Relationship among Iranian EFL Teachers' Emotional Intelligence, Reflectivity and Burnout

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Abstract

Few studies can be found which have directly addressed the issue of burnout by considering the influence of teachers' coping resources such as emotional intelligence and reflectivity especially in an EFL context. Therefore, in order to bridge this gap, the present study was conducted to investigate the relationship among teachers' burnout, emotional intelligence, and reflectivity with a sample of 125 Iranian EFL teachers from several language institutes in Kurdistan and Hamedan. Moreover, differences in the teachers' burnout, emotional intelligence, and reflectivity scores were examined with respect to teachers' teaching experiences. To answer the research questions, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey, Teacher Reflectivity Questionnaire, and Bar-On EQ-I Scale were used and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Multiple Regression and MANOVA analyses were utilized. The findings showed that emotional intelligence and reflectivity were reversely correlated with burnout, and they could both predict the level of burnout. The results of the study also revealed that there were significant differences in teachers' level of emotional intelligence with respect to their teaching experience. However, no significant differences were found in teachers' burnout and reflectivity with respect to their teaching experience. Implications of the study are discussed in details in the paper.

Keywords: EFL Teachers, Burnout, Emotional Intelligence, Reflectivity

1. Introduction

The most important factor in improving education is enhancing the efficiency of teachers (Wright, Hom & Sanders, 1997). Although the significant role of English teachers has been acknowledged in EFL contexts, they have not received sufficient attention (Brown, 2001). Akbari and Tavassoli (2011) believe that one of the best ways to take EFL teachers into account is to do more studies on teachers' characteristics and different challenges associated with their work.

According to Borg (1990), about as many as a third of the teachers investigated through different studies around the world reported that they consider teaching as a stressful job and this has become a global concern. A great deal of chronic stress might lead to burnout which was defined by Maslach and Jackson (1981) as a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind" (p. 99). The term burnout was first introduced by Freudenberger (1974) as a state of frustration caused by dedication to a job, way of life, cause, or relationship that cannot create the expected reward. He believed that those persons whose first occupational role is to help others over a long period of time, whether they are involved psychologically, socially or physically, are prone to experiencing feelings of stress, frustration, overload and hopelessness over time.

Maslach (1982) considered burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment" (p. 3). He believed that emotional exhaustion refers to being emotionally overextended when one feels that he has been depleted of emotional resources to interact with others. Depersonalization occurs when one develops negative attitudes toward his job, performance and others (e.g., clients, coworkers, etc.)

in the working environment, and reduced personal accomplishment happens when people judge their work unsatisfactorily and evaluate themselves negatively with regard to their efficacy and their achievements.

Burnout occurs as a result of long-term occupational stress, especially among human service workers, including teachers (Jennett, Harris & Mesibov, 2003). Different studies have indicated that teachers experience high levels of stress and burnout (Reglin & Reitzammer, 2008) and half of them leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Different factors such as lack of support, lack of participation in decision-making, large classes, behavioral problems of students, fear of violence, challenging relationships with colleagues, administrators, or managers and criticisms on the part of the parents are related to burnout among teachers (Milstein & Farkas, 1988).

Burnout might have serious negative influences on teachers. It is an important factor that hinders teachers' efficiency, effectiveness and their job involvement (Azeem, 2010). It negatively affects the quality of teaching and consequently, the performance of students (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). In addition, teachers' burnout leads to job dissatisfaction, work alienation, apathy, absenteeism, and finally leaving the profession (Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991). One of the factors which seem to be directly related to burnout among teachers is emotional intelligence. In order to fight against harmful consequences of burnout, "teachers are to be equipped with the means to fight against the so-called stressors, and a major asset for teachers seeking to cope with stress is said to be enjoying high level of emotional intelligence" (Alavinia & Ahmadzadeh, 2012, p. 38).

