

On the Relationship between Teacher Resilience and Self- efficacy: The Case of Iranian EFL Teachers*

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Abstract:

Teacher resilience, as a recent issue of concern, enables teachers to bounce back and thrive rather than just survived in the face of challenging circumstances. Although self-efficacy has been prompted to enhance resilience, there is little empirical research to investigate the relationship. To address this gap, the present study is an attempt to examine the connection between EFL teachers' resilience and self-efficacy. In doing so, ninety-two EFL teachers completed Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) and resilience scale (RISC). The findings showed the positive impact of different dimensions of self-efficacy on resilience. The results of the correlational analysis indicated that all three self-efficacy subscales had a significant positive relationship with teachers' resilience. The results of multiple regression also suggested that, save for classroom management, two other subscales of efficacy as efficacy for student engagement and efficacy for instructional strategies were the good predictors of teacher resilience. In line with these findings, some suggestions for further research are provided and pedagogical implications are proposed.

Keywords: EFL teachers, self-efficacy, teacher resilience

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Introduction

The crucial role of teachers in every educational context is undeniable. Wright (2010) believes that by just improving the effectiveness of our teachers, we can improve our education. Recently, a groundbreaking shift of orientation is evident in views toward teachers as an offshoot and dominance of sociocultural theory and constructivists. The shift has been made from a simplistic and passive view toward teacher in which teacher is considered as just a container and consumer of knowledge toward an alternative approach regarding teacher as theorizer and decision maker (Kumardevelue, 2006). As in Post method pedagogy, teachers are empowered to have their own voice and emphasize their important role. This sort of paradigm shifts results in informing teachers to equip themselves with the qualifications that enhance their professional development.

Teacher resilience as one of these qualities is a multidimensional and developmental construct that has recently attracted the attention of some researchers, especially in the last two decades. Teaching is a profession full of everyday challenges. Experiencing multiple challenges may put teachers at risk of burn out or attrition. But looking from the positive side, resilience is emerged in teaching discourse as “emotional practice and is found to be a multidimensional, socially constructed concept that is relative, dynamic and developmental in nature” (Gu & Day, 2007). By focusing on resilience, we can help our teachers both survive and thrive in challenging circumstances (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). However, the positive role of resilience has been investigated in few numbers of empirical studies trying to shed light on the relationship teacher resilience and personal (e.g. motivation, self-efficacy) or contextual resources (e.g. support from outside). The papers are mostly qualitative with small sample sizes and with the aim of understanding teachers’ experiences at different stages of their teaching.

Motivated by the paucity of research in this era, the present study is an attempt to investigate the influential impact of self-efficacy in

promoting resilience among ELT teachers. Of particular importance to this study is examining the degree to which self-efficacy of English teachers can promote their resilience.

Previous studies have provided ample evidence on the degree of association between self-efficacy and positive teacher related attributes. Teachers possessing a higher degree of self-efficacy are more committed and less likely to burn out (Chesnut & Burley, 2015). They have more tendency towards applying creative teaching methods (Thurlings, Evers, & Vermeulen, 2015), and experience higher levels of job satisfaction (Caprara, et al, 2003). Self-efficacious teachers have a stronger potential to enhance their student learning (Shaughnessy, 2004; Tournaki & Podell, 2005).

Considering the positive role of self-efficacy on different dimensions of teacher performance, the current study is an attempt to understand the influential role of self-efficacy in promoting resilience among teachers in ELT context. Few studies investigate the interplay between these two variables and there is a gap for in-depth investigations into the degree of association between resilience and self-efficacy. The present study provides a comprehensive definition of these two variables and by using a quantitative method try to better inform the way through which they are related.

Literature review

Teacher self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a qualification that attracted the attention of researchers as an influential factor in ELT context. The pioneer and introducer of self-efficacy, Bandura (1997), by proposing his social cognitive theory defines self-efficacy as “belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p.3). Other definitions have also been proposed by different people to bring it to the educational context, among them Tschannen-Moran, et al (1998) who clarify teacher self-efficacy as “the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p.22).

Bandura (1997) presented four sources for self-efficacy including verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, mastery experience and emotional arousal. Out of them, Mastery experience for teachers can be considered as the main source for self-efficacy in which teachers' experience of students' success boosts their efficacy. On the other side, continuing students' failure lowered teachers' efficacy.

