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Exploring the Relationship between Iranian English Language Teachers' Sense of Autonomy and Perfectionism

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Abstract

Teachers play a crucial and influential part in teaching/learning contexts and teacher-related features have gained a great deal of attention in the realm of teacher education and development. Among teacher-related factors, perfectionism and autonomy are regarded as two influential factors which play crucial roles in teachers' and learners' performance. Several research studies have tried to investigate their impacts on language teachers' performance. However, no studies have so far explored the association between Iranian EFL teachers' perfectionism and autonomy. Thus, the current research was undertaken to examine the association between Iranian EFL teachers' perfectionism and autonomy. To do this, 82 English language teachers (34 males and 48 females) were selected as the participants of the study. They were asked to fill out teacher autonomy and perfectionism questionnaires. The results of the data analysis revealed that EFL teachers' sense of perfectionism and autonomy were positively related. The findings of the present study can be helpful for syllabus designers, teacher educators, and language teachers.

Keywords: autonomy, EFL teachers, perfectionism, teacher autonomy, teacher education

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1. Introduction

According to Khany and Malekzadeh (2015), teachers are regarded as the most important and influential component of an education system. As Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) argued, in order to understand teachers, it is necessary to consider their personal, professional, and cultural identities. The sense of perfectionism as one of the most important teacher-related factors has been very much attended by psychologists and educators in the realms of education and English language teaching (ELT) (Erozkan, Dogan, & Adiguzel, 2016). According to Pacht (1984), perfectionism refers to "holding standards that are beyond reach or rationality, straining to reach those impossible goals, and defining one's worth by the accomplishment of those standards" (p. 386). Also, as Hollender (1965) held, perfectionists are people who "are too concerned about details and pay too much attention to orderliness and regularity" (p. 98).

The main properties of perfectionism, according to Accordino, Accordino, and Slaney (2000), are willingness to succeed, unrealistic and elusive goals, and an extreme striving to get to those objectives. Moreover, as Flett and Hewitt (2002) stated, as a multidimensional construct, perfectionism has two aspects as adaptive and maladaptive. As they put it, regarding its orientation, perfectionism has three types as self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially-prescribed. In accordance with Flett and Hewitt (2002), self-oriented perfectionism involves putting high degree of motivation and standard for oneself. However, other-oriented perfectionism includes expecting perfect performance from others as well as putting high standards for them. Also, socially-prescribed perfectionism is concerned with others setting unrealistic standards for people and expecting them to be flawless (Hewitt & Flett, 2002).

Also, as Vahasantanen (2015) held, teacher autonomy is one of the teacher-related features which has a significant impact on teachers' instructional practice. As Street (1988) put it, teacher autonomy is "the independence teachers maintain in exercising discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions" (p. 4). Furthermore, as Huang (2005) asserts, teacher autonomy is "teachers' willingness, capacity, and freedom to take control of their own teaching and learning" (p. 206). Later, Chuk (2010) expanded this definition and stated that teacher autonomy refers to "teachers' willingness, capacity, and freedom to take control of their teaching and teacher-learning while collaborating with others across contexts" (pp. 59-60). Besides as Lawson (2004) put, an autonomous teacher is "one who would be more willing to pass control over the learning process to those engaged in it, so that learning becomes a collaborative effort, rather than the imposition of knowledge from above" (p. 3).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study of second/foreign language (SL/FL) learning and teaching has provided novel chances for researchers and educators so as to concentrate on some concepts causing changes in the process of SL/FL teaching/learning. Humans have always struggled to be perfect and this tendency to perfection and its impacts on human behavior have been the focus of attention of psychologists and theoreticians. Teachers are no exceptions as they have always attempted to do their best in their classes and gain the highest possible degree of their perfect self. As Dunkley and Blankstein (2000) stated, it has been proven that perfectionism plays a vital role in teachers' stress and their reactions to their learners' actions. In accordance with Flett and Hewitt (2002), perfectionists try to be flawless and set high standards of performance for themselves. Several studies have been conducted on perfectionism in both clinical research and personality psychology (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Likewise, in the realm of teacher education some research studies have been conducted on teachers' perfectionism and its effects on teachers' and learners' performance (Birjandi & Bagherzadekazemi, 2010; Fakhari, 2019; Ghaemi & Sadeghi Fard, 2016; Javadi, 2014; Kilmen, 2022; Yildizbas & Topuz, 2014). However, the results of studies on the role of perfectionism in individuals' achievement and learning are controversial. Therefore, further studies, particularly in the Iranian context, are needed to gain further insight into the impact that perfectionism plays on other teacher related variables.