The term *emotional quotient* (EQ) was first introduced by Bar-On (1988) as a set of social and emotional abilities that help a person to understand and

express oneself, to have relationship with others effectively and to deal with the problems, challenges and demands of daily life. Bar-On (2002) described emotional intelligence as "an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 14). Bar-On's model of emotional intelligence involves five major competencies as "intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood" (Bar-On, 2006, p. 4) which help people to deal with environmental demands and pressures. The ability to cope with emotions in the workplace helps people to control their occupational stress (Oginska-Bulik, 2005). According to Kermenitzer (2005), in order to have successful teaching, teachers should be able to regulate and manage emotions within the classroom. Jennings and Greenberg (2008) also mention that, by increasing emotional skills, teachers and students' motivation toward teaching and learning can be developed and an effective and positive educational environment for both of them can be provided.

Alavinia and Ahmadzadeh (2012) investigated the relationship between burnout and emotional intelligence with a sample of 75 Iranian high school EFL teachers. The findings of their study indicated that emotional intelligence was reversely correlated with burnout. In another study, Vaezi and Fallah (2011) examined a sample of 104 Iranian EFL teachers from 5 language institutes and concluded that there was a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout. Moreover, a study conducted by Pishghadam and Sahebjam (2012) on 147 Iranian EFL teachers of some English language schools, revealed a significant relationship among personality types and emotional intelligence and the three dimensions of burnout. Furthermore, Bracket, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, and Salovey (2010) examined the relationship among emotion regulation ability, burnout and job

satisfaction among 123 teachers across three British secondary schools. The findings of their study revealed a statistically significant correlation between emotion regulation ability and the personal accomplishment component of burnout.

Another factor which seems to be related to teacher burnout is reflectivity. Most of the studies conducted on reflective teaching have indicated that the roots of the term reflection can be traced back to Dewey and his influential book *'How we think: a re-statement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educational process'* (Rodgers, 2002). Dewey (1933) defined reflection as an action based on "the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it" (p. 9, cited in Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 74). In fact, reflective practice arose from the need to prevent burnout in the teaching profession because burned-out practitioners see teaching as a repetitive and routine job and consequently they ignore important occasions to reflect on their teaching practices and make efficient changes to them (Farrel, 2003). Pacheco (2005) asserted that "through reflection ESL/EFL professionals can react, examine, and evaluate their teaching to make decisions on necessary changes to improve attitudes, beliefs, and teaching practices" (p. 2). Reflection helps teachers to build their daily experiences and increase their awareness about teaching in dealing with problems by acting critically and intentionally, by enabling their deep understanding and by changing the situation positively (Farrell, 2003). According to Akbari (2007), reflection can increase teachers' job satisfaction, improve teachers' interpersonal relationship with their colleagues and students, and boost teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

Javadi and Khatib (2014) investigated relationship between teachers' reflectivity and burnout among 170 Iranian EFL teachers. Their findings

revealed that teachers' reflection was significantly and inversely related to their feeling of burnout. Moreover, different studies have been conducted to investigate the role of demographic variables on teachers' burnout and emotional intelligence. In a study conducted by Fisher (2011) on 400 secondary teachers it was revealed that burnout level of teachers was different between novice and experienced teachers. He found that novice teachers had higher levels of burnout. Devi (2011) also found significant differences among teachers regarding their levels of burnout based on their age, teaching experience, and type of school. Moreover, no significant differences were found based on gender and marital status in terms of their burnout and emotional intelligence.

2. Purpose of the Study

Awareness of the importance of some teacher-related factors such as emotional intelligence (EI), reflectivity, and burnout can help EFL teachers, especially novice and less experienced ones, to become aware of their own stress levels in order to overcome chronic stress and to prevent burnout. It seems that few studies have been done to investigate these teacher characteristics and their effectiveness in educational contexts. Therefore, this study was carried out to fill this gap and to examine the relationship among three teacher-related variables, i.e. emotional intelligence, reflectivity, and burnout, in an Iranian EFL context, and to explore possible differences among these three variables with respect to their teaching experience. To this end, the following research questions were addressed in the present study:

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

2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' reflectivity and burnout?

