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**Research Paper**

**Unveiling Demotivators Among Iranian EFL Teachers: Comparing Challenges Across Schools, Institutes, and Universities**

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**Abstract**

This research explored Iranian EFL teachers' demotivating factors in schools, language institutes, and universities and determined how they can be alleviated. With an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative phase surveyed 327 teachers using a demotivation questionnaire (Sugino, 2010). In the qualitative phase, 30 teachers went through semi-structured interviews. Descriptive comparative analysis determined that low pay was the most powerful demotivator across the three education sectors. Lack of bonuses and students' indifference were also primary persisting determinants. The most powerful deviations were the greater emphasis on an unstable system of employment for university and institute teachers. Thematic analysis of interviews revealed that although financial reward (higher salary) was a solution universally promoted, particularly by institutes (100%) and university (100%) teachers, psychosocial factors such as administrative respect and colleague solidarity were also imperative, mainly for school teachers. The results indicate the necessity for an overall teacher support strategy, integrating systemic budget and employment security changes with better human resource practices. They provide practical

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implications for TESOL and teacher education administrators, policymakers, and teacher educators who deal with teacher retention worldwide.

**Keywords:** Teacher Demotivation, Demotivating Factors, Iranian EFL Teachers, Demotivated Teachers, Educational Sectors

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## 1. Introduction

Motivation is of paramount significance in the process of learning as the absence of motivational elements could impede effective learning. According to Wuntu et al. (2024), developing motivation is of vital significance as it not only maintains the interest of students but also facilitates enhanced cognitive engagement and helps in language acquisition. Different assumptions and conceptions have explained the intricate phenomenon of motivation. Motivation among students has also been researched widely, with a lot of effort going into research on what demotivates students and how students can be motivated (Salud & Kamstra, 2021). For language learning, for instance, instrumental motivation can result in language study with a view to becoming qualified for higher education institutions, performing well on international English proficiency exams such as IELTS or TOEFL, becoming employable, or attaining social prestige among academic or social circles (Soodmand Afshar et al., 2014).

Extended research verifies that teacher motivation has a substantial influence on the achievement of students, given the enormous scale of teacher-student contact (Han & Mahzoun, 2017). Motivation is also a key predictor of English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) achievement (Skehan, 1991). Motivated teachers are more effective and efficient, with a positive impact on students' achievements (Chambers, 1999; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998), and their overall well-being is a significant predictor of such

long-term success (Zohrabi & Khalili, 2024). Several scholars have highlighted the importance of teacher motivation in determining the efficacy of second language acquisition (SLA) instruction. Dörnyei (2005) noted that teachers' motivation has a significant impact on students' motivation levels and the realization of learning objectives. Ellis (2005) reported that teachers have a considerable impact on learners' intrinsic motivation, whereas they have a smaller impact on extrinsic motivation. Teacher motivation can trigger the same motivation from learners, resulting in an enhanced learning experience as well as the optimal attainment of education (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Guajardo, 2011; Thoonen et al., 2011).

However, at times, teachers become demotivated due to personal and professional problems. Teaching is a stressful profession (Aleccia, 2017), and teachers are often under pressure from expectations to lead, motivate, and facilitate learning (Day & Gu, 2010). Demotivating factors such as students' attitudes, teaching material, teaching methods, work environment, and relationships (Sugino, 2010) can lower teachers' motivation. Demotivation, or the combined impact of external forces diminishing the motivation necessary to achieve an objective (Dörnyei, 2001), has been proven to lead to negative behavior and low-quality teaching practices (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Mohammadi, 2014).

While extensive research on teacher motivation has been conducted, demotivation among teachers is comparatively less studied, even in the Iranian context where most of the available studies focus on one educational domain or a specific population. Although there is some Iranian research that has identified demotivators of significance, such as poor remuneration and lack of social regard (Yaghoubinejad et al., 2017), unpredictable syllabi (Farjami et al., 2018), and the influence of teaching experience (Hojaji & Salehi, 2017), a straightforward simultaneous comparison of demotivating

variables between the three principal domains of education—schools, language institutes, and universities—is nonexistent in the literature. Besides, the interplay between systemic forces and teacher demotivation, which has been studied lately in relation to such constructs as teacher immunity (e.g., Khalili & Zohrabi, 2024; Zohrabi & Paydar, 2025) and student resistance (Hedayatzade et al., 2025), must be explored further in diverse educational settings. This study aims to fill this gap by examining and descriptively comparing causes of demotivation among EFL instructors in various learning environments and establishing how these can be kept to a minimum. Theoretically, the study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which powerfully explains how external demotivators subvert basic psychological needs, hence presenting a higher explanatory power compared to an enumeration of factors. Through the exploration of this underexplored area, the research is meant to advance knowledge on teacher motivation and provide actionable suggestions towards improving learning outcomes.

