



Paper Type: Original Article



## Iranian EFL Teachers' Motivation, Burnout, and Cognition in Relation to Engagement in Continuous Professional Development

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Received: 12 April, 2025

Revised: 10 February, 2025

Accepted: 7 March, 2025


### Abstract

The current study examined the role of EFL teachers' motivation in shaping their engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs and the perceived outcomes of these programs for their cognitive development and burnout. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, 43 teachers completed validated questionnaires on motivation, cognition, and burnout, followed by semi-structured interviews with a subsample of 15 participants. The quantitative results revealed that intrinsic motivation positively predicted engagement in CPD, whereas extrinsic motivation was negatively associated with engagement and positively related to burnout. Intrinsic motivation was negatively correlated with burnout. The qualitative findings supported these patterns, highlighting four major themes including 1) lack of regular CPD programs, 2) misalignment between CPD content and teachers' practical needs, 3) financial incentives and job security, and 4) the need for a supportive workplace environment. Grounded in the Self-Determination Theory, this study provides empirical evidence on how contextual and motivational factors interact to shape teacher cognition and well-being. The implications of this research are discussed for policy and institutional practice, emphasizing the design of regular, relevant, and well-supported CPD programs to sustain teacher motivation, mental health, and instructional quality.

**Keywords:** Teacher motivation, Continuing professional development (CPD), Teacher cognition, Teacher burnout, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), EFL teachers.

## I | INTRODUCTION

Numerous Teacher quality is widely recognized as a central determinant of student learning outcomes (Hattie, 2012; Schwille, 2007). Continuous professional development (CPD) is one of the primary institutional strategies aimed at improving teacher competence and sustaining professional growth (Borg, 2018). CPD encompasses a range of activities, such as classroom inquiry, lesson study, peer observation, collaborative planning, and action research, which offer teachers opportunities for reflection and practice-focused learning (Day & Sachs, 2004; Borg, 2015; Farrell, 2008). Empirical research further corroborates the importance of CPD for teacher quality in EFL contexts. For instance, the studies conducted in Iranian EFL settings demonstrate that teachers' engagement in reflective practice, collaboration, and knowledge updating through CPD activities significantly contributes to their effectiveness and professional success (Ravandpour, 2019; Saeidi et al., 2024). These findings suggest that sustained participation in CPD not only enhances instructional competence but also strengthens teachers' professional confidence and classroom performance.

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Cite this article: Okhovvat, B., Alipour, J., Hashemian, M., (2026), Iranian EFL Teachers' Motivation, Burnout, and Cognition in Relation to Engagement in Continuous Professional Development, *Journal of Studies in Language Learning and Teaching*, 2(2), 32-45. doi: 10.22034/jsllt.2026.23959.1101



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Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a useful lens for understanding how and why teachers engage in CPD. SDT distinguishes between autonomous (*intrinsic*) and controlled (*extrinsic*) forms of motivation and predicts that autonomously motivated individuals, namely those who experience a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness, are more likely to pursue learning for its own sake and to sustain effort over time (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, controlled forms of motivation, which rely on external rewards or pressures, are less likely to support deep learning and may be associated with *stress* and *burnout* (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Applying SDT to CPD implies that the psychological orientation of teachers influences both their engagement with professional learning and the extent to which CPD translates into cognitive and behavioral changes.

Two outcome constructs are particularly relevant for evaluating CPD. They are a) teacher cognition, i.e., the beliefs, knowledge, and thinking that guide practice (Borg, 2003), and b) burnout, a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Although research on teacher cognition and CPD has expanded (Burns & Richards, 2009; Farrell, 2015), much of the existing literature mainly focuses on examining motivation, professional development, cognition, and emotional outcomes separately. Previous studies have investigated aspects of teacher motivation or professional development participation (Ravandpour, 2019; Qamariah & Hercz, 2025), yet few empirical studies have simultaneously examined how motivational orientations shape CPD engagement and how such engagement relates to both cognitive development and burnout, particularly within non-Western EFL contexts. Moreover, many existing studies exclusively use cross-sectional survey data, limiting deeper explanations of how and why quantitative relationships occur in real teaching environments.

Therefore, the present study aims to explore the interrelationships among EFL teachers' motivational orientations, their engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) programs, their cognition of technology integration, and their perceived burnout. By adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations relate to teachers' professional growth and well-being. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between EFL teachers' motivation and their engagement in CPD programs?
2. Is there a relationship between EFL teachers' motivation and their perceptions of the impacts of CPD programs on their cognition?
3. Is there a relationship between EFL teachers' motivation and their perceptions of the impacts of CPD programs on their burnout?

