An investigation into EFL instructors’ intention to leave and burnout: Exploring the mediating role of job satisfaction

Linda Samadi1, Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri1*, Firooz Sadighi1 and Lotfollah Yarmohammadi1

Abstract: The purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, to investigate if there are significant relationships between burnout, intention to leave, and job satisfaction among EFL instructors. Secondly, to examine whether job satisfaction mediates the potential relationship between intention to leave and burnout. To this end, 120 EFL instructors selected from 10 branches of Islamic Azad universities in Fars Province, Iran based on convenience cluster sampling completed three instruments, i.e. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Intention to Leave Questionnaire, and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). To explore the relationship between burnout and intention to leave among EFL instructors, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was run. Moreover, to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed using the Amos 21. Our results revealed that there was a moderate relationship between burnout and intention to leave. Further, findings demonstrated that job satisfaction did not mediate or predict this relationship meaning that the instructors’ intention to leave affected their level of

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Linda Samadi is a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL at Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Iran. Her research spans around different areas involving educational psychology, teacher education, and first language acquisition.

Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri is an assistant professor of applied linguistics at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch. He received his Ph.D from Shiraz University. His research and teaching areas of interest include language assessment, e-learning, and second language instruction.

Firooz Sadighi is a professor of applied linguistics at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Iran. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He maintains an active research interest in first/second language acquisition, second language education, and linguistics.

Lotfollah Yarmohammadi a professor of linguistics at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Iran. He received his Ph.D. from Indiana University. His expertise and research interests include pragmatics, critical discourse analysis, and cultural linguistics.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Retention of qualified teachers has been a major priority for educational administrators in the face of the ever-increasing rate of teacher intention to leave. The increasing number of teachers suffering from burnout is also a mounting concern for educators. Despite a steady stream of research on factors leading to burnout, intention to leave, and job dissatisfaction, the literature lacks a model depicting how these variables are interrelated. To address this, the authors in this study proposed a model to display the relationship in question. The findings manifested that job satisfaction is inversely correlated with burnout and intention to leave. Likewise, burnout and intention to leave were found to be directly correlated and that job satisfaction cannot mediate this relationship. The results can contribute to educational policymakers to develop strategies on how to alleviate the adverse impacts of burnout and actual turnover.
burnout and their level of job satisfaction did not matter. The implications of the findings are also addressed.

Subjects: Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning; Literature

Keywords: intention to leave; burnout; job satisfaction; EFL instructors

1. Introduction
One of the most important factors affecting an organization’s productivity is human sources. If employees are satisfied with their pay, working conditions, management system, organizational policies, and support, they are less likely to leave their jobs, and many organizational issues, i.e. turnover and burnout will seldom turn up to exist. Researchers have long used burnout as a term to mean various things and did not provide a precise definition for it. During the 70s and 80s, researchers identified this phenomenon among people including social workers, lawyers, teachers, or police officers performing physically and/or intellectually demanding work in the USA (Leither & Maslach, 1988). They realized that interested, dedicated, and active workers often reached the end of their tether feeling lethargic and bored and no more involved in their work. These were recognized as the initial indications of burnout. Different researchers have worked on different causes and types of burnout. Individual and situational factors have been put forth to be among the main sources of burnout (Bakker et al., 2014). While the former has been extensively studied, the latter including organizational factors resulting in job dissatisfaction, intention to leave, and burnout have remained under-researched and thus gained ground in different settings in the context of language teaching.

