

Affective Support and EFL Teacher Professional Identity: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy in an Iranian Context¹ Mohammad Amin Mokhtari² Rahman Sahragard*³ Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo⁴ Alireza Rasti

Research Paper

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Abstract: This mixed-methods study examined the relationships among affective support, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional identity (TPI) among Iranian EFL teachers, with particular attention to the mediating role of self-efficacy. In the quantitative phase, data were collected from 458 Iranian EFL teachers working in schools and language institutes across different regions of Iran using three instruments: an adapted Affective Support Scale, the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, and a Teacher Professional Identity questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, independent-samples t-tests, regression analysis, and mediation analysis with Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) with bootstrapping. In the qualitative phase, reflective written responses from 17 teachers were analyzed thematically to explore how affective support shapes teachers' self-efficacy and professional identity. The quantitative findings revealed strong positive relationships among affective support, self-efficacy, and TPI, with self-efficacy significantly predicting TPI and fully mediating the relationship between affective support and professional identity. The qualitative findings identified four interconnected themes: institutional affective support, emotional demands and workload, collegial support, and coping strategies and professional agency.

Keywords: Affective Support, Iranian EFL teacher, Teacher Professional Identity, Teacher Self-efficacy

Introduction

Humans are continually engaged in constructing and restructuring their identities as they pursue personal and professional aspirations. This ongoing process of identity formation significantly influences many aspects of life, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and the world around them. Identity serves as a guiding framework through which people set goals, define objectives, and chart paths toward achievement (Izadinia, 2013). It is vital to note that identity is not fixed or static; it is dynamic, fluid, and constantly evolving. As Beijaard et al. (2003) famously stated, "identity is not something one has, but something that develops throughout one's entire life" (p. 107). Therefore, identity development is a long-term process that unfolds through lived experiences, social interactions, and encounters with various contexts and challenges (Diasti, 2023). In this broader understanding of identity, a significant aspect is TPI, which includes their pedagogical beliefs, social roles, cultural values, and political views. This TPI is influenced by their interactions with institutional norms, curriculum requirements, and classroom realities, as well as by their relationships with learners,

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collaborators, and the wider educational group. Researchers contend that teachers' instructional practices, such as the choices they make, the methods they use, and the types of connections and interactions they have with learners, are closely tied to TPI (Beijaard et al., 2000; Diasti, 2021). Therefore, professional identity not only reflects teachers' actions but also plays a fundamental role in shaping their identity as educators and in how they fulfill their roles within educational environments.

The relationship between TPI and emotion is complex and works in both directions. For instance, negative emotions such as frustration or disillusionment can threaten a TPI by challenging their beliefs about their role, teaching methods, and effectiveness (Fried et al., 2015). Instead, positive feelings such as success, student engagement, or personal satisfaction can support the development of a new or changing TPI, strengthening a teacher's commitment to their career and goals (Hargreaves, 2005). These emotional experiences help shape both how teachers think and feel about their identity, giving a fuller picture of their role and place in education. Evolving expectations about a teacher's role can shape how teachers view and handle future emotional experiences. These expectations, shaped by policies, reforms, and societal changes, can encourage positive emotional engagement or cause anxiety and self-doubt. Teachers need to regularly adjust and rethink their TPI in response to both their own beliefs and outside pressures (Day, 2011). As Frenzel et al. (2009) and Fried et al. (2015) have noted, research on teacher emotions has come to be recognized as a key part of teacher development. Other studies on teacher development have mostly focused on rational factors such as knowledge, skills, and abilities, often ignoring emotions when seeking to improve teacher effectiveness and identity (Crawford, 2011; Day, 2011; Hargreaves, 2001). Some research highlights that emotions are central to how teachers build their TPI and approach teaching (Keller et al., 2018; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Emotions are not just personal feelings; they are shaped by social and cultural contexts (Schutz et al., 2006). Teachers' emotions come from both conscious and unconscious judgments about how well they meet goals or standards, and these feelings are strongly affected by their interactions with others in their environment. Teacher emotions are closely linked to the wider educational setting, where they both influence and are shaped by relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators. These emotional connections affect how teachers consider their own efficiency and role in the class, which in turn shapes their teaching and TPI (Farouk, 2012).

Self-efficacy is the belief in the skill to complete tasks successfully (Bandura, 1986; 1977). It is based on the idea of human agency in which people believe they can reach their goals through their own actions (Bandura, 2001; Mousapour Negari, 2023; Sheikhy Behdani, 2026). Teachers' self-efficacy is the belief that they can engage students, support their learning and motivation, and handle classroom challenges. This includes working with students who are disruptive, unmotivated, or disengaged (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to expect their students to succeed and believe they can make a difference, even when they face difficulties. Studies indicated that when teachers believe in their abilities, students are more engaged behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively (van Uden et al., 2014). Teachers with high self-efficacy demonstrate better classroom management, and their students exhibit higher motivation and better academic outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). High self-efficacy also benefits teachers by lowering job stress, increasing job satisfaction, and making them less likely to consider leaving their jobs (Troesch & Bauer, 2017; Wang et al., 2015). These teachers often feel more capable and confident, which helps them handle work challenges and feel more satisfied with their careers. As Bandura (1982) declared, self-efficacy beliefs come from several sources, including personal achievements, observing others, encouragement, and emotional or physical states. Emotions have a key role in this process. For instance, when teachers feel excited or satisfied after a successful lesson, their confidence in their abilities increases. Additionally, feeling anxious or stressed during a difficult lesson can make teachers feel less in control and lower their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). This shows that emotions do more than just accompany teaching; they shape how teachers see their own abilities in the classroom. Emotions provide teachers with feedback on their performance, either supporting or challenging their beliefs about how well they can teach (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985).

