



## Research Article

# Investigating the effect of work-life balance on job satisfaction among Iranian English as a second language teachers

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The significant role played by teachers in educational systems and the extent to which they can lead to success of a community are beyond any doubt. Therefore, the factors affecting their performance and job satisfaction ought to be taken into careful consideration. The present study aimed at investigating the extent to which work-life balance among Iranian English as a foreign language [EFL] teachers can contribute to their job satisfaction. To this end, 67 EFL instructors participated whose work-life balance was measured using work-life balance questionnaire and job satisfaction through Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. According to the findings, a statistically significant relationship was found between work-life balance and job satisfaction as well as workplace support and professional satisfaction. However, work overburden, family support and dependent care did not indicate significant links to the job satisfaction of Iranian EFL teachers in present research. The finding can provide valuable guidelines for stakeholders to consider work-life balance as a key factor leading to a higher level of job satisfaction among their staff, especially in academic and educational contexts, where the majority of teachers have to work for longer hours to afford their livings.

**Keywords:** Job satisfaction, work-life balance, English as a foreign language teachers

## 1. Introduction

Educational systems have always played a key role upon the success of all societies. There can be no gainsaying the fact that nurturing a flourishing generation entails instructors with a desirable level of knowledge, commitment, well-being and satisfaction. Therefore, taking the diverse factors which contribute to excellence / fault in teachers' performance into account is of great significance. Various studies have revealed the point that the instructors' satisfaction can result in higher levels of motivation as well as remarkable decrease in terms of work-related stress, anxiety and burnout (Caprara et al., 2006; Caprara et al., 2003; Goker, 2012; Green-glass & Burke, 2003).

As many other psychological concepts, there are countless definitions for job satisfaction [JS]. For one thing, according to Collie et al. (2012), it is a feeling of contentment, happiness, and fulfilment that stems from having a job. Moreover, Lambrou et al. (2010) define it as a favourable emotional status which has its roots upon an evaluation of one's work or work-related experiences. Furthermore, as Berry (1997, p. 32) mentions, job satisfaction refers to how an individual reacts to the job experience. As a result of the apparent mismatch between what they thought the job offered and what they desired from it, Syptak et al. (1999) also described it as the way people affectively relate to their career role, which is dependent upon their desire from work and what they actually receive. More precisely, according to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), teachers' job satisfaction can be conceptualized as the affective reactions of teachers to their job or their teaching role. In addition, to Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2004), it describes how an educator feels about their work as a teacher and is influenced by how they interpret the relationship between what they desire from teaching and what they believe teaching offers them.

As mentioned in the literature, various factors are involved in teachers' job satisfaction / dissatisfaction. Demographic features and working context (Klassen et al., 2010), teachers' interpretation of priority congruence, supervisory support, and intimate relationship with co-workers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), job characteristics, executive compensation, advancement, management, working environment, and subjective well-being (Kulshrestha & Sen, 2006; Parker et al., 2003; Wiener & Vardi, 1980;) are among those found to be greatly influential.

Taking work-life balance [WLB] into consideration, a great sum of studies has proved its unquestionable role on job satisfaction on the ground that the work-family conflict stemming from longer working hours can be responsible for job dissatisfaction, lower levels of commitment as well as a high degree of psychological distress (Adams et al., 1996). Sundry definitions also exist as far as WLB is concerned. The term "work-life balance" refers to a condition of equilibrium where an individual's personal and professional obligations are balanced (Lockwood, 2003). Also, it can be described as the manner in which job-holders keep their institutional specifications, regulations, practices and measures in balance without influencing their family, friends and involvement in the community (Gudep, 2019). However, with an upward trend in terms of families with dual earners, this goal has turned to be quite hard to achieve (Nadeem & Abbas, 2009).

As mentioned by Guest (2002), any imbalance between one's career and personal life can be blamed for affecting JS, mental health, and stress. In turn, JS itself can be considered as a driving force for companies and organizations (Rani & Mariappan, 2011).

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the concept of imbalance between one's career and personal life and its adverse effects (Abiodun-Oyebanji & Sanni, 2016; Agha, 2017; Al-Alawi et al., 2021; Johari et al., 2018; Maeran et al., 2013; Padma & Reddy, 2014). Taking a context such as Iran into consideration, since English is taught as a foreign language, EFL instruction is amongst the demanding jobs. Additionally, due to the lack of adequate payments for teachers, they tend to work for longer hours and thus experience various side-effects on their personal life. In spite of an increasing concern regarding work-life imbalance, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has investigated the impact of work-life balance upon job satisfaction among Iranian English instructors. The present research is set to address the following question:

RQ 1) Is there any significant relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among EFL teachers in Iran?