Teacher burnout will result in the undermining of student motivation (Shen et al., 2015) which is in turn affected by teacher traits e.g., dutifulness, conscientiousness, and competency (Khalilzadeh & Khodi, 2018). Along the same lines, teachers experiencing burnout may reduce their degree of job involvement and commitment to stay in their work (Kyriacou, 2015), which impacts their students in the learning process. Consequently, educational administrators seek effective strategies for diminishing teachers’ dissatisfaction by identifying factors that correlate with teachers’ job satisfaction (Khany & Tazik, 2016). The increasing number of teachers undergoing burnout in consequence of intention to leave and job dissatisfaction is a concern which warrants further exploration. Thus, it is of value to study teacher burnout and its potential connection with intention to leave and job satisfaction. However, no studies thus far have addressed the relationship between intention to leave and burnout with the mediating role of job satisfaction in educational settings such as universities among EFL instructors. Despite different studies done on these three variables, the results show that researchers have not agreed upon the idea that job satisfaction can mediate the way intention to leave is related or leads to burnout among teachers, most specifically among EFL instructors. Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge this gap in the literature by examining whether job satisfaction as depicted in Figure 1, can mediate the relationship between intention to leave and burnout among EFL instructors.

Figure 1. Hypothesized conceptual model based on literature review.
More specifically, the following research questions guide our study:

(1) Is there a significant relationship between intention to leave and burnout among EFL instructors?
(2) Is there a significant relationship between job satisfaction and burnout among EFL instructors?
(3) Is there a significant relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction among EFL instructors?
(4) Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between intention to leave and burnout?

The results of the study may conduce to educational policymakers to frame and carry out policies conducive to effective working conditions for EFL instructors working in different educational settings. Further, the study could contribute to instructors’ professional development in that it may reduce burnout and intention to leave amongst prospective EFL instructors.

2. Literature review

2.1. Burnout

Burnout refers to the lack of professional well-being (e.g., Klusmann et al., 2008) of individuals providing social services, namely teaching (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). However, as mentioned by Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015), teaching is a profession subjected to the highest levels of burnout. According to White (2009), burnout affects teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and efficacy that can in turn influence students’ academic achievement.

Maslach (2003) viewed burnout as a multidimensional construct encompassing three dimensions i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of inefficacy. To Maslach et al. (2001), emotional exhaustion is a prominent feature of burnout conceptualized as a feeling of being overwhelmed and emotionally drained by intensive interaction on a prolonged basis.

Depersonalization otherwise known as cynicism is an interpersonal dimension of burnout characterized as a state in which teachers show detached, impersonal, and uncaring feelings toward their students (Maslach et al., 2001). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) also argued that these negative cynical feelings might also happen to colleagues.

The sense of inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment refers to the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and feelings of incompetence and a lack of productivity at work (Maslach et al., 2001). It is also defined as a condition in which teachers judge themselves negatively in their work and feel disgruntled with themselves and their job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015) put forth two classifications on burnout, i.e. factors affecting teachers’ burnout and consequences of burnout.

Concerning the first category of studies on teachers’ burnout, the results of previous studies revealed that factors including work-related attitudes (Penington & Ho, 1992), self-efficacy (Brouwers et al., 2001), administrative factors (Cephe, 2010), personality and emotional intelligence (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012), teachers’ attributions (Ghanizadeh & Ghonsooly, 2014), emotional labor strategies and emotion regulation (Ghanizadeh & Royaei, 2015), teaching context (Jabbarpoor, 2016), and social comparison tendencies and instructional self-efficacy (Saber Gigasari & Hassaskhah, 2017) affect teachers’ burnout.

Based on the literature, the factors such as a feeling of inferiority (Breninkmeijer et al., 2001), a lack of social support (Brouwers et al., 2001) abandoning their teaching position in the institution (Cephe, 2010), and a decline in teachers’ self-regulation (Ghanizadeh & Ghonsooly, 2014) are some
of the consequences of teachers’ burnout which can be harmful to teachers and students (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015). Gold (2001) also expressed that the quality of education is seriously affected by the effects of teachers' burnout.

Concerning the sources of burnout, Chang (2009) presented three potential sources of teacher burnout: individual, organizational, and transactional sources. Individual factors refer to the intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics of teachers experiencing burnout. Organizational factors encompass institutional and job characteristics. Transactional factors as prominent sources of burnout determine the extent of vulnerability to burnout in different situations.

