

Reflection, Resilience and Role Stress among Iranian EFL Teachers: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to discover the relationships among reflection, role stressors, and resilience. To this end, a mixed-method approach was adopted. In the quantitative phase, 122 EFL teachers completed three questionnaires namely English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory, Teacher Role Stressors Scale, and Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale. The results of the correlation indicated that there was a significant positive relation between reflection and resilience. However, the correlation between reflection and role stressors was found to be negative. Multiple regression revealed that of the five components of reflection, metacognitive and critical reflection were significant predictors of role ambiguity while only critical reflection could predict role conflict. Metacognitive and practical reflection was also found to be significant predictors of teachers' resilience. In the qualitative phase, fifteen face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants who had also taken part in the first phase of the study. Data were transcribed, coded, and thematically structured based on a grounded theoretical perspective. The two main themes which emerged out of the interviews confirmed that reflection leads to resilience through strengthening teachers' professional identity while it also leads to resilience or stress through making teachers prepared and knowledgeable. The possible justifications of the obtained results as well as the implications of this study for teaching English and teacher education in the EFL context are discussed.

Keywords: Reflection, Resilience, Stress, EFL teachers

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INTRODUCTION

The key role of teachers in the success and failure of students and the educational system is undeniable. The job of foreign language teachers may be more difficult as they have to teach a language of which they are themselves, non-native speakers. Their conditions are worsened by the fact that they have to work long hours to financially survive. For these teachers who are usually overworked and underpaid (Akbari, 2008), the ability to be resistant and resilient in front of the various stressors seems to be critical. But how can this critical quality be promoted and kept? This is not an easy question to answer as teachers' feelings, behaviors, decisions, and performance are usually influenced by a constellation of factors that are interrelated and context-sensitive. Of the various variables which are believed to positively influence teachers' professional life, reflection is complemented and yet understudied (Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, forthcoming). To fill this gap, we aim to investigate if teachers' stress and resilience are linked to their involvement in reflection. We will also examine, based on qualitative data, how and why the possible links between reflection and stress/resilience are created and sustained.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reflection

Dewey (1933) defines reflection as 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads' (p. 9). Although Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) are somehow considered as the pioneers of introducing this concept into mainstream education, Wallace (1991) is deemed to be the first to promote reflective teaching in the ELT domain.

To operationalize the concept of reflection among EFL teachers,

Akbari, Behzadpour, and Dadvand (2010) proposed a model consisting of five dimensions of practical, cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and critical. The *practical* dimension includes the actual practice of reflection through “journal writing,” “lesson reports,” “audio and video recordings,” and “group discussions”. The *cognitive* dimension is concerned with the teacher’s activities for their professional development through attending conferences or doing action research. The learner element or *affective* reflection deals with “teacher’s reflection on his/her students, how they are learning and how learners respond or behave emotionally in their classes and teachers’ reflection on their students’ emotional responses in their classes”. The *metacognitive* dimension of reflection includes “teachers and their reflections on their own beliefs and personality, the way they define their practice, their emotional makeup, etc.”; the *critical* component involves “the socio-political aspect of teaching” (Akbari et al., 2010; pp. 214-215).

Despite the significance assigned to teacher reflection in the past two or three decades, only in the 2010s has some experimental studies been carried out on reflective teaching in ELT. For example, Moradkhani and Shirazizadeh (2017) compared EFL teachers’ reflection in public and private institutes contexts in Iran and showed the superiority of private-institute teachers over public institutes’ regarding reflective teaching. While Positive relationships have been reported between reflective teaching and self-efficacy (Moradkhani, Raygan & Moien, 2017), reflection is reported to be negatively linked to burnout (Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, forthcoming).