## **2. Review of Literature**

To clarify the idea of motivation better, defining demotivation and amotivation concepts is crucial. Demotivation, according to Dörnyei (2001), refers to negative effects, classroom environment incentives, and classroom tasks that can undermine learners' existing motivation. Demotivation is essentially when one's motivation drops due to certain factors. This study is grounded theoretically on two main models. To begin with, we adopt Dörnyei's (2001) conceptualization of demotivation as caused by recognizable external factors eroding an initial motivational drive. Secondly, to provide a more solid foundation for the analysis of the demotivation of teachers, we integrate this with the premises of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Based on SDT, motivation is preserved through

the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Consequently, demotivation can subsequently be conceived of as the frustration of these requirements by situational and environmental factors. This integrated approach allows for a more advanced analysis, one that transcends a descriptive checklist of demotivators to examine how specific elements (e.g., inadequate remuneration frustrating relatedness and security needs; lack of appreciation frustrating relatedness; inflexible curricula frustrating autonomy) systematically undermine teacher motivation. Besides, we situate this framework within the Iranian context using recent studies by Zohrabi and Paydar (2025) and Khalili and Zohrabi (2024).

Kiziltepe (2008) explained that demotives are indeed the opposite of motives; a motive heightens the inclination for action, but a demotive lessens it. Dörnyei (2001) explained that demotivation is the outcome of some extrinsic conditions that threaten the motivational strength behind a behavior intention. He further explained that a demotivated individual is one who was once motivated but lost enthusiasm. In line with this, Deci and Ryan (1985) came up with the concept of amotivation, which is not having motivation that typically results from the absence of knowledge or a sense of inadequacy. Demotivation and amotivation are thus distinct: amotivation refers to a deficiency of motivation in the first place, typically stemming from beliefs, whereas demotivation refers to a loss of existing motivation due to negative external events. In educational contexts, these theoretical claims are also supported by numerous empirical research.

Han and Mahzoun (2017) created a basis for the fact that parents, administration, students, and working conditions highly demotivated teachers. Similarly, Aydın (2012) identified six demotivators of EFL teachers in Turkey: career concerns, syllabus concerns, and working conditions. These are all in line with the emphasis on external motivators by Dörnyei (2001).

Moreover, comparative studies like that of Kim et al. (2013) discovered contextual differences, which noted the complexity of demotivation. In Iran, research has consistently shown such issues as unstable syllabi, lack of rewards, and low social respect as leading demotivators (Farjami et al., 2018; Yaghoubinejad et al., 2017). More recent investigations continue to explore this complex interplay. For example, Khalili and Zohrabi (2024) examined how such factors as emotional intelligence and income predict teacher immunity—a concept directly connected to motivation and resilience. Generally, recognizing and resolving these factors is essential to sustain teacher effectiveness. The present research will further examine these factors to provide recommendations in an effort to re-motivate EFL teachers, which contributes to the wider realm of understanding teacher demotivation. Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the demotivating factors among Iranian EFL teachers at schools, institutes, and universities?
2. What strategies can be used to reduce the demotivating factors among Iranian EFL teachers at schools, institutes, and universities?

