



The Relationship Between Job Demands-Resources and Iranian EFL Teachers' Burnout: A Mixed-Methods Investigation

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Abstract

In the demanding context of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, teacher burnout threatens instructional quality and retention, yet its association with job demands and resources remains underexplored. This study leverages the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to investigate how workplace factors, specifically job demands like administrative overload, emotional labor, and resources including autonomy and colleague support shape burnout among Iranian EFL teachers, while probing cultural and contextual influences such as societal expectations and educational policies. A convergent complementary mixed-methods design was used in which the quantitative phase included 146 teachers across Iran using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory and the JD-R questionnaire, using Kruskal-Wallis tests and pairwise comparisons. The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with 39 teachers, analyzed through transcendental phenomenology using MAXQDA. Quantitative findings revealed that high job demands significantly amplify burnout, with teachers in high-demand groups reporting greater emotional exhaustion and cynicism, while abundant resources markedly reduce burnout. Qualitative insights illuminated key themes: structural demands like inadequate salaries, imposed curricula, and societal pressures such as unrealistic parental expectations exacerbate burnout, whereas resources like professional development and peer support serve as protective buffers. Teachers' coping strategies, including exercise and adaptive teaching, alongside critiques of commercialized education and policy inefficiencies, further contextualize these dynamics. This study validates the JD-R model's predictive power in Iran's EFL context, highlighting the critical need for targeted interventions such as workload restructuring, enhanced training, and cultural awareness campaigns to mitigate burnout, bolster teacher resilience, and elevate educational outcomes. These findings offer actionable insights for policymakers and educators, with implications for global EFL settings facing similar challenges.

Keywords: job demands, job resources, teacher burnout

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Introduction

Organizational and environmental factors critically impact teaching, where job resources, job demands, and burnout affect teachers' job performance (Rezai et al., 2022) and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). The JD-R model categorizes workplace conditions into job demands, which require sustained psychological or physical effort, and job resources, which facilitate goal achievement and mitigate stress. While job demands directly correlate with teacher burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), balancing resources and demands is essential for educator well-being (Demerouti et al., 2001).

In Iranian EFL education, high job demands like heavy workloads and emotional labor lead to burnout, characterized by reduced professional efficacy and emotional exhaustion (Karanfil & Khatami, 2021). Generally, Iranian EFL teachers face distinct challenges, including overcrowded classrooms in public high schools, administrative workloads, and salary disparities, necessitating the understanding of JD-R framework to boost teacher well-being and educational outcomes (Safari, 2020). Teachers globally report high occupational stress leading to anxiety and depression (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016), with similar patterns in Iran.

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), the JD-R model explains how workplace conditions influence well-being through job demands, physical, organizational, or social aspects requiring mental, psychological, or emotional effort, and job resources, including social support, autonomy and professional development opportunities. Research demonstrates that high job demands are related to cynicism and emotional exhaustion and low resilience (Ghafouri et al., 2025), which is believed to indirectly influence burnout (Divsar, 2026). Recent education research shows that administrative pressures and lack of training predict teacher burnout (Hakanen et al., 2024), yet gaps remain regarding specific job resources' comparative significance (Hakanen et al., 2024) and the loss and gain spiral (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024).

Recent JD-R studies reveal critical research gaps. Some studies (e.g., Karanfil & Khatami, 2021; Zhou et al., 2024) have examined the influence of job demands and personal resources on professional identity in professional settings. However, higher education contexts seem to remain underexplored. Meanwhile, specific demands and resources, including work-family conflicts, classroom disturbances, and autonomy, are underexplored concerning work ability (Hlado & Harvankova, 2024). Hence, as Hlado and Harvankova (2024) highlighted, there is a need for comprehensive frameworks addressing how teachers cope with high workloads, bureaucracy, and time pressure within JD-R context. Additionally, broader organizational and macro-social factors require examination to prevent burnout (Castro Silva et al., 2026).

Teacher burnout, which is a psychological state characterized by cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and reduced professional efficacy from chronic workplace stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), significantly influences teaching quality and student outcomes. Burnout impacts retention, and according to the formal consensus, 15 to 20 percent of teachers give up their jobs annually in global settings

(Sutcher et al., 2016). High job demands predict burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), while imbalance between demands and resources drives burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Here, the role of self-efficacy is central as it has mitigating effects on the relationship between demands and resources and burnout. Teacher burnout also reduces teacher enthusiasm, which has been shown to correlate with learner engagement (Safdari, 2022).

The literature on JD-R and Iranian EFL teachers' burnout reveals underexplored areas warranting mixed-methods investigation. Barjesteh et al. (2025) reported that high job demands, like financial problems, large class sizes, administrative pressures, and limited facilities, significantly contribute to burnout, with student challenges and parental pressures intensifying exhaustion. However, exploration of how cultural and contextual factors unique to Iran moderate these relationships is lacking. Prior research relies predominantly on quantitative surveys, with limited qualitative integration to capture lived experiences, as Esmacilee et al. (2025) highlighted in their investigation of job crafting and reflective teaching. Understanding how teachers cope with demands is necessary (Hlado & Harvankova, 2024). Debates persist regarding specific demands' relative weight, emotional labor versus workload, in predicting burnout, yet few studies have disaggregated these factors within the Iranian context (Esmacilee et al., 2025). The absence of mixed-methods studies restricts understanding of how JD-R levels influence burnout in Iran, because addressing this could inform targeted interventions for teacher well-being and retention where turnover intentions are significant (Zeinolabedini et al., 2022).

