The Relationship Between Iranian EFL Teachers' Personality Traits and Motivational Trends in the First Five Years of Career

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Article info	Abstract
	Teacher's motivation originates from both teacher-internal and teacher-external conditions. This correlation-based study aimed to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' motivational trend during their first five years of teaching in relation to their personality type. Drawing on trait theory of personality and the big five personality framework, the research explores how novice EFL teachers' motivation during the first five years of career is influenced by personality traits. Participants in this study were 144 English teachers in Iranian high schools. The International Personality Item Pool-Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness Personality Inventory (IPIP-NEO) and the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale (FIT-CS) were used to assess teachers' personality and motivation. Teachers' motivation showed a steady rising trend in the first five years of their career. Results revealed that conscientiousness and openness are significant positive predictors of teacher motivation, while neuroticism negatively impacts motivation. However, teaching experience did not significantly moderate the relationship between personality traits and motivation, indicating that other professional conditions may influence this dynamic over time. This study contributes to the literature by examining teacher motivation in a non-Western context, offering valuable insights into the dynamicity between the internal and external factors contributing to Iranian EFL teachers' motivation within a complex dynamic systems perspective. The findings have practical implications for teacher recruitment, professional development, and retention strategies, emphasizing the need to consider individual personality traits in fostering long-term motivation and job satisfaction with ramifications at both individual teacher level and organization level. ***Keywords***: EFL, personality, teaching experience, teacher motivation, trait theory

1. Introduction

Motivation plays an enormous part in educational outcomes, both for learners and educators. As to English as a foreign language (EFL), teacher motivation has established itself as a critical component of the overall teaching milieu directly influencing teaching effectiveness, learning outcomes, and overall teaching quality (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Kim et al., 2019; Kubanyiova, 2020). As de Jesus and Lens (2005) argue, the issue of occupational motivation is more serious in educational settings (despite its importance, teacher motivation, particularly in foreign language teaching (FLT) contexts remains an understudied area (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). In Iranian EFL context, where English teachers are non-native local instructors trained professionally for this purpose, understanding the motivational factors influencing EFL teachers is essential for improving teaching quality and retaining effective educators.

EFL teachers' motivational states may originate from a variety of factors related to their learning and teaching experience (Hassanzadeh & Jafari, 2018). In addition, EFL teachers' individual characteristics like personality traits, intelligence profiles, social and cultural intelligence, digital literacy skills, etc. have been demonstrated to influence teachers' level of motivation (Judge & Ilies, 2002). Personality traits, as long-lasting attributes of human beings can immensely influence their psychological states and performance. The big five personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992) provide a useful framework for understanding how personality characteristics might influence teachers' motivation. The pentagon of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience have been widely applied in organizational and educational behavior research to explain various work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Barrick et al., 2002).

Adopting a cross-sectional survey-based method, the present study explores the possible links between Iranian EFL teachers' personality traits and their motivation during the first five years of their teaching experience, defined as the total number of completed years of full-time instruction since certification. The focus is on determining how personality traits—based on the big five model—interact with teaching experience to impact teacher motivation. By identifying these relationships, this research seeks to provide insights into how to foster long-term motivation among teachers, which is crucial for maintaining high standards of education.

Teacher motivation, particularly in the early years of teaching, is critical for ensuring sustained engagement, job satisfaction, and positive student outcomes (Roohani & Dayeri, 2019; Soodmand Afshar & Ghasemi, 2020). The beginning five years of teaching career make up a formative period during which many educators experience either a decrease in motivation or

burnout (Watt & Richardson, 2008). However, the role of personality traits in shaping teacher motivation throughout this period remains underexplored (e.g., Azizi et al., 2023; Calkin et al., 2024; Er & Karataş, 2021; Ulfa et al., 2022). The lack of empirical studies in this area creates a gap in understanding how to support and retain motivated teachers in the Iranian EFL context.

This research can offer insights into how personality traits predict teacher motivation and how experience in the profession influences this relationship. By investigating these dynamics, the study aims to inform strategies for teacher recruitment, professional development, and retention in the Iranian educational system. The study promises practical implications for improving teacher retention. By identifying personality traits that contribute to higher motivation, educational institutions can target those traits in recruitment and provide tailored support to mitigate the risks of burnout. The findings can help institutions create environments that support teachers' personal and professional growth, ultimately leading to better student outcomes. Therefore, the present study concerns itself with the following questions:

1. Does Iranian EFL teachers' motivation vary during their beginning five years of career?
2. What is the relationship between big five personality traits and teaching motivation among Iranian EFL teachers?
3. How does teaching experience influence the relationship between personality traits and teaching motivation?

