

# Scrutinizing EFL teachers' job satisfaction and stress at work: The intervening roles of gender, teaching experience, and educational level

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## ***Abstract***

The present study sought to explore the relationship between English as a foreign language (EFL) EFL teachers' stress at work and their job satisfaction. Moreover, it explored the role of EFL teachers' gender, length of teaching experience, and educational level in their job satisfaction and stress at work. For this purpose, 134 EFL teachers were chosen from different private language institutes in Mashhad, a city in northeast of Iran. They were asked to complete two questionnaires: *Job Descriptive Index (JDI)*, and *Stress in General Scale (SIG)*. Our findings indicated that teacher stress at work is negatively and significantly associated with job satisfaction. The results also showed that there were no significant gender differences regarding teachers' job satisfaction except for *pay*. The data did not illustrate any significant difference between men and women concerning their stress at work. The findings of the present study also confirmed that the more years of experience teachers have, the more satisfied they are with their job. On the other hand, stress at work was found to have negative but significant correlation with teaching experience. Finally, data analysis demonstrated that a higher level of education corresponds to a higher degree of job satisfaction. In other words, the more educated a teacher is, the higher degree of job satisfactions/he tends to exhibit in his or her profession. The results also showed that there were significant differences in stress at work across the three groups of teachers with different levels of education.

***Keywords:*** EFL teachers; job satisfaction; stress at work; gender; educational level; teaching experience

## **Scrutinizing EFL teachers' job satisfaction and stress at work: The intervening roles of gender, teaching experience, and educational level**

### **1. Introduction**

#### *1.1 Job Satisfaction*

Attitudes that employees have about their occupations are called work attitudes. Work is a comprehensive conception which has several features or aspects. An employee may have various attitudes towards the different facets of his/her work. One of the variables of the overall efficiency of work performed is "satisfaction". In recent years, employee satisfaction has taken central status particularly in the corporate domain as it has been recognized that organizations cannot reach competitive levels of quality; either at a product level or an after-sales service level if their workforce do not feel satisfied or do not identify with the company (Garcia-Bernal, Gargallo-Castel, Marzo-Navarro & Rivera-Torres, 2005). Fitzgerald, Johnston, Brignall, Silverstro, and Voss (1994) as well as Crossman and Abou-Zaki (2003) recognized the significant role played by the employee job satisfaction in the productivity of organizations. They contended that job satisfaction is one of the standards for establishing the health of the organization as rendering effective services. Organizations insistently desire job satisfaction from their workers (Oshagbemi, 2003). Due to the significant role of human resource in organization performance, they attempt to keep employees satisfied and content. Satisfied workers would produce better performance in ideal time which leads to increased incomes. When employees are satisfied with their job, they would be more inventive and creative and offer advances that permit the organization to develop positively over time with changes in economic situations. Farrell and Stamm (1988) concluded that high employee satisfaction will lower the occurrence of the absenteeism, accident, and employee anxiety, enhance employee satisfaction with life and expand efficiency and benefits.

Several studies have confirmed the important role that job satisfaction plays in an employee's health and well-being (e.g., Kornhauser, 1965; Gardell, 1971; Caplan et al., 1980; Keon & McDonald, 1982). A study conducted by Caplan et al. (1975) investigating the relationship between job satisfaction and employee's health showed significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and some psychoneurotic syndromes such as boredom, depression and anxiety. Another almost analogous survey carried out by Khaleque (1981) demonstrated that dissatisfied employees suffer from greater degree of stress and strain as compared to the satisfied employees.

#### *1.2 Stress at Work*

After the revolutionary work on psychological stress by Selye in 1950s, the term stress was broadly used in the social science (Selye, 1956). The study of stress emanates from early work by Selye (1946, p. 55), who conceptualized stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it to adapt". Although stress at work is a well-known concept and has also obtained huge research attention, it nonetheless, remains very difficult to explain. Stress must be understood as that unavoidable aspect of our daily work life and even the individual's domestic situations. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined stress as a disruption of the equilibrium of the cognitive-emotional-environmental system by external factors. Stress is considered as a complicated process that includes three major constituents: a) sources of stress that are encountered in workplace, b) perception and evaluation of a particular stressor by an employee, and c) the emotional reactions that are induced when a stressor is regarded as threatening (Lazarus, 1991; Spielberger, Vagg, & Wasala, 2003).

## 2. Background and Review of Literature

### 2.1 *The origin and definitions of Job Satisfaction*

The term “job satisfaction” was brought to public eye by Hoppock (1935) who reviewed preceding research studies on job satisfaction carried out prior to 1933. He defined job satisfaction as "any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause an individual to say honestly, I am satisfied with my job"(Hoppock, 1935, p. 47). Such a definition shows the diversity of variables that have influence on job satisfaction but convey nothing about its nature to us. Vroom in his definition on job satisfaction concentrated on the role of the employee in the workplace and described it as affective orientations on individuals' part toward work roles which they are currently occupying (Vroom, 1964, p. 99).