This study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach to investigate how job demands, including student expectations, administrative tasks, curriculum requirements, and resources like professional autonomy, professional development, colleague support, and teaching materials, shape Iranian EFL teachers' burnout. It assesses how specific demands and resource levels predict burnout quantitatively and qualitatively explores teachers' lived experiences within Iran's unique educational context. Specifically, the study addresses these questions:

1. Does the level of job demand lead to any significant difference in EFL teachers' burnout?
2. Does the level of job resources lead to any significant difference in EFL teachers' burnout?
3. What are the primary job demands (including societal and familial expectations) faced by EFL teachers in Iran?
4. How do the job demands influence Iranian EFL teachers' experiences of burnout, and what coping strategies do they employ to manage these pressures?
5. What additional factors (e.g., societal perceptions of English language teaching, working conditions, or educational policies in Iran) affect the quality of English language teaching?

6. How do the additional factors (mentioned in the previous research question) relate to job demands or job resources?

This comprehensive approach bridges quantitative patterns with qualitative depth to address critical gaps. The next section critically examines existing studies to frame the study's focus on Iranian EFL teachers.

Literature Review

Previously, the JD-R theory and its applications were mostly applied across professions other than teaching. For example, [Bakker and Demerouti \(2024\)](#) carried out a study on JD-R with non-teaching employees, concluding that job demands predicted burnout. These outcomes were corroborated by [Khan et al. \(2014\)](#), who reported that job demands are critical factors contributing to burnout in various professions. [Hakanen et al. \(2024\)](#) expanded this model to the field of teaching, demonstrating that demands like student misbehavior predict burnout among Finnish teachers.

Burnout elucidates individuals' responses to prolonged periods of chronic physical, emotional, and mental stresses associated with work ([Maslach & Leiter, 2016](#)). Teachers are more susceptible to withdrawal and are uncommitted within their organization, constantly accompanied by a sense of dissatisfaction and suffering from physical, emotional, and mental symptoms ([Field & Buitendach, 2011](#)). Burnout is negatively influential on teacher agency, which refers to teachers' beliefs in their own ability as active experts who are capable of making significant decisions and serving as agents of change ([Arabahmadi et al., 2023](#)).

[Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya \(2018\)](#) found that perceived job control moderates the association between perceived job demands and the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout. [Pishghadam et al. \(2014\)](#) reported that teachers' assessment-related beliefs were significantly related to the dimensions of burnout, including depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion. [Aimi Roslan et al. \(2015\)](#) showed a positive correlation between burnout and job demands among Malaysian teachers. Similarly, [Skaalvik and Skaalvik \(2016\)](#) found that emotional intelligence and personality are related to burnout. Likewise, [Baleghizadeh and Jula \(2024\)](#) reported a positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, which is the opposite of teacher burnout. Later, [De Carlo et al. \(2019\)](#) found that job resources mitigated the relationship between workload aspects and job demands among teachers.

[Samadi et al. \(2020\)](#) studied the potential links between EFL teachers' job satisfaction, burnout and intention to leave. They found that, regardless of the level of job satisfaction, teachers' level of burnout was affected by their intention to leave. [Safari \(2020\)](#) showed an inverse relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and burnout and recommended that resources be provided to help teachers gain the optimal level of well-being. [Bakker and Demerouti \(2024\)](#) observed that teacher burnout was correlated with higher demand, demonstrating higher burnout and exhaustion due to the shift to online platforms. [Xing \(2022\)](#) found a significant

relationship between professional identity and teacher burnout. Moreover, job resources, like obligation and job satisfaction, were found to mediate this association.

More studies have further developed the theoretical basis by integrating multi-level structures, external family conflicts, and psychological needs into the JD-R paradigm. At a broader organizational level, hierarchical linear modeling reveals that school-level emotional job demands of teaching and individual-level suppression have positive relationships with teachers' depression and anxiety, while school-level trust in colleagues and individual-level reappraisal relate positively to contentment and enthusiasm (Yin et al., 2018). Furthermore, the model extends to the home environment, where workload has a positive relationship with work-family conflict (WFC), and job resources successfully buffer this association (De Carlo et al., 2019).

To understand the complex, multifold relationship between teachers' JD-R and its link to burnout, empirical literature has focused heavily on locating and controlling contributing factors in an organized way (Khan et al., 2014). Synthesizing these foundational dynamics, early research established that workplace factors directly shape these outcomes; specifically, a positive relationship exists between burnout and job demands, whereas job resources and burnout are negatively correlated (Szabó & Jagodics, 2014). This foundational framework highlights a direct relationship between teachers' job demand and burnout, making it essential to consider these factors in one study to see the link between JD-R of teachers in the form of burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017, 2024; Khan et al., 2014). Beyond basic correlations, the social environment of the workplace significantly affects burnout, which is negatively related to the professional and emotional support of co-workers—implying that certain factors of the workplace contribute to the development of burnout, whereas others appear to lessen the impact of job demands (Szabó & Jagodics, 2014).

