

Research Article

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A Structural Equation Modelling Analysis of Factors Influencing Teaching Motivation among German and Iranian English Instructors

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Abstract

Motivation constitutes one of the key factors underlying language teachers' professional performance. It exerts a considerable influence on their pedagogical efficacy and is likely to determine their resilience across various language contexts and academic settings. The present study scrutinized the main factors among German and Iranian English teachers' motivation. Furthermore, it examined the difference between the motivation of these teacher groups. To this end, the researchers used convenience sampling to select 281 German and 231 Iranian English teachers as the participants. Moreover, they used four reliable and valid questionnaires to examine these participants' teaching motivation, teaching enjoyment, emotion regulation, and work engagement. Lastly, they analyzed the obtained data using structural equation modelling and t-test. The results of the study indicated that German teachers' teaching enjoyment and work engagement were the main factors in their motivation. On the other hand, Iranian teachers' emotion regulation and work engagement were the significant predictors of their motivation. Furthermore, German teachers' motivation was significantly higher than that of Iranian teachers. The results of the study are likely to provide guidelines on the development of education courses and manuals for English teachers in foreign language contexts.

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Keywords: German English teachers; Iranian English teachers; teacher factors; teaching motivation

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1. Introduction

A careful review of the recent studies of language teachers (e.g., Alexander et al., 2020; Bing et al., 2022; Buric et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2022; Xiyun, et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022) indicates that they have focused on

teacher factors in different academic settings. Chang and Taxer (2021) defined teacher factors as all of the teacher-internal variables that are likely to have a noticeable effect on language teachers' mental health, coping, and pedagogical efficacy in the context of the classroom. Likewise, Deng et al. (2022) stated that these

factors encompass language teachers' affective features that affect their language teaching practices by influencing their psychological composure. As they noted, among these factors, Teacher Motivation (TM) has been a recurrent variable in numerous empirical studies.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) defined language teachers' TM as the reasons behind their decisions to engage in language instruction in various academic settings. Similarly, Roth et al. (2007) pointed out that TM encompasses all of the factors that prompt the language teachers to take advantage of efficacious instructional strategies and techniques for ameliorating their learners' acquisition of diverse aspects of the second language. As they explained, the widespread interest in language teachers' TM stems from the fact that it is likely to influence all of the aspects of teachers' pedagogical choices including their choice of instructional approaches along with their language teaching strategies and practices in their classes. They concluded that TM is an affective factor that can be influenced by teachers' affective and personal variables.

Yuan and Zhang (2017) stated that among the various teacher factors, language teachers' Teaching Enjoyment (TE), Emotion Regulation (ER), and Work Engagement (WE) (which will be explained in detail in the following section) have attracted attention as the affective variables that may influence their TM. They concluded that there is a need for more research on language teachers' TM in different language learning contexts.

Background Studies

The examination of the recent research on teachers' variables (e.g., Alexander et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020) indicates that language teachers' TM has attracted considerable attention in language education. Roth et al. (2007) defined TM as the totality of the factors that motivate language teachers to adopt effective instructional practices to enhance learners' acquisition of the target language. The above-mentioned definition highlights the fact that various factors are likely to affect teachers' tendency to engage in second language instruction (Alexander et al., 2020). Considering this issue, Roth et al. (2007) identified four main sub-categories of language teachers' TM including *intrinsic*, *extrinsic*, *identified*, and *introjected* sub-components. As they explained, teachers' intrinsic motivation refers to their interest in language instruction that is not influenced by the external rewards. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation encompasses teachers' tendency to engage in language teaching in order to achieve a certain objective or to win an external award. Moreover, identified motivation refers to the extent to

which teachers are cognizant of the advantages of language instruction before engaging in it. Lastly, introjected motivation encompasses teachers' internal desire to teach the target language that results in their tension when they are not able to teach the language in an effective way. Roth et al. (2007) concluded that teachers' TM is likely to be affected by their TE, ER, and WE among the other affective factors.