Satisfaction is configured as the consequence of the relationship between what individuals actually get from work (in terms of pay, status or position, appreciation, etc.) and their expected outcomes. This concept can be characterized as the occasions that lead to a subjective feeling of release, delight, and pleasure which may be stated or expressed by the person who is feeling it, but cannot be seen from the outside by someone else (Mathis, 1997). Abu-Saad and Hendrix (1995) describe job satisfaction as the pleasing sentiments caused by the evaluation of one's career as reaching or facilitating the attainment of one's values. However, it should be noted that according to some job satisfaction theorists, it is a function of a combination of situational features and situational incidences (Quarstein, McAfee & Glassman, 1992).

Churchill, Ford and Walker (1974) explain job satisfaction in the context of all the characteristics of the job itself and of the workplace in which the employees may find rewards, gratification and satisfaction; or on the contrary feelings of failure and/or frustration. Thus, it is plausible to say that employees who are satisfied with their job are likely to be less often absent. Moreover, they tend to make positive contributions and to stay with the organization longer; while a dissatisfied employee may be absent more often, may experience stress that disturbs other colleagues, and perhaps constantly seeking for an occupation. According to Spector (1997), job satisfaction is simply a feeling that individuals have about their job and various features of it. It is the extent to which people like or dislike their professions. This definition was restated by Moorhead and Griffin (2004, p. 99) who said that "Job satisfaction is the extent to which an individual is content or satisfied by his or her job".

### 2.2 *Job Satisfaction in Educational Domain*

In educational realm, several definitions of job satisfaction have been presented with regard to teachers. Taylor and Tashakkori (1995) defined it as the feelings that teachers have about their profession or the mental state ascertained by the extent to which they perceive their occupational needs as being met (Evans, 1997). The existence of a relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and their intent to quit undoubtedly holds true since teachers' job satisfaction has been related to their effectiveness, extra-role manners, burnout, stress, and employment commitment (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Klassen et al., 2009; Shann, 1998; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000; Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 2003). Lester (1982) conceptualized teacher job satisfaction as the degree to which a teacher conceives and values different factors such as assessment, collegiality, accountability and recognition. Woods and Weasmer (2002) believed that when teachers are contented, the degree of attrition is lowered, collegiality is improved, and job performance enhances. According to Zembylas and Papanasta (2004), teacher job satisfaction alludes to a teacher's affective relation to his or her teaching role and is a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives it is offering to a teacher.

Various studies have shown that a number of variables influence teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. For instance, in a study conducted among 2,000 teachers and school executives in New Zealand and Australia, Dinham and Scott (2000) found that teachers are most satisfied with the internal aspects of their profession (e.g. student success, assisting students to modify their attitudes and behavior, positive relationships with students and

others, self-growth, mastery of occupational expertise, sense of collegiality, supportive work environment) and most dissatisfied with their external aspects of their job (e.g. position of teachers, forced instructive modifications over which they have little influence or control).

### *2.3 Research on Teacher Stress*

Over the last decades, teaching has been broadly recognized as a stressful profession. Moreover, Stress is one of the main problems influencing teachers these days all over the world. For instance, Kaplan estimated that as many as 200/000 teachers in the US and through them, 5/000/000 students were affected by stress. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) found that almost 20% of comprehensive school teachers in England believed teaching is very stressful or extremely stressful. Borg and Riding (1991) reported even higher degree of stress among Maltese teachers, with approximately 34% of Maltese teachers rating their jobs as stressful. Citing the work of Manthei and Gilmore (1996), Kristen Ferguson (2012) claimed that over 26% of intermediate teachers in New Zealand thought that teaching profession was either very or extremely stressful. Kyriacou (2000) contended that the level of teaching stress led to teaching being categorized as one of high stress professions parallel to other stressful jobs like the police, the prison service, air traffic controllers, doctors and nurses.

All types of stressors are regarded as barriers or difficulties perceived by teachers that interfere with or deter the educational process performed to attain learning objectives and which would clarify a high level of teacher-related stress (Schwarzer & Greenglass, 1999; Blasé, 1982). Additionally, various studies have exhibited that stress at work is associated with reduced productivity, absence, employee turnover and impaired employee health and well- being (El Shikieri & Musa, 2012). Thus, due to the problematic role of stress at work, teachers' occupational stress is a highly pertinent domain of study for educational administrators.

