

## The Relationship Between Occupational Stress And Teacher Self-Efficacy: A Study With EFL Instructors

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### Abstract

Considering the effects of stress and self-efficacy on teachers, the purpose of this study was twofold; a) to discover the relationship between perceived occupational stress and self-efficacy beliefs of Turkish EFL instructors, and b) to investigate the relationship between teachers' occupational stress and individual characteristics such as gender, age, year of experience, and educational background. The participants were 84 EFL instructors working at a preparatory school, at a state university in Turkey. Data was collected through the adapted versions of Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and Teacher Stress Inventory (Boyle, Borg, Falzon, & Baglioni, 1995), and a demographic information form developed by the researchers. A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between occupational stress and teacher self-efficacy. To determine the relationship between occupational stress and teachers' demographic variables, Independent Sample t-Tests and one-way ANOVA were carried out. The findings indicated that the participants experienced moderate levels of stress, and that there was no statistically significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and occupational stress. Individual variables also revealed no significant effect on teacher stress. It was concluded that the administrative policies and teaching environment have an effect on teachers' stress and that teachers stress and self-efficacy are context specific.

*Keywords:* Teacher stress, teacher self-efficacy, individual characteristics

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## Introduction

Teaching is regarded as one of the high stress occupations. According to Kyriacou (2001), approximately 25 percent of teachers reported that teaching is a very stressful job. Teacher stress, which causes teachers to develop various levels of psychological symptoms such as mild frustration, irritability, and anxiety as well as more serious psychosomatic and depressive symptoms, stems from some facets and conditions of their work as teachers (Dunham, 1992; Kyriacou, 2001; Kyriacou & Pratt, 1985; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Schonfeld, 1992). Thus, teacher stress puts at risk not only teachers' health and effectiveness but also students' achievements and has increasingly been drawing research attention as a widespread problem (e.g., Aftab & Khatoun, 2012; Fisher, 2011; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001).

Research has found that, apart from the external factors like unmotivated students, heavy workload, and poor working conditions, teachers' self-efficacy levels and characteristics also have correlations with stress. Self-efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs about being able to successfully accomplish a specific course of action (Bandura, 1997), influencing teaching behaviors and students' motivation and achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), has a reciprocal relationship with stress in teaching. Teachers with low self-efficacy suffer from higher levels of stress (Betoret, 2006). On the other hand, teachers' greater classroom stress results in lower self-efficacy in classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

Research has shown that stress is experienced at different levels by female and male teachers (Chaplain, 2008) and that efficacy beliefs of teachers vary depending on teaching experience (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005). The emerging body of research on the issue (e.g., Klassen & Chiu, 2010,2011; Motallebzadeh, Ashraf, & Yazdi, 2014; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016) needs to be expanded, for a

better understanding, concerning a variety of diverse teaching contexts and teacher characteristics. Besides, research on the teaching stress levels, sources of stress and ways to cope with work stress experienced by teachers working in Turkish education institutions should be increased in scope in order to better understand and help Turkish teachers suffering job-related stress. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the relationships among levels of job-related stress, perceived self-efficacy levels, and personal characteristics such as gender, years of teaching experience, and education types of EFL instructors.

The definition of stress is based upon the idea of “a perceived imbalance in the interface between an individual, the environment and other individuals” (Roxas, 2009). Kyriacou (2001, p. 28) asserts there are also some researchers defining the term stress by means “of the degree of mismatch between the demands made upon an individual and the individual’s ability to cope with those demands”. As it is the case for this specific study, what is usually pointed out with “stress” is the negative experience of feelings as a whole. Although there are a lot of individual affective factors, “stress” has been indicated among the most significant variables (Jepson & Forrest 2006).