RQ 2) Is there any significant relationship between work overburden and job satisfaction among EFL teachers in Iran?

RQ 3) Is there any significant relationship between workplace support and job satisfaction among EFL teachers in Iran?

RQ 4) Is there any significant relationship between family support and job satisfaction among EFL teachers in Iran?

RQ 5) Is there any significant relationship between dependent care and job satisfaction among EFL teachers in Iran?

## 2. Literature Review

A large volume of published studies exists, which describes the various factors involved in job satisfaction. One study by Waqas et al. (2014) reported that factors such as reward and recognition and workplace environment are significant. Kamal and Hanif (2009), on the other hand, found that considering bank employees, the amount of payment plays a significant role. Moreover, nurses are found to be the most satisfied with their career as far as their age, health conditions, self-determination/autonomy, psychological empowerment, workplace participation, work fatigue, and occupational stress are in an optimal status (Aloisio et al., 2021). Another research by Tutuncu and Kozak (2007) highlighted the determinants such as work itself, supervision, and promotion. Additionally, as reported by Gazioglu and Tansel (2006), job-related training, marital status, gender and age are responsible for job satisfaction. A further study by Yu et al. (2020) affirmed the influence of years of schooling, years of job experience, length of daily sleep, anti-epidemic work, and kind of engagement. on the level at which medical staff are pleased with their vocation.

More interestingly, a large and growing body of literature has investigated diverse factors involved in job satisfaction and/or burnout of teachers and university lecturers. For one thing, Demirtas (2010) conducted a study to measure the level of job satisfaction among primary school instructors. The study found that, in the context of this study, the teachers were highly satisfied and age was not proved to be an influential element. In another research, Crossman and Harris (2006) reported that the type of school at which teachers work has a significant relationship with the extent to which they are pleased with their occupation. However, no meaningful difference in terms of age, gender and length of service was observed. In addition, Msuya (2016) aimed at investigating the level of JS among secondary school teachers. Their results reported that socio-economic and demographic factors play a considerable role. According to recent research by Toropova et al. (2021), there is a striking correlation between teacher job satisfaction and workload, teacher collaboration, and instructor evaluations of student discipline in the classroom. Moreover, Ali and Anwar (2021) who were most concerned with teachers employed in special education, found that teachers' finances affect their JS.

In the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Teaching English as a Second Language [ESL], there exist a large number of papers which address job satisfaction. For instance, Dincer (2019), investigating 102 EFL teachers, found no meaningful relationship between job satisfaction of teachers and their autonomy level. Additionally, Namaziandost et al. (2021) underscored the influence of factors such as competence, knowledge, attitudes, and skills on the extent to which EFL teachers feel positive towards their career. Also, as maintained by Safari and Davaribina (2021), professional development and reflective thinking can be good predictors of EFL instructors' job satisfaction. Besides, teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence [EQ] are shown to be more pleased with their profession (Ferdowsi & Ghanizadeh, 2017). Exploring the link between variables including creativity and motivation, in a recent study, Farajzadeh and Alavinia (2022) found a greater impact on part of motivation. Furthermore, Soleimani and Bolourchi (2021) highlighted the negative relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction and burnout, showing that public schools contain more satisfied instructors, compared to their private counterparts. An earlier study by Soodmand Afshar and Doosti (2016) probed into the leading factors to satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction of EFL Iranian instructors. Their study demonstrated that while there is a negative correlation between JS and (a) low pay, (b) principals who pay little attention to teachers, (c) not being encouraged to pursue professional development, (d) students who lack motivation to learn English, and (e) low occupational and social status, there is a positive correlation between JS and factors including (a) sharing knowledge with others, (b) serving society, and (c) having an internal desire to teach.

As far as work-life balance is concerned, Hasan and Teng (2017) attempted to explore its link with job satisfaction on part of working adults in Malaysia. They found that the relationship is significant, but gender and race do not moderate it. An earlier study by Agha (2017) also mentioned that the interference of work with personal life and vice versa had a negative relationship with JS. Taking Pakistani employees into consideration, Nadeem and Abbas (2009) reported that S has a strikingly negative correlation with both work-family and work-work interference. Bank employees in Jakarta also maintained that WLB has a positive connection with JS (Kasbuntoro et al., 2020). On account of 401 teachers, a study (Ordu, 2021) revealed that when combined, JS and WLB can fully operate as a mediator in the link between life happiness and person-job fit. Furthermore, Solanki and Mandaviya (2021), in their investigation into the impact of factors consisting job stress, work-life balance and health on JS, highlighted that due to work-life imbalance and job stress, male participants display more wellness issues than female participants, whereas female participants show less career resilience owing to family duties and characteristics.

