The Mediating Role of Teacher Burnout and School Climate in EFL Teachers' Commitment: Focus on Iranian Teachers

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Article info	**Abstract**
	The psychological constructs of teachers have become the focus of a growing line of research in numerous studies in both mainstream and second language teacher education over the recent decades. Many studies have addressed the relationship between teacher commitment and other variables; however, its interaction with teacher burnout and school climate has not received much attention in EFL contexts. The present study investigated the mediating role of teacher burnout and school climate in predicting teacher commitment among Iranian high school EFL teachers. In doing so, 417 teachers completed three measuring instruments: English Language Teacher Commitment Questionnaire, Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire, and Maslach Burnout Inventory. The results of hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that teacher burnout and school climate could predict teachers' commitment to their profession. Although both variables had a unique effect on teacher commitment, school climate was a stronger predictor of teacher commitment. The results can offer implications for EFL teachers, school principals, educators, and teacher education programs. ***Keywords***: Burnout, Commitment, EFL Teachers, Regression Analysis, School Climate

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, teachers play a critical role in educating students as prospective members of society through their school teaching. The effectiveness of any educational system depends primarily on teachers who conduct most educational activities and tasks within schools. Teachers' occupation is, then, one of the most emotionally tense and demanding jobs whose quality depends mainly on some personal (e.g., psychological factors) and external (e.g., working environment) factors. Compared to other fields of study, second language (L2) teaching quality seems more influenced by individual and external factors since L2 teachers struggle with many psychological, emotional, and cultural issues beyond linguistic elements (Dong & Xu, 2022). Thus, the interplay among compelling factors in successful teaching is not only of paramount importance but can also result in understanding the underlying variables that affect the profession (Alonso-Tapia & Ruiz-Díaz, 2022; Benevene et al., 2020; Mahmoodarabi et al., 2021). It is now commonly assumed that teachers, as individual social beings, have their own teaching beliefs, cognition, personality, ideology, hopes, and value systems that significantly impact their teaching behaviors. Consequently, the psychological teacher-related variables influencing teachers' teaching quality are worthy of research.

Teacher education is rich in studies focusing on various teacher-related factors, such as burnout, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, identity, and commitment (e.g., Ahangaran et al., 2019; Azizi et al., 2023; Cansoy et al., 2020; Ghasemzadeh et al., 2019; Mahmoodarabi et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2021; Rashtchi, 2021). In this line of inquiry, some studies showed that teachers suffer from burnout (e.g., Aloe et al., 2014; Hong, 2010). Hong (2010) reported that the attrition rate of teachers has increased and many school teachers have left their jobs in different parts of the world. Such an attrition rate of teachers shows the necessity of placing considerable attention on teacher commitment.

Broadly defined, teacher commitment is teachers' mental connection between their beliefs and teaching so that the whole allegiance is directed toward their teaching (Lu, 2021). In L2 teacher education, according to Dong and Xu (2022), commitment means teachers' ability to eagerly conform to the goals of education, "mentally identify themselves with the profession, take operational steps to improve instruction and form an emotional connection to the profession" (p. 3). Recognizing the significance of teacher commitment in teachers' pedagogical approach, some researchers have focused on several aspects of the construct. Research has revealed that teacher commitment greatly impacts teachers' performance and students' achievement and

contributes to the success of school effectiveness and educational reforms (Altun, 2017; Lu, 2021).

As a teacher characteristic, teaching commitment is affected by various elements, including working conditions, teacher autonomy, teacher-student interpersonal communication, collaboration, learning opportunities, school environment, and teaching aims (Lu, 2021; Royaei et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2019). Some studies reported that commitment decreases with teachers' exposure to career stressors, such as workload, complexity, and high expectations for outcomes (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Conversely, schools that allow teachers to have greater autonomy on the job and help them limit their stress are assumed to promote teacher commitment to the profession. Other studies showed that teacher-related variables, such as job satisfaction, collective efficacy, and self-efficacy, can also predict commitment (Fathi & Savadi Rostami, 2018; Thien et al., 2021). Moreover, many studies acknowledged that teacher burnout and school climate are closely associated with teacher commitment (Collie et al., 2011; Nagar, 2012; Shwu-yong & Waxmanet, 2009).

