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Original Research

Scrutinizing the Underlying Factors in Italian and Iranian English Teachers' Motivation

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Abstract

Motivation constitutes one of the language teachers' main affective factors that tends to exert considerable influence on their pedagogical efficacy and is likely to determine their resilience in various language contexts and academic settings. The present study scrutinized the main factors in Italian and Iranian English teachers' motivation. Furthermore, it examined the difference between the motivation of these teacher groups. Using convenience sampling, the study gathered data from 281 Italian and 231 Iranian English educators. The participants completed six validated assessment instruments designed to measure teacher motivation, teaching enjoyment, teacher reflection, psychological well-being at work, emotion regulation, and work engagement. Lastly, they analyzed the obtained data using multiple-regression test and a t-test. The results of the study indicated that Italian teachers' teaching enjoyment, work engagement, and teacher reflection were the main factors in their motivation. On the other hand, Iranian teachers' psychological well-being at work, emotion regulation, and work engagement were the significant predictors of their motivation. Furthermore, Italian 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.

Keywords: Iranian English Teachers; Italian English Teachers; Teacher Factors; Teaching Motivation.

1. Introduction

A close perusal of recent studies on language teachers indicates a growing scholarly interest in teacher-related factors across diverse academic contexts (e.g., Alexander et al., 2020; Bing et al., 2022; Burić et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2022; Xiyun et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022). These studies collectively emphasize the pivotal role of teacher-internal variables in shaping instructional quality and professional functioning. Chang and Taxer (2021) conceptualized teacher factors as a constellation of internal characteristics that exert a substantial influence on language teachers' mental health, coping mechanisms, and pedagogical efficacy within classroom settings. Similarly, Deng et al. (2022) argued that such factors largely consist of affective attributes that shape language teaching practices by influencing teachers' psychological stability. Among these internal variables, Teacher Motivation (TM) has emerged as one of the most extensively examined constructs in empirical research.

TM has been widely recognized as a central determinant of language teachers' professional engagement and instructional behavior. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) defined language teachers' TM as the underlying reasons that drive their decision to engage in language teaching across different educational settings. In a similar vein, Roth et al. (2007) described TM as encompassing the motivational forces that encourage language teachers to adopt effective instructional strategies aimed at enhancing learners' second language development. Due to its far-reaching impact, TM has been shown to influence nearly all dimensions of pedagogical decision-making, including the selection of instructional approaches, classroom practices, and teaching strategies. Importantly, prior research has suggested that TM is not a static construct but an affective factor shaped by teachers' personal and emotional characteristics.

Despite this growing body of literature, existing research has primarily examined TM in isolation or has focused on a limited set of antecedents, often neglecting the combined and interactive influence of multiple affective teacher variables. Although emerging studies have identified constructs such as Teaching Enjoyment (TE), Teacher Reflection (TR), Psychological Well-Being at Work (PWBW), Emotion Regulation (ER), and Work Engagement (WE) as potentially influential factors in teachers' professional functioning (Yuan & Zhang, 2017), empirical evidence explaining how these affective variables jointly contribute to language teachers' TM remains scarce, particularly across diverse language learning contexts. Moreover, much of the existing research has been conducted in general education settings, leaving language-specific contexts underrepresented.

To address these gaps, the present study seeks to systematically examine the contribution of TE, TR, PWBW, ER, and WE to language teachers' TM within a language education context. By integrating multiple affective teacher variables into a single analytical framework, this study aims to extend current understandings of TM and respond to calls for more context-sensitive research on language teachers' motivational processes. In doing so, the study contributes to both theory and practice by clarifying the affective foundations of TM and offering pedagogical implications for sustaining teacher motivation in language education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Factors

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.

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 prompt language teachers to take advantage of efficacious instructional practices for ameliorating language learners' acquisition of the target language. The above-mentioned definition highlights the fact that various factors are likely to affect teachers' proclivity 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 regardless of external rewards. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation involves 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, TR, PWBW, ER, and WE, among the other affective factors.

2.2. Teaching Enjoyment

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. TE has been increasingly recognized as a key positive affective variable influencing teachers' professional functioning and instructional quality in language education. Empirical studies indicate that TE is closely associated with teachers' enthusiasm, persistence, and willingness to invest effort in classroom practices (Dewaele & Li, 2022). When educators experience greater instructional pleasure, they show a stronger tendency to display flexible teaching methods, connect constructively with students, and remain driven even during difficult educational situations. Research has also shown that TE is a multidimensional construct encompassing social enjoyment, personal enjoyment, and learner appreciation, each of which contributes uniquely to teachers' emotional experiences in instructional contexts (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). Moreover, recent findings suggest that TE functions as a protective factor by mitigating the negative effects of stress and emotional exhaustion, thereby supporting teachers' psychological well-being and long-

term engagement in language teaching (Dewaele & Li, 2022). 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 the development of working relationships with their peers and students. Furthermore, personal enjoyment specifies the extent to which target language instruction ameliorates teachers' 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.