In another classification, Byrne as cited in Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015) considered three major sources for teacher burnout: background variables, organizational factors, and personality factors. Background variables include variables such as gender, age, educational level, contract status, etc. Organizational factors such as work overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and classroom situation constitute the other sources of teacher burnout. Personality factors including self-esteem are also seen as the other sources of teacher burnout. Students’ low proficiency, a lack of help from managers, students’ misconduct, and the nature of L2 were also among the major causes of burnout among Iranian EFL teachers (Eghtesadi Rudi, 2011).

2.2. Job satisfaction
Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) defined teachers’ job satisfaction as “teachers’ affective reactions to their work or their teaching role” (p. 1030). Furthermore, Collie et al. (2012) viewed job satisfaction as “a sense of fulfillment, gratification, and satisfaction from working in an occupation” (p. 1190). Similarly, Rezaee et al. (2019) considered job satisfaction as teachers’ feelings and views toward their job. Klassen et al. (2010) argued that demographic features and working context can affect teachers’ job satisfaction. Soodmand Afshar and Doosti (2016) hold that the feeling of job satisfaction can promote EFL teachers’ performance. They maintain that teachers enjoying job satisfaction deliver better performance than dissatisfied teachers. In a similar vein, teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction are more likely to continue teaching (Stempjen & Loeb, 2002). On the contrary, teachers with lower degrees of job satisfaction demonstrate lower commitment and are more probable to leave their jobs (Ingersoll, 1994).

Teachers’ job satisfaction proved to play a determining role in education because the quality of education depends on the quality and efficiency of the teacher (Wong & Tay, 2010). Building on this, in recent years, research on job satisfaction has attracted the attention of educationalists (Ostad et al., 2019).

2.3. Intention to leave
Intention to leave as a strong predictor of one’s actual turnover decision is suggestive of job dissatisfaction (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002) which is closely dependent on organizational policies and individual factors including pay satisfaction (Xiong et al., 2018).

According to Klassen and Chiu (2011), intention to leave refers to the intention of quitting representing a high degree of actual behavior, not the real act of leaving a teaching position. When teachers’ intentions of leaving are put into action, teacher turnover and teacher attrition will occur. Barak et al. (2001) argued that factors leading to teachers’ quitting intentions are mostly organizational or job-based.

There are many reasons for the intention to leave teaching including preparedness, stress, and management skills (McLaurin et al., 2009). Goldring et al. (2014) also listed the primary reasons teachers set out for leaving their job such as personal factors, job factors, leaving involuntarily (e.g., laid off, nonrenewal of contracts), and school factors.
2.4. Empirical studies

A plethora of studies has been conducted to address teacher burnout from different perspectives. However, reviewing the literature shows that a few studies have investigated the relationship between teacher burnout and job satisfaction (e.g., Anbar & Eker, 2008; Apandi, 2003; Esfandiari & Kamali, 2016; Lv, 2005; Tan, 2006; Wei & Kanesan Abdullah, 2016; Xiang, 2005).

Researching the relationship between teacher burnout and job satisfaction in the context of China, Xiang (2005) found a negative significant relationship between burnout and job satisfaction. Lv (2005) also investigated the relationship between college teachers’ burnout, job satisfaction, and social support. The results revealed that job satisfaction was inversely related to burnout.

Tan (2006) investigated teachers’ job satisfaction and burnout and found a negative relationship with emotional exhaustion as a dimension of burnout. In a similar vein, Apandi (2003) conducted the same research on Malaysian school teachers and found that job satisfaction negatively impacted burnout.

Anbar and Eker (2008) examined the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among academics in Turkey. Their findings demonstrated a statistically significant and negative relationship between these two variables.

Esfandiari and Kamali (2016) also carried out a study on the relationship between job satisfaction, burnout, and autonomy among 207 Iranian language teachers at language institutes and found a weak negative relationship between job satisfaction and teacher burnout.

In another study, Wei and Kanesan Abdullah (2016) sought to investigate the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among 175 Chinese teachers. Their results suggested a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and job burnout.