In response to these questions, this study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The two phases served an expansion function (Greene et al., 1989), broadening the scope and depth of the research. The first, quantitative phase, utilizing the demotivation questionnaire, aimed to address research question 1 by identifying and ranking the most impactful demotivating factors in the three education sectors. The subsequent, qualitative stage, carried out through semi-structured interviews, clarified these results by addressing research question 2, obtaining a rich, context-rich understanding of countering strategies for the identified demotivation in phase one. This approach allows

for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon than either method was able to contribute individually.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Design of the Study**

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This approach consisted of two distinct and consecutive stages: an initial phase of quantification followed by a qualitative phase. This approach aimed to answer the research questions by examining a multifaceted phenomenon in its natural setting and thereby creating a richer and more complete understanding. Concretely, the design served an expansion function in which the quantitative information provided a general perspective of factors precipitating demotivation, and subsequently the qualitative information fleshed out those findings through a scrutiny of detailed methods of dealing with such difficulties. As such, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods permitted an examination of overlapping yet distinctive facets of the phenomenon under consideration.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The study involved 327 EFL teachers from across the country, selected through convenience sampling. Due to the challenges of nationwide data collection, the researchers used online platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, and Clubhouse to gather data. The participants were experienced teachers with a minimum of four years of teaching experience. This criterion was chosen because teachers are less likely to become demotivated in the early years of their career, and this level of experience provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and shortcomings within the educational system. Ultimately, 80 school teachers, 185 institute teachers, and 62 university teachers participated in the study. The high school teachers held B.A. and M.A. degrees in TEFL, the institute teachers had M.A., B.A.,

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and Ph.D. degrees in TEFL, and the university teachers held M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in TEFL. The participants were both male and female, aged 24-50. All teachers had passed the language proficiency requirements of their respective workplaces, ensuring that their language skills did not affect their performance on the study's instruments. Additionally, for the qualitative phase of the study, 30 EFL teachers (10 from schools, 10 from institutes, and 10 from universities) volunteered for interviews. The interview items were derived from the questionnaire. The profile of teachers is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**  
*The Profiles of Teachers*

Different Groups of Teachers	University Degrees	Number of Participants
School Teachers	B.A.	15
	M.A.	55
	Ph.D.	10
Institute Teachers	B.A.	65
	M.A.	115
	Ph.D.	5
University Teachers	B.A.	0
	M.A.	16
	Ph.D.	46

## 3.3 Instruments

### 3.3.1 Teacher Demotivation Questionnaire (Sugino, 2010)

Sugino's 35-item scale was used to explore sources of English teachers' demotivation in Iran. This tool is a five-point Likert scale where higher scores reflect stronger agreement with demotivating influences. A low score (1 or 2) reflects strong disagreement about demotivating influences, whereas a high score (4 or 5) reflects strong agreement. A mid score (3) reflects a neutral attitude. This scaling yields in-depth information about participants' views regarding demotivating influences. The survey quantitatively measures demotivation by covering four important areas: 1) students' views and attitudes during class, 2) class facilities, teaching resources and equipment, teaching material and curriculum, 3) work situation, research and work environment, and 4) interpersonal relations and communication skills. Moreover, demographic data (gender, age, employment status, and years of teaching experience) were asked about at the inception of the survey. The original survey's reliability and validity were already established through Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.82) and factor analysis, respectively. Nevertheless, these measures were re-assessed by the researchers to suit the particular context of this work. By employing Cronbach's Alpha to estimate the reliability of the survey in this current work, it was found to be 0.80. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.68 which is above the threshold of 0.50 (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also proved to be significant.

### **3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix) were administered to 30 teachers of English as a foreign language to determine demotivating factors and mitigation strategies. This approach was selected because researchers can follow a loosely defined structure derived from literature while giving interviewees prompts if necessary to gather reliable qualitative information. Interviews included four open-ended questions and lasted from 10 to 15

minutes per respondent. While some interviews were administered in respondents' work environments, others took place online via Skype. Interviews were audio-recorded with respondents' permission for later transcription and analysis. Interview questions underwent scrutiny by two professors of English as a foreign language and two institute teachers to establish content validity.

### **3.4 Procedure**

First, a pilot test took place to confirm the reliability and validity of the questionnaire prior to its administration to the intended participants. To check face and content validity, two EFL specialists reviewed the questionnaire. Then the validated questionnaire was administered to 328 EFL teachers, either manually or digitally through Email, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Clubhouse. Due to participants' busy schedules, data collection took six months. Following that, a qualitative method was used with 30 volunteers. Participants were given an assurance of the confidentiality of their answers. Interview questions were screened by two professors of EFL and two institute teachers with expertise in qualitative inquiry to confirm content validity. To reduce interaction effect, each of the participants was interviewed separately. Interviews took about 10-15 minutes to complete and were carried out neutrally by having the second researcher just listen to others' contributions without any leading questions and without expressing agreement or disagreement to facilitate unbiased answers. All interviews were audiotaped and analyzed through transcripts with permission of the participants.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