Burnout, as another teacher-related variable, refers to an affective reaction and negative emotions due to job-related stress, which can permanently be stabilized in teachers and may have destructive consequences for teacher efficacy and student achievements. As a multifaceted construct, burnout encompasses three components: reduced personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion, (Maslach et al., 1996). As the fundamental stress component of burnout, emotional exhaustion is defined as the energy loss or deprivation of emotional and physical resources. Depersonalization is also a source of compassion fatigue or negative feelings related to teachers' profession (e.g., learners, colleagues). As the self-evaluation aspect of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment is known as reduced efficacy and poor self-esteem when teachers cannot accomplish their work. Teacher burnout has been extensively investigated in teacher education since teachers usually feel stress and negative emotions during their careers. For instance, Hakanen et al. (2006) found that the physical environment, students' behaviors, supervisory support, job control, and social climate can predict teacher burnout.

School climate is among different external factors that affect teaching, defined as the relationship among teachers, students, parents, school principals, and vice-principals within the school environment (Alonso-Tapia & Ruiz-Díaz, 2022). School climate concerns the organizational structure, leadership, prevalent instructional and managerial context, and the relationships between teachers and teachers-students. It significantly affects students' engagement, behavior, and achievement (Quijada et al., 2020). The literature has supported school climate as a substantial factor affecting almost all variables related to

teachers and students. For example, having a holistic view of school climate, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) have proposed job demands and resources as two major school factors that affect teacher-related variables. Job demands encapsulate several facets, such as students' behavioral problems, role problems, work overload, deficient equipment, interpersonal conflicts, and school policies. Job resources also comprise some elements, namely flexible schedules, administrative leadership, decision latitude, participation in decision-making, professional development, and colleague and school support.

Although a great deal of research on teacher-related factors has been conducted, further investigation is still necessary due to the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the variables. Despite the vital role of teacher commitment in teachers' performance, the construct has not been well-addressed in L2 teacher education in general and in the EFL educational system in particular. Additionally, the current study researchers did not encounter studies focusing on the simultaneous effects of teacher burnout and school climate on teacher commitment in an L2 context. Furthermore, the teacher commitment questionnaires utilized in the previous studies (e.g., Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Collie et al., 2011; Eickholt & Goodboy, 2017; Donuk & Bindak, 2022; Manla, 2021; Nagar, 2012; Yang et al., 2019) addressed teacher commitment generically. Regarding the context-specific nature of teacher commitment, the researchers of this study developed and validated an English Language Teacher Commitment Questionnaire specifically for Iranian high school EFL teachers. In the context of English language teaching in Iran, the investigation of teacher commitment is of more significance as researchers working on EFL teachers have largely overlooked particular language teaching contexts. One of these contexts is high school. The fact that language teaching in high schools has little appeal to Iranian researchers is disappointing given the fact that "the English language is a compulsory subject for six years (from Grade 7 to Grade 12) in the Iranian public school curriculum" (Mohammadian Haghighi & Norton, 2017, p. 2).

To partially address the gap, the current study explored the role of school climate and teacher burnout as predictors of EFL teacher commitment in Iranian high schools. The main objective of this study was to explore the relationship between teacher burnout, school climate, and teacher commitment of Iranian EFL teachers. Identifying such relationships can assist in deciding the type of intervention needed to help teachers improve their teaching acts.

2. Literature Review

A critical factor influencing teachers is their "psychological bond or identification" with their profession that has a profound meaning for them, known as commitment (Chan et al., 2008, p. 598). Firestone and Pennell (1993)

also defined teacher commitment as the strength of teachers' sense of belonging to a specific school and their emotional attachment toward their roles as educators. Three primary factors characterizing teacher commitment are loyalty to and endorsement of the aims and values of the school, dedication to making efforts on behalf of the school, and a strong tendency to stay with the school.

Teacher commitment significantly impacts instructional quality and enhances student participation, school excellence, and teachers' job performance. The construct also signifies how teachers value their careers by engaging in various tasks within the workplace. Committed teachers are willing to make efforts in teaching and generally experience higher job satisfaction (Rashtchi & Jabalameli, 2012). Moreover, highly committed teachers demonstrate a strong attachment to the organization and are inclined to perform effectively. On the contrary, teachers with low levels of commitment have a weak connection to the organization and often experience frustration in the learning environment (Thien & Razak, 2014). Furthermore, commitment enables teachers to enhance their knowledge and create conducive learning environments (Lu, 2021).

The conceptualization of commitment goes beyond focusing solely on teachers' mental lives and considers the social aspect as teaching occurs through activities in the social context of the school. Moreover, teacher commitment is dynamic as it develops through teaching practice, learning, and other social and personal experiences (Borg, 2006). L2 teacher education also associates teacher commitment to possible selves and identities (GAO & Xu, 2014; Moodie & Feryok, 2015). According to Moodie and Feryok (2015), teacher commitment connects the social actions of teaching practice and its dynamic development to the psychological context in which it occurs.

