

## Professional Demotivating Factors Among High School, Institute, and University EFL Teachers: A Comparative Study

Factores profesionales desmotivadores entre docentes de inglés en colegios, institutos y universidades: un estudio comparativo

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This mixed-methods study investigated and compared the professional demotivating factors for EFL teachers in three contexts: high schools, language institutes, and universities. Consequently, a validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed to gather data from 189 Iranian EFL teachers. The results indicated that the most prominent demotivating factors were financial issues, students' demotivation, facilities and course books, and neglecting teachers for educational decision-making. However, *financial issues* and *facilities and course books* were less demotivating for university teachers. During the qualitative phase, it was also revealed that supervisors' feedback and attitudes, relationships with colleagues, and preferential treatments negatively affect EFL teachers' motivation. Furthermore, unlike high school teachers, language institutes and university EFL teachers perceive job insecurity as incredibly demotivating.

*Keywords:* demotivating factors, English as a foreign language teachers, job insecurity, language learning institutes, high schools

Este estudio de tipo mixto indagó sobre los factores profesionales desmotivadores entre docentes de inglés en tres contextos: colegios, institutos de idiomas y universidades. A 189 docentes de inglés iraníes se les pidió responder un cuestionario validado y entrevistas semi-estructuradas. Dentro de los factores desmotivadores más prominentes están los de tipo económico, la desmotivación de los estudiantes, las instalaciones educativas, los libros de texto y la falta de inclusión de los docentes en la toma de decisiones educativas. La fase cualitativa, basada en la teoría fundamentada, reveló que las actitudes y la retroalimentación de los supervisores, las relaciones con colegas y los tratos preferenciales pueden incidir negativamente en la motivación de los docentes de inglés.

*Palabras clave:* colegios, docentes de inglés, factores desmotivadores, inestabilidad laboral, institutos de idiomas

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## Introduction

Most fields of learning view motivation as a primary key to success (Khaghaninezhad & Jafarzadeh, 2013). Motivation is identified as a factor “responsible for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction” (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 117). The profound effects of motivation in teaching and learning a foreign language are also acknowledged accordingly (Dörnyei, 2014). As argued by Ellis (2015), theories of motivation have adopted different perspectives to explain the concept of motivation and particularly to consider the needs and concerns of teachers in L2 teaching and learning contexts. For instance, Anderson (2014) claimed that the critical message in the literature on motivation is that “motivation cannot be isolated to a learner alone or to a teacher” (p. 178) and emphasized the centrality of the teacher’s role in motivating learners. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) introduced teacher behaviors as robust motivational tools and noted that teachers play a significant role in positively and negatively affecting learners’ motivation.

Sinclair (2008) defined teachers’ motivation in terms of what attracts teachers to the profession of teaching, how long they desire to remain in it, and how much they concentrate on teaching. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 117), teachers’ motivation can be viewed as *motivation to teach* and *motivation to pursue a lifelong career*. They stated that certain features characterize teachers’ motivation; namely, it is closely related to “intrinsic motivation,” is highly constrained by “social contextual factors,” and reflects the temporal dimension of motivation, which has a “fragile nature.”

Richardson and Watt (2006) implied that identifying adverse effects on teacher motivation seems essential to help teachers safeguard their motivation. Considering the critical position of teachers in education, their low motivation levels would negatively impact high educational standards (Falout et al., 2009). In effect, despite the determining role of teachers’ motivation in

all aspects of educational practices, this area has not been investigated enough as a separate research area (Chong et al., 2019). Patrick et al. (2010) regarded teachers’ enthusiasm, among the other teacher variables, to be highly related to learners’ intrinsic motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) mentioned that “teachers’ motivation has a direct impact on students’ achievements” (p. 199). Thus, adverse influences on teacher motivation should be scrutinized to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

This study investigated demotivational parameters affecting Iranian EFL teachers in three pedagogical contexts. To this end, the perceptions of three groups of EFL teachers at public high schools, language learning institutes, and universities were examined. Moreover, the study attempted to discover the similarities and differences among EFL teachers regarding their perceived demotivating influences in these three contexts. Consequently, this inquiry was an effort to find justifiable answers to the following research questions:

- What are the main demotivating factors affecting high school, language learning institute, and university EFL teachers?
- Which similarities/differences exist in demotivating factors among high school, language learning institute, and university EFL teachers?

## Literature Review

Motivation is a determining factor that can affect the success of learning a foreign language. As Brophy (2010) stated: “Motivation is probably the most frequently used catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task” (p. 165). Motivation is a sophisticated term in second/foreign language learning and teaching. Teaching, like any other activity, needs motivation, and thus general models of motivation can help understand teacher motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation theorists are interested in explaining the role of motivation in physical activities, such as

task engagement and persistence, as well as cognitive activities, such as problem-solving and decision-making (Meece et al., 2006).