A review of the literature indicates that the research studies on the relationship between teacher burnout and job satisfaction have laid a strong foundation for further studies. However, no studies have yet been conducted on university instructors teaching English as a foreign language as the subjects. Therefore, it is of paramount significance to perform further research investigating the relationship between teachers’ burnout and job satisfaction among university instructors in the field. Additionally, few studies have examined the association between burnout and job satisfaction in the context of Iran (e.g., Esfandiari & Kamali, 2016).

A closer look at the literature review on intention to leave reveals that some studies have touched upon intention to leave in relation to burnout (Leiter, 1993; Leither & Maslach, 1988). Both Leiter’s (1993) model of burnout and Leither and Maslach (1988) developmental conceptualization of burnout which received substantial support in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, included intention to leave as one of the variables linked to burnout. Empirical studies also confirmed the important role of burnout in intention to leave. For example, Leung and Lee (2006) found that the exhaustion dimension of burnout was the main predictor of teachers’ quitting intention. Zhongzeng and Xiting (2005) also reported that burnout mediated the preventive effect of the need for achievement on the intention to leave.

Cha (2008) studied job satisfaction, intention to leave, and turnover rates among teachers using a national secondary dataset. The findings suggested that teachers become more satisfied and less willing to leave if their working conditions enhance.

Altunoglu and Sarpkaya (2012) also investigated the relationship between intention to leave by evaluating the level of burnout and job satisfaction. Investigating 433 academics involving readers, lecturers, and professors from different faculties of one of the state universities in Turkey, they
found that intention to leave was positively associated with teachers’ burnout. Additionally, they concluded that those faculty members with higher levels of job satisfaction were less likely to leave their job.

Taken together, although burnout, job satisfaction, and intention to leave were studied in parallel, to the researcher’s best knowledge, no empirical study to date has examined these theoretically associated factors in an academic context within a single framework in the context of language teaching. This has in fact precluded the establishment of a valid conclusion concerning the association between these constructs.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design
This study adopted a quantitative and correlational design to address the research questions. Quantitative data collected through three questionnaires were analyzed employing descriptive and inferential statistics.

3.2. Participants and setting
The participants of the present study were 120 EFL instructors (39 males and 81 females) with the age range of 30–65. They were selected based on a single-stage convenience cluster sampling method from 10 Islamic Azad universities in Fars Province, Iran including Kazeroon, Shiraz, Sepidan, Marvdasht, Beiza, Fasa, Ghir, Neiriz and Sama (Kazeroon and Shiraz Branches). These universities were randomly chosen from among 42 universities in Fars Province. Table 1 illustrates the participants’ demographic features.

3.3. Instrumentation
To put the respondents at ease, they were asked to complete three questionnaires at once. Following the instructions at the beginning of the questionnaires, the participants were required to provide answers to the demographic characteristics required as well as the questionnaire items on a Likert- scale.

To estimate the burnout degree among the EFL instructors, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) compiled by Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used. This instrument includes four different subscales, i.e. Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), Personal Accomplishment (8 items), Depersonalization (5 items), and Involvement (3 items). The reliability of this questionnaire was reported to be 0.84, and the validity of this questionnaire was also confirmed through different studies. Moreover, a 4-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale compiled by Price and Mueller (1986) was

| Demographics          | Description | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------|------------|
| Gender                | Female      | 39     | 32.5       |
|                       | Male        | 81     | 67.5       |
| Teaching experience   | 1–5 years   | 10     | 8.3        |
|                       | 6–10 years  | 18     | 15.0       |
|                       | 11–15 years | 47     | 39.2       |
|                       | 16–20 years | 40     | 33.3       |
|                       | More than 20| 5      | 4.2        |
| Age                   | 30–40       | 22     | 18.3       |
|                       | 41–50       | 59     | 49.2       |
|                       | 51–60       | 35     | 29.2       |
|                       | 61–65       | 4      | 3.3        |
employed to examine the instructors’ intention to leave. The questionnaire was chosen for the study due to its higher reliability ($r = 0.89$) in comparison to other scales. The reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.89. Further, to measure the EFL instructors’ levels of job satisfaction, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire compiled by Nerison (1999) consisting of 20 items was used. The reliability coefficient was reported to be 0.90.