Researchers (e.g., Donuk & Bindak, 2022) argued that commitment strongly correlates with teacher retention and school effectiveness. On the contrary, attrition or the strong desire to leave the profession negatively correlates with teacher commitment. Burnout, as a work-related issue, is one of the primary causes of teacher attrition and has long been interconnected with commitment in various work contexts. Fatigue, frustration, and stress experienced in the working environment are characteristics of burnout, which teachers are prone to due to their highly stressful jobs leading them to quit. Factors such as classroom size and population, financial issues, school type, and policy changes contribute to teacher burnout. Exploring the sources of stress and providing teachers with effective coping mechanisms is crucial to prevent burnout. Since schools are reported to have higher burnout rates than other contexts, they have been the focus of studies regarding burnout and commitment. In their research, Werang et al. (2015) and Sajid (2014) found a strong negative correlation between teachers' commitment and burnout.

Various factors, including school climate, affect teacher commitment. A positive school climate can effectively prevent teacher burnout (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016), help the school fulfill its aims, and improve academic success and personal growth (Quijada et al., 2020). It can also decrease the levels of teachers' depersonalization and emotional exhaustion (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). According to the Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory, school support indicates teachers' perception of how schools value their efforts and appreciate their performance, leading to teacher commitment (Suyatno et al., 2022).

Moreover, principals' effective leadership contributes to developing a positive school climate, fostering teachers' commitment. Therefore, the factors that influence various aspects of teachers in schools should be the focus of research attention, leading to implementing changes within schools, classrooms, language centers, and national academic organizations. Research findings (Collie et al., 2011; Khan, 2019) have substantiated the mediating role of school climate in teachers' commitment.

Recently, there has been an outburst regarding the number of psychological studies that have placed commitment as the focal point of their attention. However, when it comes to language teacher education, the construct of teacher commitment is still in its infancy. The context of most studies on language teacher commitment is school, where the interests of different sectors beyond learners are involved. For example, in the Netherlands, Van Veen et al.'s (2005) study of a Dutch language secondary school teacher focused on the effects of moral (the ideological and educational views of how language students learn Dutch as an L2), personal (teacher's motivation for language teaching), and social (the participant's relationships with students and his colleagues and his position within the school context) factors on the participant's image of himself as a language teacher and his willingness to remain in the language teaching profession for a long duration. Analyzing several rounds of semi-structured interviews, the researchers found that personal, moral, and social factors influenced the participant's teaching commitment.

Over a slightly more extended period, GAO and Xu (2014) investigated ten English language teachers' commitment in rural secondary schools in China through biographical interviews. The results revealed that the teachers did not like to become teachers at the outset, which influenced their commitment to teaching. Interestingly, the participants' commitment gained momentum as they observed the positive effect they had on the students' learning of English. In another context, Moodie and Feryok (2015) investigated two experienced and two novice L2 teachers' teaching commitment in South Korean primary schools. The results revealed that participants had affective commitments to language learning and continuance

commitment to English teaching. To address teacher burnout and commitment in the EFL context, Asadi and Bozorgian (2022) explored the relationship between these constructs by focusing on 100 English language teachers in Iran's Language Institutes. The study indicated a negative relationship between English teachers' teaching commitment and teacher burnout.

The studies reviewed above presented several insights into language teacher commitment in language teacher education. However, other studies have investigated the relationship between teacher commitment and other teacher-related variables in mainstream teacher education (e.g., Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Collie et al., 2011; Donuk & Bindak, 2022; Eickholt & Goodboy, 2017; Manla, 2021; Nagar, 2012; Yang et al., 2019). For example, Billingsley and Cross (1992) investigated the effect of teacher commitment and job satisfaction variables on 1147 special and general educators' burnout via a questionnaire. The results of regression analysis revealed that work-related variables, such as role ambiguity, role conflict, and stress, were predictors of teacher commitment.

In another study, Nagar (2012) examined the associations between different dimensions of teacher burnout and teacher organizational commitment among 153 university teachers. The study indicated that teachers with high levels of burnout in their teaching profession were inclined to report low levels of commitment. In Canada, Collie et al. (2011) investigated the effect of social-emotional learning and school climate on 664 school teachers. The participants filled out a questionnaire on teacher commitment, social-emotional learning, and school climate. Data analyses indicated that school climate predicted three dimensions of teacher commitment. Besides, teachers' relations with their students in the school environment and the collaborations among themselves were the most consistent predictors of all three aspects of teacher commitment.