2. Literature Review
2.1. The Role of Teacher Motivation in EFL Teaching

Teacher motivation has long been characterized as a significant factor in student achievement and educational outcomes (Demir, 2011; Han & Yin, 2016; Kubanyiova, 2020; Richardson et al., 2014). Demir (2011) demonstrated that Turkish high school teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation played a significant role in students' learning engagement. In particular, teacher motivation has been recognized as a crucial determinant of student motivation in SLA contexts (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Studies have highlighted the strong correlation between motivated teachers and motivated learners (Lamb & Sahakyan, 2024). Motivated teachers not only perform better in their instructional practices but also create a more engaging learning environment, essential in language acquisition (Dixit & Padwad, 2021).

The quality of teacher-student relationships, mediated by intrinsic motivation, also plays a key part in promoting learner engagement (Akram & Li, 2024; Amini & Amini, 2014). According to Amini et al. (2020) teachers' moral identity development is shaped as a result of a humanistic teacher-student relationship, which is heavily based on the psychological needs of both sides. Furthermore, student engagement has been linked to higher levels of

autonomy-supportive teaching strategies, which stem from teachers` intrinsic motivation (Mayangsari et al., 2025). Moreover, teachers' motivation has been recognized as a significant variable in determining teachers' self-efficacy. For instance, Calkins et al. (2024) examined nearly 2,000 American school teachers with a minimum of six years of teaching experience. They reported that teachers' self-efficacy in running their pedagogical duties was consistently associated with factors of internal motivation. Studies have shown that highly motivated teachers in their profession are more likely to employ innovative teaching methods (Lee & Kemple, 2014), foster student engagement, and contribute to positive educational outcomes (Li et al., 2022). This makes the understanding of teacher-internal and teacher external origins of teacher motivation an important concern in language teacher development.

In their framework of detecting the sources of teachers' motivation, Watt and Richardson (2007) have attended to both intrinsic and extrinsic origins. In this framework, intrinsic motivation may manifest as a passion for imparting knowledge or the satisfaction derived from ability, enhancing social equity and shaping future of children/adolescents (Watt & Richardson, 2008). In their framework, extrinsic motivation stems from such factors as intrinsic career, fallback career, job security, job transferability, time for family, bludging, salary, job security, and career advancement opportunities. Additionally, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) explains the way teaching environment can satisfy EFL teachers' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation. The association between teaching motivation and teaching effectiveness is complex and varies across contexts (Zheng & Huan, 2022). Intrinsic sources of motivation tend to have a more profound impact on teaching effectiveness compared to extrinsic factors (Sabthazi et al., 2024).

Teacher motivation is influenced by a set of factors internal or external to the teachers, the understanding of which is crucial to creating and preserving EFL teachers' motivation (Ashkani et al., 2024). Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) reported a low-to-medium level of motivation for Iranian high school English teachers. They associated this level of motivation with a set of working conditions, attesting to the impact of extrinsic factors. Similarly, Hettiarachchi (2013) showed that Sri Lankan EFL school teachers' motivation originated both intrinsically and extrinsically while their demotivation resulted mainly from extrinsic barriers such as administrative support. In this regard, personality traits of EFL teachers are potential internal sources of teaching motivation worthy of further research.

2.2. Relationships Between Personality Traits and Teacher Motivation

Personality has long been considered a predictor of behavior in professional settings, including teaching (Kim et al., 2019). The assumption

has been supported by outstanding theoretical explanations. Trait theory of personality (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985) postulates that human personalities are habitual markings of behavior and thought that can vary between individuals and different situations. In this sense, personality traits can be considered as a major source of variation in human behavior (Judge & Robbins, 2017).

Several studies have examined the role of personality traits in shaping teacher motivation and job performance (Barrick et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2019; Tomšik & Gatial, 2018). Using the Big Five personality traits framework (Costa & McCrae, 1992), researchers have identified key personality traits that correlate with higher or lower levels of motivation in various educational contexts (Judge & Ilies, 2002). The big five traits have been linked to various work-related behaviors, including motivation, job performance, and teaching effectiveness. Other models have demonstrated similar results concerning aspects of personality not represented in the big five model. For instance, HEXACO-based research has shown that honesty–humility can account for variance in social behaviour that big five agreeableness does not capture (Howard & Van Zandt, 2020).