### **Teachers and Teacher Stress**

Teachers, as a part of their professional role, are always seen as the center of attention in any classroom, but when it comes to address their needs, concerns or problems, it is obvious that they do not attract the same amount of attention. In spite of the fact that stress can have a negative effect on teachers in terms of many aspects (physical, mental and/or emotional/psychological) and this may consequently affect the institutions and students negatively, research into stress as an affective factor for teachers is limited.

Teaching is regarded as an “emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating” profession (Lambert, O’Donnell, Kusherman, & McCarthy, 2006, p. 105). In today’s global world, teachers are expected to perform numerous and diverse activities every day. Positive and negative interactions with students, colleagues, school administrators, and parents are common encounters for teachers (Unal, 2000). There are numerous studies showing that teaching is a stressful job in different contexts (e.g. Aftab & Khatoon, 2012; Fisher, 2011; McCarthy, Lambert, Crow & McCarthy 2010; Khan, Shah, Khan & Gul, 2012; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001).

In the area of education, the term teacher stress can be defined as “the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher” (Kyriacou, 2001, p. 2). When the given definition is studied closely, it is obvious that teacher stress has negative connotations and can have diverse psychological, physiological and behavioral links (Van Dick & Wagner, 2001).

Research has proved that teachers are exposed to different sources of stress. Considerable ones among these sources are; having to teach unmotivated students, discipline problems, work overload, undefined roles or responsibilities, being evaluated by others, problematic relationships with colleagues and administrators, and poor working conditions (Kyriacou, 2001).

Taking ESL/EFL teachers’ context into consideration, teachers in the profession of ELT also feel some particular stresses that are unique to their job. Occupational stress especially perceived by EFL teachers under different circumstances can be affected by many variables such as personal, psychological and contextual factors. Teacher’s age, gender, personality, teaching experience, the context, curriculum, administrators, students, students’ personality and age, proficiency levels of students, familial and financial concerns,

colleagues, poor career conditions can be accepted as job-related stress factors and may contribute to the stress levels that they have in their profession. EFL teachers are expected to communicate with learners, try to motivate them and encourage learner participation in classroom activities and, thus, to facilitate learning. Performing these tasks puts them under pressure and it is vital to explore their sources of stress to determine their potential stressors (Mohammdi, 2015).

### **Teachers' Self-Efficacy**

Self-Efficacy is one of the core concepts in Social Cognitive Theory and refers to individuals' perceptions about their capabilities to successfully accomplish a specific course of action in a particular context (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy can influence individuals' choice of tasks and activities, and predicts how much effort they put on the tasks, their persistence and resilience facing the obstacles and adverse situations, and effectiveness on regulating their thoughts, actions and plans (Schunk & Meece, 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Therefore, self-efficacy has a tremendous influence on motivation. People tend to choose, perform and persist on activities and tasks which they think they are competent to accomplish. Individuals with low self-efficacy are disposed to select uncomplicated tasks and exaggerate possible inconveniences and threats, dwelling on their limitations. On the other hand, people with high self-efficacy set challenging goals and sustain ample effort and strong commitment to achieve them even in the emergence of failure (Bandura, 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Moreover, cognitive processes and performance such as decision-making quality and academic achievement are facilitated by a strong sense of competence, i.e. high levels of self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Research supports the contention that self-efficacy is an important factor in education as well as other settings such as business, sports and health (Bandura, 1997). Teachers' self-

efficacy is defined by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) as a teacher's "judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (p.783). Another definition has been made by Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2007) as "individual teachers' beliefs in their own ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that are required to attain given educational goals" (p. 612). Teachers' self-efficacy has an effect not only on their teaching practices but also on their students' motivation and achievement. Hence, teachers' high self-efficacy leads them to use effective teaching strategies more often, which causes stronger motivation and increased academic achievements in their students (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Bandura (1997) states that mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states are the primary sources of the information that individuals process to construct their self-efficacy beliefs. Mastery experiences are viewed as the most influential source of information for constructing efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 1997, Morris & Usher, 2011; Poulou, 2007; Tschannen Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007) and regarding teaching, mastery experiences are teachers' interpretations of their previous performances. While successful experiences increase teachers' self-efficacy, experiences of failure decrease their perceptions of competence (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2010). For example, teachers with perceptions of failure to teach unmotivated students in the past may have low levels of self-efficacy when teaching a class with unmotivated students. According to Bandura (1997), vicarious experiences, or observations of other teachers' actions are indicators of what teachers can do apart from their direct experiences. If the models observed are similar to themselves in terms of abilities and success, their sense of efficacy may heighten. On the other hand, if they believe they are not as capable as the models, their self-efficacy may decrease (Johnson, 2010; Mills, 2011). Verbal