Dewaele and Li (2022) stated that TE constitutes an affective factor that determines the extent to which language teachers derive satisfaction from their language instruction and make an effort to perform their academic tasks in an efficacious way. In line with this definition, Proietti Ergün and Dewaele (2021) itemized three main sub-components of TE including *social enjoyment*, *personal enjoyment*, and *learner appreciation*. As they explained, social enjoyment refers to the satisfaction that teachers derive from development of working relationships with their peers and students. Furthermore, personal enjoyment specifies the extent to which target language instruction ameliorates teacher's perspectives on their own pedagogical capabilities. Finally, learner appreciation refers to teachers' positive feelings that stem from their learners' understanding of their vital role in the context of the classroom.

In addition, Li et al. (2022) noted that language teachers' ER constitutes an affective variable that determines their stress-management capability in their classes. Accordingly, they defined ER as teachers' ability to stifle their negative emotions by capitalizing on their internal resources. Based on the nature of teachers' ER, Gross and John (2003) itemized two main sub-components of this construct including *cognitive reappraisal* and *expressive suppression*. They explained that, teachers' cognitive reappraisal refers to their ability to reassess various teaching conditions to ameliorate their perspectives on them. Moreover, as they noted, expressive suppression determines the degree to which teachers are able to control their behaviors that are caused by their negative emotions in the process of language teaching.

Lastly, Greenier et al. (2021) noted that language teachers' WE refers to an affective factor that determines their tendency to spend their time and energy to carry out their pedagogical tasks and to facilitate their learners' language learning. Based on the structure of this construct, Klassen et al. (2013) itemized three sub-components of this construct including *emotional*, *cognitive* and *social* sub-components. They noted that emotional and cognitive engagement respectively refer to teachers' tendency to take advantage of their cognitive resources and positive feelings to perform their instructional duties. Furthermore, social engagement refers to teachers' proclivity to establish working

relationships with their language learners and their colleagues in their academic settings.

In the field of language instruction, recent studies of language teachers' TM have focused on some of the aspects of this construct without dealing with certain issues. More specifically, several studies (e.g., Alexander et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020) have examined the role of language teachers' TM in their stress-management ability and pedagogical capability. Moreover, some studies (e.g., Tao et al., 2019) have examined language teachers' perspectives on different aspects of their TM. Lastly, a few studies (e.g., Yuan & Zhang, 2017) have tried to examine the impacts of teacher education on teachers' TM.

Nonetheless, the above-mentioned studies have not examined the degree to which language teachers' affective factors including their TE, ER, and WE predict the variance in their TM. Moreover, these studies have not investigated the differences between the predictors of teachers' TM in different language contexts. The present study strived to deal with these issues in the contexts of Germany that is a country in which English is widely used in education and media and Iran in which English constitutes a school and university subject. Accordingly, it endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. Do German teachers' TE, ER, and WE significantly predict their TM?
2. Do Iranian teachers' TE, ER, and WE significantly predict their TM?
3. Is there a significant difference between German and Iranian teachers' TM?

Method

Participants

Considering the aims of the study, first, the researchers selected various reputable language institutes (e.g., inlingua Sprachschule Köln & Deutsch Aktiv Sprachinstitut) in seven major cities in Germany including Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, and Frankfurt and Main and language institutes (e.g., Navid English Institute & Avatalk) in seven major cities in Iran including Urmia, Tabriz, Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz, Yazd, and Kermanshah. These institutes applied strict criteria for employing their teachers and used similar teacher education courses for preparing their teachers for their service years. Second, they contacted the managers of the relevant institutes, informed them about the aims, obtained their consent to the study, and asked them to furnish them with the contact information (i.e., email address) of their English

teachers. The researchers were provided with the contact information of 563 English teachers including 302 German and 261 Iranian teachers.

Second, the researchers contacted these teachers in a one-month period, apprised them of the aims, and invited them to take part in the study. Twelve German and 14 Iranian teachers did not answer the researchers' emails. Moreover, 9 German and 16 Iranian teachers refused to participate in the study owing to different reasons such as their busy schedule among the others. Nonetheless, the remaining 281 German and 231 Iranian teachers agreed to take part in the study and completed the written consent forms and the demographic information questionnaire of the present study. The examination of German and Iranian teachers' academic background indicated that they held either a B.A. or an M.A degree in an English-related field. Moreover, German teachers ranged in age from 26 to 52 while Iranian teachers were in the age range of 23 to 61. German teachers were native speakers of German and Iranian teachers were native speakers of Azeri, Persian, or Kurdish. German teachers' language teaching experience was in the range of 2 to 23 years and Iranian teachers ranged in experience from 1 to 28 years. Lastly, both German and Iranian teachers taught basic to advanced levels.