2.3. Teacher Reflection

Akbari (2007) stated that language teachers' TR determines their capability to consciously examine their teaching practices to identify their teaching strengths and weaknesses and to substitute their ineffective pedagogical techniques with more effective ones. In view of this definition, Akbari et al. (2010) particularized five main sub-components of TR, including the *metacognitive*, *practical*, *cognitive*, *affective*, and *critical* sub-components. As they explained, metacognitive and practical sub-components of TR respectively refer to teachers' examination of their language teaching principles and their strategies that are implemented for facilitating the learners' language acquisition. Moreover, the cognitive and affective sub-components respectively determine the degree to which teachers consciously scrutinize their cognitive resources that are used in language teaching and the impact of language learners' emotions on the process of their language acquisition. Finally, Akbari et al. (2010) noted that the critical sub-component specifies the degree to which teachers are aware of the effect of their teaching strategies on their language learners' critical thinking ability.

2.4. Psychological Well-Being at Work

Garg and Rastogi (2009) stated that language teachers' PWBW is considered to be an affective factor that has a noticeable effect on their ability to acclimatize themselves to different instructional situations. They defined PWBW as teachers' perspectives on the agreeableness of their instructional experiences in their workplace. In view of this definition, Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012) identified five main sub-components of this construct, including *perceived recognition at work*, *feeling of competency at work*, *desire for involvement at work*, *thriving at work*, and *interpersonal fit at work*. They explained that perceived workplace recognition involves how teachers view others' awareness of their contribution to student achievement. Occupational competence relates to an educator's self-assurance in their own instructional skills. Workplace involvement signifies how deeply invested teachers are in executing their daily educational tasks, while job-related thriving reflects their capacity to innovate and design successful teaching methodologies. Lastly, occupational interpersonal fit measures a teacher's proficiency in building supportive networks with colleagues and students inside the school environment.

2.5. Emotion Regulation

Research by Li et al. (2022) identifies emotional regulation as a psychological asset governing how well educators handle classroom pressures. They characterized this variable as the capacity of teachers to control adverse feelings by drawing upon inner psychological strengths. 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.

2.6. Work Engagement

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.

2.7. Research Gap and Rationale

The studies of TM have not examined the degree to which language teachers' affective factors, including their TR, PWBW, 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 the above-mentioned issues in research on TM in the contexts of Italy 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 Italian teachers' TR, PWBW, ER, and WE significantly predict their TM?
2. Do Iranian teachers' TR, PWBW, ER, and WE significantly predict their TM?
3. Is there any significant difference between Italian and Iranian teachers' TM as reflected by affective factors?

3. Methodology

3.1. 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 the five independent variables of the study, including Italian and Iranian English teachers' TE, TR, PWBW, ER, and WE, predicted their TM that was the dependent variable of the study.

3.2. Participants

Considering the aims of the study, first, the researchers selected various reputable language institutes in seven major cities in Italy, including Rome, Naples, Milan, Bologna, Genoa, Catania, and Florence, and 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 Italian and 261 Iranian teachers.

Second, the researchers contacted these teachers (male and female) in a one-month period, apprised them of the aims, and invited them to take part in the study. Twelve Italian and 14 Iranian teachers did not answer the researchers' emails. Moreover, 9 Italian 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 Italian 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 Italian and Iranian teachers' academic degrees indicated that they had a B.A. or M.A degree in an English-related major. Moreover, Italian teachers ranged in age from 26 to 52, and Iranian teachers were in the age range of 23 to 61. Italian teachers were native speakers of Italian, and Iranian teachers were native speakers of Azeri, Persian, or Kurdish. Lastly, Italian teachers' language teaching experience was in the range of 2 to 23 years, and Iranian teachers ranged in experience from 1 to 28 years.