persuasions are the judgments of other people such as administrators, colleagues, and students about a teacher's competency on a specific task. As positive persuasions may act to improve teacher's self-efficacy beliefs, negative judgments may diminish their sense of competence (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Physiological and affective states such as anxiety, stress or excitement in teachers performing a particular task may have an impact on the self-efficacy perceptions of the teachers (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Although affective states have the weaker relation to self-efficacy than the other sources (Poulou, 2007), these sources of information can increase or decrease teachers' perception of efficacy in combination with others (Bandura, 1997; Morris & Usher, 2011). For instance, when a teacher feels anxious performing a task, his or her perception of competence may decline.

### **Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Job Stress**

Both job stress and teaching efficacy beliefs are important factors for teachers' motivation (Barnabé & Burns, 1994), work engagement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014), and commitment to their jobs, as well as their students' achievement and self-efficacy (Caprara, Barbanelli, Steka, & Malone, 2006; Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Hannay, 2001). Bandura (1997) and Avanzi, Miglioretti, Velasco, Balducci, Vecchio, Fraccaroli, Skaalvik, (2013) asserted that there might be a reciprocal relationship between self-efficacy and burnout, hence stress. Recent research in educational psychology has corroborated this contention. A study by Collie, Shapka and Perry (2012) concluded that perceived stress from students' behavior and discipline had a negative effect on teachers' efficacy beliefs. Similarly, Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that teachers with high levels of classroom stress had low levels of self-efficacy in instructional strategies and student engagement. In addition, a more recent study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016) indicated that high stress in teaching predicted lower teacher self-efficacy leading to intentions to quit their jobs.

Schwarzer & Hallum (2008) claimed that the effect of self-efficacy on stress may be more substantial than the effect of stress on efficacy beliefs of teachers. They also revealed teaching self-efficacy beliefs as personal resource factors which protect teachers against job stress experiences. Supporting this view, Motallebzadeh, Ashraf and Yazdi (2014) showed that teachers who have perceptions of competence were more likely to cope with various sources of stress such as job insecurity, work overload and student's low motivation in a private language institute in Iran.

On the other hand, Klassen and Chiu (2010) indicated that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs mediate job stress. Low levels of self-efficacy for classroom management may cause teachers difficulties to regulate classroom stress (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Moreover, Betoret (2006) noted that teachers with low self-efficacy might have greater difficulties in teaching and experience higher levels of occupational stress. As can be seen, research on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction is inconclusive and further studies are needed to understand and explain these aspects.

Considering the inconclusive nature of studies on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction and the effects that self-efficacy and stress have on teachers and students, the following questions guided the study;

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between occupational stress and teacher self-efficacy in EFL teachers?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between EFL teacher occupational stress and demographic variables (gender, age, year of experience, and educational background)?



## **Methodology**

### **Participants and Setting**

The participants consisted of 84 Turkish EFL instructors working at a Preparatory School of a Turkish state university in Eskişehir. The primary goal of the Preparatory Program where this specific study was conducted is to help students improve their English in order to pursue their academic studies. Students are placed in classes basing on their results from the Placement Exam on general English administered by their institution and receive integrated skills courses for 20-24 hours a week. Each class is shared by 3 different instructors who generally have the same or similar amount of workload. They teach students whose levels range from beginner to upper-intermediate. The students are required to pass the English proficiency exam administred by their institution in order to be able to continue their academic studies in their departments.

