# The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among EFL Teachers Teaching at Private Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their burnout in private language institutes in one city in Iran. This study also identified the emotional intelligence sub-categories that contribute mostly to burnout. To this end, the researchers administered the Bar On's EQ-I Self Report Scale questionnaire along with the Maslach Burnout Inventory to a sample of 63 Iranian teachers of English language in 11 private EFL institutes. Pearson correlation, multi-variable regression analysis, and two independent samples *t*-tests were run. The results revealed a significant relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and the three dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment). The results also showed that categories of general mood and adaptability are the best predictors of teachers' burnout.

*Keywords:* Emotional intelligence; burnout; EFL teachers; private language centers

## INTRODUCTION

In todays' technologically interconnected world, having a happy life depends greatly on one's satisfaction with different aspects of life, particularly, at the workplace.

Individuals spend half of their time in their workplace, so the role of emotion as an effective factor, which can be a predictor of one's performance in a workplace, is undeniable. Along with the development of Emotional Intelligence (hereafter EI) and its influence on human life, most companies have realized the importance and crucial role of EI in their organization's management. On the other hand, some studies (Mohammadyfar, Khan, & Tamini, 2009) revealed destructive effects of burnout and its reverse relation with EI. So, the crucial role of EI in order for employees

to achieve better performance became so obvious that it is believed that EI could lead to success, strong personal relationships, high responsibility and more collaboration among employees.

Many surveys have been conducted in the teaching profession to study the main area in which teachers encounter difficulties, either in classrooms or their personal lives. Results of these studies revealed various problems in different aspects including physical, economical, sociological, and psychological ones (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Kim, 2004; Wright & Davis, 2003). Among these, psychological aspects are influential factors that have more impact on life satisfaction of teachers comparing to physical, economical and sociological items. Among variant psychological factors, depression, self-esteem, self-achievement, and participation in leisure activities are directly related to one's level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Schutte & Malouff, 2011).

**Elt Trends in Iran**

Recognized as an international language of communication, English was given specific attention by Iranians around the beginning of 21st century (Ashrafzadeh & Sayadian, 2015). This time in Iranian history was concurrent with economic privatization as a part of marketization which among many other factors resulted in the national curriculum reform and the opening of many private language institutes. In terms of the former, however, Davari and Aghagolzadeh (2015) believed that the public education system was doomed to failure due to its

traditional teacher-centered approach which utilized a grammar-translation method. This claim was further supported by Pazhouhesh (2014) who reported that state-run schools in Iran operated with teacher-centered instruction, followed a more top-down pedagogic theory and practice and still emphasized on form-focused practices in which teachers had isolated themselves from "the realities of the classroom dynamic" (p. 44). In contrast, teachers at privately-operated language institutes, Pazhouhesh (2014) reported, were more open to change and adopted a more liberal role. Moreover, they were less obliged to stick to the syllabuses and adopted Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches by using American ELT textbooks such as *American File, Top Notch*, and *New Interchange Series*. In constrast, state-run schools have not been successful in meeting Iranian students' ever-increasing desire to learn English communicatively (Davari, 2014). On the other hand, private institutions have been extremely successful at offering English language at different levels in their curriculum, leading to popularity of private language institutions. According to Zandian (2015), "English seems to have found its way smoothly right to the heart of Iranian society, proving itself to be a necessity, rather than a mere school subject" (p. 113).

However, the fact that EFL teachers at Iranian private institutions are not permanently employed, leading to less job security, is considered as a downside factor. Although one must be careful in generalizing the teachers' dissatisfaction

to every country and all cultural contexts, in Iran, EFL teachers who work at private institutions, reportedly have low income but heavy workloads. Hence, they are less motivated and are less satisfied professionally (Hekmatzadeh, Khojasteh, & Shokrpour, 2016; Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012). When this occurs, it is not surprising that unhappy teachers are less capable of doing their expected job.

Nevertheless, the extant literature reveals that the emotional workload of teachers has been mostly ignored. Wang, Lan, Li and Wang (2002) reported that many teachers all over the world are so unhappy in their profession that they consider leaving within their first five years of employment. This vocational unhappiness, in the long run, can turn to long-term occupational stress, especially among human service workers such as teachers (Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003).

In a nutshell, considering the place private institutions fill in Iran or perhaps many other similar countries, and a great number of language learners who attend these institutions to fulfill their dreams, it is vital to study the relationship between private teachers' EI and burnout. This is also because teachers' physical and emotional well-being have a direct relationship with students' learning, health and wellbeing (McCallum & Price, 2012).

## Research Questions

With regard to the nature of the study, the researchers raised the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and burnout?