Instruments

The researchers used five questionnaires in order to gather the required data. These questionnaires were administered to the participants separately, and each took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Four of these instruments comprised Likert-scale items. Consequently, the researchers used Cronbach's Alpha (CA) measure to examine the reliability of the questionnaires in a pilot study that involved 28 German and 26 Iranian English teachers who were similar to the participants of the main study in terms of their characteristics. The following section elaborates on these questionnaires.

Demographic information questionnaire. In this study, the researchers used a demographic information questionnaire to examine the participants' academic degree, age, gender, and experience.

Teaching motivation (TM) questionnaire. In light of the aims, the researchers used Roth et al.'s (2007) TM questionnaire in order to examine German and Iranian teachers' TM in their relevant settings. This instrument involves 16 items that are rated on a five-point Likert-scale. They examine four main sub-components of TM including *intrinsic*, *extrinsic*, *identified*, and *introjected* motivation sub-components.

The results of CA analysis indicated that the reliability indices of this questionnaire were .85 and .82 in the contexts of Germany and Iran respectively.

Teacher enjoyment (TE) questionnaire. In the present study, Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) TE questionnaire was used to obtain the required data on German and Iranian teachers' TE. This instrument comprises nine items that focus on three main aspects of TE including *social enjoyment*, *personal enjoyment*, and *learner appreciation*. These items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Based on the results of CA analysis, the reliability of this questionnaire was acceptable in German (.88) and Iranian (.85) contexts and it could be utilized in the present study.

Emotion regulation (ER) questionnaire. Given the main aims, Gross and John's (2003) ER questionnaire was used to examine German and Iranian teachers' ER in this study. This instrument focuses on two main sub-components of ER including *cognitive reappraisal* and *expressive suppression*. It involves 10 items that are rated on a 7-point scale. Based on the results of CA analysis, the reliability indices of this questionnaire were .84 and .87 in German and Iranian contexts respectively and it was used to collect the required data.

Work engagement (WE) questionnaire. The researchers used Klassen et al.'s (2013) WE questionnaire to examine the WE of German and Iranian teacher groups. This instrument examines teachers' *emotional* and *cognitive* engagement along with their *social engagement* with their learners and peers. It encompasses 16 items that are rated on a 7-point scale. According to the results of CA analysis, the reliability indices of this instrument were .88 and .84 in German and Iranian contexts and it could be employed in this study.

Procedure

In this study, first, the researchers used convenience sampling in order to select 281 German and 231 Iranian English teachers in seven major cities in Germany and seven major cities in Iran as the participants and obtained written informed consent from them. Second, they administered Roth et al.'s (2007) TM, Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) TE, Gross and John's (2003) ER, and Klassen et al.'s (2013) WE questionnaires to them at three-day intervals to examine their TM, TE, ER, and WE respectively. German participants and Iranian participants returned the completed questionnaires to the researchers in a two-month period and a three-month period respectively. Lastly, the researchers analyzed the collected data using Amos 22.

Design

The researchers conducted this study using the *predictive correlational design*. Creswell and Creswell (2017) pointed out that this design helps the researchers to examine the extent to which several independent variables predict a certain dependent variable. Likewise, in this study, the researchers used this design to determine the degree to which three independent variables of the study including German and Iranian English teachers' TE, ER, and WE predicted their TM that was the dependent variable of the study.

Data Analysis

In the present study, the researchers used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) test to examine the predictive role of German and Iranian teachers' TE, ER, and WE in their TM (Pallant, 2020). Moreover, they used independent-samples t-test to examine the significance of the difference between the TM of these teacher groups (Pallant, 2020).

Results

The first research question examined the predictors of German teachers' TM. Therefore, the researchers used SEM to analyze the data. Figure 1 shows the model of the predictors of German EFL teachers' TM.

