

Exploring the Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Professional Identity and Job Satisfaction in Virtual Environments

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Abstract

Job satisfaction is a crucial component of the professional domain, as it can affect productivity and teacher professional identity (TPI), specifically in remote teaching contexts. The study investigates the association between TPI and online job satisfaction, focusing on virtual environments. The analysis of TPI encompasses personal, social, and institutional perspectives, which examine how teachers' identities are influenced by their experiences, socioeconomic origins, and societal perceptions of the teaching profession. The study employed a nonparametric correlation analysis to investigate the association between job satisfaction and TPI among Iranian EFL instructors working in an online teaching environment. The data collection process included administering two surveys. The first questionnaire, comprised thirty-eight items, measured job satisfaction. The second questionnaire assessed TPI and contained thirty-seven items covering personal, social, and institutional components. Data was gathered from one hundred forty-four educators at private language institutes running online classes through different educational platforms. The study observed a weak positive relationship between TPI's personal, institutional, and social factors and job satisfaction. The result implies that increasing personal and societal acknowledgement within the field of education results in elevated levels of online teaching roles. The study offers valuable insights for educational policymakers and administrators in creating situations that promote a positive remote teaching environment to increase retention rates in academic institutions for teachers and job satisfaction, with the ultimate goal of enhancing teachers' professional development.

Keywords:

Job Satisfaction, Teacher Professional Identity, Virtual classroom, Iranian Context, Correlation

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Introduction

In the language teacher education (LTE) domain, the most significant objective is training and preparing teachers for evolving the teaching landscape, particularly with the rise of online education. Adequate preparation involves equipping novice and in-service teachers to improve classroom teaching practices (Spiteri & Rundgren, 2018). The teacher's professional domain has evolved from behaviourist to cognitive processes to more socially oriented and constructivist learning theories (Johnson, 2006). Similarly, research on teacher identity has thrived in the last twenty years in teacher education and professional development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2000); hence, it is essential for teachers navigating the complexities of remote instruction. LTE literature underscores the importance of teacher education, especially in remote instruction (Mosere et al., 2020; Spiteri & Rundgren, 2018). Professional identities in online settings are not formed in isolation but are shaped and reshaped through their debates and conversations with other group members (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). The crucial role of social interactions was explicitly highlighted in online learning and digital environments (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Haleem et al., 2022; Spiteri & Rundgren, 2018). Consequently, the work environment, a product of these social interactions, can significantly influence the teachers' job satisfaction and identity.

Job satisfaction is a vital component of the professional domain, as it can affect employee productivity, commitment, and retention within an organisation, specifically in remote teaching contexts (Martin et al., 2022). Namely, it is perceived as an internal response to working conditions (García-Salirrosas et al., 2023). Some educators call for the demands of online teaching, which can potentially detrimentally affect their level of satisfaction, leading to burnout, increased inactivity, and, ultimately, attrition from the profession (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Haleem et al., 2022). According to Hartell and Steyn (2019), teachers have abandoned their profession because of low job satisfaction, insufficient work conditions, and a lack of professional advancement and high responsibility. Since job satisfaction is an attitude that evaluates various aspects of the work and work situation (Canrinus et al., 2011), increased employment satisfaction can result in improved teacher retention and performance (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Gkolia et al., 2014) consequently teacher identity. On the other hand, teacher resignation can be exacerbated by work conditions, high responsibility, and inadequate compensation, leading to stress for remote instruction (Hartell & Steyn, 2019). However, a supportive virtual work environment, reasonable pay, and room for advancement can make teachers interested in pursuing their careers and staying in the profession, which can positively relate to teachers' job satisfaction (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Haleem et al., 2022; Spiteri & Rundgren, 2018).

Numerous studies examined the correlation between remote job satisfaction and factors including teacher digital literacy, professional identity, commitment, and

burnout. For instance, Manzano-Garcia et al. (2023) executed a survey employing structural equation modelling to analyse the relationships among job demands, control, social support, and burnout in educators during the COVID-19 pandemic. Roch and Montague (2021) conducted a study comparing traditional public schools and remote instruction through a survey to assess differences in job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Haleem et al. (2022) examined the impact of digital technologies on education, contending that technology enhances accessibility and affordability in teaching while transforming the learning experience. Gkolia and Belias (2014) conducted a literature review on job satisfaction and self-efficacy among teachers, highlighting the necessity for schools to bolster these aspects to enhance educational outcomes. Wu et al. (2024) examined the relationship between teachers' professional identity and job satisfaction to improve teachers' performance.

