

A Diamond in the Hand: Unearthing the Efficacy of In-service Classes on Professional Well-Being, Enthusiasm, and Psychological Health in EFL Landscape

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of in-service training on the professional well-being, enthusiasm, and psychological health of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Using a qualitative approach, ten EFL educators with varying experience levels participated in semi-structured interviews to explore their perceptions of professional development programs. Thematic analysis revealed that in-service courses significantly enhance teaching enthusiasm by introducing innovative pedagogical strategies and fostering collaborative environments. Participants reported improved psychological health through strengthened collegial relationships and increased job satisfaction, bolstering their professional identity and self-efficacy. The findings underscore the critical role of structured professional development in cultivating a motivated and resilient teaching workforce. This research contributes to the growing literature on teacher development. It offers practical insights for educational policymakers, emphasizing the need for ongoing support and recognition of educators to enhance their professional experiences and ultimately improve educational outcomes for learners. The study highlights the necessity of further research to explore the long-term effects of in-service training across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords

In-service Courses, Teacher Enthusiasm, Psychological Health, Professional Well-being, EFL Teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational systems seek to develop skilled and competent educators, improve educational quality, and provide efficient instructional frameworks (Han & Wang, 2021; Romano et al., 2020). Professional development (PD) is essential for attaining these goals, especially within the realm of EFL instruction. Studies have shown that successful professional development may enhance instructors' knowledge, abilities, and practices, improving student learning outcomes (Shelton et al., 2023; Zeng, 2023). A primary approach to enhancing professional development is in-service training, which denotes targeted instruction offered to educators during their active professional duties. Diverse tactics, including mentorship (Deen, 2023) and reflective thinking (Namaziandost et al., 2024), are essential for promoting professional development among educators. Furthermore,

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these programs cultivate vital attributes such as perseverance, reflective pedagogy, and resilience, which are crucial for effective language instruction (Fathi & Soleimani, 2025; Ismail & Nikpoo, 2023; Yang & Sato, 2025). In-service training programs that include novel pedagogies, such as translanguaging, assist educators in diversifying their linguistic repertoires, redefining their professional identities, and augmenting their teaching philosophies (Yüzlü & Dikilitaş, 2022). Moreover, these programs frequently tackle essential domains like assessment literacy, equipping educators to adeptly manage the complexities of many learning contexts (Sayyadi, 2022). Thus, in-service training is a crucial element of continuous professional growth for EFL educators.

In parallel with professional development, teacher well-being (TPW) is a crucial component of effective education, impacting both instructional quality and student results (Sacré et al., 2023). TPW is a multifaceted construct that includes the emotional, cognitive, social, and physical dimensions of teachers' professional lives (Schleicher, 2018; Viac & Fraser, 2020). Positive teacher professional well-being (TPW) affects educators' pedagogical decisions, classroom interactions, and overall work satisfaction (Buonomo et al., 2019; Burić & Frenzel, 2020; Keller et al., 2014). TPW is frequently assessed using psychological parameters, including job satisfaction and emotional well-being, which incorporate positive and negative effects (Rahm & Heise, 2019). This study used Warr (1990) paradigm, based on Diener (1984) notion of subjective well-being, to analyze TPW through its affective and cognitive dimensions, particularly emphasizing job satisfaction and emotional well-being. Teacher excitement (TE), a crucial aspect of positive psychology (PP), significantly influences instructional efficacy and student outcomes. TE is defined by educators' enthusiasm for teaching and the enjoyment that they experience from the subject matter (Chen et al., 2024; Kunter, 2013). Studies indicate that elevated levels of teacher efficacy enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic performance (Moè et al., 2020; Xu & Wang, 2024). TE also improves cognitive processing and content retention, resulting in more efficient learning (Frenzel et al., 2009). Notwithstanding the significant advantages of TE, its use in EFL contexts, especially in in-service training, is inadequately examined. Psychological health (PH) is essential to educators' well-being, affecting their teaching methodologies and job satisfaction. Recent psychological research indicates that educators with superior mental health have enhanced classroom performance (Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024), and favorable mental health outcomes correlate with elevated instructional quality (Duckworth et al., 2009; Seligman, 2011). The psychological health of teachers is a crucial element of their total professional well-being, influencing their teaching efficacy and work satisfaction (Dewaele et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Despite growing recognition of the importance of in-service training, research on its impact on teachers' psychological health, motivation, and professional well-being is limited, especially in the context of EFL teaching. This research aims to bridge that gap by examining the impact of in-service training participation on critical components of teachers' psychological health, motivation, and overall professional well-being. This research seeks to supplement the current literature on teacher development by providing practical suggestions for strengthening EFL professional development programs. Existing research on EFL contexts is inadequate in inquiry. It focuses on psychological health, excitement, and professional well-being as separate entities, overlooking their dynamic linkages within the context of in-service training. Exploring this issue is significant because teacher well-being is critical in improving instructional quality, teacher retention, and student results. While in-service training is an important component of professional development, the absence of a thorough knowledge of its effects on teachers' psychological health and motivation hinders the efficiency of these programs. This research aims to guide the creation of more comprehensive, effective professional development programs that may better assist teachers psychologically and professionally by investigating the interrelationships between these factors. Furthermore, the results will help to further our knowledge of creating a sustainable and motivated

teaching staff, which is crucial to educational systems' long-term performance. This study will also provide valuable insights into how professional development programs can be tailored to address the multiple dimensions of teacher well-being, resulting in practical suggestions for educators, policymakers, and training organizations seeking to create more effective training initiatives. The research especially examines the following inquiry:

To this end, this research sought to answer the following research question:

1. To what extent do in-service courses impact the enthusiasm of EFL teachers?
2. To what extent do in-service courses impact the professional well-being of EFL teachers?
3. To what extent do in-service courses impact the psychological health of EFL teachers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional Well-being

Professional well-being (PWB) is an essential component of educators' daily lives, covering their contentment, happiness, and general health within the profession (Garg et al., 2014). In the educational context, teacher well-being denotes the emotional fulfillment and happiness educators derive from their teaching responsibilities. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) characterized teacher well-being as the pleasure, joy, and satisfaction experienced by educators while executing their professional responsibilities. Gregersen et al. (2020) emphasized that the subjective evaluation of teachers' satisfaction in the classroom is a vital factor influencing PWB. Recent research has demonstrated that PWB is affected by several personal, organizational, and societal variables. Personal attributes, including motivation, marital status, and spirituality, have substantially influenced teachers' well-being (Ardi et al., 2023). Moreover, the professional milieu, encompassing interactions with students, peers, institutional leadership, and workload, profoundly influences teachers' overall well-being (Ebadijalal & Moradkhani, 2022). In the realm of EFL instruction, social elements, including trust and cooperation among peers, are crucial for improving well-being (Cann et al., 2022; Sadeghi & Pourbahram, 2024). Emotional regulation is recognized as a crucial element in teacher engagement, mitigating burnout and fatigue and enhancing teachers' overall well-being (Ma & Liu, 2024). Teachers who adeptly regulate their emotions often report elevated levels of psychological well-being (Lucena & Ojeda, 2024). Likewise, L2 grit—characterized by perseverance and passion for teaching—was identified as a significant predictor of teacher enjoyment and well-being (Namaziandoust et al., 2023). Chamani et al. (2023) state occupational self-efficacy and job satisfaction are critical determinants affecting teachers' well-being.

Teacher Enthusiasm

Teacher enthusiasm (TE) is acknowledged as an essential pedagogical characteristic and a vital component of the classroom environment (Keller et al., 2015; Kunter et al., 2013). Frequently shown by movements such as dynamic speech, animated gestures, and positive emotions, it is characterized by an impression of enthusiasm and fulfillment in the educational process (Frenzel et al., 2009; Keller et al., 2018). Emotions such as enjoyment, excitement, and teacher enthusiasm reflect the satisfaction educators get from their work (Kunter et al., 2008). This positive enthusiasm and dedication may significantly motivate students, enhance their learning experiences, and improve academic achievement (Frommelt et al., 2021; Lazarides et al., 2019). There is an agreement that instructor excitement positively impacts students' attitudes toward learning (Keller et al., 2015). A passionate educator may invigorate and engage students, increasing their commitment to learning activities (Keller et al., 2014; Kunter, 2013).

TE is becoming more well-recognized in the EFL context as a key factor influencing both instructor and student performance. According to (Chen et al., 2024), job engagement and foreign language teaching enjoyment are important predictors of EFL instructors' excitement, with FLTE

being a more reliable indicator. Additionally, TE and work satisfaction are positively correlated, indicating that teaching enjoyment raises overall job satisfaction (Liu et al., 2024). As Greenier et al. (2023) noted, TE is a significant predictor of creativity in teaching practices, highlighting its contagious nature in the classroom. It is also influenced by the school environment, metacognitive strategies, and students' social-behavioral involvement (Dewaele & Li, 2021). Last but not least, regulations that support positive classroom interactions and opportunities for professional growth may be influenced by the subjective experiences of EFL teachers about pleasure (Thumvichit, 2022).

More specifically, there has been little research on TE in Iran. In their study, Mirshojaee et al. (2019) identified nine factors that sustain teachers' enthusiasm: passion for learning, societal contribution, student assistance, relationship building, personal fulfillment, colleague collaboration, role modeling, adaptability, and the act of teaching English. Furthermore, Sheikhanui (2021) explored the link between Iranian EFL instructors' excitement for teaching and reflective practices and whether teachers' enthusiasm substantially predicts reflective practice. They discovered a strong positive relationship between Iranian EFL instructors' excitement and their degree of reflective practice. Enthusiastic instructors are more likely to participate in reflective practice, which may help them teach more effectively. Similarly, Fallah et al. (2024) highlighted that TE was favorably linked with foreign language pleasure and readiness to speak but negatively associated with boredom.