Brown (2014) defined *demotivation* as “the loss of interest that once was present” (p. 163). In the same vein, Dörnyei (2001) expressed that the personality, commitment, competence, and teaching methods of L2 teachers can cause demotivation. In contrast, *amotivation* refers to the lack of motivation not due to the absence of initial interest but to the person’s emotions when faced with the activity. Furthermore, amotivation makes an individual unable to obtain the expected outcome, usually accompanied by feelings of helplessness or depression. Although amotivation and demotivation may convey the same concept, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) referred to a slight distinction between the two terms; some external factors commonly cause demotivation. When the causes of demotivation are eliminated, the underlying motives of behavior may reappear. However, amotivation is pertained to conceiving the desired outcome unfeasible.

### EFL Teachers’ Motivation and Demotivation

Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) believed that teachers’ motivation is essential in education because it significantly affects students’ motivation. Haggai and Piwuna (1997) highlighted L2 teachers’ role as the most critical factor in all L2 learning activities and tasks. In addition, Eggen and Kauchak (1992) argued that it is the teachers’ role to design an environment suitable for implementing instructions, teaching, and learning. Such an environment should have a warm and empathetic atmosphere to move students toward success, comprehension, and reinforcement, and thus teachers are the ones who build motivation in the classroom.

More importantly, teacher motivation is a crucial issue due to its correlation with the quality of education (Javaid, 2009). Teachers’ motivation should be considered at the forefront of government policies to improve quality

education and achieve the aims of education (Meece et al., 2006). Motivation can be related to achievement and enable L2 learners to expand the continuous sustained attempt at language learning; without motivation, even highly competent learners may fail to achieve long-term goals (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Therefore, teachers should be motivated to enhance their productivity and effectiveness in teaching, which can improve the quality of education and instruction (McKay, 2002).

Srivastava (2014) believes teachers’ motivation and job satisfaction can be linked. To him, increasing job satisfaction and motivation would lead to better job performance and efficiency. Moreover, teachers’ commitment can be improved when they feel motivated. Haque (2009) states that demotivation can even lead to counterproductive behaviors. Hence, the sources causing demotivation—such as inability, inadequate means, and lack of interest—should be identified to perceive demotivational attitudes. The following lines review studies on the demotivating factors for EFL teachers in different instructional contexts.

### Demotivating Factors at High Schools

Kızıltepe (2008) conducted a study to determine the demotivating factors in the Turkish EFL context of public schools and found that improper administration and indifferent students were the foremost demotivators for high school EFL teachers. Hettiarachchi (2013) investigated the sources of demotivation for teachers in Sri Lankan public schools; limited learning facilities, the large number of students per class, the mismatch between textbooks and the students’ proficiency level, and teaching methodology were identified as the main demotivators. In addition, unhelpful education administration, challenging conditions of teacher transfer, and lack of good rapport between colleagues were found to demotivate teachers frequently.

Mukminin et al. (2015) attempted to examine the demotivating factors among Indonesian high school EFL teachers at two high schools in Jambi. The fin-

dings revealed that students' limited knowledge of the English language was one of the significant factors that demotivated teachers. Other factors were the school environment and limited supporting facilities. Tampubolon (2017) compared the demotivators for EFL instructors at public and private high schools in Indonesia in another study. In private schools, students' demotivation, physical conditions, textbooks, and curricula were found to be demotivating. In contrast, in public schools, six factors caused demotivation for English teachers: teacher's workload, physical condition, material/textbook, working condition, parental interest, and curriculum.

Another study by Dişlen (2013) sought to explore the factors causing demotivation in EFL classrooms at Anatolian high schools. The author found that a positive and psychologically healthy environment is the main parameter for the job satisfaction of EFL teachers. Moreover, the findings revealed that syllabus density, health problems, shortage of proper instructional materials, and attention distracters (such as a noisy environment) would result in a lack of motivation and enthusiasm on the part of EFL teachers.

#### **Demotivating Factors at Language Learning Institutes**

Kim et al. (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study to compare demotivating factors between Chinese and Korean EFL teachers in the private sector. They found that class size was the dominant demotivating factor for Chinese and Korean teachers. Chinese teachers expressed that parents' interference and high expectations mainly demotivated them.

Menyhárt (2008) explored teachers teaching styles and what motivates or demotivates them at private language learning institutes. The results revealed that teachers were encouraged by the subjects they teach and students' intellectual development. They were also motivated when they could be creative in their classes; however, stress, low salaries, job insecurity, the

prescribed curricula, and inadequate teaching facilities appeared to affect teacher performance negatively.

Nazari and Taki (2015) examined the demotivating professional factors among 109 Iranian EFL teachers at private language institutes. They found that a lack of communication among teachers, professional jealousy, and learners' heterogeneity were the most detrimental parameters to teachers' job satisfaction. The results also showed that recognizing and eradicating such impeding factors would enhance learners' educational attainment.

#### **Demotivating Factors at Universities**

The significant role of students in teachers' motivation was found salient in a study by Sugino (2010) on 97 Japanese university teachers. He found that university teachers perceived factors related to students' attitudes to be mainly demotivating; for instance, using cell phones and sleeping in class, not being interested in the subject, and being rebellious. Other demotivating factors were long meeting hours, the load of paperwork, and fixed teaching materials. Fattash (2013) highlighted that the English language teachers at An-Najah University found learners' indifference and dissatisfaction demotivating. Another demotivating factor was "rigid administrative regulations which hinder teachers' academic progress. Teachers feel that their efforts are not appreciated by the administration" (p. 128), which would create a sense of detachment, lack of commitment, and lack of dedication to the institution.