Applying and adapting this framework globally, subsequent research shifted toward specific cultural contexts and life-span demands. In Malaysia, investigations adapting the JD-R model confirmed that job demands and job resources were negatively correlated, while reinforcing the positive relationship between burnout and job demands (Aimi Roslan et al., 2015). Expanding the model to include personal resources and life stages, research has shown that demands fluctuate across a teacher's career; for instance, economic problems and ICT demands are positively related to burnout symptoms particularly during the early stages of a career, while caregiving demands have a positive relationship with work burnout but a negative association with work engagement in the later stages (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018). Crucially, while life satisfaction is related to work engagement, depressive symptoms remain linked to work burnout across all career stages (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018).

According to Yu and Yu (2023), heavy workload and social expectations increase EFL teachers' job demands, leading to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in China. Rastegar and Zarei (2023) reported that some aspects of

assessment workload were significant predictors of burnout among EFL teachers in Iran.

Pawlak et al. (2024) provided a systematic review of language teacher burnout and demotivation, explicitly associating high job demands, such as intercultural requirements and assessment responsibilities, with burnout because language teachers and assessors face various demands, including designing authentic assessments and meeting high intercultural expectations, which result in emotional exhaustion, burnout, and consequently, reduced motivation.

Hlado and Harvanková (2024) found that job demands indirectly influence work ability. High job demands lead to teacher fatigue, which contributes to a reduced perceived work ability. Li (2025) concluded that higher job resources, such as a positive perceived school climate and access to professional development, were negatively related to burnout, whereas high challenging job demands had positive correlations with burnout.

Most recently, empirical focus has turned to the internal mechanics of motivation, needs, and administrative perceptions. Research mapping the school hierarchy shows that out of multiple potential resources and demands identified by school principals, only four are significantly related to emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and motivation to quit, with emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction mediating the relationships between motivation to quit and JD-Rs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Finally, looking at how these dynamics affect teachers' learning commitment, findings demonstrate positive relationships between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, teachers' job resources experience, commitment to professional learning, and autonomous motivation (Pawlak et al., 2024). However, mirroring the distinct pathways of the JD-R model, there remains no relationship between basic need satisfaction and job demands (Pawlak et al., 2024), showing the separate but intersecting roles that demands and resources play in teacher burnout.

Two notable limitations emerge from the research conducted thus far. First, few studies have investigated job demands and resource levels among Iranian EFL teachers, specifically focused on burnout. Second, there remains a scarcity of mixed-methods studies examining these interconnections through integrated quantitative and qualitative lenses. These gaps motivated the present mixed-methods investigation into the associations among burnout, job demands, and resources within Iran's EFL context.

Method

Participants and Setting

Quantitative Phase

The quantitative strand involved 146 Iranian EFL teachers (67 males, 79 females), selected through convenience sampling. Participants were drawn from various cities across Iran, including Tehran, Shiraz, Qazvin, Rasht, Arak, Urumieh, Ahvaz, and Ilam. Their age range was from 21 to 65 years ($M = 31.5$ years). Their experience of teaching ranged from 4 to 40 years. Educational qualifications

included 22 participants with a B.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), 75 with an M.A., and 49 who were PhD candidates or PhD holders.

Qualitative Phase

The qualitative strand comprised 39 EFL teachers (22 females, 17 males), recruited via an online questionnaire administered through Porsline. Informed consent was obtained, and anonymity was ensured to protect participant confidentiality. Their ages ranged from 24 to 56 years ($M = 40.1$ years). They had experiences of teaching ranging from 1 to over 18 years, distributed as follows: 1–3 years ($n=2$), 3–6 years ($n=7$), 6–12 years ($n=7$), 12–18 years ($n=7$), and more than 18 years ($n=16$). Educational qualifications included 4 participants with a B.A., 18 with an M.A., and 17 who were PhD candidates or holders. The participants were affiliated with diverse educational settings: 16 taught at language institutes, 18 at private or public schools, and 15 were university professors. They were located in Shiraz, Qazvin, Mashhad, Tehran, Rasht, Arak, and Hamedan.

Materials and Instruments

The following four data collection instruments were used to collect data:

Burnout Questionnaire

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) was used to measure academic burnout (Kristensen et al., 2005). We used the Personal Burnout Scale, which assesses the level of psychological and physical fatigue and exhaustion an individual experiences (Kristensen et al., 2005). It includes six questions that are answered on a five-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale was evaluated by Kristensen et al. (2005) and demonstrated excellent internal consistency, achieving a high Cronbach's alpha of .90. The validity of the scale was entrusted to expert judgment, and Cronbach's alpha was used to re-estimate its reliability to be .83.

Job Demand and Resources Questionnaire

The questionnaire originally developed by (Demerouti et al, 2001) is made up of two parts; the first part (job demand) contains seven sections, each of which includes four items: mental load, pace and amount of work, physical effort, emotional load, changes in tasks, uncertainty about the future, and ambiguities about work. Part two (job resource) also has seven sections, each including four items: communication, information, participation, remuneration, relationship with superior, relationship with colleagues, and work independence. Items are scored on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The construct validity of the instrument is anchored in the dual-process framework of JD-R theory, and its contextual and content validity were verified through a panel of expert judges to ensure relevance to the educational climate. Expert judgment and widespread previous use confirmed its validity, and its reliability in the context of this study was estimated to be 0.83.