Psychological Health

Psychological health (PH) encompasses a multifaceted blend of emotional states and effective functioning in personal and social domains (Heydarnejad & Çakmak, 2024). It is crucial among EFL teachers as it is influenced by factors such as teacher self-efficacy and emotion regulation, which are significant predictors of teachers' psychological well-being. Job satisfaction and resilience are also important factors that can impact EFL teachers' PH (Han, 2022; Xiyun et al., 2022). The term PH is defined by Lazarus (2003) as the absence of stress, decreased motivation, and the risk of teacher burnout. As Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) noted, PH greatly influences how professionally balanced and successful language teachers are in their careers. Furthermore, present studies revealed a significant correlation between teachers' PH and the emotional elements of their working life (Greenier et al., 2023; Namaziandost et al., 2024).

Robust positive correlations between resilience and emotional regulation have shown their significance in forecasting the psychological health of EFL educators, as indicated by current research (Namaziandost et al., 2024; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024). Self-efficacy beliefs govern the relationship between PH, emotional regulation, and resilience in the context of Chinese English instructors (Guo & Jiang, 2023). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the PH of EFL teachers is improved by engaging in regular physical exercise, which increases their self-efficacy and mental well-being, thereby enhancing their overall competence. Various workplace factors, such as learners, colleagues, institutional authorities, rules, workload, and professional status, significantly impact the professional happiness of EFL teachers (Ebadijalal & Moradkhani, 2022). Furthermore, it has been emphasized that the emotional dimensions of the teaching profession are significant, as PH and the emotional regulation of Chinese EFL instructors contribute to mitigating work burnout (Ma & Liu, 2024).

The Present Study

Although the existing literature emphasizes the significance of PWB, TE, and PH concerning teachers' motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction, it mostly concentrates on overarching theoretical frameworks and general correlations rather than on targeted interventions to improve these dimensions. A significant deficiency exists in research investigating the effects of in-service

courses or professional development programs on these attributes. In-service courses, essential for professional advancement, may provide specific tactics and support that enhance teachers' emotional resilience, job satisfaction, and classroom efficacy. However, empirical research on the specific effects of such programs on teachers' psychological well-being, teaching efficacy, and professional health, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language instruction, is sparse. In Iran, particularly within public institutions, teachers often encounter considerable class numbers, overwhelming workloads, and insufficient professional support, which may significantly hinder their well-being and motivation. Consequently, examining the impact of in-service courses on teachers' well-being in Iran may provide significant insights into how professional development might mitigate these specific problems and enhance teachers' psychological health and job satisfaction. This study is distinctive due to its emphasis on the interplay of personal, institutional, and emotional elements within Iran's distinct educational and socio-cultural setting. The current research seeks to enhance theoretical advancements in teacher well-being and professional development by examining the interconnections of in-service training, psychological well-being, teacher efficacy, and professional happiness. This study's results may address this gap by providing evidence for the comprehensive function of professional development in enhancing overall teacher well-being. This approach underscores the need for systemic change in supporting educators, not only via the development of technical abilities but also by fostering their emotional intelligence, resilience, and professional engagement. This study will provide actionable suggestions for policymakers, educational leaders, and professional development providers about designing and implementing successful in-service training programs. These programs may be more effectively customized to address the particular requirements of EFL educators, particularly those operating in high-pressure settings like public schools in Iran. The project will uncover the main elements affecting teachers' well-being, excitement, and mental health, contributing to the worldwide discourse on teacher professional development and offering significant insights for educators and researchers across many educational settings.

3. METHOD

Participants and Research Context

This study recruited a cohort of 10 Iranian EFL teachers selected to incorporate diverse teaching experiences, professional backgrounds, and prior participation in in-service training courses. Participants were chosen by purposive sampling, a method designed to incorporate individuals possessing specified attributes pertinent to the study's emphasis on EFL teaching techniques. The sample exhibited gender diversity, including 30% male participants and 70% female individuals. The participants exhibited a diversity of academic credentials. They possessed various degrees, including BA, MA, and Ph.D. in English Literature and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). The deliberate variance in professional backgrounds and experiences meant that the study encompassed a wide range of viewpoints on the problems and practices of EFL teaching within the Iranian setting. These teachers were employed in various educational environments, including universities, private language institutions, and high schools, throughout some cities in Iran. This study's background is crucial due to the distinctive cultural, social, and educational obstacles encountered in English instruction in Iran, encompassing disparities in educational policy, regional variances, and the impact of worldwide English-language trends. The participants' perspectives offer significant insights into the practice of EFL instruction across various Iranian educational environments, illuminating the elements that affect both rookie and seasoned educators in this context. Table 1 delineates the comprehensive demographic data of the participants, encompassing their age, gender, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Profile

Demographics	No. (%)
Age	
20–25	8 (80%)
35–45	2 (20%)
Gender	
Male	3 (30%)
Female	7 (70%)
Academic Degree	
BA	4 (40%)
MA	4 (40%)
PhD	2 (20%)
Major	
TEFL	(80%)
English Literature	(20%)