Role Stressors

Teaching is an undeniably stressful career as it requires interactions with pupils, principals, colleagues, and organizations daily while considering the needs and requirements of all sides. Kyriacou (2001) defines teacher stress as “the experience of unpleasant, negative emotion, such as anger, anxiety tension, frustration, depression, resulting from some aspects of their work as

a teacher” (p. 28). Within a classical role theory viewpoint, role stress can include role conflict and ambiguity (Rizzo et al., 1970). Role conflict in teachers occurs when the behaviors expected of them are inconsistent and even at even contradicting. Role ambiguity is experienced when the teacher does not know what decisions he is authorized to make and what organizational territories he is in charge of controlling. Both role conflict and role ambiguity are theorized as located at the heart of occupational stress among employees (Bowling et al., 2017).

Teachers’ occupational stress can result from the challenges of teaching, as well as the amount of mismatch between the demands and one’s ability to cope with them. Stress among teachers is a widespread, and perhaps increasing problem (Armor et al., 1976; Kyriacou, 2001; Wright, 2010). One study found that up to one-quarter of teachers perceive their occupation to be “highly stressful” (Borg, 1990). At the school level, organizational and contextual factors play a significant role in causing troubles and challenges for teachers (Day and Gu, 2010). Teachers face a wide array of stress, such as excessive workload, disruptive students, and lack of support from administrators and parents (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

While stress has been examined in detail in mainstream education, findings are still mixed and inconclusive. For example, mixed findings are reported as to the relationship between teacher’ stress and a wide range of variables such as marital status (e.g. Vokić & Bogdaniæ, 2008), age and experience (e.g. Ameen, Guffey & Jackson, 2002), job security and job satisfaction (e.g. Jepson & Forrest, 2006). In one of the few studies conducted on EFL teachers, Sadeghi and Sa’adatpourvahid (2016) reported that age, marital status, and employment conditions are significant factors determining Iranian EFL teachers’ occupational stress.

Resilience

Resilience does not have roots in academic theories; however, it has been identified through phenomenological characteristics of survivors living in

high-risk situations (Richardson, 2002). Among others, teachers are the survivors of challenges they face, the responsibilities they bear, and the pressure they feel every day. Being traced back to Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's (1978, cited in Richardson, 2002) research, teaching has been recognized as an emotionally draining and stressful occupation (Gu & Day, 2007). Different researchers and scholars have initiated studying resilience as an intrapersonal quality which can aid teachers to deal with the stressors they encounter in their work and enable them to flourish in schools instead of merely surviving (Gloria et al. 2013). Resilience has been defined as a malleable, adaptive "process of development that occurs overtime" involving "the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions" (Bobek, 2002, p.25).

While many studies addressed teacher stress and burnout, only recently have scholars paid attention to what aids instructors and teachers survive and develop in schools (Borg, 2011). Gloria et al. (2013) state that resilient teachers have the ability and skill to persist through stressful situations while considering the balance between their needs and those of their students. However, there has been controversy as to whether resilience is to be conceptualized as an innate quality or one that is developed eventually (Yonezawa et al. 2011, in Richards et al. 2016). Some studies assumed that resilience was a quality that teachers either possessed or did not possess (see Richards et al. 2016); however, resilience has been recently viewed as a construct that can be developed and nurtured. It has become the basis to understand how teachers deal with the stress while others succumb to the pressure and challenges of their daily work life.

Despite the significance of this concept, empirical studies on the development, correlates, causes, and effects of resilience are scarce especially within the domain of EFL teacher education. Day (2008) reported that self-efficacy promotes resilience among teachers. Razmjoo and Ayoobiyan (2019) also confirmed this relationship in a sample of Iranian EFL teachers. Partovi and Tafazoli (2016) also reported that EFL teachers with higher self-regulation were more resilient in their students' points of view. In

a study, quite similar in its inquiry to the present one, McKay and Barton (2018) investigated qualitatively the relationship between reflection and resilience and reported that art-based reflection can promote teachers' resilience. As can be seen, the body of research on resilience and stress among EFL teachers is slender and reflection, which is a significantly useful strategy for teachers' stressful challenges, is not adequately examined concerning occupational stress and resilience. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to shed more light on these possible relationships.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the importance of reflection in helping teachers in their professional development and considering that professional stress can negatively impact teachers' performance, this study aims to see if the reflective practice is linked to stress and resilience among Iranian EFL teachers. In other words, the present study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between EFL teachers' involvement in reflective practices and their perception of role stressors?
2. Is there any relationship between EFL teachers' involvement in reflective practices and their level of resilience?
3. If the answer to the first two research questions is positive, how does reflection promote or prevent resilience and role stress based on teachers' perception?

METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study were 122 EFL teachers. Of the total participants, 93 were female and 29 were male. The age of the participants varied from 19 to 56 years, except for three respondents who failed to identify their age. 99 teachers had studied English majors (English teaching,

English literature, English translation, linguistics) while 23 teachers were holding non-English degrees. Out of those English degree holders, 5 held a Ph.D. degree, 78 held a Master of Arts (MA), 14 had a Bachelor of Arts (BA), and 2 held English certificate (i.e. advanced-level language certificate). Seventeen teachers had less than 2 years of teaching experience; twenty-one had 2-4 years of experience; eleven had 4-6 years of experience, fifteen had 6-8 years of experience, eighteen had 8-10 years of teaching experience, 33 had more than ten years of teaching experience and 7 did not specify this.

Instrumentation

We employed three questionnaires to collect data for the quantitative phase of this study. Each is elaborated below.

English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory

This instrument includes 29 items measuring five components (practical, 6 items; cognitive, 6 items; affective, 3 items; metacognitive, 7 items; and critical, 7 items). This questionnaire is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from ‘never (1)’ to ‘always (5)’. Higher scores in all the five dimensions of the instrument represent higher levels of reflection. The validity of the mentioned instrument was evaluated and confirmed by its developers among a sample of Iranian EFL teachers. Moreover, the Cronbach’s Alpha index for the indicators of practical, effective, critical, meta-cognitive, and cognitive was reported as 0.73, 0.78, 0.84, 0.82, and 0.83 respectively.

Teacher Role Stressor Scale

The very first version of the role stress scale was developed by Rizzo et al. (1970). It was divided into two parts, role conflict and role ambiguity which were collectively referred to as “role stressors”. Also, it consisted of thirty items, fifteen of which dealt with role conflict and fifteen with role ambiguity. Despite its popularity, it had been the target of criticism. Much

of the criticism centered around the fact that the Rizzo et al. scales confound the construct purportedly being assessed with directions of the item wording (Kelloway & Barling, 1990; McGee et al., 1989; Tracy & Johnson, 1981) and many of its items have questionable content validity (King & King, 1990). Bowling et al. (2017) developed a new measure of role ambiguity and role conflict including six items for each component. They used this new questionnaire in five different studies and reported that it is highly valid. Its Cronbach's alpha index turned out to be .91 and .89 for role ambiguity and role conflict respectively. In this study, we will use this latter questionnaire for its higher validity support and shorter content.

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

To measure the resilience of teachers, the short version of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007) which includes 10 items were used. The 25-item version of this questionnaire was created and validated by Connor and Davidson (2003) as a multi-faceted measure of resilience. It was however modified, shortened, and revalidated by Campbell-Sills and Stein (2007). It is a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by 0 (not true at all) and 4 (true nearly all the time). The internal consistency of the 10-item CD-RISC was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha. The alpha value of .85 indicated good reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

In the first phase of the study which is quantitative, around 140 Iranian EFL teachers were randomly selected and asked to fill out the questionnaires. Data were collected by both distributing the hard copy of the instruments and by sending the link of its electronic version to those who agreed to fill it out online. Respondents were given enough instructions as to how to fill out the questionnaire and were assured about the confidentiality of their information. The questionnaires contained 51 items altogether and it took participants around 20 minutes to complete them. Out of 140 questionnaires

that were distributed among teachers, 130 were returned with all the questions answered and 8 were discarded because of many unanswered questions. The second phase of the study was an extension of the first (Riazi, & Candlin, 2014). Here, we focused on 11 of the participants who had participated in the first phase of our study. We did our best to interview teachers with different levels of experience and education and with enough diversity in terms of age, sex, and teaching context. We conducted semi-structured interviews with these teachers to investigate their views on how reflection can influence stress and resilience. Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted in English. There were a few code switches by the participants into Persian which were translated into Persian by the third author and then checked and confirmed by the first author. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

All the questionnaire data were fed into SPSS version 22. In the next stage of analysis, the indices for the reliability of the scales, descriptive statistics, and normality of distribution were all checked. To answer the first two research questions, the correlation between all pairs of variables was first computed. For further analysis, a series of multiple regressions were run to answer the research questions with more details.