In addition, Kim and Kim (2015) conducted a survey on initial career demotivators for Korean EFL teachers at college. The findings indicated that some L2 teachers were demotivated to teach L2 learners with a significant gap in language proficiency or students with low motivation. Other demotivating factors were communicative difficulties, inadequate administrative support, heavy workloads, and lack of social recognition.

Falout et al. (2009) selected 900 university EFL teachers in Japan to examine the demotivating factors and check the relationship between past demotivating

experiences and professional achievements. They classified the demotivators into three classes: external, internal, and reactive factors. Internal and reactive factors were shown to correlate with long-term EFL teaching and learning outcomes and experiences; however, external demotivators (which were more effective than the other two) were highly connected with institutional regulations.

Dobre (2013) scrutinized the teachers' demotivation factors in the Romanian academic context. Consequently, by evaluating the responses of 34 college EFL teachers to a validated questionnaire, the author concluded that students' attitudes and feelings could be the primary source of teachers' de/motivation. Moreover, she proposed a new framework of motivational research called "directed motivational currents" to help teachers find solutions and lead themselves from not enjoyable psychological professional states into enjoyable ones.

The studies mentioned above have shed some light on the less explored area of demotivation factors among EFL teachers. Even though teachers worldwide share most of these demotivating forces, teachers in each specific context perceive certain factors to influence their motivation more dominantly. Furthermore, the role of demotivating factors has been mostly neglected in the Iranian EFL context. This study has tried to explore the demotivational parameters affecting Iranian EFL teachers in public high schools, private language institutes, and universities to provide some insights for pedagogical policymakers and partially fill the existing gap.

## Method

This study employed a mixed-methods research design; for the quantitative phase, the data were gathered through a questionnaire on teachers' demotivation in three different contexts of Iranian EFL teaching and learning. For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 participants (10 interviewees from the EFL teachers of each context) and inspired by grounded theory, the obtained data

were analyzed, and common themes were derived and compared with the outcome of the quantitative phase.

## Participants

In total, 189 Iranian EFL teachers teaching English in three contexts—public high schools, private language institutes, and universities—participated in the study. The participants—78 men (within the age range of 26–59) and 111 women (within the age range of 24–50)—were selected through the convenience sample procedure. All teachers had at least three years of teaching experience since the researchers deemed that this minimum of teaching experience was required to give the teachers a better understanding of the problems inherent in teaching and the possible deficiencies of the educational system. The sample included three groups: 64 teachers from high schools, 65 teachers from language institutes, and 60 general English teachers at universities. Seventeen teachers held bachelor's degrees, 101 held master's degrees, and 71 were either PhD holders or PhD candidates.

Regarding teaching experience, on average, the high school teachers had taught for 12 years, the language institute teachers had taught for 11 years, and the university teachers had taught for 13 years. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire on teachers' demotivating factors. Thirty teachers (10 volunteers from each group) were invited to participate in the interview sessions whose items were derived from the literature and questionnaire.

## Data Collection Instruments

### Teachers' Demotivation Questionnaire

This study used the teachers' demotivation questionnaire developed by Soodmand-Afshar and Doosti (2015). The questionnaire consisted of two parts; the first part included demographic information (i.e., gender, age, English teaching experience, the level of education), and the second part consisted of 58 items measured

by a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). An initial version of the questionnaire was given to a couple of experts at the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of Shiraz University to check its face and content validity. The questionnaire pilot with 20 EFL teachers of three groups and Cronbach's alpha indicated an excellent reliability level (0.82). Some revisions in the wording were made to suit the respondents of the three contexts under study.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

These interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward demotivating factors and the reasons behind them. Each interview contained 13 open-ended questions and lasted between 20 to 35 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the participants' workplace, and an expert friend accompanied the researchers to certify the accuracy of the exposed data and satisfy

the inter-rater reliability. The questions of the interviews were constructed based on the outcome of the quantitative phase, recurrent themes in literature, and the researchers' experience. Then, the items were checked by three TEFL experts at the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at Shiraz University.

**Data Collection Procedure**

In the first phase, the questionnaire was distributed among 189 EFL teachers who were asked to complete it on paper or electronically via email. A principal component analysis was run to see how various questionnaire items loaded on different factors, considering the impact of socio-contextual features in teacher demotivation. Table 1 shows that the questionnaire enjoyed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index of .717, which was adequate. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant. ( $p = .000$ ). The component matrix revealed that 39 items of the questionnaire had factor loadings over 0.40.

**Table 1.** Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Index and Bartlett's Test for the Questionnaire

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.717
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	1340.107
	<i>df</i>	435
	Sig.	.000

For the qualitative phase, the researchers interviewed 30 EFL teachers teaching at high schools, language institutes, and universities. Seventeen women and 13 men aged 25–45 voluntarily participated in the study's second phase. Seven participants were PhD candidates, 16 were MA holders, and seven were BA holders of TEFL and English literature. The researchers assured the participants that their responses would remain confidential. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed and translated into English. Some translations were member-checked to ensure they conveyed the exact meaning the participants wanted to express.