To triangulate the quantitative phase of the study, a qualitative phase was designed with the following research question:

4. How do Iranian EFL teachers explain the ways in which continuing professional development programs relate to their motivation, cognition, and burnout?

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Teacher Motivation and Learning

Teacher motivation to engage in professional learning has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing various internal and external drivers (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Within the teaching profession, motivation influences “what attracts individuals to teaching, how long they remain in the profession, and the extent to which they engage with it” (Sinclair, 2008, p. 80). Depending on the research focus, teacher motivation can refer to motivation for teaching, research, or professional development (Yang, 2021), with the latter receiving growing attention in recent scholarship.

Among the theoretical frameworks, self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) has been most widely employed to explain teacher motivation. SDT distinguishes three major forms of motivation, intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation, situated along a continuum from autonomy to control. Intrinsic motivation reflects engagement driven by inherent interest or enjoyment, whereas extrinsic motivation involves participation due to external incentives or pressures, subdivided into external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Amotivation denotes the lack of intention to act. According to SDT, individuals' sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness determines the extent to which they internalize and sustain their motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020).



Research indicates that intrinsically motivated teachers display higher levels of engagement and more student-centered teaching practices (Froiland & Worrell, 2016; Hein et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2014). However, such motivation does not emerge automatically (Yang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Contextual factors such as institutional autonomy, workload, and support mediate the extent to which teachers can maintain their self-determined motivation (Han & Yin, 2016). Importantly, teachers' motivation to participate in professional learning appears to depend not only on personal dispositions but also on their perceptions of workplace autonomy and collegial support (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Nevertheless, empirical evidence on how different motivational orientations translate into cognitive or affective changes through CPD participation remains limited, particularly in EFL contexts.

## 2.2 Research on Teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The enhancement of teacher quality has been recognized as a central component of educational improvement (Borg, 2018). Continuing professional development (CPD) provides a structured avenue for in-service teachers to refine their pedagogical and professional competences (Day & Sachs, 2004). Despite this consensus, there is ongoing debate about how teachers' motivation shapes the outcomes of CPD initiatives.

Previous reviews report inconsistent evidence regarding the effectiveness of CPD (Gegenfurtner, 2011; Lawless & Pellegrino, 2007; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). One frequently cited reason for this inconsistency is the neglect of teacher motivation in the design and implementation of CPD programs (Guskey, 1986; Kennedy, 2016). Teachers driven by autonomous motivation tend to engage more deeply and sustainably in professional learning (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2016; Liu et al., 2018), whereas those with controlled motivation may participate only for external validation or institutional obligation. Moreover, contextual constraints, such as limited institutional support, prescriptive program structures, and top-down delivery, often inhibit meaningful engagement (Han & Yin, 2016).

While prior research highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation, the specific relationship between EFL teachers' motivation types and their perceived CPD outcomes has not been clearly established (Yang, 2021). This gap underscores the need to examine CPD engagement not merely as participation, but as a psychologically mediated process influenced by motivational orientation and contextual realities.

## 2.3 Teacher Cognition

The construct of teacher cognition, defined as the "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching: what teachers know, believe, and think" (Borg, 2003, p. 1), has gained substantial attention in TESOL research (Basturkmen, 2012; Farrell & Ives, 2014; Wyatt & Ager, 2016). Cognitions are dynamic and context-dependent, evolving as teachers acquire new experiences and reflect on their practices. However, empirical findings on the relationship between beliefs and practices remain inconclusive; while some studies reveal alignment (Kuzborska, 2011), others report partial or no correspondence (Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2015; Yuan & Lee, 2014). These inconsistencies often stem from contextual constraints, including rigid curricula and exam-oriented policies (Zheng & Borg, 2013).

Teacher education programs, including CPD, have shown potential to reshape teachers' cognitions (Burgess et al., 2000; Peaco; Mattheoudakis, 2007), yet such transformation is contingent on the nature of the training. For instance, Wyatt and Ager (2016) found that excessive top-down CPD may demotivate teachers and misalign with their professional beliefs. Given this, understanding how CPD participation influences EFL teachers' cognitive orientations remains a pertinent area for investigation.

## 2.4 Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is a psychological syndrome marked by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). It poses serious challenges to teacher well-being and instructional quality. Burnout has been linked to job dissatisfaction, poor school climate, and higher attrition rates (Berkowitz et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2019). Empirical evidence suggests that burnout negatively correlates with teaching quality (Cook et al., 2016) and student achievement (Shen et al., 2015). However, the potential moderating role of CPD participation in alleviating burnout remains underexplored.

