



Barriers to Teacher Accountability in the EFL Context: Development and Validation of a Context-specific Scale Employing a Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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Abstract: Teacher accountability, referring to teachers' responsibility for instructional effectiveness and student outcomes, is a fundamental concept in education. However, barriers to teacher accountability in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Iran have not been previously investigated. This study aimed to identify these barriers by developing and validating a context-specific instrument. A mixed-method approach was adopted, starting with semi-structured interviews with 100 EFL teachers to generate questionnaire items. Following the pilot study, a 77-item questionnaire was administered to 1000 EFL teachers in private language institutes. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was run to develop an adjusted model of inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability and to assess the psychometric properties of the BTAS. Additionally, descriptive statistics explored teachers' perceptions of the identified barriers. The analysis supported a three-factor model of teacher accountability barriers: Internal obstacles, including motivational factors; external inhibitors, such as systemic constraints and assessment limitations; and environmental inhibitors related to cultural, sociocultural, and political constraints. The findings highlight the complex and interrelated motivational, institutional, and contextual challenges that hinder teacher accountability, and they present practical implications for policymakers and educational authorities to foster supportive environments that enhance teaching quality and learner achievement.

Keywords: Accountability Barriers, Teacher Accountability, Scale Validation, Structural Equation Modeling.

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Introduction

Due to the increasing focus on the quality of education (Herbert et al., 2022; Taylor, 2023; Zhong & Wang, 2025), research on teachers' work has constantly intensified during several decades, particularly in contexts of global change (Beijaard, 2019; Wu & Li, 2023). Educational institutions are not static entities; they are deeply viewed through the lens of social and political changes (Hauerwas et al., 2023). Within the neoliberal framework, the concept of education has undergone a change from a collective endeavor fostering democracy to an individual pursuit focused on employability. This shift led to a redefinition of the teachers' role as professionals (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021). Teacher professionalism is structured around individualization, standardization, and accountability (Yang, 2023).

This research can be divided into three different strands: The first one deals with inquiring whether or not teaching can be regarded as a profession (Tezcan, 1996; Erden, 2007). The second deals with what knowledge constitutes the characteristics of the teaching profession (Ayenalem et al., 2022; Guerriero, 2017), and the third concerns how social, political, and technological advancement influence societies' approach to teaching and the teaching profession (Beijaard, 2019; Seddon & Levin, 2013).

In the present study, the researchers regard teachers' work as embedded in a dynamic global context that influences the teachers' positioning within educational discourse. For example, Evetts (2009) advocates for redirecting analytical attention away from the traditional notions of profession and professionalization, and instead promoting a more detailed investigation into the concept of professionalism and its contemporary applications. Today's educational inquiries are increasingly viewed through the lens of social and political change, emphasizing the need for improvement in teaching and schooling. This perspective aligns with scholars like Ball (2003) and Popkewitz (2015), who argue that educational institutions are not static but are deeply influenced by broader societal shifts. Furthermore, these global changes are contextualized into different local or national settings, which are closely interwoven in the processes of reforming (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2000; Ball, 2003). These global reforms reflect education's integration into a knowledge-based economy (Ozga & Jones, 2006) and offer managers and organizations expanded freedom regarding operational decision-making (OECD, 2005). Ball (2003) contends that educational reform policies function not only to alter organizational structures but also to fundamentally transform educators' professional identities, effectively creating new subjectivities for teachers themselves.

The new teachers emerge as “an ‘autonomous,’ an ‘innovative’ and a ‘responsible’” profession, actively building their own set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes specific to their profession (Van den Berg et al., 1999), indicating that today's teachers play a more active role (Nolan & Hoover, 2008). Moreover, there have been significant changes in the methods used by educational authorities to evaluate teachers' performance, shifting the focus from the processes involved to procedures for measurement, assessment, and evaluation to regulate outcomes (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2000).

Changes in educational policy have led to diverse approaches to accountability. Whereas accountability is often defined as a hierarchical relationship of power, wherein an agent is obliged to answer for their performance to a principal (Grey & Morris, 2023, p. 181), the professionalization approach offers an alternative framework that emphasizes internal awareness of best practices and adherence to professional standards (Leithwood, 2001; Öztuzcu Küçükberber & Balkar, 2021; Sugrue & Sefika, 2017). Alternative approaches to teacher education policy are being introduced in various countries to increase the quality of learning and teaching processes. Anderson (1997) believes that these organizationally focused reforms aim to actively engage both policymakers and teachers to shape their own policies. However, critics argue that excessive accountability and increased control over teachers' work can reduce teacher autonomy and confidence (Sachs, 2016; Biesta, 2004). Impositions of accountability and heightened control have been shown to result in negative restrictions and to diminish teacher confidence.