Affective support, characterized by emotional encouragement, empathy, and relational warmth, creates a psychologically safe environment that fosters teachers' belief in their ability to manage

instructional, relational, and classroom challenges. According to social cognitive theory, supportive interpersonal contexts enhance self-efficacy by providing teachers with positive emotional states, vicarious experiences, and constructive feedback (Bandura, 1997). These strengthened efficacy beliefs, in turn, influence how teachers interpret their professional roles, internalize professional norms, and construct a stable sense of who they are as educators. Furthermore, self-efficacy and emotions influence each other bidirectionally. When people believe in their abilities, they often feel more confident and optimistic when facing challenges (Pajares, 1996). For instance, teachers who feel able to manage a diverse classroom are more likely to feel pride and satisfaction, which strengthens their sense of competence. On the other hand, teachers with low self-efficacy may feel frustrated, anxious, or doubtful, as they are more likely to feel overwhelmed by classroom challenges (Frenzel, 2018). This cycle illustrates how self-efficacy and emotions interact to shape teachers' experiences. Based on the Affective Events Theory (AET) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), specific work events, such as student engagement, peer feedback, or successful teaching experiences, lead to emotions that accumulate over time and influence job attitudes and behaviors. AET explains that these emotional experiences shape how teachers view their jobs and respond emotionally at work. Positive classroom experiences, such as success or positive feedback, can boost a teacher's job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and commitment to teaching. Alternatively, negative experiences, such as classroom management problems or low student engagement, can lead to job dissatisfaction and reduced self-efficacy (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Many studies show that positive feelings at work are connected with higher job satisfaction in both teaching and non-teaching roles (Brackett et al., 2010; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Thoresen et al., 2003). Teachers who feel good about their work have higher satisfaction and are less likely to experience burnout (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In contrast, teachers who often feel frustrated or stressed are more likely to feel disconnected from their students and work, which lowers job satisfaction and raises the risk of burnout (Hargreaves, 2005). These results emphasize the importance of encouraging positive feelings in the class to support teacher well-being and effectiveness.

In recent years, attention has increasingly turned to the emotional dimensions of teaching and their impact on teachers' professional development. In language education contexts, teachers regularly face emotionally demanding situations, including institutional expectations, classroom management challenges, and the need to maintain positive relationships with students and colleagues. These experiences can significantly shape teachers' self-perceptions as professionals. TPI reflects how teachers perceive their roles, competencies, and professional commitments, and is shaped not only by pedagogical knowledge and experience but also by the emotional and social environments in which teachers work. Affective support, manifested through encouragement, empathy, and recognition from institutions and colleagues, can therefore play a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional identity and sustaining their engagement in the profession. It should be noted that, in the present study, affective support is conceptualized as the emotional resources and supportive interactions available to Iranian EFL teachers that may contribute directly and indirectly, through teacher self-efficacy, to the development of their professional identity (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Although there is increasing acknowledgment of the role of emotional and contextual factors in teacher development, how affective support influences the formation of professional identity remains not fully understood. Previous research often considers teacher identity, self-efficacy, or organizational support as separate elements, usually emphasizing direct links between environmental factors and professional outcomes.

In the Iranian EFL context, teachers work within a sociocultural and institutional environment that places considerable demands on their pedagogical performance, emotional regulation, and professional commitment. Large class sizes, exam-oriented curricula, limited instructional autonomy, and the central role of institutional expectations may all shape how teachers perceive support in their workplaces and how they construct their professional identities. For this reason, affective support may be especially consequential for Iranian EFL teachers, as it can buffer work-related stress, strengthen self-efficacy, and foster a more resilient sense of professional identity. Nonetheless, few studies have examined how emotional support in educational settings translates into a stronger professional identity through psychological processes. Specifically, the mediating role of teachers' self-beliefs in linking

contextual support to identity formation has been underexplored, particularly in EFL contexts and in underrepresented settings such as Iran. This gap in integrated research limits our understanding of how emotional and cognitive aspects of teaching interact to shape teachers' professional identities. From a social cognitive perspective, self-efficacy is a vital psychological mechanism that explains how environmental factors shape teachers' professional growth. When teachers feel more emotionally and institutionally supported, they tend to develop greater confidence in their teaching skills, classroom management, and student engagement. These enhanced beliefs can reinforce their sense of competence, dedication, and identity as educators. Viewing self-efficacy as a mediator offers a valuable way to understand how affective support indirectly impacts TPI. This mediational process is especially relevant in EFL settings, where teachers often face emotionally challenging environments and depend heavily on institutional backing and personal confidence to stay committed to their profession.

Review of Literature

Recently, TPI has appeared as a critical concept for understanding teachers' professional lives, instructional practices, and career sustainability. TPI refers to how teachers consider themselves as experts, how they perform their roles, and how they navigate their positions within various social, institutional, and cultural contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004). Studies have consistently reflected that TPI is dynamic, context-sensitive, and continually shaped by experience and interaction (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In the context of second and foreign language education, professional identity significantly influences teachers' pedagogical choices, their involvement in professional development, and their emotional commitment to teaching (Gu & Benson, 2014; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Interest in TPI has been increasing, and concurrently, teacher self-efficacy has been extensively studied as an important psychological resource that affects teachers' motivation, persistence, and instructional effectiveness. Based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, teacher self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs teachers hold about their ability to effectively execute teaching tasks and influence learners' learning outcomes. Research has shown that teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to be more resilient, innovative, and dedicated to their profession (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Recent investigations suggest that self-efficacy is not solely an individual characteristic but is also influenced by social, emotional, and contextual factors within the educational environment (Han & Wang, 2021; Klassen et al., 2023).