2. Which emotional intelligence sub-categories mostly contribute to burnout?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence (EI hereafter) is related to psychological wellbeing and in turn can have an impact on one's job satisfaction. EI is defined as an ability to realize one's emotions as well as others' emotional feelings such as customers or students. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) considered this ability as a useful tool for employees who dealt with job stress. Furthermore, it is a way to retain psychological health. It is generally believed that emotionally intelligent teachers, who try to develop their relationships with others while teaching, can help their students' achievement (Kremenitzer & Miller, 2008). Some people seem to be more tolerable in everyday stress, while others break down under stress load which is an indicator of individuals' emotional difference. According to Platsidou (2010), high level of EI reduced stress level, resulting in less burnout. As Slaski and Cartwright (2002) argued, stress was a cause of negative feelings like threat, danger, or challenge. In the workplace, specifically, burnout has been positively

linked to the challenging demands that employees need to fulfill (Crawford, LePine & Rich, 2010).

Burnout refers to the feeling of exhaustion, resulting from extensive usage of one's energy, strength, and resources (Freduenberger, 1974). Maslach, the first person who worked on burnout empirically, stated that it was an emotional exhaustion which was brought about because of stress from interpersonal contacts. Studies on burnout show that burnout is not a one-night phenomenon; that is, it is created gradually. As Maslach and Leiter (1997) asserted, burnout was a feeling of illness which was created gradually as the time passes due to one's psychological depression.

Freudenberger (1974) further defined the concept as a process of getting fed up with needs of energy, power and resource. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout was a psychological syndrome referring to emotional draining, depersonalization and low personal adjustment which may occur among people who interacted with others in some social roles. Many studies demonstrate the negative impact of burnout syndrome on productivity, work effectiveness, quality of life and health (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). According to Maslach and Leiter (1996), "burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity" (p.14). In the past, it was believed that burnout is limited to human services such as, social work, legal services and police work. However, in the 1980's, researchers and practitioners recognized a wider area in which burnout has occurred such as managers, entrepreneurs and teachers (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

**Models of Emotional Intelligence**

Researchers have presented different models for EI in accordance to its progress in different areas of human life. According to Mayer, Salovery & Caruso (2004), models of EI could be generally categorized into three main theoretical approaches including: 1) 'ability' models, that defined EI as a conceptually related set of mental abilities to do with emotions and the processing of emotional information (e.g., Mayer & Salovey, 1997); 2) 'trait' models, defining EI as an array of socio-emotional traits, such as assertiveness (e.g., Bar-On, 1997); and 3) competency models comprising a set of emotional competencies defined as learned capabilities based on EI (e.g., Goleman, 2001). Although these categories are useful in that they help to clarify the different approaches to the conceptualization of the construct, they also serve to suggest that approaches to EI are unrelated and more disparate than they may actually be as Goleman (2005) pointed out "…the proposed division may have the unintended effect of obscuring important connections between aspects of emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 2005, p. 1).

Mayer and Salovey as the prominent researchers in this field proposed the mental ability model. In their model, the focus is on processing affective information.

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence was "the ability to monitor one's own and other' emotions and feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p.185). Mayer and Salovey (1997) proposed the following traits for their mental ability model: (1) perception, evaluation, and expression of senses; (2) making thinking facile with regard to one's emotions; (3) perceiving and closely studying emotional information, and finally (4) emotional management.

Emotional intelligence is conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as a set of abilities to do with emotions and the processing of emotional information. These included the capacity to identify and express emotions, the capacity to effectively regulate and manage emotions and the capacity to utilize or reason with emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Within this framework, Salovey and Mayer (1990) proposed that individuals differed in these abilities, and that these differences were potentially important because: (a) emotional abilities might account for variance in important life criteria such as psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and the quality of interpersonal relationships; and (b) such differences underpinned skills that could possibly be learned or taught. Daniel Goleman paid attention to the second notion and wrote a popular book that placed particular emphasis on the links between EI and important life criteria. Goleman's (1995) book "Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ" generated a considerable amount of interest in EI, quickly becoming the most widely read social science book in the world. With this influence, a number of alternative models of EI were developed providing several theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing and measuring the construct (Goleman, 2001).