Job Demands-Resources Semi-Structured Interview

After completing the quantitative part, a semi-structured interview protocol, adapted from Bakker and Demerouti (2007), served as the primary instrument to explore the job demands and resources of English language teachers in Iran. The adaptation incorporated probes specific to Iran's EFL teaching environment, such as societal attitudes toward English and local curriculum constraints, to reflect cultural and educational nuances. The questionnaire comprised 11 questions: the first five gathered demographic data, including gender (male or female), teaching experience (1–3, 3–6, 6–12, or over 12 years), educational attainment (B.A., M.A., or Ph.D.), teaching city, and age. The remaining six open-ended questions explored major job demands including societal and familial expectations (e.g., workload, student issues, administrative tasks, curriculum, parental pressures, and societal views on English teaching), coping strategies for managing these pressures, supportive resources (e.g., colleagues, training, autonomy, educational materials, and professional development in Iran), and insights on how additional contextual factors like working conditions and educational policies affect teaching quality.

Procedure

The JD-R questionnaire was utilized along with the burnout questionnaire to determine the possible consequence of job demands or job resources in academic settings. After getting the participants' consent, in the quantitative phase, the JD-R and burnout questionnaires were given to teachers via e-mail and social media, including Google Forms, Telegram, and WhatsApp. The researchers explained to the respondents that they had to answer the questionnaires at time intervals; this was to prevent fatigue and to ensure effective cooperation. Moreover, the participants could ask questions if they had any misunderstanding any time. Of the 220 initial sample of participants, 146 responded to the questionnaires satisfactorily.

In the qualitative phase, the semi-structured interview was hosted on the Porsline.ir platform, supporting both voice and written responses to accommodate varying technological access and participant preferences, ensuring inclusivity. To ensure that the Interview and the respective questionnaire measured the same construct, the interview guide was submitted to a panel of psychometric and linguistic experts to verify its content alignment and face validity, and they confirmed that the qualitative prompts effectively targeted the same conceptual dimensions as the quantitative items. The interview was presented in Farsi to minimize time demands and encourage authentic responses. Then, answers were translated into academic English for analysis. Data were collected over a month in 2025. Based on Guest et al. (2006), who suggest 12–60 interviews for thematic saturation in qualitative research, the study initially targeted 70 teachers to ensure a diverse sample across Iran's regions and teaching contexts. However, data collection concluded with 39 participants, as thematic saturation was confirmed through iterative coding by the research team, ensuring no new themes emerged, and participant availability constraints were encountered.

To address the quantitative research questions examining whether the levels of job resources and job demands lead to significant differences in EFL teachers'

burnout, the collected data were systematically cleaned, summarized, and prepared for statistical analysis. Data cleaning involved handling missing values and identifying outliers to ensure data quality. The Kruskal-Wallis test was selected for its suitability in analyzing non-parametric data or non-normal distributions. Following significant Kruskal-Wallis test results, pairwise comparisons were conducted to identify specific group differences.

To investigate the qualitative research questions concerning the primary job resources, job demands, societal and familial expectations, and additional factors influencing EFL teachers' burnout and teaching quality in Iran, a transcendental phenomenology was conducted to describe the essence of the lived experiences of 39 EFL teachers across various regions in Iran (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This approach was chosen to bracket researchers' preconceptions and capture the invariant structures of teachers' experiences with job demands, resources, and burnout. Qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews and open-ended surveys, were imported into MAXQDA software, and analyzed using thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework, employing an inductive coding approach to identify emergent themes (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2021). The analysis adhered to the core stages of transcendental phenomenology: (1) epoché, bracketing researchers' biases through reflective memos; (2) phenomenological reduction, identifying significant statements and coding meaning units from narratives; (3) imaginative variation, exploring structural variations to uncover essential patterns; and (4) synthesis of meanings, integrating textures and structures into cohesive themes that capture the phenomenon's essence (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2007). MAXQDA facilitated data organization through code hierarchies and visualization of theme relationships, supporting iterative coding and theme refinement in line with the questions of the study (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2021).

Design of the Study

This study utilized a convergent complementary mixed-methods design to examine the relationships between resources, job demands, and burnout among EFL teachers in the Iranian educational context, aiming to provide robust insights. In this design, the quantitative and qualitative strands are deliberately separated to address distinct, specialized research questions, allowing for a comprehensive mapping of the target phenomenon (Greene et al., 1989). Quantitative data were first collected through structured surveys to test statistical relationships for research questions 1 and 2, establishing a generalizable foundation for understanding these variables. Subsequently, qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews to address research questions 3 and 4, exploring contextual nuances specific to the Iranian setting. Integration occurred during interpretation, where joint displays link survey results with interview themes to explain quantitative findings, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the EFL teaching environment. The design of this study enhances reliability and credibility by combining the breadth of statistical analysis with the depth of qualitative insights, making it ideal for addressing complex research objectives in a high-impact study (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Results

Results of the Quantitative Phase

Research Question 1

The goal of the first question was to see whether the level of job demand can make any difference in the level of teachers' burnout. To this end, the researchers divided the participants' job demand scores into three categories using the Visual Binning facility in SPSS, and based on these, compared the burnout scores of the resultant groups. For this purpose, a Kruskal-Wallis test was used, with the results displayed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Burnout Scores Based on Job Demand

	Job Demand (Binned)	N	Mean Rank
Burnout	Low	52	33.03
	Mid	47	70.87
	High	47	120.90
	Total	146	

Table 1 shows Kruskal-Wallis mean ranks for Burnout across three binned categories of Job Demand, illustrating a clear, progressive increase in burnout scores as job demands elevate.