Besides, Eickholt and Goodboy (2017) explored the significance of the ostracism of school teachers as a correlate of teacher commitment in the USA. A group of 200 teachers filled out a survey assessing the teachers' workplace ostracism, professional and organizational commitment, investment, and job satisfaction. Results demonstrated that teachers' experiences with ostracism in the workplace could indirectly predict their commitment to school and profession through its effect on job satisfaction.

In a very different context, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, Yang et al. (2019) explored the influences of school environment, district-level practices, and teacher characteristics on teacher commitment of 4,941 teachers in 238 public schools who filled out the teacher survey. The data analysis yielded that nationality, collegial relationships, and multiple interpersonal support were the most potent factors in predicting teacher commitment. The results also revealed that the interpersonal environment of schools had a critical role in

developing teachers' commitment. In another study, Manla (2021) explored the school climate's impact on teacher commitment and school performance in the Philippines. Employing school climate and organizational commitment questionnaires, 200 teachers, 30 principals, and 60 parents completed the questionnaires. Data analyses showed that school climate is related to teachers' teaching commitment. In another study, Donuk and Bindak (2022) found significant associations among school climate, organizational commitment and burnout of math teachers.

Despite the studies mentioned above, no empirical study has examined the effect of teacher burnout and school climate on EFL teachers' commitment levels in the Iranian EFL context. Therefore, the current study aimed to fill this gap and examine the role of teacher burnout and school climate as predictors of teacher commitment in the Iranian EFL context and identify the possible association among the abovementioned variables. The overarching research question then is:

Do teacher burnout and school climate predict Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to their high school profession?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants were 432 (201 males, 231 females) state high school English language teachers from various provinces of Iran. This study employed cluster sampling as obtaining a list of all target population members was difficult or impossible. To select the sample, the researchers ranked the provinces in Iran due to socioeconomic indicators (Hosseini & Eskandari, 2000) because previous studies (e.g., Klassen et al., 2010) indicate that the socioeconomic status of the community in which a teacher teaches has profound influences on teacher variables (e.g., identity, commitment, job satisfaction, etc.). Hosseini and Eskandari determined provinces' ranking based on social, cultural, production, economic, and infrastructure indicators in their research. According to their findings, provinces such as Tehran, Isfahan, Mazandaran, Khorasan, and Fars are considered high-ranking provinces in terms of possessing socioeconomic indicators. At the same time, Hormozgan, Kohgiluyeh Boyer-Ahmad, Sistan and Baluchestan, Khuzestan, and Kurdistan are labeled as low-ranking provinces. Thus, the researchers used their provincial ranking as a criterion for selecting the study sample. In the first round, the researchers selected some provinces (e.g., Tehran, Isfahan, Fars, Hormozgan, Kohgiluyeh, Boyer-Ahmad, and Khuzestan) from high- and low-ranking provinces. In the second round, cities from each province were selected. The researchers preferred to choose the capital of each province to have a more homogeneous sample and control the variables related to the population density, schools, and facilities. Once the cities were selected (e.g.,

Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Bandarabbas, Yasooj, and Ahvaz), some schools in each were randomly sampled to target the high school teachers who attended the present study. Teachers were equally selected from both high-ranking and low-ranking cities. Regarding the respondents' educational degrees, 24 teachers held PhDs, 169 had MAs, and 239 had BA degrees. Teachers' teaching experiences ranged from less than two years to 28 years, and their ages varied from 24 to 50 years.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

3.2.1. English Language Teacher Commitment Questionnaire (ELTCQ)

The English Language Teacher Commitment Questionnaire (ELTCQ) developed by Bagheri et al. (2024) was used. ELTCQ (Appendix) includes 32 items with a six-point Likert scale measuring seven underlying commitment components, namely cognitive language teaching ability (5 items), language classroom environment (5 items), job satisfaction (5 items), opportunities for professional development (5 items), language teaching planning and support (4 items), language teaching self-image and beliefs (4 items), and language teaching exhaustion (4 items). The ELTCQ also has high internal consistency and validity. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that the whole factor structure accounted for 44.724% of the total variance. Table 1 shows the variance, eigenvalues, and internal consistency reliabilities for each component. Also, the overall ELTCQ enjoyed a reliability of .901.

Table 1

Variance, Eigenvalues, and Reliabilities of Factors

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
variance%	7.516	6.811	6.489	6,331	6.022	5.847	5.708
eigenvalues	7.86	1.88	1.78	1.74	1.67	1.61	1.56
Reliability	.759	.733	.790	.822	.761	.763	.784

The confirmatory factor analysis corroborated the seven-factor model by employing the General Linear Model. All the loading between latent factors and indicators and covariance among the factors were significant at a=.001 (p<.001). The seven components of ELTCQ measure a higher-order latent variable. All items have significant (=>.50) contributions to their respective latent variables, which, in turn, have large contributions to ELTCQ.