The quality of education is significantly influenced by the teaching qualifications of instructors, which encompass their professional knowledge and teaching abilities (Hai et al., 2021). According to Abuhussein and Badah (2024), despite its considerable significance, the evolution of EFL teachers' identities has garnered less focus than the vast research on technological advancements in pedagogical methods. The shift from traditional classroom instruction to virtual environments has altered pedagogical approaches and introduced problems, as Wu et al. (2024) noted, impacting job satisfaction and professional identity. Habibi and Ganjali (2021) stated that despite the extensive emphasis on teachers' professional competence for three decades, its correlation with job satisfaction remains unexplored in the EFL context in Iran. To our knowledge, no significant attention has been devoted to the online educational environment. While many studies have explored the relationship between job happiness and teacher identity, there is a paucity of study in online environments. Therefore, it is essential to consider TPI and its dimensions and teachers' job satisfaction in virtual classrooms. With this in mind, the current study aims to identify the relationship between TPI and job satisfaction among Iranian English teachers in online instruction to highlight the work conditions in the virtual environment. The following hypotheses were predicted to answer the subsequent research questions.

- H1: Iranian English teachers' job satisfaction is not significantly related to TPI's personal, institutional, and social aspects in remote educational environments. Namely, the teacher's professional identity does not increase with job satisfaction.
- Is there any significant correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity and job satisfaction?

Literature Review

Teacher Professional Identity

The literature review indicated that TPI identifies teaching as a profession and, simultaneously, the perceptions of the type of teacher one aspires to be in a specific context (Schneider, 2018). Ou and Gu (2024) argue that TPI is linked to a robust and affirmative viewpoint regarding the profession, characterised by a sense of connection, an ambition for retention, and a feeling of success; however, Beijaard et al. (2004) assume professional identities result from how teachers perceive themselves as experts in the subject matter who rely on knowledge and skills. As such, teachers rely on different knowledge to provide a productive learning situation for their profession (Cheng, 2017). Many studies acknowledge identity formation as a complex interaction between the individual and the social (e.g., Farrell, 2013). To be more precise, the concept of professional identity is frequently used and explored in an individual's perception of themselves as an employee in their field or occupation (Tang, 2020). Conceptualising professional identity requires addressing one's current identity and investigating the more detailed question of how individuals perceive their role as teachers. The process of addressing these issues has been paralleled by the increasing significance of TPI in comprehending teachers' decision-making, commitment, departure, and staying in their profession (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In English language teaching (ELT), understanding the relationship between teacher identity and job satisfaction in a virtual environment is paramount, as it can significantly influence education quality and the well-being of teachers (García-Salirrosas, 2023; Haleem et al., 2022; Spiteri & Rundgren, 2018).

The primary focus of language teacher educators and researchers has now become the professional development of language teachers (Astuni, 2016; Farrell, 2013). According to Flores and Day (2006), this attempt may be attributable to the fact that language educators can develop novel strategies to improve the language teaching profession and performance by examining various aspects of language TPI. Significant discussions have evolved among researchers regarding developing, discovering, and implementing new methods for the professional identity of language teachers concerning sociocultural theory (SCT) and activity theory. For instance, Gu and Benson (2015) examined how teacher identities are produced through discourse throughout teacher education, drawing on insights from Communities of Practice. It also explores how social structure influences this process. In another study in the Iranian context, Shahri (2018) investigated the formation of language teacher identity and emotions through SCT. He found that the teacher identity construction of a Turkish ESL teacher was rooted in emotionally charged teaching experiences, which affected her enactment of teacher identities and practices. Similarly, Karimi and Mofidi (2019) utilised activity theory as a conceptual framework to explore TPI formation. Teacher identity is a

cognitive process that emerges from utilising cultural objects and symbols and influences classroom instruction. In a digitalisation era, the abrupt transition to online instruction heightened teachers' responsibilities and professional demands to incorporate technology into their classes.