In the institution where the study was carried out, the instructors had 16 to 18 hours of teaching in a week on average. They used an integrated skills course book according to the proficiency level they were teaching and they followed a pre-planned syllabus. Their duties included grading weekly tasks submitted to an online platform and pop quizzes provided by the testing unit of the institution and giving feedback accordingly. Some instructors also had computer lab classes in which students were supposed to practice the activities in the online component of their course book and do the assigned lab tasks provided weekly by the institution. The instructor had the duty of grading the tasks and giving feedback to the students. Finally, some of the instructors had administrative duties in different units of the institution including the testing unit, the curriculum design unit, the technological development unit, the professional development unit and the coordinating unit. Those

instructors had fewer teaching hours but more administrative workload as they had to organize or attend meetings within their unit schedules and carry out their unit specific duties.

Out of 84 respondents, 50 were female and 34 were male. Their ages ranged from 22 to 60 (16 of them were between 22-30, 47 were between 31-40, 18 were between 41-50, 3 were between 52-60). 6 of the instructors who participated in the study had up to 5 years of total teaching experience, whereas 13 of them had 6 to 10 years, 56 of them had 11 to 20 years, 9 of them had 21 years and above teaching experience. In terms of their educational background, out of 84 respondents, 60 graduated from an English Language Teaching Department, whereas 24 of them graduated from other departments (English Language and Literature Department, American Culture and Literature Department, Translation and Interpretation Studies, or Linguistics Department). Table 1 outlines the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

*Demographic Information of Participants*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	50	59%
Male	34	41%
TOTAL	84	100%
<b>Age</b>		
22-30	16	19%
31-40	47	56%
41-50	18	21%
52-60	3	4%
TOTAL	84	100%
<b>Teaching Experience</b>		
0-5	6	7%
6-10	13	15%
11-20	56	67%
21 and above	9	11%
TOTAL	84	100%
<b>Educational Background</b>		
ELT Department	60	71%

Other Departments	24	29%
TOTAL	84	100%

## Instruments

The main instruments of the present study were based on collecting quantitative data by using the long form of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) and Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI). The instruments were completed anonymously, and participation in the study was voluntary. To collect demographic information on participating teachers, four questions were asked at the beginning of the questionnaire. The aim was to identify the four significant personal (individual) variables; age, gender, number of year in teaching and educational background.

The long form of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran (2001) which is a 24-item questionnaire was used to measure levels of teacher efficacy. However, 2 items, item 18 (How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?) and item 22 (How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?), were discarded. Item 18 was excluded because the instructors at the institution did not have any space for designing their own assessing system due to administrative policies. Item 22 was discarded as the university did not have any public relation policies aiming at the parents of the students, so most of the time the instructors do not have any contact with the parent of the students. This scale covers three subscales; efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practices, and efficacy in classroom management. This self-report measure is scored on a nine-point Likert Scale, ranging from "nothing" to "a great deal". The Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) was developed by Boyle et al., (1995) to measure the various aspects of teachers' stress in the work environment. This inventory comprised of 14 items measure on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'no stress' to "extreme stress".

## Results

The present study set out to investigate the relationship between occupational stress and self-efficacy among a group of EFL teachers working at preparatory school of a state university in Turkey. Table 2 shows the overall descriptive statistics of the participants' scores obtained from the two instruments.

Table 2

### *Descriptive Statistics of Overall Scores*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
<b>Occupational Stress</b>	84	,29	3,36	1,99	,75
<b>Teacher Self Efficacy</b>	84	5,50	8,64	7,33	,67
<b>IE</b>	84	5,50	8,64	7,32	,67
<b>CMSE</b>	84	5,00	8,75	7,42	,84
<b>SE</b>	84	4,29	8,71	7,06	,93

*ISE=Instructional Self Efficacy*

*CMSE=Classroom Management Self Efficacy*

*SESE=Student Engagement Self Efficacy*

In order to achieve the first aim, a correlation analysis was conducted between the measures of occupational stress and teacher self-efficacy. Table 3 demonstrates the correlation analysis results between occupational stress and teacher self-efficacy.