To answer the first question, which was addressed by the quantitative questionnaire data, descriptive analysis was used to discover the demotivating factors among EFL teachers in the Iranian context. To address

the second research question, which was explored through the qualitative interview data, the recorded audio data were transcribed, focusing exclusively on relevant information. Upon completion of the transcription, thematic analysis following the model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed to identify recurring themes in the respondents' answers. This thematic analysis involves a six-step process: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes by categorizing and verifying consistency, (3) identifying common themes that highlight significant patterns in the data, (4) reviewing these themes to ensure coherence, (5) defining the themes and analyzing their interconnections, and (6) producing a detailed report. Subsequently, the identified themes were elucidated with illustrative examples.

#### **4. Results**

The results of each research question are provided below.

##### **4.1 What are the Demotivating Factors Among Iranian EFL Teachers at Schools, Institutes, and Universities?**

The results of frequency analysis show that the 10 most important factors of demotivation in the entire studied sample are:

1. Low pay
2. No bonus
3. Employment system is unstable
4. When students are not interested in studying
5. Little appreciation from the administration
6. Lacking research fund
7. Lacking research time
8. No consistency in curriculum with clear goals

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9. When students are not interested in foreign languages

10. When students take a rebellious attitude

The 10 most important demotivating factors for school teachers

are:

1. Low pay

2. No bonus

3. When students are not interested in studying

4. Employment system is unstable

5. Lacking research fund

6. Little appreciation from the administration

7. Lacking research time

8. Much paperwork

9. Lacking communication among the full time faculty

10. No consistency in curriculum with clear goals

The 10 most important demotivation factors in the group of institute teachers are:

1. Low pay

2. Employment system is unstable

3. No bonus

4. When students are not interested in studying

5. Lacking research fund

6. Little appreciation from the administration

7. No consistency in curriculum with clear goals

8. Lacking research time

9. When students are not interested in foreign languages

10. Negative comments by colleagues

And, the 10 important factors in demotivation factors in the group of university teachers are:

1. Low pay
2. Employment system is unstable
3. No bonus
4. When students are not interested in studying
5. Little appreciation from the administration
6. No consistency in curriculum with clear goals
7. Teaching method is fixed.
8. Lacking research fund
9. Use of cell phones
10. When students forget to bring textbooks and dictionaries

Although inferential statistics were not used for significant difference, a comparative description of these ranked lists provides a strong indication of consensus on core demotivators as well as context-related concerns. The factor of 'low pay' was the overall unanimous top demotivator in all three sectors. Additionally, 'no bonus' and 'when students are not interested to study' appeared highly in all three top tens, suggesting their ubiquity. Pronounced divergences are found in 'employment system is unstable' being ranked higher by institute and university teachers (2nd) than school teachers (4th), and 'use of cell phones' and 'when students forget to bring textbooks' appearing uniquely in the top ten of university

teachers' list only, suggesting the particular challenge of the tertiary context.

#### **4.2 What Strategies Can Be Used to Reduce the Demotivating Factors Among Iranian EFL Teachers at Schools, Institutes, and Universities?**

As already explained, semi-structured interviews were administered to 10 school teachers, 10 institute teachers, and 10 university teachers to collect their views regarding their techniques to motivate teachers. By limiting the number of interviews to only 30 respondents from these three different groups, our approach is in line with the philosophy of data saturation as propounded by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Data saturation is that phase of qualitative inquiry when further data collection stops retrieving new information or adding to the refinement of emerging concepts and themes. According to their responses, the themes have been grouped into two main types: human sources and physical sources. The human sources are again branched into sub-themes that consist of teachers, students, colleagues, and administrators. Similarly, the physical sources are grouped into sub-themes that are compensation, work environment, and educational concerns.