Data Collection Procedures

For participant recruitment, the researchers sent 45 invitations to EFL instructors through prominent social media platforms (Telegram and Eita). The invitations explicitly targeted EFL instructors who had attended in-service training courses or workshops, as these experiences were fundamental to the study. The invitation emphasized that participation in the research interview was voluntary and that participants' responses would be kept confidential. Due to the invitation, 10 EFL instructors from Gonabad, Sabzevar, and Zabol consented to participate in the research. These teachers were selected based on their varied experiences with in-service training, assuring diverse insights into the impact of such professional development on their teaching practices and personal well-being. Before the interviews, participants were fully briefed on the study's objectives and interview procedure, and their consent was obtained to ensure confidentiality. In-service training plays a critical role in enhancing the professional development and psychological well-being of educators, particularly in the field of EFL. This research explored how participation in such training courses affects the participants' professional health, enthusiasm for teaching, and overall psychological health. The interview questions were designed in alignment with established theoretical frameworks in professional health, enthusiasm for teaching, and psychological health, ensuring the instrument's validity. To ensure rigor, L2 research specialists—including three university professors with expertise in Applied Linguistics—reviewed and validated the interview questions. Their feedback ensured the queries were relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the study's aims, thereby enhancing the instrument's content validity. The data collection process was carried out with meticulous attention to reliability. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and examined to ensure accuracy and consistency. Any discrepancies, such as typographical errors, were addressed during the review process. Additionally, the transcriptions underwent a cross-verification procedure by a panel of researchers to ensure inter-rater reliability and consistency in data interpretation. Following transcription, the interview data was analyzed using MAXQDA software, which allowed for a structured and systematic examination of the data. The software facilitated theme identification, pattern recognition, and the extraction of key insights. This methodical data analysis approach strengthened the research findings' reliability and dependability.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed thematic analysis to organize, classify, and interpret the data, adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step framework and MAXQDA software (v. 2020). Familiarization was the initial phase of the process, during which the researchers examined the data and transcribed the interviews to further their comprehension. As a result, they identified pertinent data segments and organized them into a preliminary codebook, thereby generating initial codes. Comparisons were conducted to identify patterns, and the codes were refined iteratively through ongoing analysis. Researchers identified and organized the codes into themes that encapsulated the primary patterns in the data after they were finalized. To guarantee that the themes were consistent with the dataset, they were consistently reviewed and refined. Ultimately, the themes were identified and allocated names, and a thematic map was developed to depict their connections. The iterative analysis process is exemplified by the specific data extracts that support the themes that are directly reflected in the findings. The analysis results were meticulously documented to guarantee transparency, and the identified themes were substantiated with examples from the data.

Findings

This investigation aimed to investigate the impact of in-service courses on the professional well-being, psychological health, and enthusiasm of Iranian EFL teachers. The thematic analysis of interviews conducted with Iranian EFL instructors regarding the impact of in-service classes on professional well-being, enthusiasm, and psychological health is summarized in the table below. The findings are categorized into three primary variables: Professional Well-Being, Psychological Health, and Teaching Enthusiasm. Each variable is further subdivided into specific themes, with the frequency of each theme's occurrence being recorded. The following comprehensive analysis delineates the numerous ways in which in-service courses affect instructors, including the development of new strategies, the cultivation of collegial relationships, and the improvement of job satisfaction and self-efficacy. The table presents the qualitative data in a clear and organized manner, facilitating comprehension of professional development's multifaceted effects on educators.

To explore the extent to which in-service courses impact the enthusiasm of EFL teachers, the thematic analysis of participant responses revealed several key themes that highlighted the various dimensions of teaching enthusiasm. Figure 1 gives an overview of extracted themes for teaching enthusiasm.

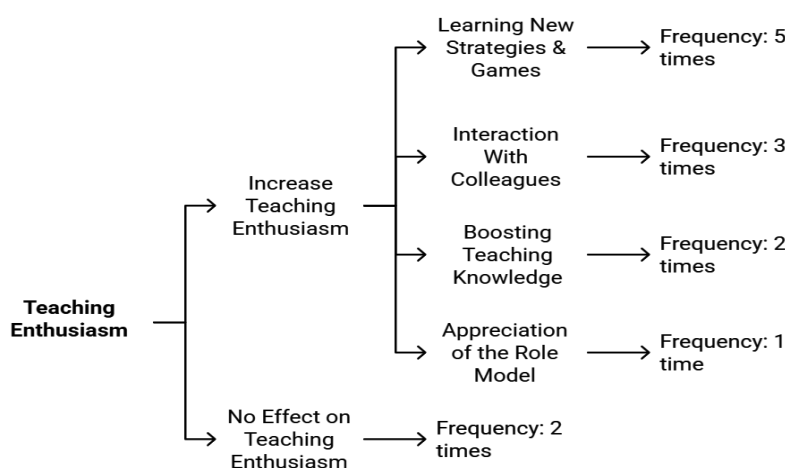


Figure 1: Teacher Enthusiasm Themes

Learning New Strategies & Games

A prominent theme that emerged was the positive impact of in-service courses on teachers' enthusiasm through the introduction of new teaching strategies and games. Neda noted, "These courses have helped me a lot by providing new strategies, and I believe games are a significant motivator for kids to learn a language." Similarly, Shirin emphasized the importance of interactive games, stating, "When you teach alongside games, it makes learning more engaging." This suggests that incorporating playful and dynamic teaching methods significantly enhances teachers' enthusiasm for their profession. Kaveh further echoed this sentiment, maintaining that the "current and updated" methods taught during training greatly improved his teaching experience. Notably, Shirin confirmed that these creative teaching methods "boost energy in the classroom," indicating a direct link between innovative pedagogical approaches and heightened enthusiasm.