Moreover, according to Ryan and Deci (2000), autonomy is a basic psychological need for all human beings. It is also, as Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan (2003) put it, a vital human concern which forms the basis of teachers' sense of professionalism. Different studies have been carried out on the effect and significance of teacher autonomy (Day, 2002; Fadaee, Marzban, & Najaf Karimi, 2021; Singh Negi & Laudari, 2022; Smith & Ushioda, 2008; Strong & Yoshida, 2014; Zhang, Jin, & Cui, 2022) and reported that it is an effective factor in education and teachers' performance. Considering the effectiveness and significance of teachers in SL/FL teaching/learning process, few studies have examined the effect of teachers' autonomy in the process of language teaching and learning, especially in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context of Iran. Also, the concept of perfectionism alongside with other variables among teachers has been investigated by different researchers. However, the association between English language teachers' sense of autonomy and perfectionism has been rarely explored. Thus, the current research was an

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effort to examine the association between EFL teachers' sense of perfectionism and their autonomy in Iranian EFL context.

1.2 Significance and Justification of the Study

As Wang and Zhang (2014) stated, teacher autonomy should be promoted. They argued that "finding ways to support teacher research for developing teacher autonomy is vital to sustain the continuity of the curriculum reform" (p. 223). Considering the significant role of teachers in the realm of education, conducting studies to examine teacher-related factors, such as autonomy and perfectionism, and their effects on teachers' performance and development can give a thorough understanding of factors that can influence teachers' performance. Therefore, the current study can contribute to the field of teacher education and development by providing some data on the possible interplay between teachers' perfectionism tendencies and their level of autonomy. In addition, the findings of this study can provide valuable insight for EFL teachers and teacher educators. This study can be regarded as of significance and novelty since it reported the first research study to investigate the bond between Iranian English language teachers' autonomy and perfectionism.

1.3 Research Question

Based on the topic of the present study, the following research question was formulated:

RQ: Is there any relationship between perfectionism and autonomy of Iranian EFL teachers?

2. Literature Review

According to Hollender (1965), perfectionism refers to "the state of demanding of oneself or others a higher quality of performance than is required by the situation and trying hard for total success in a specific task" (p. 94). Also, a perfectionist, as Flett and Hewitt (2002) stated, is a person who "strives for faultlessness and exactness with unneeded high standards for performance is a perfectionist" (p. 32). Also, in accordance with Shafran, Cooper, and Fairburn (2002), perfectionists are often afraid to make mistakes, and evaluate their self-worth in terms of accomplishment and productivity. Throughout the history, the notion of perfectionism has undergone several changes. According to Burns (1980) and Patch (1984), perfectionism was first viewed as a maladaptive, unidimensional, and unhealthy phenomenon and was discussed in terms of negative cognitive factors by early psychology scholars. They argued that perfectionists are people with high expectations who evaluate their self-worth on the basis of fulfilling their expectations. According to Burns (1980), perfectionists are "people who strain unremittingly toward impossible goals and measure their own worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment" (p. 34). In the traditional view, perfectionists were regarded as people lacking self-confidence with a negative view that they always need to surpass their current accomplishment (Missildine, 1963).

In contrast, many of the contemporary researchers (Frost, Heimberg, Holt, Mattia, & Neunauer, 1993; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Rice & Slaney, 2002; Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi, & Ashby, 2001) considered perfectionism as a multidimensional construct. Hamachek (1978) altered the unidimensional view of perfectionism and introduced a two-faced account of perfectionism as normal and neurotic. According to Hamachek (1978), normal perfectionists set high standards and accept their mistakes and imperfections. They are mostly organized, prefer order, try for excellence in their performance, and strive to make proper use of the construct. However, neurotic perfectionists have a highly restricted range of acceptable and self-determined standards that are hardly achievable. When they perform tasks, neurotic perfectionists are nervous and seldom feel pleased with their performance. In general, their self-confidence depends on their achievements (Hamachek, 1978).