##### **4.2.1 School Teachers' Interview Results**

The participants' responses were categorized into two themes; physical sources and human sources with their own sub-themes. The answers of school teachers to interviews are depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*School Teachers' Common Patterns of Answers to the Interview Questions  
(Strategies to Motivate Teachers)*

Themes	Sub-Themes	Description	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Human Sources</b>	Teachers	Having rest	3	30%
	Students	Observing students' progress	1	10%
<b>Physical Sources</b>	Colleagues	Cooperative staff	5	50%
	Administrators	Giving credit to teachers	7	70%
	Payment	Increasing salaries	2	20%
<b>Physical Sources</b>	Work place conditions	Making class a more enjoyable place for learning	2	20%
		Providing more facilities for teachers and learners	2	20%
	Education issues	Training courses or seminars	3	30%

Thematic analysis of the school teacher interviews found that demotivation mitigation strategies are intrinsically linked to a requirement for professional validation and affirmation within a regulated structure. Administrative recognition was the most prominent of all themes expressed. A strong majority of respondents emphatically made it clear that feeling validated and recognized boosted their motivation the most. This did not pertain to financial recompense but to psychological validation as expounded upon by a teacher:

*Teacher 2: Administration and directors must credit and appreciate teachers' efforts and commitment. A word of 'thank you' or an appreciation note can do wonders to raise their motivation.*

This implies that in a context where monetary rewards are low, the significance of non-monetary forms of appreciation cannot be

overstated. The second dominant theme was collegiality. Fifty percent of interviewees identified a positive and encouraging work culture as the principal motivator. This theme speaks to a desire for belonging and peer problem-solving:

*Teacher 3: A favorable setting in which teachers can work and exchange thoughts among peers and in which they can bring up difficulties and consult is able to bring new viewpoints and reinvigorate enthusiasm.*

The remaining themes, while less common, offered additional insight. Among the teachers quoted, more good working conditions and equipment were mentioned as a need, linking their motivation to the possibility of teaching. Professional development through training courses was also mentioned as a necessary investment in professionalism. Surprisingly, 'getting rest' was mentioned as a strategy, which links the issue of workload and burnout. The comparatively less focus on raises (20%) is consistent with the quantitative observation that although pay is the biggest demotivator, the school teachers most prefer to give top priority to for remotivation are usually more psychosocial and within their immediate control of their school principals.

#### **4.2.2 Institute Teachers' Interview Results**

The answers of institute teachers to the interviews are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Institute Teachers' Common Patterns of Answers to the Interview Questions (Strategies to Motivate Teachers)*

Themes	Sub-Themes	Description	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Human Sources</b>	Teachers	Having rest	3	30%
	Students	Observing students' progress	4	40%
	Colleagues	Cooperative staff	4	40%
	Administrators	Giving credit to teachers	6	60%
<b>Physical Sources</b>	Payment	Increasing salaries	10	100%
	Work place conditions	Making class a more enjoyable place for learning	2	20%
		Providing more facilities for teachers and learners	4	40%
	Education issues	Training courses or seminars	2	20%

All of the interviewed teachers (100%) opined that 'raising teachers' salaries' would be the most crucial way to motivate institute teachers.

Teacher 4: *But all in all, I think that raising the pay could assist in motivating the instructors on so many levels and having a permanent bonus can re-stir the motivations again.*

Apart from that, the majority of the institute teachers (60%) rated 'giving credit to teachers' as an important consideration in the motivation level of institute teachers. Below are some of their statements.

Teacher 9: *They should give space to teachers to teach the way they like, and never instruct them what to do and what not to do.*

For them, factors like 'providing more facilities to teachers and learners' (40%) were also significant due to the evolving nature of the educational system. Some of their remarks are given below.

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Teacher 1: *We can no longer just depend on the textbook alone to teach the students. There are certain facilities which need to be provided like laptops with internet access so that the students are able to search for information themselves and learn accordingly.*

'Observing students' progress' (40%) in their performance was also thought to be a significant factor in motivating them. Here are some of their statements.

Teacher 5: *And to see the children improve is good for getting motivated.*

'Cooperative staff' (40%) such as attempting to help resolve colleagues' problems was also an important factor in making teachers motivated. Below are quotes from their comments and reflections.

Teacher 8: *Discussing with demotivated teachers about one's own experiences might stimulate them to work on their pedagogy and enhance their teaching practice.*

They also considered the factor like 'being away for some time' (30%) as a significant variable. Some of their remarks are given below.