Boosting Teaching Knowledge

Enhancing specialized pedagogical expertise via in-service training also emerged as a crucial theme. Kamran noted, "These training sessions can spark enthusiasm, provided the instructor is skilled." Neda added that she "gains a lot of knowledge about teaching methods and applies them," highlighting how increased knowledge directly contributes to enthusiasm in teaching. This suggests that when teachers perceive they are gaining relevant and practical skills, their motivation and enthusiasm for teaching can significantly increase.

Appreciation of Role Models

Another factor influencing teaching enthusiasm was the appreciation of role models within the education system. Farnaz shared that "[her] moment really boosted [her] enthusiasm" when she received approval from a teacher she admires, indicating that recognition and validation from respected figures can enhance a teacher's motivation. This underscores the importance of mentorship and role models in fostering enthusiasm among educators. The thematic analysis illustrates several themes for psychological health, as shown in Figure 2.

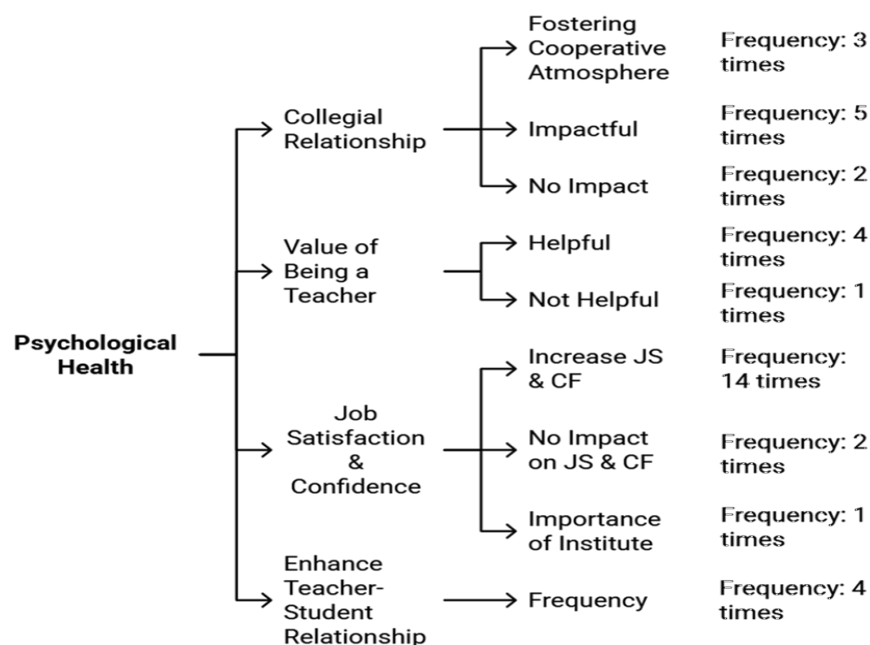


Figure 2 Psychological Health Themes

Collegial Relationships

Participants articulated the transformative effects of in-service courses on their collegial interactions. Many expressed that these courses fostered a cooperative atmosphere, leading to positive professional relationships. For instance, Roxana noted that the shift from competition to collaboration among teachers helped address educational challenges more effectively, highlighting that “it fostered a more cooperative atmosphere.” Similarly, Farnaz emphasized the profound impact of understanding colleagues’ situations, stating, “It allows us to understand each other’s situations and provide solutions, which is vital and has a positive impact.” However, not all participants felt the same way. Farideh remarked, “The joy of collaborating with colleagues was more experiential than related to the courses,” suggesting that while in-service courses provided valuable insights, the joy of collaboration stemmed more from daily interactions than structured learning.

Value of Being a Teacher

Another significant theme that emerged was recognizing the value of being a teacher. Setareh articulated a sense of reinvigoration through these courses, stating, “These courses help me recognize my value as a teacher, understanding the significant impact of teaching and striving to play an important role in shaping students’ futures.” This sentiment was echoed by Mostafa, who highlighted that the courses not only focused on teaching methods but also instilled a sense of immense responsibility in educators: “They emphasized the significant responsibility that comes with becoming a teacher.” On the contrary, Kaveh identified a limitation in this aspect, explaining, “the connection between the course instructor and us as teachers isn’t fully established,” thus inhibiting a deeper understanding of their professional roles.