In addition, since 1990s, the construct of teacher autonomy has been increasingly attended in SL/FL education research. This growing attention indicates changes in language teacher education and emphasizes the importance of the role of language teachers in classroom (Benson, 2001; Benson & Huang, 2008; Crandall, 2000). The idea of teacher autonomy, as a key feature affecting the quality of education, has begun to gain momentum in recent years and has been known as a key factor influencing the development of learner autonomy in SL/FL learning. In language education, teacher autonomy originated from two main sources: teacher education and SL/FL education. The former pertains to the field of teacher education which considered teachers as expert technicians. However, this view gradually adopted a constructivist approach viewing teachers as self-directed learners and reflective practitioners who sought both educational development and personal transformation. Following this, language teachers were regarded as autonomous teachers that are aware of "not only how to teach but also how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula, and textbooks" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33).

The latter is related to the key roles teachers play in enhancing learner autonomy in language teaching/learning settings. It is argued that teacher autonomy needs to be increased in order to enhance learner autonomy (Benson, 2001;

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Little, 1995; McGrath, 2000; Thavenius, 1999). Little (1995) was the first scholar who introduced the notion of teacher autonomy into language education. According to him, it is impossible to implement the principles of learner autonomy in formal educational settings without teachers having "a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising, via continuous reflection and analysis, the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers" (Little, 1995, p. 179). This can be reflected in Thavenius's (1999) definition of teacher autonomy which refers to language teachers' "ability" and "willingness" to help students accept the responsibility for their learning (p. 160). In other words, autonomous teachers are those who can reflect on their roles and aid their learners to gain independence and autonomy in their learning (Thavenius, 1999). In this sense, Huang (2005) asserts that there are two reasons to apply the concept of learner autonomy to the discussion of teacher autonomy. First, both learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are concerned with autonomy; and second, teachers are also learners (Huang, 2005). As a result, as the prerequisite for learner autonomy, teacher autonomy needs to be highly appreciated by language teachers and language institutes (Jiménez Raya, Lamb, & Vieira, 2007; Jiménez Raya & Sercu, 2007; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Nakata, 2011).

2.1 Empirical Studies

Birjandi and Bagherzadekazemi's (2010) reported a positive association between Iranian English language teachers' perfectionism and their professional success. Saljoughi and Nemati (2015) explored the association between teachers and students' autonomy. They found that there was no positive relationship between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy. Xu (2015) found a positive relationship between teachers' professional growth and autonomy. Ghaemi and Sadeghi Fard (2016) suggested that there were significant relationships among math and English teachers' leadership, empowerment, and perfectionism in the context of Iran. Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki (2016) examined the impact of EFL teachers' anxiety on the association between their perfectionism and burnout levels. The results of his study indicated that anxiety had a significant effect on the relationship between EFL teachers' perfectionism and burnout. Sadoughi (2017) investigated the relationship between Iranian high-school teachers' personality traits, perfectionism, and job burnout and found a significant relationship between negative perfectionism and job burnout.

Fakhari (2019) examined the relationship between novice and experienced EFL teachers' perfectionism and creativity and reported a positive association between novice and experienced EFL teachers' perfectionism and creativity. Shirazizadeh and Karimpour (2019) investigated the bond among perfectionism, reflection, and burnout among Iranian EFL teachers. They found a significant correlation between EFL teachers' reflection and burnout; however, their findings indicated no significant association between the teachers' perfectionism and burnout. Derakhshan, Coombe, and Arabmofrad (2020) studied the bond among Iranian teachers' autonomy, professional identity, and success and found a significant positive interrelationship among these variables. Cirocki and Anam (2021) investigated Indonesian EFL teachers' understanding of teacher autonomy and found that in relation to seven specific areas of their work, teachers' sense of autonomy was relatively high. Fadaee and Marzban (2021) conducted a comparative study between male and female EFL teachers' autonomy and teaching styles. They reported that male teachers' sense of autonomy was significantly higher than the females. Fadaee et al. (2021) reported a positive association between autonomy, teaching style, and personality traits of English language teachers in the context of Iran.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

The present study was a descriptive study with a descriptive-correlational design. This design is employed to investigate the possible association between two variables. Also, this type of design is not used to explore the cause/effect association between the variables. As the current research study was carried out to examine the relationship between two teacher-related features, i.e. perfectionism and autonomy, the descriptive-correlational design was selected.