Building on AET and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this research sees affective support as an important workplace event that influences teachers' emotional and cognitive states. AET explains that ongoing positive interpersonal interactions at work, such as encouragement, respect, and emotional support, create positive emotional responses that accumulate over time and shape attitudes and self-view related to work. Meanwhile, SCT suggests that teachers' beliefs about their abilities are not fixed; they are continually shaped by feedback from the environment, social encouragement, success experiences, and emotions. In this context, affective support can boost teachers' self-efficacy by providing emotional reassurance and social approval, which, in turn, enhances their confidence in professional tasks. Since self-efficacy influences how teachers interpret challenges, manage their behavior, and stay committed, it plays a vital role in developing their professional identity. Therefore, affective support directly and indirectly impacts teacher identity through self-efficacy, which serves as a bridge between emotional workplace experiences and identity development.

Recent research indicates a notable mutual relationship between TPI and their self-efficacy. Educators with a clear and positive TPI are more likely to express stronger self-efficacy beliefs, whereas elevated self-efficacy enhances teachers' competence and professional value (Canrinus et al., 2012; Hanna et al., 2020). In the context of language education, research has revealed that how teachers construct their identities is closely associated with their perceived instructional abilities and confidence in handling classroom challenges (Trent, 2019; Yazan, 2018b). This connection is especially prominent in EFL settings, where teachers frequently encounter additional linguistic, cultural, and institutional challenges that can affect both their identity and efficacy beliefs. In the context of Iranian language teaching, research evidence indicates a strong relationship between TPI and self-efficacy. Moslemi and Habibi (2019) found that the TPI of Iranian EFL teachers was a substantial indicator of their self-

efficacy beliefs, suggesting that identity serves as a fundamental framework through which educators assess their professional abilities. Likewise, Babaei and Abednia (2016) found that engaging in reflective teaching practices helped enhance both TPI and self-efficacy among Iranian language instructors.

In educational research, affective support has gained recognition as an increasingly significant concept, alongside identity and efficacy. Affective support encompasses the emotional, relational, and psychological support that teachers receive from their professional setting, including assistance from students, colleagues, administrators, and institutional frameworks (Miller & Gkonou, 2018). Research indicates that such support can improve teachers' emotional health, alleviate burnout, and promote a sense of connection within their professional communities (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Yin et al., 2022). Recent research highlights the importance of affective support, especially in high-emotion professions like teaching, where emotional labor is a fundamental aspect of everyday work (Benesch, 2017; Derakhshan et al., 2022). Research demonstrates that affective support is vital in influencing TPI. Teachers in emotionally nurturing environments tend to develop favorable self-perceptions of their profession and maintain their dedication to their roles (Day & Qing, 2009). In language education context, affective support has been associated with educators' readiness to adopt innovative teaching methods, collaborate with peers, and exhibit strong affective commitment to their students' learning (Gkonou & Miller, 2019). Studies conducted in Iran support these conclusions, indicating that supportive institutional atmospheres enhance teachers' job satisfaction, emotional management, and professional development (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Eslamdoost et al., 2020).

Recent research increasingly identifies self-efficacy as a key factor mediating the impact of affective support on professional outcomes. Teachers who receive emotional encouragement and validation are more likely to cultivate stronger beliefs in their efficacy, thereby enhancing TPI and teaching effectiveness (Shan, 2022). In a study conducted in Iran, Mossafaie et al. (2024) found that self-efficacy significantly mediated the relationship between psychological well-being and professional success among EFL teachers, highlighting the vital importance of efficacy beliefs in translating emotional resources into professional competence. Nevertheless, despite these developments, empirical studies directly investigating the facilitative effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between affective support and TPI remain scarce, especially in Iranian EFL contexts.

Despite increasing interest in TPI, self-efficacy, and the emotional aspects of teaching, empirical research that integrates these constructs remains scarce, especially in the context of Iranian EFL. Previous studies have typically investigated these variables individually, underscoring the need for research that integrates descriptive, comparative, and qualitative approaches grounded in teachers' personal experiences. To fill this gap, the present study aimed to investigate levels of affective support, self-efficacy, and TPI among Iranian EFL teachers, analyze potential differences by demographic factors, and examine how teachers perceive the influence of affective support on their professional lives. By doing this, the study intended to enhance pedagogical practices, teacher education programs, and institutional support systems by demonstrating how emotionally supportive environments can promote teachers' confidence and professional development. To meet these objectives, the subsequent research questions have been formulated:

Research Question One: What are the levels of affective support, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional identity among Iranian EFL teachers?

Research Question Two: What are the relationships among affective support, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional identity in the Iranian EFL context?

Research Question Three: Does teacher self-efficacy mediate the relationship between affective support and teacher professional identity among Iranian EFL teachers?

Research Question Four: How do Iranian EFL teachers perceive the role of affective support in shaping their self-efficacy and professional identity?