The existing literature primarily examines burnout from individual and organizational perspectives (Klusmann et al., 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), neglecting the potential of professional learning as a buffer against emotional exhaustion. Considering the inherently demanding nature of EFL teaching



(Brasfield et al., 2019; Hiver & Dörnyei, 2015), exploring how motivation-driven engagement in CPD may mitigate burnout could offer both theoretical and practical insights.

Despite the growing body of research on teacher motivation, professional development, cognition, and burnout, the existing studies have extensively examined these constructs in isolation or through single-method quantitative designs. In particular, prior research has often highlighted either teachers' motivation for professional learning or the outcomes of professional development programs without simultaneously investigating how motivational orientations relate to engagement in CPD and how such engagement connects to both cognitive development and burnout. Moreover, empirical evidence from non-Western EFL contexts remains limited, and many studies rely exclusively on cross-sectional survey data, which prevents the full understanding of the mechanisms underlying observed statistical relationships. Consequently, there remains a need for integrative research employing mixed-method approaches to explore how motivational, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of teachers' professional experiences interact within CPD contexts. The present study addresses this gap by examining the interrelationships among EFL teachers' motivational orientations, CPD engagement, cognition regarding technology integration, and perceived burnout through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 45 EFL teachers (27 females and 18 males) working at different branches of the Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Shiraz. Their ages ranged from 25 to 46 years ( $M = 33.8$ ,  $SD = 5.9$ ), and their teaching experience varied from 3 to 18 years ( $M = 9.4$ ,  $SD = 3.7$ ). All the participants were Persian-speaking English instructors teaching adult and young adult learners.

To control for potential background effects, demographic information such as educational degree, years of experience, and teaching level was collected to ensure the sample's homogeneity. The teachers were selected through convenience sampling, and efforts were made to include instructors across proficiency levels to enhance representativeness.

Although demographic variables such as gender, age, and years of teaching experience were collected, they were not included as analytical variables because the main purpose of the study was to examine relationships among motivational orientations, CPD engagement, cognition, and burnout rather than to investigate demographic differences. In addition, the relatively limited sample size restricted the feasibility of conducting reliable subgroup comparisons or multivariate controls. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples may further examine how demographic factors influence teachers' professional development engagement and motivational patterns.

#### 3.2 Materials and Instruments

The study employed three main instruments including two standardized questionnaires and one researcher-developed questionnaire along with a semi-structured interview protocol in line with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2013). All the instruments were selected or developed to align with the theoretical framework of the study and the research questions. In order to enhance methodological transparency while respecting copyright constraints, a selection of representative sample items from each questionnaire and the interview protocol are provided in Appendix A.

##### 3.2.1. Teacher Motivation Inventory (TMI)

Teachers' motivation to participate in continuing professional development (CPD) programs was measured using the Teacher Motivation Inventory (TMI) developed by Lam, Cheng, and Choy (2010). The instrument consists of 20 items across four subscales including external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation. The responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). In the present study, the TMI demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ). The sample items include "*I attend CPD because I find it personally rewarding*" (intrinsic motivation) and "*I participate because it helps me meet institutional expectations*" (external regulation). Some representative items from the TMI are presented in Appendix A.

##### 3.2.2. Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES)

Teacher burnout was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), which comprises 22 items measuring emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and

personal accomplishment. The responses were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 5 (Every day).

The internal consistency reliability of the MBI-ES in this study was satisfactory (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$ ), consistent with the values reported in previous Iranian EFL research (Zhaleh et al., 2018). The burnout scores were interpreted such that higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and lower levels of personal accomplishment indicated greater burnout. Some representative items are provided in Appendix A.

### 3.2.3. Teacher Cognition Questionnaire (researcher-developed)

To assess the perceived changes in the teachers' cognition regarding CPD participation and ICT integration, a researcher-developed questionnaire was designed based on Borg's (2003) conceptualization of teacher cognition. The instrument consisted of 15 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The content validity was established through expert review by two applied linguistics specialists with experience in teacher education. A pilot study with 12 EFL teachers was conducted to examine clarity and relevance of the items, leading to minor revisions. The internal consistency in the main study was acceptable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ). A sample item is "CPD programs have helped me integrate new technologies effectively into my teaching." Some representative items from the researcher-developed questionnaire are provided in Appendix A to illustrate item content and construct coverage.