Moreover, changes in the implementation of educational policy occurred due to the idea of a “teacher deficit” (Ingersoll, 2011) and “failing teachers” (Ingersoll, 2006). Therefore, a logical solution to address the problems in the education system is to hold teachers more accountable and to increase the control of schools. However, the teacher accountability movement remains one of the most important and hotly debated issues in contemporary educational reforms (Öztuzcu Küçükberber & Balkar, 2021).

In summary, teacher accountability is a critical construct in both educational theory and practice, representing teachers' responsibility for their instructional effectiveness and student achievement. Theoretically, it is closely connected with concepts such as teacher agency, self-efficacy, and ethics, providing a basis to predict teacher behaviors and motivation (Polatcan, 2024). Accountability in EFL education is particularly crucial due to the specific challenges teachers face. Practically, effective accountability mechanisms can improve teaching quality through transparency, promoting professional development, and informing policymakers to enhance teacher performance and student outcomes.

Despite its importance, the existing literature on the topic remains limited (Liebowitz, 2021; Öztuzcu Küçükberber & Balkar, 2021; Puhani & Yang, 2020). Challenges to Iranian EFL teachers' accountability have not been comprehensively examined within Iranian EFL settings, and limited research has addressed its effects on English language learning. Based on a comprehensive examination of the relevant literature, no pre-existing questionnaire has been identified that assesses the barriers to accountability among EFL teachers. Thus, a notable gap in the literature is the lack of validated instruments to measure barriers to teacher accountability in this specific context. This study addresses this gap by constructing and validating a scale designed to assess these barriers, thereby contributing to applied linguistics research and offering a practical tool for both teachers and policymakers. Moreover, research on teacher accountability remains underexplored, with cultural, institutional, and pedagogical factors influencing its implementation (Liebowitz, 2021; Öztuzcu Küçükberber & Balkar, 2021). Recognizing this gap, the present study attempts to address these complexities by examining the multifaceted challenges that affect the enforcement and effectiveness of teacher accountability in the Iranian context.

Review of the Related Literature

Theoretical Framework of the Study and Practical Studies

Accountability represents a central concept in contemporary educational policy and practice. According to Smith and Benavot (2019), the emergence of accountability systems marks one of the most significant shifts in educational policy frameworks globally. At the conceptual level, accountability is multifaceted and polysemous, with interpretations including responsiveness, transparency, liability, control, and dialogue (Drach-Zahavi et al., 2018; Syahril, 2017). Fundamentally, it emphasizes appropriate behaviors and responsibilities, particularly the process of assigning accountability to a person for a designated objective or outcome (Levitt et al., 2008).

Generally, accountability involves an individual's role or competency to take ownership of their behavior toward themselves and other individuals (Drach-Zahavi et al., 2018). Hall (2005, p. 32), integrating various definitions, describes accountability as "an implicit or explicit expectation that one's decisions or actions will be subject to evaluation by some salient audience(s) (including self) with the belief that there exists the potential for one to receive either rewards or sanctions based on this expected evaluation." This viewpoint underscores the evaluative aspect of accountability, including self-monitoring and performance assessment (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).

Accountability itself encompasses various dimensions and types. [Levitt et al. \(2008\)](#) identify multiple forms, such as organizational, political, educational, legal, professional, moral, and ethical accountability. Organizational accountability pertains to defining company values, missions, and goals and holding responsible individuals accountable for achieving these aims; political accountability functions through democratic institutions ensuring that politicians and actors are answerable; educational accountability involves appraising institutional performance; legal accountability is enforced by judicial bodies protecting rights; professional accountability relates to individual responsibility over one's own performance; while moral or ethical accountability involves voluntary adherence to internalized moral standards.

From this multi-dimensional perspective, accountability can also be classified into two overarching types: Internal and external accountability ([Rosenblatt & Wubbels, 2021](#)). Internal accountability reflects an individual's personal commitment and responsibility towards their own values and goals, often described as the "perception of the individual's own accountability" ([Frink & Klimoski, 1998, p. 18](#)). This involves evaluation of expectations, efficient reporting, judgment, and corresponding rewards or punishments for performance ([Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2015](#); [Frink et al., 2008](#); [Hall & Ferris, 2011](#); [Rosenblatt, 2017](#); [Snyder & Bristol, 2015](#)). [Frink and Klimoski \(2004\)](#) emphasize interpersonal accountability as a critical factor influencing both individual and organizational outcomes.

Conversely, external accountability originates from outside the individual, constituting the social relationship between the agent and external audiences mediated by mechanisms such as reward systems, performance evaluations, audits, and monitoring processes ([Amrein-Beardsley & Holloway, 2019](#); [Knapp & Feldman, 2012](#); [Sugrue & Sefika, 2017](#); [Zamir, 2019](#)). [Hall \(2005\)](#) further stresses the importance of external accountability in creating an overall impression of accountability on individuals.