### 3.4. Data collection procedure

The data for the present study was collected through three self-report questionnaires. The lead researcher modified the format of some of the items to improve the face validity of the questionnaires and compiled them into one questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire entailing a total of 49 Likert-scale items was forwarded to the instructors’ email addresses. The questionnaire was also printed and posted to some instructors in Neiriz. Moreover, some EFL instructors received the printed questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents before participating in the study. They were also assured that their personal information would remain confidential. However, they could know their scores and interpretation of the statistical results. For this, the main researcher provided her email address at the end of the instruction in the questionnaire. The respondents were given a week to fill out the questionnaire. Some instructors returned the questionnaire after three weeks that delayed the process of data collection. It is worth mentioning that some participants did not answer the items associated with their demographics; some others never returned the questionnaire, and a few respondents left some questions unanswered. Therefore, the researcher could collect the data only from 120 out of 150 instructors.

Noteworthy to mention is that the new version of the three questionnaires was piloted with 50 instructors at Shiraz Islamic Azad University. The reliability values are shown in Table 2.

### 3.5. Data analysis

The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Statistics 23. Descriptive statistics were run to identify the statistics related to the variables under study. Moreover, three Pearson Product-moment correlations were computed to examine the relationships between the three variables. Furthermore, to investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction between intention to leave and burnout, path analysis was run via Amos 21.

### 3.6. Normality of data: Kolmogorov- Smirnov test

The normality of the data was examined using Kolmogorov- Smirnov Test, whose results are depicted in Table 3.

As illustrated in Table 3, the significance values turned out to be greater than the significance level ($P>0.05$), indicating that the data were normally distributed for all the variables, i.e. intention to leave ($p = .153$), job satisfaction ($p = .670$), and burnout ($p = .976$).

### 3.7. Descriptive statistics of the variables

To answer the research questions, the descriptive statistics were calculated, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

| Table 2. Reliability of the modified questionnaires |
|-----------------------------------------------------|
| N of Items | Cronbach’s Alpha |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Intention to Leave Questionnaire | 4 | .728 |
| Job Satisfaction Questionnaire | 20 | .760 |
| Emotional Exhaustion | 9 | .792.871 |
| Personal Accomplishment | 8 | .701 |
| MBI Depersonalization | 5 | .735 |
| Involvement | 3 | .866 |
| MBI(Total) | 25 | |

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Samadi et al., Cogent Education (2020), 7: 1781430
https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1781430

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Following Table 4, the instructors’ intention to leave gained the highest mean score of 3.35, while the lowest mean score (M = 2.75) was ascribed to job satisfaction. Likewise, burnout obtained a mean score of 3.24.

3.8. The results of the first research question
The first research question examined if there was a significant relationship between intention to leave and burnout among EFL instructors.

Since the mediator variable demands a direct relationship between the dependent and the independent variable prior to the mediation role (Baron & Kenny, 1986), the researchers first estimated the relationship through the Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 5 shows the pertaining statistical results.

Based on the results in Table 5, the statistical result of the correlation between the intention to leave and burnout was positive and significant (r = .607, p < .05), indicating that these two variables were strongly correlated.

3.9. The results of the second research question
The second research question investigated if there was a significant relationship between job satisfaction and burnout among EFL instructors.

Table 3. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

| Intention to leave | Job Satisfaction | Burnout |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------|
| N                 | 120             | 120     | 120     |
| Normal Parameters a/b |                 |         |         |
| Mean              | 3.3500          | 2.7500  | 3.2457  |
| Std. Deviation    | .72428          | .90473  | .69198  |
| Most.Extreme Differences |             |         |         |
| Absolute          | .103            | .066    | .044    |
| Positive          | .085            | .066    | .044    |
| Negative          | -.103           | -.046   | -.041   |
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | 1.133          | .725    | .479    |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .153           | .670    | .976    |