3. Do reflectivity and emotional intelligence predict the degree of burnout among Iranian EFL teachers significantly?

4. Is there any significant difference among Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence, reflectivity, and burnout with respect to their teaching experience?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 125 EFL teachers (male and female) aged between 20 and 47 with a range of between 1 and 24 years of teaching experience. The participants were classified into three groups based on their years of teaching experience, with teaching experiences of 1-8, 9-16 and 17-24 years. The participants were selected from 7 language institutes in Kurdistan and Hamedan, Iran. The institutes were selected randomly based on cluster sampling procedure.

3.2. Instruments

To answer the questions of this study, the following instruments were used:

i. Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator's Survey (MBI-ES)

In order to measure the participants' burnout, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators' Survey (MBI-ES) was used. This questionnaire is a 22-item self-report instrument including three components of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). This questionnaire is a Likert scale with 7 point response ranging from never (0) to

every day (6). High scores on the EE and DP subscales and low scores on the PA subscale are characteristics of burnout. Validity and reliability of the MBI-ES has been examined in different studies (for example Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011; Alavinia & Ahmadzadeh, 2012; Gold, 1984; Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981; Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012) and it has been proven that it enjoys high level of reliability and validity.

ii. Teacher Reflectivity Questionnaire

The teacher reflectivity questionnaire developed by Akbari, Behzadpoor and Dadvand (2010), was used in this study. It consists of 29 items in a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1=never to 5=always. It includes the underlying factors of the teacher reflectivity, i.e., Affective, Cognitive, Metacognitive, Practical, and Critical dimensions. This questionnaire is of high reliability and validity for measuring teacher reflectivity (Akbari et al., 2010).

iii. Bar-On's Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EQ-i)

Bar-On's emotional intelligence inventory (EQ-i) includes 5 factors and 15 components. This questionnaire is in a Likert scale with 5-point responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The original version of this questionnaire included 133 items. Later Bar-On (1997) revised the questionnaire and reduced its size to 117 questions. Through later attempts, Samouei (2003) translated and piloted the test for reliability and validity in Iran. After removing items irrelevant to the Iranian context, the number of items in the final version equaled 90 items. It was also proven by Samouei (2003) that the translated version enjoyed high reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.93) and validity.

3.3. Procedure

Since all the three questionnaires had been validated in earlier studies, they were not piloted in this study for their validity. First the reliability of each instrument was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha. Next, in the main study, the 125 participants took the questionnaires home, filled them out, and gave them back to the researcher within a week. To receive reliable data, the researcher assured the participants that their information would be kept confidential.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to examine the first research question, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation between the participants' scores on Burnout and Emotional Intelligence was run.

Table 1. *Correlations between Burnout and Emotional Intelligence*

		Burnout	EQ
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	
emotional intelligence	Pearson Correlation	- .36**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 1 indicates there was a significant negative correlation between burnout and emotional intelligence (r=- 0.36, p<0.01). Therefore, the first null hypothesis, indicating that there was no statistically significant relationship between burnout and emotional intelligence among Iranian EFL teachers was rejected.

This finding is in accordance with previous theoretical studies on the role of emotional intelligence in burnout. It is also consistent with the findings of some empirical studies such as Mendes (2003), Ricca and Donna (2003), Chan (2006), Momenian (2009), Platsidou (2010), Akbari and Momenian (2011),

Devi (2011) , Vaezi and Fallah (2011), Fallah (2011), Jude and Grace (2011), and Iqbal and Abbasi (2013). Based on the outcome of these studies it can be concluded that teachers who have high levels of emotional intelligence experience less burnout. This result also supports Chang's (2009) claim that in order to prevent burnout, teachers should provide themselves with different emotional resources because those teachers whose scores are higher on emotional intelligence skills have higher job satisfaction. In addition, they can cope better with environmental demands related to occupational stress; they also experience greater positive influence in teaching and receive more support from their principals and colleagues (Chang, 2009).

However, these outcomes are in contrast with the findings of Akbari and Tavassoli (2011) and Thornqvist (2011) who found no significant correlations between burnout and emotional intelligence components.

In order to examine the second research question, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation between burnout and reflectivity was run.