Research has demonstrated that aspects of teacher personality significantly influence motivation, thereby impacting both teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Specific personality traits, such as conscientiousness and openness, have been associated with intrinsic motivation and overall job satisfaction in educational settings. Kim et al. (2019), for instance, found that conscientiousness, openness, extraversion and emotional stability correlated positively with effective teaching and negatively with teacher burn out. These traits are predictive of motivations related to individual and social utility, suggesting that educators possessing these characteristics are more likely to experience personal sense of achievement and purpose in their roles (Jugović et al., 2012). Similar results have been reported for preservice teachers' motivation for their future career (Pavin Ivanec & Defar, 2023)

Conscientiousness, in particular, has consistently emerged as a strong predictor of job motivation and conduct (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001). Barrick and Mount (1991) found that conscientiousness showed consistent association with job performance within five job groups. Barrick et al. (2001) reviewed the findings from 15 meta-analyses to date on the relationship between big five factors of personality and occupational performance across a variety of jobs. The results attested to the strong predicting power of conscientiousness and negative effect of neuroticism. However, agreeableness, extraversion and openness to experience did not show robust correlations across different jobs.

Openness to experience is another personality trait that has been linked to higher motivation in teachers. Teachers who are open to new experiences

hold a stronger tendency to experiment with innovative teaching methods and adapt to changing educational environments (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Relying on Watt and Richardson's (2007) FIT-Choice Scale, Jugović et al. (2012) indicated that teachers' personality traits showed a stronger predicting relationship with the intrinsic sources of motivation than extrinsic ones. Agreeableness and extraversion were secure predictors of intrinsic career value and job satisfaction. More specifically, agreeableness predicted social utility values while extraversion showed a positive relationship with ability.

On the other hand, Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability and susceptibility to stress, has been associated with lower motivation levels (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Apampa et al., 2024; Barrick et al, 2001). In a study by Ahmadi et al. (2023), neuroticism was found to negatively impact both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of teachers. This is because neurotic teachers may struggle with emotional instability, which can lead to a less engaging and supportive learning environment, which can ultimately diminish the students' motivation to learn. In conclusion, several personality traits are integral to shaping teacher motivation, influencing not only their professional satisfaction but also their capacity to engage and inspire students. A related question that goes without explanation is whether the effect of personality types on teachers' motivation vacillates as they gain further teaching experience.

2.3. The Moderating Role of Teaching Experience

Empirical research has underscored the role of teaching experience in shaping teacher motivation. Several studies have found that motivation tends to fluctuate throughout a teacher's career, particularly in the early years. For instance, comparing three groups of novel, mid-experience and highly experienced teachers, Azizi et al. (2023) indicated that Iranian EFL teachers' motivational needs were at the highest in the middle years of their teaching career. This variation in motivation is attributed to various challenges and responsibilities that arise as they transition into full-time teaching roles (Rostami et al., 2020). Early career teachers frequently experience stress and feelings of being overwhelmed, which can negatively impact their motivation and job satisfaction (Soodmand Afshar & Ghasemi, 2020).

Research regarding the effect of teaching experience on teacher motivation has yielded mixed results. Some studies indicate that teaching experience can positively affect teacher motivation by enhancing self-efficacy and perceived teaching competence (Calkin et al., 2024). Research indicates that as teachers gain experience, their effectiveness in teaching tends to increase (Podolsky et al., 2019). This boost in teaching effectiveness is linked to greater motivation to teach and improved instructional practices (Azizi et al., 2023). Conversely, other research suggests that teaching experience may not significantly influence motivation in specific contexts. For example,

spotting the concern about preservation of EFL teachers' motivation in online education in Turkey, Er and Karataş (2021) reported that teaching experience did not have any effect in preserving motivation. Another study indicated that novice teachers sometimes demonstrated higher levels of knowledge and motivation compared to their more experienced colleagues, particularly in STEM education contexts (Jerki & Han, 2020). This suggests that in certain situations, teachers' internal conditions such as their cognitive and emotional profile may play a more critical role in influencing teacher motivation than experience alone (Ulfa et al., 2022). In summary, while teaching experience has the potential to enhance motivation through increased competence and self-efficacy, its overall impact appears to be contingent upon the specific teaching context and teachers' intra-psychological world including their personality traits.

Despite the extensive research on teacher motivation and personality traits, there remains a significant gap in the studies that focus specifically on Iranian EFL teachers. Comprehensive focused research targeting the intersection of motivation and personality traits among Iranian EFL teachers remain scarce. Much of the existing research has been conducted in Western contexts, and there is limited empirical data on how these dynamics play out in non-Western educational settings. Additionally, the specific role of teaching experience as a moderator in the relationship between personality traits and motivation has been understudied, particularly in the context of early-career teachers. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the intersection of personality traits, motivation, and teaching experience among Iranian EFL teachers in an attempt to provide insights for educators and decision makers in the field.

2. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, correlational research design to dig into the relationships between personality traits, teaching experience, and teacher motivation among Iranian EFL teachers. Teaching experience was operationalized as the number of years of full-time teaching since first obtaining certification. Ranging from 1 to 5 years, it has been measured in whole years based on participants' self-reports.

3.2. Participants

The study was conducted with 144 (86 females and 58 males) Iranian high school EFL teachers with teaching experience of 1-5 years (M =3.2). The participants' age ranged from 20 to 35 with an average of 32.4 years. The participating teachers were selected through online recruitment from various schools across Iran based on the principle of convenience sampling. Although

this method of sampling can restrict the generalizability of findings, we tried to relieve this conflict with stratified sampling to ensure that a diverse sample in terms of gender, location, and educational degree. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of their anonymity

3.3. Data Collection

Data was collected via online surveys, which were distributed through email to EFL teachers in different high schools. The survey included demographic questions, a personality questionnaire, and a motivation questionnaire. Two primary instruments were used for data collection.

The IPIP-NEO validated by Maples-Keller et al. (2017) based on The Neo Five Inventory Personality Questionnaire (Costa & McCrae, 1992) was used to assess personality traits along the five factors of extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, neuroticism, and Cconscientiousness. The scale includes 60 items answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Maples-Keller et al. (2017) reported a high level of correlation (from .74 to .89 for the five personality traits) between the IPIP–NEO–60 and the Big Five Inventory. This instrument has been commonly used recently in personality research in EFL settings (e.g., Kim & Hwang, 2024).

The Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale (FIT-Choice Scale) was introduced by Watt and Richardson (2007) to measure levels of teaching motivation as a job. The scale includes 37 items with seven response categories ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important) to measure several aspects of teacher motivation including intrinsic career, ability, fallback career, job transferability, job security, time for family, bludging, shaping future of children/adolescents, prior teaching and learning experiences, making social contribution, enhancing social equity, working with children/adolescents, and social influences (Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008). Meta analyses of the generalizability of the instrument in international scale shows high reliability (Navarro-Asencio et al., 2021). The scale has been used in Iranian context for assessing teaching motivation (e.g., Eghtesadi Roudi, 2021).

3.4. Data Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationships between personality traits and teacher motivation. The data collected in this study were analyzed though one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the patterns of motivational changes, multiple regression to observe the relationship between personality and motivation, and Structural Equation Modelling to explore the moderating effects of teaching experience in this relationship.

4. Results and Discussion
The objectives specified for this study were threefold. First, it explored Iranian EFL teachers' motivational variation during the beginning five years of their career. Second, it investigated the correlational and predictive relationships between personality traits and motivational status of Iranian EFL teachers. Finally, it studied the moderating effect of years of teaching on the relationship between motivation and their personality traits. Before the analysis proper, it was ensured that the assumption of normality was substantiated for the personality and motivation scores for each of the five teaching experience groups based on Skewness and Kurtosis rates. Field (2018, p. 345-346) has made clear that the skewness and kurtosis ratios over standard errors are comparable to z-scores. These values can be matched with the anticipated values of skewness and kurtosis were 0. According to this statistical argument, an absolute value above 1.96, 2.58, and 3.29 are assumed to be significant at $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, and $p < 0.001$, respectively. Since the ratios of skewness and kurtosis in the current statistical test were smaller than +/- 1.96, it was concluded that the normality assumption was met.

4.1. Results
4.1.1. Descriptive Data
Descriptive statistics summarizing the personality and motivation scores as well as the Cronbach's alpha reliability indices for the overall personality and motivation questionnaires, and the components of the personality instrument for the 144 participants are presented in Table1.

Table 5
Descriptive Data on Personality Traits and Teacher Motivation

Measure	No. of items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Openness to experience	12	3.7	0.8	.857
Conscientiousness	12	4.2	0.6	.848
Extraversion	12	3.4	0.7	.858
Agreeableness	12	4.0	0.6	.862
Neuroticism	12	2.9	0.9	.846
Personality	60	3.6	0.7	.867
Motivation	37	180.85	28.29	.959

The Neo Five Inventory Personality Questionnaire results showed a broad distribution across the five traits. The reliability indices were higher than

the minimum criterion of .70 on the index of Cronbach's alpha as proposed by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009).