Methodology

Research Design

This research employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to thoroughly investigate affective support, self-efficacy, and TPI among Iranian EFL teachers. The quantitative phase aimed to measure teachers' levels and relationships among affective support, self-efficacy, and TPI, and to examine potential differences across selected demographic variables. The qualitative phase complemented the survey data by exploring teachers' perceptions of how affective support contributes to their professional experiences and the construction of their identities. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the depth and validity of the findings and responded to calls for context-sensitive research in teacher education (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Participants

The participants, selected through convenience sampling, were Iranian EFL teachers working in public and private schools and language institutes across various regions of Iran. In the quantitative phase of the research, 458 male and female teachers participated. They came from various demographic backgrounds, including differences in gender, years of teaching experience, and levels of education. Their teaching experience ranged from under 5 years to over 15 years, and they held bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees in English-related disciplines, including TEFL, English literature, and translation studies. In the qualitative phase, 17 teachers were randomly selected to provide detailed written responses to open-ended questions. These participants were intentionally selected to ensure diversity in teaching experience and institutional backgrounds, thereby enhancing the credibility and depth of the qualitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Instruments

Affective Support Scale

The Affective Support Scale in this study was adapted from Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Perceived Organizational Support (POS) scale. It was tailored to the educational setting to assess teachers' perceptions of emotional and affective support from their schools, colleagues, and the wider organization. Comprising eight items, the scale uses a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater perceived affective support. Previous research has continuously demonstrated strong psychometric properties for the POS scale across various organizational settings (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In this study, the reliability and validity of the adapted scale were evaluated. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated high reliability ($\alpha = .89$). Furthermore, the composite reliability ($\alpha = .89$) exceeded the recommended minimum of .70, providing additional evidence of the scale's dependability.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES)

Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). The instrument assesses teachers' beliefs in their capability to influence student learning and effectively manage various aspects of classroom practice. Grounded in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, the scale operationalizes self-efficacy in the educational context by capturing teachers' confidence in their ability to engage students, implement effective instructional strategies, and manage classroom behavior. The short form of the TSES consisted of 12 items rated on a nine-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (nothing) to 9 (a great deal). The scale measures three dimensions of teacher self-efficacy including efficacy for student engagement,

efficacy for instructional strategies, and efficacy for classroom management. Higher scores indicate stronger beliefs in one's teaching capabilities. Previous research has reported strong psychometric properties for the TSES across diverse educational contexts (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In the present study, the instrument's reliability and validity were assessed. Internal consistency reliability analysis showed high reliability for the overall scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$).

Teacher Professional Identity Scale

TPI was evaluated using the questionnaire developed by Beijaard et al. (2000). According to their framework, TPI reflects teachers' self-perceptions and beliefs about their professional roles and responsibilities within education. The tool aims to measure how teachers view their professional functioning across various aspects of teaching. It includes 14 items that assess three main dimensions of TPI: subject-matter expertise (4 items), pedagogical expertise (6 items), and didactical/pragmatic expertise (4 items). The subject-matter dimension gauges the extent to which teachers rely on their disciplinary knowledge and subject-specific skills in their teaching. Pedagogical expertise evaluates teachers' confidence in planning, organizing, executing, and assessing teaching and learning activities. Didactical or pragmatic expertise centers on teachers' ability to support students' overall development, including social, emotional, and moral growth. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of professional identity. Previous studies have reported acceptable psychometric properties for this instrument in various educational contexts (Beijaard et al., 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004). In the present study, the reliability and validity of the scale were examined to ensure its appropriateness for the research context. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results indicated satisfactory reliability for the overall scale ($\alpha = .90$). The subscales also demonstrated acceptable reliability: subject-matter expertise ($\alpha = .84$), pedagogical expertise ($\alpha = .88$), and pragmatic expertise ($\alpha = .81$). In addition, composite reliability values for the constructs ranged from .86 to .91, exceeding the recommended threshold of .70.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected over 3 months through an online survey platform. Following ethical approval, the questionnaires were distributed electronically to Iranian EFL teachers via email. Prior to participation, respondents were informed of the study's purpose and assured that participation was voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained before participants answered the questionnaires.

Qualitative data were gathered through reflective journal writing to capture in-depth accounts of teachers' emotional and professional experiences over time. Participants were encouraged to write brief reflective entries in response to a series of guiding prompts that focused on their experiences of emotional support, teaching-related emotional responses, perceived shifts in self-efficacy, and the evolution of their professional identity. Journal writing was chosen as a data-collection method because it allows participants to document their experiences in a reflective, less restrictive way, facilitating deeper expression of thoughts, feelings, and the processes of meaning-making that might not surface in more structured survey responses.

The journal prompts were developed in accordance with the research's theoretical framework, drawing on Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), and prior research on teacher emotions and professional identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Gkonou & Miller, 2019). Participants were asked to record their reflections over a 2-month period, focusing on emotionally significant teaching experiences, sources of affective support within their professional environment, and the perceived influence of these experiences on their confidence and sense of professional self. Participants were asked to write reflective journal entries weekly throughout the data collection period. Each participant was required to submit one entry per week with a minimum length of approximately 200–300 words to ensure sufficient reflection on their experiences. The reflections were written in English, which was the participants' medium of academic and professional

communication. To facilitate accessibility and consistency, all entries were submitted electronically through an online platform rather than handwritten. This procedure enabled the researchers to systematically collect participants' ongoing reflections while allowing teachers to document their experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses related to their professional practice over time.

To ensure content validity and contextual relevance, experts in applied linguistics and teacher education reviewed the journal prompts. The reviewers assessed the prompts for clarity, relevance, and their alignment with the research goals and the EFL context in Iran. Following their suggestions, marginal modifications were made to enhance clarity and cultural appropriateness. The updated prompts were then tested with a small group of Iranian EFL teachers who were not part of the main study to ensure they were understandable and practical before full implementation.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. Prior to testing the research hypotheses, preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the data's distributional properties and ensure that the assumptions of parametric statistical analyses were met. The normality of the variables was assessed using skewness and kurtosis indices. Following the commonly accepted criteria, skewness and kurtosis values within ± 2 was considered indicative of an approximately normal distribution. The results showed that all study variables met the assumption of normality, allowing the use of parametric statistical techniques.