Analysis of the qualitative data collected through interviews was done through a grounded theoretical approach (Charmaz, 2006). In so doing, the interview contents were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analyzed through the constant comparative method, which “involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data were grouped on a similar dimension. The dimension was tentatively given a name, which then became a category or theme. To ensure appropriate qualitative data coding, a colleague who was well acquainted with data coding in qualitative research also coded 20 percent of the

interviews. An agreement rate of about 80% was found between the two codings which are high enough.

RESULTS

Quantitative Phase

For examining the reliability index, Cronbach alpha was calculated for all the components of reflection, role stressors, and resilience. The obtained reliability indices of role stressors measure for the present research were 0.73 for role conflict and 0.87 for role ambiguity. The reliability index of the resilience measure was 0.81. The reliability indices of reflection measure were 0.79 for practical, 0.86 for cognitive, 0.67 for affective, 0.82 for metacognitive, and 0.88 for critical, also 0.91 for a total score of reflection. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all the measured variables in this study.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the measured variables

	practical reflection	cognitive reflection	affective reflection	metacognitive reflection	Critical reflection	total reflection	role ambiguity	role conflict	total resilience
Min	9	7	4	14	10	59	6	7	13
Max	28	30	15	35	35	138	36	36	38
Mean	18.51	20.22	11.55	29.06	23.20	102.53	13.30	18.07	27.28
SD	4.498	5.541	2.353	4.351	6.153	16.596	6.840	6.207	5.615
Valid (listwise)	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122	122

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to see the relationships among reflection, role stressors, and resilience in the first stage of data analysis. Table 2 indicates that there was a significant positive correlation

between teachers' total reflection and total resilience score ($r=0.50$, $p<0.05$). However, there was a significant negative correlation between teachers' total reflection and both components of the role stressors' scale ($r = -0.08; -0.25$).

Table 2: Pearson correlations matrix for the measured variables

	totalresi	pracref	cogref	afferef	metaref	critref	totalref	roleambi
pracref	.422**							
cogref	.463**	.594**						
afferef	.414**	.449**	.555**					
metaref	.506**	.391**	.658**	.643**				
critref	.131	-.071	.294**	.304**	.438**			
totalref	.509**	.609**	.855**	.730**	.842**	.608**		
roleambi	-.368**	-.031	-.112	-.089	-.221*	.089	-.083	
roleconf	-.425**	.018	-.213*	-.168	-.250**	-.255**	-.250**	.527**

Notes: totalresi = total resilience; pracref = practical reflection; cogref = cognitive reflection; afferef = affective reflection; metaref = metacognitive reflection; critref = critical reflection; totalref = total reflection; roleambi = role ambiguity; roleconf = role conflict.

The first research question: the relationship between reflection and role stressors

To answer the first question which dealt with the relationship between reflection practices and the perception of role stressors, Pearson product correlation was used in the first stage of data analysis. As is indicated in Table 4-2 the correlation between practical reflection and role ambiguity is -0.03, cognitive reflection and role ambiguity is -0.11, affective reflection and role ambiguity is -0.08, metacognitive reflection and role ambiguity is -0.22, critical reflection and role ambiguity is 0.08 and total reflection score and role ambiguity is -0.08. Besides, the correlation between practical reflection and role conflict is 0.01, cognitive reflection and role conflict is -

0.21, affective reflection and role conflict is -0.16, metacognitive reflection and role conflict is -0.25, critical reflection and role conflict is -0.25 and total reflection score and role conflict is -0.25.