In literature, teachers' professional identity is formed by the ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation of their experiences concerning other factors. Teacher identity is a dynamic process (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) extended as teachers accumulate experience. Clarke (2009) argues that teacher identity is influenced by the interplay between social and individual factors, e.g., discourse and practice, reification and participation, similarity and difference, and the synoptic and dynamic (p. 189). Namely, it is not a fixed construct and changes due to individuals' interaction with others and with artefacts (Edwards & Burns, 2016) in hybrid environments (Haleem et al., 2022). Since teacher identity is a cognitive process that emerges from utilising cultural objects and symbols and influences classroom instruction (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014), teachers must actively enhance their teaching knowledge and represent subject content with technology to facilitate students' learning. Cheng (2017) argued that teachers must equip themselves with "technological pedagogical content knowledge" (TPACK), which refers to knowledge that facilitates students' learning of specific content through proper pedagogy and technology.

Reviewing the existing literature determined that a TPI may encompass three fundamental components, including personal, social, and institutional, despite minor conceptual variations. According to Tang (2020), although the more individuals get paid, the better they feel about their careers, "It's not only Work and Pay" (p.1). It seems that teachers' job satisfaction, among other factors, is related to the teacher's professional identity; specifically, the more robust the teacher's professional identity is, the greater the job satisfaction is and vice versa (Chen et al., 2020). For instance, Tang (2020) investigated the moderating influence of TPI on job satisfaction in traditional classrooms, i.e., face-to-face classes. However, once virtual instruction is provided, it is imperative to provide a situation where teachers can promote their job effectiveness. Many studies linked remote job satisfaction to teacher digital literacy, professional identity, dedication, and burnout. In a COVID-19 pandemic survey, Manzano-Garcia et al. (2023) examined different factors related to job satisfaction. Roch and Montague (2021) explored job satisfaction and turnover intentions in typical public schools and remote instruction. They considered different factors, including teacher characteristics, experience level, gender, and perceptions of working conditions, i.e., school control and student quality. Haleem et al. (2022) examined how digital literacy enables teachers to enhance the learning experience. Martí-González et al. (2023) examined employment happiness by analysing job demands, control, and social support, highlighting the importance of social ties in the workplace for job satisfaction and personal accomplishment.

Job Satisfaction in Virtual Environment

Job satisfaction is considered an internal response to working conditions, a comprehensive assessment that individuals derive from their work environment (Gkolia et al., 2014). Many researchers have expressed concern regarding job satisfaction, primarily due to its correlation with organisational efficacy. Despite the plethora of definitions attributed to job satisfaction, it should be interpreted based on the research subject (Gkolia et al., 2014). Lawler (1973) defines overall job satisfaction as the aggregate of an individual's expectations from their job and the actual benefits received (Evans, 1998). However, Bogler (2001) characterises job satisfaction through teachers' judgments of occupational prestige, self-esteem, work autonomy, and professional self-development; hence, it can be considered an indicator of an individual's contentment with their employment. Troesch and Bauer (2017) describe job satisfaction as the perception of how well individuals' job-related requirements are being fulfilled (Evans, 1997) or as the degree to which individuals either enjoy "(satisfaction) or detest (dissatisfaction) their occupations" (Spector, 1997, p. 2). They argued that multiple theoretical models highlight the components contributing to elevated work satisfaction in the teaching profession. Some researchers identified a substantial positive association between personal identity and work happiness, implying that teachers may feel accomplished in their professional positions (Wu et al., 2024). The authors contend that a robust sense of personal identity is essential for fostering dedication and involvement, influencing career satisfaction (Perrachione et al., 2008).

Although there are significant differences in the details, existing research generally agrees that job satisfaction is affected by internal and external influences, including the context and conditions of work (Troesch & Bauer, 2017). In online teaching settings, job satisfaction can relatively mediate the relationship between professional identity and job burnout. Understanding the potential influence of the shifts in context on a teacher's identity is necessary (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Accordingly, much research has been investigated in this regard. Chen et al. (2020) investigated the effect of job satisfaction and professional identity on job burnout among online university educators during COVID-19. It was determined that professional identity and job satisfaction negatively predict job burnout, with job satisfaction as a partial mediator. Surprisingly, teachers possessing a robust professional identity and elevated job satisfaction were less prone to occupational burnout. Furthermore, professional identity and job satisfaction significantly and negatively influenced job burnout. Martí-González et al. (2023) investigated the impact of job demands, control, and social support on job satisfaction, emotional weariness, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment in the virtual environment.