Despite its intended positive goals, accountability systems have complex impacts. Positively, accountability has been shown to promote better student learning outcomes ([Okitsu & Edwards Jr, 2017](#)), boost learner motivation, encourage creative engagement, and teach students to accept critical feedback ([Post, 2018](#)). It supports oversight of teachers' work and holds educators responsible for improving school performance ([Shibuya, 2020](#)). Furthermore, shared expectations communicated to students and parents contribute to strengthening teacher professionalism through emotional labor ([Jenkins, 2000](#); [UNESCO, 2022](#); [Öztuzcu Küçükbere & Balkar, 2021](#)).

On the other hand, accountability may have detrimental consequences, particularly when perceived negatively by stakeholders. These include decreased perceived job security, reduced job satisfaction, and loss of autonomy, especially when curricula are prescriptively aligned with high-stakes testing (Kraft et al., 2020). Teachers' professional identities may be challenged, their agency demoralized, and overall professionalism weakened (Guenther, 2021). Increased workloads can lead to adverse effects on teachers' well-being (Perryman & Calvert, 2019).

Given this complex landscape, contemporary teachers are held accountable to clear standards aimed at improving teaching and learning quality (Guenther, 2021; Lingard & Sellar, 2012; Sahlberg, 2010). Ballard and Bates (2008) note a prevailing belief among teachers that accountability is essential for accomplishing student learning objectives. This fosters not only a supportive environment for meaningful learning but also a collaborative student-teacher relationship critical for educational success (Lingard, 2010; Sahlberg, 2010; Taylor, 2023). Moreover, acting in accordance with accountability protocols is necessary for teachers to develop their professional competencies and ensure the success of educational systems (Öztuzcu Küçükbere & Balkar, 2021).

Several studies have been carried out across various countries to study the teachers' accountability from various perspectives, including policy reforms, professional practices, and sociocultural contexts. For instance, Tuytens and Devos (2009) found three critical factors—practicality, necessity, and clarity—that shape teachers' perceptions of accountability policies, while Donnelly and Sadler (2009) indicated teachers' modification to standards-based accountability in curricula. Keddie (2014) underscored the potential of student voice initiatives to increase the quality of the teaching and learning process and improve teacher accountability, and Puhani and Yang (2020) demonstrated that the implementation of a reform policy based on accountability has resulted in Germany reducing grading leniency.

Similarly, Kraft et al. (2020) found that high-stakes evaluation systems enhanced the quality of newly hired teachers but negatively influenced the supply of new teachers due to reduced perceived job security, autonomy, and satisfaction. Liebowitz (2021) highlighted the need for persistent instructional support for underperforming teachers whose performance fell below a certain threshold under evaluation systems.

Other investigations have explored how sociocultural context interacts with teachers' responses to accountability measures (Hwa, 2022) and the association of accountability with professionalism among Turkish middle school teachers (Öztuzcu Küçükbere & Balkar,

2021). In the Iranian context, Vosoughi et al. (2018) studied how teacher accountability variables like experience, education level, and gender influence language teachers' autonomy in material development but found no significant predictive relationship. Zarei et al. (2019) carried out a mixed-methods study to explore differences in elements of educational accountability—including goals, performance metrics, design choices, consequences, communication, support mechanisms, system evaluation, monitoring, and enhancement—between Iranian high schools and English language institutes. Results revealed statistically significant differences in accountability levels between the two educational contexts for all elements except communication, which was similarly rated in both settings. The qualitative interview data supported these quantitative findings, suggesting distinct accountability profiles in Iranian public and private EFL environments.

Additionally, the status of educational accountability and the overall quality of classroom life in Iranian EFL public and private sectors were investigated by Bahrami and Hamzavi (2022) through the use of mixed-methods research. The findings indicated that both teachers and learners demonstrated a relatively high level of educational accountability, with significantly greater accountability in the private sector. Similarly, the quality of the classroom was found to be acceptable overall but significantly higher in the private sectors compared to the public schools.

Makkie and Kargozari (2025) investigated the relationship between teachers' professional development and professional accountability using questionnaires and reported a positive significant correlation. Professional accountability was found to be one of the predictors of professional development. The findings suggest that professional development modules need to be tailored based on teachers' accountability characteristics and supported by stakeholders in order to meet challenges in Iranian EFL settings. As it is clear, the literature highlights a global trend toward incorporating teacher accountability into educational reforms to improve instructional quality, teachers' motivation, and address performance disparities. However, it also underscores challenges such as reduced job satisfaction among teachers.