### 3.2.4. Semi-structured Interviews

To complement the quantitative findings and provide explanatory depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 15 teachers (33% of the total sample). The interview protocol was designed to explore the teachers' perceptions of CPD effectiveness, motivational challenges, and cognitive changes related to instructional practices and burnout experiences.

The interview questions were reviewed by two experts for content relevance and clarity prior to the data collection. The interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. They were conducted in Persian to ensure the participants' comfort and expressiveness and were audio-recorded with informed consent. For qualitative reliability, two independent coders analyzed the interview data, achieving high interrater agreement (Cohen's  $\kappa = .86$ ). A selection of representative interview questions is presented in Appendix A.

### 3.2.5. Procedure

The data collection followed an explanatory sequential design. In the first (quantitative) phase, the three questionnaires were administered to all the 45 participants online via Google Forms. The outliers ( $n = 2$ ) were removed after screening for inconsistent responses, leaving 43 valid cases for analysis.

In the second (qualitative) phase, interviews were conducted to further explain and interpret the quantitative findings. The interviewees were selected through maximum variation sampling to ensure diversity in teaching experience and motivation levels. All the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, signed a consent form, and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. To minimize bias, the interviewer was not affiliated to the participants' institution.

## IV. RESULTS

### 4.1 Relationship between Teachers' Motivation and CPD Engagement

The first research question examined the relationship between the teachers' motivational orientations and their engagement in CPD programs. As reported in Table 1, Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant negative correlation between extrinsic motivation and CPD engagement ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ), while intrinsic motivation was positively but weakly associated with engagement ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ).

A linear regression analysis further examined the predictive role of motivation (see Table 1). The results indicated that intrinsic motivation positively predicted CPD engagement ( $\beta = .37, p = .02$ ), whereas extrinsic motivation negatively predicted engagement ( $\beta = -.41, p = .01$ ). The regression model explained 14% of the variance in engagement ( $R^2 = .14$ ). These findings suggest that intrinsic motivation encourages teachers to participate actively in CPD, whereas extrinsic motivation is associated with reduced engagement.



**Table 1.** Correlations and regression coefficients between motivation and CPD engagement

Motivation type	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Intrinsic motivation	.18	.37	.02	.14
Extrinsic motivation	-.26	-.41	.01	.14

**Note.** *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient,  $\beta$ =standardized regression coefficient, *p* = significance value, *R*<sup>2</sup> =explained variance. *P* < .05 (2-tailed)

**4.2 Relationship Between Motivation and Perceived Cognitive Impact**

The second research question focused on the relationship between motivational orientations and the teachers’ perceived cognitive gains from CPD programs. As shown in Table 2, intrinsic motivation was positively correlated with the perceived cognitive gains (*r* = .21, *p* < .05), while extrinsic motivation indicated a small negative correlation (*r* = -.17, *p* < .05).

The regression results (see Table 2) indicated that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted cognitive gains ( $\beta$  = .31, *p* = .04), whereas extrinsic motivation did not reach statistical significance ( $\beta$  = -.21, *p* = .09). The model explained 9% of the variance in the perceived cognitions (*R*<sup>2</sup> = .09). These findings suggest that intrinsically motivated teachers are more likely to perceive improvements in their pedagogical knowledge, although effect sizes are modest, highlighting the influence of contextual factors beyond motivation.

**Table 2.** Correlations and regression coefficients between motivation and teacher cognition

Motivation type	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Intrinsic motivation	.21*	.31	.04	.09
Extrinsic motivation	-.17	-.21	.09	.09

**Note.** *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient,  $\beta$ =standardized regression coefficient, *p* = significance value, *R*<sup>2</sup> = proportion of variance explained. *P* < .05 (2-tailed)

**4.3 Relationship Between Motivation and Teacher Burnout**

The third research question examined how motivational orientations related to the teachers’ perceived burnout levels following CPD participation. As indicated in Table 3, extrinsic motivation was strongly positively correlated with burnout (*r* = .81, *p* < .01), whereas intrinsic motivation was strongly negatively correlated (*r* = -.87, *p* < .01).

The regression analysis (see Table 3 below) further confirmed these relationships. Intrinsic motivation significantly reduced burnout ( $\beta$  = -.78, *p* < .001), while extrinsic motivation significantly increased it ( $\beta$  = .69, *p* < .001). The model explained 61% of the variance in burnout (*R*<sup>2</sup> = .61). These results indicate that intrinsic motivation functions as a protective factor against burnout, whereas extrinsic motivation may heighten emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

**Table 3.** Correlations and regression coefficients between motivation and burnout

Motivation type	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Intrinsic motivation	-.87**	-.78	< .001	.61
Extrinsic motivation	.81**	.69	< .001	.61

**Note.** *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient,  $\beta$ =standardized regression coefficient, *p* = significance value, *R*<sup>2</sup> = proportion of variance explained. \*\**p* < .01.