Similarly, the study by Abuhussein and Badah (2024) investigated the Palestinian perspectives of EFL instructors regarding identity transformation in online instruction amid the COVID-19 pandemic that affected professional identities. Employing a mixed-methods design, they revealed the influence of online instruction on multiple facets of EFL instructors' professional identity. The abrupt transition to online instruction heightened teachers' awareness of their professional demands regarding coping with and integrating technology into their online classes. This abrupt transition led to investigating the connections between educator self-efficacy, work satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. Similarly, drawing on different methods, Wu et al. (2024) and Zhang and Chang (2025) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and various components of TPI. As a result, the teachers had to implement new methods of instruction, student interaction, and evaluation when they moved their classes online. Interestingly, the most critical factor was the beneficial effect on job satisfaction and various components of TPI. The emergence of COVID-19 led to remote instruction, and the shift in instructional delivery informed future online and remote teaching (Moser et al., 2020), consequently, job demands.

A literature analysis indicates that numerous studies have examined the correlation between personal variables and professional components, especially within online teaching. A longitudinal study by Smith et al. (2021) investigated the relationships among virtual teaching resources, personal teaching abilities, and instructor involvement in online settings. Their findings revealed that various kinds of resources and general well-being can experience a cyclical process, profoundly affecting instructors' capacity to adjust to the obstacles of online instruction. Johnson and Miller (2022) examined the association between the job satisfaction of online instructors and their primary objective of cultivating positive interactions with students in virtual environments. The employment satisfaction of seasoned online educators is closely connected with their perceived success in achieving goals within student-instructor relationships. Instructors who found it challenging to foster desired relationships with their students reported diminished job satisfaction. They frequently coped with their displeasure by decreasing their participation in activities directly associated with student engagement and learning. While some research has been conducted on forming identities among English teachers (Gu & Benson, 2015), in the EFL context, there has been limited research on the relationship between TPI and job satisfaction among Iranian teachers holding online classes.

Method

Design

The non-experimental research design was used in this study since there were no interventions or manipulations. The researcher used correlation based on the association

between variables to examine the interrelationship among a set of constructs. This study explored how much of the variance in job satisfaction scores was related to the following variables: personal, social, and institutional aspects of TPI. Since there is no cause-and-effect relationship (Larson-Hall, 2015), correlation is the best statistical test (Pallant, 2011), and the research tends to find which components have a perfect negative or positive relationship. As the study utilised a Likert scale questionnaire and the data collected were ordinal, the conditions necessary for a parametric test were violated. In other words, the assumptions of the parametric test are not met, and the data is not continuous. Therefore, a nonparametric correlation test, i.e., Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ), was employed instead. Nonparametric correlations are typically favoured when the data is ordinal, indicating that the measures are ranked (Ary et al., 2018). Table 3 displays Spearman's ρ correlation coefficients between TPI and job satisfaction.

Context

Although public schools and private language institutes are the two primary institutions in Iran that provide language instruction (Abednia, 2012), the researcher was forced to do the current study with private institutes' teachers due to limited access to public schools. The private language institutes adhere to a decentralised structure, wherein each institute has the autonomy to choose its coursebook and teaching methods. Most language institutes in Iran cater to the demand of the language education market by structuring their courses around the principles of communicative competency. The primary goal is to enable students with the skills to communicate effectively in spoken and written English. The private institutes generally aim to ensure that teacher applicants possess a high level of language competency, similar to that of a native speaker (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015). The institutes use different educational or general platforms for teaching, such as BigBlueBottom, Adobe Connect, Google Meet, Zoom, and Skyroom.

Participants

A cohort of 144 Iranian EFL instructors, consisting of 77 females and 67 males, answered the questionnaire. They all teach English online, linking to private language institutes in Tehran province. The participants' teaching experience spanned from more than four years to ten years, with an average of six years. Their ages ranged from twenty-two to forty-nine years, averaging thirty-four. The teachers in this study held bachelor's and master's degrees in English-related fields such as Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), English Translation, Linguistics, and English Literature. However, some have learned English at institutes and are certified in IELTS or TOEFL degrees, and some are certified in international degrees like CELTA and TESOL.

Instruments

Drawing on previous studies on TPI and job satisfaction, this study utilised two questionnaires to find the relationship between job satisfaction and TPI. The questionnaires consist of a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from the response “strongly agree” to the highest score (scored 5), “agree” (scored 4), “neutral” (scored 3), “disagree” (scored 2); and “strongly disagree” to the lowest (scored 1). Namely, a low score denotes low job satisfaction, whereas a high score denotes reasonable job satisfaction. The questionnaire had almost 50% of its items written in negative form; therefore, to prevent bias in the response set, these items were flipped to positive form. In other words, the scoring is inverted for the negative answers.