Table 2. *Correlations between Burnout and Reflectivity*

		Burnout	reflectivity
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	
reflectivity	Pearson Correlation	- .20[*]	1

[*]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 2 the result shows that there was a significant negative correlation between burnout and reflectivity (r=-0.20, p<0.05). Therefore, the second null hypothesis, indicating that there was no statistically significant relationship between burnout and reflectivity among Iranian EFL teachers was rejected.

The findings are in line with the findings of a study conducted by Javadi and Khatib (2014) who found that teachers' reflection was significantly and

inversely related to teachers' feeling of burnout. The findings of this study are also consistent with those of Cimermanová (2013) who found that teachers' permanent self-reflection on their performance and teacher portfolio as a self-reflection tool for recording and reflecting on their own works could have a positive effect on reducing their stress and burnout. The results of his study indicated that teachers' reflection on their own work could help increase the level of personal accomplishment and decrease the level of emotional exhaustion.

Larrivee and Cooper (2006) believe that reflective teaching helps reflective practitioners to free themselves from "routine and impulsive acts, enabling them to act in a more deliberative and intentional manner" (p.1). When teachers engage in a routine action continuously, they eventually feel powerless in affecting their future jobs and this can in turn lead to burnout (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006). According to Korthagen and Wubbels (1995), reflective teachers have a high degree of job satisfaction and reflection helps them have strong feelings of personal security and self-efficacy. Teachers who develop their reflection skills report less burnout and they can increase their job satisfaction (Wadlington &Wadlington, 2011). In addition, different studies have been done to investigate the relationship between teachers' reflectivity with different teacher-related variables. For example, Guvenc and Celik (2012) found a positive relationship between five components of emotional intelligence and reflective thinking skills. On the other hand, the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout (Bilge, 2006; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005) and the role of emotional intelligence in reducing teachers' burnout (Alavinia & Ahmadzadeh, 2012; Bracket, et al., 2010; Devi, 2011; Fallah, 2011; Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012; Vaezi & Fallah, 2011) have consistently been cited in various studies. Moreover, teachers' reflection improves teachers'

sense of efficacy (Braun & Crumpler, 2004, cited in Akbari, 2007) and the role of teachers' sense of efficacy in reducing teachers' stress and burnout has been examined and proved in different studies (Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011; Fallah, 2011; Grau, Salanova & Peirò, 2001). Therefore, it may be reasonable to conclude that increasing teachers' reflectivity leads to an increase in their emotional intelligence, job-satisfaction and self-efficacy, which in turn lead to decrease in their level of burnout.

Moreover, Larrivee (2000) showed that self-reflection could help teachers find purpose in teaching and this process of finding personal meaning and purposes is an important tool in preventing teacher burnout. He believed that self-reflection is "deep examination of personal values and beliefs, embodied in the assumptions teachers make and the expectations they have from the students" (p. 294) which is in accordance with the meta-cognitive component of reflectivity classified by Akbari et al. (2010). They considered meta-cognitive element as teachers' reflection on their beliefs, personality and how they define their practice and construct themselves emotionally.

To answer the third research question as to whether emotional intelligence and reflectivity can predict the degree of burnout among Iranian EFL teachers, a 2-step regression analysis was run.

Table 3. *Model Summary for Emotional Intelligence and Reflectivity in Predicting Burnout*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.36[a]	.13	.12	15.07
2	.39[b]	.15	.14	14.89

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional intelligence

b. Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence, reflectivity

According to Table 3, two models are presented: In the first model, it can be seen that the adjusted R^2 value is .12, which indicates that about 12 percent of the variance of the dependent variable (i.e., burnout) can be accounted by the variance of the independent variable (emotional intelligence). Therefore, it can be a moderate predictor of burnout. Moreover, due to the increase in the adjusted R^2 value from .12 to .14, it can be concluded that Model 2 is a better predictor than Model 1. These results indicate that the first and the second independent variables together (i.e., emotional intelligence and reflectivity) can account for 14% of the variance in burnout. It can also be concluded that the addition of reflectivity improved prediction only by almost 2%.

In Table 4, the results of ANOVA test to examine the regression model in predicting burnout by emotional intelligence and reflectivity variables is presented.