Variables contributed to building efficacy of teachers can be divided into two classes: contextual factors and personal factors. In contextual factors, it is believed that efficacy is a context-bound construct which can be built in a specific environment. Factors such as access to educational resources, receiving and enjoying support from their colleges and participating in the developmental program are all the ones that make them have more sense of efficacy (Ross & Bruce, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Among other contextual factors of improving teacher self-efficacy, the class size in that larger classes and student characteristics are referred in the literature (Lee et al., 1991; Raudenbush et al., 1992). Based on Lee et al. (1991) and Hoy and Spero (2005), high socio-economical class of students is influential in providing the sense of efficacy for teachers.

On the personal factors such as age, gender, experience and degree, Gencer & Cakiroglu (2007) indicate that gender makes no difference in perception of teachers' efficacy. But experience in most of the studies (Chan, 2008; Cruz & Arias, 2007; Huang, Liu, & Shiomi, 2007) is an important and determining factors in making sense of efficacy. In a way that more experienced teachers are more efficacious than novice teachers.

Majority of studies concerning the efficacy of teachers investigate the positive consequences of this construct and just some of them focus on examining factors that improve the efficacy of teachers. Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) investigated the amount of experience and conclude that teachers with higher experience are more efficacious rather than inexperienced ones. While Akbari and Moradkhani (2010) concentrate on the effect of degree among teachers and its relationship with their self-efficacy, they reported that

seasoned EFL teachers feel more efficacious with no effect of holding an academic degree.

Teacher resilience

One of the ongoing concerns for policymakers and teacher educators is equipping teachers with the qualities that improve teaching and result in effective and successful learning. A good number of studies has indicated that teachers as an influential element of every educational system face different challenges in different years of teaching and lack of ability in managing these difficulties may result in frustration and burn out. In preparing “classroom- ready” teachers (Mansfield, 2016), resilience is an attribute that empowers teachers to manage everyday challenges of teaching and thrive through their profession rather than survive. Day and Gu (2014) in their research indicates that teachers’ resilience is connected with other positive outcomes such as professional commitment and development, beneficial engagement and job satisfaction.

Resilience, as a specific strategy that people apply when they encounter a kind of adverse situation (Castro, et al., 2009), has been attracted the attention of researchers especially those interested in education. Teachers, as an important contributor to each educational system, seems to be more successful and confident if they equip themselves with this developmental quality. More specifically, teacher resilience can be regarded as the process of positive adjustment and ongoing development in challenging contexts and circumstances. It can be formed by different sources such as individual, situational and contextual factors that interconnected in dynamic ways. Resilient teachers not only are able to thrive professionally and personally but also they can enjoy job satisfaction, positive self-beliefs, general wellbeing and also a higher level of commitment to their profession.

“Resilience offers a useful lens which allows us to probe teachers internal and external worlds to explore which factors, individually and in combination, influence their capacity to sustain their passion, enthusiasm and strong sense of fulfilment.” (Gu, Q. & Li, Q. (2013) p.288-303).

Mansfield, et al (2012), whose study is one of the most comprehensive projects on teacher resilience, postulate four major aspects of resilience- professional dimension, emotional dimension, social dimension and motivational dimension. In the teaching context, professional-related dimension composites of teaching competence and skills, organization, preparation, facilitating effective learning, class management, the ability to be flexible. Emotional dimension mostly relating to personal attributes and attitudes includes self-confidence, having a sense of humor, the capability of bouncing back. Social dimension mainly shaped by factors such as asking others for help, interpersonal skills, ability to utilize suggestions from others, professional and personal supporting networks.

Personal resources including self-efficacy, social and emotional competence and motivation are crucial in formulating both success and resilience ((Beltman et al., 2011). In addition, resilience is connected with other positive qualities of job satisfaction, professional commitment and engagement (Day & Gu, 2014) as well as student achievement and teacher overall quality (Gu & Li, 2015). Although researchers of resilience proposed that resilience may have emerged in the cases of adversity (Doney, 2013), most of recent teacher resilience studies argue that teacher requires an everyday resilience to manage challenges and handle difficulties that they may face during their everyday practice (Gu & Day, 2013; Gu & Li, 2013). Every day resilience is something more than just bouncing back from specific challenges, rather it is an ability or better to say a quality for teachers to manage everyday emotional and intellectual challenges over time as they thrive professionally (Mansfield et al, 2016). Particular skills and strategies are important in developing resilience because it is not just a personal capacity but is “a complex construct resulting from a dynamic relationship between risk and protective factors“(Beltman et al., 2011, p. 186). Some studies on resilience attempt to specify those risk and protective factors for teachers (Beltman et al., 2011).