Teacher 3: *I would like to leave work for some time and relax so that I could regain my strength.*

'Training courses' (20%) was the second factor which was considered to assist in making the teachers motivated. Their reaction is partially indicated by the following statements.

Teacher 5: *Providing online workshops or seminars helps EFL teachers to get motivated.*

And 'making class a more enjoyable place for learning' (20%) was another determinants essential in enhancing the rate of motivation among institute teachers. The following are some of their remarks.

*Teacher 5: Once you create the class as a place where everyone is happy in the class, then you will enjoy yourself in your teaching, and thus you will be motivated.*

#### 4.2.3 University Teachers' Interview Results

The same process of grouping the answers within two themes; i.e., physical sources and human sources with sub-themes of their own was applied to the university teachers as well and the findings are presented in the Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*University Teachers' Common Patterns of Answers to the Interview Questions (Strategies to Motivate Teachers)*

Themes	Sub-themes	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Human Sources	Teachers	Having rest	0	0%
	Students	Observing students' progress	4	40%
Physical Sources	Colleagues	Cooperative staff	5	50%
	Administrators	Giving credit to teachers	10	100%
	Payment	Increasing salaries	10	100%
	Work place conditions	Making class a more enjoyable place for learning	1	10%
		Providing more facilities for teachers and learners	3	30%
	Education issues	Training courses or seminars	1	10%

All of the interviewed university teachers (100%) had the view that the most significant action in maintaining teachers' motivation was

'giving credit to teachers' based on trusting them and 'Increasing teachers' salaries'.

Teacher 3: *Getting promoted in their profession involves various things such as teaching upper-level classes.*

Aspects such as 'cooperative staff', (50%) to assist one another in times of difficulties proved to be pivotal for university teachers to motivate them.

Teacher 6: *Peers can play a role in bringing demotivated teachers back by providing them with actual camaraderie and support whenever the need arises.*

After co-operative staff, is 'observing students' progress' (40%) as mentioned by the teachers.

Teacher 8: *There is something that makes me want to do better, and that is when the students master the subject matter and don't attempt to memorize the facts to just pass the class.*

Slightly over 40% of the teachers identified 'workplace conditions' (40%) in terms of making class a place to enjoy learning and having more facilities as encouraging factors.

Teacher 10: *I can recommend that administration and policy makers provide the facilities required by teachers in order to enhance teaching and motivation.*

'Training courses' (10%) was the other rationale provided by teachers to be vital in sustaining them.

Teacher 3: *Having in-service classes running for teachers to be more professional and have more material is an incentive.*

## **5. Discussion**

The present research aimed at exploring the demotivational aspects influencing Iranian EFL teachers in three different sectors of education—schools, institutes, and universities—and arriving at suggestions for motivating them. The descriptive comparative research design employed in the present research makes it possible to analyze the trend of demotivation critically across schools, institutes, and universities. The discovery that 'low pay' is the strongest demotivator in each of the three settings indicates a widespread economic insecurity that is systemic and pervasive in Iran's contemporary economic environment (Zohrabi & Paydar, 2025). That other factors differ in ranking, however, is a sign of considerable contextual variation. For example, the higher concern of institute and university professors (2nd) as opposed to their counterparts at schools (4th) about an 'unstable employment system' probably stems from the more contractual and transient nature of employment at private institutes and the highly competitive, frequently insecure, tenure track for Iranian universities (Khalili & Zohrabi, 2024). This is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), as insecurity in work directly undermines the basic psychological need for competence (having the capacity to build a secure job) and relatedness (feeling secure belonging).

The results point towards an interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic variables, with economic issues being the greatest demotivator across the board. 'Low pay' was the strongest demotivator in every setting, a

result in line with a strong international literature on teacher motivation (e.g., Aslam et al., 2022; Gameda & Tynjälä, 2015) and one especially applicable to the economic situation in Iran (Zohrabi & Paydar, 2025). Lack of bonuses also worked to further magnify this pay discontent, once again highlighting a systemic failure to offer tangible recognition for teachers' hard work.

This general cost burden substantiates Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory assumptions that money is a 'hygiene factor' (Herzberg, 1966). Its absence or its paucity has a very potent inhibitory influence which prevents job satisfaction, even when other motivators are present. Cross-institutional ranking on the qualitative aspect of higher salary by institute teachers (100%) and university teachers (100%) unanimously supports this quantitative result, and that financial reward is not only appreciated but a *sine qua non* for motivational drive.