Consequently, the literature emphasizes the need to elicit inhibitors of teacher accountability in specific contexts, particularly in Iranian EFL settings where such studies are rare. It proposes developing a reliable measurement instrument to systematically detect these inhibitors and inform policies that promote a supportive environment for teachers. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions on barriers to their accountability and developing an inventory of these inhibitors. The results of the present study could inform educational reforms not only in Iran but also in similar EFL contexts,

ultimately improving teaching effectiveness and supporting broader educational objectives. To carry out the present study, the following three research questions were formulated:

1. What is a valid model of inhibitors of Iranian EFL teachers' accountability?
2. Does the proposed model satisfy the criteria of reliability and validity?
3. How do Iranian EFL teachers view the factors that hinder their accountability?

Methods

Design

A sequential exploratory mixed-methods design was utilized to create a valid model for the obstacles associated with the Iranian EFL teacher accountability scale and evaluate inhibitors of teacher accountability in this context. The study employed a two-phased approach to develop and validate the Barriers to Teacher Accountability Scale (BTAS). Phase 1 included conducting semi-structured interviews with a sample of Iranian EFL teachers to generate items for the BTAS questionnaire. In Phase 2, the generated items underwent a pilot study and structural analysis to examine the psychometric adequacy of the scale.

Participants

In phase 1, the participants comprised 60 EFL teachers (30 males and 30 females) teaching at private language institutes of Shiraz, Iran. For interview purposes, the sample was selected through purposive sampling to represent a range of teaching experience (ranging from 2 to 15 years) and educational backgrounds (BA, MA, and PhD). In phase 2, the participants included a sample of 460 EFL teachers who taught at various private language institutes across Iran. The sample size was recruited based on recommendations for SEM analysis (Kline, 2015), which requires a minimum sample size of 200 for frameworks with a moderate number of variables.

Given the accessibility and availability of teachers in the targeted institutions, participants were selected using a convenience sampling approach. The resulting sample comprised 274 female and 186 male teachers, with academic qualifications distributed as 277 with a BA, 153 with an MA, and 30 with a Ph.D. in English Language Teaching, English Translation, and English Literature. The teaching experience of participants varied from one year up to twenty years, with 47.5% reporting less than five years, 25% between five and ten years, and 27.5% above ten years. Educators taught at diverse proficiency levels ranging from pre-intermediate to advanced.

Instruments

Semi-structured Interviews

In Phase 1, the semi-structured interviews were developed according to the present literature review and carried out individually with each teacher in private and suitable contexts. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio recorded and generally lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interview consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit teachers' points of view on the barriers that they face in being accountable in their teaching practice. The questions aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions and experiences with accountability. For example, participants were requested to share their perception of teacher accountability, whether they had ever been held accountable, and how accountability influenced their teaching practices. Moreover, they were questioned about factors that could prevent teacher accountability and the potential role of policymakers in this context. Finally, participants were invited to provide their final comments and suggestions concerning accountability. This qualitative approach provided an opportunity for in-depth investigation into teachers' experiences and perceptions of accountability in education.

Inhibitors of Teacher Accountability Scale

The Barriers to Teacher Accountability Scale (BTAS) is a researcher-made 27-item questionnaire designed to evaluate teachers' perceptions of factors that prevent their accountability. The items were developed through a rigorous procedure: Firstly, several semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase 1 were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis, detecting critical themes related to barriers to teacher accountability. A pool of items was then generated based on these themes, and the items were reviewed by two experts in the field for clarity, relevance, and content validity. These themes included systemic constraints (lack of resources, administrative support), motivational factors (lack of self-efficacy, burnout), and assessment deficiencies (flawed evaluation systems, over-reliance on standardized testing). The questionnaire's validity and reliability were confirmed by conducting a pilot study involving 65 EFL institute instructors who shared characteristics with the target participants. After piloting, the last version of the scale was developed through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) within a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Moreover, the reliability of the BTAS was checked employing Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha values for the overall scale were .87, and for each subscale were: Systemic Constraints (.82), Motivational Factors (.79), and Assessment Deficiencies (.85), indicating acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Convergent validity was also evaluated by examining the average variance extracted

(AVE) for each factor. The AVE values for each factor were above .50, showing adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was evaluated by contrasting the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct with the squared correlations among constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Results demonstrated that the AVE values surpassed the squared correlations, thereby confirming discriminant validity. The measurement instrument consisted of Likert-scale items, scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), designed to assess participants' perceived inhibitors to teacher accountability.