What can be highlighted in literature is the fact that few studies try to regard resilience as adaptive, developmental and dynamic as raised by Hong (2012).

The present study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and their sense of efficacy?
- 2) Is there any significant relationship between the subscales of self-efficacy and resilience?

Method

Participants and context

A total of ninety-two EFL teachers (56 females and 36 males) teaching general English courses to adults and teenagers in private language institutes were selected. The dominant approach in designing courses is based on the principles of communicative competence (Zhang & Rahimi, 2014) with the main objective of preparing students to communicate both orally and written. Often the ultimate objective is attending in international tests such the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015). Care was taken to include teachers teaching various levels of proficiency ranging from elementary to advance. The participants' teaching experience varied from less than one year to 25 years, and their age ranged between 19 and 60 years. They were assured that their information would be confidential and they could withdraw from the research without any consequences.

Instruments

In order to address the research questions, questioners were distributed in three sections; the first one aimed at collecting some background information such as age, gender, years of experience, degree and contact information for possible follow up analysis. Then, the researcher distributed the two validated instruments of Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) for measuring self-efficacy and the

Connor-Davidson Resilience scale (2003). The efficacy scale, which comprises 24 items, measures three subscales (eight items for each) of efficacy for student engagement, efficacy for instructional strategies, and efficacy for classroom management. Responses were given a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “not at all” to (5) “a great deal” to 150 participants of this study. The participants were then surveyed via a 25-item, 5-point Likert-scale resilience questionnaire ranging from “Definitely Agree” to “Definitely Disagree” (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Data collection and analysis

A quantitative design of research was followed for data collection and analysis. Around 150 questionnaires were distributed in the form of hard copies or online link. Out of 150 questionnaires, 106 questionnaires were returned and after discarding those which were carelessly completed (e.g. selecting just one option for all questions), they were reduced to 92. Then data were fed into SPSS 25. To ensure the reliability of data Cronbach alpha was employed and to check the normality of distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S test) was conducted. To answer the questions, examining the relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy and their resilience, a series of Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted. Through these sets of correlation, the associations between scores of self-efficacy and its three subscales and scores on resilience were investigated. Furthermore, a multiple regression is run to examine the power of teacher’s self-efficacy subscales in predicting resilience.

Result

The relationship between teachers’ resilience and self-efficacy

The descriptive results for the overall scores and subscales of self-efficacy scale and resilience scale are presented in table 1. As the table indicates, the Cronbach alpha values vary from 0.83 to 0.92 suggesting that the participants’ responses to the items enjoy a relatively high internal consistency for both instruments of efficacy and resilience. Moreover, the p-values of the KS test which range

from 0.05 to 0.11 demonstrate that the collected data are normally distributed.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of teachers' self-efficacy and resilience

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Alpha	KS Sig.
Self-efficacy	1.45	5	3.88	0.87	0.92	0.05
Efficacy for student engagement	1.12	5	3.90	0.88	0.83	0.11
Efficacy for instructional strategies	1.5	5	3.95	0.87	0.87	0.08
Efficacy for classroom management	1.75	5	3.81	0.86	0.83	0.11
resilience	1.4	5	3.72	0.83	0.86	0.07

Regarding the first question, a series of Pearson-product correlation was conducted. The results in table 2 indicate that there is a moderate, but significant, relationship between teachers' total self-efficacy and resilience scores ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$). It means that generally EFL teachers who are more efficacious in encouragement of students to participate in classroom activities, apply efficient and various teaching techniques, and deal with management-related issues are more resilient in adverse conditions or challenging situations.