Uncertainty regarding the employment system was a cardinal issue. Job insecurity gradually erodes the feeling of belongingness and investment necessary for professional commitment. The finding supports that of Kim and Kim (2015), who presumed job security to be an affective stimulus and losing it would deny professional commitment a crucial ingredient. In the same vein, a study by Khalili and Zohrabi (2024) about teacher immunity shows how structural stress like workplace insecurity can over-dominate dysfunctional coping to place economic insecurity in a positive relationship with heightened psychological resilience for teaching staff.

The second major theme was the highly demoralizing effect of student challenges, namely inattentiveness and felt disengagement. This is in line with previous studies positioning the learner's attitude and behavior at the heart of the instructor's motivational climate (e.g., Hettiarachchi, 2013; Pourtoussi et al., 2018). The issue is most concerning where, as in Iran, English is not planned to be used for any function outside classrooms, thus leading to learners' alienation (Hedayatzade et al., 2025). This creates a feedback loop halfway: teaching disengaged students drains teaching energy, and this can cause student apathy to feed back in, difficult to break.

Yet the same research reveals the other side of that coin: seeing students learn was generally expressed as a key motivator. That would suggest that interventions capable of enhancing student engagement can have equally powerful, interdependent positive effect on teacher motivation. This two-way street of teacher to student motivation reveals to us the need for ecological models of motivation that appreciate the classroom as an interdependent system (Kamstra, 2021), not just focusing on the teacher.

Demotivation counter-measures also leaned towards focusing on two broad themes: human and physical origins. Psychological reward in terms of 'giving credits to teachers' was highly valued across all groups, especially by school (70%) and university (100%) teachers. It speaks to the profound value of psychological rewards and administrative recognition, validating Gyimah (2020) that recognition is a critical non-monetary motivator. The necessity for similar-minded

and supportive colleagues, by school and university teachers by half, confirms again the necessity for a strong professional community. This finding is consistent with that of Han and Yin (2016), who stated that collegial cooperation has a direct effect on teachers' effectiveness and motivation, by providing support and guidance.

On a personal level, 'having rests' as a practice is manifested in workload and burnout concerns, and meditation. Teaching is a highly intellectual and emotional career, and rests are not an indulgence but a requirement in order to be able to sustain long-term motivational levels and work despite burnout (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This falls under the overall domain of teacher well-being, which has been established as one of the foremost sources of effective practice and motivation in the long run (Zohrabi & Khalili, 2024).

Lastly, requests for resources needed in terms of extra facilities and training for professional development dictate the extent to which the organizations need to invest. These poor-quality materials, aside from preventing quality teaching, are also the cause of ongoing frustration as a reminder of the failure to support teachers' work. Offering the right types of in-service training, the respondents think, can empower teachers, enhance their self-efficacy, and serve as an incentive with positive effect by showing the organization's care in developing their professional competency.

Finally, the study revealed that Iranian teacher demotivation stereotypes are a syndrome and not an attribute but are founded on a multi-dimensional matrix of systemic economic facts, bureaucratic

complacency, student issues, and lack of sensible professional guidance. The key is in the suggested teacher-driven strategy, which offers an open blueprint for action. To eradicate all these evils, a response will have to overshadow all with obligatory finance reform (nothing but just compensation and workplace safety) and functional human support systems (appreciation, teamwork) and better physical and professional instruments. Longitudinal design also finds its application in the follow-up effect study of intervention in contexts where theory development meets demotivation of teachers, such as teacher immunity and well-being.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

The results of the present study reveal some of the causes of demotivating teachers of EFL at schools, institutes, and universities. 'Low pay' was ranked as the most demotivating by the school teachers, with 72% of the respondents reporting its strongest impact. It was followed by 'no bonus' and 'students sleeping during class,' and ranked lowest was 'teaching material is not fixed.' And even among the teachers of language institutes, 'low pay' was the highest demotivator, followed by 'no bonus' and 'students sleeping in class.' Conversely, 'students speaking in class' had minimal or no influence on them. For the teachers of the university too, 'low pay' was the topmost one, named by 71% of the respondents, followed by 'employment system is unstable' and 'no bonus.' 'The fixed nature of teaching materials' was the least of concern.

