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EFL Teacher Concern, Teacher Success, and EFL Learners' Self-efficacy: Learners' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Delving into the existing research on EFL teacher success (TS), the role of EFL teacher concern (TC) in relation to their success, EFL learners' general self-efficacy (GSE), and English self-efficacy (ESE) seems to be overlooked. Thus, the present endeavor attempts to shed light on the potential interrelationships between TC, TS, EFL learners' GSE, and ESE, while also examining whether TC could serve as a predictor for TS, the learners' GSE, and ESE. A sample of 265 intermediate to advanced Iranian EFL learners, selected through convenience sampling, took part in the study, filling out four questionnaires in Google Forms. Applying Pearson product-moment correlation and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the researchers came to positive correlations among the variables of the study, with TC positively predicting TS, ESE, and GSE. This quantitative study yielded awareness-raising implications for educational administrators, teacher trainers, EFL instructors, EFL learners, and researchers in relation to the crucial role of EFL teacher concern in TS and EFL learners' GSE and ESE.

Keywords: EFL learners' English self-efficacy; EFL learners' general self-efficacy; EFL teacher concern; EFL teacher success; EFL teacher

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Introduction

Considering the dynamics of an EFL classroom, a wide array of psychological factors is at play in forming successful language learning experiences (Albert et al., 2024; Hasanzadeh et al., 2024). One such factor deserving particular attention could be EFL teacher's attentiveness and emognitive skill in comprehending and responding to the emotional and mental circumstances of their learners, namely EFL teacher concern (Pishghadam et al., 2022). This construct has been rationalized by some studies (e.g., Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al., 2023; Soudkhah Mohammadi & Shayesteh, 2023) to be related to EFL teacher success or their effectiveness in providing students with input, fostering communication in the classroom, in addition to assessing and monitoring their progress with constructive feedback (Coombe, 2014). Also, it is distinct from EFL teacher's self-efficacy, which refers to their belief in their ability to achieve such success (Bandura, 1986). However, the proposed relationship has yet to undergo correlational analysis to determine its strength, direction, and statistical significance and, therefore, it needs to be validated through empirical evidence. With regards to the ties between EFL teacher success and other variables, Stronge (2007) has highlighted that EFL teacher and learner success are related, and learners' success is highly influenced by their general self-efficacy (Shih & Alexander, 2000), or belief in their "capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to attain the designated type of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Learners' self-efficacy in general not only has the potential to lead to their English self-efficacy (Chung et al., 2021), which concerns their self-efficacy regarding speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills in English (Li & Zhou, 2022), but also is positively influenced by caring teacher-student bonds (Li & Yang, 2021). Yet, to the researchers' best knowledge, the literature lacks direct scrutiny of the interconnectedness among EFL teacher concern, EFL learners' self-efficacy, be it in general or pertaining to the EFL context specifically, and EFL teacher success. Additionally, to reach a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the interrelationships among the aforementioned variables, delving into the factors that have the potential to predict EFL teacher success (Pishghadam et al., 2021; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2014) and EFL learners' general or English self-efficacy (Genç et al., 2016) is an area worthy of investigation. Thus, the present research is aimed at investigating the role of EFL teacher concern in EFL teacher success and EFL learners' general and English self-efficacy. Conducting such studies could contribute to gaining a better understanding of the complex processes involved in learning English, thereby laying the groundwork for future improvements in EFL discipline.

Review of the Literature

Teacher Success

Teacher success has been associated with a range of various characteristics in literature, some of which are not directly related to their personal features, such as defining their success with respect to their students' achievement (Stronge, 2007). However, another group of studies emphasize the importance of personal qualities in teachers such as empathy and friendliness (Damayanti et al., 2024; Quan, 2022), the ability to motivate learners (Salahshour & Hajizadeh, 2013; Stronge, 2007; Zhang, 2022), respectfulness and politeness (Murphy et al., 2004; Stronge, 2007), as well as a sense of humor and patience (Elizabeth et al., 2008).

One of the notable characteristics that have been associated with teacher success is being caring toward the learners (Barnes & Lock, 2010; Elizabeth et al., 2008; Quan, 2022; Stronge, 2007) as Murphy et al. (2004) stated that "effective teachers are caring, patient, not boring, polite, and organized" (p. 87). McBee (2007) examined the conceptualization of educators about teacher's caring and emphasized the fact that educators believed caring to be a contributor to their success.