The researchers examined the regression weights of German EFL teachers' TE, ER and WE to determine the degree to which these variables predicted the TM of this group of language teachers. Table 1 shows these results.

According to Table 1, German EFL teachers' TE and WE were significant predictors of their TM, $C.R. > 1.96$; $p < .05$. Therefore, the researchers examined the standardized estimates to determine the most significant predictor of their TM. Table 2 shows these results.

As shown in Table 2, German EFL teachers' WE (.991) and TE (.143) were respectively the first and the second most significant predictors of their TM. Based on these results, the researchers examined the model fit. Table 3 provides the relevant results.

According to Table 3, the model fit was satisfactory, $p > .05$; $CMIN < 3$. Consequently, the researchers scrutinized the baseline comparisons of this model to ensure its fit. Table 4 shows these results.

According to Table 4, German EFL teachers' TM model fit was acceptable, $IFI > .90$; $TLI > .90$; & $CFI > .90$.

The second research question focused on the main predictors of Iranian teachers' TM. The researchers had to use SEM to analyze the data.

Figure 2 shows the model of the predictors of these teachers' TM.

The researchers examined the regression weights of Iranian EFL teachers' TE, ER and WE to determine the degree to which these variables predicted the TM of this group of language teachers. Table 5 shows these results.

As shown in Table 5, Iranian EFL teachers' ER and WE were significant predictors of their TM, $C.R. > 1.96$; $p < .05$. Consequently, the researchers examined the standardized estimates to determine the most significant predictor of their TM. Table 6 shows these results.

According to Table 6, Iranian EFL teachers' WE (.983) and ER (.185) were respectively the first and the second most significant predictors of their TM. Based on these results, the researchers examined the model fit. Table 7 shows the pertinent results.

As shown in Table 7, the model fit was satisfactory, $p > .05$; $CMIN < 3$. As a result, the researchers examined the baseline comparisons of this model to ensure its fit. Table 8 provides these results.

According to Table 8, Iranian EFL teachers' TM model fit was acceptable, $IFI > .90$; $TLI > .90$; & $CFI > .90$.

Finally, the third research question examined the significance of the difference between German and Iranian teachers' TM. Based on the aims, the researchers used Welch's independent-samples t-test (due to unequal sample sizes) to determine the difference between the TM of these teacher groups. Table 9 provides descriptive statistics on German and Iranian teachers' TM.

As shown in Table 9, there was a difference between the mean value of German teachers' TM ($M = 60.54$) and the mean value of Iranian teachers' TM ($M = 53.03$). Table 10 shows the results of the pertinent Welch's independent-samples t-test.

Welch's t-test assumes unequal variances. The examination of the unequal variances in Table 10 showed that German teachers' TM was significantly higher than that of Iranian teachers ($p < .05$). Figure 3 shows these results.

Discussion

The first research question of this study scrutinized the main factors in German teachers' TM. The results indicated that these teachers' TE and WE were the strongest predictors of their TM in their academic settings. In general, these results corroborate the results of a number of previous studies including the studies that were conducted by Moradkhani et al. (2017), Song et al. (2018), Zeng et al. (2019), Proietti Ergün and Dewaele (2021), Proietti Ergün, and Ersoz Demirdag (2022), Soodmand Afshar and Moradifar (2021), Shu (2022), Xiao et al. (2022), Xiaojing, et al. (2022), and Xiyun, et

al. (2022). The results of the above-mentioned studies indicated that English teachers' TM was significantly affected by their affective factors including their TE.

Breines and Chen (2012) pointed out that language teachers' TM may be influenced by their TE. According to them, the increase in teachers' TE prompts them to spend their time and energy to ameliorate their learners' acquisition of the target language. As a result, teachers take advantage of efficient teaching techniques and strategies that engage the learners in language learning and positively affect their development of target language communicative competence. As Breines and Chen (2012) explained, the improvement in learners' language learning increases teachers' TM and ameliorates their self-efficacy. Moreover, Burić and Macuka (2018) argued that language teachers' WE enables them to develop and maintain working relationships with their peers and students in their workplace. They explained that these relationships empower the teachers to stifle stressors using the other individuals' support and improve their TM for teaching the target language in an effective way.