Data Collection Procedure

In the first phase, a comprehensive literature review revealed the absence of any existing questionnaires specifically designed to examine inhibitors of accountability among Iranian EFL teachers. Consequently, the study proceeded with the following steps. Initially, interview questions were developed grounded in the literature review and subsequently validated by two scholars specializing in applied linguistics. The participants were requested to specify their perception of teacher accountability, purpose of being accountable, the impact of accountability, factors inhibiting accountability, the role of policy makers in inhibiting teacher accountability, and their suggestions for accountability (Appendix A). To this end, 60 EFL teachers were requested to participate in the interview, and their responses were subjected to thematic analysis. Based on the findings of the interview and an extensive review of the literature, the scale was developed to obtain inhibitors of EFL teachers' accountability. Also, the scale was piloted with 65 subjects similar to study participants and underwent factor analysis for validation purposes.

In Phase 2, the BTAS questionnaire was administered to the participants through online survey platforms to ensure anonymity and ease of access. A short explanation of the research objectives was provided to the participants, along with information regarding the importance of their participation and guidance on how to answer the questionnaire accurately. Completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and took approximately 15-20 minutes. A cover letter describing the goals of the study and ensuring privacy was included with the online survey. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study before filling out the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Procedure

In Phase 1, thematic analysis of the interview was conducted using MAXQDA software, following the six-phase procedure offered by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process comprised

data familiarization, initial coding, thematic identification, theme review, theme articulation, and final report. As previously stated, "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Additionally, intercoder reliability was checked for relevant categories and subcategories by conducting systematic intercoder agreement with MAXQDA. The initial coding of the total interview sample (N = 12) was done by the first author (Coder A), followed by independent coding of 25% of the sample (N = 3) by the second author (Coder B), yielding a Cohen's kappa value of 0.70, which Landis and Koch (1977) label it as "substantial" agreement.

The quantitative data from Phase 2 were examined using structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS version 24. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the factor loadings of the BTAS. Multiple fit indices were employed to determine the model's adequacy, including the chi-square statistic (χ^2), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Additionally, descriptive statistics were used to describe Iranian EFL teachers' views on the factors that limit their accountability.

Results

Interview Results

As noted earlier, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 60 EFL teachers to identify the challenges they face in being accountable. The final coding scheme, encompassing both the categories and subcategories and delineating their exact scope, can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. EFL Teachers' Common Patterns of Answers to the Interview questions
(i.e., Barriers to Accountability)

No.	Pattern	Frequency (Out of 60)	Percentage
1	Most language teachers are dissatisfied with their salary, leading to their lack of motivation to think about their responsibilities.	52	86.66%
2	There is a lack of professional development training courses focused on teacher accountability.	45	75%
3	Policymakers have not established a clear system of shared responsibility among teachers to hold them accountable for their responsibilities.	39	65%
4	Some schools and institutes have excessively strict rules and regulations that hinder teachers to be accountable.	30	50%
5	The extensive number of materials that should be covered by teachers hinders teachers from always thinking about being accountable for their teaching.	29	48.33%

Table 1 indicates that a significant majority of EFL teachers (86.66%) express dissatisfaction with their salaries, which is perceived as a primary barrier to their motivation and sense of accountability. Furthermore, 75% of respondents highlighted the lack of professional development opportunities focused on accountability as a critical issue. The absence of a clear system of shared responsibility among teachers, noted by 65% of participants, suggests a need for policy reform to enhance accountability frameworks within educational institutions. Additionally, 50% of teachers reported that overly strict regulations hinder their ability to be accountable, indicating a potential conflict between institutional policies and teacher autonomy.

Lastly, nearly half of the respondents (48.33%) identified the extensive curriculum requirements as a barrier to maintaining accountability in their teaching practices. This suggests that the pressure to cover a vast amount of material may detract from teachers' focus on their accountability and effectiveness in the classroom. These results emphasize the complex nature of accountability in EFL settings and point to the need for broad changes to overcome the obstacles identified by teachers.

Consequently, the analysis of the interviews illustrated three main themes related to barriers to teacher accountability: 1) Systemic Constraints, including lack of resources, administrative support, and professional development opportunities; 2) Motivational Factors, including lack of self-efficacy, burnout, and perceived lack of recognition; and 3) Assessment Deficiencies, including flawed evaluation systems, over-reliance on standardized testing, and lack of constructive feedback. The obtained themes were employed to develop the items of the BTAS questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis Results

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the KMO measure and Bartlett's Test regarding teachers' views on factors hindering their accountability. The findings for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test for the Participants' Perspectives on Inhibitors to Their Accountability

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.91
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	21629.18
	Df	351
	Sig.	.00

According to Table 2, the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.91, above the recommended value of .00, and also Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found statistically significant ($X^2(351) = 21629.18, P < 0.05$). Moreover, Figure 1 shows the scree plot.