The data collection technique was to survey the students through a set of predetermined questions named closed-response. A survey, “Teacher Job Satisfaction”, developed by Lester, P. E. (1982) as an instrument to measure teacher job satisfaction, was distributed to answer the research questions (see appendix). It consists of two portions, the first specifically designed to collect participants’ background information. The second part of this questionnaire encompasses the English-language teaching reflection. This questionnaire consists of 77 items that assess respondents’ job satisfaction across five different areas. However, they are reduced to 38 items to be tailored to the scope of this study. These areas, or subscales, include seven items on working conditions, nine on work itself, seven on pay, eight on responsibility, and five on advancement, which overall measure teachers’ job satisfaction.

The TPI questionnaire “TPI Questionnaire” developed by Hai et al. (2021) comprises 37 items and features three constructs. This questionnaire’s three TPI constructs are personal, institutional, and social. Social stigmatisation includes nine items regarded as social recognition of occupational prestige (Klimenko & Posukhova, 2018). The personal construct, including fourteen items, encompasses the following indicators: motivation, satisfaction, and commitment to work (Day et al., 2006), which are used to evaluate the individual’s professional identity. In addition, institutional TPI, encompassing fourteen items, is designed to identify and classify an individual as a member of a specific class. Samar et al. (2011) define institutional TPI as a recycling of meanings that encompasses the actions and attitudes of institutional members. It also denotes the institutional identity and administrators’ inclination to interact with instructors at the workplace.

Procedure

The study employed one data collection instrument, questionnaires, to comprehensively address the research question. The respondents were chosen for diversity, with different ages, genders, and fields of study, to provide relevant information from teachers with diverse backgrounds. Two hundred fifty surveys were sent through email or social

media, resulting in one hundred forty-four completed responses (with a response rate of fifty-eight per cent). Two specialists in education and research were solicited to evaluate the suitability of the study instruments; moreover, the validity of the study instruments was confirmed. The wording of the questionnaires was simple enough to be understood by the participants; hence, it was not translated into Persian. However, the negligently filled-out surveys were then disposed of to improve the dependability of the gathered data. The researcher made slight changes in response to the Iranian context. Subsequently, the researchers solicited five educators to complete the questionnaires and assess the clarity of the items. According to their reports, certain elements were altered by substituting simpler vocabulary.

The responses were collected using the online survey through Google Forms and in-person hands-outs. The researchers subsequently transmitted the digital format of the questionnaires to the teachers via social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Bale, Eta, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Likewise, the hard copies were distributed through email and in person at two universities in Tehran, Alzahra and Azad University. The responses of the EFL teachers were archived in a computerised database for subsequent data analysis. The researchers ultimately conducted the semi-structured interviews. Cronbach's alpha was utilised to ensure the reliability of responses and assess the internal consistency of the responses. The following stage analysed the relationship between TPI and job satisfaction.

Data Analysis

The study employed correlation analysis to evaluate the data, as correlation analysis examines the extent to which two measurements co-vary. The researchers investigated the association between job satisfaction and TPI. Conducting a correlation test involves examining a consistent pattern of connections between data points. The scales' internal consistency was analysed to check the togetherness of items (Pallant, 2011). As such, the most appropriate method of testing reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, was run by SPSS to check if the reliability assumptions were met. As mentioned by Hinton et al. (2004), "It is necessary for the questionnaire to measure the topic under study at different times and across different populations" (p. 356). After the teachers completed the forms, the researchers worded the items positively and negatively and reversed and reverse-coded them before checking their reliability (Larson-Hall, 2015; Pallant, 2011).

Results

As mentioned above, the test reliability was 0.765, as shown in Table 1, suggesting good internal consistency or reliability for the scale. In general, the correlations between judges typically fall between suggesting 0.7 or higher, indicating medium to large effect sizes. This result suggests that Cronbach's alpha is reasonably reliable.

Table 1*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.765	2

The analysis of the connections between every single set of variables is presented as follows. Table 2 gives the mean, minimum, and maximum items and standard deviation results.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
TPI	144	2.30	4.10	3.3569	.02571	.30854
JS	144	2.40	3.80	3.0833	.02551	.30611
Valid N (listwise)	144					

TPI and job satisfaction include 144 sample sizes, a considerably reliable size for statistical analysis. The minimum and maximum for TPI ranges from 2.30 to 4.10, while job satisfaction ranges from 2.40 to 3.80. These results illustrate that TPI has a broader range than job satisfaction, which could suggest more response variability. The mean score for TPI is 3.357, while for job satisfaction is 3.083, suggesting the TPI is approximately rated higher than job satisfaction. The standard deviation for TPI is 0.30854, and job satisfaction is 0.30611. The standard deviations for both variables are relatively close, indicating that the deviations for both items are relatively similar. The standard error for the mean provides insight into how much the sample mean is expected to fluctuate. The standard errors of both variables are around 0.025, suggesting a low uncertainty level in the mean.