Concerning model evaluation, the non-significant chi-square value of 490.337 (p=.135) indicated the model's fit. The ratio of chi-square over the degree of freedom (490.37 / 457=1.07) was lower than 3. The Root Mean Square of Error Approximation of .013 was lower than .05. These results supported the absolute fit of the model. The Goodness of Fit Index of .99, the Standardized Root Mean Residual of .041, and the Probability of Close Fit

(1>.50) also supported the model's fit. Table 2 illustrates the fit of the ELTCQ overall model.

Table 2

Model Fit Indices of ELTCMQ

Fit Indices	Labels	Statistic	df	P-Value	Criterion	Conclusion
Absolute	X^2	490.37	457	.135	>.05	Bad Fit
	X^2 Ratio	1.07	---	---	<=3	Good Fit
	SRMR	.041	---	---	<=.10	Good Fit
	RMSEA	.013	---	---	.05 to .08[1]	Good Fit
	PCLOSE	1	---	---	=>.50	Good Fit
	GFI	.99	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
Incremental	RFI	.97	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	CFI	1	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	NFI	.97	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	IFI	1	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
CN		450.84			=>200	Sampling Adequacy

Schumacker and Lomax (2016)

3.2.2. Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire (R-SLEQ)

The participants' sense of their school climate was measured through Johnson et al.'s (2007) Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire (R-SLEQ), which includes 21 items categorized into five subscales: student relations, collaboration, decision-making, school resources, and instructional innovation. The R-SLEQ items were rated along a five-point Likert scale from *Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree*. Johnson et al. (2007) have provided evidence that the R-SLEQ is a reliable (α=.78) and valid measure of school climate. In the current study, reliability for the school climate questionnaire was .804.

3.2.3. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

The valid and reliable Maslach burnout scale (Maslach et al., 1996) was used to assess the participants' sense of teaching burnout. The instrument has 22 items in three dimensions: depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment. Each item is rated along a seven-point Likert scale from never to every day. Cronbach's alpha reliability for the three sub-scales yielded 0.76, 0.63, and 0.73, respectively, and the whole questionnaire reliability was .757.

3.3. Data Collection

To collect the data, the participants completed three questionnaires (i.e., teacher commitment, teacher burnout, and school climate). The questionnaires were distributed through both email and face-to-face methods. Due to the better accessibility to the participants, the online version of the questionnaires was also created using the Google Docs application. The online survey was then shared on WhatsApp and Telegram groups with teachers.

Reviewing the completed questionnaires showed that 15 were carelessly completed and thus discarded, resulting in 417 questionnaires for analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

The hierarchical regression analysis was utilized to explore whether the participants' sense of school climate and teacher burnout predicted the extent to which they felt committed to language teaching. Hierarchical regression analysis is helpful when the researcher has a reasonable justification that predictors (i.e., independent variables) should be "entered into the [regression] equation in the order specified by the researcher based on theoretical grounds" (Pallant, 2005, p. 141). Literature shows that teacher burnout is a more critical variable than school climate for predicting teachers' satisfaction and commitment to their jobs (Collie et al., 2011). Thus, it was entered into the regression equation first.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

A linear regression through the backward method was run to predict Iranian language teachers' commitment to their profession in high schools through teachers' burnout and school climate. As noted by Field (2018), the forward and stepwise methods should be avoided because they are highly affected by sample size and suffer from "overfitting (having too many variables in the model that essentially make little contribution to predicting the outcome) and underfitting (leaving out important predictors) the model" (p. 531). However, the backward method increases the type II error rate. It is worth mentioning that the SPSS software has two more methods, namely, enter and remove, through which the researcher manually decides on the entry and removal of variables.

As shown in Table 3, the regression model converged in two steps. School climate and teacher burnout entered the regression model on the first step to predict 19.3 percent of commitment (R = .439, R^2 = .193). Teacher burnout was excluded on the second step to leave school climate as the sole predictor of commitment to have a prediction power of 18.8 % (R=.433, R^2=.188). These results showed that burnout and school climate predict 19.3 % of commitment, and school climate alone can predict 18.8 % of commitment.