Job Satisfaction and Confidence

The discussion also revealed a critical link between in-service courses and enhancing job satisfaction (JS) and confidence (CF). Numerous participants noted a marked increase in their confidence levels after attending the courses. For instance, Roxana mentioned, “I learned to overcome my fears... it helped me recall the material.” Moreover, Farnaz shared how obtaining her Teaching Training Certificates (TTC) significantly boosted her confidence, illustrating, “After getting my TTC, I felt more confident, and it showed that I was ahead compared to others.” Neda further supported this notion by stating, “Naturally, when a teacher becomes more enthusiastic and receives positive feedback, job satisfaction increases.” However, some participants like Mahsa felt disconnected from the impact of the courses, admitting, “In terms of job satisfaction, the courses didn’t relate to it for me,” suggesting that intrinsic motivations and job nature might play a more significant role.

Enhancing Teacher-Student Relationships

Lastly, feedback also revealed that in-service courses positively impacted teacher-student relationships. For instance, Amir expressed that “these methods have increased students’ enthusiasm and engagement, which has positively impacted my job satisfaction.” Kaveh echoed this sentiment, stating that the courses helped him build a strong rapport with his students. Farideh emphasized the necessity of a friendly rapport with students, especially when teaching teenagers, noting, “building a friendly rapport... was emphasized, especially with teenagers, who may resist if they feel pressured.” To address the research question, “To what extent do in-service courses impact the professional well-being of EFL teachers?” an analysis of participant responses identified three primary categories of impact: Sense of Recognition, Sense of Self-efficacy, and Job Satisfaction. The thematic analysis illustrates several themes for professional well-being, as shown in Figure 3.

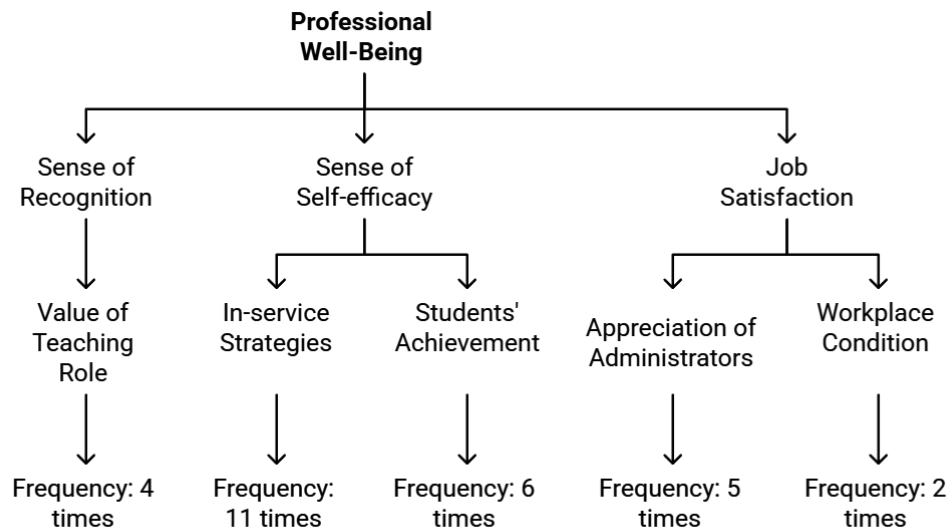


Figure 3 Professional Well-Being Themes

Sense of Recognition

Regarding Sense of Recognition, participants emphasized the value of their teaching roles and the recognition they receive from their institutions through in-service courses. Setareh strongly believed in the significance of a teacher's role, stating, "I understand the importance of a teacher's role in students' lives, helping them develop life skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities." Neda highlighted how institutional recognition, such as positive feedback from students and the provision of beneficial training programs, reinforces the sense of value teachers derive from their profession: "When an organization values its teachers by offering training, it underscores the importance of the teaching role."

Sense of Self-efficacy

Moving to Sense of Self-efficacy, teachers expressed how in-service training enhanced their confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. Mostafa noted, "The courses taught us how to be teachers and introduced us to helpful tools." At the same time, Roxana observed improvements in her planning and teaching structure, providing her with "a sense of efficacy." This confidence translated into better classroom management and student engagement; Amir shared: "When I use a variety of strategies learned from the in-service courses, it changes everything. Students participate more, and the class runs more smoothly." Additionally, participants recognized the importance of evaluating student progress rather than solely focusing on grades. Shirin mentioned, "They've been influential, helping me develop a comprehensive evaluation strategy that doesn't rely solely on final or midterm exams."

Job Satisfaction

In terms of Job Satisfaction, appreciation from administrators was a prevalent theme. Setareh reflected on receiving support from her principal after the courses, which boosted her confidence and engagement at work: "After attending these courses, I've received suggestions from the school principal to use new software for teaching English." Moreover, the supportive and flexible workplace conditions noted by participants, particularly Neda's observation that investment in teacher training enhances performance, fostered a collaborative and validating environment for teachers.