Powell and Parker (2016) also described unsuccessful educators as those who are apathetic towards their students, not caring about them. Xie and Derakhshan (2021) indicated that instructor's care and concern for the learners as a type of teacher positive interpersonal behavior could lead to increased motivation, learning, and, therefore, the success of the students. Boosting students' motivation and teacher's caring behavior has been found to lead to pupils' higher attendance in class and academic outcomes (Foster, 2008). Empathy, as a level of teacher's caring and concern for learners (Pishghadam et al., 2022), has been found to lead to effective teaching (Aldrup et al., 2022), higher learner engagement (Souderjani et al., 2021), motivation (Ge et al., 2021; Zhang, 2022), and facilitating caring, positive teacher-student relationships (Ge et al., 2021), having the potential to improve the learners' self-efficacy (Li & Yang, 2021). Salahshour and Hajizadeh (2013) also directed their attention toward the perspectives of learners in an exploration of what elements EFL learners believe are essential for an EFL instructor to possess in order to result in teacher success. Amongst their findings, one notable aspect highlighted the learners' belief that an effective teacher possesses the remarkable faculty to heighten students' assurance and belief in their capabilities to successfully complete assigned tasks, namely general self-efficacy. Allari et al. (2020) also saw the roots of the nursing students' high general self-efficacy in the caring behavior they receive.

Teacher Concern

Thus far in the literature, Hall et al. (1986) gave a general definition of the term 'concern' and referred to it as "the composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought, and consideration given to a particular issue or task" (p. 5). Pishghadam et al. (2022) focused on one's concern for the other, defining it as an emo-cognitive capacity enabling individuals to get engaged with others' mental and emotional states. They argued that individuals exhibit varying degrees of concern towards others' circumstances. Drawing on the emotioncy model (Pishghadam et al., 2013), the first level of concern can be attributed to apathy. Those who are apathetic towards others' situations lack any emotional connection and consequently demonstrate no signs of caring behavior. One step further is sympathy, which involves recognizing and acknowledging the emotional state of others (Jahoda, 2005) or offering verbal responses in return (Pishghadam et al., 2022), although it does not entail taking active measures to assist them. Pishghadam et al. (2022) elucidated upon the utmost level of concern an individual can possess, drawing upon the concept of being metavalued with their condition and adopting a forward-thinking approach towards it. Embracing metapathy, as they denominated it, individuals at this stage show concern for others' future prospects and transformative potential, setting such people apart from those who exhibit lower levels of concern. Pishghadam et al. (2022) extended this notion to EFL teachers specifically who may manifest varying degrees of concern toward their students' welfare, classifying them into four distinct categories (apathizers, sympathizers, empathizers, and metapathizers) based on their differing levels of concern in relation to their learners' state (Al Abdwani et al., 2025).

Inspired by EFL teacher's varying levels of concern, Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, and Al Abdwani (2023) classified EFL teachers into distinct categories, namely energy drainers, energizers, energy boosters, and energy creators, as they saw one root of students' accomplishment and achievement in the energy their teacher puts in the classroom. The discussion of various levels of concern an individual may have toward others was further expanded in the investigation of Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al. (2023), adding a new level of concern, transpathy, to the previously introduced levels of concern by Pishghadam et al. (2022) (Figure 1).

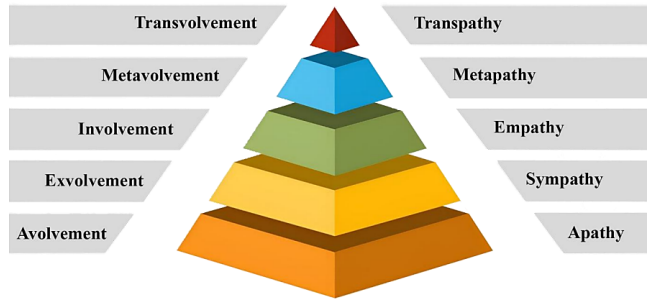


Figure 1. New Concern Types (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al., 2023)

Hasanzadeh et al. (2024) put TC into investigation along with EFL students' motivation, anxiety and language achievement. While TC was found to be a significant positive predictor of EFL students' motivation, it negatively predicted their anxiety. They also reported its positive prediction for foreign language achievement.

EFL Learners' Self-efficacy

Putting forward the idea of self-efficacy, Bandura (1986) described it as "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to attain the designated type of performance" (p. 391). In sum, when it comes to students' self-efficacy, it deals with how competent they are in accomplishing a task. With respect to the EFL setting, numerous studies have been conducted focusing on EFL learners' self-efficacy and its relationship with different constructs in relation to the English language (e.g., Setiawati et al., 2023). There is also another line of research emerging from the fact that one's self-efficacy differs according to the context (Zhang, 2022), and therefore, depending on the area under investigation, various types of self-efficacy have been identified. For instance, in relation to the field of EFL, English self-efficacy has been the focus of researchers (e.g., Qusay, 2020). It was described as the learners' understanding of their ability in the four essential skills for the purpose of mastering the English language, namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing (Li & Zhou, 2022). Among the recent studies, Wang et al. (2023) found that EFL instructors should reduce the learners' foreign language anxiety and improve their English learning self-efficacy through activities developing the learners' learning adaptability.