Table 4. *Analysis of Variance for Emotional Intelligence and Reflectivity in Predicting Burnout*

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	4204.93	1	4204.93	18.49	.00[b]
1	Residual	27964.75	123	227.35		
	Total	32169.68	124			
	Regression	5113.11	2	2556.55	11.52	.00[c]
2	Residual	27056.56	122	221.77		
	Total	32169.68	124			

a Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence

b Predictors: (Constant), emotional intelligence, reflectivity

c Dependent Variable: burnout

As can be seen in table 4, when emotional intelligence is entered by itself, it is a significant predictor of burnout, (F=18.49 p<0.01). In addition, the second model in which the other independent variable (i.e., reflectivity) was added is also a significant predictor of burnout *(F* =11.52, p<0.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis, indicating that emotional intelligence and reflectivity do not predict burnout among Iranian EFL teachers was rejected.

Table 5 shows the results of multiple regression analysis for predicting burnout by emotional intelligence and reflectivity.

Table 5. *Coefficients*[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	107.96	12.15		8.88	.00		
	Emotional intelligence	-.15	.03	-.36	-4.30	.00	1.00	1.00
2	(Constant)	124.27	14.46		8.59	.00		
	Emotional intelligence	-.14	.03	-.34	-4.12	.00	.98	1.01
	Reflectivity	-.19	.09	-.16	-2.02	.04	.98	1.01

a. Dependent Variable: Burnout

As indicated by Standardized Beta coefficients in Table 5, both emotional intelligence (β=-0.34, p<0.05) and reflectivity (β=-0.16, p<0.05) can predict burnout among the teachers. In addition, Tolerance and VIF values which refer to the relationship between the independent variables indicate that in this study we do not need to worry about multicollinearity. If the Tolerance value is low

($< 1-R^2$), then there is probably a problem with multicollinearity. According to Table 3, adjusted R^2 for Model 1 is .12 and 1- R^2 is about 0.88, and adjusted R^2 for Model 2 is .14 and 1-R^2 is about 0.86. But, as can be seen in the above table, Tolerance values are close to 1. Therefore, we have no problem with multicollinearity.

The finding of this study in this regard is consistent with previous studies such as Momenian (2009), Bracket, et al (2010), Jude and Grace (2011), Akbari and Momenian (2011), Vaezi and Fallah (2011), Pishghadam and Sahebjam (2012), and Alavinia and Ahmadzadeh (2012). They found that emotional intelligence could significantly predict burnout among EFL teachers. Chan (2004) also found that emotional intelligence was one of the variables which could be used to predict and prevent burnout.

To explore whether there were significant differences in emotional intelligence, reflectivity, and burnout level of Iranian EFL teachers with respect to their teaching experience, a series of MANOVA analyses was conducted.

Table 6. *Multivariate Tests*[a]

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.99	4378.28[b]	3.00	120.00	.00
	Wilks' Lambda	.00	4378.28[b]	3.00	120.00	.00
	Hotelling's Trace	109.45	4378.28[b]	3.00	120.00	.00
	Roy's Largest Root	109.45	4378.28[b]	3.00	120.00	.00
TE	Pillai's Trace	.08	1.79	6.00	242.00	.10
	Wilks' Lambda	.91	1.81[b]	6.00	240.00	.09
	Hotelling's Trace	.09	1.83	6.00	238.00	.09
	Roy's Largest Root	.09	3.68[c]	3.00	121.00	.01

Multivariate tests examine whether teachers' teaching experience makes any significant differences on a linear combination of the dependent variables

(teachers' burnout, emotional intelligence and reflectivity). As shown in Table 6, Wilks' Lambda (F=3.68, P=.09), which is commonly reported in multivariate tests, is not significant at $\alpha=0.05$. However, it is significant and smaller than $\alpha=0.10$. This shows that on a linear combination of the three dependent variables there are significant differences among teachers' variables with respect to their teaching experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis indicating that there is no significant difference among Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence, reflectivity, and burnout with respect to their teaching experience can only be rejected if we set the significance level at $\alpha=0.10$.

In Table 7, tests of Between-Subject Effects are presented to indicate which variable scores are different with respect to teachers' years of experience.

