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EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELLING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence: A relationship study

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Abstract: Emotional intelligence is the capability to realize, to create, to comprehend emotions and sentimental knowledge, and to reflectively control emotions and to improve emotional and mental growth. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. To collect the data, 357 EFL teachers—selected based on Krejcie and Morgan's table of sample size (1970)—participated in this research. Validated and reliable scales of assessing emotional intelligence and professional ethics were utilized. In this study, descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics of each principle was performed. Also, for estimating the results, Pearson Product-moment Correlation analysis was utilized. According to the results, there is a significant positive relationship between 9 and 10 the professional ethics principles especially dual relationship with students principle and emotional intelligence. Since there is an increase in commitment of teachers to professional ethics, their emotional intelligence has increased too.

Subjects: Research Methods in Education; Secondary Education; Educational Psychology

Keywords: emotional intelligence; professional ethics; EFL teachers

1. Introduction

Teaching may be considered as a profession in its own path, and one that needs a great professional proficiency. Also, it needs its own code of ethics, which may be included in a set of ethical principles.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Professional ethics are a collection of norms and standards which should be considered by individuals in every profession. Teachers like every individual in every profession have their professional norms and standards that they should commit them in their craft. In addition, emotional intelligence is ability to manage emotions in one's self and in others in order to reach desired outcomes. So, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. According to the results, there is a significant positive relationship between the professional ethics and emotional intelligence. By the increase of commitment of teachers to professional ethics, their emotional intelligence has increased too.

(OAJ: Ethical principles for the teaching profession, 2014). Strike (1990) argues that based on norms and standards of professional conduct, professionals conduct their practice.

According to Heidari, Nosrati Heshi, Mottagi, Amini, and Shirvani Shiri (2015) “professional ethics among teachers may cause such ethics to transmit to students automatically, and the students will follow such teachers as a model in their affairs, and make efforts in prospering and elevating themselves and their future working conditions” (p. 2461). Students learn ethics from their teachers as they learn from their parents in their home. Salehnia and Ashraf (2015) mentioned that “it seems a number of teachers are interested to know what the most constructive professional ethics principles and rules are around the world and Iran is not an exception” (p. 135).

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is regarded as a crucial cause for improving achievement, memorization, and good conduct and promoting achievement. Indeed, academic institutions and schools have recourse to EQ in order to promote the results of educational and social life (Six seconds, the emotional intelligence network, 2007). Also, Agarwal and Chaudhar (2013) mentioned emotional intelligence as “an essential factor responsible for determining success in life and psychological wellbeing, seems to play an important role in taking the ethical decision-making” (p. 28). So, emotional intelligence plays an important role in the success of every individual. Emotional intelligence is a new construct that recently has been under concentration in educational context and it is the most important factor of the level of achievements in life (Pathak, Jaiswal, & Patwardhan, 2013). Ashraf and Hosseinnia (2016) in their study have shown that by the increase of commitment of teachers to professional ethics their teaching effectiveness has increased too. So, professional ethics plays an important role in professional success of every teacher. Also, in another study, Wahyuddin (2016) found a positive relationship between teacher competence and emotional intelligence with teacher performance. Therefore, both emotional intelligence and professional ethics are influential in the professional life of every teacher.

In the importance of the relation between emotional intelligence and professional ethics in education can be said that teachers’ emotions might influence their performance, decision-making, evaluations and ethical behaviors. So, regarding the significance of both emotional intelligence and professional ethics in education and language learning, the researchers decided to implement an investigation in order to find if there is a relationship between these two issues. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers’ Commitment to Professional Ethics and their emotional intelligence.

1.1. Research question and purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study is to answer the following research question:

- (1) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers’ commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence?

2. Literature review

2.1. Professional ethics

Ethics have different concept according to the context. “Sometimes, ethics means moral values; other times, it means legal limitations on behavior and understood community standards” (Öztürk, 2010, p. 394).

Professional ethics, as a field, concerned with considering ethical commitments in a craft and its ethical subjects (Dorudi & Ahari, 2015). Many professionals throughout the history have adapted themselves with their profession ethical norms which indicate the mentality and sense of duty that they are needed to show towards their craft, indicating the common norms and principles that they should have according to their career (OAJ: Ethical principles for the teaching profession, 2014).

According to Strike (1990), ethical conduct should be trained and their norms and guidelines of that profession should be internalized by means of those formal trainings.