3.3. Instruments

The researchers used seven English questionnaires in order to gather the required data. The questionnaires were administered to all of the participants using Google Forms. Six of these instruments comprised Likert-scale items. Consequently, the researchers used Cronbach's Alpha (CA) measure to examine their reliability in a pilot study that involved 28 Italian and 26 Iranian English teachers who were similar to the participants of the main study in terms of their characteristics. The following section expounds on these questionnaires:

3.3.1. Demographic Information

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

3.3.2. Teacher Motivation

In light of the aims, the researchers used the TM scale developed by Roth et al. (2007). This 16-item tool utilizes a five-point Likert response format to assess four core motivational dimensions: intrinsic, extrinsic, identified, and introjected. Internal consistency evaluation via Cronbach's alpha yielded reliability values of .85 for the Italian cohort and .82 for the Iranian cohort.

3.3.3. Teaching Enjoyment

In the present study, the 9-item enjoyment scale by Proietti Ergün and Dewaele (2021) was utilized to measure teaching enjoyment across three branches: social pleasure, personal fulfillment, and student appreciation, scored via a five-point Likert system. Cronbach's alpha confirmed strong reliability, returning coefficients of .88 and .85 for the Italian and Iranian groups, respectively, confirming its suitability.

3.3.4. Teacher Reflection

The researchers took advantage of Akbari et al.'s (2010) TR questionnaire to examine Italian and Iranian teachers' TR. This instrument focuses on the main sub-components of TR, including the *metacognitive*, *practical*, *cognitive*, *affective*, and *critical* sub-components. It involves 29 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert-scale. Based on the results of CA analysis, the reliability indices of this instrument in Italian and Iranian contexts were respectively .87 and .81, and it was used in the present study.

3.3.5. Psychological Well-Being at Work

Considering the main objectives, the researchers used the 25-item instrument by Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012) to evaluate workplace well-being. It measures occupational recognition, personal competence, institutional involvement, workplace vitality, and social harmony using a six-point scoring system. Alpha reliability tests showed solid consistency, with coefficients of .83 (Italy) and .82 (Iran).

3.3.6. Emotion Regulation

Given the main aims, the 10-item emotional regulation metric from Gross and John (2003) was implemented. It gauges two principal dimensions—expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal—on a seven-point scale. The tool demonstrated high reliability in this sample, with alpha coefficients reaching .84 among Italian respondents and .87 among Iranian respondents.

3.3.7. Work Engagement

The researchers used Klassen et al.'s (2013) WE questionnaire to examine the WE of Italian 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 Italian and Iranian contexts, and it could be employed in this study.

3.4. Procedure

The data collection process began by securing written consent from 281 Italian and 231 Iranian English instructors across fourteen urban centers (seven per country) selected via convenience sampling. Following enrollment, participants were requested to fill out the complete survey packet, which integrated the measurement scales for teacher motivation (Roth et al., 2007), teaching enjoyment (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021), reflective practices (Akbari et al., 2010), workplace well-being (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012), emotion regulation (Gross & John, 2003), and work engagement (Klassen et al., 2013). Lastly, the researchers analyzed the collected data using SPSS 24.

3.5. Data Analysis

In the present study, the researchers used the Multiple Regression (MR) test to examine the predictive role of Italian and Iranian teachers' TE, TR, PWBW, 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).

4. Results

Question one examined the predictors of Italian teachers' TM. Therefore, the researchers used MR to analyze the data. To this end, first, they checked its assumptions, including *multicollinearity*, *outlier*, *independence of residuals*, *normality*, *linearity*, and *homoscedasticity*. Table 1 provides the results of the Tolerance (T) and VIF values:

Table 1. *T and VIF Values of Italian Teachers' TM*

Predictor	T	VIF
TE	.574	2.87
TR	.494	2.54
PWBW	.399	1.57
ER	.473	2.23
WE	.595	1.37

The metrics displayed in Table 1 confirm the absence of multicollinearity issues, as tolerance values remained strictly above 0.1 and variance inflation factors did not cross the threshold of 10. To verify the remaining regression criteria, calculations for Cook's distance and Mahalanobis distance were subsequently executed. Table 2 shows the relevant results:

Table 2. *MD and CD Values of Italian Teachers' TM*

Value	Minimum	Maximum
MD	2.98	18.76
CD	.023	.154

According to Table 2, the maximum MD value was 18.17. This value is less than 20.52 that constitutes the critical MD value of the models with five independent variables (Pallant, 2020). Moreover, the maximum CD value was less than 1. Therefore, the assumptions were not violated, and the researchers could examine the relevant model. Table 3 shows the pertinent results:

Table 3. *Model of Italian Teachers' TM*

Model	R	R Square	ARS	SEE
1	.914	.826	.817	23.847

According to Table 3, this model explained 82.6 percent (R Square multiplied by 100) of the variance in Italian teachers' TM. Moreover, the results of the relevant ANOVA test (which is a part of the MR test) were significant ($p < 0.05$). As a result, the researchers examined the model coefficients. Table 4 shows these results:

Table 4. *Beta Values of Italian Teachers' TM*

Predictor	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Sig.
TE	.395	.000
TR	.169	.012
PWBW	.042	.487
ER	.025	.754
WE	.287	.001

The scrutiny of Beta values in Table 4 indicated that Italian teachers' TE (.395), WE (.287), and TR (.169) were respectively the first, the second, and the third variables that made the strongest significant contribution to the prediction of their TM ($p < 0.05$).

Question two focused on the main predictors of Iranian teachers' TM. The researchers had to use MR to analyze the data. Accordingly, they checked each of the above-mentioned assumptions prior to the examination of the relevant model. Table 5 shows the results of the T and VIF values:

Table 5. *T and VIF Values of Iranian Teachers' TM*

Predictor	T	VIF
TE	.386	1.57
TR	.598	1.28
PWBW	.297	2.66
ER	.457	1.74
WE	.386	2.76

As shown in Table 5, the multicollinearity assumption was not violated due to the fact that all of the T values were greater than 0.1 and all of the VIF values were less than 10. Therefore, the researchers examined the MD and CD values to check the remaining assumptions. Table 6 provides the relevant results:

Table 6. *MD and CD Values of Iranian Teachers' TM*

Value	Minimum	Maximum
MD	2.55	19.22
CD	.032	.178

According to Table 6, the maximum MD value was 19.22. This value is less than 20.52 that constitutes the critical MD value of the models with five independent variables (Pallant, 2020). Furthermore, the maximum CD value was less than 1. Consequently, the assumptions were not violated, and the researchers could examine the relevant model. Table 7 shows the relevant results:

Table 7. *Model of Iranian Teachers' TM*

Model	R	R Square	ARS	SEE
1	.832	.784	.743	24.956

According to Table 7, this model explained 78.4 percent (R Square multiplied by 100) of the variance in Iranian teachers' TM. Furthermore, the results of the relevant ANOVA test were significant ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, the researchers examined the model coefficients. Table 8 shows these results:

Table 8. *Beta Values of Iranian Teachers' TM*

Predictor	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Sig.
TE	.059	.525
TR	.032	.743
PWBW	.356	.000
ER	.231	.002
WE	.152	.014

The scrutiny of Beta values in Table 8 showed that Iranian teachers' PWBW (.356), ER (.231), and WE (.152) were respectively the first, the second, and the third variables that made the strongest significant contribution to the prediction of their TM ($p < 0.05$).

Finally, question three examined the significance of the difference between Italian 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 Italian and Iranian teachers' TM:

Table 9. *Descriptive Statistics on Italian and Iranian Teachers' TM*

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Italian Teachers	281	60.54	12.955	.770
Iranian Teachers	231	53.03	11.767	.513

As shown in Table 9, there was a difference between the mean value of Italian 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:

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

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	34.229	.594	7.721	510	.000	7.511	.973	5.600	9.422
Equal variances not assumed			8.116	472.78	.000	7.511	.925	5.692	9.329

Welch's t-test assumes unequal variances. The examination of the unequal variances in Table 10 showed that Italian teachers' TM was significantly higher than that of Iranian teachers ($p<.05$). Figure 1 shows these results:

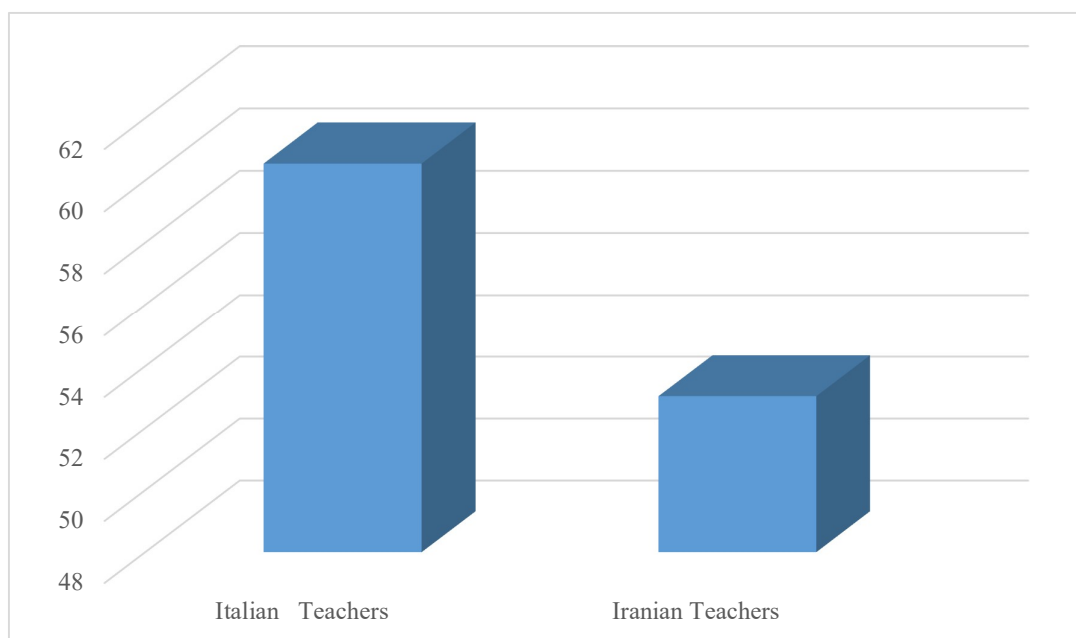


Figure 1. Italian and Iranian Teachers' TM

5. Discussion

The present study sought to examine the predictors of teachers' TM in two distinct educational contexts, namely Italy and Iran, and to compare the level of TM across these contexts. By doing so, the study not only corroborates earlier findings but also provides context-sensitive insights into how different affective and professional variables function across cultural and institutional settings.

With respect to the first research question, the findings revealed that Italian teachers' TE, WE, and teacher reflectivity TR were the strongest predictors of their TM. While previous studies have repeatedly highlighted the role of affective variables in shaping teachers' motivation (e.g., Moradkhani et al., 2017; Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021; Xiao et al., 2022), the present study extends this line of research by demonstrating that the motivational structure of TM is not universal, but rather context-dependent. Specifically, the prominence of TE and TR among Italian teachers suggests that in relatively autonomy-supportive educational environments, teachers' motivation is strongly rooted in intrinsic satisfaction, reflective practice, and emotional fulfillment derived from teaching.

Drawing on Breines and Chen's (2012) framework, the findings indicate that Italian teachers' TE operates as a self-reinforcing mechanism: enjoyment enhances instructional investment, which leads to improved learner outcomes and, in turn, strengthens teachers' motivation and sense of efficacy. What this study adds to the literature is the empirical evidence that TE does not merely coexist with TM but acts as a central motivational engine in contexts where teachers have the pedagogical freedom to experiment with strategies and observe tangible learner progress. In addition, the significant role of TR underscores the importance of reflective awareness as a motivational resource. Unlike earlier studies that treated reflectivity primarily as a professional skill, the present findings suggest that TR also serves a motivational function, enabling teachers to recognize their instructional strengths and maintain commitment despite classroom challenges.

Moreover, the predictive power of WE among Italian teachers highlights the social and relational dimension of motivation. Consistent with Burić and Macuka (2018), the results indicate that engagement with colleagues and students provides emotional and professional support; however, this study further demonstrates that such engagement buffers stress and sustains motivation, rather than merely enhancing job satisfaction. This nuanced finding contributes to the literature by positioning WE as both a social and motivational construct.

Regarding the second research question, the results showed that Iranian teachers' PWBW, ER, and WE were the main predictors of their TM. While earlier studies have established the relevance of affective regulation and well-being in teaching (e.g., Fathi & Derakhshan, 2019; Greenier et al., 2021), the present study offers a novel insight by foregrounding PWBW as the most salient predictor in this context. This finding suggests that in more demanding or constraint-driven educational systems, teachers' motivation is less dependent on enjoyment and reflectivity and more contingent upon their overall psychological functioning and emotional resilience.

In line with Dewaele et al. (2018), Iranian teachers' awareness of their professional value and contribution to student success appears to play a pivotal role in sustaining motivation. However, the current study challenges the implicit assumption in prior research that motivation primarily stems from positive emotions such as enjoyment. Instead, it shows that motivation can be sustained through coping-oriented mechanisms, such as ER and well-being maintenance, particularly in contexts characterized by higher stress and external pressures. The significance of ER, as emphasized by Diedrich et al. (2014), further illustrates that Iranian teachers' TM is closely tied to their capacity to manage emotional demands and mitigate burnout-inducing factors.