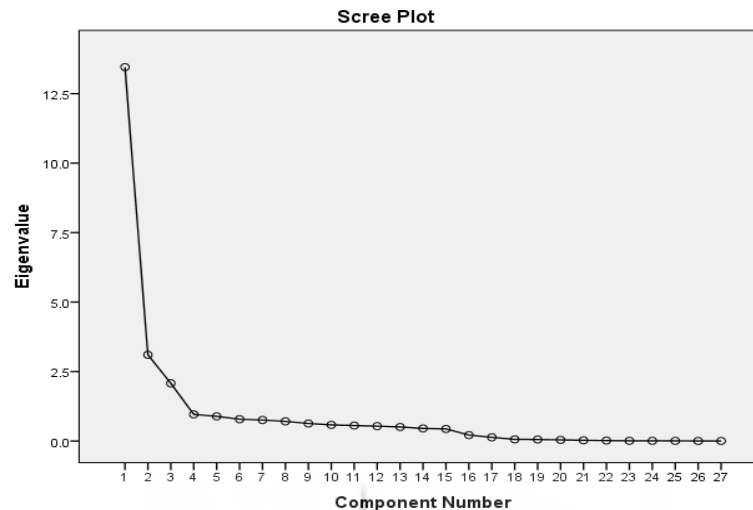


Figure 1. Scree Plot for the Extracted Factors (N of Factors =3)

The screen plot indicated that three main factors could be retained. Additionally, Table 3 below shows the communalities and factor loadings for the Inhibitors to EFL Teachers' Accountability questionnaire.

Table 3. Matrix Factor Allocation, Communality, Eigenvalues, and Variance (Sample, n=460)

Item	Factors			Communalities
	1	2	3	
Item 1	.95			.97
Item 2	.95			.97
Item 3	.95			.96
Item 4	.94			.94
Item 5	.96			.98
Item 6	.96			.97
Item 7	.96			.97
Item 14	.95			.95
Item 15	.95			.94
Item 16	.96			.96
Item 17	.95			.96

Item	Factors			Communalities
	1	2	3	
Item 25	.95			.96
Item 26	.85			.76
Item 27	.59			.53
Item 19		.71		.56
Item 20		.69		.51
Item 21		.65		.46
Item 22		.70		.52
Item 23		.55		.45
Item 24		.50		.44
Item 8			.70	.49
Item 9			.73	.55
Item 10			.69	.50
Item 11			.64	.43
Item 12			.63	.41
Item 13			.66	.45
Item 18			.47	.41
Eigenvalues	13.45	3.10	2.07	
Variance Explained (%)	49.83	11.49	7.69	

As presented in Table 3 above, all communalities were greater than 0.4, indicating that each item shared a certain amount of common variance with the other items. Furthermore, the analysis identified three factors that together explain 69.01 percent of the total variance in the variables. As is indicated in Table 3, the three factors explained 49.83, 11.49, and 7.69 percent of total variance, respectively. This supports the scale's construct validity. The factors represent clusters corresponding to motivational, systemic, and assessment-related barriers (mirroring interview themes). Furthermore, the reliability of the Inhibitors to EFL Teachers' Accountability questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in an estimated value of 0.94 (Table 4).

Table 4. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.945	.944	27

Furthermore, Table 5 presents the components, the content of the items, and the reliability indices of the questionnaire.

Table 5. Questionnaire Components, Items' Number and their Contents, and Reliability Indices

Component	Items' number and their contents	Reliability
F1:	(1): Language teachers are not familiar with the concept of teacher accountability.	0.98
	(2): Language teachers don't view accountability as an opportunity to improve their teaching methods.	
	(3): Some teachers are demotivated to be accountable due to low salary.	
	(4): The personality of a teacher determines how much they prioritize accountability.	
	(5): Language teachers do not tend to be restricted by any regulation.	
	(6): Language teachers think they know everything; therefore, their knowledge is enough for being accountable.	
	(7): Language teachers believe that holding themselves accountable for their teaching is a waste of time.	
	(14): Language teachers are unaware of the positive achievements of accountability.	
	(15): Language teachers are unaware of the negative consequences of disregarding teacher accountability.	
	(16): Novice teachers often lack knowledge about teacher accountability and its advantages and disadvantages.	
	(17): Job insecurity among language teachers discourages them from being accountable.	
	(25): Policymakers have not established a precise system of shared responsibility among teachers to ensure accountability.	
F2:	(26): Policymakers don't make familiar language teachers with advantages of accountability.	0.79
	(27): Language teachers lack a sense of responsibility.	
	(8): Policymakers don't motivate language teachers to reflect on the consequences of being accountable.	
F2:	(9): Language teachers believe that teacher accountability may lead to minimizing student-centered instruction learning, which makes them demotivated for being accountable.	0.79