4.1.2. Variations in Teachers' Motivation During Beginning Five Years of Career

An examination of the participants' overall motivation during their beginning five years of teaching indicated a steady increase (Table 2).

Table 2

Teachers Motivation by Experience Groups

	N	Mean	SD	Std. error	95% Confidence interval for mean	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
First	16	150.31	19.189	4.797	140.09	160.54
Second	20	159.15	23.833	5.329	148.00	170.30
Third	23	179.26	20.948	4.368	170.20	188.32
Fourth	27	190.70	29.178	5.615	179.16	202.25
Fifth	58	192.81	23.335	3.064	186.67	198.95
Total	144	180.85	28.291	2.358	176.19	185.51

Teachers' motivation scores ranged between 37 and 259. Teachers on 5th year of their career demonstrated the highest motivation level (M=192.81) while novice teachers on their 1st year of career had the lowest score on motivation (M = 150.31) on the FIT-Choice Scale.

Before discussing the results of one-way ANOVA, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met. As displayed in Table 3, the non-significant results of the Levene's test, $F(4, 139) = 1.45$, $p > .05$, indicated that the five groups of EFL teachers were homogeneous in terms of their variances on motivation.

Table 3

Test of Homogeneity of Variances: Motivation by Groups

		Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Motivation	Based on Mean	2.358	4	139	.057
	Based on Median	1.458	4	139	.218
	Based on Median with adjusted df	1.458	4	119.268	.219
	Based on trimmed mean	2.192	4	139	.073

A summary of the results of one-way between-groups analysis of variance are shown in Table 4. The results, $F(4, 139) = 15.50$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .287$ indicating a large effect size, demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the five experience groups in terms of their motivation.

Table 4

One-Way ANOVA: Motivation by Groups

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	35314.972	4	8828.743	15.506	.000
Within groups	79142.966	139	569.374		
Total	114457.938	143			

Therefore, a post-hoc test was run to spot the differences between the groups of teaching experience. Table 5 shows the results of the post-hoc Scheffe's tests in two-by-two comparisons of groups.

Table 5

Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test: Motivation by Groups

(I) Experience	(J) Experience	Mean bifference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Second	First	8.838	8.003	.874	-16.15	33.82
Third	First	28.948*	7.768	.010	4.70	53.20
	Second	20.111	7.295	.114	-2.67	42.89
Fourth	First	40.391*	7.528	.000	16.89	63.89
	Second	31.554*	7.040	.001	9.58	53.53
	Third	11.443	6.771	.584	-9.70	32.58
Fifth	First	42.498*	6.738	.000	21.46	63.53
	Second	33.660*	6.188	.000	14.34	52.98
	Third	13.549	5.880	.263	-4.81	31.91
	Fourth	2.107	5.559	.998	-15.25	19.46

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

EFL teachers' motivation on 4th and 5th year of their career was significantly different compared to their 1st and 2nd year. However, 5th year teachers' motivation was not significantly different from either 4th year or 3rd year teachers. Furthermore, no significant difference was spotted in the motivation levels of teachers on their first and second year of teaching

experience. Overall, the results indicate that EFL teachers' motivation sharply increases from their beginning year to their 5th year of teaching career.

4.1.3. Relationship Between Personality Traits and Teachers' Motivation

Pearson coefficients were computed to determine the correlations between personality traits and teachers' motivation. The results (Table 6) indicated significant correlations between all personality traits and teaching motivation.

Table 6

Relationship Between scores of personality traits and teacher motivation

Personality Type	Motivation
Openness to Experience	0.45**
Conscientiousness	0.62**
Extraversion	0.31*
Agreeableness	0.40**
Neuroticism	-0.52**

*Significant at $p < 0.05$, **Significant at $p < 0.01$

The analysis revealed several key findings regarding the relationship between personality traits and motivation among Iranian EFL teachers. Conscientiousness was found to have the strongest positive correlation with teacher motivation. Teachers who scored high in conscientiousness reported higher levels of teaching motivation. Openness to experience and agreeableness also positively correlated with teaching motivation. Extraversion showed weak but significant correlation. Neuroticism had a significant negative correlation with motivation, suggesting that teachers who are more emotionally unstable are less motivated and more prone to burnout.