Additionally, although WE emerged as a predictor in both groups, its function differed across contexts. For Iranian teachers, WE appeared to operate as a resource mobilization strategy, enabling teachers to draw upon cognitive and emotional reserves to compensate for environmental constraints. This contrasts with the Italian context, where WE was more closely associated with relational fulfillment and professional growth. This comparative insight represents one of the key contributions of the study, as it demonstrates that the same construct may serve different motivational purposes depending on contextual realities.

lastly, data addressing the final research objective indicated that the Italian cohort possessed significantly elevated motivation levels compared to their Iranian peers. Though this outcome mirrors existing cross-cultural literature (e.g., Dewaele & Li, 2022; Yang et al., 2022), this research goes a step further by providing a conceptual explanation for the disparity instead of just summarizing data. The elevated scores of Italian educators likely stem from a heavier reliance on internal drives like reflective habits and job satisfaction. Conversely, the drive of Iranian educators seems more circumstantial, acting as a resilience strategy governed by emotional control and overall occupational mental health.

Burić et al. (2020) pointed out that language teachers who teach English in contexts where English is widely used in education and media (e.g., Italy) tend to report higher levels of teaching motivation (TM) compared to teachers working in other contexts. They attributed this finding to teachers' beliefs that English proficiency substantially enhances

learners' educational and occupational opportunities, which, in turn, strengthens teachers' commitment to meeting learners' language learning needs. In contrast, Bing et al. (2022) argued that in contexts where English does not play a central role in education and media, teachers may experience lower motivation, as they may perceive English as a time-consuming subject with limited relevance to learners' academic trajectories or future careers.

However, this explanation may not fully apply to learners who willingly enroll in language institutes, as such learners are typically already motivated to learn English and perceive its value irrespective of its role in formal education or media. Therefore, teachers' motivation in language institute contexts may be influenced not only by macro-level sociocultural factors but also by learners' self-initiated engagement and goal-oriented participation in English courses.

Based on these considerations, the significantly higher TM reported by Italian teachers in the present study may be partly attributed to broader societal perceptions of English as a key resource for educational and occupational advancement, while acknowledging that, in language institute settings, learners' voluntary enrollment and intrinsic motivation may also play an important role in shaping teachers' motivational orientations.

6. Conclusions

The present study aimed to identify the main predictors of TM among Italian and Iranian EFL teachers and to examine potential differences between these two groups. The findings revealed that Italian teachers' TM was primarily predicted by TE, WE, and teacher resilience TR, whereas Iranian teachers' TM was significantly predicted by PWBW, ER, and WE. These results highlight both shared and context-specific motivational mechanisms underlying EFL teachers' TM.

The findings carry several implications that are directly grounded in these results. First, the consistent predictive role of WE in both contexts suggests that fostering teachers' sustained involvement, enthusiasm, and absorption in their professional activities may be central to enhancing TM across different educational settings. Accordingly, professional development initiatives that support teachers' active engagement with their instructional roles may contribute to higher motivational levels regardless of context.

Second, the prominence of TE and TR as predictors of TM among Italian teachers indicates that positive emotional experiences in teaching and the ability to adapt to professional challenges play a crucial role in sustaining motivation in this context. This finding suggests that teacher support practices in similar contexts may benefit from placing greater emphasis on strengthening positive teaching experiences and resilience-related capacities.

In contrast, the predictive roles of PWBW and ER for Iranian teachers' TM underscore the importance of teachers' psychological functioning and their capacity to manage emotions in potentially demanding work environments. These findings imply that, in contexts where teachers' motivation is more closely tied to well-being and emotional regulation, attention to teachers' psychological resources may be particularly relevant for sustaining their motivation.

Taken together, the results suggest that TM is a multidimensional construct shaped by different affective and psychological factors across contexts. Rather than adopting uniform approaches to enhancing TM, stakeholders may need to consider context-sensitive strategies that align with the specific predictors identified in each setting.

Despite its contributions, the present study is subject to certain limitations. The researchers were unable to control for the potential effects of demographic variables such as gender, age, teaching experience, and language background. In addition, the study was delimited to examining PWBW, ER, WE, TE, and TR as predictors of TM, leaving other potentially influential factors such as emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence unexplored. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a broader range of teacher variables, employing mixed-methods designs to gain deeper insights into motivational processes, and extending investigations to other instructional contexts such as schools and universities.

Generative AI Use Statement

The authors used generative AI tools solely for language polishing and formatting assistance, and all content, analysis, and conclusions presented in this article remain the authors' own original work.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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