### *2.4 The Role of Teachers' Demographic Information*

The role of teachers' demographic information in their job satisfaction and stress at work has been another scope that attracts several researchers. For example, as one of the most significant demographic factors, the relationship between gender and job satisfaction has been examined frequently. However, the yielded results have been contradictory. That is to say, there are no simple conclusions about the differences between males and females and their job satisfaction levels. Some studies reviewed by Herzberg et al. (1957) show that men are more satisfied with their jobs, whereas others indicate that women are more contented. Cano and Miller (1992b), in an investigation of agricultural education teachers in Ohio, explored that the teacher's age, years in present position, total years teaching, and educational level were not significantly related to overall job satisfaction.

Oshagbemi (1999) found that British teachers seem to be generally satisfied with their job in terms of physical conditions or working facilities and supervision but they were not satisfied with their salary and promotion opportunities. Klecker and Loadman (1999) also found that American male elementary school teachers were generally satisfied with all features of their work. In another study, Athanasios Koustelios (2001) examined the relationship between Greek teachers' personal characteristics and their level of job satisfaction. The results revealed that Greek teachers were content with the nature of their job and supervision, whereas they were discontented with salary and opportunities for promotion. The findings also indicated that gender and age were significant predictors of different aspects of job satisfaction.

Age and experience have also been associated with the level of stress that teachers experience in their work because it has often been proposed that the highest levels of stress might be experienced by newcomers to the profession (usually younger or novice teachers). Ameen, Guffey, and Jackson (2002), in an investigation among accounting professors in the United State found that teaching stress is mainly related to position, age and years of experience. Veronica (2011) attributed the variations identified in the level of stress between male and female teachers to their emotional aptitudes since there appears to be individuals' intrinsic resources with a significant role in protection and maintenance of emotional health and coping with the threatening conditions.

## 2.5 The Purpose of the Study

Due to the effective role of teacher job satisfaction in the teaching and learning process, it seems crucial to examine the features that relate to its development. The present study hypothesized a relationship between EFL teachers' stress at work and their job satisfaction. To empirically investigate this hypothesis, attempt was made in the current study to explore the role of EFL teachers' stress at work in their job satisfaction. In addition, the mediating roles of teachers' gender, length of teaching experience, and educational level in their job satisfaction and stress at work were examined. To this end, the following research questions were posed and investigated in the present study:

- Does EFL teachers' stress at work play any significant role in their job satisfaction?
- Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work, and their gender?
- Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work, and their years of teaching experience?
- Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work, and their educational level?

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Participants

The population for this study comprised 134 EFL teachers teaching English in several private language institutes in Mashhad, a city in northeast of Iran. The profile of teachers was as follows: Out of 134 teachers, 89 were females and 45 were males, their age varied from 19 to 57 years ( $M= 28.19$ ,  $SD= 6.35$ ) with 1 to 33 years of teaching experience ( $M= 5.08$ ,  $SD= 4.62$ ). The majority of participants had majored in different branches of English, i.e., English teaching, English literature, English translation and those teachers who had certificate in majors except English were qualified to teach it. Eleven teachers were PhD candidates, 46 held a master of arts (MA) degree or were MA students, and the rest (77) had a bachelor of arts (BA) degree or were BA students.

### 3.2 Instruments

**Job Descriptive Index (JDI)** - To assess teachers' job satisfaction, the researchers utilized the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) with an abridged Job in General Scale (Bowling Green State University, 2009). The JDI and the JIG scale were selected for this research since they are broadly used to measure job satisfaction and they have been displayed to be valid predictors (Balzer et al., 1997; Kinicki et al., 2002). The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) evaluates five important facets of job satisfaction: (1) people on your present job, (2) work on present job, (3) pay, (4) opportunities for promotion, (5) supervision. The Job in General (JIG) scale measures the overall satisfaction (Bowling Green State University, 2002). In the present study, the researchers used the abridged version of the Job Descriptive Index. It has 30 items while the JIG has 8 items, making a total thirty eight. The items of these two scales were short words or phrases (e.g., "fascinating" for work on present job, "underpaid" for pay), and the participants were required to put a (Y) beside an item if it described the exact aspect of the career, an (N) if the item did not illustrate the aspect and a (?) if they could not decide. Copies of JDI and JIG were taken from the publisher, Bowling Green State University.

**Stress in General Scale** - In order to measure teachers' stress at work in this study, Stress in General Scale (Bowling Green State University, 2009) was chosen. This scale contained 8 items and the teachers were asked to put a (Y) beside an item if it described the exact feature of their job, an (N) if the item did not represent the aspect, and a (?) if they could not decide.