To further investigate the predictive relationships between different personality traits and teacher motivation, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Teacher motivation and the big five personality traits were the dependent and the independent variables, respectively. Major assumptions of multiple regression were first examined. The first assumption concerns the sample size. According to Tabachnick and Fidell's (2013) formula, the total number of participants must be 50 plus 8 times each independent variable. Since we have five predicting variables, the total number must be larger than 90, which has been met here. The second vital assumption concerns multicollinearity between independent variables. As displayed in Table 6, all

five predicting variables are correlated with motivation though the correlations are below 0.7. Furthermore, the correlations between each pair of personality trait variables were lower than 0.7, indicating lack of singularity of predicting variables. In addition, outliers and normality of scores were examined. As Table 8 indicates, the Mardia's index of multivariate normality was 1.48, which attests to the absence of distressing outliers and normality of scores (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The multiple regression model for EFL teachers' personality explained 51% of the variance (R^2 = 0.51, p < 0.01) for motivation (Table 7). The remaining 49% of the variance in teaching motivation can be attributed to a set of confounding variables, such as teachers' socioeconomic status, school type and institutional support, which were not controlled in this research. The results indicated that conscientiousness (β = 0.45, p < 0.01) and openness to experience (β = 0.26, p = 0.01) were the strongest predictors of teacher motivation. Neuroticism had a significant negative impact (β = -0.37, p = 0.01), reinforcing the assumption that emotionally unstable individuals are less likely to be intrinsically motivated.

Table 7
Power of Personality Traits in Predicting Intrinsic Motivation

Variable	B	SE B	β	p-value
Openness to Experience	0.32	0.10	0.26	0.01**
Conscientiousness	0.51	0.09	0.45	0.01**
Extraversion	0.11	0.08	0.10	0.05
Agreeableness	0.19	0.09	0.17	0.05*
Neuroticism	-0.43	0.10	-0.37	0.01**

R^2 = 0.51, F (5, 138) = 16.34, p < 0.01

The following results can be summarized on the power of personality traits and teaching experience in predicting Iranian EFL teachers' motivation during their first five years of career:

1. Conscientiousness was the most consistent predictor of teaching motivation.
2. Openness to experience was a strong predictor of teaching motivation.
3. Agreeableness held the weakest significant predicting power.
4. Extraversion did not significantly predict EFL teachers' motivation.
5. Neuroticism had a significant negative impact on teaching motivation.

4.1.4. The Role of Teaching Experience

A multi-group structural equation model was run on Amos SPSS to probe the third research question, which concerned the moderating role of

teaching years. That is to say, the links between Iranian EFL teachers' motivation and their personality traits were compared at different teaching years. The assumptions regarding the univariate and multivariate normality were met since, as displayed in Table 8, the skewness and kurtosis value indices were lower than +/- 2, and the Mardia's index of multivariate normality; i.e. 1.48, was lower than 3 (Gray & Kinnear, 2012).
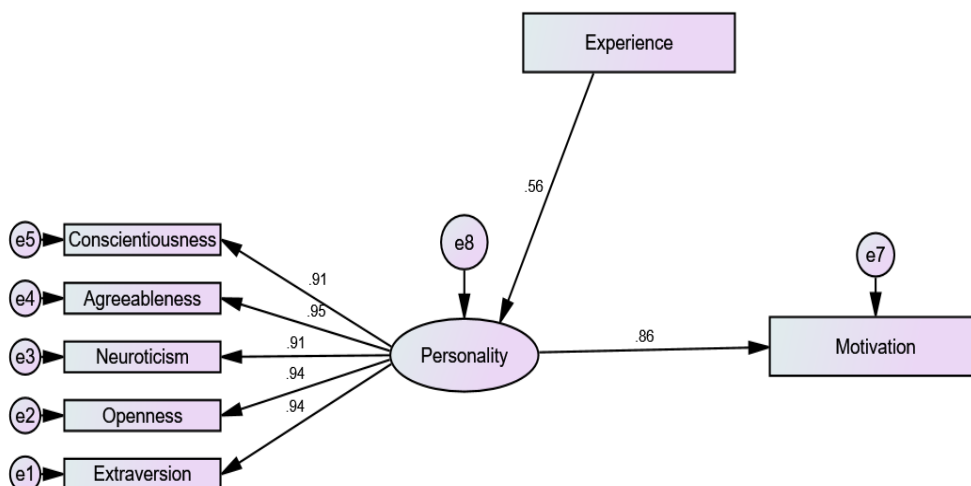
Table 8
Testing Univariate and Multivariate Outliers

Variable	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Motivation	104	240	-.094	-.557
Conscientiousness	14	34	.299	-.060
Agreeableness	14	39	-.080	-.301
Neuroticism	15	39	.046	-.678
Openness	14	39	.016	-.274
Extraversion	15	43	-.199	-.427
Mardia				1.485

Figure 2 displays the multi-group structural equation model probed in this study. The intention was to see whether the effect of personality traits on teachers' motivation varied across the five experience groups (1 to 5 years of teaching experience).

