy theory as Bandura (1977) implied is one of the fundamental sub-components of the socio-cognitive theory, which is signified by a straightforward relationship between self and society along with internal and personal factors (cognitive, affective and biological events), and the external environment as interactive factors. In other words as Bandura (1977) implies there is a “reciprocal causal” relationship between these three factors. To put it more simply, self-efficacy underscores the role of human agency as the capacity for planning, leading and evaluating the emotions. In the educational context, teacher’s self-efficacy is characterized with respect to the teacher’s attitudes toward their abilities to generate optimal learning context among students as well as enriching the agency of under-achieving and unmotivated students. (Salami, 2007) maintained that the level of self-efficacy is directly related to the positive behaviors of teachers and students. Consequently, he implies that teacher self-efficacy is an exceedingly important factor in expanding the field of teacher education.

Hashemi and Ghanizadeh (2011) study on 97 EFL university students indicated that there is a strong positive nexus between students’ emotional intelligence and their self-efficacy beliefs. Through regression analysis, their study revealed that the concepts of self-actualization and stress-tolerance are positive predictors of self-efficacy.

In the same line, research conducted by Sarkhosh & Rezai (2014) on 105 EFL teachers showed strong positive relationship between their trait EI and self-efficacy beliefs.

Rastgar and Memarpour (2009) conducted their study on EFL high school teachers in order to assess the relationship between EI and self-efficacy. They came up with significant positive linkage between the aforementioned variables.

reducing the work related tension in teaching practices, because in this case the individual takes pride in his or her work and readily willing to manage, the physical and as well as mental pressures pertinent to the profession.

In a similar study, Syamakinia, Tabrizi & Zoghi (2013) correlational research on the university instructors indicated that there is significant positive association between their emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.

It should be noted that teacher efficacy is defined as “the teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplishing a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 1998, p. 22). It has been found to be associated with the learners’ individual differences such as motivation, achievement, and efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Gibson and Demo (1984), for instance, indicated a high correlation between teachers’ sense of efficacy and their persistence in the presentation of lessons, feedback presentation, and support scaffolding for weaker students. In a similar study, Pajares (2002) found a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, classroom practices, and subsequent teaching behaviors.

Teaching-self efficacy is in conformity with the general formulation of this broad term in different contexts. self-efficacy in educational settings is virtually defined in various ways, such as the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the needed capacity to influence students’ performance; teachers belief in their abilities to have a positive impression on students’ performance (Ashton, 1985); the extent to which teachers feel they can affect students’ learning process (Dembo & Gibson, 1985); teachers’ beliefs or convictions that they can influence how well students learn, even those that may be unmotivated from different aspects ; and they deem that he or she can motivate even the most difficult students and offer them assistance in their learning. Resorting to these definitions, it is tangible that a teacher with a strong self-efficacy would not only have the potential to transfer knowledge effectively, he/she would also do so without confronting specific troubles. The resulted inference from the teaching behavior of such a teacher is that even his/her difficult students would be more motivated to learn.

A few studies have reported some links between emotional intelligence and teaching self-efficacy. Penrose, Perry and Ball (2007) probe the linkage between emotional intelligence and teacher efficacy beliefs. Their finding shows a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers’ self-efficacy from different aspects. Based on these results, they recommend the direct teaching of the related concepts to emotional intelligence in order to facilitate teachers’ self-efficacy. Salami (2007) similarly investigates the relationships between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to work attitudes among secondary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria. In his finding, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy had significant relationships with teachers’ attitude toward working.

Ng and Hor (2005) investigate the relationship between teaching attitudes and emotional intelligence. Their finding shows that teachers’ attitude positively correlated with emotional intelligence.

3. Method

Participants

In order to gather the required data, one hundred Iranian EFL teachers (50 male and 50 female) took part in the study. They were high school teachers in Birjand, Iran. They all had been teaching English for over 4 years. Besides, the selected teachers aged between 21 and 51 years old. The final point with regard to the participants is that they were selected based on the availability sampling procedure.

Instruments

Altogether, two instruments were adopted to collect the intended data from the participants: The Emotional Intelligence quotient inventory, and Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale. What follows is a detailed description of the two instruments.

The first instrument employed was the Emotional Intelligence quotient inventory designed by Bar-On in 1980. It is in a Likert-scale format containing 30 items ranging from completely disagrees to completely agree. (EQ-I), is a self-report measure of emotionally and socially intelligent behavior that is highly informative about the level of emotional-social intelligence (Bar-On, 1997). In order to assure about the reliability and validity of this instrument, it was piloted among 25 male and female teachers and the after calculating its reliability through Cronbach alpha formula it turned out to be approximately 0.73. Besides, the inventory's content and face validity were investigated by some university professors. That is, it was examined by some veteran professors and they confirmed the point that it was pertinent to and consistent with the present study objectives.