Component	Items' number and their contents	Reliability
F3:	(10): There is no collaborative relationship between managers and teachers regarding accountability in teaching.	0.75
	(11): Language teachers lack the theoretical foundation necessary for reflecting on their accountability.	
	(12): Language teachers have not received training on how to be accountable.	
	(13): There are no professional development courses available on teacher accountability.	
	(18): Most language teachers are dissatisfied with their wage, which hinders their motivation to consider their responsibility.	
	(19): Language teachers lack motivation in fulfilling their duties.	
	(20): Some schools and institutes have overly strict rules and regulations that prevent teachers from being accountable.	
	(21): The extensive amount of material to cover in the syllabus often leads teachers to prioritize content coverage over accountability.	
	(22): In all language teaching schools and institutes of Iran, there is no 'Reflection Session' to think about their accountability at work.	
	(23): Language teachers are not satisfied with its theoretical precision and general framework.	
	(24): Policymakers don't set high expectations for teacher accountability.	

In order to validate a scale (i.e., "What kind of model of inhibitors of Iranian EFL teacher accountability can be developed?"), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run. As stated earlier, the questionnaire was given to EFL teachers, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine the potential model for the Inhibitors to EFL Teachers' Accountability questionnaire based on the collected data. The questionnaire consists of 27 items that are considered as observed variables, while three factors were identified as latent variables. Amos version 24 was utilized, and maximum likelihood estimation was applied as the data analysis technique.

With the aim of accepting a particular model, three main criteria, namely, normality distribution, estimation of factor loadings, and goodness-of-fit indices must be taken into account (Byrne, 2013). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to evaluate whether the data followed a normal distribution, with the results presented in Table 6.

Table 6. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Inhibitors to EFL Teachers' Accountability		
N		460
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	97.3978
	Std. Deviation	22.51856
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.052
	Positive	.047
	Negative	-.052
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.121
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.162

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

As indicated in Table 6 above, the Sig. value for the scores of inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability (0.162) was above the critical value. Therefore, there is evidence to support the normal distribution of scores for the mentioned variable. Moreover, all of the items in the present study had acceptable factor loading (Figure 2). Finally, multiple fit indices were evaluated to determine the model's adequacy: the chi-square value, which is expected to be non-significant; the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio, which should be less than 5; the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), which should be above 0.90; and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), ideally around 0.08 (Byrne, 2013; Kline, 2015).

Table 7. Fit Measures for the Valid Model

	X ² /df	GFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<5	>.90	<.08
Model	2.82	.91	.07

According to Table 7, all the fit indices (i.e., chi-square/df ratio (2.82), GFI (.91), and RMSEA (.07) fall within the acceptable range for model fit. As a result, the fit model was deemed acceptable and recommended for investigating inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability.

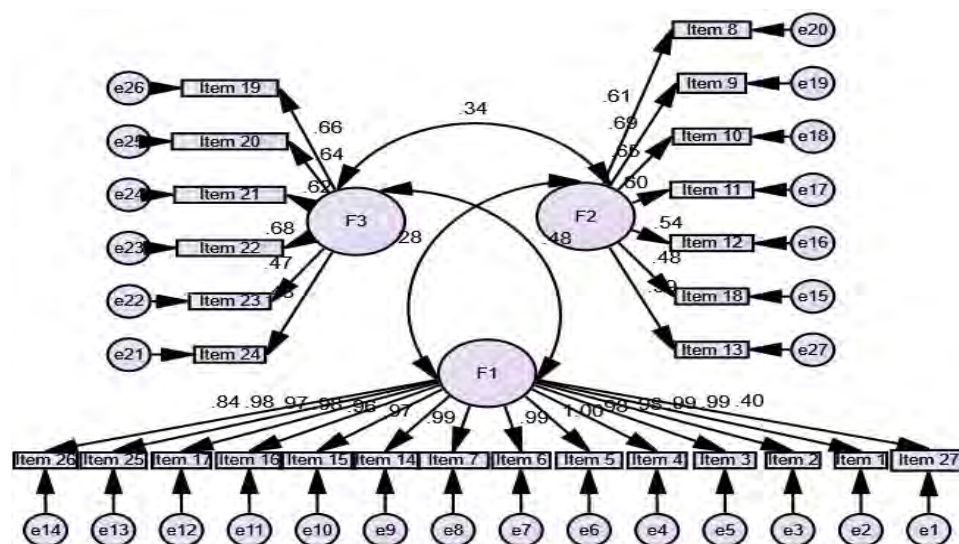


Figure 2. The Valid Model for Inhibitors to EFL Teachers' Accountability (F:: Factor ; F:: Factor 2; F3: Factor 3)

