

The Relationship between EFL Teachers' Resilience and Creativity

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Abstract

The present study intended to examine the relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity. To this end, 120 EFL teachers within the age range of 24 to 46, who were teaching in different language schools in Mashhad took part in the study. The participants of the study were selected based on convenience sampling procedure and were asked to complete the Creativity Fostering Teacher Index (CFTI) developed by Soh (2000) and the Teacher Resilience Scale developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). The results of Pearson product moment correlation showed that there was a significant relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity. Furthermore, the results of regression analyses revealed that EFL teachers' resilience was a significant predictor of their creativity. In the light of the findings of the present study, EFL teachers and policy makers are thus recommended to apply and introduce various applicable strategies to improve EFL teachers' resilience in order to help them develop higher level of creativity. The results of the study are discussed in more details in the paper.

Keywords: Creativity, Resilience, EFL Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are typically regarded as one of the most vulnerable and also influential associates in any given teaching system (Khany & Malekzadeh, 2015). One eminent variable that has a very significant effect in the teaching and improvement of learners is the concept of teachers' creativity (Robinson, 2001). The concept of creativity is widely considered as one of the utmost influential factors for the development of teachers' profession at schools and institutes (Mirzaee & Rahimi, 2017). According to Robinson (2001), in a world mainly dominated by various technological improvements and novelties, the notion of creativity is a crucial component; human abilities and individuals' powers of imagination and creativity are important resources in a knowledge.

Along with creativity, one way for teachers to be successful and stay in their own profession is to have high level of resiliency (Williams, 2003). The notion of resilience is defined as the "ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions" (Bobek, 2002, p. 202). As pointed out by Stanford (2001),

resilient teachers basically derive deep personal contentment and satisfaction in their profession and naturally rely on an all-embracing network of support encompassing family and friends, teacher colleagues, and other teacher-related groups.

It is also believed that some Iranian educators are embracing and searching about their lack of adequate creativity and intend to explore how they can be critically creative in order to improve their learners' academic success and their own classroom management (Mirzaee & Rahimi, 2017). Furthermore, conducting study on teachers' resilience is of utmost significance since according to Patterson, Collins and Abbott (2004), "resilience is a key factor in how an instructor will hold up in an urban school" (p. 3), and hence promoting teachers' resilience is a significant objective in the overall improvement of the field. To the best of the researcher' knowledge, no empirical studies, to date, examined the relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and their creativity. Thus, this study was an attempt to fill this gap by scrutinizing the relationship between the above-mentioned teacher-related variables.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Creativity

The concept of creativity is defined by Lefrancois (1994) as "the capacity of individuals to produce novel or original answers or products" (p. 393). Likewise, Seltzer and Bentley (1999) defined creativity as "the application of knowledge and skills in new ways to achieve a valued goal" (p.10). Furthermore, Sarsani (2005) defined creativity as "the ability or the capacity of a person to discover and explore new areas to create or produce new idea, or theory or object including the arrangement or reshaping of what already exists" (p. 105).

Moreover, creativity is defined as "the unique ability to create either all-new and still undiscovered things, thoughts and solutions, or the synthesizing ability to combine existing objects and ideas in an absolutely new, still unused and unknown, manner" (Blaskova, 2014, p. 417). Creativity is regarded as one of the characteristics of successful and effective teachers (Polk, 2006). As Khany and Malekzadeh (2015) maintain, almost in every educational system one essential objective is applying and developing creative abilities in teachers to deal with rapid technological changes in teaching domain.

Creativity is believed to be the result of individual, social, intellectual, and appropriate processes which do not rely on stable characteristics (Amabile, & Khaire, 2008). As Cremin (2009) reports, combining teaching and creativity together can relate to a learning that is taught in a more interesting and effective way by using inspirational and imaginative ways in the class by the teacher. Teaching with creativity comes alive if only the teacher is willing to face this kind of teaching (Amabile, & Khaire, 2008). Creative teaching has four main structures, namely relevance, ownership, control and innovation (Cremin, 2009). There have been several research studies conducted on teachers' creativity in Iranian and International context. In this respect, for example, Hong, Hartzell, and Greene (2009) in a school setting found that instructor characteristics, such as a clear goal orientation for learning, are related to creativity-fostering instructional practices.