5. DISCUSSION

This qualitative study aimed to unmask the multifaceted impact of in-service courses on EFL teachers, focusing on three key areas: enthusiasm, professional well-being, and psychological health. The research specifically intended to assess the extent to which participation in in-service courses enhances the enthusiasm of EFL teachers for their profession, thereby fostering a more engaging and dynamic learning environment for their students. Additionally, the research seeks to evaluate how these courses contribute to EFL teachers' overall professional well-being and psychological health, including job satisfaction, career development, and a sense of community among peers. Before digging into the results, we realized that our positionality, as affected by our personal viewpoints, professional backgrounds, and educational experiences, may have impacted the data's interpretation. Our notion of teacher development and psychological health inspired the study, and we acknowledge that this viewpoint may have influenced our focus on certain issues. With this in mind, we aim to present the findings with transparency and context, recognizing the potential impact of our positionality on the research process.

Teacher Enthusiasm

One of the most notable themes emerging from the data is the beneficial influence of in-service courses on teacher enthusiasm, especially via the implementation of creative instructional tactics and interactive activities. Participants such as Neda and Shirin noted that adopting creative and participatory approaches not only made language learning more interesting for students but also renewed their own enthusiasm for teaching. This result is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of creativity and dynamic instructional techniques in maintaining teacher enthusiasm (Greenier et al., 2023; Mirshojaee et al., 2019). According to the findings, in-service training should concentrate on new teaching approaches that encourage both teacher and student participation, as this may help maintain excitement and enhance motivation. In a comparable vein, Neda's practical learning and its direct application to teaching emphasize how meaningful in-service courses can make a significant difference in nurturing teacher enthusiasm. This is in accordance with previous studies that associate enhanced teaching competence with greater enthusiasm and job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2024; Kunter et al., 2008). In-service courses should, therefore, strive to provide instructors with the necessary tools and methods to refine their skills, ensuring that these courses are both relevant and practically applicable. Furthermore, recognizing role models within the educational system emerged as another contributing component to teaching excitement. Farnaz's experience of gaining affirmation from a recognized mentor illustrates the value of mentoring and encouragement in developing teachers' motivation. This data supports the concept that mentoring plays a significant role in professional growth (Dewaele & Li, 2021). Educational institutions can implement mentoring programs inside their in-service training, enabling instructors to learn from more experienced colleagues, which may raise morale and promote professional progress.

Teachers' Psychological Health

The thematic analysis of participant responses uncovers several significant insights, including collegial relationships, the intrinsic value of teaching, job satisfaction and confidence, and the improvement of teacher-student relationships. Regarding collegial relationships, participants expressed the profound impact of in-service courses on their interactions with colleagues. A considerable number of participants stated that these courses cultivated a collaborative environment, resulting in beneficial professional connections; this aligns indirectly with the findings of Blair et al. (2023), which indicated that constructive relationships among teachers and between teachers and administrators were significantly linked to enhanced teacher well-being. Furthermore, the acknowledgment of the importance of the teaching profession was another

notable theme that surfaced in our findings. No discernible alignment or misalignment, whether explicit or implicit, was identified in this context across the literature.

The connection between in-service courses, job satisfaction, and confidence further highlighted their influence on PH. Participants such as Roxana and Farnaz reported increased confidence levels after completing the courses, attributing this growth to improved knowledge and skills. In the same vein, Neda realized that job satisfaction was enhanced by increased enthusiasm and positive feedback. These results indirectly confirm prior research suggesting that increased job satisfaction and self-efficacy are protective factors against stress and exhaustion (Guo & Jiang, 2023; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024), essential for enhancing PH. Lastly, the indirect yet substantial contribution of in-service courses to psychological health is reflected in their positive impact on teacher-student relationships. Amir and Kaveh underscored the importance of implementing new methodologies to enhance student engagement, which in turn reduced classroom-related tension and enhanced the emotional well-being of teachers. Farideh's emphasis on establishing a cordial rapport with students, particularly adolescents, indirectly underscores the significance of emotion regulation in preventing teacher fatigue (Ma & Liu, 2024).

Teachers' Professional Well-Being

An analysis of participant responses identified three primary areas of impact: Sense of recognition, sense of self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. In-service training enhanced teachers' perception of recognition, as participants voiced a revitalized appreciation of their worth within their organizations. Setareh underscored the pivotal role of teachers in developing students' life skills, while Neda emphasized the importance of institutional support, including feedback and access to training, in enhancing teachers' sense of worth. These results correspond with previous studies indicating that acknowledgment alleviates exhaustion and unhappiness (Lucena & Ojeda, 2024; Sadeghi & Pourbahram, 2024). School managers need to guarantee that in-service courses serve as both platforms for skill enhancement and means for instructors to experience recognition and esteem inside their institutions.

Moreover, in-service courses substantially influenced instructors' sense of self-efficacy. Participants such as Mostafa indicated the acquisition of practical tools, whilst Roxana saw enhancements in lesson preparation and organization. Amir's use of varied tactics enhanced student engagement, highlighting the correlation between skill growth and concrete classroom advantages. This finding corroborates other studies that recognize self-efficacy as a crucial factor influencing teacher well-being (Chamani et al., 2023; Fathi & Soleimani, 2025). For teachers, this implies that professional development courses should offer tangible, relevant practices that enhance self-confidence and classroom efficacy. Enhanced self-efficacy reduces weariness while promoting enduring passion and creativity in pedagogy.