Other scholars who presented a model for this concept are Bar On and Goleman. They are also outstanding experts in the EI arena. They both introduced mixed models, variant in some facets. In Goleman's mixed model of EI, there are five components including: awareness of one's emotions, management of emotions, impelling oneself, identification of emotions in others, and coping with relationship. Bar On's (1995) model of EI is known as a mixed model since "it mixes emotional intelligence as an ability with social competencies, traits, and behaviors, and make wondrous about the success this intelligence leads to" (Mayer & Cobb, 2000, p.171). Thus, this model highlights multiple aspects of personal functioning. Since most of the discussion in the present study draws on Bar-On's (1995) conception of EI, the way in which his main scales and subscales are categorized is presented in Table 1.

Some main distinctions exist between the mental ability model and the mixed model. To name a few, in a mixed model, EI assessment is gained through self-report protocols, known as Emotional Quotient. In the mental ability model, EI is assessed through an objective performance test. Other differences exist in scoring of

Table 1
*Main scales and subscales of EI based on the Bar-On's EI model (1995)*

| Main Scales of EI | Subscales of EI |
|---|---|
| Intrapersonal skills | self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization |
| Interpersonal skills | empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships |
| Adaptability | reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving |
| Stress management | stress tolerance and impulse control |
| General mood | optimism and happiness |

scales, reliability of scales, convergent and divergent validity, and predictive validity and so on. As the last difference mentioned here, Bar On (1997)'s mixed model EI contains prevalent notions. In addition, this model is very practical for a large number of studies as both performance and achievement have been considered. Based on the aforementioned reasons, the model used for this study is Bar On (1997)'s mixed model which describes a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies.

## Empirical Studies

Even though several studies in literature have been carried out with the aim of examining EI and burnout, the studies that examined the possible relationship between these two concepts are very few. Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler and Mayer (2000) conducted a study on emotional intelligence. They found that people with the ability to manage their emotional conditions were healthier as they "accurately perceive and appraise their emotional states, know how and when to expresses their feelings and can effectively regulate their mood states" (p.161). This supports the idea that there

is a direct relation between EI skills and physical and psychological health (Schutte & Malouff, 2011). Accordingly, Amdurer, Boyatzis, Saatcioglu, Smith and Taylor (2014) stated that emotionally intelligent people were able to adapt themselves with life's problems; moreover, they had the ability to manage their emotions in the best possible way. In the same vein, Harrod and Scheer (2005) asserted that EI was a tool which pushed through factors influencing personal achievement and better relationship with others.

Regarding EI and its relation with teachers, Mortiboys (2005) reported that teachers with high EQ (Emotional Quotient) could understand students' emotions. In addition, they have a positive behavior toward students making them more competent to help their students in their learning process. EI is a useful devise, which enables teachers to learn about the students and familiarize themselves with them, resulting in more sensitivity to students demands (Chang, 2009).

Aslan and Ozata (2008); Gullue (2006) also found that there was an adverse relation between EI and burnout; in other words, increase in one of them leads to reduction

in another one. According to Chang (2009), various emotional resources were essential to avoid burnout. Moreover, in a study carried out by Gohm, Grant, Croser and Dalsky (2005), EI was shown to be related to lower levels of stress.

In a more recent study, Hekmatzadeh, Khojasteh and Shokrpour (2016) investigated the relationship between EI and job satisfaction of EFL teachers who worked at private language institutes in Iran/Shiraz. This study also tried to answer whether there is a significant difference between EI and job satisfaction of Iranian EFL teachers in terms of gender. The results showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between EI and job satisfaction of EFL teachers in Iran/Shiraz. The results further showed that there was a statistically significant difference in EI between EFL male and female teachers, but there was no statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' job satisfaction in terms of gender.

In another study conducted by Vlachou, Damigos, Lyrakos, Chanopoulos, Kosmidis and Karavis (2016), the researchers investigated the relationship between burnout and EI among professional healthcare workers. The results indicated a positive correlation between the two variables with the note that EI acted protectively against burnout.

Many other studies, such as Moafin and Ghanizade (2009); Mortiboys (2005) had revealed that there was a positive relationship between EI and self-efficacy. A number of studies revealed no significant

relationship between EI trait measures and burnout phenomenon. For example, in De vito (2009)'s study, the result showed no significant difference between EI and burnout. Inconsistency of the result of this study with many other relevant studies might be due to its small sample size along with the participants of this study who were all female studying at the Master level. Furthermore, for this specific study, convenient rather than random sampling was adopted which could affect the generalizability of this finding to a larger group. Another study which supports the result of the aforementioned study was carried out by Thornqvist (2011) at a rural public school district in southwest Florida. One feature this study shares with the previous study is its sampling method. In this study too, convenient sampling was adopted by the researcher and only involved the participation of four elementary schools. Therefore, we can conclude that insignificant relations found between demographic variables with burnout and EI subscales may be due to the small sample size and the homogeneity of the participants involved in the study.