Resilience

The concept of resiliency is defined as “the ability to bounce back when faced with adverse conditions” (Bemshausen & Cunningham, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, the notion of resilience is basically defined as “using energy productively to achieve school goals in the face of adverse conditions” (Patterson, Collins & Abbott, 2004, p. 3). Moreover, teachers' resilience is defined as “the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions” (Bobek, 2002, p. 202).

As noted by Patterson, Collins and Abbott (2004), resilient instructors are basically those individuals who, “use energy effectively despite adverse conditions” (p. 3). Likewise, Howard and Johnson (2002) argued that resilient teachers constantly demonstrated: a) *A sense of agency*, b) *Moral purpose*, c) *A strong support group and administrative support*, and d) *Competence and a sense of accomplishment* (p. 11).

Another feature of resilient teachers is high morale, which is defined as, “a positive attitude, being enthusiastic about teaching, being involved in their work,” and instructors who “are themselves” (Stanford, 2001, p. 76). Consistent with high morale, Bobek (2002) found that a sense of humor to be an important element in improving teacher resilience. Additionally, Bobek (2002) asserted that a sense of humor is a feature often observed among resilient teachers. As pointed out by Bobek (2002), humor “is vital to strengthening an instructor's resilience. An instructor who promotes a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at their own errors has an excellent medium for releasing frustrations” (p. 204).

The concept of resilience in literature, have reference stress in numerous areas, though much of it comprises of listing stressors that avert resilience or stimulate exhaustion. Supposedly, in terms of the association between stress and resilience, Abel and Sewell (1999) maintained that “prolonged stress can result in burnout” (p. 287). In other words, stress can impede teachers' resilience.

Research Questions

The study, therefore, seeks answers to the following questions:

- RQ₁: Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity?
- RQ₂: Is EFL teachers' resilience a significant predictor of their creativity?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions stated, the following null hypotheses were assumed:

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity.
- H₀₂: EFL teachers' resilience is not a significant predictor of their creativity.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study were 120 (60 male and 60 female) EFL teachers from different language institutes in Mashhad. The sampling strategy for selection of the participants was convenience sampling procedure. All the participants were Persian speakers and their age ranged from 24 to 46.

Instruments

To accomplish the purposes of the study, following instruments were employed.

Creativity Fostering Teacher Index (CFTI)

In order to measure the participants' creativity level, the Creativity Fostering Teacher Index (CFTI) developed by Soh (2000) was administered. This instrument has 45 items on a 6-point Likert scale. It is worth noting that high total scores on this instrument show high creativity levels. The administration of this instrument took approximately 25 minutes. The reliability of this instrument in this study was calculated to be 0.80.

Teacher Resilience Scale

To measure the participants' resilience, the Teacher Resilience Scale developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) was administered. This instrument encompasses 38 six-point Likert scale items ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. This scale encompasses eight factors which cope with personal, pedagogical, and social aspects of educators' resilience in an EFL context. It takes approximately 20 minutes to be completed. The reliability of this instrument in this study was calculated to be 0.81.

Procedure

This study aimed at pinpointing the relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling and after ensuring their anonymity, the two instruments of the study, i.e., *Creativity Fostering Teacher Index (CFTI)* and *Teacher Resilience Scale*, were administered to the EFL teachers who were teaching at different language institutes in Mashhad. The completion of both questionnaires took about 45 minutes. Having collected the required data, the researcher made use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20) to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, SPSS version 20 was used for analyzing the data. A Pearson product moment correlation was run in order to answer the first research question of the study. Concerning the second research question of the study, a regression was run.

RESULTS

First Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity.