In light of these discussions, it can be averred that in the present study, German teachers' TE was a main predictor of their TM since it improved learners' target language learning and encouraged the teachers to ameliorate their instructional techniques. Moreover, these teachers' WE significantly predicted their TM owing to the fact that it enabled them to establish constructive relationships with their peers and to deal with sources of stress in their classes by relying on their peers' support.

The second research question examined the main factors in Iranian teachers' TM. Based on the obtained results, these teachers' ER and WE were the main predictors of their TM. Generally, these results are in line with the results of the studies that were carried out by Dewaele et al. (2018), Fathi and Derakhshan (2019), Buric et al. (2020), Ayoobiyan and Rashidi (2021), Chang and Taxer (2021), Greenier et al. (2021), Bing et al. (2022), Li and Li (2022), and Li et al. (2022). The results of these studies highlighted the fact that language teachers' TM was influenced by their affective factors such as their ER among the others.

Diedrich et al. (2014) pointed out that teachers' ER enables them to determine the stress-inducing factors and teaching situations in their workplace and to take advantages of affective strategies to deal with them. As they noted, teachers' ability to stifle these stressors may increase their TM and is likely to positively affect their self-esteem. In addition, Xiao et al. (2022) noted that language teachers' WE prompts them to take advantages of all of their cognitive resources and positive emotions in order to facilitate and expedite their learners' target

language acquisition. As they explained, teachers’ use of these resources improves their teaching ability and their learners’ success and is likely to positively affect their TM in their settings.

Considering these discussions, it can be argued that in this study Iranian teachers’ ER significantly predicted their TM owing to the fact that it enabled them to deal with stressors in their classes using efficient stress-management strategies. Moreover, Iranian teachers’ WE was a main predictor of their TM due to the fact that it encouraged them to improve their learners’ language acquisition using their cognitive and emotional resources in their classes. Finally, the third research question examined the significance of the difference between German and Iranian teachers’ TM. Based on the results, German teachers’ TM was significantly higher than that of Iranian teachers. In general, these results support the results of the studies that were conducted by Stapleton et al. (2020), Stavrakian and Karagianni (2020), Deng et al. (2022), Dewaele and Li (2022), and Yang et al. (2022).

Buric et al. (2020) pointed out that the language teachers who teach English in the contexts in which English is used in education and media (e.g. Germany) have higher TM levels compared to the other teachers. As they explained, this issue stems from the fact that these teachers believe that English knowledge has a major effect on their learners’ occupational opportunities and tend to teach English to satisfy their learners’ language learning needs. Likewise, Bing et al. (2022) pointed out that in the contexts in which English does not play a vital role in education and media, teachers may be less motivated for teaching it since they consider English to be a time-consuming subject that does not influence their learners’ education and future occupational opportunities.

Based on these discussions, it can be argued that, in the present study, German teachers’ TM was significantly higher than Iranian teachers’ TM owing to the fact that they considered English to be a main factor in their learners’ educational and job-related opportunities.

Table 1. Regression Weights of German EFL Teachers’ TM Model

Correlations		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
TM	<--- TE	.104	.005	18.936	.000
TM	<--- ER	.004	.015	.288	.773
TM	<--- WE	.633	.023	27.277	.000

Table 2. Standardized Estimates of German EFL Teachers’ TM

	Correlations	Estimate
TM	<--- TE	.143
TM	<--- ER	.004
TM	<--- WE	.991

Table 3. Model Fit Summary of German EFL Teachers’ TM

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	39	196.335	51	.346	2.850

Table 4. Baseline Comparisons of German EFL Teachers’ TM

Model	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.995	.929	.991

Table 5. Regression Weights of Iranian EFL Teachers’ TM Model

Correlations		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
TM	<--- TE	-.059	.006	-9.251	.254
TM	<--- ER	.147	.008	17.534	.000
TM	<--- WE	.653	.021	30.795	.000

Table 6. Standardized Estimates of Iranian EFL Teachers' TM

Correlations			Estimate
TM	<---	TE	-.075
TM	<---	ER	.185
TM	<---	WE	.983

Table 7. Model Fit Summary of Iranian EFL Teachers' TM

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	39	279.801	51	.187	2.486

Table 8. Baseline Comparisons of Iranian EFL Teachers' PD

Model	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.925	.937	.920

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics on German and Iranian Teachers' TM