Table 7. *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TE	EQ	11563.94	2	5781.97	4.30	.01
	Reflectivity	677.25	2	338.62	1.66	.19
	Burnout	426.85	2	213.42	.82	.44
Error	EQ	163778.42	122	1342.44		
	Reflectivity	24835.67	122	203.57		
	Burnout	31742.83	122	260.18		
Total	EQ	14252420.0	125			
	Reflectivity	1255192.88	125			
	Burnout	424162.98	125			

As can be seen in Table 7, F value was only significant for emotional intelligence. The results indicated that, with respect to teaching experience, teachers were significantly different on their scores only on emotional intelligence (F=4.30, p<0.05) and it was revealed that there were no significant

differences on teachers' reflectivity (F=1.66, p>0.05) and burnout (F=.82, p>0.05) with respect to teaching experience.

In Table 8, the results of LSD (Least Significant Difference) Test are provided.

Table 8. *Multiple Comparisons*

LSD

Dependent Variable	(I) TE	(J) TE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional intelligence	1-8	9-16	-17.86[*]	8.30	.03	-34.29	-1.42
		17-24	-26.16[*]	11.27	.02	-48.48	-3.84
	9-16	17-24	-8.30	12.86	.52	-33.77	17.16
Reflectivity	1-8	9-16	-5.22	3.23	.10	-11.62	1.17
		17-24	-4.82	4.39	.27	-13.51	3.86
	9-16	17-24	.39	5.01	.93	-9.51	10.31
Burnout	1-8	9-16	3.73	3.65	.30	-3.49	10.97
		17-24	4.60	4.96	.35	-5.22	14.43
	9-16	17-24	.86	5.66	.87	-10.34	12.08

Regarding emotional intelligence variable, the mean difference between teachers with 1-8 years of teaching experience and teachers with 9-16 years of teaching experience was significant (Mean difference=-17.86). Moreover, the mean difference between teachers with 1-8 years of teaching experience and 17-24 years of teaching experience was significant (Mean difference=- 26.16). The negative amount of mean differences shows that mean scores of emotional intelligence in teachers with 1-8 years of teaching experience is lower than that of teachers with higher teaching experience. It means that more experienced teachers enjoyed higher levels of emotional intelligence.

The findings of this study, in this regard, are in line with the findings of Mendes (2003), Cobb (2004) and Kant and Lenka (2013) who found that teachers with more experience had higher emotional intelligence and they were better in recognizing their own and others' emotions. In a study conducted by Akbari and Momenian (2011), it was revealed that there is a significant difference between moderately and highly experienced teachers in their emotional intelligence. In addition, they found that there is no statistically significant difference in the burnout level of moderately and highly experienced teachers. In another study conducted by Ealias and George (2012), it was indicated that there was a significant difference between job satisfaction and emotional intelligence mean scores based on employees' experience. According to Devi (2011), increasing age and experience improves people's awareness of themselves and also different situations of life increase their awareness of others' emotions. He also mentioned that different responsibilities help individuals learn how to control their relationships with people and this may be because of high level of emotional intelligence in older and experienced teachers.

This finding also supports Goleman's (1998) theory. He believed that "our level of emotional intelligence is not fixed genetically, nor does it develop only in early childhood" (p. 7). He also mentioned that "unlike IQ, which changes little after our teen years, emotional intelligence seems to be largely learned, and it continues to develop as we go through life and learn from our experiences" (p. 7). Bar-On (2002) also believed that emotional intelligence can be increased over time and it can be improved by training, programming and therapy. Moreover, Mayer and Salovey (1997) mentioned that EQ is a developing ability improving with age and experience from childhood to adulthood.

However, the findings of the study are in contrast to the findings of Cakan and Altun (2005), Rastegar and Memarpour (2009), and Mishra and Laskar (2013) who found no significant difference in the levels of EQ among EFL teachers with different teaching experiences.

The findings of this study also showed that there was no significant difference in teachers' burnout with respect to their teaching experience. These results are in line with a host of studies (e.g., Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011; Bataineh, 2009; Bayani, Bagheri & Bayani, 2013; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). Moreover, Schwab, Jackson and Schuler (1986) concluded that years of teaching experience and level of education were not significantly related to teacher burnout.