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No variations were found between the three groups of demotivating factors, as 'low pay' and 'no bonus' were seen as uniform major issues, while fixed teaching materials were not in general perceived as demotivating. All the institute teacher interviewees (100%) emphasized 'raising teachers' salaries' as important for motivation, with 60% also appreciating the offer of credit to teachers. The other variables prominent were 'providing more facilities' (40%), 'observing students' progress' (40%), 'cooperative staff' (40%), 'being away sometimes' (30%), and 'training courses' (20%). At schools, 70% of teachers believed 'giving credits to teachers' was important, followed by 'cooperative staff' (50%), 'improved working conditions' (40%), 'training courses' (30%), and 'having rest' (30%). Fewer school teachers (20%) considered 'increasing teachers' salaries' as an incentive, and only 10% considered 'observing students' progress' useful.

University teachers overall (100%) stated 'giving credit to instructors' and 'increasing teachers' salaries' as being most important incentives. Other important factors were 'cooperative staff' (50%) and 'observing students' progress' (40%), with fewer placing importance on 'working conditions' (40%) and 'training courses' (10%). These findings point to a broad pattern across various learning environments and suggest that money and infrastructural support are the primary means to turn around teacher demotivation. The findings of this research will contribute to the discipline by helping provide policy

guidelines and intervention methods for improving teacher motivation and thus learning.

These findings are of significant theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, they contribute to theories of demotivation and countermeasure approaches towards boosting teacher motivation for teaching languages. These findings are significant to researchers across all areas of study since the trend towards demotivation among teachers is on the rise. Studies into causes of demotivation are significant so that countermeasures can be developed. The primary purpose is to acquire methods of avoiding teacher demotivation. Being educated on the causes of demotivation enables better control and management. For instance, school administrators can address the causes to enhance the working environment and economic situation, hence enhanced teacher motivation. Appreciating and praising teachers is the duty of school administrators. The policymakers should enhance working conditions through job security and stability, and these are the determinants of motivation. The school administration must ensure a facilitating environment in the form of the role of sufficient teaching and learning resources so that teachers' tension is reduced and use of various facilities is made easy.

The study also needs in-service training to enhance professionalism among teachers. Professional development, in the form of workshops, courses, and assistance groups, can extend teaching experience as well as psychological adaptation. Moreover, demotivation and misbehavior among students should also be tackled because students' attitude

empowerment can indirectly result in teachers' motivation. Furthermore, according to research, even competitive compensation cannot be taken as a solution to all motivational problems, yet some level of financial reward needs to be offered. The results of this study hold global significance with significant implications for teaching and research at a global level. Comparative country analysis can potentially investigate trends of demotivating factor similarity and dissimilarity with the ultimate goal of building a more detailed conceptualization of global teacher demotivation.

While it is valuable, there are shortcomings to this study. Convenience sampling, through mainly internet social media (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram), although at the level of accessing a national cohort convenient, can impede the generalizability of results. The participants were volunteer self-selection and thus there may be selection bias under which teachers who had some incentive to fill the questionnaire or who held more extreme views about demotivation might have been over-represented. The findings, then, cannot be generalized to the entire group of all Iranian EFL teachers at all institutes, schools, and universities. Future research would be more robust through the employment of stratified random sampling procedures to help build a more representative sample and heighten the external validity of results. The cross-sectional nature of this study also yields an instantaneous view of demotivation at a particular point in time. Longitudinal designs are required to explore the way teacher demotivating factors and teacher motivation develop in a long period,

primarily in terms of economic change and change in educational policy. Additionally, quantitative comparison was employed based on descriptive frequency analysis. In the future, inferential statistical tests (e.g., ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis) should be applied to large groups so that a test of significance of difference in perceived importance of demotivating factors by education sector is possible.

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### Appendix: Interview Questions

1. According to your experience of English language teaching, are there any negative factors that have affected your teaching? Could you please explain in detail.
2. Can you explain some strategies to help demotivated teachers to recover their motivation and interest in teaching English.

3. What are some steps that can be taken by other colleagues, administration, managers, policy makers, etc. to help teachers get motivated again.

4. Have you ever experienced demotivation? If yes, please explain what happened, and how did you deal with that to get your motivation back.



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