Groups	N	M	SD	SEM
German Teachers	281	60.54	12.955	.770
Iranian Teachers	231	53.03	11.767	.513

Table 10. Welch's Independent-Samples t-test of German and Iranian Teachers' TM

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means					95% CI	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD	SED	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	34.229	.594	7.72	510	.000	7.511	.973	5.600	9.422
Equal variances not assumed			8.11	472.6	.000	7.511	.925	5.692	9.329

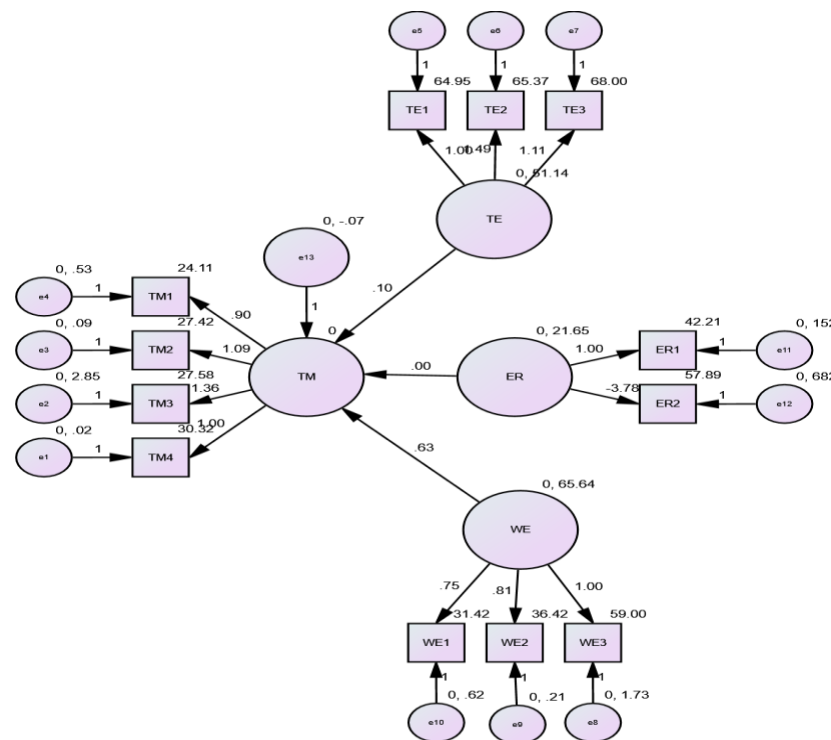


Figure 1. Model of the Predictors of Iranian EFL Teachers' TM

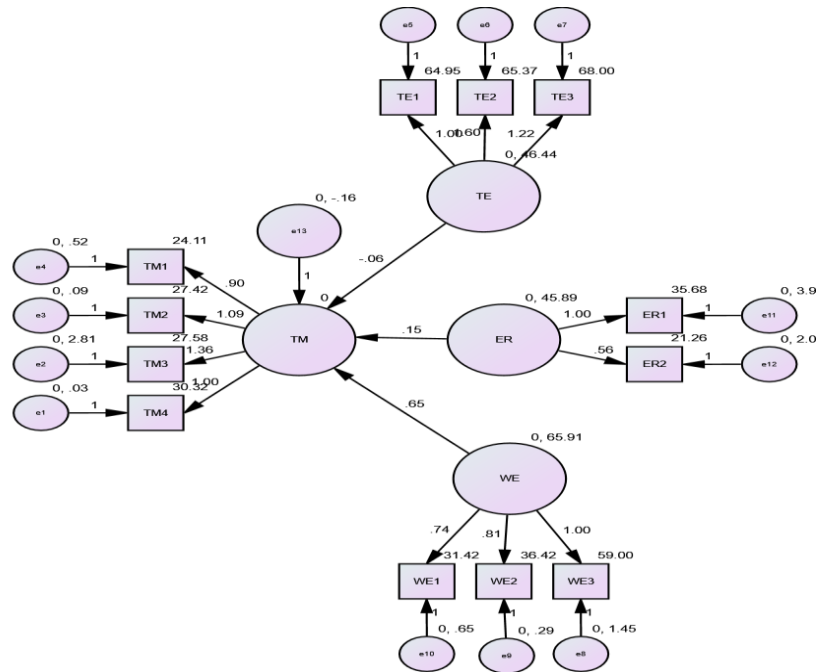


Figure 2. Model of the Predictors of Iranian EFL Teachers' TM

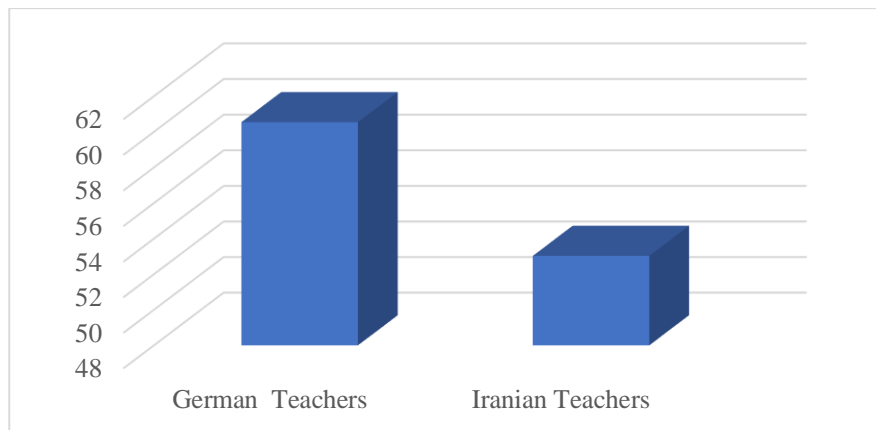


Figure 3. German and Iranian Teachers' TM

Conclusion

The present study strived to determine the main predictors of German and Iranian teachers' TM. Moreover, it examined the difference between the TM of these groups of language teachers. Based on the results, while German teachers' TE and WE were the main factors in their TM, Iranian teachers' ER and WE constituted the significant predictors of their TM in their settings.

It is possible to draw a number of conclusions based on these results. First, EFL syllabus designers have to provide the language teachers with effective teaching manuals that provide them with adequate information on their main factors including their TM and make them aware of the consequential role of the relevant factors in

their language teaching. The need for these manuals becomes more apparent in the case of Iranian teachers. The relevant manuals have to empower the teachers to use efficient stress-management strategies. Moreover, they should enable them to capitalize on their internal resources, including their ER, WE, and TE in order to deal with the stress-inducing factors in the process of second language instruction.

Second, there is a need to redress the current teacher education courses in the EFL contexts including the Iranian context. The examination of the content of these courses shows that they mainly focus on the practical issues of language instruction and disregard the theoretical issues including teacher variables. Furthermore, most of the teacher educators of these courses do not apprise the teachers of the impact of their