Apart from the learners' English self-efficacy, their self-efficacy in general has also been put into investigation by scholars in the field of EFL (e.g., Chung et al., 2021; Marashi & Dakhili, 2015). As a recent investigation of the relationship between EFL learners' general self-efficacy and their achievement, the study of Bouih et al. (2021), with the aid of path analysis, concluded that the higher the learners' GSE, the more successful they would be. They also realized that female learners had higher self-efficacy beliefs compared to males. Considering both GSE and ESE, the study of Hosseini Fatemi and Vahidnia (2013) also reported a positive correlation between the learners' motivation and their English and general self-efficacy.

Overall, the reviewed evidence suggests that there has been no discussion on the interconnectedness between EFL teacher concern, EFL teacher success and EFL learners' general and English self-efficacy in the literature, considering all the aforementioned variables in a single study. The first objective of the present research, therefore, is to investigate the association between TC, TS, and EFL learners' GSE and ESE. More specifically, there are studies substantiating a positive link between EFL teacher concern and EFL teacher success without

conducting statistical analysis (e.g., Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al., 2023; Soudkhah Mohammadi & Shayesteh, 2023). Also, EFL teacher concern has been found to significantly and positively predict EFL learners' motivation (Hassanzadeh et al., 2024), and as EFL learners' motivation is positively linked to their ESE and GSE (Hosseini Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013), the following structural model was proposed for the sake of investigating the predictive power of EFL teacher concern for EFL teacher success and EFL learners' English and general self-efficacy, for the second and third objective of the present study (Figure 2).

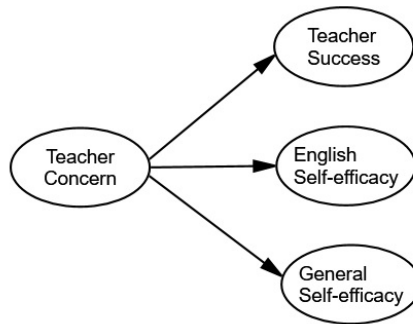


Figure 2. The Primary Hypothetical Model of TC, TS, EFL Learners' ESE, and GSE

To address the outlined gaps, the following research questions are formulated:

1. Is there any relationship between EFL teachers' levels of concern, EFL learners' general self-efficacy, EFL learners' English self-efficacy, and teacher success?
2. Can EFL teacher concern predict EFL teacher success?
3. Can EFL teacher concern predict EFL learners' general self-efficacy and EFL learners' English self-efficacy?

Accordingly, the below null hypotheses are addressed:

H01. There is no relationship between EFL teacher concern, EFL learners' self-efficacy, and EFL teacher success.

H02. EFL teacher concern cannot predict EFL teacher success.

H03. EFL teacher concern cannot predict EFL learners' self-efficacy.

Method

Participants

For the present research, a total of 265 Iranian EFL learners (56 males and 209 females) in the age range of 16 to 49 ($M = 27.07$; $SD = 7.69$) were selected through convenience sampling. The participants were different individuals from various cities in Iran (e.g., Mashhad, Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz) who replied to our questionnaires through Google Forms. The participants belonged to three proficiency groups: intermediate ($N = 137$), upper intermediate ($N = 88$), and advanced ($N = 40$), having at least three years of English learning experience.

Instrumentation

In what follows, four questionnaires used in the study are elucidated:

Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ)

In order to measure the success of EFL teachers, CSTQ, exclusively developed for the Iranian setting and, therefore, in Persian language, was employed. Shaping the questionnaire items according to university professors, EFL instructors, and EFL learners' viewpoints and comments, in addition to the existing teacher success questionnaires (e.g., Gadzella, 1971), Pishghadam and Moafian (2009) took a step toward construction and also validation of CSTQ, through Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). It is made up of two parts: the first part seeks to find out some information about learners' gender, age, EFL teacher's name, degree, and level of proficiency, while the second part is a 47-item section about the learners' English instructors, followed by a five-point Likert scale, varying from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). This section encompasses 12 sub-constructs yielded by factor analysis, namely, teaching accountability (7 items), interpersonal relationships (7 items), attention to all (5 items), examination (3 items), commitment (3 items), learning boosters (6 items), creating a sense of competence (4 items), teaching boosters (4 items), physical and emotional acceptance (2 items), empathy (2 items), class attendance (2 items), and dynamism (2 items). As far as the total reliability of this questionnaire is concerned, it was reported to be high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$). For the present study, its reliability was .97. Sample items include "S/he emphasizes on important topics and points" (teaching accountability), "S/he establishes a friendly relationship with the students" (interpersonal relationships), "S/he evaluates and grades fairly and impartially" (examination), and "S/he gives students opportunities to ask questions and participate in class discussions" (attention to all).