As shown in Table 2, ($H(2) = 108.036$, $P = 0.000$), the p-value ($p < 0.05$) suggested significant differences among the burnout scores of the participants with different levels of job demand scores.

Table 2

Kruskal-Wallis H Test Statistics on Burnout Scores Based on Job Demand

	Burnout
Chi-Square	108.036
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kruskal-Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Job Demand (Binned)

To determine which pairs of categories were different, the researchers used pairwise comparisons of the burnout scores. The results are shown in Table 3. The p-values in Table 3 indicate that the burnout scores of each job demand level were significantly different from other levels ($p < 0.05$). It was observed that the level of burnout of the participants of the high job demand group was notably higher in comparison to the other two job demand levels. Meanwhile, the level of burnout of the participants of the mid job demand level was significantly higher than that of the low job demand group.

Table 3*Pairwise Comparison of Burnout Scores Based on Job Demand Categories*

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Low-Mid	-37.843	.000	.000
Low-High	-87.875	.000	.000
Mid-High	-50.032	.000	.000

Based on this piece of data, it can be concluded that the level of job demand led to a significant difference in EFL teachers' burnout.

Research Question 2

To investigate whether the level of job resource leads to any significant difference in EFL teachers' burnout, the researchers divided the participants' job resources scores into three categories and, based on them, compared the burnout scores of the resultant groups. For this purpose, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was run; the results are shown in Table .

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics for Burnout Scores Based on Job Resources Categories*

	Job Resource (Binned)	N	Mean Rank
Burnout	Low	54	59.85
	Mid	37	70.85
	High	55	88.68
	Total	146	

Table 4 displays Kruskal-Wallis mean ranks for Burnout across three binned categories of Job Resources, demonstrating a progressive increase in burnout rank scores across resource groups. The p-value in Table 5 ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$) is indicative of significant differences among the burnout scores of the participants with different levels of job resource scores.

Table 5*Kruskal-Wallis H Test Statistics on Burnout Scores Based on Job Resources*

	Burnout
Chi-Square	12.999
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.002

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Job Resource (Binned)

To determine which pairs of categories were different, the researchers used the pairwise comparisons of the burnout scores. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Pairwise Comparison of Burnout Scores Based on the Three Categories of Job Resource

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Low-Mid	-10.999	.220	.661
Low-High	-28.830	.000	.001
Mid-High	-17.830	.046	.139

The adjusted p-values in Table 6 indicate that only the difference in the burnout scores of the teachers with low and high levels of job resources was significantly different (adj. $p < 0.05$), and that the teachers with intermediate levels of job resources showed no significant difference with those teachers who had low or high job resource levels in terms of their burnout.

Results of the Qualitative Phase

In the qualitative phase, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used to explore the research questions, complementing quantitative findings by elucidating the essence of Iranian EFL teachers' lived experiences of job demands, resources, and burnout (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Thematic analysis was conducted inductively within this phenomenological framework to identify meaningful themes and patterns from textual data, capturing the psychological, social, and professional complexities of teachers' experiences (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2021). Data from semi-structured interviews were transcribed for rigorous analysis to reflect participants' lived realities. The analysis followed transcendental phenomenology's stages: (1) epoché, bracketing researchers' assumptions via reflective memos; (2) phenomenological reduction, coding significant statements to form meaning units; (3) imaginative variation, varying perspectives to identify invariant structures; and (4) synthesis, integrating findings into essential themes (Creswell, 2007). MAXQDA supported this process through systematic coding, code hierarchies, and visualization tools, enabling iterative theme development (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2021).

To ensure rigor, trustworthiness was established by observing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, as described in Creswell and Clark (2018). Credibility was achieved through the design of the semi-structured interview guide, which utilized detailed prompt development grounded in the operational definitions of the JD-R framework, and was further refined through peer debriefing with two EFL pedagogy experts to refine interpretations. Transferability was improved by detailed contextual descriptions of settings and diverse sampling across regions and institutions. Dependability was maintained via a MAXQDA audit trail, logging coding decisions and theme revisions, with intercoder reliability checks confirming consistency. Confirmability was ensured through reflexivity, documenting biases in memos, and verifying themes against raw data. These measures ensured robust findings that accurately reflected participants' experiences.

Thematic Analysis and Findings

To analyze the qualitative data, the initial coding phase aimed to extract foundational concepts and organize data into meaningful units. This phase followed an inductive thematic analysis approach within the phenomenological framework to avoid imposing preconceived theoretical frameworks on the data. Transcripts were read multiple times, with meaning units coded line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph, yielding 43 initial codes. Efforts were made to define codes with precision and semantic consistency, avoiding conceptual overlap.

Table 7 presents an example of the preliminary coding procedure applied to the qualitative data, including a representative matrix of the initial coding phase and how specific excerpted narratives were translated into foundational open codes for subsequent axial categorization.