variables such as their TM on their instructional efficacy. Considering these issues, it can be argued that it is necessary to add a module to the present teacher education courses that informs the teachers about their affective factors and helps them to capitalize on them to ameliorate their teaching capabilities. In addition, teacher-education course developers have to re-educate the teacher educators in terms of teacher factors to enable them to include teacher-factor-based education in the current courses.

Finally, English teachers have to develop a satisfactory understanding of their own affective variables that influence their teaching practices. Regarding this issue, teachers can attend diverse national and international events such as webinars and education courses to become aware of the affective strategies that can increase their TM and may enable them to deal with sources of stress. Additionally, teachers can take advantage of their peers and supervisors' support to stifle their negative emotions that decrease their TM and interfere with their effective language teaching.

The present study suffered from certain limitations since the researchers were not able to control the impacts of the participants' gender, age, language background, and experience on the results. Furthermore, they delimited the study by focusing on German and Iranian teachers' ER, WE, and TE as predictors of their TM without dealing with the other factors such as their emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence among the others. The future studies need to deal with these issues. Furthermore, they need to use mixed-methods designs to delve more deeply into the predictors of language teachers' TM. Finally, these studies have to be conducted in different settings including schools and universities among the others.

Authors Contribution

All authors have contributed equally to prepare the paper.

Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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