Teacher Concern Scale (TCS)

The TCS, in Persian, was applied for the sake of measuring EFL learners' understanding of their teacher concern. Being developed and made valid by Pishghadam et al. (2022) and Hasanzadeh et al. (2024), TCS entails four subconstructs, namely apathy, sympathy, empathy, and metapathy. The six items allocated to each sub-scale form the overall 24 Likert-type items of this questionnaire, varying from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Its reliability was reported to be 0.90 by Pishghadam et al. (2022), and as for the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.96.

Self-efficacy Scales

As one's self-efficacy varies across various activities and domains and taking into account the idea of Bandura (2006), "there is no all-purpose measure of perceived self-efficacy" (p. 307), the researchers had better to adopt a type of task-specific and domain-specific measurement of this

construct rather than only relying on their participants' general self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). For the mentioned purpose, two questionnaires, one measuring students' English self-efficacy and the other measuring their general self-efficacy, were used in the present study.

Questionnaire of English Self-efficacy (QESE)

As for the measurement of EFL learners' English self-efficacy, QESE, backtranslated and validated by Rezaee Sharif et al. (2018), was used. Shaping the questionnaire items using the students of college and through observations, interviews, focus groups, and expert consultation, and after some amendments to the choice of words in its previous version, Wang et al. (2014) took a step toward development and validation of QESE through Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). It has 32 seven-point items of Likert type, varying from "not at all confident" (1) to "extremely confident" (7), and covers four subconstructs, including listening (8 items), speaking (8 items), reading (8 items), and writing (8 items). The total reliability of this questionnaire is reported to be .97, and its subscales are in the range of .88 to .92. The reliability of its translated version was Cronbach's Alpha .90 and calculated to be .98 in the present research.

General Self-efficacy Scale (GSES)

EFL learners' general self-efficacy was measured through GSES, originally designed and validated by Sherer et al. (1982), translated and validated by Asgharzadeh et al. (2006). Entailing 17 questions on a five-point Likert scale, varying from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), the overall score in this measure ranges from 17 to 85, with higher scores showing greater general self-efficacy. The reliability of the translated version has been reported to be .83, calculated to be Cronbach's Alpha .91 in the present study.

Procedure

The process of data collection started in April 2023 and ended in May 2023. Compiling the four questionnaires, including TCS, QESE, GSES, and CSTQ, in Google Forms, the researchers sent the online version of the questionnaires via Telegram to various channels and groups having EFL learner members from different English language institutions in Iran. Being culturally adapted, the translated versions of the non-Persian scales were used to facilitate participants' more effective interaction with the questions, ensuring minimal room for misunderstanding to occur (Tsai et al., 2023). Not only were the participants assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, but they were also informed of the purpose underlying the tests and the significance of providing honest responses. In order to test the null hypotheses, not only the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26, but also Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), version 26, were applied. Explaining the steps in detail, followed by descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the interrelationships among the variables of the study, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to reveal whether EFL teacher concern could significantly predict their success and learners' ESE and GSE.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for CST, TC, ESE, and GSE are presented in Table 1. The Skewness and Kurtosis values, being within the range of -2 and +2, led to the confirmation of the normal distribution of the data. Additionally, reliability coefficients were established.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates for CST, TC, ESE, and GSE Scales

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability
CST	115	235	200.25	26.47	-.69	.07	.97
Teaching Accountability	16	35	30.58	4.09	-1.02	.98	.87
Interpersonal Relationships	12	35	30.32	4.42	-1.02	1.12	.89
Attention to All	8	25	21.19	3.65	-.97	.67	.89
Examination	5	15	11.94	2.42	-.53	-.29	.73
Commitment	6	15	13.11	1.79	-1.01	1.14	.70
Learning Boosters	9	30	24.80	4.26	-.73	.28	.87
Creating a Sense of Competence	6	20	15.64	3.27	-.60	-.06	.82
Teaching Boosters	10	20	17.27	2.50	-.68	-.34	.74
Physical and Emotional Competence	5	10	9.14	1.11	-1.27	1.36	.70
Empathy	3	10	8.72	1.37	-1.08	1.07	.71
Class Attendance	4	10	9.00	1.16	-.94	.57	.76
Dynamism	3	10	8.53	1.54	-1.18	1.18	.70
TC	44	120	91.61	15.98	-.34	.07	.96
Apathy	6	29	11.49	4.51	.93	.88	.89
Sympathy	12	30	22.21	4.50	-.10	-.47	.86
Empathy	9	30	22.92	4.34	-.61	.42	.89
Metapathy	6	30	21.97	4.90	-.20	-.19	.92
ESE	82	224	170.39	30.99	-.24	-.38	.98
Listening	19	56	40.69	8.57	-.06	-.61	.92
Speaking	22	56	44.42	7.98	-.44	-.41	.93
Reading	16	56	42.12	8.19	-.25	-.34	.92
Writing	16	56	43.16	8.31	-.46	-.14	.92
GSE	39	85	62.76	10.35	-.07	-.49	.91