Table 7

Initial Coding of Qualitative Data Based on Interviewee Narratives

Narrative of Participant	Initial Coding
"I have to stay at school until late every day, even after working hours, because we also have administrative tasks."	High workload
"Our contracts are renewed every year; I'm never sure if I'll be here next year or not."	Lack of job security
"The school principal doesn't pay attention to our suggestions at all; I feel like I have no value."	Feeling undervalued
"To avoid burnout, I go hiking on weekends or spend time with friends."	Coping strategies for burnout
"We have no discretion in choosing resources or teaching methods; everything is dictated from above."	Limitations in educational autonomy
"The books we have to teach don't match the kids' levels at all; they're too hard or too easy."	Syllabus mismatch with learner levels

Each code was documented with raw data examples to enhance analysis credibility. These initial codes formed the basis for extracting final themes in subsequent stages of thematic analysis and paved the way for identifying deeper conceptual patterns. Table 8 displays the initial codes derived from the data.

Table 8

Initial Codes Extracted from Data

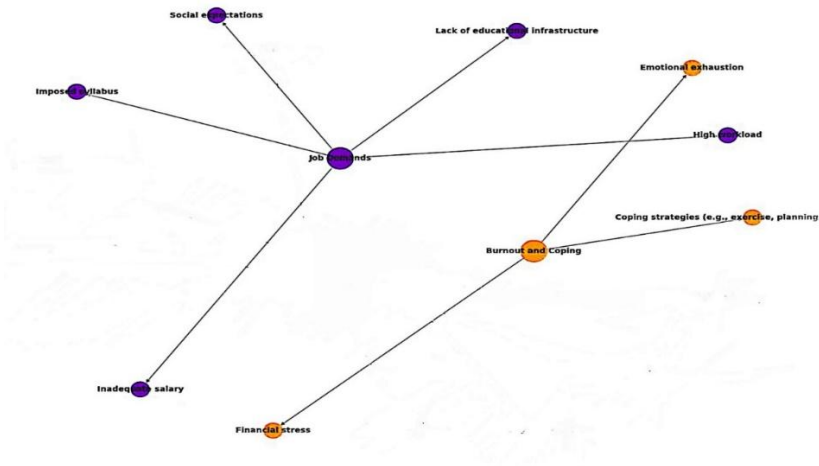
Category	Initial Code	Description
Job Demands	High workload	References to large numbers of classes, administrative duties, and online assignments
Job Demands	Inadequate salary	Dissatisfaction with pay relative to effort and working hours
Job Demands	Imposed syllabus	Lack of alignment between the curriculum and students' levels or the teacher's expertise
Psychological Pressure	Family expectations	Pressure from unrealistic expectations of parents and society
Psychological Pressure	Commercial view of institutes	Transformation of education into business, neglect of teaching quality

The table maps five distinct initial codes to their higher-order thematic, accompanied by explicit operational descriptions for each code.

Initial inductive coding of qualitative data revealed that the lived experiences of English language teachers in Iran encompass multilayered and diverse components identifiable as conceptual codes (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Codes Extracted From MAXQDA



The extracted codes reflected challenges and coping strategies in facing job pressures. Examination of participants' narratives indicated that concepts such as high workload, lack of job security, feeling undervalued, and limitations in educational autonomy were among the most significant factors contributing to burnout. Narratives also showed that teachers employ diverse coping strategies, including recreational activities and revisions to teaching methods. These findings suggest that teachers' professional experiences combine structural pressures and individual strategies, interacting to shape their occupational well-being. The final themes from qualitative analysis are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Final Themes in Qualitative Analysis

Row	Main Theme	Subthemes	General Description of Theme
1	Structural and Organizational Demands	High workload, inadequate salary, imposed syllabus, and lack of facilities	Pressures arising from the educational structure and lack of institutional support
2	Job Burnout and Psychological Pressure	Mental fatigue, financial pressure, social neglect, and unrealistic expectations	Experiences of exhaustion and disappointment due to work and social conditions
3	Coping Strategies for Job Pressure	Time management, relaxing activities, social support, and changing teaching methods	Methods teachers use to maintain mental health and motivation
4	Critique of Educational Structure and Policy	Commercial outlook, lack of effective evaluation, scientific gap, and distrust in formal education	Critical views on macro policies and inefficiencies in the language education system

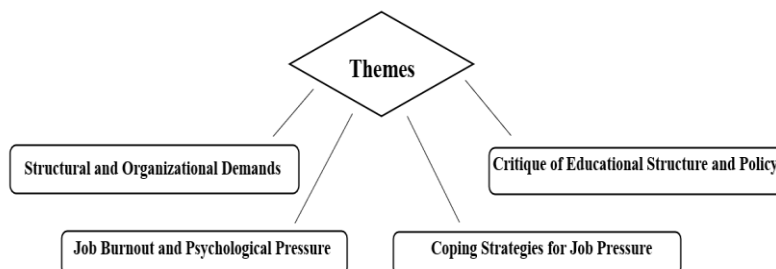
The thematic analysis indicates that the lived experiences of English language teachers in Iran form at the intersection of structural pressures and coping strategies. The extracted themes can be categorized into a main axis: Tension Axis, including themes of 'structural demands', 'job burnout', and 'critique of educational structure', which highlight systemic, psychological, and social challenges. These themes indicate that teachers face burnout when confronting inefficient structures, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of institutional support. This axis forms a

complex pattern of professional experiences, which can be used as a foundation for designing educational interventions and supportive policies.