**Results**

The 58 items of the questionnaire were subjected to principal components analysis. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire after running the factor analysis. It indicates that Item 38—which deals with the financial issue—has the least mean (1.71) with a standard deviation of 0.88, while Item 6—related to attitude toward teaching—has the highest mean of 4.41 with a standard deviation of 0.67.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Questionnaire Items (*N* = 189)

	Mean	SD	Strongly agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly disagree
Q1	4.35	.74	2(1.1%)	2(1.1%)	11(5.6%)	87(46.1%)	87(46.1%)
Q5	3.59	1.0	2(1.1%)	40(21.3%)	31(15.7%)	76(40.4%)	40(21.3%)
Q6	4.41	.67	0	4(2.2%)	6(3.4%)	85(44.9%)	94(49.4%)
Q7	4.32	.73	0	4(2.2%)	17(9%)	81(42.7%)	87(46.1%)
Q9	4.12	.80	0	8(4.5%)	25(13.5%)	90(47.2%)	66(34.8%)
Q10	4.34	.79	0	10(5.6%)	7(3.4%)	81(42.7%)	91(48.3%)
Q11	3.59	1.01	2(1.1%)	27(14.6%)	55(29.2%)	62(33.7%)	43(23.1%)
Q18	3.35	1.21	12(6.7%)	47(24.7%)	24(12.4%)	75(39.3%)	31(16.0%)
Q19	2.71	1.17	30(15.7%)	66(34.8%)	34(18%)	49(25.8%)	10(5.6%)
Q20	2.97	1.33	30(15.7%)	47(24.7%)	34(18%)	49(25.8%)	28(14.6%)
Q21	2.81	1.19	23(12.4%)	73(38.2%)	24(12.4%)	57(30.3%)	12(6.7%)
Q22	3.12	1.31	27(14.6%)	40(21.3%)	30(15.7%)	64(33.7%)	28(14.6%)
Q26	3.57	1.10	12(6.7%)	21(11.2%)	32(16.9%)	92(48.3%)	32(16.9%)
Q27	3.32	1.145	15(7.9%)	34(18.0)	38(20.2%)	79(41.6%)	23(12.4%)
Q28	3.55	1.02	8(4.5%)	19(10.1%)	51(27%)	81(42.7%)	30(15.7%)
Q29	3.35	1.16	15(7.9%)	32(16.9%)	44(23.6%)	68(36%)	30(15.7%)
Q31	3.12	1.06	15(7.9%)	37(19.1%)	63(33.7%)	59(31.5%)	15(7.9%)
Q32	3.11	.94	11(5.6%)	38(20.2%)	63(33.7%)	72(38.2%)	4(2.2%)
Q35	2.09	1.00	61(32.6%)	74(39.3%)	28(14.6%)	26(13.5%)	0
Q37	1.79	1.02	104(55.1%)	40(21.3%)	26(13.5%)	19(10.1%)	0
Q38	1.71	.88	95(49.4%)	75(38.2%)	10(4.5%)	9(4.2%)	0
Q45	3.02	1.06	15(7.9%)	55(29.2%)	34(18%)	81(42.7%)	4(2.2%)
Q46	2.65	1.04	25(13.5%)	67(34.8%)	51(27%)	42(22.5%)	4(2.2%)
Q47	2.69	1.15	28(14.6%)	68(36%)	38(20.2%)	45(23.6%)	10(5.6%)
Q48	3.02	1.21	21(11.2%)	55(29.2%)	28(14.6%)	68(36%)	17(9%)
Q49	2.82	1.22	16(18%)	20(22.5%)	22(24.7%)	24(27%)	7(7.9%)
Q52	2.98	3.33	42(22.5%)	42(22.5%)	53(28.1%)	41(21.3%)	11(5.6%)
Q53	2.84	1.14	21(11.2%)	59(31.5%)	53(28.1%)	39(20.2%)	17(9%)
Q58	3.56	1.09	2(1.1%)	40(21.3%)	39(20.2%)	66(34.8%)	42(22.5%)

The rotated factor matrix showed seven items loaded on Factor 1, which explained 12.22% of the total variance and related to teachers' general view of their occupation and passion for teaching. Five items were loaded on Factor 2, accounting for 10.49% of the total variance,

which concerned the educational settings' physical surroundings, classes, and the quality of course books. Six items were loaded on Factor 3, which accounted for 9.02% of the total variance; these items were related to the managers' and supervisors' support and how much

they allow teachers' freedom in the teaching process. Three items loaded on Factor 4, explaining 7.11% of the total variance, concerned with students' active classroom participation and intrinsic motivation to learn English. Two items loaded on Factor 5, which accounted for 6.48% of the total variance, were concerned with the quality of teachers' relationships with other teachers in the same educational setting. Three items loaded on Factor 6, accounting for 6.42% of the total variance, were related to teachers' salaries and the degree of satisfaction with their economic status. Two items loaded on Factor 7, accounting for 3.07% of the total variance, explained the extent to which teachers are engaged in decision-making, teamwork, and collaboration. Finally, Factor 8 accounted for 2.62% of the total variance and was labeled "attitudes toward effective teaching." Thus, the questionnaire was composed of eight factors: (a)

attitude toward teaching, (b) facilities and course books, (c) supervisors' attitude, (d) students' motivation, (e) relationship with colleagues, (f) financial issues, (g) teachers' involvement in educational issues, and (h) attitudes toward effective teaching.