Next, descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated for all variables to summarize participants' responses. Then, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationships between affective support, teacher self-efficacy, and TPI. Moreover, to explore the predictive relationships among the variables, regression analyses were run. Initially, simple linear regressions were conducted to assess whether affective support significantly predicted TPI and teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, regression analysis was used to assess whether teacher self-efficacy could predict TPI.

To test the hypothesized mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between affective support and TPI, a regression-based mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4). A bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval was employed to estimate the indirect effect. Bootstrapping was used for mediation analysis because it does not rely on the assumption of normality in the sampling distribution of the indirect effect. The mediating effect was considered statistically significant if the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero.

The qualitative data obtained from teachers' reflective journal writing were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis began with repeated readings of journal entries to become familiar with the data and gain an overall understanding of participants' experiences. Initial codes were generated inductively, with particular attention to emotional experiences in teaching, perceived sources of affective support, and participants' reflections on how such experiences influenced their self-efficacy and professional identity.

The generated codes were later categorized into broader themes that reflected common patterns of meaning across the participants' narratives. These themes were assessed, improved, and clearly articulated to ensure both internal consistency and clear conceptual differentiation. To strengthen the credibility of the qualitative findings, analytic choices were meticulously documented, and peer review was used to develop and refine these themes. Ultimately, the qualitative findings were employed to provide deeper interpretation and insight into the quantitative results, thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how affective support influences Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy and professional identity.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed to indicate the levels of affective support, self-efficacy, and professional identity among Iranian EFL teachers. Means and standard deviations for each variable are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Affective Support, Self-Efficacy, and Professional Identity

	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Self-efficacy	2.9913	.05117	1.09501
Affective support	3.0175	.05398	1.15520
TPI	3.1659	.05457	1.16794

The descriptive statistics table indicates that the mean self-efficacy score was 2.99 (SD = 1.10, SE = 0.05), suggesting that teachers generally perceived themselves as having a moderate level of self-efficacy. Similarly, the mean efficacy score was 3.02 (SD = 1.16, SE = 0.05), indicating a slightly higher yet still moderate level of perceived efficacy among participants. The relatively small standard error indicates that the mean is a reliable estimate of the population value. Among the three variables, TPI had the highest mean score (M = 3.17, SD = 1.17, SE = 0.05), indicating that teachers tended to perceive their professional identity more positively than their self-efficacy or efficacy.

Assessment of Normality

Before the main analysis, the normality of the variables was checked using skewness and kurtosis indices. According to standard criteria, values within ± 2 are typically considered indicative of an approximately normal distribution. Based on this, the distributions of self-efficacy, affective support, identity, and enthusiasm were evaluated.

Table 2

Skewness and Kurtosis Values for the Assessment of Normality

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Interpretation
Self-efficacy	-0.073	-0.568	Approximately normal
Affective support	0.000	-0.738	Approximately normal
Identity	0.063	-0.863	Approximately normal
Enthusiasm	-0.037	-0.895	Approximately normal

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the skewness values ranged from -0.073 to 0.063 and the kurtosis values ranged from .895 to -0.568. All these values fell within the acceptable ± 2 range. Accordingly, the distributions of all study variables were judged to be approximately normal. This

finding supports the assumption of normality and justifies the use of parametric statistical procedures in the subsequent stages of data analysis.

Correlational Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships among affective support, self-efficacy, and professional identity.

Table 3

Correlations Among Affective Support, Self-Efficacy, and TPI

		self-efficacy	affective support	TPI
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.875**	.857**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	547.965	506.070	500.664
	Covariance	1.199	1.107	1.096
	N	458	458	458
Affective support	Pearson Correlation	.875**	1	.758**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	506.070	609.860	467.672
	Covariance	1.107	1.334	1.023
	N	458	458	458
TPI	Pearson Correlation	.857**	.758**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	500.664	467.672	623.389
	Covariance	1.096	1.023	1.364
	N	458	458	458

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

According to the above table, there was a very strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy and affective support ($r = .875$, $p < .001$). This indicates that higher levels of affective support are strongly associated with higher levels of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was also strongly and positively correlated with TPI ($r = .857$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to report to a stronger professional TPI.

Additionally, a strong positive correlation was found between affective support and identity ($r = .758$, $p < .001$), indicating that greater affective support is associated with a stronger sense of

professional identity. All correlations were significant at the .01 level (two-tailed), confirming that these relationships are unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Predicting Teacher Self-Efficacy from Affective Support and Identity

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether affective support significantly predicted teacher self-efficacy and TPI. The regression model was statistically significant, $f(2,455) = 1327.915$, $p < .001$, indicating that the predictor reliably explained variance in teacher self-efficacy and TPI.

Table 4

Model Summary for Predicting Teacher Self-Efficacy from Affective Support and Identity

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.924a	.854	.853	.41970

a. Predictors: (Constant), identity, affectivesupport

Table 5

ANOVA Results for the Regression Model of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	467.818	2	233.909	1327.915	.000b
	Residual	80.147	455	.176		
	Total	547.965	457			

a. Dependent Variable: self-efficacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), identity, affective support

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.125	.059		2.114	.035
	affectivesupport	.504	.026	.531	19.315	.000
	identity	.425	.026	.454	16.486	.000

a. Dependent Variable: selfefficacy

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether TPI and affective support predicted teacher self-efficacy. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 455) = 1327.915$, $p < .001$. The model showed a strong relationship between the predictors and the outcome variable (Multiple $R = .924$), explaining a substantial proportion of variance in teacher self-efficacy ($R^2 = .854$, Adjusted $R^2 = .853$).