### 3.3 Data Collection

This study was conducted in several private institutes in Mashhad, a city in northeast Iran, between February 2015 and May 2015. The institutes were selected according to credibility and feasibility criteria, and they were among the most creditable Language Institutes in Mashhad. After a brief explanation of the aim of the research, all participants received *the abridge job in general scale* and *stress in general scale* then completed them at home and delivered to the researchers at the next session. To obtain reliable data, the researchers explained the aim of completing the questionnaires and reassured them that their replies would be kept confidential; furthermore, the participants were required not to write their names on the questionnaires. They were simply asked to write demographic information (e.g., gender, age, teaching experience, and education level). Moreover, some questionnaires in the form of emails were sent to the researchers' colleagues who were teachers in language institutes and they kindly completed them and forwarded to the researchers.

## 4. Results

Table 1 illustrates descriptive statistics of job satisfaction and its subscales ((People on Your Present Job, Job in General, Work on Present Job, Pay, Opportunities for Promotion, and Supervision). As the table demonstrates, among the six subscales, job in general (JIG) obtains the highest mean ( $M=16.29$ ,  $SD=5.54$ ) and pay receives the lowest mean ( $M=5.37$ ,  $SD=4.65$ ).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Job Satisfaction and its Subscales*

|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| JS                 | 134 | 17.00   | 107.00  | 67.6269 | 20.84914       |
| PEOPLE             | 134 | .00     | 20.00   | 12.5522 | 4.55801        |
| JIG                | 134 | 3.00    | 24.00   | 16.2910 | 5.54249        |
| WORK               | 134 | .00     | 19.00   | 12.2836 | 4.44619        |
| PAY                | 134 | .00     | 20.00   | 5.3731  | 4.65610        |
| OP                 | 134 | .00     | 19.00   | 9.2612  | 5.03959        |
| SUP                | 134 | .00     | 18.00   | 11.9030 | 5.07518        |
| Valid N (listwise) | 134 |         |         |         |                |

Table 2 summarizes descriptive statistics of stress at work. As the table exhibits, the mean and standard deviation equal 14.27 and 5.53 respectively.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Stress at Work*

|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Stress at Work     | 134 | 1.00    | 24.00   | 14.2761 | 5.53511        |
| Valid N (listwise) | 134 |         |         |         |                |

Table 3 demonstrates the results of correlation between the subscales of job satisfaction and stress at work. As the table demonstrates, the highest negative correlation were obtained between stress at work and Pay ( $r = -0.378$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Job in general ( $r = -0.345$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), People on your present job ( $r = -0.341$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Supervision ( $r = -0.339$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3***The Results of Correlation between Subscales of Job Satisfaction and Stress at Work*

|           | Stress at Work |
|-----------|----------------|
| 1. People | -.341**        |
| 2. JIG    | -.345**        |
| 3. Work   | -.260**        |
| 4. Pay    | -.378**        |
| 5. Op     | -.285**        |
| 6. Sup    | -.339**        |

Note. \*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

To delve more into EFL teachers' job satisfaction and stress at work, the association of job satisfaction and its comprising factors as well as stress at work with teachers' demographic variables such as, gender and educational level was estimated.

The following table (Table 4) shows the descriptive statistics of job satisfaction across male and female teachers: 0) male, 1) female.

**Table 4***Descriptive Statistics of Job Satisfaction across Male and Female Teachers*

|        | GENDER | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|--------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| JS     | .00    | 45 | 70.8444 | 23.96110       | 3.57191         |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 66.0000 | 19.02451       | 2.01659         |
| PEOPLE | .00    | 45 | 12.8444 | 4.99070        | .74397          |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 12.4045 | 4.34511        | .46058          |
| JIG    | .00    | 45 | 16.0222 | 4.86868        | .72578          |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 16.4270 | 5.87539        | .62279          |
| WORK   | .00    | 45 | 12.6000 | 4.84017        | .72153          |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 12.1236 | 4.25286        | .45080          |
| PAY    | .00    | 45 | 6.7111  | 4.88794        | .72865          |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 4.6966  | 4.40920        | .46737          |
| OP     | .00    | 45 | 10.2222 | 5.47261        | .81581          |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 8.7753  | 4.76434        | .50502          |
| SUP    | .00    | 45 | 12.4444 | 4.95230        | .73824          |
|        | 1.00   | 89 | 11.6292 | 5.14203        | .54505          |

As the table indicates, there are some differences in the mean scores of job satisfaction and all its subscales. To see if these observed differences are statistically significant, independent-samples *t*-test among the participants of the two groups were run. Table 5 represents the results of *t*-test.

**Table 5***Independent-Samples T-Test Displaying the Results of Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction*

|        | t     | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
|--------|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| JS     | 1.273 | 132 | .205            | 4.84444         | 3.80476               |
| PEOPLE | .526  | 132 | .600            | .43995          | .83601                |
| JIG    | -.398 | 132 | .691            | -.40474         | 1.01703               |
| WORK   | .584  | 132 | .560            | .47640          | .81530                |
| PAY    | 2.408 | 132 | .017            | 2.01448         | .83672                |
| OP     | 1.578 | 132 | .117            | 1.44694         | .91669                |
| SUP    | .877  | 132 | .382            | .81523          | .92913                |

As can be seen, there are no significant differences between males and females regarding their job satisfaction and its comparing factors except for PAY as follows: PAY( $t=2.408$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). In other words, it seems females are more satisfied with the payment they receive.