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the variables

|                      | Intention to leave | Job Satisfaction | Burnout |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------|
| N                    | 120                | 120              | 120     |
| Minimum              | 1.50               | 1.00             | 1.62    |
| Maximum              | 5.00               | 5.00             | 5.00    |
| Mean                 | 3.3500             | 2.7500           | 3.2457  |
| Std. Deviation       | .72428             | .90473           | .69198  |
| Variance             | .525               | .819             | .479    |

Table 5. The correlation between intention to leave and burnout

| Variables   | Intention to leave | burnout |
|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| Correlation | 1.000              | .607**  |
| Intention to leave | Significance (2-tailed) | .   | .000 |
| N           | 120                | 120     |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
As shown in Table 6, the value of the significance level suggested that there was a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and burnout (P < 0.05). Furthermore, the value of the correlation between job satisfaction and burnout (r = −.372) indicated a significant negative relationship between the two variables.

### 3.10. The results of the third research question

The third research question addressed the relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction among EFL instructors.

The relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction was investigated using the Pearson Product-moment correlations coefficient. As shown in Table 7, there was a significant negative relationship between the two variables, r = −.443, n = 120, p < 0.01.

### 3.11. The results of the fourth research question

Having evaluated the relationships between the variables in question, we addressed the mediating role of job satisfaction between intention to leave and burnout using Amos 21. The results are displayed in Figure 2, Tables 8 and 9.

As depicted in Figure 2, the model analysis demonstrated the relationships between burnout, intention to leave, and job satisfaction.

Table 8 shows the goodness of fit indexes for the equation model. As seen in Table 8, the goodness-of-fit measures including $x^2 = 232.952$, df = 98, p = 0.000, GFI = .943, RMSEA = 0.079, CMIN/DF = 2.377, and CFI = 0.968 indicated that the model was acceptably fit.

Having found a significant positive relationship between intention to leave and burnout (t = 1.30, C. R = 4.98, P < .05) as depicted in Table 9, we examined the mediating effect of job satisfaction, the results of which are shown in Table 10.

As seen in Table 10, the regression results confirm that there was a weak negative relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction (t = −.30, p = .106). The results also show that there was a direct positive relationship between intention to leave and burnout (t = 1.30, p < .05). Finally, it was observed that there existed a negative relationship between burnout and job satisfaction (t = −.29, p = .432). Thus, it can be concluded that the relationship between intention to leave and burnout is a direct relationship and is not mediated by job satisfaction.

**Table 6. The correlation between job satisfaction and burnout**

| Variables       | Job Satisfaction | Burnout |
|-----------------|------------------|---------|
| Pearson Correlation | −.372**      | 1       |
| Burnout         | Sig. (2-tailed)  | .000    |
| N               | 120              | 120     |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

**Table 7. The correlation between intention to leave and job satisfaction**

| Variables       | Job Satisfaction | Intention to leave |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | −.443**    | 1                  |
| Intention to leave | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000               |
| N               | 120              | 120                |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Table 8. Fit indices of the model

| Index | df   | GFI  | CMIN/DF | RMSEA | CFI  | X2 or CMIN |
|-------|------|------|---------|-------|------|------------|
| Model | 98   | .94  | 2.37    | 0.079 | .96  | 232.952    |
| Acceptable fit | - | >.90 | < 3 | <.08 | >.90 | - |

Table 9. Regression weights: (Total effect)

|          | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P   |
|----------|----------|------|------|-----|
| JS       | IL       | .000 |      |     |
| Burnout  | IL       | 1.30 | .276 | *** |
| Burnout  | JS       | .000 |      |     |

***Significant (p < .05).

Table 10. Regression weights: (Mediation effect)

|          | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P   |
|----------|----------|------|------|-----|
| JS       | IL       | −.30 | .149 | −1.507 | .106 |
| Burnout  | IL       | 1.30 | .305 | 3.367 | *** |
| Burnout  | JS       | −.29 | .164 | −1.525 | .432 |

***Significant (p < .05)
4. Discussion
This study investigated the relationships between intention to leave, job satisfaction, and burnout. Also, the study examined whether job satisfaction mediated the relationship between burnout and intention to leave.