Table 3

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.439ᵃ	.193	.189	4.767
2	.433b	.188	.186	4.776

a. Predictors: Climate, Burnout

b. Predictors: Climate

c. Dependent Variable: Commitment

Table 4 shows that the regression model enjoyed statistical significance at first, $F(2, 414) = 49.39$, p< .001) and second $F(1, 415) = 95.87$, p<.001) steps.

Table 4

ANOVA of Test of Significance of Regression Model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	2244.536	2	1122.268	49.394	.000b
1	Residual	9406.404	414	22.721		
	Total	11650.940	416			
	Regression	2185.986	1	2185.986	95.847	.000c
2	Residual	9464.954	415	22.807		
	Total	11650.940	416			

a. Dependent Variable: Commitment

b. Predictors: Climate, Burnout

c. Predictors: Climate

Table 5 shows the results of the regression coefficients. Two sets of coefficients were provided: unstandardized (B) and standardized (Beta). The unstandardized regression coefficient for burnout was -.100, indicating that if burnout increased by one unit, commitment decreased by .100 units. The standardized regression coefficient of -.146 indicated that if burnout increased by one standard deviation, commitment decreased by .146 standard deviations. The t-value of -1.60 (p =.109) showed that burnout had a non-significant contribution to the regression model; therefore, it was excluded in the second step.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	166.602	7.621		21.861	.000
1	Burnout	-.100	.062	-.146	-1.605	.109
	Climate	.293	.087	.305	3.359	.001
2	(Constant)	155.021	2.459		63.036	.000
	Climate	.415	.042	.433	9.790	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Commitment

The unstandardized regression coefficient for school climate was .293, indicating that if school climate increased by one unit, commitment increased by .293 units. The standardized regression coefficient of .305 indicated that if school climate increased by one standard deviation, commitment increased by .305 standard deviations. The t-value of 3.35 (p = .001) indicated that school climate significantly contributed to the regression model, thus included in the second step. In the second step, the b and beta values for school climate increased to .415 and .433, respectively. The second step also enjoyed a statistical significance (t = 9.79, p < .001). The results shown in Table 3 can help build the regression equation. The regression equation for the first step is as follows:

Commitment=Constant + (b1*burnout) + (b2*school climate)
Commitment=166.602 + (-.100*burnout) + (.293*school climate)
The regression equation for the second step is:
Commitment=155.021 + (.415*school climate)

4.2. Discussion

The literature on teacher education suggests the contribution of teacher commitment as the most efficient way to successful instruction and learning. In keeping with this line of inquiry, the current study explored the effect of teacher burnout and school climate on Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to teaching. The regression analysis revealed that teacher burnout and school climate could predict Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to their careers in high schools. School climate alone could also predict a large portion of commitment in this respect.

The finding provides evidence that teachers' collaboration and decision-making, school resources, and instructional innovation are critical factors in predicting high school EFL teachers' commitment to their profession, students, and educational centers. Teachers with a strong commitment strive for schools' goals entirely aligned with their own will. Therefore, it is logical to find a negative relationship between depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and teaching commitment. This result can be elucidated concerning the pivotal role of school climate in affecting teacher's burnout and commitment. School as a community of practice (CoP) can provide a social support system for teachers, which contributes to mitigating the impacts of teachers' emotional stress and burnout. School support was also recognized as essential in increasing teachers' commitment. School support enables teachers to feel positive in carrying out their duties. In turn, according to POS theory, it has a great influence on some indicators of teachers' performance, such as increased

commitment and job satisfaction and decreased absenteeism. In other words, the influence of school support is related to teachers' adaptability and adversely related to their disengagement and burnout (Suyatno et al., 2022). Consequently, a supportive and cooperative climate of schools helps EFL teachers experience feelings of inspiration, importance, and encouragement in teaching and subsequently leads to higher teaching commitment.

This finding is in accord with some studies predicting teacher commitment through different factors, such as work-related variables (Billingsley & Cross, 1992), teachers' work context (Shwu-yong & Waxmanet, 2009), teacher identification with school (Chan et al., 2008), social-emotional learning and school climate (Collie et al., 2011), the schools' social and organizational environment (Yang et al., 2019), and teaches' burnout levels (Donuk & Bindak, 2022). Based on a social psychology viewpoint, people's behavior is affected by the individuals themselves and the environment (Alansari & Rubie-Davies, 2020). From this perspective, it can be argued that societal and cultural factors of schools, such as resource availability, community support, and educational policies can influence teachers' teaching behavior, job satisfaction, and teaching commitment. The school context can also enhance teaching commitment by providing a favorable work environment, implanting more satisfaction, and heightening the sense of effectiveness in L2 teachers (Zakariya, 2020).