The results indicated that both predictors significantly contributed to the model. Affective support significantly predicted teacher self-efficacy ($B = .504$, $SE = .026$, $\beta = .531$, $t = 19.315$, $p < .001$). Similarly, TPI was also a significant positive predictor of self-efficacy ($B = .425$, $SE = .026$, $\beta = .454$, $t = 16.486$, $p < .001$). Comparison of standardized coefficients revealed that affective support had a slightly stronger predictive effect on teacher self-efficacy than identity. Overall, the findings suggest that both affective support and professional identity play important roles in explaining variations in teacher self-efficacy.

Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Professional Identity from Teacher Self-Efficacy

A regression analysis was performed to determine if teacher self-efficacy significantly predicts teacher professional identity.

Table 7

Variables Entered/Removed in the Regression Model Predicting Teacher Professional Identity from Teacher Self-Efficacy

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Self-efficacy ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: identity

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 8

Model Summary for the Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Professional Identity from Teacher Self-Efficacy

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.857 ^a	.734	.733	.60325

a. Predictors: (Constant), self-efficacy

Table 9

ANOVA Results for the Regression Model Predicting Teacher Professional Identity from Teacher Self-Efficacy

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	457.446	1	457.446	1257.029	.000 ^b
	Residual	165.943	456	.364		
	Total	623.389	457			

a. Dependent Variable: identity

b. Predictors: (Constant), self efficacy

Table 10

Regression Coefficients for Predicting Teacher Professional Identity from Teacher Self-Efficacy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
1	(Constant)	.433	.082		5.274	.000
	selfefficacy	.914	.026	.857	35.455	.000

a. Dependent Variable: identity

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether teacher self-efficacy significantly predicted TPI. The analysis revealed that the model was statistically significant.

$F(1, 456) = 1257.03, p < .001$. The model accounted for 73.4% of the variance in TPI ($R^2 = .734$, Adjusted $R^2 = .733$), indicating a strong explanatory power. Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy significantly and positively predicted TPI ($B = 0.914, SE = 0.026, \beta = .857, t = 35.46, p < .001$). This suggests that higher levels of teacher self-efficacy were associated with higher levels of professional identity. Therefore, teacher self-efficacy can be considered a strong predictor of TPI in this sample.

The Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy

A mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) to examine whether teacher self-efficacy mediated the relationship between affective support and TPI. A bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval was used to test the indirect effect.

Table 11

Mediation Analysis of Teacher Self-Efficacy in the Relationship Between Affective Support and Teacher Professional Identity

Effect	B	SE	t	P	95% CL
Total effect (X → Y)	.7668	.0309	24.8536	<.001	[.7062, .8375]
Direct effect (X → Y)	.0371	.0506	.7339	.4634	[-.623, .1365]
Indirect effect (X → M → Y)	.7297	.0374	-	-	[.6572, .8030]
Completely standardized indirect effect	.7218	.0315	-	-	[.6606, .7843]

The total effect of affective support on TPI was significant, $B = .7669, SE = .0309, t = 24.8536, p < .001, 95\% CI [.7062, .8275]$. However, the direct effect of affective support on TPI was not significant, $B = .0371, SE = .0506, t = 0.7339, p = .4634, 95\% CI [-.0623, .1365]$. The indirect effect of affective support on TPI through teacher self-efficacy was significant, $B = .7297, BootSE = .0374, 95\% Boot CI [.6572, .8030]$. Because the bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero, the mediation effect was statistically significant. The completely standardized indirect effect was also significant, $B = .7218, BootSE = .0315, 95\% Boot CI [.6606, .7843]$.

These findings indicate that teacher self-efficacy fully mediates the relationship between affective support and TPI. These findings indicate that teacher self-efficacy fully mediates the relationship between affective support and TPI, suggesting that affective support influences TPI primarily through its effect on self-efficacy. Furthermore, the findings of the mediation analysis provide strong evidence for the pivotal role of teacher self-efficacy in explaining how affective support contributes to the development of TPI. Although affective support initially demonstrated a strong and significant total effect on professional identity, this relationship became non-significant after teacher self-efficacy was introduced into the model. This pattern of results indicates that the relationship between affective support and TPI is not direct; rather, it operates through teachers' beliefs in their own capabilities.

It can be stated that the results suggest that affective support—such as encouragement, empathy, and emotional backing from the educational environment—enhances teachers' perceptions of their competence and effectiveness. When teachers experience higher levels of affective support, they are more likely to develop stronger self-efficacy beliefs regarding their instructional abilities, classroom management, and professional responsibilities. These strengthened efficacy beliefs, in turn, play a crucial role in shaping how teachers perceive themselves as professionals and how strongly they internalize their professional identity.

The magnitude of the indirect effect further highlights the centrality of self-efficacy in this process. The bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero, confirming that teacher self-efficacy significantly transmits the influence of affective support to professional identity. In contrast, the non-significant direct effect indicates that affective support alone does not independently predict professional identity once teachers' efficacy beliefs are taken into account. This pattern is consistent with the concept of full mediation, suggesting that self-efficacy functions as the primary psychological mechanism through which affective support contributes to identity development.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align closely with Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits that self-efficacy beliefs play a central role in shaping individuals' motivation, behavior, and self-perception. Within the context of teaching, affective support may serve as an important environmental source that nurtures teachers' confidence in their abilities. As teachers develop stronger efficacy beliefs, they are more likely to internalize their role as competent educators, thereby strengthening their professional identity.