Finally, job satisfaction surfaced as a notable consequence of in-service training. Setareh's experience with constructive comments from her principal and Neda's observation of a collaborative atmosphere exemplify how in-service courses promote excellent school climates. Such settings synchronize educators' personal ambitions with organizational objectives, resulting in heightened work satisfaction and less stress (Namaziandost et al., 2024; Nazari & Karimpour, 2024). For educational institutions, this implies that fostering a supportive, collaborative atmosphere via in-service training programs may enhance teachers' fulfillment in their positions, hence improving their overall well-being and happiness.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research elucidates the substantial influence of in-service courses on the enthusiasm, psychological health, and professional well-being of Iranian EFL teachers, highlighting the multifaceted benefits of professional development in the context of education. Several critical

themes emerged through a thematic analysis of participant responses, illustrating how these training programs catalyze positive change within educators' professional lives. The findings reveal a strong link between in-service courses and increased teaching enthusiasm. Participants reported that introducing innovative teaching strategies and interactive methods, including games, invigorated their approach to teaching, making learning more engaging for students. Moreover, the collaborative environment fostered through these courses allowed for meaningful interactions among colleagues, enhancing both personal and professional relationships, which further stimulated enthusiasm for teaching.

Secondly, the study emphasizes the positive effects of in-service training on teachers' psychological health. The establishment of collegial relationships and the reinforcement of the value of the teaching profession emerged as critical aspects that contributed to increased job satisfaction and overall psychological well-being. The ability to build rapport with students, cultivate a supportive classroom environment, and receive recognition from colleagues and administrators played pivotal roles in enhancing teachers' mental health and resilience. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of a teacher's sense of recognition and self-efficacy as determinants of their professional well-being. Participants expressed that acknowledging their roles as educators and the skills gained from professional development significantly bolstered their confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. The alignment of these results with existing literature underscores the importance of structured teacher support programs, which not only enhance pedagogical skills but also foster a sense of personal and professional fulfillment.

In conclusion, the insights gained from this study advocate for the continuous implementation of in-service courses as an essential component of professional development for EFL teachers in Iran. Educational institutions can cultivate a more motivated and resilient teaching workforce by prioritizing teacher training initiatives that promote enthusiasm, psychological health, and professional well-being. Policymakers must consider these findings when designing professional development frameworks, ensuring that they address the diverse needs of educators and ultimately contribute to improved educational outcomes for learners. The results of this study offer some important insights into the professional growth of EFL teachers in Iran and the education community as a whole. First, the research shows that in-service courses can boost teachers' enthusiasm, mental health, and professional well-being; this indicates that educational leaders should prioritize investing in ongoing professional development programs. By understanding how beneficial these courses can be, administrators and policymakers can create training that not only enhances teaching skills but also builds a supportive and collaborative atmosphere among educators.

Moreover, the study emphasizes how crucial strong relationships among colleagues are for keeping teachers motivated and satisfied. This suggests that professional development programs should include opportunities for teachers to collaborate, like peer mentoring and team workshops, to improve communication and teamwork. Teachers feeling part of a community can lead to more excitement about their work and a richer workplace experience. The study also points out the importance of recognizing and appreciating role models in education. This highlights the need for a culture that honors teachers' contributions. Schools should consider implementing feedback systems, mentorship programs, and ways to celebrate teaching achievements to help reinforce teachers' sense of value, competence, and professional identity. Finally, the insights from this research can help shape future studies that look at the long-term impact of in-service training on teachers' professional lives. By broadening research to include various educational settings or comparing experiences across different cultural backgrounds, we can better understand effective teaching practices worldwide.

While the study offers valuable insights, there are some limitations to keep in mind. First, it used a qualitative approach and included just 10 participants, which may not represent the broader population of teachers. The experiences shared by this small group of Iranian EFL teachers might not reflect what teachers elsewhere, especially those in different regions or teaching subjects, face. Additionally, the study depended on self-reported data, which can sometimes lead to biases. Participants might have felt inclined to give answers they believed were more socially acceptable rather than being completely open about their true feelings regarding in-service courses. While qualitative interviews are great for capturing personal perspectives, they can be subjective and may not give a complete picture of the impact of training. It is also worth noting that the focus was solely on Iranian EFL teachers, which may impact the findings' relevance to other teaching populations. The unique aspects of the Iranian education system and its cultural norms could shape the results, so applying them to different settings would require careful consideration of local factors. Lastly, because the study looks at experiences at a single point in time, it would be beneficial for future research to take a longer-term perspective. A longitudinal approach in future studies would be beneficial to monitor the progression of the benefits of in-service courses as educators persist in professional development activities. Investigating the evolution of teachers' psychological health, enthusiasm, and professional well-being over time could yield profound insights into the enduring effects of continuous training and how educators' needs and reactions may evolve as they gain more experience with in-service programs.

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Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Competing interests

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author declares that there are no competing interests.

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