Regarding the predictive ability of school climate concerning EFL teacher commitment, the study finding also supports those of Billingsley and Cross (1992), Van Veen et al. (2005), Gao and Xu (2014), Donuk and Bindak (2022), Yang et al. (2019), and Eickholt and Goodboy (2017) which underlined the effects of the school social concerns and the work-related variables on teachers' commitment to the school. More particularly, in line with Collie et al. (2011) and Manla (2021), this finding signifies that notions of school climate and classroom environment, such as cooperation among teachers, student behaviors toward teachers, good teamwork, teachers' participation in decision making in the school, students helpful and cooperative acts, students' willingness to language learning, as well as an adequate supply of equipment are decisive factors in strengthening teacher commitment to the educational organization. Moreover, this result confirms the findings of studies that showed teachers' teaching commitment and their intentions to remain in the profession were strongly related to their attitudes toward school culture (Eickholt & Goodboy, 2017; Weiss, 1999).

Thus, the researchers assume teachers would be more committed to teaching in schools with strong collaborative communities and supportive, interdependent relationships. In such a situation, EFL teachers develop learning activities, utilize more effectual teaching strategies, and attempt to provide a climate in which their students achieve the optimal learning outcome.

Subscribing to Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, the researchers argue that school as a CoP and social context that gives meaning and structure to teachers of what they do can foster teachers' participation and engagement in the school community. Besides, it can help them develop and share their practical and theoretical knowledge by providing a climate of collaboration and trust within the community. Undoubtedly, such a community climate enhances teachers' engagement in school learning and teaching activities and fosters their commitment to the organizational structure, decreasing teachers' burnout levels.

Moreover, the study found that school climate was a stronger predictor of teacher commitment than teacher burnout, which means that although both constructs (i.e., school climate and teacher burnout) affected teacher commitment, school climate outweighed teacher burnout as a predictor of teacher commitment. It can be inferred that the importance of burnout is not comparable to the educational climate in promoting or reducing teacher commitment since the main determinant of teacher burnout is the school environment per se. This result can be justified in alignment with social-cognitive theory, which proposes that teachers' teaching acts are influenced by school climate but vary concerning teachers' personalities (Bandura, 1986).

The findings also suggest that burnout is associated with many factors related to the school. The most significant factors are concepts, such as the language classroom environment, job satisfaction, and teachers' self-image and beliefs. It can be argued that EFL teachers' beliefs about how they can teach English successfully, involve the students in class activities, and promote their learning outcomes affect their job satisfaction and self-image and, thereby, their burnout level. According to Hong (2010), a teacher's self-image, or identity, has a mediating role in teachers' decisions to remain or leave the school where they teach. Teachers with higher self-images are more determined to make efforts and clasp positive attitudes in their teaching acts. In this respect, researchers assume that teachers' positive self-image affects their motivation and work performance positively, lowers the likelihood of their retraction from teaching, and ultimately increases their job satisfaction and commitment to teaching.

Based on organizational theory, burnout primarily results from organizational risk factors, such as work overload and stressors, role ambiguity, and the relationships between the organization members. However, individual factors, such as teachers' personalities and coping strategies, would act as moderating variables in generating burnout. Teachers' inadequate use of individual stress-avoidance coping strategies when encountering work stressors, low self-image, and lack of self-confidence leads to decreased organizational commitment, much like depersonalization. In such a way, the first phase of burnout is depersonalization, which ensues with a sense of low

self-fulfillment and, ultimately, emotional exhaustion (Manzano-Garcia & Ayala-Calvo, 2013).

This study re-echoes the results of the studies that showed a negative relationship between teacher commitment and burnout (Asadi & Bozorgian, 2022; Demirhan & Yucel, 2016; Nagar, 2012). Demirhan and Yucel (2016) and Nagar (2012) suggested that burnout could predict teacher commitment in a way that teachers with higher levels of burnout in their profession were disposed to have lower levels of commitment. According to Ghasemzadeh et al. (2019), teachers who have more substantial degrees of emotional exhaustion and perceive high levels of depersonalization experience more vocational stress, leading to feeling less efficacy and meaninglessness, all of which result in less job satisfaction. This failure in teachers' job satisfaction manifests in teachers' less teaching commitment to the profession. Therefore, any sign of teaching stress greatly impacts teacher attrition, teacher effectiveness, and recruitment policies.

Therefore, the researchers of this study conclude that EFL teachers should be aware of the factors influencing their teaching acts and attempt to establish a balance between these factors and their teaching practices to overcome the multiple adversities. Consequently, promoting the psycho-emotional aspect of teaching among L2 teachers is imperative.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The current study explored the role of teacher burnout and school climate in predicting Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to their profession in high schools. The outcome was that burnout and school climate predicted EFL teachers' commitment directly and indirectly.