Qualitative Results

Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Affective Support in Shaping Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity

The qualitative phase of the study aimed to address the third research question by examining how Iranian EFL teachers perceive the role of affective support in shaping their self-efficacy and professional identity. The analysis of open-ended responses, conducted through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, revealed that teachers consistently viewed affective support as a central contextual factor influencing their emotional experiences, professional confidence, and TPI construction.

Table 12

Summary of Themes Emerging from the Qualitative Analysis of Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Affective Support

Theme	Description	Relation to Self-Efficacy	Relation to Professional Identity
Institutional affective support	Administrative understanding, responsiveness, and emotional recognition of teachers' challenges	Enhance confidence and perceived instructional competence	Strengthens commitment and professional value
Emotional demands and workload	Workload pressure, stress, and emotional exhaustion associated with teaching responsibilities	Reduces efficacy when emotional support is limited	Creates identity tension under sustained stress
Collegial support	Peer interaction, emotional sharing, and collaborative problem-solving	Supports emotional regulation and confidence	Reinforces professional belonging
Coping strategies and professional agency	Individual strategies for managing stress and professional growth	Encourages adaptive efficacy beliefs	Promotes stable and positive professional identity

The qualitative analysis identified four interconnected themes concerning Iranian EFL teachers' views on affective support. Institutional affective support, emotional demands and workload, collegial support, and coping strategies and professional agency. These themes illustrate how emotional and relational conditions in the teaching environment shape teachers' self-efficacy and professional identity.

The initial theme, institutional affective support, reflected participants' views on the emotional and professional functions of school leadership. Teachers saw supportive administrators as those who recognized their efforts, understood their challenges, and offered constructive feedback that validated their professional worth. In this context, institutional support was perceived not just as formal oversight but as a meaningful emotional form of acknowledgment. One participant expressed this feeling clearly:

“When administrators appreciate our work and understand the pressure we face, I feel respected and more confident in my teaching.”

It indicates that emotional recognition from leadership serves as a form of professional validation. When teachers feel that their efforts are recognized and appreciated, their confidence increases because they see challenges as solvable rather than signs of failure. The importance of leadership adaptability was also emphasized:

“If the school leadership is flexible and supportive during busy times, it helps me stay motivated and focused on my students.”

This suggests that emotional support helps lessen the emotional strain caused by institutional demands and fosters conditions for ongoing professional involvement. Conversely, a lack of support can leave teachers feeling isolated and less confident, potentially undermining their self-efficacy and professional identity.

The second theme addressed the emotional challenges and workload pressures of teaching English. Participants highlighted that teaching in their setting demands ongoing emotional regulation, considerable energy, and juggling various professional duties. They also noted that heavy workloads and institutional expectations are major sources of stress. As one participant explained:

“The workload is exhausting, and sometimes I feel emotionally drained before I even finish the day.”

This response shows how increasing workload can lead to emotional exhaustion, potentially lowering teachers' motivation and confidence. Another participant noted:

“There are too many responsibilities, and when the pressure builds up, I start doubting whether I am doing enough.”

These comments indicate that ongoing stress not only leads to fatigue but also causes self-doubt and diminishes teachers' confidence in their professional abilities. Qualitatively, emotional demands seem to exert contextual pressure that threatens the stability of their professional identity, particularly when teachers lack adequate external support.

The third theme, collegial support, underscored the importance of supportive relationships among peers. Participants described colleagues as a major source of emotional encouragement, practical advice, and a sense of professional belonging. Collegial interactions were often described as a safe space where teachers could share concerns, exchange strategies, and normalize the challenges of teaching. One participant noted:

“Talking to my colleagues makes me feel less alone, because they understand the same struggles.”

This quote indicates that support among colleagues lessens emotional loneliness and fosters a sense of belonging within a professional community. Another teacher elaborated:

“We support each other by sharing ideas and encouraging one another when teaching becomes difficult.”

Collegial support here extends beyond emotional encouragement, encompassing practical and collaborative aspects. These relationships seem to bolster teachers' sense of identity by emphasizing their membership in a collective of professionals sharing common challenges. Consequently, collegial support serves as both an emotional safeguard and a way to maintain commitment.

The final theme focused on coping strategies and professional agency. Despite facing emotional and institutional pressures, many participants described actively creating methods to handle stress and stay effective in their roles. These methods involved reflective thinking, seeking support, adjusting instructional techniques, and viewing challenges as opportunities for growth. One participant remarked:

“When I face problems, I try to reflect on what I can change instead of giving up.”

This response shows a proactive approach to professional challenges. Instead of succumbing to stress, the teacher seeks to manage it through reflection and adjustment. Another participant noted:

“I ask for help when I need it, and that helps me continue working with confidence.”

This indicates that coping is not solely an individual effort but frequently relies on relational resources like support from colleagues or the institution. Notably, this agency seems to influence how emotional strain affects individuals: even under high workload and stress, teachers who use adaptive coping strategies can sustain their self-efficacy and uphold a consistent professional identity.

The qualitative results highlight that affective support plays a vital role in teachers' professional lives. Institutional and collegial emotional support boost teachers' confidence and sense of belonging, whereas emotional demands and heavy workload pose risks to their well-being and job security. However, coping strategies and a sense of professional agency allow teachers to handle these challenges constructively. The findings indicate that self-efficacy is influenced not only by personal beliefs about competence but also by emotionally supportive environments, both interpersonal and institutional. In this context, affective support serves as a key resource that helps teachers maintain motivation, resilience, and a positive professional identity.

Discussion

This study investigated the levels and interrelationships of affective support, teacher self-efficacy, and TPI among Iranian EFL teachers, with attention to demographic differences and teachers' perceptions of how affective support shapes professional experiences. The findings indicate a significant connection among the emotional, cognitive, and professional dimensions of teaching. Specifically, the results demonstrate that TPI is embedded within the relational and affective context of their work, and that emotionally supportive environments are particularly relevant to teachers' perceptions of their competence and professional value.