As shown in Table 3, Spearman's rho correlation coefficients between several variables are associated with the relationship between TPI and job satisfaction among Iranian teachers teaching online. As can be observed, comparing TPI factors with job satisfaction, a very weak positive correlation exists between TPI and job satisfaction and

their dimensions, indicating that TPI increases as job satisfaction increases, namely $r_s = -0.224$, $N = 144$, $p > 0.01$ level (2-tailed). Since the p-value is 0.007, below the 0.01 level (2-tailed), the result indicated that the observed value is not due to chance. In other words, the correlation between TPI and job satisfaction dimensions suggests that as scores on TPI increase, the scores on job satisfaction slightly increase; however, their relationships are weak. However, the p-value of 0.007 suggests the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Hence, these findings are strong enough to reject the null hypothesis, implying a real relationship between TPI and job satisfaction among Iranian teachers in virtual settings.

Overall, the weak correlation between variables suggests that although there is a statistically significant relationship between TPI and job satisfaction, it might not be strong enough to imply that changes in one consistently lead to changes in the other.

Table 3*Spearman Rank Order Correlation*

			TPI	JS
Spearman's rho	TPI	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.224**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.007
		N	144	144
	JS	Correlation Coefficient	.224**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.
		N	144	144

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

Discussion

This study examined the correlation between TPI's personal, institutional, and social dimensions and job satisfaction (including compensation, career progression, working conditions, responsibilities, and the nature of work) among Iranian English teachers in a virtual setting. The research and conclusions referenced in the literature indicate a positive correlation between TPI and job satisfaction. The findings indicate a somewhat positive correlation between the job satisfaction of Iranian teachers instructing in virtual classrooms and their TPI, suggesting that increased job satisfaction is associated with a slight improvement in TPI. Nevertheless, our study identified a tenuous correlation between these two categories, suggesting that the relationship between job satisfaction and TPI cannot be ascertained in isolation. This result indicated that several dimensions can influence the link between TPI and job satisfaction. These findings indicate that

enhancing TPI may require consideration of standard job satisfaction criteria and other aspects. Namely, prioritising professional growth, enhancing TPI, fostering a supportive community of practice, and emphasising the intrinsic benefits of teaching may prove more beneficial.

In this regard, Wu et al. (2024) and Zhang and Chang (2025) reported a significant positive association between TPI and job satisfaction in online education. Wu et al. (2024) analysed many variables, including affective and efficacy identities, whereas Zhang and Chang (2025) established a relationship between work engagement, job satisfaction, and TPI. They found that work involvement acts as a mediator between two other qualities. Consistent with this study, they demonstrated that instructors possessing a robust professional identity were fully involved in their careers, resulting in increased job satisfaction. Chen et al. (2020) corroborate this conclusion, suggesting that teacher professional identity (TPI) and job satisfaction among educators buffer the relationship between TPI and job burnout, which is fundamentally linked to job satisfaction. These analogous results indicate a complicated interaction among these factors, suggesting that job engagement may enhance the relationship between TPI and job satisfaction.

Similarly, in Troesch and Bauer's (2017) study, teachers were satisfied with their jobs despite the workload and the preparation needs. These personal factors enhance individuals' sense of capability to influence their work environment. As a result, they took pride in their work, derived significance from it, and maintained their level of involvement, enhancing their job engagement. In this vein, Tang (2020), in his study, showed that rural teachers who worked longer hours and had a lower reported income level were likely to experience less job satisfaction. However, TPI can be essential in mitigating this relationship between work challenges and job satisfaction. This outcome suggests that the teacher's commitment to work leads them to handle the challenges of their profession, and they are satisfied with their teaching role.