4.1. Discussion of the first research question
The first research question examined if there was a relationship between intention to leave and burnout irrespective of the mediating role of job satisfaction. The results showed a strong positive relationship between intention to leave and burnout without the mediating role of job satisfaction implying that the EFL instructors’ intention to leave is highly correlated with their level of burnout at work. This finding fits well with that of Zhongzeng and Xiting (2005) who revealed a positive association between burnout and intention to leave. The result is also in accord with those of Altunoglu and Sarpkaya (2012) who found that depersonalization and emotional exhaustion as two components of burnout are predominant factors predicting intention to leave. Overall, previous studies (e.g., Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Leung & Lee, 2006) revealed that not all teachers experiencing burnout stay in their jobs. This finding is in agreement with those of Goddard and Goddard (2006) who found support for the claim that there is a significant relationship between intention to leave teaching and burnout levels among teachers at the beginning of their teaching profession. However, this finding ran counter to that of Hughes’s (2001) study in which he found many teachers bore the destructive consequences of burnout and stayed in occupation. As to the relationship between burnout and intention to leave, there seem to be inconclusive results. This could be justified in terms of teachers’ years of service meaning that experienced teachers suffering from burnout are less likely to take risks at leaving their teaching career. The reason behind this might be the effect of a tight job market. However, there is evidence that one dimension of burnout, namely personal accomplishment does not significantly impact intention to leave (Altunoglu & Sarpkaya, 2012). One line of explanation might be that instructors enjoy status and recognition as two elements of personal accomplishment and are less likely to leave their jobs.

4.2. Discussion of the second research question
The second research question addressed the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout. The results manifested a moderate negative relationship between burnout and job satisfaction. The negative relationship suggests that as the level of job satisfaction among the EFL instructors increases, their level of burnout decreases. This is in line with the results obtained by Xiang (2005), Lv (2005), Anbar and Eker (2008), Apandi (2003), Lu and Gursoy (2013), Chenevay et al. (2008), Esfandiari and Kamali (2016), Kazemi Talachi and Gorji (2013), Koustelios and Tsigilis (2005), Scanlan and Still (2013), Wei and Kanesan Abdullah (2016) and Tan (2006), who revealed that burnout negatively affected job satisfaction. One possible explanation might be that when teachers are satisfied with their jobs, they are more energetically spend time educating students (Nguni et al., 2006). Another justification is that satisfied teachers are primarily intrinsically motivated. Particularly, intrinsic motivation positively impacts teachers’ confidence and self-esteem thereby diminishing burnout.

In general, in the teaching-related professions, burnout has been negatively correlated with satisfaction with different aspects of teachers’ jobs (Platsidou, 2010). However, this finding is not in line with Platsidou and Agaliotis (2008) study, in which no significant relationship was found between burnout dimensions and satisfaction with pay and work conditions.

4.3. Discussion of the third research question
The third research question examined the relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction. The results revealed a negative relationship between intention to leave and job satisfaction. It implies that as intention to leave increases among EFL instructors for any reason, their level of job satisfaction decreases. This result agrees with the studies carried out by Basak et al. (2013), Zhang and Feng (2011), Sing and Loncar (2010), Masroor Alam and Fakir Mohammad (2010), Deery (2008), Tzeng (2002), Moore (2002), Shields and Ward (2001), and Rizwan et al. (2014) who
reported that intention to leave among employees is highly affected by lack of job satisfaction. This result is also consistent with those of Jonathan et al. (2013) and Kosi et al. (2015) who found that teacher job satisfaction and intention to leave move in opposite directions. It is irrational to expect that the teachers act functionally and stay in their profession when they are dissatisfied with their job. It can be assumed that when EFL teachers derive satisfaction from teaching, they are less likely to leave their jobs. Even some teachers who are discontented with their jobs, prefer to stay in position. The reasons might be attributed to a lack of job opportunities, age, and financial issues.