Table 2. Correlation between total self-efficacy and resilience

	Resilience
Self-efficacy	0.59

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

Considering the association between subscales of self-efficacy and resilience, significant positive correlations were observed in the case of efficacy for student engagement ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$), efficacy for instructional strategies ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$) and efficacy for classroom management ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$), with the second subscale indicating the greatest correlation. In the table 3 Efficacy for classroom

management has the least correlation with a considerable distance with two other subscales.

Table 3. Correlation between the subscales of self-efficacy and resilience

	Resilience
Efficacy for student engagement	0.54
Efficacy for instructional strategies	0.60
Efficacy for classroom management	0.39

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

The results of multiple regression in the table 4 showed that only efficacy for student engagement and efficacy for instructional strategies are good predictors of teacher resilience.

Table 4. The results of regression analysis for teachers' self-efficacy subscales and resilience

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Efficacy for student engagement	.623	.275	.268	2.267	.026
Efficacy for instructional strategies	1.017	.265	.468	3.842	.000
Efficacy for classroom management	-.154	.264	-.065	-.584	.561

a. Dependent Variable: resilience

The model summary, as in table 5, demonstrated that the multiple correlation coefficients between subscales of self-efficacy and resilience is 0.63 and its adjusted value is around 0.38. Therefore, the model proposes that all three subscales of self-efficacy can predict

almost 38% resilience, meaning that about 38% of the variation in resilience can be attributed to different subscales of self-efficacy.

Table 5. R² table for self-efficacy as the predictor of teachers' resilience.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.637 ^a	.406	.385		8.793

a. Predictors: (Constant), efficacy for classroom management, efficacy for student engagement, efficacy for instructional strategies

Discussion

Generally speaking, the results of the present study shows that teachers' self-efficacy can be considered as a predictor of their resilience. Though various subscales of self-efficacy have a different contribution to the promotion of resilience, the subscale of efficacy for classroom management has a weaker (though significant) correlation with resilience compared to two other subscales. These findings are in line with what Mansfield (2012) refers as "resilient teachers possess a sense of self-efficacy, feeling confident and competent, taking credit for and drawing sustenance from their accomplishments" (p. 361) Having a strong sense of self-efficacy is a prerequisite for teachers to be resilient and effective (Day, 2008). Self-efficacy for teachers can be considered as "a little idea with big impact" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007, p. 954). The result of the study supports the theory of Bandura (1997) in which he proposed that teachers' self-efficacy would be associated with the attempt that teachers invest in their teaching, the aims they set for themselves and their resilience in the face of setbacks. The findings highlight that self-efficacy might be an essential contributor to teacher resilience (Gu & Day, 2007; Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Hong (2012) believes that

"it seems that teachers who have a stronger sense of efficacy perceive difficulties as challenges rather than threats, and thus invest

their effort in the face of adversities and direct their efforts in resolving problems. Whereas those who have a low sense of efficacy believe there is little they can do to change the problems they perceive, and thus put less effort and do not strongly persevere when difficulties arise. (p. 420)

The results of multiple regression also showed that only two subscales of self-efficacy can be regarded as predictors of resilience. To provide a sound explanation, the nature of participated teachers and different sources of efficacy which they utilized should be closely considered. Most teachers are the novice (with less than four years of teaching) and highly experienced teachers are low in number.

Based on Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007), novice teachers try to formulate their voices through depending mostly on the support of their colleagues. Therefore, verbal persuasion is the most prevailing source of attaining efficacy. In the case of experienced teachers, they depend more on mastery experience, the strongest source of efficacy, gathered over years of teaching. These successful and subsequent experiences strengthen the teachers' self-efficacy in a cyclical nature. This finally leads to better performance which enhanced teachers' efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

Conclusion

Through adopting a quantitative design, the current study demonstrated the positive relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their resilience. Based on aforementioned findings, all subscales of self-efficacy (efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) measurably correlate with teachers' resilience. Though the degree of the association varies for different subscales.

Given the findings of the present study, teachers, teacher educators and language policymakers should figure out the significance of how to promote teachers' efficacy to foster resilience among EFL teachers.

Although this piece of research was a quantitative one with a large number of participants and lacks the qualitative phase, it opens the

path to development of resilience through prompting self-efficacy. Theoretically, the current study brings some empirical evidence that self-efficacy of teachers and their resilience could be related. Therefore, it encourages future research for more in-depth investigation of these two qualities for teachers.

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