Table 3

### *Correlation between Occupational Stress and Teacher Self Efficacy*

		<b>Occupational Stress</b>	<b>Teacher Self Efficacy</b>
<b>Occupational Stress</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	1	,159
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		,15

As Table 3 demonstrates, there is a weak correlation ( $r = .159$ ,  $p = .15$ ) between occupational stress ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) and teacher self-efficacy ( $M = 7.33$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) and the

correlation between the two scores is not significant. This means that the scores obtained from the two instruments cannot be related to each other. In other words, it is not necessarily the case that higher scores on one of the instruments will be accompanied by a higher score on the other instrument or vice versa. Therefore, the results indicate that the two variables are independent from each other and individuals can have a high level of stress while at the same time enjoying a high level of self-efficacy or a low level of stress and a high level of self-efficacy. There are no consistent patterns found between these two scores.

In order to answer the second research question, the effect of demographic variables (gender, age, year of experience and educational background) on occupational stress, a set of analyses were conducted. In order to see if there is any significant difference in stress scores between females and males, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Descriptive scores of the participants show that female participants of the study are more prone to occupational stress ( $M= 2.03$ ,  $SD= .67$ ) than their male colleagues ( $M= 1.94$ ,  $SD= .86$ ). This slight difference was computed through independent samples t-test for determining if it was significant or not. Table 4 demonstrates the results of the independent samples t-test.

Table 4

*Independent Sample t-Test Results for Gender*

	Levene's Test		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
	F	Sig.				
<b>Equal variances assumed</b>	2,651	,107	,503	82	,616	,08462
<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>			,481	59,592	,632	,08462

The independent samples t-test results presented in Table 4 indicate that although female participants had slightly higher occupational stress levels, the difference is not statistically significant ( $t(82)= .503$ ,  $p= .616$ ). Therefore, although it cannot be generalized to

a larger population, it can be argued that being female or male does not lead to significant differences in occupational stress levels in the context of the study.

Another demographic variable under investigation is the age of the participants. The participants were divided into 4 age groups (aged between 22-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 52-60) thus requiring one-way ANOVA for measuring the differences among them. The comparison of the age groups show that, there is a slight difference among the age groups in terms of occupational stress scores. The participants in the 22-30 age group have the highest occupational stress score ( $M= 2.16$ ,  $SD= .55$ ) followed by the 31-40 age group ( $M= 2.03$ ,  $SD= .74$ ) and 52-60 age group ( $M= 1.97$ ,  $SD= .77$ ). The participants aged between 41 and 50 demonstrate the lowest occupational stress scores ( $M= 1.75$ ,  $SD= .90$ ). In order to determine if the difference among the groups in terms of occupational stress scores was significant, one-way ANOVA was administered. Table 5 demonstrates the results of the analysis.

Table 5

*One-way ANOVA Results for Age*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	1,556	3	,519	,912	,439
<b>Within Groups</b>	45,499	80	,569		

The results of one-way ANOVA presented in Table 5 yields that although there are slight differences among the groups on occupational stress scores, these differences don't reach significance ( $F(3, 80)=.912$ ,  $p= .439$ ). It can then be concluded that age does not have a statistically significant effect on occupational stress.

Another demographic variable whose effect on occupational stress was investigated in this study is educational background, whether the participants graduated from an English Language Teaching Department or graduated from other related departments (Linguistics,

Literature, and American Culture). The participants were divided into 2 groups and therefore their scores on occupational stress were compared via an independent samples t-test. It is found that the two groups differ in terms of their stress levels slightly, with the participants graduating from ELT department experiencing a higher level of stress ( $M= 2.05$ ,  $SD= .76$ ) than their colleagues graduating from other related departments ( $M= 1.85$ ,  $SD= .70$ ). Table 6 presents the findings of the independent samples t-test.