Accordingly, inconsistencies exist in the results provided in the literature. Some studies found relationship between EI and burnout, while some other studies rejected any relationship between the two concepts. Furthermore, those studies which have been carried out in many countries just considered EFL school teachers (e.g., Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). Considering teachers' exposure to a number of problems, such as low payment, lack of insurance and lack of job security

in private language institutes, it is essential to carry out a comprehensive research on the relationship between EI and burnout of private language institute EFL teachers.

## METHODS

### Design

This study was in fact a correlational research since it detected a possible relationship between EI and burnout. It should be, therefore, noted that even though a mere correlation is not able to reasonably determine causation, "high correlation values should suggest causal relationships" (Barr, Kamil, Mosenthal, & Pearson, 2002, p. 48). To have more reliable data, other experimental means have to be used to verify such suggested relationships (Barr et al., 2002). To this end and based on the nature of the study, a quantitative approach was then followed to determine the extent of the correlation between study variables, EI and burnout. To clarify further, the instruments used in this study are two questionnaires with five-point Likert scale and seven-point Likert scale; therefore, the data are purely quantitative that make it necessary to apply quantitative approach. Moreover, this study aimed to obtain quantifiable information in numerical form to examine the relationships by statistics that led the researchers to follow a quantitative design.

### Participants

In selecting participants, as the first step, a random sampling method was utilized to collect the data from private EFL institutes in one city in Iran. The researchers selected the participants of the study from 11 private institutes. These institutes were the sources for collecting the data from 63 male and female EFL teachers (30 male and 33 female teachers) with a range of different marital status, educational background, and teaching experience. The participants' age ranged between 32 and 50 years and their teaching experience ranged from 10-15 years. To select the samples, the researchers employed the fish and ball technique and assigned a unique number to each one of the teachers in 11 available private institutes. After that, the required number of samples were randomly selected (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The teachers selected based on their unique number were then contacted. The researchers explained the objectives and purposes of the study and what the teachers were expected to do. After getting their consent, they were added to the samples of the study. The following table shows the final number of teachers in the study sample.

The researchers adhered to the ethics in

Table 2
*Number and properties of EFL teachers in the study sample*

| Male | Female | Age (years) | Single | Married | Years of teaching | Total |
|------|--------|-------------|--------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| 30 | 33 | 32-50 | 45 | 18 | 10-15 | 63 |

conducting quantitative research. The ethical procedures involved obtaining informed consent, collecting sensitive information, confidentiality versus disclosure of harm and mental capacity act and inclusivity. In questionnaire translation, the researchers paid attention to using neutral language and maintaining privacy along with using words, which reduce embarrassment in answering the questions. They also tried to avoid the use of any word which may upset the participants.

There are some basic reasons why only EFL teachers who teach at private language institutions rather than those who teach at high schools were chosen in the current study. Indeed, EFL teachers who teach at private language institutions encounter some unremitting problems which may impact their teaching outcomes, resulting in their job related burnout (Hekmatzadeh, Khojasteh, & Shokrpour, 2016). For instance, they are employed temporarily and not permanently; they usually have low payment, they lack job insurance, they do not have job security; consequently, their outcomes vary from one term to another.

Moreover, there is no competition among teachers to attract more students since education in public schools is free; in contrast, there is stiff competition among private language institutions to employ better teachers and attract larger student enrolments (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012). This may in turn intensify the problems with private institute teachers' job security, stress, and disappointment, resulting in their burnout. Thus, private

institution teachers were selected based on the supposition that more reliable data would be gained regarding the relationship between their EI and burnout as a result of the above mentioned issues.

**Instruments**

The first instrument used in this study was Bar On EQ-I Self Report Scale. This scale, according to Bar-On (2000), "has the capacity to assess individual's general degree of EI, potential for emotional health, and present psychological well-being" (p.1). This model of EI was mainly developed in order to answer the question, "Why are some individuals more able to succeed in life than others?" (Bar On, 1997, p. 35). Bar-On's EQ provided us with five composite scores drawn out of the 15 sub-categories. Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Adaptability, Stress management, and General mood were the ones which provided composite scores. Self-regard or self-esteem, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization, empathy, interpersonal relationship, social responsibility, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, optimism, and happiness were the sub-scales which provided 15 sub-categories (Bar-On, 1997).

The scale consists of 90 questions which assess the teachers' emotional intelligence and applies a 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1= *highly satisfying* to 5= *highly dissatisfying* in the checklist form.