Since the school system in Iran is particularly influenced by high-stakes tests, which boost teachers' responsibilities, teachers are more exposed to tensions arising from their unfavorable working conditions and thus, more prone to burnout. Accordingly, teacher preparation programs in Iran should consider teaching strategies and procedural skills as essential elements for developing teacher commitment among EFL teachers.

The study can be helpful for EFL teachers since it can raise their awareness and understanding of such teacher-related variables and their roles in the teaching process. Furthermore, EFL teachers will recognize that their commitment to teaching can prominently influence their teaching quality and students' learning. Likewise, program designers and teacher trainers can offer training courses, workshops, and seminars to EFL teachers in which various ways of being committed to teaching are taught professionally.

Additionally, the researchers of this study assume that alleviating teacher burnout increases teachers' sense of teaching commitment. In this regard, teacher educators are recommended to provide practical courses to help

teachers survive in the face of stressful situations. To promote teachers' positive perceptions of the school climate, school principals, as critical educational figures, should provide facilities that contribute to teaching efficiently, thus enhancing teacher commitment.

The limitations of the method used in the current study should be considered when discussing the findings. This study was one-shot and correlational. Interviews with teachers and teachers' journal writings about their viewpoints regarding the variables under scrutiny could help have a clearer picture. Besides, further studies can triangulate their data via interviews with principals, educators, and teacher trainers. However, since the underlying components of EFL teacher commitment are less clearly conceptualized, further studies are needed to investigate the construct of commitment thoroughly and develop an all-encompassing framework for teacher commitment, which should be empirically verified and theoretically sound.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

English Language Teacher Commitment Questionnaire (ELTCQ)

Dear Respondent:

This questionnaire aims to learn about EFL teachers' commitment to language teaching in Iranian high schools. Your answers to the following questions will provide valuable information that hopefully impacts language teaching in Iran. The data will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. There is no right or wrong answer to these questions.

Instruction: In the following situations, if you would like to say something to your classmate, please write down the exact words you have said. Thank you for your cooperation.

Demographic Information

Gender: Male   Female

Age: ——————

Academic Degree: Associate Diploma   BA   MA   PhD

 Major: ——————

City in which you teach ——————

Grades you have taught English (you can choose more than one option)

10th grade   11th grade   12th grade

Years of teaching experience ————————————————

Please check the box that best expresses your belief about each item.

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I simply dedicate myself to the assigned goals in my classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I believe in my students' abilities, and it is my responsibility to ensure their success.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I feel an internal satisfaction in teaching English that increases my commitment to teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6

4	I feel an internal satisfaction in teaching English that increases my commitment to teaching.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
5	I have the autonomy to select textbooks, content, and topics I teach in my English classes.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
6	I think that being an English teacher is more prestigious than being a teacher of other school subjects.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
7	I am tired of teaching English in high school.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
8	I believe in my ability to manage unpredictable events in my classes efficiently.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
9	I am responsible for motivating uninterested students to learn English.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
10	I find my salary, not in keeping with my capabilities and qualifications as an English teacher.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
11	I develop my abilities to my full potential as an English teacher in high school.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
12	I am invited to participate in making important educational decisions.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
13	I believe that my identity as a high-school English teacher inspires me in life.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
14	I do not feel as motivated as when I began teaching English in high school.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
15	I try to use new teaching techniques in my classes in high school.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
16	I teach English to my full potential, even if I receive negative feedback from my students.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
17	I will again choose to be an English teacher even if I am given new opportunities to change my job.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
18	I am in constant contact with professionals (researchers, university professors, etc.) in English teaching.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
19	I am responsible for implementing effective strategies in my classes to guarantee students' learning.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
20	I am highly respected by people when they come to know I am an English teacher.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
21	I would definitely abandon teaching English in high school if I had other career choices.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
22	I can manage classes with different English proficiency levels.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

23	I must ensure that low-achieving and high-achieving students would equally learn English in my classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I think the best decision I have ever made was to become an English teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I have identified specific goals for my development as a high-school English teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	I have strongly dedicated myself as a dedicated English teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I feel emotionally detached from teaching English in high school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	I am confident enough about my language knowledge and my ability to teach English well to my students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	I am deeply impressed by my students' attitudes toward English language learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	I think English classes are more vibrant than other school subjects.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	I receive high school officials' support regarding my educational decisions in my classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6