Table 6

*Independent Samples t-Test Results for Educational Background*

	Levene's Test					Mean Difference
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Equal variances assumed	,196	,659	1,068	82	,289	,19405
Equal variances not assumed			1,109	46,074	,273	,19405

The results in Table 6 indicate that the department graduated from lead to a slight difference between the mean scores on occupational stress but the difference fails to reach significance ( $t(82) = 1.068$ ,  $p = .289$ ). That is, the educational background of the participants does not produce significant differences and therefore we cannot generalize the results to larger groups.

The last demographic variable the present study took into consideration was years of experience. The subjects were divided into 4 experience groups (those with a 0-5, 6-10, 11-20 and 21 or above year of experience). There is a slight difference between the groups in terms of the participants' occupational stress levels. The group with the highest level of stress, more than moderate stress, is the 6-10 years of experience group ( $M= 2.18$ ,  $SD= .64$ ) followed by the 11-20 years of experience group ( $M=1.98$ ,  $SD= .64$ ) and 21 or above years of experience

group ( $M= 1.2$ ,  $SD= .79$ ). The lowest level of stress was observed among the participants with the 0-5 years of experience ( $M= 1.80$ ,  $SD= .60$ ). The findings are interesting since the same pattern with the age variable wasn't observed. The younger participants were found to be experiencing higher levels of stress while the ones with less experience didn't experience such high levels. It can be due to the fact that experience isn't parallel to the age. The differences were analyzed through one-way ANOVA and the results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

*One-way ANOVA Results for Experience*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	,705	3	,235	,406	,749
<b>Within Groups</b>	46,350	80	,579		

As presented in Table 7, the difference among the groups was far from being significant ( $F(3,80)= .406$ ,  $p= .749$ ). In other words, although there are slight differences in terms of occupational stress between the participants with different years of experience, these differences are not consistent and cannot be generalized to larger populations.

In summary, several measures demonstrate that individual differences such as age, gender, educational background, and experience indicate slight differences among the participants but these differences are not statistically significant.

## Discussion

The results demonstrate that 84 EFL teachers who participated in this study have a high level of self-efficacy ( $M= 7.33$ ,  $SD= .67$ ) and experience a moderate level of occupational stress ( $M= 1.99$ ,  $SD= .75$ ). Secondly, the findings reveal a weak non-significant



relationship between occupational stress and self-efficacy. In other words, teachers' occupational stress and self-efficacy levels act independently from each other. On the contrary, research revealed that low self-esteem leads to high stress and vice versa (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Motallebzadeh & Ashraf & Yazdi, 2014). It can be concluded that moderate stress does not necessarily lead to low self-esteem.

As research found demographic variables to be related to occupational stress, one of the aims of the current study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' occupational stress and demographic variables such as gender, age, year of experience, and educational background. As for the gender, the findings show that although the level of stress of both genders was found to be moderate, female teachers ( $M= 2.03$ ,  $SD= .67$ ) experience more occupational stress when compared to their male colleagues ( $M= 1.94$ ,  $SD= .86$ ). However, the difference between the two genders in terms of occupational stress is not significant ( $t(82)= .503$ ,  $p= .616$ ). These findings are in consistence with the results of the study carried out by Check & Okwo (2012). According to Check & Okwo (2012), teachers feel stressful regardless of their gender. This finding might be related to the fact that teachers feel stress as a result of outside factors rather than personal traits. On the other hand, these results contradict from findings of the study conducted by Aftab & Khatoon (2012). According to the results of this study, male teachers were found to experience more stress when compared to female teachers. The authors attribute this finding to the fact that female teachers have higher motivation levels than male teachers. Here it can be argued that the level of stress experienced by teachers is related to their teaching context.