To further analyze the data and provide a more detailed answer to our research question, we used stepwise multiple regression. By so doing, we intended to see which of the dimensions of reflection significant predictors of role ambiguity and role stress are. The findings showed that metacognitive and critical dimensions of reflection were two significant predictors of role ambiguity. While metacognitive reflection accounted for 4.9% of the variance in role ambiguity, the addition of critical dimension increased the shared variance to about 9.2% in role ambiguity. To predict role conflict as the dependent variable, we entered the components of reflection into the model as predictors. The results indicated that only critical reflection stood as a significant predictor of role conflict. The R square index showed that critical reflection accounted for 6.5% of the variance in role conflict. Table 3 summarizes our regression models for the first research question.

Table 3: Summary of regression models for the first research question

	Dependent Variable	Predictors	R	R²	Adjusted R²	SEE	Beta
Model 1	Role ambiguity	1. metacogref	0.221	0.049	0.41	6.68	-0.22
Model 2	Role ambiguity	1.metacogref 2.criticalref	0.303	0.092	0.077	6.57	-0.32 0.23
Model 3	Role conflict	1.criticalref	0.255	0.065	0.057	6.02	-0.25

None of the reflection components except metacognitive and critical reflection could predict role ambiguity. Only critical reflection could significantly predict role conflict.

The second research question: the relationship between reflection and resilience

To answer the second question of this inquiry, the Pearson correlation was initially used to investigate the relationship between reflection practices and the level of resilience. As it can be seen in table 4-2 the correlations between a) practical reflection and total resilience were 0.42, b) cognitive reflection and total resilience was 0.46, c) affective reflection and total resilience was 0.41, d) metacognitive reflection and resilience was 0.50, e) critical reflection and total resilience were 0.13 and total score of reflection and total score of resilience was 0.50 indicating that reflection is positively linked to teachers’ resilience.

To further analyze the data, stepwise multiple regression was utilized just as in the first research question. The total reflection score and its components were taken as independent variables and the total resilience score acted as the dependent variable. Metacognitive and practical reflection was found to significantly predict the total resilience score.

Table 4: Summary of regression models for the second research question

	Dependent Variable	Predictors	R	R²	Adjusted R²	SEE	Beta
Model 1	Total resilience	1. metacogref	0.506	0.256	0.250	4.864	0.506
Model 2	Total resilience	1.metacogref 2.pracref	0.561	0.315	0.303	4.686	0.402 0.264

Notes: metacogref = metacognitive reflection; pracref = practical reflection.

Metacognitive reflection accounted for 25% of the variance in total resilience score. The addition of practical reflection increased the shared variance to 31% in total resilience score. As shown in Table 4-4 none of the reflection components except metacognitive and practical could predict total resilience score.

Qualitative phase

This section tries to answer the third research question which aimed at investigating how reflection leads to or prevents stress and resilience among teachers. Analysis of the interviews with some of the EFL teachers led to the extraction of two main themes namely a) reflection leads to resilience through strengthening teachers' professional identity and b) reflection leads to resilience and stress through making teachers prepared and knowledgeable.

Reflection leads to resilience through strengthening teachers' professional identity and confidence

We implied from the interviews that reflection can lead to resilience through boosting teachers' morale and improving their professional identity and self-efficacy. In other words, reflection makes teachers value their pedagogical lives and experiences, and help them gain and boost their self-confidence. That reflection makes teachers value their professional lives and experiences refers to the fact that including reflection as a regular practice in one's teaching helps teachers to be in love with teaching and enables them to stand the adversities and challenges of their job. Reflective practice helps teachers "to value their own lives and experiences as a source of knowledge about what they may expect to encounter in their classrooms and lives of children they will teach" (Braun and Crumpler, 2004, P. 61; also see Carter, 1993; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Sina, one of the interviewees believed that consulting with his supervisor and thinking about the impact of his job, which are instances of reflective practices, make him strong and resistant against the challenges:

I never thought of leaving teaching cause this is what I love to do, although I had very hard times in the first year of my experience like not having class management or not being able to control the class, I stayed and overcome those with the help of my dear supervisors or through thinking about the value I assign to my job and my students.