2.1.1. *Professional ethics in education*

“The debate concerning the ethics of education that took place in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century has gained renewed, worldwide interest in the past two decades” (Education International, 2016). Teaching like other professions has ethical norms and standards. Therefore, teachers should have commitment to those ethics in their work. Heidari et al. (2015) argue that “due to their influential role in their surrounding environment, teachers are required to be equipped with ethical science and behavior, and be familiar with its principles” (p. 2461). Also, they mention that “teachers with professional ethics will make attempts to enhance such factors as physical, mental, intellectual health, social responsibility, commitment, modesty, honesty, creativity, accuracy, bravery, generosity, and flexibility among their students” (p. 2461). Thus, according to Salehnia and Ashraf (2015), “teacher professionalism affects the role of the teacher and his or her pedagogy, which in turn affects the student’s ability to learn effectively” (p. 136).

Ontario College of teachers provided the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession which is: commitment to students and student learning, professional knowledge, leadership in learning communities, professional practice, and ongoing professional learning. Strike (1990) in a study, argued that “professional ethics for teachers is not a form of moral education and that its content should not be taken primarily from the law on teacher morality” (p. 47). Salehnia and Ashraf (2015) in their study have shown that by the increase of commitment of teachers to professional ethics, their students’ self-esteem has increased too.

2.2. *Emotional intelligence (EQ)*

Emotional intelligence was first utilized by Payne (1985) concerned with the abilities of individuals to connect to dread, trouble and ideal (cited in Kalyoncu, Guney, Arslan, Guney, & Ayranci, 2012) and has attracted most of researchers’ attention. According to Por, Barriball, Fitzpatrick, and Roberts (2010) “it has the potential to enable individuals to cope better and experience less stress thus contributing to a healthy and stable workforce” (p. 855). Salovey and Mayer (1990) (as cited in Por et al., 2010) “argued that EI is a type of social intelligence that involves a person’s ability to monitor their own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them and to use that information to guide their thinking and actions” (p. 855). Emotional intelligence’s theories introduced new insight into anticipation of effective factors in personal, professional and educational life of human (Dorudi & Ahari, 2015). In this regard, Fernandez-Berrocal and Ruiz (2008) mentioned emotional intelligence “as one of crucial components of emotional adjustment, personal well-being, life success, and interpersonal relationships in different contexts of everyday life” (p. 422).

Social and emotional development is central to children’s success in school. By incorporating EQ into existing educational programs, we can promote our children’s achievement in the present and secure their success for the future. (Six seconds, p. 22)

So, so many researchers have devoted their studies in this area. Pathak et al. (2013) referred to emotional intelligence as the most essential cause of the amount of professional and individual achievement in life.

Ghiabi and Besharat (2011) did an investigation with the aim of examining the relationship between personality dimensions and emotional, and revealed that the variables of extraversion and neuroticism could positively and negatively forecast emotional intelligence.

Pathak et al. (2013) in their study verified that there is no difference between boy and girl students in their emotional intelligence and ethical orientation.

Dorudi and Ahari (2015) in a study examined the relationship of professional ethics and emotional intelligence of managers with their act in women and found a significantly positive relationship. In another study, which has been done in the context of Iran, Moafian and Ghanizadeh (2009) examined the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their self-efficacy in Language Institutes. Their results revealed that there is a significant relationship between the teachers' emotional intelligence and their self-efficacy. Adeyemo and Chukwudi (2014) investigated the effect of emotional intelligence, and teacher efficacy, on the teacher effectiveness of pre-service teachers. They demonstrated that emotional intelligence and teacher efficacy had predictive influence on teacher effectiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study are 357 who are teaching in schools in several cities of Iran including Mashhad, Tabriz, Kashan, Kerman, Tehran, ... This sample size is concerning to Morgan's table (Morgan, 1970). They were randomly chosen. The English teachers comprised males and females aged 22 to 45 with a range of 2–25 years of teaching experiences. The teachers had all majored in the various branches of English like teaching, literature, and translation at BA or MA or PhD.

3.2. Instruments

In this study, two instruments were applied: the questionnaires which measure the EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and emotional intelligence scale. Also, for analyzing the data, the SPSS software was used.

3.2.1. EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics questionnaire

This scale was developed and validated by Salehnia and Ashraf (2015). It consisted of 32 items. The five-point Likert scale was used ranging from "never" to "always". Ten principles are included in this scale as the professional ethics subcategories. The included principles are: Content competence, Pedagogical competence, Student professional development, Dealing with sensitive topics, Respect for colleagues, Valid assessment of students, Respect for institution, Dual relationship with students, Respect for class, Collaboration with parents, and Confidentiality with Students. In the original study, Cronbach alpha as reliability was 0.84. Also, for calculation of the construct validity of the professional ethics questionnaire, two types of factor analysis, namely Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were utilized.

3.2.2. Emotional intelligence scale

This scale includes 33 questions and was created and validated by Schutte et al. (1998). This scale has been used conceptual basis of the Salovey and Mayer (1990) emotional intelligence. The items assess three factors of emotional intelligence construct such as utilization of emotions, regulation of emotions, and assessment of emotion. It is accomplished in a Likert 5-point scale which ranges from point 1 (completely disagree) to point 5 (completely agree). This scale had good internal reliability through performing factor analysis. Also, this scale showed evidence of predictive and discriminant validity (Schutte et al., 1998).