Since the researchers were not sure about the English proficiency level of English teachers who worked at private

language institutions, they decided to use the Persian version of the Bar-On questionnaire. This questionnaire had been translated to Persian by Hekmatzadeh, Khojasteh and Shokrpour (2016) and the validity and reliability of the Persian version of the questionnaire were examined via 30 teachers from private language institutions. According to this study, Cronbach's Alpha testing was utilized to determine the reliability and the result was 0.94 which is within the highly satisfactory range.

The second questionnaire used in this research was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, 1996) that has been in use for over 20 years. The questionnaire is used for measuring teachers' burnout on the three sub-scales consisted of 22 items including nine items for emotional exhaustion (1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, 20), five items for depersonalization (5, 10, 11, 15, 22), and eight items for reduced personal accomplishment (4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21). The emotional exhaustion subscale (EE), is used to examine a feeling of emotional exhaustion by individuals' work demands. The depersonalization (DEP), on the other hand, measures an impersonal response toward recipients of one's care or service. Finally, the personal accomplishment subscale (PA) is related to assessment of a success feeling in work environment (Maslach, 1996). In this scale, participants responded a 7-point Likert scale, which ranges from 0 = *never* to 6 = *very much*. It should be noticed that individuals' high scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscale

and low scores on personal accomplishment subscale are signs of burnout in individuals.

As mentioned earlier, the researchers applied the Persian version of the MBI questionnaire to collect the required data. According to Eghtesadi Roudi (2011), the Persian version of MBI had revealed a good level of reliability and validity in Iran. According to this study, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients ranged from 0.81 to 0.92 proving it to be highly satisfactory. As a result, the researchers used the Persian version of this questionnaire in the context of Iran. The number of the items was 22, the same as the English version.

**Data Analysis Procedure**

As the first step in analyzing, the data were entered into the SPSS version 19. As the next step, descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviation were estimated. Since the collected data in the two questionnaires were in the form of Likert scale, numerical statistics (quantitative data) were then gained and used in the process of data analysis. To examine the relationship between EI and burnout and answer the first research question, Pearson correlation was used, and for investigation of common distribution, descriptive statistics were determined. The researchers conducted Multi-variable Regression analysis to identify the emotional intelligence sub-categories which mostly contribute to burnout.

**RESULTS**

At first, Kolmogorov-Simonov test was

applied to examine the normal distribution of data (Table 3). This normality was determined with the assumption that H0= normal data and H1 = abnormal data. Since the p-values for the variables of EQ (0.911) and Burnout (0.067) were greater than the alpha level (p-values = sig >0.05), H0 could not be rejected; thus, the data were

Table 3
*Results for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test*

| Variable | N | Mean | Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | Level of Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Quotient | 63 | 330.17 | 0.562 | 0.911 |
| Burnout | 63 | 28.87 | 1.47 | 0.067 |

normal and due to the normality of data, the researchers used parametric tests.

### Research Question 1

The first research questions asked, "Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and burnout?"

The first hypothesis of the study which was formulated based on the first research question predicted that there is no statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and burnout. In order to test this hypothesis, the researchers applied Pearson's correlation coefficient test

Table 4
*Pearson correlation analysis between teachers' EQ and burnout*

| Variable | | N | Pearson Correlation | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent | Dependent | 63 | -0.582 | 0.000 |
| Emotional Quotient | Burnout | | | |

to analyze and interpret the data. Results of this test are shown in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, the Sig. (two-tailed) value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05; hence, the correlation is significant. The $r$ value, on the other hand, is negative ($-0.582$). As a result, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant medium strength negative correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their burnout.

So we can conclude that when the amount of EQ increases (our first variable), the rate of burnout (our second variable) decreases. In other words, the higher the EFL teachers' EQ, the lower their burnout would be.

As depicted in Table 5, a weak but significant negative correlation ($r = -0.381$, $-0.337$, $p$ value = 0.002, 0.007 <0.05) exists between the sub-scales of Intrapersonal EQ (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness,