Identical analysis was run for the role of gender in stress at work. Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of stress at work across gender.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics of Stress at Work across Male and Female Teachers*

|    | GENDER | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----|--------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| SW | .00    | 45 | 13.9111 | 5.56704        | .82989          |
|    | 1.00   | 89 | 14.4607 | 5.54128        | .58737          |

As the table indicates, male and female teachers' scores on stress at work are quite close to each other. To investigate if these slight differences are significant statistically, independent-samples *t*- test among the participants of the two groups were run. Table 7 represents the results of *t*-test.

**Table 7**

*Independent-Samples T-Test Displaying the Results of Gender Differences in Stress at Work*

|    | t     | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
|----|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| SW | -.541 | 132 | .589            | -.54956         | 1.01516               |

As can be seen, there is no significant difference between males and females regarding their stress at work as follows: SW ( $t = -.541, p < 0.05$ ).

To examine the association between job satisfaction and teaching experience, multiple Pearson Product-Moment correlation was run. The results are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*The Results of Correlation between Job Satisfaction and Teaching Experience*

|        | Teaching experience |
|--------|---------------------|
| JS     | .352**              |
| People | .179*               |
| JIG    | .309**              |
| WORK   | .271**              |
| PAY    | .262**              |
| OP     | .280**              |
| SUP    | .186*               |
| SW     | -.297**             |

Note. \*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

As Table 8 indicates, job satisfaction correlated significantly with teaching experience ( $r = 0.35, p < .05$ ). Among the components, all correlated significantly and positively with teaching experience except People. In other words, more experienced teachers enjoyed higher levels of job satisfaction. Stress at work, on the other hand, was found to have negative significant correlation with teaching experience: SW ( $r = -0.297, p < .05$ ).

To examine the role of educational level in job satisfaction, a one-way ANOVA was applied to the data. The participants were classified into three groups regarding their educational level: 1) the participants who had a BA; 2) the participants who had an MA or were MA students, and 3) the participants who had a PhD or were PhD students. Table 9 presents the results of ANOVA.

**Table 9***The Results of ANOVA for Determining Differences in Job Satisfaction among the Three Groups*

|        |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|--------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| JS     | Between Groups | 12883.394      | 2   | 6441.697    | 18.782 | .000 |
|        | Within Groups  | 44929.949      | 131 | 342.977     |        |      |
|        | Total          | 57813.343      | 133 |             |        |      |
| PEOPLE | Between Groups | 211.560        | 2   | 105.780     | 5.431  | .005 |
|        | Within Groups  | 2551.575       | 131 | 19.478      |        |      |
|        | Total          | 2763.134       | 133 |             |        |      |
| JIG    | Between Groups | 310.236        | 2   | 155.118     | 5.382  | .006 |
|        | Within Groups  | 3775.413       | 131 | 28.820      |        |      |
|        | Total          | 4085.649       | 133 |             |        |      |
| WORK   | Between Groups | 227.093        | 2   | 113.546     | 6.192  | .003 |
|        | Within Groups  | 2402.131       | 131 | 18.337      |        |      |
|        | Total          | 2629.224       | 133 |             |        |      |
| PAY    | Between Groups | 546.878        | 2   | 273.439     | 15.331 | .000 |
|        | Within Groups  | 2336.465       | 131 | 17.836      |        |      |
|        | Total          | 2883.343       | 133 |             |        |      |
| OP     | Between Groups | 657.288        | 2   | 328.644     | 15.825 | .000 |
|        | Within Groups  | 2720.571       | 131 | 20.768      |        |      |
|        | Total          | 3377.858       | 133 |             |        |      |
| SUP    | Between Groups | 377.593        | 2   | 188.796     | 8.114  | .000 |
|        | Within Groups  | 3048.146       | 131 | 23.268      |        |      |
|        | Total          | 3425.739       | 133 |             |        |      |

As indicated in Table 9, there are significant differences among the three groups regarding the job satisfaction: JS ( $F= 18.78$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and all the subscales: People ( $F= 5.431$ ,  $p<.05$ ), JIG ( $F= 5.382$ ,  $p<.05$ ), WORK ( $F= 6.192$ ,  $p<.05$ ), PAY ( $F= 15.331$ ,  $p<.05$ ), OP ( $F= 15.852$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and SUP ( $F= 8.114$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In other words, teachers with higher educational degrees tended to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction.

Identical analysis was performed for probing the role of educational level in stress at work. Table 10 presents the descriptive statistics of stress across educational level. As it can be seen, the mean scores of stress at work across the three groups are different.