3.2 Participants

The data required for the study was gathered from English language teachers teaching English to various levels at English language institutes, high schools, and universities in Bukan, West Azerbaijan, Iran. At the beginning, the number of EFL teachers taking part in the study was 87; however, only 82 teachers who provided complete answers to the questionnaire items were considered for the final analysis. Therefore, 82 EFL teachers (34 males and 48 females) constituted the participants of this study. The participants held degrees in different related majors to English language (English literature, English Translation, English Teaching) at B.A, M.A, and Ph.D. levels. Their age range was between 21 to 50 years old, and their teaching experience was more than two years. The teachers participating in this study were chosen on the basis of their willingness to participate. Thus, the participants were chosen non-randomly

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on the basis of convenient non-random sampling. The detailed information of the teachers taking part in the current research are provided in the following table.

Table 1. The information of participants

Number of the participants	82 EFL teachers (34 males and 48 females)
Educational degree	B.A, M.A, and PhD.
Fields of study	English language teaching, English translation, and English Literature
Age	21 to 50 years old
Teaching experience	Over 2 years
First language background	Kurdish

3.3 Instruments

The following instruments were employed to collect the data needed for the purpose of the study.

3.3.1 Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS)

In order to collect the participants' ideas and views with regard to perfectionism, MPS questionnaire designed by Hewitt and Flett (1991) was used. It is a 45-item questionnaire measuring self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially-prescribed as the three dimensions of perfectionism. It involves a seven-point Likert-scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Also, in MPS, the minimum score is 45 and maximum score is 315. According to the scoring criteria, the higher the score of an individual, the higher his/her degree of perfectionism. Also, the reliability and validity of this questionnaire have been approved in multitude of studies. Regarding the current research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient equaled 0.82 which showed an acceptable level of reliability.

3.3.2 Teacher Autonomy Questionnaire (TAQ)

To evaluate the level of autonomy of English language teachers participating in the present research, TAQ prepared by Pearson and Hall (1993) was utilized. TAQ measures the perception of teachers from their autonomy in: (a) choosing tasks and materials, (b) standards of classroom conduct, (c) instructional planning and sequencing, and (d) personal on-the-job decision making. It involves 18 items and measures teachers' autonomy on a 4-point Likert scale. The answers range from 1 (Definitely True) to 4 (definitely false). Furthermore, the questionnaire includes two more subsections which measure general autonomy and curriculum autonomy. Also, considering its reliability, the results of Cronbach's alpha was 0.78, which indicated that TAQ worked well in terms of consistency.

3.4 Procedure

The data collection phase of the present study involved the following steps. First, EFL teachers were contacted in person, by phone, email, and social media and their consent was taken to take part in this research. The number of EFL teachers participating in the current research was 82 including 34 males and 48 females. They were chosen on the basis their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Then, they were provided with some information and details about the objectives of the study and were ensured that their answers and data would be kept confidential. After that, the two questionnaires selected for the aims of the study, i.e. multidimensional perfectionism scale (MPS) and teacher autonomy questionnaire (TAQ), were distributed among the participants through email and social media applications like Whats App, Telegram, Eitaa, and iGap. The participants were asked to complete them and send the filled questionnaires back to the researcher. Having collected the completed questionnaires, the answers provided by the participants were scrutinized and rated in accordance with the rating scales of the questionnaires. Finally, the collected data were analyzed so as to find out the answer for the research question posed in the current study. It needs to be noted that a statistician was asked to help in order to ensure the precision and accuracy of the scoring procedure and data analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

After the data were collected, the data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Cronbach alpha was run to determine the reliability of Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) and Teacher Autonomy Questionnaire (TAQ). Also, descriptive statistics was used to determine the frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation of MPS and TAQ to identify the participant teachers' levels of perfectionism and

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autonomy. In addition, to determine the correlation between MPS and TAQ, Pearson Product-moment correlation coefficient was run. The results of the data analysis as well as their explanations are presented in the following sections.

4. Results

The results of the data analysis are provided in the following sections.

4.1 Testing Normality Assumption

To examine the normality of the data distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed. Table 2 includes the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for autonomy and perfectionism.