Table 5
*Pearson correlation analysis between EQ and burnout variables*

| Variables | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent | Dependent | | Pearson Correlation | Significance |
| Emotional Quotient Component | Burnout Component | $N$ | | |
| | Emotional exhaustion | 63 | −0.381 | 0.002 |
| Intrapersonal | depersonalization | 63 | −0.337 | 0.007 |
| | Personal accomplishment | 63 | 0.457 | 0 |
| | Emotional exhaustion | 63 | −0.114 | 0.374 |
| Interpersonal | depersonalization | 63 | −0.299 | 0.017 |
| | Personal accomplishment | 63 | 0.489 | 0 |
| | Emotional exhaustion | 63 | −0.387 | 0.002 |
| Adaptability | depersonalization | 63 | −0.362 | 0.004 |
| | Personal accomplishment | 63 | 0.585 | 0 |
| | Emotional exhaustion | 63 | −0.439 | 0 |
| Stress management | depersonalization | 63 | −0.285 | 0.024 |
| | Personal accomplishment | 63 | 0.365 | 0.003 |
| | Emotional exhaustion | 63 | −0.439 | 0 |
| General mood | depersonalization | 63 | −0.362 | 0.004 |
| | Personal accomplishment | 63 | 0.567 | 0 |

self-regard, self-actualization, and independence) and emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization as the two basic dimensions of burnout. This could mean that if the Intrapersonal EQ (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, and independence) subscales are improved in EFL teachers, their emotional exhaustion and depersonalization would decrease slightly. In other words, the higher EFL teachers' Intrapersonal EQ subscales, the less likely they are to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in their profession.

In contrast, there is a medium strength and significant positive correlation ($r$ = 0.457, & $p$ value = 0.000<0.05) between the sub-scales of Intrapersonal EQ (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, and independence) and personal accomplishment as the third basic dimension of burnout. It means that if the EFL teachers improve the same variables of Intrapersonal EQ and its sub-scales, their personal accomplishment would increase with an average degree. In other words, the higher EFL teachers' Intrapersonal EQ subscales, the more likely they are to experience personal accomplishment in their job.

The second row of the above table further demonstrates significant results. As

a result of significant correlation depicted in Table 5, it could be noticed that while there is no significant relationship ($r$ = −0.114, & $p$ value = 0.374>0.05) between sub-scales of Interpersonal EQ (empathy, interpersonal relationship, and social responsibility) and emotional exhaustion, a weak significant negative correlation ($r$ = −0.299, & $p$ value=0.017<0.05) can be seen between these sub-scales and depersonalization. Based on these results, it could be said that there is no relationship between the EFL teachers' rate of Interpersonal EQ (empathy, interpersonal relationship, and social responsibility) and emotional exhaustion. In contrast, the more these teachers possess these sub-scales, the less likely they may suffer from depersonalization leading to job-related burnout.

The results further confirm that there is a medium strength positive correlation ($r$ = 0.489, & $p$ value = 0.000<0.05) between sub-scales of Interpersonal EQ (empathy, interpersonal relationship, and social responsibility) and Personal accomplishment. The higher the sub-scales of Interpersonal Emotional Quotient, the higher the feeling of personal accomplishment of our teachers would be. In other words, there will be an increase in teachers' feeling of personal accomplishment if we increase these variables.

As a result of significant correlation detected, it could be noticed that a weak but significant negative correlation exists between Adaptability EQ and its sub-scales (reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving) and emotional exhaustion ($r$ = −0.387, & $p$ value = 0.002<0.05) and depersonalization ($r$ = −0.362, & $p$ value = 0.004<0.05). The same analysis shows a strong significant positive correlation between Adaptability EQ and its sub-scales (reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving) and Personal accomplishment ($r$ = 0.585, & $p$ value = 0.000<0.05). This could mean that while an increase in rate of the teachers' reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving as the sub-scales of Adaptability EQ leads to a low decrease in their emotional exhaustion as well as depersonalization, the increase in the same variables would lead to a significant increase in teachers' Personal accomplishment.

The results also demonstrated an average strength but meaningful negative correlation between the sub-scales of Stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control) and Emotional exhaustion ($r$ = −0.439, & $p$ value = 0.000 < 0.05). These variables, on the other hand, have a weak but meaningful negative correlation ($r$ = −0.285, & $p$ value = 0.024 < 0.05) with depersonalization. Finally, Stress management sub-scales have a weak ($r$ = 0.365) but significant positive correlation ($p$ value = 0.003 < 0.05) with Personal accomplishment. This could mean that while the teachers with higher stress tolerance and impulse control would experience somewhat less Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, they would more likely experience higher Personal accomplishment in their job.

Finally, an average significant negative correlation exists between General mood

and its sub-scales (optimism and happiness) and Emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.439$, & $p$ value $= 0.000 < 0.05$) and depersonalization ($r = -0.362$, & $p$ value $= 0.004 < 0.05$). Optimism and happiness, in contrast, have a strong significant positive correlation with Personal accomplishment ($r = 0.567$, & $p$ value $= 0.000 < 0.05$). This means that in case there is an increase in the amount of optimism and happiness, the rate of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization would decrease to some extent. An increase in the amount of the same variables would, on the other hand, increase the feeling of Personal accomplishment of the EFL teachers to a great deal.