**Table 10***Descriptive Statistics of Stress at Work among the Three Groups*

|            | N   | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | Minimum | Maximum |
|------------|-----|---------|----------------|------------|---------|---------|
| 1.00 (BA)  | 77  | 15.7792 | 4.66122        | .53119     | 5.00    | 24.00   |
| 2.00 (MA)  | 46  | 13.0217 | 5.99069        | .88328     | 1.00    | 24.00   |
| 3.00 (PhD) | 11  | 9.0000  | 5.05964        | 1.52554    | 4.00    | 22.00   |
| Total      | 134 | 14.2761 | 5.53511        | .47816     | 1.00    | 24.00   |

To see if these observed differences are significant statistically, a one way ANOVA was applied to data. Table 11 is the ANOVA table examining the role of educational level in stress at work.

**Table 11***The Results of ANOVA for Determining Differences in Stress at Work among the Three Groups*

|                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 552.559        | 2   | 276.279     | 10.275 | .000 |
| Within Groups  | 3522.225       | 131 | 26.887      |        |      |
| Total          | 4074.784       | 133 |             |        |      |

As Table 11 indicates, there are significant differences in stress at work across the three groups of teachers with different educational level ( $F= 10.275$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In other words, as teachers gain higher educational degrees, their stress at work tends to decline.

The ANOVA analysis revealed there is a difference somewhere among the means of three groups regarding stress at work, but the precise location of differences is not clear. To locate the exact place of differences, a *post-hoc* comparison of the means was run. In so doing, a Scheffe's test was utilized. Table 12 displays the results of the Scheffe's test (1: BA, 2: MA, 3: PhD).

**Table 12**

*The Scheffe's Test for Determining the Location of Difference of stress at Work across the Three Groups*

| (I) DEGREE | (J) DEGREE | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|------|
| 1.00       | 2.00       | 2.75748*              | .96628     | .019 |
|            | 3.00       | 6.77922*              | 1.67137    | .000 |
| 2.00       | 1.00       | -2.75748*             | .96628     | .019 |
|            | 3.00       | 4.02174               | 1.74034    | .073 |
| 3.00       | 1.00       | -6.77922*             | 1.67137    | .000 |
|            | 2.00       | -4.02174              | 1.74034    | .073 |

Note. \*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

The results of the *post hoc* Scheffe's test revealed that, at the level of 0.05 there were significant differences among all educational levels.

## 5. Discussion

The current study primarily aimed at exploring the relationship between EFL teachers' stress at work and their job satisfaction. Moreover, the intervening roles of teachers' gender, length of teaching experience, and educational level in job satisfaction and stress at work were examined.

**Research Question 1:** Does EFL teachers' stress at work play any significant role in their job satisfaction?

This research question sought to find out whether teachers' stress play any significant role in their job satisfaction. Our results confirmed this hypothesis and indicated that teacher stress at work is negatively and significantly associated with job satisfaction. In an investigation in which stress was indicated by the degree of depression and anxiety, Daniel Veronica (2011) aimed to discover the relationship between stress and job satisfaction among Romanian university teachers. In addition to the significant differences among teachers with different types of occupation, he figured out negative correlation between stress and job satisfaction. Therefore, it is plausible to state, stress, which is typically considered as a negative motivational force among educationalists (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Leung & Lee, 2006), causes the teachers experience less satisfaction in their profession.

Identical analysis was performed for the subscales of job satisfaction and stress at work. As the findings indicated, the highest negative correlations were obtained between stress at work and pay and job in general (JIG). Survey data demonstrated that teachers, who believed the amount of salary they got is low, reported higher stress in their job. Likewise, earlier study by Smit (2000, p. 96) acknowledged that "the highest levels of teacher stress were found to be those stemming from lack of rewards and recognition". The relationship between stress at work and job in general was also explored in present study and a negative correlation was found between these two construct. Accordingly, it is logical to believe that teachers who are not generally satisfied with their work have higher degree of stress. Results of this study are compatible with preceding researches. Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) reported that one of the major sources of stress is job dissatisfaction. The finding of some studies indicated that there is a strong negative relationship between stress at work and job satisfaction (Sweeney & Quirin, 2009; Lambert, Hogan, Elechi, Jiang, Laux, Dupuy, & Morris, 2009). Antoniou et al., (2003) reported that low job satisfaction can be predicted through stress resources, namely occupation demands and excessive work-load.

**Research Question 2:** Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work, and their gender?

This research question aimed to address the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work and their gender. The role of gender, as one of the most important demographic factors, and job satisfaction has been investigated frequently. In the present study, the results of *t*-test indicated that there were no significant gender differences regarding in teachers' job satisfaction except for pay. In other words, it appears that females were more satisfied with the salary they received. Our survey data were in line with other prior studies that have shown no significant relationship between employees' gender and job satisfaction (Barbash, 1976; D'Arcy et al., 1984; Murray & Atkinson, 1981; Smith et al., 1998; Oshagbemi, 2000).