**4.4 Teachers’ Qualitative Perceptions of CPD, Cognition, and Burnout**

In order to provide explanatory depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers explored how CPD programs could influence cognition and burnout. The thematic analysis identified four major themes:

Theme 1: Lack of regular and structured CPD programs

The teachers noted that irregular scheduling reduced engagement and the sustained benefits of CPD. As one teacher noted:

“CPD programs are meaningful, but they’re held so irregularly that we lose momentum and enthusiasm.”

Theme 2: Financial incentives and job security

Participation was often tied to external rewards, explaining why extrinsic motivation correlated with burnout. One participant stated:

“We want to learn and grow, but when CPD comes with extra workload and no pay rise, it’s hard to stay motivated.”

Theme 3: Misalignment of CPD content and classroom needs

The teachers reported limited practical application of CPD content, clarifying why cognition gains were modest despite statistical significance. As one of them said:

“We rarely get actionable strategies from CPD sessions. They feel too abstract and detached from our teaching reality.”

Theme 4: Workplace environment and supportive leadership

The participants frequently mentioned that lack of supportive and administrative leadership contributed to stress and burnout. The supervisors’ supportive behavior was considered crucial to sustaining motivation:

“We feel more confident when our supervisors guide us instead of judging us.”

#### 4.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integrating quantitative and qualitative findings allowed for meta-inferences. Convergence was evident; the majority of teachers described CPD participation as externally driven, aligning with the strong quantitative association between extrinsic motivation and burnout. Divergence occurred in cognition; although intrinsic motivation predicted cognitive gains, the teachers reported limited practical impact due to CPD-practice misalignment.

These integrated findings support the Self-Determination Theory and demonstrate how motivational processes operate within the specific institutional context of Iranian EFL teaching. Triangulation was achieved across the theory, method, and environment, ensuring interpretive depth and construct validity.

## V. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the relationships among Iranian EFL teachers’ motivational orientations, engagement in continuing professional development (CPD), perceived cognitive gains, and burnout using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. By integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings, the study offers a contextualized understanding of how motivation shapes teachers’ professional learning and well-being.

The quantitative results demonstrated that intrinsic motivation positively predicted engagement in CPD, whereas extrinsic motivation negatively predicted engagement. This pattern is in line with the Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing the fact that sustained engagement is more likely when professional learning is internally endorsed rather than externally imposed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Similar findings have been reported in EFL contexts, where teachers’ engagement in CPD is shown to depend largely on perceived autonomy and relevance (Nasimi & Ghaemi, 2022; Nessaei & Kazemi, 2024; Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al., 2018).

Regarding teacher cognition, intrinsic motivation was found to be a modest but significant predictor of perceived cognitive gains, while extrinsic motivation showed no meaningful predictive power.

This result aligns with previous research suggesting that genuine cognitive change is facilitated by reflective and self-directed engagement rather than compliance-driven participation (Qi & Derakhshan, 2023; Samii et al., 2024). The relatively small effect size is further explained by the qualitative findings indicating that CPD content is often perceived as misaligned with classroom realities, a concern widely noted in prior research (Li & Mohammad, 2025).

The regression analyses further showed that intrinsic motivation exerts a small but statistically significant influence on teachers’ perceived cognitive gains, whereas extrinsic motivation demonstrates a weak and non-significant association. This pattern suggests that the cognitive outcomes of CPD are more closely linked to teachers’ internalized reasons for participation than to externally driven incentives. Such results are consistent with earlier research indicating that meaningful cognitive change among teachers is fostered through reflective engagement and sustained professional inquiry rather than compliance with institutional requirements (Borg, 2003; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Zheng & Borg, 2013).

The strongest relationships emerged in relation to burnout. Intrinsic motivation, representing an autonomous motivational orientation, was strongly and negatively associated with burnout, whereas



extrinsic motivation was strongly and positively associated with burnout. These findings reinforce the assumption of SDT that controlled forms of motivation (e.g., external or introjected regulation) tend to produce stress, emotional exhaustion, and less well-being (Maslach et al., 1996; Schaufeli et al., 2009). In contrast, autonomous motivation protects teachers against burnout by fostering a sense of purpose and professional fulfillment (Alexander et al., 2020). The findings are also in line with earlier evidence that controlled forms of motivation are linked to emotional exhaustion and reduced well-being, particularly in demanding EFL contexts (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Qi & Derakhshan, 2023). Within the Iranian EFL context, where teachers often experience heavy workloads, limited resources, and restricted professional agency (Yaghoubinejad et al., 2017), intrinsic motivation appears to serve as a key psychological buffer against emotional depletion.