Correlational Analysis

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the possible relationships between the variables in the study. The results, presented in Table 2, show that some of the variables have statistically significant correlations with each other. More specifically, CST has a significant positive relationship with TC ($r = .70, p < .01$) and three of its subconstructs, namely sympathy ($r = .54, p < .01$), empathy ($r = .65, p < .01$), and metapathy ($r = .55, p < .01$). Conversely, CST is significantly and negatively correlated with apathy ($r = -.71, p < .01$) as a subconstruct for TC. Additionally, CST has a significant positive relationship with ESE ($r = .16, p < .01$) and all its subconstructs, namely listening ($r = .14, p < .05$), speaking ($r = .17, p < .01$), reading ($r = .17, p < .01$), and writing ($r = .13, p < .05$). Significant positive correlation is also found between CST and GSE ($r = .29, p < .01$). TC is positively correlated with CST ($r = .70, p < .01$) and all its subconstructs, that is, teaching accountability ($r = .64, p < .01$), interpersonal relationships ($r = .64, p < .01$), attention to all ($r = .56, p < .01$), examination ($r = .48, p < .01$), commitment ($r = .52, p < .01$), learning boosters ($r = .67, p < .01$), creating a sense of competence ($r = .68, p < .01$), teaching boosters ($r = .59, p < .01$), physical and emotional competence ($r = .44, p < .01$), empathy ($r = .43, p < .01$), class attendance ($r = .37, p < .01$), and dynamism ($r = .58, p < .01$). TC is also positively correlated with ESE ($r = .21, p < .01$) and all its subconstructs, including listening ($r = .20, p < .01$), speaking ($r = .21, p < .01$), reading ($r = .20, p < .01$), and writing ($r = .19, p < .01$). Moreover, there is a significant positive correlation between TC and GSE ($r = .18, p$

20. Listening	.14	.12	.13	.10	.11	.13	.15	.15	.17	.08	.02	.02	.10	.20	-.19	.19	.1	.1	.9	.9	1			
21. Speaking	.17	.16	.15	.13	.10	.15	.16	.17	.22	.10	.08	.09	.12	.21	-.25	.15	.2	.1	.9	.77	1			
22. Reading	.17	.15	.16	.11	.12	.14	.16	.14	.18	.12	.05	.07	.13	.20	-.19	.18	.1	.1	.9	.87	.81	1		
23. Writing	.13	.15	.11	.11	.07	.10	.12	.12	.17	.07	.04	.06	.09	.19	-.21	.18	.1	.1	.9	.80	.90	.86	1	
24. GSE	.29	.29	.20	.24	.20	.28	.28	.21	.27	.21	.22	.21	.30	.18	-.22	.16	.1	.1	.2	.22	.28	.22	.25	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SEM Analysis

To check the predictive power of the independent variables, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted through Amos. As a result of the modifications made to our initial hypothetical model, four models (Figures 3, 4, 5, & 6) were proposed for the prediction of the dependent variables. Goodness of fit indices showed that the models fit the data adequately (see Table 3). The first model (Figure 3) verifies the power of the subconstructs of TC in predicting TS. As Figure 3 illustrates, while apathy negatively predicts TS ($\beta = -.51, p < 0.001$), empathy ($\beta = .16, p < 0.05$) and metapathy ($\beta = .18, p < 0.05$) positively predict TS.

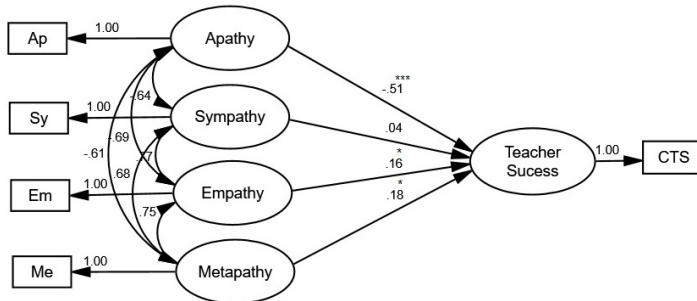


Figure 3. The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among the Subconstructs of TC and TS (Model1)