(Sina, 24 years old)

When asked if he calls himself a reflective teacher, he made the following interesting comment:

I don't know what you exactly mean by a reflective teacher but if you mean caring about my job and thinking of ways to improve in that [em] ...yes, I care and so I may be a reflective teacher as you call it.

This shows that although the knowledge of reflection is a key factor in whether and how frequently teachers reflect (Shirazizadeh & Moradkhani, 2017), reflective practices can have their positive effects even when the teacher does not know what he is doing is called reflection.

Unlike Sina, Ms. Kalhori, an institute supervisor seemed to know well about reflection. Like Sina and many other interviewees, she believed that reflective practice could protect teachers from stress and boost their resilience because it gives the teacher a sense of professional attachment:

I was a teacher since I was 18 and I have twenty years of experience in teaching, I know what reflective practices are and I always recommend them to my teachers. During these twenty years and due to my job I saw hundreds of teachers and I can say that those who were reflective resisted the challenge of teaching because they believed in and valued their professional identity while the others got tired and left the job after at most one year. (Kalhori, 42 years old)

Improving teachers' self-confidence was also found to be one of the ways through which reflection makes teachers resilient and stress-free. Our participants believed that teachers' involvement in reflective practices like reading journals, talking to colleagues, attending workshops, and many others can help them believe in their practice since what they do is not impulsive and haphazard but well thought upon. The following excerpt from

the interview with Amir instantiate this issue:

By being confident, which is a result of background studies and being alert in hard situations you are able to analyze the situation and lower the level of stress and finally you can find the source and solve it. This happens only when you value your job and spend time on it. (Amir, 29 years old)

Reflection leads to resilience and stress through making teachers prepared and knowledgeable

This second theme which we extracted from our interview data in response to the third research question has the two dimensions of ‘being prepared’ and ‘being knowledgeable’. Analysis of interview data revealed that reflection leads to resilience through making teachers both prepared and knowledgeable while it may at the same time lead to stress through making teachers knowledgeable, unduly critical, and hence quite fussy. The following excerpt shows how lesson plans as a typical practical reflection lower teachers’ stress:

I always keep a not detailed lesson plan on top of the page that I want to teach in my book. By looking at it I can manage time and it’s like a path that I should go. I always check what I’m going to teach and find the meanings and synonyms of new vocabularies that I’m going to teach, it really releases my stress in intermediate and upper-intermediate classes. (Hanieh, 29 years old)

Leila, with 5 years of teaching experience, commented in her interview that sometimes she gets anxious when she spends much time on reading and planning for her classes:

Balance is good in every aspect of teaching. Sometimes, to know more

than you should makes you fussy, makes you lose control and leads to stress. I had a pre-intermediate class and I used to take it so seriously, I remember I used to teach the parts of speech of all words and I was stressed not to miss anything and to make sure that I am following what I had planned for myself based on my readings and talks to my more experienced colleague. (Leila, 28 years old)

Maryam who was a supervisor in an institute was familiar with the concept of reflection and resilience. She therefore directly referred to these two concepts and linked them. She also acknowledged that reflective practice can help teachers better cope with stress as it eliminates some of the sources of teachers' stress, hence making them more resistant and resilient:

I got my MA in ELT. The first time I studied about the notion of reflection and reflective teacher was from one of my courses. Since then, I tried my best to use its practices for my career as much as I could like joining relevant conferences, having lesson plans, talking to my colleagues about the problems I face in the class and so on. Now, I consider myself way more knowledgeable than before and the reason that I am resilient in my job with all its problems is being a reflective teacher. Stress in teaching is usually because of lack of knowledge or self-confidence and reflection can remove these sources. (Maryam, 34 years old)