More relevant to our study, a study with 445 respondents in an Indian context, investigated factors including commitment, occupational stress, job fulfilment, and work-life balance (Aruldoss et al., 2021). It was found that quality of work-life is positively related to job satisfaction and to job commitment.

However, in spite of an increasing concern regarding work-life imbalance, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has investigated the impact of work-life balance upon job satisfaction among Iranian English instructors.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research Design

The present study aimed at the measuring the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' work-life balance and their job satisfaction. To put it simply, work-life balance as independent variable and job satisfaction as dependent variable are taken into consideration. The study takes advantage of a survey design. The study tried to include Iranian EFL teachers by random sampling, which led to participation of a sample of 67 EFL teachers.

#### 3.2. Participants and Sampling

A total of 67 Iranian EFL instructors were surveyed. Table 1 depicts their demographic characteristics. As can be inferred, a vast majority of the participants (92.5 %) were young, aging 20- 40. Moreover, nearly 3 quarters of them (73.1%) claimed to hold Master's degree. Additionally, Female participants outnumbered males (roughly double). Sixty-four point two percent of the subjects had a teaching experience of less than 10 years, which is explainable due to the dominance of young participants. As far as educational organization is concerned, while 35.8% of them were employed in private institutions such as language academies or private schools, just over one-fifth of them (20.9%) were hired in governmental and public schools, as well as 43.3% working in both sectors. Furthermore, 85.1 % of those who took part in this research considered teaching as their main career. Sixty-seven point two percent of them reported to be single, as compared to 33.8 % married counterparts. Additionally, they registered to teach diverse age groups, including kids, teens, and adults.

Table 1  
*Demographic Features of the Participants*

Variable		Number	%	Variable		Number	%			
Age	Under 20	1	1.5	Educational Organization	Private	24	35.8			
	20 - 30	41	61.2		Public	14	20.9			
	30 - 40	21	31.3		Both	29	43.3			
	40 - 50	4	6.0		Total	67	100.0			
	Total	67	100.0		Teaching as a main job	No	10	14.9		
Academic Level	Bachelor	14	20.9	Yes		57	85.1			
	MA / M.Sc.	49	73.1	Total		67	100.0			
	Others	1	1.5	Marital Status		Married	22	32.8		
	Ph.D.	3	4.5		Single	45	67.2			
Total	67	100.0	Total		67	100.0				
Gender	Female	45	67.2	Teaching age group	Adults	7	10.4			
					Male	22	32.8	Kids	12	17.9
					Total	67	100.0	Kids,	1	1.5
Years of Teaching Experience	2 - 5	23	34.3		Adults					
					Kids,	4	6.0			
	5 -10	20	29.9		Teens					
					Kids,	9	13.4			
	Less than 2	12	17.9	Teens,						
				Adults						
More than 10	12	17.9	Teens	25	37.3					
			Adults	9	13.4					
Total	67	100.0	Total	67	100.0					

### 3.3. Data Collection

To investigate the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by their work-life balance, two well-established questionnaires were used.

#### 3.3.1. Work-life balance questionnaire

The scale was developed by Swarnalatha (2013), the shorter form of this survey consists of 34 items, exploring the diverse factors which play a role upon work-life balance. Five general areas are covered: Work-life Balance [WLB], Work Overburden [WO], Workplace Support [WPS], Family Support [FS], and Dependent Care [DC]. It is worth-mentioning that the section of the questionnaire measuring the level of job satisfaction was eliminated since it was measured by the other tool in this study. Participants were expected to respond on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The first section contains items such as "My work affects my personal life". In other words, disagreement is an indication of work-life balance. The next eight questions consider the extent to which the participants are dealing with work overload and long working hours. WPS also shows the amount of support one gets from their workplace, both. The Cronbach Alpha reliability for this questionnaire was found to be at .7 level, which is satisfactory.

#### 3.3.2. Job satisfaction questionnaire

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire [MSQ] (Weiss et al., 1967) was used as a means to measure the extent to which Iranian EFL instructors are satisfied with their job. The short form adjusted for research purposes was used, which includes 20 items divided into intrinsic and extrinsic job-related items. A Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) is employed for each of the items. The Cronbach Alpha value of reliability was reported more than .7 for this instrument.