Figure 2 presents the extracted themes and the final conceptual model of the qualitative section of the study.

Figure 2.

Extracted Themes and the Final Conceptual Model



Here, the key themes of the qualitative findings are summarized with participant quotes for credibility:

- a. Theme: Workload Pressure and Imposed Duties: "We are not just teachers; we have to do administrative work, report writing, and even cultural planning. There's no time left for actual teaching."
- b. Theme: Feeling Undervalued and Lack of Organizational Support: "No one supports us. When a problem arises, everyone blames the teacher."

Research Question 3: Job Demands

Challenging job demands and the way they influence job burnout were explored, and the result showed that Job demands in teaching English in Iran often extend beyond mere instruction. Teachers face a high volume of administrative tasks, report writing, cultural planning, and even executive duties, as illustrated in Theme (a) regarding workload pressure and imposed duties. This excessive workload, coupled with job insecurity and imposed curricula misaligned with students' proficiency levels, contributes to feelings of burnout and demotivation. Some teachers reported feelings of 'worthlessness' and 'organizational neglect', which align with Maslach and Leiter's (2016) burnout theory. Structural and organizational demands, such as high workload, inadequate compensation, imposed curricula, insufficient teaching resources, and inefficient educational structures, are among the primary challenges for English teachers in Iran. These pressures lead to mental exhaustion, decreased motivation, and feelings of devaluation.

Research Question 4: Burnout Experiences, and Coping Strategies

The impact of societal and parental expectations on job stress and motivation management revealed that these expectations often exceed English

teachers' realistic capabilities and roles in Iran. Parents anticipate rapid language proficiency from their children while disregarding educational constraints, creating significant psychological pressure. Teachers are expected to ensure students' success in international exams without adequate institutional support, often leading to feelings of worthlessness and frustration, consistent with the experiences of organizational neglect described in Theme (b). However, teachers navigate these pressures through various coping strategies, including engaging in constructive dialogue with parents, establishing realistic expectations, and participating in stress-relieving activities such as exercise and social interaction. As one teacher shared: "To avoid burnout, I try to exercise or spend time with friends on weekends. It helps a lot." Additionally, teachers employ adaptive teaching methods to manage workload demands. These coping mechanisms are in line with the stress-coping model of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984), demonstrating how teachers actively employ emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies to maintain their professional well-being.

Research Question 5: Contextual Factors Affecting Teaching Quality

The analysis of the data pertaining to the contextual factors affecting teaching quality related to job resources and demands showed that contextual factors, such as societal views on English, working conditions, and educational policies, significantly influence teaching quality. The commercial orientation of some educational institutes, the lack of effective evaluation, and distrust in formal education systems pose structural challenges. One teacher remarked, *"Institutes are more commercial than educational. Teaching quality doesn't matter; only enrollment numbers do."*

Research Question 6: The Impact of the intervening factors on job demands/resources

According to the open-ended results, these factors are intertwined with job demands, like workload and job insecurity, and also affect the availability of motivational resources. For instance, in environments with more flexible educational policies, teachers have greater opportunities to utilize technology and innovative methods. Contextual factors, including the commercialization of language education, ineffective evaluation systems, a scientific gap between policymakers and teachers, and distrust in formal education, negatively impact the quality of teaching. These factors are linked to structural demands and undermine motivational resources. However, some teachers maintain motivation through the use of educational technology and engaging teaching experiences. These experiences align with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, suggesting that meaning-making in teaching serves as a source of sustained motivation.

Discussion

The results of this mixed-methods study revealed a nuanced interplay between JD-R and Iranian EFL teachers' burnout. Quantitatively, Kruskal-Wallis tests demonstrated that higher job demands were significantly associated with elevated burnout, with teachers in high-demand groups exhibiting greater emotional

exhaustion and reduced efficacy compared to their low-demand counterparts. Conversely, higher job resources significantly lowered burnout, with pairwise comparisons revealing progressive improvements across resource levels. Qualitatively, themes such as structural demands, including administrative overload and inadequate salaries, alongside societal pressures, exacerbated burnout, as richly illustrated through teachers' narratives. These findings underscore the JD-R model's applicability in Iran's EFL context, demonstrating that balancing demands and resources is pivotal for teacher well-being, which ultimately influences instructional quality and student outcomes in this culturally unique educational system.

These findings align with and extend the extensive JD-R literature, offering a robust contribution to educational and EFL-specific research within the Iranian context. Consistent with Bakker and Demerouti (2017), high job demands, including administrative tasks, emotional labor, and curriculum constraints, predicted burnout, corroborating Hakanen et al. (2024) and Safari (2020) regarding workload pressures and organizational challenges. Assessment-related demands linked to emotional exhaustion align with findings from Ghafouri et al. (2025), Pishghadam et al. (2014) and Rastegar and Zarei (2023) among Iranian EFL teachers. The study's emphasis on 'professional autonomy' and 'colleague support' as protective job resources corroborate Hakanen et al. (2024) regarding psychological capital in EFL settings. Qualitative findings on cultural factors, particularly parental expectations and the commercialization of education, extend Barjesteh et al. (2025) while aligning with Pawlak et al. (2024) on intercultural demands. The mixed-methods approach uniquely addresses the scarcity of such designs in Iranian EFL research, noted by Zeinolabedini et al. (2022), with qualitative insights on coping strategies aligning with Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Esmaeilee et al. (2025) regarding job crafting practices. The integration of macro-social factors, including policy inefficiencies and commercial outlooks, responds to calls by Hlado and Harvankova (2024) and Castro Silva et al. (2026) for more holistic examinations of structural and cultural influences on the well-being of teachers.