The second instrument was the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) designed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). Like the first instrument, this instrument was also in the Likert format consisting of 24 items ranging from *nothing* to *great deal* and includes efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. The instrument was also pre-tested among 25 teachers and its reliability was calculated through Cronbach alpha and turned out to be 0.69. In addition, the face and content validity were investigated through the above-mentioned procedure.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

In order to collect the desired data for the study, at first the two questionnaires were piloted by the researcher among 25 selected teachers. Having ensured about their reliability and validity, the researcher distributed them among the participants of the study. Before distributing them, the researcher explained briefly to them about the objectives of the research and also guaranteed that their responses would be kept confidential and are just for research purposes. For each of the instruments the participants were given 25 minutes to answer the items.

Eventually, SPSS statistical program in general and Pearson product moment correlation formula and t-test in particular were run to reveal that if first of all, there was any relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of teachers or not. Secondly, to see if gender had any significant effect on the intended variables of the study, independent t-test was run.

4. Results and Discussion

The Relationship between EI and Self-Efficacy

The first research question of the study deals with the existence or lack of existence of any probable relationship between the EI and self-efficacy of Iranian EFL teachers. To address this question, the researcher of the study ran Pearson product correlation that led to Table 4.1 presented below.

Table 4.1. Correlation between EI and Self-Efficacy

		EI	Self-Efficacy
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As the table reveals, firstly, there is a strong positive relationship between the two mentioned variables ($r = .78$). Secondly, a significant difference is observed between the participants' self-efficacy and their EI ($p = .00 < .5$). It indicates that language teachers with high self-efficacy enjoy high degree of EI, while the teachers with lower self-efficacy capabilities have low EI and vice versa. Reviewing the literature on the same issue reveals that this finding is in line with most of other previously carried out studies on the same issue. For example, Evans (2007) concluded in his study that individuals who rated with higher level of EI have more positive beliefs in their own capabilities that led them to academic and social success. Therefore, they have high achievement, social adjustment, and empowerment.

Penrose, Perry and Ball (2007) also examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher efficacy beliefs. Their findings showed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and teaching self-efficacy. They also suggested the use of emotional intelligence education to enhance teaching self-efficacy. Salami (2007) similarly examines the relationships between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to work attitudes among secondary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria. In his finding, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy were found to have significant relationships with teachers' attitude to work. Ng and Hor (2005) also investigate the relationship between teaching attitudes and emotional intelligence. Their finding reveals that teachers' attitude positively correlated with emotional intelligence. Chan (2004) further underscores the relationship between EI and self-efficacy by reporting that self-efficacy beliefs are significantly predicted by the components of emotional intelligence.

Another study by Evan (2007) indicated that students who lack empathy, dedication and other EI related skills are likely to be academically weak which leads to low degrees of self-efficacy. He pointed out that educators provided programs for the improvement of academic skills in students but these educators have neglected programs that they could gear towards students' overall improvement.

In a study with university students, Schutte and Malouff (2002) provided beginning university students with information and skills training related to emotional intelligence as part of an introductory university class. The students who received emotional intelligence training scored significantly higher on trait or typical emotional intelligence at the end of the term and were more likely to complete their first year of university than control students with no intervention. The retention rate for the students in the emotional intelligence training group was 98%, while that of the students in the comparison group was 87%. Finally, Doaei, Alizadeh, & Tabrizi, (2010) implied that the emotional strength of a person plays an invincible role in gaining the authority on the basis of knowledge in an organization, because a person faces the challenge of, admitting a reasonable level of knowledge, so that it should not threaten the people who have the authority currently, another facet of emotional sensibility in leadership is, leaders' ability to avoid negative thinking, biasness and they also give sacrifices and understanding others' behavior to accomplish the goals of the team.

The Relationship between EI, Self-Efficacy, and Age

The second research question mentioned in this study was about the interrelationship among three variables of EI, Self-efficacy, and age of Iranian language teachers. In order to get the answer for this research question another multiple correlation was run that resulted to Table 4.2 shown below.