### 3.4. Data Collection

Due to the availability and convenience of online questionnaires regardless to time and location, the present study takes advantage of the online formats of Work-life balance questionnaire (short form) (Swarnalatha, 2013) and Job satisfaction questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967). They were included in a form in Google Docs platform and the social media were used to gather data in a much greater variety, since EFL instructors from all over Iran had the opportunity to take part in this study. The questionnaires were sent to various social groups, with English teachers as their members. Each respondent was restricted to submit a single questionnaire.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The data has been analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 27. In particular, Descriptive Statistics and multiple regression analysis were the main tools to carry out the analyses throughout the present study. Multiple regression analysis was used since the study aims at investigating the effects of five sub-sets of work-life balance as five independent and predictor variables on Iranian EFL teachers' job satisfaction as the dependent variable. Additionally, to test the normality of our sample, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was carried out, in which the Sig. value of greater than 0.05 demonstrates normal distribution of the data. Furthermore, the F ratio test resulted from ANOVA test was used to investigate the collective effects of sub-scales of WLB on JS, i.e., to check whether the model is a good fit to the dataset.

## 4. Results

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics for each variable, including the values of means, standard deviations, variance, skewness and kurtosis considering 5 sub-scales of work-life balance and for job satisfaction.

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics for Each Sub-type of Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work-life Balance	23.06	4.628	21.421	0.077±0.293	0.089±0.578
Work Overburden	32.78	3.911	15.298	-0.829±0.293	1.757±0.578
Workplace Support	12.49	3.332	11.102	0.716±0.293	2.936±0.578
Family Support	23.67	3.457	11.951	-0.299±0.293	-0.098±0.578
Dependent Care	16.81	2.401	5.765	0.649±0.293	0.819±0.578
Job Satisfaction	67	68.63	11.057	-0.517±0.293	0.225±0.578

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine whether the variables under investigation were normally distributed. This test best fits sample with a size of larger than 50. Table 3 shows the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the sub-sets of work-life balance and for job satisfaction. As per the basic assumption of this test ( $p > .05$  means normal distribution), work-life balance and job satisfaction were each with the p-value of .200 were the only normally distributed variables. Nonetheless, work overburden ( $p < .05$ ), workplace support ( $p < .05$ ), family support ( $p < .05$ ), and dependent care ( $p < .05$ ) were not distributed in a normal manner in present sample.

Table 3  
Normality Test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov for Variables

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Work-life Balance	.090	67	.200*
Work Overburden	.165	67	.000
Workplace Support	.113	67	.034
Family Support	.120	67	.018
Dependent Care	.124	67	.012
Job satisfaction	.088	67	.200

Note. \*: This is a lower bound of the true significance; a: Lilliefors Significance Correction

To investigate the correlation between the level of work-life balance and job satisfaction among Iranian English as Foreign Language teachers, multiple regression was used to determine the extent to which each subscale of work-life balance was related to the teachers' professional satisfaction. Table 4 indicates the model summary of multiple regression analysis. The adjusted R square is equal to .219, which means 21.9% of the change in the dependent variable of the study (job satisfaction) is due to the independent variables (Work-life Balance, Work Overburden, Workplace Support, Family Support, and Dependent Care). Meanwhile, the remaining 78.1 percent of variation can be ascribed to other variables off the focus of this research.

Table 4  
Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.528 <sup>a</sup>	.278	.219	9.771

Note. a. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, work-life balance, workplace support, dependent care, work overburden.

Table 5 depicts the degree of regression for different items. To begin with, work-life balance proves to have a statistically significant relationship with the level of job satisfaction ( $p < .05$ ). However, since the items of this section of the questionnaire demonstrate a sort of imbalance between WLB and JS,  $t$  score holds a negative figure i.e. the more balance Iranian EFL teachers have between their job and personal life, the more satisfied they are with their profession. Likewise, workplace support showed a considerably significant relationship with JS ( $p < .001$ ). On the contrary, work overburden is not a significant contributor to job (di)satisfaction ( $p > .05$ ). Moreover, family support ( $p > .05$ ) and dependent care ( $p > .05$ ) did not represent a statistically significant connection to the job satisfaction of Iranian English teachers.