Figure 1
Moderation Model of Personality Trait, Motivation and Teaching Experience

The standardized and unstandardized regression weights for the associations between EFL teachers' motivation and personality traits appear in

Table 9. The data attest to the go-togetherness of both standardized and unstandardized regression weights with linear regression Beta values.

Table 9
Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Weights Between Personality Traits and Motivation

Years			B	S.E.	C.R.	P	Beta
First	Personality <-->	Motivation	62.651	23.490	2.667	.008	.967
Second	Personality <-->	Motivation	108.444	36.439	2.976	.003	.965
Third	Personality <-->	Motivation	-28.112	15.355	-1.831	.067	-.499
Fourth	Personality <-->	Motivation	123.866	35.356	3.503	.000	.991
Fifth	Personality <-->	Motivation	86.466	17.441	4.958	.000	.951
Overall	Personality <-->	Motivation	122.851	16.309	7.533	.000	.863

The model fit indices have been displayed in Table 10. The indices confirm the good fitness of the model presented here.

Table 10
Model fit indices

Fit indices	Labels	Statistic	D.F.	P-Value	Criterion	Conclusion
Absolute	X^2	58.07	54	.328	>.05	Good Fit
	X^2 Ratio	1.07	---	---	<=3	Good Fit
	SRMR	.082	---	---	<=.10	Good Fit
	RMSEA	.000	---	---	<=.05	Good Fit
	PCLOSE	.991	---	---	=>.05	Good Fit
	GFI	.942	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
Incremental	RFI	.957	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	TLI	.997	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	CFI	.998	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	NFI	.974	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	IFI	.998	---	---	=>.95	Good Fit
	Hoelter	.358	---	---	=>200	Sampling

The results showed that personality trait had a significant direct relationship with motivation (Beta = .864, p < .05). That is to say, if overall personality trait increases one standard deviation, motivation increases .864 standard deviations and vice versa. Teaching experience had a direct relationship (Beta = .562, p < .05) with personality trait. The indirect (moderating) effect of teaching experience on motivation was .486 (.864 *.562

= .486). Since the direct relationship between personality trait and motivation after being moderated by teaching experience (i.e., .486) was higher than .30 which is the moderate effect size value, it can be concluded that teaching experience did not significantly moderate the direct relationship between personality trait and motivation. That is to say, the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' motivation and their personality traits did not vary over the first five years of their career. While certain traits like conscientiousness and openness were associated with higher motivation, their influence did not change significantly for the novice teachers in their beginning 5 years of teaching (Barrick et al., 2002). The third concern of this research has been to examine whether the effect of Iranian novice EFL teachers' personality traits on their teaching motivation varied as they gained further experience. The results showed that personality traits exerted stronger attractor states than teaching experience (Dörnyei, 2009).

4.2. Discussion

The findings here offer insights into the intricate dynamics between personality traits, teaching experience, and motivation within English teaching landscape. Such a relationship is multifaceted and complex (Hiver et al., 2018). Our research revealed that while the big five personality traits exerted significant influence on novice EFL teachers' motivation, the trends of their motivation during their first five years of teaching experience tended to be predominantly in steady increase. Moreover, the effects of personality traits on teaching motivation did not vary as the novice teachers gained further experience. The findings are discussed under the Complex Dynamic Systems view of teaching motivation (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008).

A theory of motivation inspired by the dynamic systems theory (DST) is built on the complex relationships between a set of variables internal or external to the person. In the present research on teaching motivation, the internal and external factors are represented by personality traits and years of teaching experience, respectively. The teaching motivation consistently levelled up during the first five years of our novice teachers' experience. On the other hand, their teaching motivation was predicted positively or negatively by different personality traits. However, the intervening role of years of teaching on the effect of personality on teaching motivation remained insignificant.

Research has indicated that certain personality traits, such as openness to experience, can positively influence teaching methodologies and foster, in turn, the creativity among pre-service teachers (Lee & Kemple, 2014). Moreover, the connection between personality traits and the development of a professional identity underscores the significance of both demographic factors and accumulated experience in shaping educators' motivational identity

(Rostami et al., 2020). The fact that conscientiousness and openness to experience were consistently linked to higher motivation suggests that these traits are crucial for sustaining long-term engagement in the teaching profession (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Apampa et al., 2024). This is consistent with previous research indicating that conscientious individuals are in a better position in setting and achieving their professional goals (Judge & Ilies, 2002).