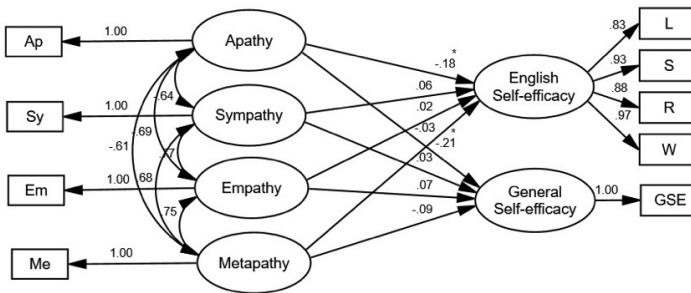


Figure 4. The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among the Subconstructs of TC, ESE, and GSE (Model 2)

The third model (Figure 5) verifies the power of TC in predicting students' ESE and GSE with TS as the mediator. The bootstrap analysis of mediation was performed for the indirect effects. As Figure 5 illustrates, TC is a positive predictor of TS ($\beta = .68, p < 0.001$) and ESE ($\beta = .19, p < 0.05$). Moreover, TS positively predicts students' GSE ($\beta = .32, p < 0.001$). Mediated by TS, TC is a positive predictor of students' GSE ($\beta = .22, p < 0.01$) but not their ESE.

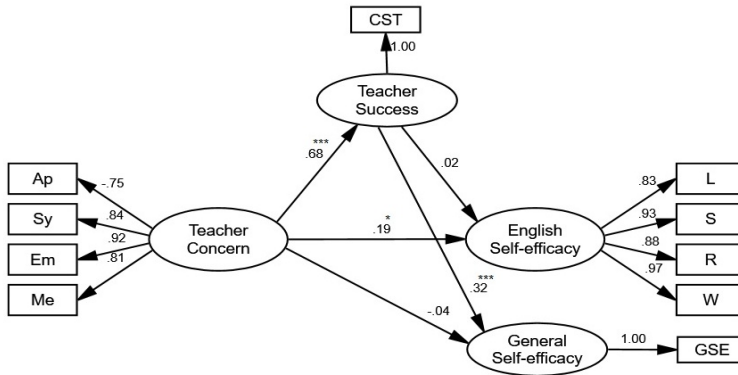


Figure 5. The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among TC, ESE and GSE with TS as the Mediator (Model 3)

The fourth model (Figure 6) verifies the power of TC in predicting TS with students' ESE and GSE as the mediators. The bootstrap analysis of mediation was performed for the indirect effects. As Figure 6 illustrates, TC is a positive predictor of ESE ($\beta = .21, p < 0.01$) and GSE ($\beta = .19, p < 0.01$). It also predicts TS directly ($\beta = .67, p < 0.001$). Moreover, GSE positively predicts TS ($\beta = .15, p < 0.001$). Mediated by students' GSE, TC is a positive predictor of TS ($\beta = .03, p < 0.01$). However, mediated by ESE, TC does not predict TS.

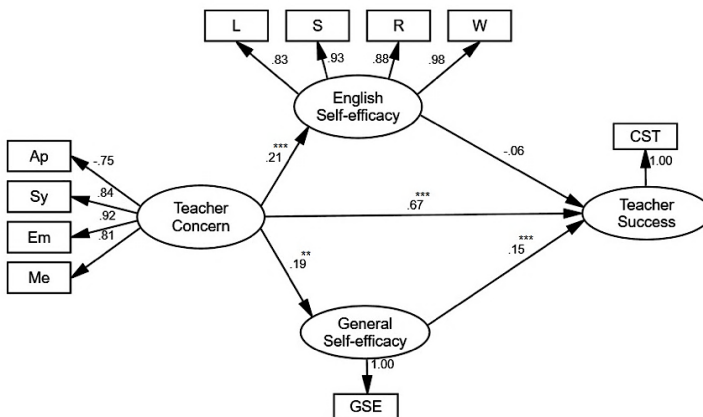


Figure 6. The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among TC and TS with ESE and GSE as the Mediators (Model 4)

To see whether the models fit the data, goodness of fit indices were calculated using Amos. Table 3 shows the relative chi-square (i.e., chi-square index divided by the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df)), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of

Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Squared Error (SRMR). The criterion for acceptance is different across researchers. In the present study, values for χ^2/df should be less than 3 (Ullman, 2001), TLI and CFI were over .90, and RMSEA and SRMR were equal to or less than .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

Table 3
Goodness of Fit Indices for the Models

Models	χ^2/df	Df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1 (Figure 3)	2.47	2	.99	.98	.07	.01
Model 2 (Figure 4)	2.42	17	.99	.97	.07	.06
Model 3 (Figure 5)	1.83	30	.99	.98	.06	.06
Model 4 (Figure 6)	1.90	30	.99	.98	.06	.06

Discussion

The present study was an attempt to find out the role EFL teacher concern plays in their success in addition to their learners' English and general self-efficacy. In this regard, the first aim of the proposed study was to realize whether there are any significant relationships among the aforementioned variables and, second, to probe into the predictability of EFL instructor concern for their success in addition to EFL learners' ESE and GSE, as the last objectives.