Table 5  
Correlation Coefficient for Multiple Regressions

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	1 (Constant)	51.955	13.605				3.819
Work-life balance	-.754	.293	-.316	-2.576	.012	-1.340	-.169
Work overburden	.303	.378	.107	.800	.427	-.454	1.059
Workplace support	1.279	.367	.386	3.490	.001	.546	2.013
Dependent care	.072	.552	.016	.131	.896	-1.031	1.175
Family support	.294	.365	.092	.805	.424	-.436	1.023

Table 6 indicates the F-ratio obtained from ANOVA test to check if the subsets of work-life balance collectively can predict the job satisfaction of Iranian EFL teachers. The degree of trust was considered as 0.05. The table shows that the subsets of work-life balance have both significant and simultaneous impact ( $F(5,61) = 4.704, p < .001$ ) on the dependent variable of the study. In other words, i.e. the regression model is a good fit of the present data.

Table 6  
ANOVA - Overall Significance of the Model

Model		ANOVA <sup>a</sup>				Sig.
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
1	Regression	2245.750	5	449.150	4.704	.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5823.922	61	95.474		
	Total	8069.672	66			

Note. a: Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction; b: Predictors: (Constant), Family support, work-life balance, workplace support, dependent care, work overburden.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among 67 Iranian English as a Foreign Language teachers. Swarnalatha (2013) work-life balance questionnaire (short form) as well as Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967) were used to examine the extent to which Iranian EFL instructors hold a balance between their professional and personal life and its effect upon the level of their job satisfaction. Considering 5 subsets of work-life balance included in former survey, namely work-life balance, work-overburden, work-place support, family support and dependent care, statistically significant relationship was found between work-life balance and job satisfaction as well as workplace support and professional satisfaction. In addition, according to the results of multiple regression analysis, it was found that the aforementioned subsets have significantly simultaneous effects. However, work overburden, family support and dependent care did not indicate a significant link to the job satisfaction of Iranian EFL teachers in this study.

The results obtained are in line with the study carried out by Hasan and Teng (2017) who noticed a strong correlation between job satisfaction and work-life balance taking Malaysian working people into consideration. Likewise, another study discovered a substantial correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of work-life balance among teachers residing in the northernmost part of Surigao del Sur (Mercado, 2019). Moreover, Lindfelt et al. (2018) observed that the balance between work and personal life was inversely connected with the intention to career change considering the members of Colleges of Pharmacy. A more recent study also has found that a significant negative relationship exists between the interference between work and life and the degree of satisfaction (Boakye et al., 2023).

Regarding the positive significant association between workplace support and job satisfaction, the results in the present study are consistent with those of Kwak et al. (2010), who found a

significant relationship between organizational support and job satisfaction. Likewise, Gok et al. (2015) reported that being supported on part of the supervisor has the potential to increase job satisfaction. Similarly, Appelbaum et al. (2019) found an indirect correlation between burnout and perceived organizational support and a substantial direct association between JS and working atmosphere. However, the findings concerning work overburden and career satisfaction are in contrast with Holland et al. (2019) who witnessed a significant relationship between these two variables.

As far as the findings regarding family support are concerned, they contradict the claim made by Qu and Zhao (2012) which is a lower conflict between work and family may have considerable impact upon job and life career satisfaction. In another study by Dixon and Sagas (2007) also the relationship between work-family conflict and organizational support and life satisfaction was shown to be somewhat mediated by JS. The fifth category was dependent care, which includes questions regarding the person's ability to take care of their children or elderly parents. This study found no statistically significant link between them which is in line with the study by Rothausen (1994) who did not find any significant difference between the level of job satisfaction among parent and non-parent workers.

In sum, work-life balance can be considered as an influential factor as far as job satisfaction is concerned. Considering human being consisted of basic as well as growth needs, a balance between one's career and personal life enables them to meet both groups of needs.

## 6. Recommendations for Academic Stakeholders

Thus, academic organizations and institutions can employ several strategies such as flexible working hours, providing the instructors with satisfactory payment (to prevent them working for longer hours to address their needs), flexible working modules (online as well as in-person teaching) and establishing and ameliorating existing dependent-care facilities so that instructors' concern about their families are met. As a result, this satisfaction has a potential to lead to more desired work performance and mental as well as mental well-being. Additionally, as mentioned by Norouzpour and Pourmohammadi (2019), the more satisfied teachers are, the more creative classes they are likely to have.

## 7. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present research has surveyed 67 EFL instructors in Iranian context, which can be enlarged in terms of sample size for future studies. Furthermore, a broader context such as including and comparing teachers from various countries and different domains can lead to more generalizability. In addition, other factors such as demographic features and their mediating role upon the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction can be worth investigating. Similarly, the mediator or moderator effect of other job-related factors can be taken into consideration.

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**Ethics Declaration:** All participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement in the study. No additional ethical approval was needed.

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