On the other hand, the results of present study are in contrast with the preceding job satisfaction-related research in that they proved that males were more satisfied than females (Weaver, 1974; Forgionne & Peeters, 1982; Smith & Plant, 1982). The findings of an investigation conducted by Smith et al. (1969) also indicated that women are less satisfied than men. They believed this is because women are typically employed on lower level professions in which they receive lower pay rate and obtain fewer opportunities of promotion. Nevertheless, the results of studies on the relationship between gender difference and job satisfaction have been contradictory. In other words, regarding gender, there are no simple conclusions about the differences between men and women and their job satisfaction levels.

Findings of some investigations proposed that either female are more satisfied with their jobs than males (Sloane & Williams, 1996; Clark, 1997; Kim, 2005) or males to be more content with their jobs than females (Shapiro & Stern, 1975; Weaver, 1974). Herzberg et al. (1957) reported that males are more satisfied and content with their professions, whereas others pointed out that females are more satisfied. Donohue and Heywood (2004) also were not successful in demonstrating gender-related differences in job satisfaction among young American and British employees.

As human being, men and women have much in common with regard to proficiencies and prospects, yet as individuals they are each completely unique. In fact, due to biological, psychological, physiological, and emotional differences, male and female teachers see the threatening conditions in different ways. Hence, the present study carried out identical analysis to explore the role of gender differences in stress at work. The results demonstrated that scores of male and female teachers on stress at work were quite close to each other. Thus, independent samples *t*-test was performed among the participants of the two groups in order to examine whether these slight differences were statistically significant. The data did not illustrate any significant difference between men and women concerning their stress at work. Our results were in contrast with previous studies (i.e., Mishra, 1991; Veronica, 2011).

The findings of these studies revealed that female teachers experienced more stress in their profession as compared to their male counterparts. Veronica (2011) attributed the variations identified in the level of stress between male and female teachers to their emotional aptitudes since there appears to be individuals' intrinsic resources with a significant role in protection and maintenance of emotional health and coping with the threatening conditions. As stated above, our results were not in consistent with preceding studies and the main reason for this contradiction can be ascribed to the great number of women working in the realm of EFL. Nowadays, the population of females educating EFL in Iranian context considerably exceeds the number of male students, which provides a good basis of confidence to cope with their job in the future.

**Research Question 3:** Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work, and their years of teaching experience?

With regard to the fifth research question– the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, stress at work and their years of teaching experience– the data indicated job satisfaction correlated significantly with teaching experience. Moreover, among the subscales of job satisfaction all correlated significantly and positively with teaching experience except people on present job. In other words, the findings of present study confirmed that the more years of experience teachers have, the more satisfied they are with the job. Years of teaching experience may be utilized as an index of a teacher's human capital "a person's cumulative abilities, knowledge, and skill

developed through formal and informal education and experience” (Pil & Leana, 2009, p. 1103). With regard to the association of teaching experience with teachers’ job satisfaction, the research results are less consistent. Findings of our study were in accordance with a number of previous investigations. For instance, Grady (1985) discovered that as the number of years of teaching experience increased, overall job satisfaction increased as well. Moreover, a number of studies have reported no evidence of a significant relationship between teaching experience and satisfaction (e.g., Crossman & Harris, 2006; Green-Reese et al., 1991), whereas others have illustrated that the longer teachers stay in the job, the less satisfied they are (e.g., Van Houtte, 2006; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; US Department of Education, 1997; Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 2003).

Years of experience as another important stress related factor in teaching profession plays a prominent role in the level of stress. In the current study, stress at work was indicated to have significant but negative correlation with teaching experience. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that teachers with more years of teaching experience have less stress at their profession. The results of a recent investigation in India revealed that junior university teachers experienced significantly higher level of stress in comparison to senior teachers (Kumar & Deo, 2011). In another similar study conducted by Ameen, Guffey and Jackson (2002) among accounting professors in the United State, it was demonstrated that teaching stress is mainly related to position, age and years of experience. Age and experience have also been associated with the level of stress that teachers experience in their work because it has often been proposed that the highest levels of stress might be experienced by newcomers to the profession (usually younger or novice teachers). Trawers (2003) confirmed that novice teachers feel higher level of stress due to the fact that they have not yet acquired the expertise and knowledge required dealing with the career. A study by Coates and Thoresen (1976) acknowledged that younger and less experienced teachers encountered greater stress comparing their more experienced colleagues from pressures related to discipline, poor promotion prospects and management issues.