As it is conspicuous from this table, firstly, like the previous case, there is strong positive relationship between the self-efficacy and EI of Iranian EFL teachers; that is, the higher the level of teachers' EI, the higher their self-efficacy ($r = .78$). And secondly, since the reported p value is less than .05 ($p = .01$), it can be inferred that the two variables differ significantly from each other. Thirdly, the correlation between EI and age is also a strong and positive one ($r = .89$). And finally, there is a strong, positive relationship between the self-efficacy of teachers and their age ($r = .74$). In line with this finding, Fahim and Pishghadam (2007) also pointed out a positive relationship between university students' academic

achievement and several components of emotional intelligence (intrapersonal, stress management, and general mood competencies).

Table 4.2. Correlation between EI, Self-Efficacy, and Age

		EI	Self-Efficacy	Age
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.78	.89
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.01	.01
	N	100	100	100
Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.78	1	.74
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01		.01
	N	100	100	100
Age	Pearson Correlation	.89	.74	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	.01	
	N	100	100	100

As with teacher self-efficacy, Armor, (1976) demonstrated that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy exhibit greater levels of planning, organization and enthusiasm, spend more time teaching in areas where their sense of efficacy is higher, more receptive to new ideas, and more willing to experiment with the same ideas to meet the needs of their students and therefore they would enjoy higher degrees of achievement. In addition, studies show that they tend to be less critical of students who make errors and work longer with students who are struggling (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibbs, 2002).

The Effect of Gender on Self-Efficacy

The third research question addresses the any probable effect of gender on the self-efficacy of the language teachers. To see if there is any significant difference between the male and female Iranian EFL teachers in terms of their self-efficacy, an independent t-test was run that its findings are brought in Table 4.3 and 4.4.

First of all, an independent t-test was run to see if the two groups (males and females) are significantly different on their self-efficacy or not. Table 4.3 displays the results obtained from this statistical analysis.

Table 4.3. Independent T-Test of Gender and Self-Efficacy

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Gender and Self-Efficacy	-15.43	60	.00	-13.33	.77	-14.21	-11.19

The table shows that the difference between the two groups of male and female teachers are significant in terms of their self-efficacy ($t = -15.43, p < 0.00$). Now in order to understand which group has a higher degree for self-efficacy, Table 4.4 that presents the descriptive statistics is brought.

Table 4.4. Descriptive statistics of the Gender Impact on Self-Efficacy

	code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gender	Males	50	34.47	12.13	.36
	Females	50	27.21	19.44	.48

This table clearly indicates that the mean of male teachers (M=34.47) is remarkably higher than the mean of female teachers (M=27.21). It means that the male Iranian EFL teachers have higher degree of self-efficacy in comparison to their female counterparts.

The Effect of Gender on Emotional Intelligence

Finally, the last research question asks about the impact of gender of the participants on their EI. Like the previous research question, another independent t-test was run which led to Tables 4.5 and 4.6 presented below respectively.

First, to see does the male and female language teachers are significantly different in terms of their EI or not, Table 4.5 which includes the main findings of t-test is presented.

Table 4.5. Independent T-Test of Gender and EI

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Gender and EI	-14.44	60	.00	-9.17	.60	-10.39	-7.96

The Table clearly shows that, like the previous case, the difference between the two groups of teachers in terms of their EI is significant ($t = -14.44, p < 0.00$). Therefore, it can be stated that gender has a significant and remarkable effect on EI degree of male and female teachers. Now in order to understand which group has a higher degree for EI, Table 4.6 that presents the descriptive statistics is brought.

Table 4.6. Descriptive statistics of the Gender Impact on EI

	code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gender	Males	50	19.13	13.44	.35
	Females	50	27.13	9.14	.39

As it can be understood from this table, unlike the previous case, the female language teachers (M=27.13) enjoy higher degrees of EI than the male teachers (M=19.13). In other words, the female language teachers are more intelligent emotionally than their male counterparts.

Conclusion

The present study basically aimed to shed light on the point that if there is any interrelationship between the emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy of Persian EFL teachers or not. Besides, the study also examined the role and better to say, the impact of gender of the teachers on the two under-studied variables (self-efficacy and EI). The chief conclusions of the study are as follow: First, there is a strong positive relationship between the EI and self-efficacy of Iranian EFL teachers. Besides, a significant difference was observed between their self -Efficacy and their EI. Second, there is a strong positive relationship between the EFL teachers' EI and their age and also between the self-efficacy of teachers and their age ($r = .74$). Besides, gender has a significant impact on the EFL teachers' self-efficacy. That is, male EFL teachers have higher degrees of self-efficacy in comparison to their female counterparts. And finally, gender also has a meaningful and significant influence on the EI degree of Iranian EFL teachers. In other words, female teachers enjoy higher degrees of EI compared with their male co-workers.

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