In response to the first research question regarding the existence of any interrelationships among the three variables of the study, the results of the conducted analysis suggested a positive correlation among the constructs and all their subconstructs, except for teachers' apathy with an existing negative relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there are no relationships among EFL teacher concern, EFL learners' ESE, GSE, and TS could be rejected. In detail, justifying the found link and breaking teacher concern into its subconstructs, the results displayed a positive correlation between sympathy, empathy, and metapathy of EFL teachers towards the learners and the learners' GSE and ESE and a negative correlation between teacher's apathy and learners' ESE and GSE, suggesting that the more EFL instructors show behaviors such as, recognizing the learners' states, showing understanding of their conditions, providing them with verbal response to their states (sympathy), going further by attempting to help them with their situation (empathy), or being concerned about the learners' future in addition to sympathy and empathy (metapathizers) (Pishghadam et al., 2022), the more EFL learners feel competent in general and also in the four English language skills, namely speaking, listening, writing, and grammar. Also, the more EFL teachers' behavior manifests their indifference and lack of concern towards their learners, the less the learners feel they are able both in the English language and in general. The gained results are accountable as previously established that an English classroom atmosphere cultivated with teacher's kindness, sympathy, and empathy and any type of teacher's behavior that shows their caring and concern for the students brings about the engagement of the EFL learners (e.g., Lumpkin, 2007; Souderjani et al., 2021; Sun, 2021; Zhang, 2022). This engagement is achieved by reducing the learners' stress level (Zhang, 2022) and increasing their motivation (Ge et al., 2021; Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, it has been confirmed that higher motivation in EFL learners leads to greater general and English self-efficacy (e.g., Hosseini Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013). Therefore, the existence of a positive relationship between EFL teachers' sympathy, empathy, and metapathy, as types of teacher concern, with their learners' GSE and ESE, is not unexpected. Also, a negative connection between instructor's apathy, due to their lack

of concern and not having a contribution to the learner's engagement, and the learners' ESE and GSE is not unlikely. Hassanzadeh et al. (2024) have found that EFL teacher concern significantly and positively predicts EFL learners' motivation, and as EFL learners' motivation is positively linked to their ESE and GSE (Hosseini Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013), lack of teacher concern or apathy could be negatively related to learners' GSE and ESE.

The found relationship between EFL teacher concern and their success is logically accountable as various levels of concern could be considered as strokes provided by the teacher. For instance, the feedback offered verbally by a sympathetic EFL teacher could be taken as a verbal stroke (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al., 2023). Thus, as it has been found that EFL teachers' stroking behavior is positively correlated with their pedagogical success (Pishghadam et al., 2021), the mentioned link between TC and teacher success is not far-fetched.

In response to the second research question on whether EFL teacher's concern for the learners predicts their success, the result of SEM analysis signified that EFL teacher concern positively and directly predicts their success. In fact, EFL learners find their instructor successful as a result of the concern their instructor shows towards them. This is in harmony with the theoretical finding reported by Soudkhah Mohammadi and Shayesteh (2023), calling the readers' attention to the existing missing link between EFL teacher concern and their success in the literature. Moreover, the yielded finding is in accordance with the study of Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al. (2023), asking EFL learners to express how successful they think teachers with various levels of concern are and reaching the conclusion that EFL learners counted teachers of all levels of concern, except for apathetic teachers, to be successful but specified different degrees of success to each level of concern. Furthermore, the predictability of EFL teacher concern for their success is compatible with the study of McBee (2007) showing that caring is a contributor to teachers' success. Moreover, the aforementioned findings conform to the ones yielded by the study of Elizabeth et al. (2008), whose framework, developed from instructor interviews, identified "caring for students" as a key personal attribute of effective EFL teachers. This attitude is also in harmony with the studies of other scholars in search of what attributes make a successful teacher (e.g., Barnes & Lock, 2010; Quan, 2022; Stronge, 2007).

The result of SEM analysis also showed that EFL teacher concern mediated by students' GSE is a positive predictor of TS, meaning that if an EFL teacher's concern for the learners leads to the learners' sense of self-belief in their general capability to do tasks, it may result in EFL learners' regarding their teacher to be successful. This is consistent with the research conducted by Salahshour and Hajizadeh (2013) on the fact that successful EFL teachers have the ability to shape the learners' self-belief and general self-efficacy. Therefore, the second null hypothesis regarding no predictability between the two variables is rejected as EFL teacher concern predicts their success both directly and indirectly through the mediation of GSE.