**Research Question 4:** Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers’ job satisfaction, stress at work, and their educational level?

Finally, the last research question explored the role of teachers’ level of education in their job satisfaction and stress at work. Survey data demonstrated that a higher level of education corresponds to a higher degree of job satisfaction. That is to say, the more educated a teacher is, the higher degrees of job satisfactions/he tends to exhibit. Previous studies have shown similar findings. For example, Berns (1989) found that a teacher’s educational level also affected his or her overall job satisfaction level. He stated that a teacher with a master’s degree was more satisfied with his or her teaching position than a teacher with only a bachelor’s degree. Although, some studies indicated an association between educational level and job satisfaction, research is inconclusive regarding whether or not workers increase or decrease their job satisfaction when they increase their educational level (Herzberg et al., 1957). Even so, some studies did not demonstrate that increasing one’s educational level increases his or her level of job satisfaction (Griffin, 1984; Berns, 1989; Andrews, 1990; Bowen et al., 1994).

Similar analysis was conducted to probe the role of educational level in stress at work. The results showed that there were significant variations in stress at work across the three groups of teachers with different levels of education. In other words, as teachers gain higher educational degrees, their stress at work tends to decline. Our findings were compatible with studies by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) and SitiRohani (1991) in which they proved those teachers with higher academic qualification, such as bachelor or higher, experienced less stress than their coworkers with lower academic qualification, such as diploma. Therefore, from the results of present study, it can be contended that teachers with high educational level set more realistic anticipations which allow them to experience a greater feeling of achievement and lower level of stress in their teaching profession.

## 6. Conclusion

Due to the influential role of job satisfaction and stress at work in teaching process, the present study

attempted to investigate the role of EFL teachers' stress at work in their job satisfaction. Furthermore, it proposed the requirement to inspect the role of demographic variables such as teachers' gender, teaching experience, and educational level in their job satisfaction and stress at work. Data analysis indicated that teacher stress at work is negatively and significantly associated with job satisfaction. Thus, it is conceivable to state, stress, which is typically considered as a negative motivational force among educationalists (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Leung & Lee, 2006), causes the teachers experience less satisfaction in their profession. Here it must be noted that EFL teachers seem to be even more prone to anxiety since they teach English to students whose native language is not English. EFL teachers deal with two different languages, contexts, and cultures. Cultural inconsistency between the two languages is one of the most important factors that make their profession more demanding. The yielded findings also showed that there were no significant gender differences regarding in teachers' job satisfaction except for pay. In other words, it appears that females were more satisfied with the salary they received.

Additionally, present study carried out identical analysis to explore the role of gender differences in stress at work. The results demonstrated that scores of male and female teachers on stress at work were quite close to each other. The data did not illustrate any significant difference between men and women concerning their stress at work. This can be concluded by the fact that nowadays the population of females educating EFL in Iranian context considerably exceeds the number of male students, which provides a good basis of confidence to deal with their job in the future. The findings of present study also confirmed that the more years of experience teachers have, the more satisfied they are with their job. Moreover, years of experience as another important stress related factor in teaching profession plays a noteworthy role in the level of stress. In the current study, stress at work was explored to have negative but significant correlation with teaching experience. Finally, data analysis demonstrated that a higher level of education corresponds to a higher degree of job satisfaction. In other word, the more educated a teacher is the higher degrees of job satisfactions/he tends to exhibit in his or her profession.

The results also showed that there were significant differences in stress at work across the three groups of teachers with different levels of education. That is to say, as teachers gain higher educational degrees, their stress at work tends to decline. The information derived from this study can have important implications in teacher education domain. Survey data showed that teacher stress negatively influences job satisfaction. Thus, authorities and institute principals are recommended to explore the prevalence of teacher stress and the main sources of stress teachers would face in their profession. They can also provide counseling services and training programs available to teachers who are feeling high levels of stress.

Regarding job satisfaction, institutes are required to consider and improve the work related factors that lead to increased job satisfaction. It is essential to note that the present study is limited in a number of ways. First, this research was conducted only among the EFL teachers in language institutes; thus, the study should be conducted with other samples from official schools and centers in different regions of the country and utilize procedures that confirm a higher degree of randomization and, eventually, more generalizability. Second, in present study, the data about the variables under investigation were largely gathered by means of self-reporting questionnaires and were therefore subject to various biases. In this respect, the study does not differ from previous researches in this field. In any case, further research should use other sources of qualitative approaches such as interviews, case studies, and observations to evaluate teachers' job satisfaction and stress at work. Third, in this investigation, other teachers' demographic information, such as their age, marital status, cultural and socioeconomic background, mastery experience, pedagogical training, contractual status, and major were not controlled and their role on each concept was not considered. Thus, it is recommended that these important factors and their role in teachers' job satisfaction and stress at work investigate in further researches.

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