Putting all the aforementioned results together, we could reject the first hypothesis of study. As the results showed, not only the EI has a significant relationship with EFL teachers' burnout, but in most cases this variable explains many of the burnout related scales including emotional

exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. As explained earlier, overall, the higher the EQ components like intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood, the lower the EFL teachers' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, yet the greater the amount of the feeling of personal accomplishment in their job. Therefore, it could be concluded that there exists a statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and burnout. Table 6 can better depict the results and the observed relationships.

## Research Question 2

The second research question asked, "Which emotional intelligence sub-categories mostly contribute to burnout?"

Having detected a statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and burnout, the researchers then tried to analyze the data in a way to

Table 6
*Relationship between EI categories and burnout components*

| | sig | weak | average | strong | negative | positive | correlation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship between EI Categories and Burnout Components (EE & D) | | | | | | | |
| Intra vs. EE & D | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ |
| Inter & D | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ |
| Adapt vs. EE & D | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ |
| SM vs. EE & D | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ |
| GM vs. EE & D | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Relationship between EI Categories and Burnout Components (PA) | | | | | | | |
| Intra vs. PA | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Inter vs. PA | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Adapt vs. PA | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| SM vs. PA | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ |
| GM vs. PA | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |

detect the most contributing EI factors. As explained earlier, this study examined three sub-categories of the dependent variable (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) which are the dimensions of burnout with five factors of EI (Interpersonal, Impersonal, Adaptability, Stress management, and General mood). The following table presents a summary of the results obtained by Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis to predict teachers' burnout through components of emotional intelligence.

Table 7
*Results of stepwise multiple regression analysis about predicted frequency of burnout based on EI*

| Step | Prediction Variable | Beta | T | Sig | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | F | Sig |
|------|---------------------|------|-----|------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | General Mood | -0.585 | 5.63 | 0.000 | 0.585 | 0.342 | 0.331 | 31.70 | 0.000 |
| 2 | General Mood | -0.367 | 2.63 | 0.011 | 0.627 | 0.393 | 0.373 | 19.44 | 0.000 |
|  | Adaptability | -0.314 | 2.25 | 0.028 | | | | | |

Note. *significant at $p \leq .05$

As displayed in Table 7, general mood ($\beta = -0.585$, $p < 0.05$) and adaptability were found to make significant contributions to the teachers' perceived sense of burnout. General mood entered in the first step, turned out to be the most powerful component of EI (Adj $R^2 = 0.331$), was responsible for 33.1% of the variance in burnout. The amount of the *beta* coefficient for general mood ($\beta = -0.314$, $p \leq 0.05$) represented that it had the most powerful or significant negative correlation with EFL teachers' burnout. In other words, the higher the general mood of the teachers, the lower their burnout would become.

In the second part of the analysis, the amount of the adjusted regression for adaptability (Adj $R^2 = 0.373$) revealed that it added 4.2% of the variance in predicted frequency of burnout. The total amount of these two components of EI indicated that general mood and adaptability determined 37.3% of the predictors of the dependent variable, teachers' burnout. The amount of the *beta* coefficient for adaptability represented that it had the second most powerful or significant negative correlation with EFL teachers' burnout. In other words, the higher the adaptability rate of the teachers, the lower their burnout would become. Accordingly, in response to the second question of the study, it could be concluded that optimism and happiness as the sub-categories of general mood, and reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving as the sub-categories of adaptability can predict the amount of burnout EFL teachers experience in their job.

## DISCUSSION

The main research question in this study dealt with whether EI quotient bears any influence

on the extent of the Iranian EFL teachers' job burnout. In this regard, the findings revealed that there was a strong negative relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and job burnout. Therefore, emotional intelligence is one key factor which enables teachers to cope with stress and burnout of the work sufficiently. Therefore, this skill raises the quality of effective communication between teachers and students (Hans, Mubeen, & Al Ghabshi, 2013). Teachers, who stand at the heart of education systems, should have such essential skills (e.g., awareness and aptitude); otherwise, they cannot be effective role models of knowledge for their students (Adilogullar, 2011).