3.3. Procedure

This study aimed at investigating the relation between Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. The data collection done through two questionnaires (EFL Teachers' Commitment to Professional Ethics scale & Emotional Intelligence scale) started in January, 2016 and ended in February.

The researchers explained the aim of their research and instruction of filling the questionnaires for the participants of the study (357 EFL teachers).

The process of distribution of questionnaires was done by hand to hand method and via email. After gathering the data, they were calculated in SPSS software. Then, the correlation between these two variables was computed. Present study is based on quantitative method, and factorial and correlational designs were applied based on specified variables.

4. Results and data analyses

The purpose of this study was to find answer to the research question about the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. Appropriate statistical analyses were carried out to get the answer for that research question. Also, descriptive statistics used in this study were examined and reported. Furthermore, the correlations between EFL teachers' professional ethics and their emotional intelligence are examined and argued.

4.1. Descriptive statistics

4.1.1. Teachers' demographic information part

In the professional ethics scale, the first seven questions in part A (Teachers' information) consisted of the participant's teaching years of experience, gender, levels they teach, age, educational degree, and their major of study. In this section, frequency and percent of the responses were calculated for each of these sections (Table 1).

Table 1. Teachers' demographic information

		Frequency	Percentage
Years of teaching experience	Bellow 5	12	3.4
	5-10	76	21.3
	11-15	115	32.2
	16-20	64	17.9
	21-25	49	13.7
	Above 25	41	11.5
Level/s the teacher teach	Beginners	46	12.9
	Pre-intermediate	45	12.6
	Intermediate	62	17.4
	Upper-intermediate	153	42.9
	Advanced	51	14.3
Teachers' gender	Male	146	40.9
	Female	211	59.1
Teachers' age	20-29	58	16.2
	30-39	128	35.9
	40-49	113	31.7
	50-59	58	16.2
Teachers' degree	Bachelor	158	44.3
	MA	186	52.1
	PhD	13	3.6
Teachers' major of study	Teaching	261	73.1
	Literature	71	19.9
	Translation	25	7.0
Total participants of teachers		357	

According to Table 1, a total of 357 English language teachers involved— 146 males (40.9%) and 211 females (59.1%), they were teaching at five levels. Teachers were in different branches of English: teaching (73.1%), literature (19.9%), and translation (7.0%). They were in various degrees: bachelor (73.1%), MA (52.1%), and PhD (3.6%). Teachers were in various age groups and years of teaching experiences.

4.1.2. The means of factors obtained from descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation for EFL Teachers' Professional Ethics Questionnaire was computed (see Table 2).

According to Table 2, Iranian EFL teachers in schools are committed to professional ethics principles from the most to the least as follows: (1) Content Competence (mean 16.82), (2) Student Professional Development principle (mean 15.29), (3) Dual Relationship with Students principle (mean 14.76), (4) Pedagogical Competence principle (mean 13.97), (5) Respect for Institution (mean 13.76), (6) Respect for Class principle (mean 13.75), (7) Respect for Colleagues principle (mean 11.21), (8) Valid Assessment of Students principle (mean 11.01), (9) Confidentiality with Students and Collaboration with Parents principle (mean 9.67), and (10) Dealing with Sensitive Topics principle (mean 8.93).

4.2. Inferential statistics

4.2.1. Correlation

The researcher calculated correlation between two variables, to examine whether there is a relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. To find the kind of correlation test used, Test of Normality of data was run. With this aim, the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test was run and the results showed that the distribution is normal. As a result, the correlation of Pearson Product-Moment formula was applied. Results are summarized in Table 2.

4.2.2. Correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence

To examine the relationship between EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence correlation was utilized.

According to Table 3, emotional intelligence has a positive significant correlation with just nine principles of the EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics subscales as follows. EFL teachers' emotional intelligence had a positive relationship with these nine principles: pedagogical competence ($r = 0.634, p < 0.05$), student professional development ($r = 0.345, p < 0.05$), dual relationship with

Table 2. The means of factors obtained from descriptive statistics

Professional ethics principles	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Content competence	357	16.82	2.32
Pedagogical competence	357	13.97	1.45
Dealing with sensitive topics	357	8.93	1.32
Student professional development	357	15.29	2.01
Dual relationship with students	357	14.76	2.61
Respect for colleagues	357	11.21	0.99
Valid assessment of students	357	11.01	2.35
Respect for institution	357	13.76	1.37
Respect for class	357	13.75	1.09
Confidentiality with students and collaboration with parents	357	9.67	0.74
Valid N	357		