As Table 3 shows, the most motivating factors contributing to the participants' motivation are mainly related to the first factor, "attitude toward teaching" with the highest mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.577. The most demotivating factor was "financial issues" with the least mean of 1.86 and a standard deviation of 0.845. "Students' motivation" ( $M = 2.7$ ), "teachers' involvement in educational issues" ( $M = 2.74$ ), and "facilities and course books" ( $M = 2.99$ ) were considered demotivating factors as well.

Table 4 depicts the descriptive statistics regarding the demotivating factors for public high school EFL teachers.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics Regarding Demotivating Factors for EFL Teachers ( $N = 189$ )

	Mean	SD
Attitude toward teaching	4.14	.577
Facilities and course books	2.99	.686
Supervisors' attitudes	3.27	.767
Students' motivation	2.7	.801
Relationship with colleagues	3.11	.947
Financial issues	1.86	.845
Teachers' involvement in educational issues	2.74	1.06
Attitude toward effective teaching	3.48	1.09

**Table 4.** The Demotivating Factors Affecting High School EFL Teachers ( $N = 64$ )

	F1	Q1	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q9	Q10	Q11
Mean	4.14	4.26	3.58	4.51	4.45	4.23	4.51	3.42
SD	.58	.63	.99	.62	.67	.77	.67	.99
	F2	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22		
Mean	2.77	2.83	2.87	2.74	2.55	2.87		
SD	.69	1.29	1.38	1.31	1.02	1.38		



	<b>F3</b>	<b>Q26</b>	<b>Q27</b>	<b>Q28</b>	<b>Q29</b>	<b>Q48</b>	<b>Q49</b>
Mean	3.30	3.39	3.42	3.42	3.51	3.12	2.93
SD	.77	1.14	1.09	1.12	1.18	1.12	1.24
	<b>F4</b>	<b>Q45</b>	<b>Q46</b>	<b>Q47</b>			
Mean	2.96	3.29	2.68	2.90			
SD	.80	1.01	1.08	1.11			
	<b>F5</b>	<b>Q31</b>	<b>Q32</b>				
Mean	3.27	3.42	3.13				
SD	.94	1.15	.96				
	<b>F6</b>	<b>Q35</b>	<b>Q37</b>	<b>Q38</b>			
Mean	1.77	2	1.64	1.68			
SD	.84	1.03	.98	.87			
	<b>F7</b>	<b>Q52</b>	<b>Q53</b>				
Mean	2.93	2.90	2.97				
SD	1.06	1.19	1.11				
	<b>F8</b>	<b>Q58</b>					
Mean	3.48	3.48					
SD	1.09	1.09					

Note. F1 = attitude toward teaching, F2 = facilities and course books, F3 = supervisors' attitudes, F4 = students' motivation, F5 = relationship with colleagues, F6 = financial issues, F7 = teachers' involvement in educational issues, F8 = attitude toward effective teaching.

As discernible, "financial issues" were the most demotivating. Moreover, "students' motivation" ( $M = 2.96$ ), "facilities and course books" ( $M = 2.77$ ), and "teachers' involvement in educational issues" ( $M = 2.93$ )

were also demotivating factors for high school EFL teachers. Table 5 illustrates the descriptive statistics of demotivating factors for EFL teachers at private language institutes.

**Table 5.** The Demotivating Factors Affecting Private Language Institute EFL Teachers ( $N = 65$ )

	<b>F1</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q5</b>	<b>Q6</b>	<b>Q7</b>	<b>Q9</b>	<b>Q10</b>	<b>Q11</b>
Mean	4.02	4.31	3.66	4.4	4.17	3.91	4.26	3.46
SD	.68	.90	1.11	.77	.82	.89	.82	1.04
	<b>F2</b>	<b>Q18</b>	<b>Q19</b>	<b>Q20</b>	<b>Q21</b>	<b>Q22</b>		
Mean	2.85	3.4	2.8	2.57	2.65	2.828		
SD	.56	1.12	1.16	1.27	1.219	1.29		
	<b>F3</b>	<b>Q26</b>	<b>Q27</b>	<b>Q28</b>	<b>Q29</b>	<b>Q48</b>	<b>Q49</b>	
Mean	3.05	3.68	2.94	3.4	3	2.66	2.63	
SD	.95	1.10	1.21	1.06	1.23	1.35	1.37	