In contrast to this study, numerous investigations examined various factors and their impact on job satisfaction. García-Salirrosas et al. (2023) examined the impact of family behaviours on job satisfaction by creating supportive and positive environments for teachers. Consequently, the online environment, which enjoys a supportive ambience, can substantially impact job satisfaction more than individual factors like TPI. The TPI examined in this study indicates that instructors establish inductive relationships with their students and parents who observe their teaching practices. Although TPI shapes individually, it develops and modifies in society, which differs from the teacher's attitudes and context. Teachers' identities are a personal process shaped by the immediate context, socioeconomic background, and societal beliefs about teachers and the teaching profession. Investigating the effect of the online teaching environment, Abuhussein and Badah (2024) found cultural and contextual factors, indicating that online teaching favourably impacted instructors' social relationships with colleagues and students, improved the teaching process, and elevated their self-esteem, consequently the identities

concerning their professional needs. Similarly, Karimi and Mofidi (2019) demonstrated that individual teachers mainly carried out identity formation. The enactment of individual identity in this study was influenced by various factors, including the teachers' personal experiences, extensive teaching experience, immediate context, and broader social structure related to multiple identities.

Roch and Montague (2021) compared job satisfaction and teacher turnover between novice teachers in traditional and online schools, discovering that while both groups exhibited similar characteristics, online teachers generally possessed more prior school experience and demonstrated higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. Their research concentrated on overall job satisfaction instead of the particular association with TPI. Their study revealed that the teachers working online were more satisfied with their work conditions despite relatively less student quality, parental participation, and classroom control. However, they relate the students' low progress to the regimented nature of online learning. These findings signify that individual and contextual factors contribute to teacher satisfaction in the virtual learning environment. Similar to the current study, they found a weak correlation with TPI alone. In contrast, some studies found that specific factors of TPI were more highly linked to job satisfaction than others. As mentioned earlier, the teachers who experience high job satisfaction have a minimal disparity between their desired perceptions and actual perceptions of teacher-student relationships. In other words, these teachers successfully achieved their desired level of connection with their students. It can be suggested that the teacher's job satisfaction is related to social aspects, and how the students treat them, namely their relationship with their students, can result in job satisfaction (Veldman, 2013).

Numerous prior research demonstrates that the higher the teacher's job satisfaction, the higher the teacher's identity, especially within the virtual context. Consequently, the outcomes of this study align with the findings of prior studies. However, other factors rather than social factors can result in high or low job satisfaction. In this sense, Martí-González et al.'s (2023) findings revealed that social support predicted job happiness, underscoring the significance of workplace social connections and emotional exhaustion. It indicates that job expectations influence teachers' experiences of burnout. Thus, it can be concluded that various factors, such as teacher burnout, can reduce job satisfaction, resulting in low TPI. Similarly, several investigations analysed diverse elements and their effects on job satisfaction, yielding varying results. García-Salirrosas et al. (2023) found that family-supportive behaviours, work and life balance, and their positive effect on job satisfaction. A supportive atmosphere can significantly impact job satisfaction more than individual factors such as TPI.

Overall, the study's findings indicate that contributing to promoting professional development, improving TPI, cultivating a supportive community of practice, and highlighting the inherent advantages of teaching may yield greater advantages.

Conclusion

Findings revealed a weak positive relationship between TPI's personal, institutional, and social aspects and job satisfaction (pay, advancement, work condition, responsibility, and work itself) among Iranian English teachers. TPI has a positive relationship and level of involvement in their profession. Elevated levels of TPI are linked to heightened job satisfaction, thus bolstering instructors' dedication and productivity. The study highlights factors that link TPI's dimensions, such as individual experiences, social interactions, institutional environments, and job satisfaction. The results indicate that any attempts to enhance job satisfaction should consider these factors that affect TPI. By addressing concerns such as a supportive work environment, pay, and advancement, it is possible to increase and, as a result, improve educational outcomes.

The study's dependence on self-reported data may introduce bias, as replies could be influenced by the tendency to give socially desirable answers or personal interpretations. Due to the time limit, this study failed to investigate other factors such as gender, age, and experience that can impact the generalizability of the findings. Subsequent investigations should prioritise the inclusion of more extensive and varied samples to authenticate and expand upon the conclusions drawn from this study. Furthermore, using a correlation design prevents the establishment of causal relationships, emphasising the necessity of conducting longitudinal research to determine causality.

The current study's results suggest that private institutes should provide teachers with the necessary infrastructure and instructions to enhance job satisfaction, hence TPI. These results may entail implementing professional development initiatives that strengthen teachers' identities and improve social support within educational settings. In addition, cultivating a favourable institutional culture that appreciates and acknowledges teachers' efforts can further augment job satisfaction and professional identity. Likewise, it creates numerous avenues to establish better methodological practices for virtual classrooms and the subsequent research to endorse them.