Table 3. Correlation between teachers' professional ethics and their emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence with professional ethics principles	Content competence	Pedagogical competence	Sensitive topics	Student professional development	Dual relationship with students
	0.03	0.634**	0.549**	0.345**	0.765**
	Respect for colleagues	Valid assessment of students	Respect for institution	Respect for class	Confidentiality with students and collaboration with parents
	0.598**	0.662**	0.243**	0.413**	0.721**

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05.

students ($r = 0.765, p < 0.05$), respect for colleagues ($r = 0.598, p < 0.05$), valid assessment of students ($r = 0.662, p < 0.05$), respect for class ($r = 0.413, p < 0.05$), confidentiality with Students and collaboration with parents ($r = 0.721, p < 0.05$), sensitive topics ($r = 0.549, p < 0.05$), respect for institution ($r = 0.243, p < 0.05$). Among these nine principles, dual relationship with students had the strongest and highest correlation with teachers' emotional intelligence ($r = 0.765, p < 0.05$), while, respect for institution principle had the lowest correlation with emotional intelligence ($r = 0.243, p < 0.05$).

Based on the results, nine principles had a significant relationship with teachers' emotional intelligence. It means that since there is an increase in these nine principles in teachers, their emotional intelligence increased, respectively. Therefore, there is a positive significant correlation between nine the professional ethics principles and teachers' emotional intelligence.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The present study was aimed to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. There have done no researches in finding the relationship between these two variables especially in EFL teachers. But, some similar studies have been done to find relationship with other variables such as the study of Salehnia and Ashraf (2015) that investigated on the relationship between EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and students' self-esteem. Thus, their results revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between most of the professional ethics principles especially teachers' student professional development principle and students' self-esteem. So, the what these two studies have in common is the positive relationship of professional ethics with students' self-esteem and teachers' emotional intelligence. Another similar study done with Ashraf and Hosseinnia (2016) on the relationship between EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their teaching's effectiveness, their results have shown that there is a significant positive relationship between all of ten the professional ethics principles especially teachers' student professional development principle and teaching effectiveness. Therefore, teachers' commitment to professional ethics has an important role in teaching effectiveness and emotional intelligence. Also, some other similar studies have been done to find relationship between emotional intelligence with other variables. In a study, Wahyuddin (2016) examined the relation between teacher competence and emotional intelligence and found a positive relationship between teacher competence and emotional intelligence with teacher performance. Another attempt has made by Kant (2014) to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and different factors of personality of teachers in secondary school. Kant (2014) in his study have found no significant difference between emotional intelligence of teachers regarding their sex and branch in which they are educating. Kotaman (2016) explored Turkish prospective early childhood teachers' emotional intelligence scores in order to determine whether levels indicated differentiations according to grade level, and parenting style. His findings revealed that participants had moderate scores on the POE, UOE, and RE subscales and for whole emotional intelligence. Also, Baracsi (2016) focused on the personal and social competencies of Hungarian teachers as unexplored areas and his results proved that about one third of the participants seem uncertain personalities that might be in connection with low communicative and emotional capacities, mainly as a result of their poor emotional intelligence.

Thus, in the present study based on the results: there was a positive correlation between nine the professional ethics principles and their teachers' emotional intelligence.

Indeed, teachers' commitment to professional ethics might be correlated with quality of their teaching. According to obtained results, dual relationship with students' principle had the strongest, highest and most positive correlation with teachers' emotional intelligence. Respect for institution principle had the lowest correlation with teachers' emotional intelligence.

Results of this study provide teachers and practitioners useful implications to promote professional ethics in their educational setting and teaching craft. Results of the analysis indicated that commitment to professional ethics among EFL teachers is highly related to teachers' emotional intelligence in nine principles. It induces teachers to promote their ethical commitments as well as their emotional intelligence because teachers' emotions might influence their performance, decision-making, evaluations and ethical behaviors ... Teachers should be aware of this important issue, because the importance of knowing about professional ethics may affect their teachers' emotional intelligence and then students' achievement might improve. Teachers should pay attention to all professional ethics principles and should consider them in their academic life. People in charge of teachers' professional development may consider professional ethics an important issue to be included in their programs. In addition, in the case of professional ethics, ethical norms and standards might be different in every society because of cultural differences. In Iran, because of prominent role of religion, some norms and ethical standards is different from those of other non-Islamic societies. Therefore, professional ethics might be culture specific and the results of this study might be different in other countries.

6. Suggestions for further research

Some suggestions were offered by the researchers for further studies in this respect:

In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between EFL teachers' professional ethics and teachers' emotional intelligence among teachers who are teaching in schools. Another research can examine the role of these two variables in English institutions and make a comparison with the results of this study. Also, other researchers can do researches to find probable relationships between professional ethics with other variables such as job satisfaction, or they can investigate ethics in different areas of education.

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