Similarly, openness to experience is linked to a willingness to embrace novelties and adapt to changes, fostering a more engaging and dynamic teaching environment (Navidnia et al., 2015; Yang, 2021). The findings align with earlier research indicating that teachers exhibiting high levels of openness demonstrate greater adaptability in applying strategic teaching (Ding et al., 2022). Such adaptability becomes particularly critical in dynamic environments, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Er & Karataş, 2021).

Additionally, the role of neuroticism in diminishing motivation underscores the necessity for robust support mechanisms aimed at helping educators manage stress and emotional instability. Given that neuroticism is associated with emotional volatility and increased susceptibility to stressors (Ahmadi et al., 2023), addressing these challenges is vital for fostering a motivating environment for teachers. By implementing targeted interventions and support systems, educational institutions can empower teachers to navigate the complexities of their roles more effectively, ultimately benefiting both educators and their students (Hiver et al., 2018).

While existing studies have established links between EFL teachers' personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness to experience and positive outcomes like academic success, teaching motivation and learner engagement, they often fall short of directly comparing the impact of teaching experience against these outcomes. The present study attempted to fill this gap by examining whether the effect of big five personality traits on teaching motivation varies across the beginning five years of EFL teaching career. The results indicated that the interaction between EFL teachers' personality and motivation did not change over time. This finding can be interpreted as an indication that personality traits function as a robust attracting variable, within DST framework, in determining teacher motivation. From this perspective, personality traits as a teacher-internal variable create stronger attractor states than the teaching experience as a teacher-external variable. The absence of a significant moderating effect of teaching experience on the relationship between personality and motivation suggests that motivational outcomes may be more universally applicable across varying personality types than previously understood. While personality influences motivation, it does not necessarily alter the trajectory of motivation over time. This implies that other factors, such as institutional support and career development opportunities,

may play a more significant role in sustaining EFL teacher motivation as their experience increases (Azizi et al., 2023). The dynamicity of these relationships need to be taken into account in the future research on EFL teachers' motivation.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study was an attempt to bring into spotlight the dynamics between personality traits and motivation among Iranian EFL teachers during their first five years of career. The findings suggest that personality traits, particularly conscientiousness and openness, are key predictors of higher motivation, while neuroticism is a risk factor for decreased motivation and potential burnout. Furthermore, while personality traits influence motivation, teaching experience does not appear to significantly alter this relationship over time.

Several recommendations can be made to enhance teacher motivation and effectiveness within EFL educational settings. To foster long-term motivation among teachers, educational institutions should focus on recruiting individuals with personality traits that align with sustained motivation, such as conscientiousness and openness. Additionally, providing professional development opportunities that cater to individual personality traits and offering support for managing stress can help mitigate the negative effects of neuroticism. English education institutes can devise targeted teacher training programs based on personality profiles or specialized mentorship initiatives to sustain motivation. It is important that teachers' personality profiles be remarked as an inevitable component of pre-service and in-service teacher development. Institutions should create a culture that values and encourages conscientiousness and openness to new experiences among teachers. This can be achieved through collaborative projects, interdisciplinary teaching opportunities, and exposure to diverse educational practices, fostering an environment where innovation is celebrated. Establishing mentorship programs can provide less experienced teachers with guidance and support from seasoned educators. These relationships can foster a sense of community, promote sharing of best practices, and enhance overall motivation by creating a supportive network.

This study was entangled with certain limitations, including sampling scope, potential confounders, and the need for diverse educational settings. However, these limitations can instigate future research. First, in this research, we focused on the first five years of teaching experience. It is suggested that a broader spectrum of EFL teaching experience is examined to see into the dynamics between teachers' personality, experience and motivation. Second, we adopted an overall view in assessing sources of motivation. However, FIT-Choice Scale offers distinctive categories to measure several aspects of internally and externally-oriented sources of motivation rooted in teachers' cognitive, affective and social character. For example, Tomšik and Gatial

(2018) have demonstrated that conscientiousness and neuroticism have been strong positive and negative predictors of fallback. Future research can examine such confounding variables as school type (e.g., rural vs urban) and teachers' socio-economic status as the intervening variables. Third, teachers' personality was assessed within the framework of the Big-Five Model. Further research should be conducted using other personality frameworks such as HEXACO to explore the nuanced relationships between personality traits, teaching experience, and motivation. Finally, examining the relationship between EFL teachers' personality profiles and moral identity (Amini et al., 2020) can spot further light on the dynamics involved in good teacher research. Understanding these dynamics can inform tailored interventions that address specific needs within diverse teacher populations.

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