DISCUSSION

In the quantitative phase of this study, we examined the link between reflective practice, and role stress and resilience. Our first research question particularly investigated the link between reflection and role stress. The findings revealed that reflective teachers perceive lesser amounts of role stress. More particularly reflection was negatively correlated with both role

ambiguity and role conflict. All components of reflection except critical were also negatively related to role ambiguity. Of the correlation indices between the dimensions of reflection and role conflict, only the one between practical reflection and role conflict was positive. In sum, we can claim that teachers with higher levels of reflection feel less organizationally stressed. This can be justified because of the positive link between reflection and self-efficacy and the negative link between reflection and burnout (Moradkhani, Raygan, Moein, 2017; Shirazizadeh & Moradkhani, 2018; Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, forthcoming). Reflective teachers are more efficacious in managing their classes, engaging their students, and employing effective instructional strategies, which may give them a sense of achievement and competence that can prevent stress. On the other hand, Shirazizadeh and Moradkhani (2018) showed that reflective teachers feel that they are more attached to their students and have had more achievements in their profession than less reflective teachers. Such feelings of attachment and achievement can thus mediate the negative link between reflection and role stress among EFL teachers.

The findings of our second research question showed that reflection is positively correlated with resilience. The correlation indices between all components of reflection, except critical, and resilience were statistically significant with metacognitive and practical reflection found to be significant predictors of resilience based on our regression model. Our data shows clearly that reflective teachers have a higher ability to cope with their professional and educational adversities. This is not surprising as reflective practice is by nature a matter of making judicious decisions in light of experience and knowledge (Akbari, 2007). It can, therefore, be argued that a teacher who regularly writes journals and lesson reports, attends group discussions regarding her job (instances of practical reflection), thinks about her identity as a teacher and her emotional make-up concerning her career (instances of metacognitive reflection) would inevitably be wiser, more knowledgeable and more skillful in coping with stressors, hence more resilient.

In the qualitative phase of this study, we interviewed several participants to investigate how reflection leads to or prevent resilience and stress. Interviewees suggested that reflection induces resilience and prevents stress through boosting teachers' professional identity, morale, and confidence and by making them more knowledgeable and professionally prepared. Our interviewees believed that involvement in reflective practice makes teachers self-possessed by making them sharp and continuous learners and experimenters. Reflective behaviors will also create a sense of attachment between the teachers and their careers (Tajik & Ranjbar, 2018). What might be neglected in our findings and thus merits attention here is the possible inhibiting effect of stress on reflection. Although we found that reflection can promote resilience and protect teachers against stress, highly stressful working conditions may prevent teachers from reflection. In line with this hypothesis, Shirazizadeh and Moradkhani (2018) showed that job-related, curriculum-related, and student-related issues can act as external sources of stress for the teacher over which they have no control. Such sources can thus impede teachers' reflection.

One interesting finding of the qualitative phase of this study was that high reflection could induce stress. Some of the interviews maintained that high involvement in reflective practices has sometimes made them fussy and oversensitive to their practice. This has been followed by a sense of uncertainty as to the appropriateness of the pedagogical decisions they make. This is partly justified by Akbari (2007, p.192) who believes that "too much emphasis on reflective practices and teachers' practical knowledge might result in isolation from the language teaching discourse community". Isolation of teachers and leaving them on their own with lots of responsibilities is also a drawback of the postmethod era (Akbari, 2008). Teachers who are set free from the limits of methods are left with the heavier and more daunting task of teaching on their own albeit reflectively. This may leave some stranded and some others confused as to the appropriateness of their practice hence anxious and stressed as reported by some of our participants.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

While reflection is a celebrated concept in teacher education, only recently has its various dimensions started to be empirically investigated. In this study, we showed that reflective practice is related to lower levels of stress and higher levels of resilience. There were however many cases where reflection was reported to induce stress. The conclusion one can draw from the findings of our study is that while reflection is a valuable pedagogical instrument to help teachers in making better decisions, its scope and nature should be more extensively elaborated. Future research can thus focus on how reflection is operationalized by stressed teachers who sometimes sweat the small stuff at the chalk face and do not know how to calm down.

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