	<b>F4</b>	<b>Q45</b>	<b>Q46</b>	<b>Q47</b>
Mean	2.82	3.08	2.74	2.65
SD	.95	1.07	1.09	1.19
	<b>F5</b>	<b>Q31</b>	<b>Q32</b>	
Mean	3.01	2.94	3.08	
SD	.93	1.05	1.04	
	<b>F6</b>	<b>Q35</b>	<b>Q37</b>	<b>Q38</b>
Mean	1.66	2.03	1.45	1.48
SD	.63	1.01	.78	.74
	<b>F7</b>	<b>Q52</b>	<b>Q53</b>	
Mean	2.46	2.17	2.74	
SD	1.07	1.17	1.19	
	<b>F8</b>	<b>Q58</b>		
Mean	3.51	3.51		
SD	1.19	1.19		

Note. F1 = attitude toward teaching, F2 = facilities and course books, F3 = supervisors' attitudes, F4 = students' motivation, F5 = relationship with colleagues, F6 = financial issues, F7 = teachers' involvement in educational issues, F8 = attitude toward effective teaching.

Table 5 implies that demotivating factors are accounted for by “facilities and course books” ( $M = 2.85$ ), “students' motivation” ( $M = 2.82$ ), “financial issues” ( $M = 1.66$ ), and “teachers' involvement in educational

issues” ( $M = 2.46$ ). Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of demotivating factors for university EFL teachers.

**Table 6.** The Demotivating Factors Affecting General EFL University Teachers ( $N = 60$ )

	<b>F1</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q5</b>	<b>Q6</b>	<b>Q7</b>	<b>Q9</b>	<b>Q10</b>	<b>Q11</b>
Mean	4.18	4.52	3.52	4.30	4.39	4.26	4.22	4.04
SD	.54	.59	1.20	.56	.66	.69	.90	.93
	<b>F2</b>	<b>Q18</b>	<b>Q19</b>	<b>Q20</b>	<b>Q21</b>	<b>Q22</b>		
Mean	3.49	3.96	2.35	3.87	3.39	3.91		
SD	.59	.97	.83	1.06	1.23	.90		
	<b>F3</b>	<b>Q26</b>	<b>Q27</b>	<b>Q28</b>	<b>Q29</b>	<b>Q48</b>	<b>Q49</b>	
Mean	3.57	3.65	3.78	3.96	3.65	3.43	2.95	
SD	.70	1.07	.95	.70	.93	.99	.93	
	<b>F4</b>	<b>Q45</b>	<b>Q46</b>	<b>Q47</b>				
Mean	2.51	2.56	2.48	2.48				
SD	.92	1.03	.95	1.16				

	<b>F5</b>	<b>Q31</b>	<b>Q32</b>	
Mean	3.06	3	3.13	
SD	.76	.90	.81	
	<b>F6</b>	<b>Q35</b>	<b>Q37</b>	<b>Q38</b>
Mean	2.29	2.30	2.48	2.09
SD	.87	.97	1.12	.99
	<b>F7</b>	<b>Q52</b>	<b>Q53</b>	
Mean	2.93	3.04	2.83	
SD	.96	1.065	1.15	
	<b>F8</b>	<b>Q58</b>		
Mean	3.73	3.74		
SD	.96	.96		

Note. F1 = attitude toward teaching, F2 = facilities and course books, F3 = supervisors' attitudes, F4 = students' motivation, F5 = relationship with colleagues, F6 = financial issues, F7 = teachers' involvement in educational issues, F8 = attitude toward effective teaching.

As depicted in Table 6, “financial issues,” “students' motivation,” and “teachers' involvement in educational issues” were considered as the main demotivating factors with means below 3 ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $M = 2.51$ , and  $M = 2.93$ , respectively). Furthermore, “facilities and course book” was not demotivating for university EFL teachers. An analysis of variance was conducted to address the second research question; however, the descriptive statistics suggested that the demotivating factors among EFL teachers of the three contexts of instruction were mainly accounted for by “facilities and course books,” “students' motivation,” “financial issues,” and “teachers' involvement in educational issues.”

Table 7 reveals that, firstly, the difference among EFL teachers from high schools, language institutes, and universities in terms of demotivating forces in Factor 2 (facilities and course books) was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Regarding Factor 4 (students' motivation), the statistical analysis indicated no significant difference among EFL teachers in these three contexts ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, Factor 6, “financial issues,” was found to bring about a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) among the EFL teachers of different contexts. In addition, regarding Factor 7 (teachers' involvement in educational issues), the mean difference among EFL teachers from high schools, language institutes, and universities was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 7.** Comparing EFL Teachers from Public High Schools, Private Language Institutes, and Universities

		<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Factor 2	Between groups	7.97	2	3.99	10.59	.000
	Within groups	157.77	71	2.22		
	Total	351.96	73			
Factor 4	Between groups	2.75	2	1.38	1.73	.18
	Within groups	68.44	86	.796		
	Total	71.19	88			

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Factor 6	Between groups	5.92	2	2.96	4.89	.01
	Within groups	52.04	86	.60		
	Total	57.96	88			
Factor 7	Between groups	4.85	2	2.43	2.25	.11
	Within groups	92.71	86	1.08		
	Total	97.56	88			