Overall, the results of this mixed-methods study indicate that the JD-R model benefits from predictive validity in Iranian EFL contexts, in alignment with global trends in educational psychology. This is evidenced by the quantitative data, which connotated high job demands with increased burnout, as well as the qualitative data, which supported the role of structural and societal demands, as put forward by Pawlak et al. (2024), which was shown to serve as a mediator as well as a moderator in this relationship. These findings align with our qualitative data, where peer support emerged as a key resource.

Finally, from a teacher-centered perspective, we can refer to the findings drawn from Lillelien and Jensen's (2025) systematic review of digital interventions on burnout. The study indicated that personal resources (e.g., mindfulness) play an undeniable role in enhancing professional well-being and reducing emotional exhaustion. Moreover, Bahramy Hidaji et al. (2024) drew upon Demerouti et al.'s (2001) model to validate the JD-R framework's applicability across diverse educational settings, including EFL instruction, which can ultimately improve teacher retention and instructional quality through structural reforms and resource

allocation. Therefore, teacher training centers' targeted interventions can build on teachers' personal and social resources, which can, in turn, improve students' well-being and engagement (Safdari, 2022) and foster a culture of support.

Conclusion and Implications

The quantitative findings revealed that high job demands significantly increased burnout among Iranian EFL teachers, while abundant resources substantially reduced it, demonstrating that teachers' well-being is intrinsically linked to balancing workplace demands and the resources available. Qualitatively, the study highlighted how structural demands, such as administrative overload and inadequate compensation, alongside external societal pressures, drive exhaustion, whereas resources like colleague support, professional development opportunities, and institutional autonomy serve as protective buffers. These results validate the applicability of the JD-R model to Iranian EFL settings and suggest that targeted interventions, including workload restructuring, enhanced professional development programs, and strengthened peer support systems, can effectively mitigate burnout while improving teaching quality and retention rates.

In conclusion, this mixed-methods research utilized a complementary framework, and the qualitative insights elaborated and contextualized the broader macro-structural patterns revealed by the quantitative instruments. The investigation validated the JD-R model's applicability within the Iranian EFL context through compelling quantitative and qualitative evidence. Quantitatively, Kruskal-Wallis tests confirmed that elevated job demands significantly increased burnout levels, with high-demand groups reporting greater emotional exhaustion and cynicism, while abundant job resources substantially reduced burnout across progressive resource levels. Qualitatively, thematic analysis illuminated how structural demands, including administrative overload, inadequate salaries, and imposed curricula, alongside societal and familial expectations, amplified occupational pressures and burnout experiences. Conversely, resources like professional autonomy, colleague support, and access to educational technology mitigated burnout and enhanced teaching quality. Teachers employed various coping strategies, including exercise and constructive dialogue, to navigate these challenges. Additionally, contextual factors such as the commercialization of education and policy inefficiencies further exacerbated demands while limiting available resources. The combination of quantitative patterns with qualitative meanings provides a more comprehensive picture of how demand-resource imbalances fundamentally undermine teacher well-being in Iran's culturally unique educational landscape.

Nevertheless, the study has a number of limitations that warrant caution in interpretation. The reliance on convenience sampling for both quantitative ($n=146$) and qualitative ($n=39$) phases may limit generalizability beyond urban Iranian EFL teachers, potentially overlooking rural or less accessible populations. Self-reported measures, such as the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, introduce risks of socially desirable responses, while cross-sectional designs preclude causal inferences about JD-R dynamics over time. Additionally, the qualitative saturation at 39 participants, though aligned with Guest et al. (2006), could be expanded for greater diversity in

teaching contexts. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track how JD-R factors evolve, perhaps incorporating objective measures like physiological stress indicators. Interventions testing resource-enhancing programs, such as targeted professional development in digital tools, could be evaluated in randomized trials.

The broader implications of the results can go beyond Iranian EFL education, offering valuable lessons for global educational systems grappling with teacher retention amid high-stakes demands. By highlighting how resources mitigate burnout, this study underscores the need for targeted interventions, such as enhanced professional development programs and digital tool access, which could be applied in policy reforms to foster resilient teaching environments, particularly in resource-scarce contexts like Iran. Educational administrators and policymakers can leverage these insights to redesign workloads, promote autonomy, and address cultural expectations through awareness campaigns, ultimately improving instructional quality and student outcomes. Moreover, the identification of societal perceptions as burnout influencers suggests applications in cross-cultural educational psychology, informing strategies to align public expectations with realistic teaching roles. However, limitations such as convenience sampling and self-reported data call for cautious generalization, prompting future research to employ longitudinal designs that track JD-R dynamics over time and incorporate objective measures like physiological stress indicators. Additionally, exploring the role of personal resources in moderating JD-R effects could refine the model for diverse EFL settings.

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