The findings of this research go hand in hand with the findings of Rastegar and Memarpour (2009) in the context of Iran. Similar to our study, a significant correlation was reported between the teachers' EI and their self-efficacy. In another research on the correlation between language institute teachers' EI and their pedagogical success, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) found a significant relationship between teachers' EQ and their success, teaching experience, and their age. Labbaf, Ansari and Masoudi (2011), like this study, concluded that EI had significant positive effect on effective transfer of knowledge, teamwork, and group problem solving. The findings of the study conducted by Hekmatzadeh, Khojasteh and Shokrpour (2016) further support the findings of the present study since they found a positive and significant correlation between EI and job satisfaction of EFL teachers in Iran/Shiraz. In fact, research on

resilience reports that emotionally intelligent people can turn stresses into positive forces even if dwelling with vocational stressors that normally trigger anger, anxiety, and sadness in other people (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010; Mendes, 2002). This is probably due to the fact that emotionally intelligent people can "accurately perceive and appraise their emotional states, know how and when to express their feelings and can effectively regulate their mood states" (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 2000, p. 161).

Furthermore, it has been reported that happiness and positive emotions are strongly correlated with favorable end products, such as higher coping skills, physical and mental health, higher creativity, effective relationship functioning, and greater vocational success (Gallagher, Lopez, & Pressman, 2013). This has been supported by studies conducted by Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008); Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) who concluded that workplace-induced depressive symptoms were significantly higher in emotionally drained or mentally exhausted workers. According to Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector and Kelloway (2000), these people had less job involvement, but more absenteeism and turnover.

Similar to the findings of the current study (the higher the adaptability rate of the teachers, the lower their burnout), Harry and Coetzee (2013) reported that high levels of career adaptability could lower sense of coherence exhaustion and cynicism (subcategories of burnout). Similar studies

supported this notion that strong sense of coherence can lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010; Harry, 2011; Sairenchi, Haruyama, Ishikawa, Wada, Kimura, & Muto, 2011).

**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to determine any significant relationship between EFL teachers' EI and the amount of burnout they may experience in their job. The major objectives of the ongoing study were to explore any significant relationship between EI and EFL teachers' burnout; then to identify the EI sub-categories that mostly contributed to the burnout. As the first finding, a statistically significant difference was found between the Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their job related burnout. Moreover, the researchers found that this relationship is both positive and negative with respect to the burnout components. In fact, while all of the five EI composite categories and their sub-categories turned out to have a significant negative relationship with burnout sub-scales namely emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, they proved to have a positive correlation with the amount of burnout and especially personal accomplishment these teachers experience in their job.

The second finding of the study highlighted the general mood and adaptability as the main categories of EI which could make significant contributions to the teachers' perceived sense of burnout. Accordingly, reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving were the subcategories of adaptability, ranked the highest impressive factors, which could noticeably predict the amount of teachers' burnout. Optimism and happiness as the sub-categories of general mood were other contributing factors to the teachers' burnout.

Teachers also need a variety of emotional resources to avoid burnout (Chang, 2009). As it was revealed in this study, almost all constructs of EI including stress management, adaptability, general mood, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies were related to burnout. Therefore, a teacher with high EI is predicted to have more ability to manage and control the job related stress; as a result, he or she will not be in danger of burnout. Montgomeryand Rupp (2005) also believed that those teachers who had high EI skills were more likely to cope effectively with environmental demands and pressures connected to occupational stress and health outcomes than those who enjoyed less EI.

**Pedagogical Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study can be important since they give clear evidence about the significant relationship between EFL teachers' EI and their job related stress and burnout. If teachers know about the possible problems related to their jobs, they will be able to communicate more effectively not only in their language classes but also with their colleagues to improve their job satisfaction and reduce burnout. As to the private institution EFL teachers, it is important for them to gain more

institutional, academic and social support in terms of human resource management, workload, professional development, teacher satisfaction, organizational learning, and development. It is believed that private institution teachers often work at domineering working conditions in which they are not given enough time and support to upgrade their knowledge or to do any research-work. Furthermore, due to their job insecurity, these teachers live with the constant fear of being thrown away out of service. All this emotional workload can, physically and mentally, be very detrimental for these private institution teachers who play critical roles in responding young learners' cumulative demands in Iran. Consequently, private institution principals play a major role on the aforementioned factors and their support can buffer against all these stress-causing factors among teachers.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can be beneficial for EFL teachers and learners since emotional intelligence is both teachable and learnable. Teacher training programs in this regard can take steps to emphasize different aspects of emotional intelligence and educate teachers how to improve their EI' leading to the reduction of their job burnout. This can also help improve the efficiency and quality of education. The results can also help to improve teachers' method of teaching while the findings add to their knowledge about their students' emotional reactions. This prepares the ground to identify their students' abilities, talents and limitations. In this way, teachers can help them improve and make progress as a student or productive members in the society. This can lead students to improve their emotional skills and achieve their educational goals and help to improve EI in individuals or assist students in knowing themselves and directing their emotions toward their educational or life related goals.

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