Regarding the variable of age, the youngest group of teachers (22-30 years old) in the study experience the highest level of occupational stress. Teachers between the age range of 31-40 experience second highest level of occupational stress. However, stress level decrease gradually in the age range of 41-60 and 60 and above. The analysis conducted in order to see

whether these four groups of teachers from different age ranges differed in terms of occupational stress level, shows no statistically important relationship ( $F(3, 80) = .912, p = .439$ ). That is to say, teachers' age does not affect occupational stress. Similarly, Bharathi (2013) found that Iranian primary school teachers' age did not correlate with their level of occupational stress.

With respect to the educational background, the analysis of the data shows that teachers who graduated from an ELT department experience a little higher level of occupational stress than their colleagues who graduated from other language related departments. As for the difference between the teachers who graduated from an ELT department and the ones who graduated from other language related departments, it was found to be insignificant ( $t(82) = 1.068, p = .289$ ). In this sense, it can be concluded that graduating from an ELT department does not have a reciprocal relationship with occupational stress. Accordingly, it might be deduced that gaining experience might have equalized the teachers' theoretical background in terms of language teaching. Therefore, a discrepancy might not be observed as educational background is not a differentiating factor.

In relation to years of experience, it was found that teachers who are new in the field (0-5 years of experience) feel occupational stress the least when compared to other three groups. As for the difference among the groups divided according to their experience level in English language teaching, the findings show no statistically significant difference ( $F(3,80) = .406, p = .749$ ). Teachers who have experience between 6 and 10 years have the highest level of occupational stress ( $M = 2.18, SD = .64$ ). However, starting from the experience of at least 11 years, the level of occupational stress decreases. In other words, teachers with 11-20 years of experience and 20 and above years of experience have lower levels of occupational stress respectively. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Aftab & Khatoon's (2012) study, who found that teachers with 0-5 years of experience in their study also had the lowest

occupational stress level. The decrease in the stress level after 11 years was also observed in Aftab & Khatoon's (2012) study. This finding might be interpreted as novice teachers start their job idealistically and that this idealism might decrease their stress level. However, in time, as they are exposed to the same environmental factors like the teachers who have been working in the field longer, their level of expectations might decline, which might result in frustration and stress, eventually. Then, year after year, they might get used to the environment they are working in and might feel more comfortable. According to another perspective by Aftab & Khatoon (2012), with experience, their capacity as a teacher increases and they perform their jobs better.

### **Conclusion**

The findings revealed that the participants experienced moderate level of job-related stress. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between occupational stress and teacher self-efficacy. This means that the two variables under investigation were independent from each other. In other words, high level of teacher self-efficacy does not necessarily bring about low level of job-related stress or vice versa. With respect to the demographic information, none of the variables were found to be related to occupational stress.

As a conclusion, the findings of the study might indicate that external factors may play a more important role than individual factors in terms of teacher self-efficacy and occupational stress. With this respect, it might be inferred that school administrations could have a crucial impact on regulating the working conditions and thus, affecting the level of occupational stress experienced by the teachers. The findings that the overall level of stress was moderate and that personal variables such as age, gender and self-efficacy together mean that administrative policies and the school environment can be argued to have contributed in

keeping the level of stress considerably low. If high stress and low self-efficacy are seen as problems, the reasons and the remedy seem to be context specific. That is, teachers working at various institutions may experience stress and low self-efficacy due to factors unique to their working conditions and environment.

For further studies, firstly it can be recommended that the researchers might include other affective factors such as motivation or anxiety levels of their participants. Secondly, the research can be supported with qualitative data collected through introspective tools to gain deeper insight into the relationship between self-efficacy and job-related stress. Thirdly, the relationship between self-efficacy and occupational stress can be investigated within different contexts or settings. Finally, the relationship between self-efficacy and job-related stress can be studied in relation to the language proficiency level the teachers are teaching.

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