Subsequent investigations should examine factors affecting TPI, such as inherent motivations, individual values, and the wider educational environment. Scholars should comprehensively analyse other dimensions of teacher identity, teacher cooperation, and working conditions in the virtual environment. Another critical component related to teachers' qualifications is digital literacy, which affects TPI or job satisfaction. This research could provide more precise recommendations for implementing educational practices. Including educators from different academic backgrounds and levels in the sample would be beneficial to enhance the understanding of the correlation between TPI and work satisfaction.

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Appendix

TPI Samsudin et al (2021)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
P1. I am passionate about the teaching profession					
P2. I feel that I am well prepared for teaching					
P3. I believe I am competent to teach					
P4. In my class, I can effectively handle diverse groups of students					
P5. I am satisfied with my teaching role					
P6. I am proud to be a teacher					
P7. I have always enjoyed working with children/students					
P8. I am committed to the teaching profession					
P9. I joined the teaching profession with passion, even if the salary scale was not attractive					
P10. I am motivated to learn new knowledge and skills about innovative teaching.					
P11. I feel that I made the correct decision when I chose the teaching profession					
P12. I have a responsibility for the wholesome development of children/students					
P13. I always make every effort to improve my career					
S14. I am proud to tell others that I am a teacher					
S15. In my school, we have a good teamwork spirit					

S16. Teachers in my school treat me with a welcoming attitude					
I17. There is an adequate accountability system in my school					
I18. In my school, there is an opportunity to learn from other teachers					
I19. My school leadership has high regard for teachers					
I20. My school provides adequate teaching-learning resources					
I21. My school environment is conducive for teaching-learning					
I22. My school has an incentive system that encourages good performance					
S23. I have a good relationship with my school leadership					
I24. My school leadership supports the teaching-learning process					
P25. I am proud of my school					
S26. My school accommodates students with different Backgrounds					
I27. The working conditions of teachers in my school are motivating me to stay in the profession					
I28. The performance evaluation in my school is useful to my career development					
S29. I advise my family members to choose teaching as their profession					
P30. If I were given a chance to choose a					

profession, I would choose teaching again					
S31. Students highly value the teaching profession					
S32. Teaching is highly regarded in my family					
S33. My family is happy about my current job as a teacher					
S34. The community values experienced teachers					
S35. Teaching is considered a high-status profession by society					
S36. The society has a high regard for teachers					
I37. Assignment of school leadership is merit-based.					

Teacher Job Satisfaction Lester, P. E. (1982)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A1. Teaching provides me with an opportunity to advance professionally.					
P2. Teacher income is adequate for normal expenses.					
W3. Teaching provides an opportunity to use a variety of skills.					
P4. Insufficient income keeps me from living the way I want to live.					
W5. The work of a teacher consists of routine activities.					
A6. I am not getting ahead in my present teaching position.					
WC7. Working conditions in my school can be improved.					
W8. I do not have the freedom to make my own decisions.					

R9. The administration in my school defines its policies.					
WC10. Working conditions in my school are comfortable.					
R11. Teaching provides me with the opportunity to help my students learn.					
A12. Teaching provides limited opportunities for advancement.					
R13. My students respect me as a teacher.					
W14. Teaching is very interesting work.					
WC15. Working conditions in my school could not be worse.					
W16. Teaching discourages originality.					
R17. The administration in my school communicates its policies well.					
W18. Teaching does not provide me the chance to develop new methods.					
WC 19. The administration in my school communicates its policies well.					
A20. Teaching provides an opportunity for promotion.					
R21. I am responsible for planning my daily lessons.					
WC22. Physical surroundings in my school are pleasant.					
P23. I am not well paid in proportion to my ability.					
R24. I do have responsibility for my teaching.					
W25. Teaching encourages me to be creative.					

P26. Teacher income is barely enough to live on.					
W27. I am indifferent toward teaching.					
W28. The work of a teacher is very pleasant.					
A29. Teaching provides a good opportunity for advancement.					
R30. I am not responsible for my actions.					
WC31. Working conditions in my school are good.					
P32. Teacher income is less than I deserve.					
R33. I try to be aware of the policies of my school.					
P34. Pay compares with similar jobs in other school districts.					
P35. Teaching provides me with financial security.					
R36. I am not interested in the policies of my school.					
R37. I get along well with my students.					
WC38. administration in my school does not clearly define its policies.					