Table 8. Post Hoc Test for High School, Language Institute, and University EFL Teachers

Dependent variable	(I) group	(J) group	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
F2	Institute	School	.07	.15	1	-.29	.44
		University	-.64*	.16	.001	-1.05	-.24
	School	Institute	-.08	.15	1	-.45	.291
		University	-.72*	.17	.000	-1.135	-.31
	University	Institute	.64*	.16	.001	.24	1.05
		School	.72*	.17	.000	.31	1.13
F6	Institute	School	-.11	.19	1	-.58	.35
		University	-.63*	.21	.01	-1.14	-.12
	School	Institute	.11	.19	1	-.35	.58
		University	-.51566	.21	.05	-1.03	.00
	University	Institute	.63*	.21	.01	.12	1.14
		School	.51	.21	.05	-.01	1.04

The researchers also ran a post hoc test to confirm where the differences occurred between groups. Table 8 demonstrates the result of the post hoc test.

Based on Table 8, regarding the “facilities and course books,” the score of university teachers was higher than high school and institute teachers. Considering the *p*-values (0.001 and 0.00, respectively), a statistically significant difference between university and high school/language institute EFL teachers was discernible. Regarding Factor 6, “financial issues,” the mean of university EFL teachers was higher than that of high schools (mean difference = 0.51), and this difference

was statistically significant ( $p = 0.05$ ). It can also be concluded that “facilities” and “financial issues” have less adverse effects on university EFL teachers.

After extracting the demotivating factors affecting teachers in the three contexts of the study, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 volunteers (10 interviewees from each group of EFL teachers). The interviews aimed to scrutinize the outcome of the quantitative phase and other potential factors not considered in the questionnaire. Through the principles of grounded theory, the data was coded carefully, and the required steps of “open coding,” “conceptual coding”

“clustering,” and “themes/categories development” were followed sequentially (Charmaz, 2002). Next, the resulting factors are described with some examples.

The first and foremost cause of demotivation reported by the EFL teachers was related to “learners’ behaviors and their level of motivation.” As a high-school teacher mentioned,

[Students] are used to the best of service in their life. It seems that they don’t have the same point of view, as our generation, toward the university and the future job. They know that they can enter university easily. (Participant 1)

Although some EFL teachers at language institutes mentioned their salary as the most demotivating force, they all believed that students could negatively influence their motivation to teach. Participant 4, a language institute teacher, expressed: “Boys are often trouble-makers. They are not obedient. They don’t come to class to learn something. They just want to have fun. Girls are better.”

In the same vein, a university EFL teacher explicated, When I’m going to teach new stuff, they nag or don’t like to listen. They constantly look at their watches. This students’ demotivation can demotivate us, and over time you ask yourself, “so what?” Learners’ motivation has decreased compared to previous years. (Participant 13)

The second important factor causing EFL teachers’ demotivation was “financial issues.” All teachers emphasized that financial problems affect their motivation; however, high school teachers, especially women, seemed more satisfied with their salary considering their summer vacations. For example, a language institute teacher and a university teacher expressed their dissatisfaction in this way,

We put much effort into our work. If I want to teach for three hours, I have to study for about six hours; I have to print some materials with my own money. At the end

of the semester, I get almost nothing. This reduces my motivation. (Participant 21)

I’m not satisfied with my salary, and I think this is the case for all of us. When you are a teacher, especially a language teacher, you deal with the soul and feelings of the students. Language is a phenomenon connecting with people’s characteristics and beliefs...so EFL teachers’ financial expectations must be met...unfortunately, in our society, being a teacher cannot be considered a decent job for a living. (Participant 18)

In addition to a “low salary,” language institutes and university teachers complained about their “job insecurity.” Almost all EFL teachers noted that the supervisors do not appreciate their efforts suitably. For instance, Participant 28, a language institute teacher, said: “[The supervisors] not only don’t encourage us, but they criticize us. I spend a lot of time in my classes and get reprimanded. This is heartbreaking!”

Teachers complained about the “inadequate facilities” in all three language learning contexts. In this regard, high school teachers mostly pointed out that the schools are not equipped with laboratories, and class sizes are unsuitable. However, the facility’s inadequacy was not severe for university teachers; they stated that the number of students per class negatively affects their motivation. For language institute teachers, the “prescribed methods or syllabus” have adverse effects on their motivation, believing that this would repress their creativity: “We don’t have any role in syllabus designing. Everything is determined in advance, and we just put it into practice. This affects my motivation. It is imposed on me” (Participant 17).

Teachers pointed out some forces which weaken the motivation to seek opportunities for “professional development.” Another parameter that influences teachers’ motivation regarding professional development mentioned by high school and language institute teachers, but not included in the questionnaire, was the influence

of an observer. Interestingly, some teachers considered the lack of observation very demotivating: “I try to have self-development. I recorded my classes several times and reflected on them, but I’d like someone to observe my classes, but it hasn’t happened yet” (Participant 20).