However, the findings of this study are in contrast with the results of some studies, such as Alavinia and Ahmadzadeh (2012), Devi (2011), Fisher (2011), Lau, Yuen, and Chan (2005), Mashhady, Fallah, and LotfiGaskaree (2012), Mede (2009), Pierce and Molloy (1990), Sunbul (2003), and Vaezi and Fallah (2011). These studies indicated that burnout level is different between novice and experienced teachers. They found that less experienced teachers were more prone to burnout than more experienced teachers while the findings of Friedman (1991) and Tye and O'Brien (2002) indicated that older and experienced teachers were more apt to the effects of stress, and they may suffer higher levels of burnout than the younger and less experienced teachers. Since there are contradictory results regarding teachers' differences on burnout level with respect to their teaching experience, there should be further comprehensive studies in this area to resolve the confusion.

Furthermore, in this study, it was revealed that there was no significant difference in teachers' level of reflectivity with respect to their years of teaching experience. The results are consistent with those of Guven cand Celik (2012)

and Odeh, Kurt and Atamtürk (2010), who found no significant difference in the level of reflective teaching skills of teachers with respect to their teaching experiences.

Nevertheless, the findings are in contrast with the findings of Karadag and Sadik (2012) who found that teachers with higher length of service had a higher reflective thinking tendency. These results are also contrary to Loughran (2002) who claimed that teaching experience is an important element of reflection and in teacher education, experience, and reflection on teaching experiences can be influential in the development of effective reflective practice.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The results of the current study lead to the conclusion that increasing EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and reflectivity might have a reducing effect on their burnout. This, in turn, may lead to increasing teachers' professional development, motivation and teaching effectiveness and consequently may improve students' learning and achievement. The findings also indicated that teachers' emotional intelligence and reflectivity could predict the level of burnout among EFL teachers effectively and this has another promising perspective in that, these findings can be useful for preventing burnout among teachers. Knowing about the way teachers understand, control, and utilize emotions in their classrooms can give us useful insights on the process of helping teachers to avoid burnout.

One of the interesting results was the significant differences found among teachers' emotional intelligence regarding their teaching experience, which showed that experienced teachers had higher levels of emotional intelligence. It was indicated that experienced teachers feel more competent and efficacious in

their profession. However, findings related to the differences in teachers' burnout and reflectivity due to teaching experience did not show any coherent or systematic increase or decrease pattern.

Based on the results of this study, it can be suggested that reflection and emotional learning programs be incorporated into teacher training and short-term in-service programs, especially for young EFL teachers. These programs can help EFL teachers develop skills in monitoring their stress levels and increasing the level of their emotional intelligence to understand their own and others' emotions better and develop their ability in dealing with difficult and stressful situations and problems. These programs can help teachers decrease their level of burnout, if not completely eliminate it, in their work environment and improve their success and motivation, which in turn help them to remain longer in their profession and be more effective in the classroom. This will certainly affect students' achievement and increase their learning. In addition, In-service training workshops and seminars of reflective teaching can be organized for teachers which can increase teachers' reflection by developing their awareness to take part in different conferences and workshops, to read different articles and books related to teaching course and to develop their self-reflection about themselves, their teaching methods and their students.

The small sample size and lack of diversity among the participants in this study creates difficulty in generalizing the findings of this study to other settings. In addition, the subjects were all selected from language institutes and the data collection had been restricted to teachers in Kurdistan and Hamedan. Therefore, it is not representative of school teachers and also teachers of other cities of Iran. Thus, it is suggested that this study be replicated with a larger and varied samples of the EFL teacher population in different cities of Iran and among school teachers to have a better understanding of the relationship

among teachers' emotional intelligence, reflectivity, and burnout. Furthermore, in this study only self-report measures were used to assess emotional intelligence, burnout, and reflectivity. Self-report measures may be susceptible to the possibility of participant biases and faking. Therefore, to obtain a more precise estimate of teacher emotional intelligence and burnout, future research should combine self-reporting measures with other measures.

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