In terms of the predictability of each component within the TC for TS, the findings extracted from SEM analysis indicated that apathy negatively leads to TS. Conversely, empathy and metapathy positively lead to this construct. This means that when EFL teachers display indifference and disinterest towards their students' situations, it contributes to the learners' perception of their instructor's ineffectiveness. On the other hand, when EFL instructors demonstrate genuine concern for their students' circumstances and readiness to provide assistance in various situations (empathy) or even express worry about their future prospects (metapathy), it fosters a strong belief among learners in their teacher's effectiveness and accomplishments. This result aligns with the one obtained by Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al. (2023) who sought to elicit EFL learners' perspectives on the success levels of teachers displaying various degrees of concern, including apathy, sympathy, empathy, metapathy, and transpathy. The findings revealed that EFL learners considered teachers at all levels of concern, including

empathetic and metapathetic instructors and excluding those apathetic in nature, to be successful. Nonetheless, they attributed distinct degrees of success to each level of concern. The result regarding EFL teacher's apathy is also in agreement with Powell and Parker (2016) regarding the teachers who do not have any concern for the learners as those who are not successful.

In response to the third research question concerning the predictive power of EFL teachers' levels of concern for their learners' self-efficacy and taking into account the fact that the existence of a correlation between variables does not necessarily show whether one could lead to the other, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to delve into the predictability of EFL teacher concern for the learners' self-efficacy and further confirm the results gained by the correlational analysis. The result of SEM indicated that EFL teacher concern is a positive predictor of EFL learners' GSE and ESE, implying that EFL learners may feel competent not only generally but also in the skills pertaining to the English language as a result of realizing that their EFL teacher is concerned about them. Considering teacher concern as facilitator of positive teacher-learner bond, the gained results support the study of Li and Yang (2021), who believed such a positive bond could foster the learners' GSE. Due to the significant relationship between EFL learners' GSE and ESE (Chung et al., 2021), it could lead to the learners' ESE likewise. As for the prediction of EFL teacher's concern for the learners' GSE, the result of SEM analysis also showed that TC could predict learners' GSE through the mediation of TS, meaning that if EFL teacher's concern for the learners leads to their pedagogical success, it may result in EFL learners' GSE as a result of having a successful teacher. This finding could be logically justified as being the student of a successful teacher may give the learners a sense of confidence in themselves and their competencies as they are supported by an effective teacher. Hence, the third null hypothesis, establishing that TC could not predict EFL learners' GSE and ESE, is rejected.

Looking at each subconstruct of TC and their predictability for learners' GSE and ESE, the negative predictability of EFL teacher's apathy for learners' GSE and ESE is elicited from SEM analysis. This means that as soon as the learners feel that their instructor is indifferent toward them and has no concern for them, they may feel doubtful of their ability to perform well both in general and in English language skills. The achieved result is justifiable as caring teacher-learner links positively influence the learners' GSE (Li & Yang, 2021), and learners' GSE has the potential to lead to their ESE (Chung et al., 2021), a teacher-learner bond that is not caring and is characterized by teacher's apathy could negatively predict learners' GSE and ESE.

Conclusion

The present study resulted in a positive correlation between TC, TS, EFL learners' GSE, and ESE. TC is also found to be a positive predictor of TS, learners' GSE, and ESE. These findings have practical implications significant for educational managers, teacher trainers, EFL teachers, EFL learners, and researchers. First, this investigation enhances teacher trainers' knowledge of the positive link between EFL teacher concern, learners' ESE, GSE, and TS, in addition to the fact that teacher concern could positively predict the learners' ESE and GSE, plus TS. Consequently, teacher educators could highlight the importance of this issue in the training courses designed for future EFL instructors and lead to EFL teachers' awareness of the important role their concern plays not only in learners' self-efficacy but also in their own success. As a result of such an awareness, EFL teachers could opt to avoid apathy towards the learners and instead show concern towards them in order to seed the belief of "I can" in their minds, leading to the learners' high levels of self-efficacy. Furthermore, teacher trainers could orient their teacher training course planning into practices that pave the way for fostering concerned future EFL teachers instead of apathetic ones. Managers could also elicit some information related to EFL teachers' concern for the learners in teacher recruitment processes to avoid hiring apathetic and indifferent educators.

However, the present study had some limitations that could be bridged in future research. For instance, even though the relationship found between the variables was statistically significant, most of them were not particularly strong. This could be attributed to the fact that there might be an unaccounted third variable that is influencing the relationships observed in the study. To gain a better understanding of the weak relationships, future studies could consider incorporating additional variables that may have confounded the correlations observed in this study. Furthermore, with an increased sample size, researchers are empowered to discern subtle correlations more effectively. Thus, it is highly advisable to employ a larger sample size in forthcoming investigations. Towards the end of our study, Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Rajabi Esterabadi et al. (2023) introduced an additional level of concern, namely transparency. It would also be beneficial to conduct a similar study, taking this new level of concern into account as well.

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