## Discussion

The findings revealed that the EFL teachers in the three contexts had a high degree of dissatisfaction with their financial conditions. High school teachers believe their salaries are unfair as all teachers obtain similar salaries. There should be differences among teachers according to the amount of energy they invest in class participation and teaching. Likewise, all participants were dissatisfied with their salaries due to payment delays; moreover, they claimed that the managers never considered their degrees and years of experience for their payments. It is in line with what Markovits et al. (2014) found about the negative influence of economic factors on teachers’ motivation and job satisfaction. In addition to financial status, “job insecurity” was one factor that negatively affected this study’s participants. As Kim and Kim (2015) expressed, job stability can motivate teachers, while job insecurity can be regarded as a source of demotivation.

The findings also indicated that students’ demotivation demotivated most of the EFL teachers in all three contexts. As teachers spend most of their time with L2 learners, maintaining a positive and strong relationship is vital in keeping teachers motivated (Curby et al., 2009; Henson, 2001). More importantly, a positive relationship between teachers and learners can be a source of intrinsic motivation for both (Christophel & Gorham, 1995). University teachers were also demotivated by their students as they usually learn English because it is a part of their curriculum and not because they are interested. Alexander (2008) stated that

when students have low self-confidence and self-esteem, high anxiety and inhibition, their motivation can be destroyed. Moreover, teachers’ negative attitude towards

students and non-supportive classroom environments damage students’ willingness towards lessons. Shortage of positive reinforcement, approval, and appreciation of students by teachers influences motivation to learn negatively. (p. 488)

The findings are in line with the results of Addison and Brundrett (2008), Aydin (2012), and Fattash (2013), who demonstrated a strong affiliation between learners’ and teachers’ motivation.

Additionally, EFL teachers in all three contexts were demotivated because the managers do not usually engage them in participatory decision-making, goal-setting, and problem-solving processes. The participants’ statements in the interviews were in line with the study of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), which documented that managers should provide opportunities for teachers’ collaboration and teamwork in decision-making to enhance their motivation. Another factor that can decrease teachers’ motivation is the lack of support from colleagues. This factor can harm the quality of teaching (Sugino, 2010). Communication among colleagues can make teachers motivated and satisfied with their teaching life. Based on the interviews, EFL teachers had not received much encouragement and feedback from their colleagues; teamwork, collaboration, and sharing of ideas were non-existent in their working places.

The findings also indicated that inadequate facilities and course books at institutes and high schools were a major demotivating factor, which is in agreement with the results of Yaghoubinejad et al. (2016) and Mukminin et al. (2015). They found that teachers were demotivated because of inadequate language facilities and English course books. Aydin (2012) considered the lack of supporting material for classroom use as a source of demotivation. He expressed that problems with course books, such as diversity, lack of coherence, and imbalanced activities, can negatively influence teachers.

The results are also in line with Al-Khairi (2013), who found that inadequate facilities influence teachers’

motivation negatively; however, the quantitative results of the study showed that, unlike high school and institute EFL teachers, university teachers did not consider facilities demotivating. Aydin (2012) mentioned the physical conditions, such as crowded classrooms and noise, as a demotivation factor in the EFL teaching process. Also, Khodadady and Khaghaninejad (2012) stated that overcrowded classrooms could negatively affect teachers and cause embarrassment, stress, and exhaustion for some teachers. Similarly, Baba-Khouya (2018) pointed out that crowded classrooms are the main demotivators among teachers and students in learning environments.

### Conclusion

Very few studies have investigated EFL teachers' demotivating factors in different contexts of English teaching and learning in the Iranian context. This study concentrated on investigating the main demotivating factors for public high schools, private language institutes, and university EFL teachers and the possible similarities and differences in this regard. This study investigated the opinions of 189 teachers of these three pedagogical contexts employing a mixed-methods design. It was found that financial issues, students' motivation, facilities and course books, and teachers' involvement in educational issues were demotivating for high school EFL teachers. The main demotivating factors for language institute teachers were financial issues, teachers' involvement in educational issues, students' motivation, and facilities and course books. These factors, except for the latter, were also judged demotivating by university EFL teachers. In addition to the financial status, language institutes and university EFL teachers referred to job insecurity as a dissatisfying factor that leads to job dissatisfaction, discouragement, and demotivation. The differences among the three groups were statistically significant in terms of facilities and course books, and financial issues. At the same time, they have roughly similar views regarding students' motivation and teachers' involvement in educational issues.

Through the interviews, EFL teachers declared that they were not motivated enough for professional development because of negative feedback from stakeholders, the heavy workload, the high costs of attending conferences, and restrictive and unfair rules for promotion. Moreover, they complained about the poor relationship with colleagues, lack of mutual respect, and jealousy that damaged their motivation. Interviews also indicated that most teachers were dissatisfied with inadequate facilities in all three educational contexts. They complained about unsuitable teachers' rooms, lack of laboratory and teaching aids, and class sizes. More importantly, they clarified that the textbook and the prescribed teaching methods demotivate them.

Differences exist among public high school, private language institute, and university EFL teachers regarding demotivation though they share the same cultural background and have educational similarities. If their demotivating factors are identified and dealt with appropriately, the quality of English teaching and learning would be undeniably improved, and the teachers' health and satisfaction would be assured.

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