In order to test the first research hypothesis, a Pearson Correlation was run, which its results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 .Descriptive Statistics for EFL Teachers' Resilience and Creativity

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Creativity	166.2167	17.77458	120
Resilience	138.6167	16.86685	120

As indicated in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the EFL teachers' creativity were 166.21 and 17.77, respectively while the mean and standard deviation of their resilience were 138.61 and 16.86, respectively.

Table 2 .Pearson Correlation between EFL Teachers' Resilience and Creativity

		Creativity
Resilience	Pearson Correlation	.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120

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

As demonstrated by Table 2 above, the correlation came out to be significant at the 0.01 level ($r = 0.349$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Consequently, it can be claimed that the two variables were significantly and negatively related to each other and the first null hypothesis was rejected.

Second Hypothesis: EFL teachers' resilience is not a significant predictor of their creativity

A regression was run to investigate the second research hypothesis and its results are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3 .Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.349 ^a	.122	.115	16.72499

A. Predictors: (Constant), Resilience

According to the figures presented in Table 3, the amount of R was calculated to be 0.349 and R square 0.122. In order to further analyze the issue, the results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 .Regression Output: ANOVA^a Table

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4588.787	1	4588.787	16.405	.000 ^b
	Residual	33007.580	118	279.725		
	Total	37596.367	119			

a. Dependent Variable: Creativity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resilience

Table 4 reported the results of the ANOVA ($F_{1,118} = 16.405, p = 0.000 < 0.05$) which proved significant.

Table 5 .Regression Output: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	115.183	12.692		9.075	.000
	Resilience	.368	.091	.349	4.050	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Creativity

As indicated by Table 5 above, resilience was a significant predictor of EFL teachers' creativity. Thus, the second null hypothesis was also rejected.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to inspect the possible relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and their creativity. The results of this study clarified that there was a significant positive relationship between the two constructs. It means that teachers who are resilient have higher creativity level on their jobs and vice versa. Moreover, the findings revealed that EFL teachers' resilience could significantly predict their creativity. This means that, the knowledge and mindfulness of EFL teachers' resilience, is essential for having higher levels of creativity. In other words, one way to improve the creativity level of EFL teachers is the improvement of their resilience.

One possible explanation might be the fact that the notion of adaptability is a second classroom practice of resilient teachers, and it is discussed by Patterson, Collins and Abbott (2004), who state, "resilient instructors are not wedded to one best way of teaching and are interested in exploring new ideas" (p. 5). The findings of the present study can appropriately be manifested through the argument provided by some scholars (e.g., Claxton, 1999; Galton, 2010; Mccarthy, Pittaway & Swabey, 2016) in the literature that resilient instructors are typically described as innovators, effective thinkers, and problem-solvers.

Furthermore, as Claxton (1999) noted, the positive relationship between educators' resilience and creativity might be due to the fact that instructors' resilience and thinking have a positive role and lead to their inventiveness in different creative challenges educators take during their teaching. The findings of the present study are in line with those of Mccarthy, Pittaway and Swabey (2016), who found that there was a significant and positive relationship between instructors' resilience and creativity.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study set out to inspect whether there existed a statistically significant relationship between EFL teachers' resilience and creativity and whether EFL teachers' creativity was significantly predicted by their resilience. The results of the present study provide practical support for the estimation that EFL teachers' resilience and creativity are significantly related and EFL teachers' resilience was a significant predictor of their

creativity, suggesting that with the aim of improving creativity level of teachers, their resilience level must be increased. However, it is worth noting that doing further research in this respect could shed more light on this issue.

Based on the findings of the present study some implications may be drawn. The findings inform EFL teachers of the crucial role of their resilience and the extent to which it might influence their creativity. Consequently, due to the fact that resilient educators have the capability to flourish in hard circumstances, EFL educators are recommended to apply various applicable strategies and procedures to improve their resilience level if they want to be creative throughout their challenging situations in their career. Furthermore, policy makers are also recommended to take the required actions for improving EFL teachers' resilience and creativity.

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