4.4. Discussion of the fourth research question

The fourth research question sought to investigate whether job satisfaction could mediate the relationship between intention to leave and burnout. In other words, this research question examined if job satisfaction could predict the relationship between intention to leave and burnout. The results showed that job satisfaction did not mediate the strong direct relationship between intention to leave and burnout. The non-mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship in question can be justified on the ground that the relationship between intention to leave and burnout is a direct relationship. Moreover, job satisfaction was found to be negatively correlated with both burnout and intention to leave. As a result, job satisfaction cannot mediate the relationship between the two variables. That is, although a high level of job satisfaction diminishes EFL instructors’ intention to leave and burnout, a low level of job satisfaction is not the only predictor of their turnover or even burnout.

Although job satisfaction has been reported to be among the factors that contribute to people’s intention to quit (Masroor Alam & Fakir Mohammad, 2010) and that the level of job satisfaction is related to burnout (Kazemi Talachi & Gorji, 2013), it cannot mediate the relationship between the two variables in question. This result accords with those of the studies done by Esfandiari and Kamali (2016) who acknowledged that teacher burnout results in intention to leave, and it negatively affects job satisfaction. Along the same lines, Wang et al. (2015) confirmed that these variables are directly correlated.

5. Conclusion

The present research aimed at studying the relationship between intention to leave and burnout through the mediating role of job satisfaction. The results revealed that the more the instructors intend to leave, the more stress and burnout they will face. In other words, the more stress and exhaustion they feel, the more they intend to leave. Subsequently, the findings revealed that job satisfaction did not mediate the relationship between burnout and intention to leave because job satisfaction bore a direct relationship with intention to leave and burnout. However, it does not mean that the level of job satisfaction should be neglected because it can affect the level of burnout and/or intention to leave among EFL instructors. Hence, EFL instructors should be provided with better working conditions to deliver quality education. This, in turn, will enhance their level of job satisfaction and lower the rate of turnover or intention to leave among EFL instructors. However, it should be noted that working conditions coupled with other factors e.g., wages, promotion, co-workers, and organization’s support can contribute to teacher job satisfaction. As confirmed in the present study, there was a strong direct relationship between intention to leave and burnout. Therefore, if job satisfaction decreases the level of burnout among the EFL instructors, intention to leave decreases among them.

The finding of this study may carry several implications for high school principals and language institute managers who intend to decrease the rate of their teachers’ attrition. The results of the current study can inform and raise educationalists’ and principals’ awareness of the relationship between burnout, intention to leave, and job satisfaction. Such awareness might enhance the level of job satisfaction and in turn, decrease the possibility of burnout among EFL instructors. This will decrease EFL instructors’ intention to leave making them highly motivated and more eager to stay in their profession. Furthermore, informed of the findings of this study, teacher educators, and those involved with teachers’ well-being can diagnose and prevent some potential problems. Building on this, language institution managers as well as the Ministry of Education policymakers
should increase teachers’ income and offer sufficient incentives. This would, however, improve the quality of instruction in educational settings.

The findings of the study can be used as a basis for the establishment of educational policies in EFL instructors’ recruitment programs. The results may conduce to educational psychologists in devising effective tools that can efficiently select qualified EFL instructors.

In light of cultural and contextual circumstances inherent in the present study, the results should be interpreted with caution. Future studies are called for to investigate the variables in question employing mixed methods approach, i.e. performing semi-structured interviews to shed more light on the results.

Funding
The authors received no direct funding for this research.

Author details
Linda Samadi1
E-mail: lbaran_yas@yahoo.com
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8743-0673
Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri1
E-mail: bagheres@gmail.com
Firooz Sadighi1
E-mail: firoozsadigh@yahoo.com
Lotfollah Yarmohammadi1
E-mail: Yarmoh@yahoo.com

1 Department of English Language, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

Citation information
Cite this article as: An investigation into EFL instructors’ intention to leave and burnout: Exploring the mediating role of job satisfaction, Linda Samadi, Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri, Firooz Sadighi & Lotfollah Yarmohammadi, Cogent Education (2020), 7: 1781430.

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