Table 2. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

Statistic	df	Sig.
Perfectionism	81	0.08
Autonomy	81	0.13

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used to check the normality of the data distribution. If the significance value for an item is larger than 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05) it means that the data is normally distributed. According to Table 2, the significance values reported for perfectionism and autonomy were 0.08 and 0.13, respectively. Since significance values of both variables, i.e. perfectionism (0.08 > 0.05) and autonomy (0.13 > 0.05), were larger than 0.05, it was inferred that the data were normally distributed with regard to the two variables of the study.

4.2 Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaires

In order to examine the reliability of the items in the questionnaires employed in this research, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. The results of the reliability analysis for Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability statistics of perfectionism questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.82	45

Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) contains 45 items and measures three dimensions of perfectionism (self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially-prescribed). According to Table 3, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for MPS equaled 0.82. Since the degree of Cronbach's alpha for MPS was greater than 0.8 (0.82 > 0.8), it can be inferred that MPS enjoyed a good degree of reliability index. Furthermore, Table 4 shows the results of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of teachers' autonomy questionnaire.

Table 4. Reliability statistics of autonomy questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.78	18

The teacher autonomy questionnaire (TAQ) used in this study included 18 items. It was used to measure teachers' degree of autonomy. In order to figure out whether TAQ was a reliable instrument, Cronbach's alpha was employed to check the reliability index of TAQ. As the data presented in Table 4, the value of Cronbach's alpha for TAQ was 0.78. This coefficient value indicates that the teacher autonomy questionnaire employed in this study can be considered as completely reliable tool for eliciting the needed information from the participants.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of the data analysis are provided in the following table.

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Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of EFL Teachers' Perfectionism and Autonomy

	N	Min.	Max.	M	Std.
Perfectionism	82	114	264	189.4	33.68
Autonomy	82	43	69	53.27	5.39

As can be seen in table 5, the minimum and maximum scores for Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) with 45 items were 114 (Min. = 114) and 264 (Max. = 264), respectively. Also, the mean score of teachers' perfectionism was 189.4 (M = 189.4) with standard deviation of 33.68 (Std. = 33.68). Regarding teacher autonomy questionnaire (TAQ), in accordance with Table 5, the range of the participants' scores for teacher autonomy with 18 items was between 43 (Min. = 43) and 69 (Max. = 69). Furthermore, the mean teachers' scores for autonomy was 53.27 (M = 53.27) with standard deviation of 5.39 (Std. = 5.39).

4.4 Inferential Statistics

In order to examine the association between perfectionism and autonomy of Iranian English language teachers and find an answer for the research question posed in this study, Pearson Correlation test was employed. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of Pearson's Correlation between teachers' perfectionism and autonomy

		Perfectionism	Autonomy
Perfectionism	Pearson Correlation	1	0.29**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
	N	82	82
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	0.29**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	N	82	82

In accordance with Table 6, the correlation between 82 (N= 82) EFL teachers' perfectionism and autonomy was 0.29 (Pearson Correlation = 0.29). Also, the significance level equaled 0.00 (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.00) which was less than 0.05 (0.00 < 0.05). According to statistical rules pertained to Pearson Correlation, if the significance level is less than 0.05 (Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05), there is a significant association between the variables. Therefore, based on the results of Pearson Correlation test presented in Table 6, there was a significant correlation between Iranian English language teachers' perfectionism and autonomy. It can be inferred that the senses of perfectionism and autonomy of the EFL teachers participating in the current research study were positively correlated, i.e. as perfectionism increases, EFL teachers' autonomy increases, too.

5. Discussion

The present study attempted to investigate the possible bond between English language teachers' perfectionism and autonomy. In accordance with the results of Pearson correlation analysis, there existed a positive association between Iranian English language teachers' perfectionism and autonomy. This means that perfectionistic views and behaviors obtained through the answers to the items in the questionnaire, could contribute to the autonomous behaviors of teachers. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers with a high degree of perfectionism have a high degree of autonomy as well. Thus, based on the results obtained from the data analysis, the answer to the research question posed in the current study "*Is there any relationship between perfectionism and autonomy of Iranian EFL teachers?*" was positive as teachers who were perfectionist were supposed to be autonomous, too.