In response to the first research question, quantitative results indicated moderate levels of affective support and self-efficacy, as well as relatively high levels of TPI. This pattern indicates that, even in the absence of consistently strong emotional support or instructional confidence, teachers may still develop a robust sense of professional identity. A plausible explanation is that professional identity evolves gradually through accumulated experience, reflective practice, and engagement in teaching communities, rather than relying solely on high levels of support. This interpretation aligns with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997), which highlights the significance of contextual feedback, mastery experiences, and social interactions in shaping efficacy beliefs over time. Therefore, the observed positive associations among affective support, self-efficacy, and TPI should be viewed as evidence of related, mutually reinforcing constructs rather than confirmation of a causal relationship.

Findings related to the second research question indicate that gender differences were not significant for affective support or self-efficacy, although a difference was observed for professional identity. This suggests that perceptions of support and instructional confidence are relatively consistent across gender groups in this context, while TPI may be more responsive to sociocultural expectations and role-related factors. In contrast, teaching experience demonstrated a consistent relationship with all three variables. Teachers with greater experience reported higher levels of affective support, self-

efficacy, and TPI, likely reflecting the cumulative effects of classroom experience, professional adaptation, and identity consolidation. This pattern is consistent with previous research indicating that mastery experiences are critical for strengthening efficacy beliefs and stabilizing professional identity (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Educational attainment also differentiated the variables, with teachers holding doctoral degrees reporting higher self-efficacy and stronger professional identity, possibly due to advanced academic engagement fostering reflective practice, pedagogical confidence, and professional agency.

The qualitative findings provide important depth to the statistical results. Teachers consistently identified affective support as essential for maintaining confidence and affirming TPI. According to their accounts, institutional recognition, collegial collaboration, and emotional understanding are central features of a healthy professional environment, rather than peripheral benefits. These perspectives align with Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which posits that emotionally significant workplace experiences shape employees' attitudes and professional outcomes over time. In this study, teachers' narratives suggest that supportive interactions facilitate more constructive interpretations of daily challenges, whereas the absence of support can diminish feelings of value and security in professional roles.

Participants also reported that emotional demands and workload pressures can undermine self-efficacy and create tensions in professional identity, especially when affective support is lacking. This observation is consistent with research on the emotional labor of teaching and its implications for well-being and professional commitment (Benesch, 2017; Hargreaves, 2005). However, the qualitative data indicate that teachers actively employ coping strategies, collegial relationships, and professional agency to manage stress and sustain commitment to their work. These accounts suggest that professional identity is negotiated through a complex interplay of emotional, social, and contextual factors, rather than resulting from a direct or mechanical process.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enhances the interpretation of the study. Statistical results demonstrate positive associations among affective support, self-efficacy, and TPI, while qualitative data elucidate how teachers experience and interpret these relationships. Thus, the mixed-methods approach reveals both the connections among these constructs and how teachers understand them in practice. This convergence supports the view that teacher development is both relational and shaped by affective factors. Furthermore, it suggests that professional identity is a dynamic construct that develops through continuous interaction with the school environment.

These findings align with SCT by emphasizing the influence of contextual and interpersonal experiences on teachers' beliefs about their capabilities. They also correspond with Affective Events Theory, as emotionally meaningful interactions appear to shape teachers' evaluations of their work and professional selves. Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted with caution: while strong associations and convergent patterns are evident, the data do not support claims regarding direct causal pathways or mediation effects. The primary contribution of this study is to demonstrate that affective support, efficacy beliefs, and professional identity are closely interconnected within teachers' professional experiences. Furthermore, these findings have relevance beyond the Iranian EFL context. In many EFL and ESL settings, teachers face significant emotional and instructional demands, often within environments characterized by inconsistent recognition and support. The results suggest that supportive professional climates are important for teacher development across diverse contexts, particularly where teachers must balance pedagogical responsibilities with emotional labor. While institutional and cultural conditions may differ internationally, the fundamental importance of relational support, professional confidence, and identity stability is likely to be broadly applicable.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that TPI is shaped by the interplay of affective support, self-efficacy, and significant workplace interactions. These findings align with existing theories that emphasize the importance of social and emotional factors in the development of professional identity. However, several limitations should be considered. First, the strength and nature of the observed associations may

differ in educational systems with varying organizational structures, cultural expectations, or professional norms. Second, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to assess how these relationships change over time. TPI is generally regarded as a developmental process, and the relationships identified in this study may evolve as teachers advance through different career stages or institutional contexts. Third, the reliance on self-reported perceptions captures teachers' subjective interpretations but may not fully represent broader organizational dynamics.

These limitations suggest several avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies could investigate how affective support, efficacy beliefs, and professional identity interact and change throughout different stages of teachers' careers. Comparative research across countries or institutional settings would clarify how cultural and organizational factors influence the role of affect. These limitations indicate several directions for future research. Longitudinal studies could examine how affective support, efficacy beliefs, and professional identity interact and change across different stages of teachers' careers. Comparative research across countries or institutional settings would help clarify how cultural and organizational factors influence the role of affective support in teacher development. Furthermore, future studies could investigate additional contextual variables, such as leadership practices, institutional climate, or professional learning communities, that may affect teachers' experiences of emotional support and the formation of their professional identities. Qualitative and mixed-methods research may also provide deeper insights into how teachers interpret emotionally significant workplace experiences and how these interpretations influence their professional trajectories over time.

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