The interview data further clarified that financial pressure, job insecurity, and limited institutional support contributed to burnout, echoing the concerns raised in Iranian and regional EFL research (Ravandpour & Elmer, 2018; Nasimi & Ghaemi, 2022).

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative strands allowed for the development of meta-inferences. Convergence was observed in the relationship between extrinsic motivation and burnout, while partial divergence emerged in cognition outcomes, where statistical associations were tempered by contextual constraints. These findings highlight the importance of designing CPD programs that support teachers' autonomy, align with instructional needs, and are embedded within supportive institutional environments (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025).

## VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study focused on examining the interplay between Iranian EFL teachers' motivational orientations, engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) programs, perceived cognitive gains, and burnout. The findings indicate that intrinsic motivation, operationalized as autonomous motivation, serves as a vital catalyst for teachers' active engagement in CPD and as a protective factor against burnout. In contrast, extrinsic motivation appears to undermine engagement and is associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The quantitative analyses demonstrated these relationships statistically, while qualitative insights clarified the contextual mechanisms, including irregular CPD structures, misaligned content, limited institutional support, and financial pressures. Collectively, the results underscore that motivation, cognition, and burnout are interdependent phenomena, shaped by both individual psychological orientations and institutional realities.

While these findings provide valuable insights, several limitations must be considered. The sample size was modest ( $n = 43$ ), and the participants were drawn from a single institutional context, which limits the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the quantitative data and reliance on self-report instruments restrict causal inferences. Nonetheless, the use of multiple data sources, triangulated instruments, and integration of qualitative evidence enhances the internal validity and explanatory power of the study. Future research could replicate this work with larger, more diverse samples, employ longitudinal designs to examine changes in motivation and burnout over time, and incorporate behavioral or observational measures to complement self-report data.

The study has several practical and theoretical implications. First, CPD programs should be intentionally designed to promote autonomous motivation rather than compliance-driven participation. This can be achieved by involving teachers in co-designing CPD content, providing flexible participation options, and aligning sessions with teachers' actual classroom challenges. Second, institutions must consider financial and job-security factors as contextual facilitators of motivation; when teachers' basic needs are met, they are more likely to engage enthusiastically in professional learning. Third, a supportive and collaborative workplace environment is essential. Supervisors and administrators should highlight developmental mentoring over evaluative observation, guiding teachers in reflective practice and instructional improvement. Fourth, teacher mental health and well-being initiatives should be integrated into institutional policy to prevent burnout and sustain long-term professional growth.

In conclusion, the present study emphasizes the complex but actionable relationship between motivation, cognition, and burnout in the EFL teaching context. The evidence drawn from the integration of quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates that enhancing intrinsic motivation and addressing

institutional and contextual barriers can meaningfully improve teachers' engagement, cognitive development, and psychological well-being. These insights provide evidence-based guidance for policymakers, administrators, and teacher educators seeking to develop CPD programs that truly empower teachers to learn, reflect, and thrive within their professional environment.



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## Appendix A.

Sample Items From the Instruments

### A1. Teacher Motivation Inventory (Lam et al., 2010)

To respect copyright restrictions, only representative items are presented.

I participate in CPD because I find it personally meaningful.”.”

I attend CPD to meet expectations from my institution.”.”.

“I enjoy learning new teaching approaches.”

Response format:

Five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

### A2. Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (Maslach et al., 1996)

Sample items are as follows

“I feel emotionally drained from my work.”

“I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.”

“I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work.”

Response format:

6-point frequency scale (0 = never to 5 = every day).

### A3. Teacher Cognition Questionnaire (Researcher-developed)

“CPD programs have influenced the way I think about teaching.”

“I am more aware of alternative instructional strategies after CPD.”

“I critically evaluate my teaching beliefs following professional learning.”

Response format:

5-point Likert scale.

### A4. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Sample Questions)

How do CPD programs influence your teaching beliefs or classroom decisions?

What motivates or discourages you from participating in CPD?

In what ways, if any, has CPD affected your stress or burnout levels?

What improvements would make CPD more useful for you?