The findings of the current study are in agreement with the results of the following studies. Some studies have shown that certain characteristics of teachers are related to their professional development. For example, Iranian English teachers who had higher levels of perfectionism were more successful in their careers, according to Birjandi and Bagherzadekazemi (2010). Xu (2015) also reported a positive link between teachers' autonomy and their professional

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growth. Moreover, Ghaemi and Sadeghi Fard (2016) found that leadership, perfectionism, and empowerment were significantly associated among Iranian math and English teachers. Some research has explored how different aspects of teachers' personalities and beliefs are connected to their professional development. For instance, Fakhari (2019) reported a significant link between the levels of perfectionism and creativity of novice and experienced EFL teachers. Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2020) revealed a significant positive relationship among Iranian teachers' professional identity, autonomy, and success. Furthermore, Cirocki and Anam (2021) examined Indonesian EFL teachers' views on teacher autonomy and found that the teachers in their study had a relatively high degree of autonomy in seven specific areas of their work. Some studies have investigated how Iranian English language teachers' autonomy, teaching style, and personality traits are related. Fadaee et al. (2021) found a positive link between these variables. However, their results contradict the findings of other researchers who did not find any positive relationship between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy (Saljoughi & Nemati, 2015) or between teacher perfectionism and burnout (Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, 2019).

Stoeber and Otto (2006) distinguished between two aspects of perfectionism: perfectionism strivings and perfectionism concerns. Perfectionism strivings are positive and relate to positive attributes, processes, and outcomes. However, perfectionism concerns are negative and associate with negative features, processes, and outcomes (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Stoeber et al. (2009) found a significant link between striving and performance. They discovered that the participants who scored high on perfectionism had better performance and higher achievement goals. Thus, the results of the present research can be justified by the fact that there is an association between positive perfectionism and other positive qualities and performances like autonomy. Also, the findings of the current research can be imputed to the fact that teachers' perfectionist inclinations are channeled into generating creative thoughts and ideas, beneficial resources, as well as excellent teaching and performance (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Furthermore, as Little (1995) asserted, teachers' autonomy predicts their success in a positive way, i.e. teacher autonomy plays a significant part in teachers' level of success. According to Little (1995), an influential teacher is the one who is autonomous, accepts a strong sense of responsibility in their teaching, exercises a considerable level of affective and cognitive control in teaching, and attains the autonomy manifested by these feelings. As autonomous teachers are effective and responsible, they set some high goals for their work and do their best to achieve them. As a result, such teachers have a high degree of perfectionism. That is, their sense of autonomy makes them perfectionist. These ideas provide some support and justification for the findings of the current research study.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the current research indicated that Iranian English language teachers' perfectionism was positively correlated to their autonomy. In contrast to the dominant traditional belief regarding the negative maladaptive role of perfectionism, the findings of the current research lent more support for the healthy positive dimension of perfectionism. Thus, it can be inferred that being a perfectionist helps teachers, especially EFL teachers, improve their sense of responsibility and control the teaching process. Furthermore, this research study can provide more support to the idea that teachers who are perfectionist and put high standards for their job are able to have a better understanding of their autonomous behavior, how to appreciate it, and help to develop it.

6.1 Pedagogical Implications

The results of the present research study can benefit syllabus designers, teacher educators, and language teachers. Syllabus designers can employ the findings of this research to provide EFL teachers with the required protective features by designing syllabuses, lessons, and tasks which can improve their sense of positive perfectionism and autonomy. Also, to foster the sense of autonomy among EFL teachers, teacher educators should train teacher-students in a way that essential opportunity for experiencing autonomy is provided for them. Teacher education is also expected to improve the development of autonomy among teachers (Jiménez-Raya & Flávia, 2015). Besides, teacher educators should make attempts to familiarize teachers and teacher-students with the different aspects and dimensions of perfectionism such as striving or positive perfectionism via pre-service and in-service teacher-training courses. Furthermore, regarding language teachers, the findings can raise their awareness of perfectionism tendencies and its contribution/relation to the other personality variables. The findings may also inform them about the benefits of perfectionism. Language teachers who play an important part in students' learning may find the results of the current study fruitful in their classes and designing their own syllabuses and lessons. Thus, this study can help language teachers to become autonomous through setting favorable standards for themselves.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

It is reasonable to mention the limitations from which the current study suffered. The small sample size (82 EFL teachers) of the study might affect the opportunity to generalize its findings. Therefore, the findings should be

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generalized with caution. Moreover, other teacher-related characteristics such as teachers' reflective practice, attitude, and so on were not considered in the present study. Also, the selection of the teachers was based on availability sampling.

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