To address the final research question of the study—“how do Iranian EFL teachers perceive the factors that hinder their accountability”—descriptive statistics were used. The results are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics (Sample, n=460)

Item	Statement	Scale (%)					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
Item 19	Language teachers lack motivation in fulfilling their duties.	7	10.92	1.52	0.93	9.83	75.61	1.272
Item 8	Policymakers don't motivate language teachers to reflect on the consequences of being accountable.	3.5	13.3	22	27	34.33	75.41	1.161
Item 26	Policymakers don't make familiar language teachers with advantages of accountability.	5	17.4	18.3	16.1	43.33	75.21	1.305
Item 24	Policymakers don't set high expectations for teacher accountability.	3.2	15.4	21.1	24.6	35.73	73.71	1.194
Item 18	Most language teachers are dissatisfied with their wage, which hinders their motivation to consider their responsibility.	7	13.3	19.8	19.6	40.43	73.21	1.300
Item 9	Language teachers believe that teacher accountability may lead to minimizing student-centered instruction learning, which makes them demotivated for being accountable.	4.6	17.6	13.5	28.9	35.43	73.01	1.238

Item	Statement	Scale (%)					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
Item 20	Some schools and institutes have overly strict rules and regulations that prevent teachers from being accountable.	9.1	13.7	20	12	45.23	3.7041	1.392
Item 21	The extensive amount of material to cover in the syllabus often leads teachers to prioritize content coverage over accountability.	9.1	11.3	23	13.34	33.33	3.7021	1.360
Item 10	There is no collaborative relationship between managers and teachers regarding accountability in teaching.	5.4	14.1	22.2	23.3	35	3.6821	1.236
Item 11	Language teachers lack theoretical foundation necessary for reflecting on their accountability.	6.5	15.7	16.5	28.5	32.83	3.6541	1.261
Item 13	There are no professional development courses available on teacher accountability.	5.4	10.9	25.9	28.9	28.93	3.6501	1.162
Item 12	Language teachers have not received training on how to be accountable.	8	12.4	19.6	28.9	31.13	3.6261	1.260
Item 22	In all language teaching schools and institutes of Iran, there is no 'Reflection Session' to think about their accountability at work.	10.9	12.6	24.1	14.3	38	3.5601	1.384
Item 23	Language teachers are not satisfied with its theoretical precision and general framework.	11.7	14.1	16.7	21.3	36.13	3.5581	1.399
Item 25	Policymakers have not established a precise system of shared responsibility among teachers to ensure accountability.	6.3	20.9	19.3	18.7	34.83	3.5471	1.320
Item 2	Language teachers don't view accountability as an opportunity to improve their teaching methods.	6.3	20.4	20	18.9	34.33	3.5451	1.313
Item 1	Language teachers are not familiar with the concept of teacher accountability.	6.1	20.9	20	18.7	34.33	3.5431	1.312
Item 4	The personality of a teacher determines how much they prioritize accountability.	6.1	21.1	20	18.9	33.93	3.5341	1.310
Item 16	Novice teachers often lack knowledge about teacher accountability and its advantages and disadvantages.	6.1	20.2	21.3	19.1	33.33	3.5321	1.298
Item 17	Job insecurity among language teachers discourages them from being accountable.	6.1	20.4	22	18	33.53	3.5231	1.302
Item 14	Language teachers believe that holding themselves accountable for their teaching is a waste of time.	6.3	20.2	22	18	33.53	3.5211	1.305
Item 5	Language teachers do not tend to be restricted by any regulation.	6.1	20.7	20.9	20	32.43	3.5191	1.295

Item	Statement	Scale (%)					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
Item 7	Language teachers believe that it is wasting of his/her time to hold accountable on their teaching.	6.1	20.9	20.9	19.3	32.8	3.51	1.300
Item 6	Language teachers think they know everything; therefore, their knowledge is enough for being accountable.	6.1	21.1	20.7	19.6	32.6	3.51	1.300
Item 3	Some teachers are demotivated to be accountable due to low salary.	6.5	20.9	20.7	18.9	33	3.51	1.312
Item 15	Language teachers are unaware of the negative consequences of disregarding teacher accountability.	6.3	21.1	21.7	18	32.8	3.50	1.307
Item 27	Language teachers lack a sense of responsibility.	8	24.1	15.2	17	35.7	3.48	1.389

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=No Idea; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree. M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

According to the information presented in Table 8 above, the average scores of the items varied between 3.480 and 3.756, indicating that all items had moderate to high ratings. The results show that most respondents tended to agree or strongly agree with the majority of the statements. This means that EFL teachers mainly thought the questionnaire items negatively affected their accountability. The most highly rated item was Item 19: "Language teachers lack motivation in fulfilling their duties" ($M = 3.756$), with almost 62% of the participants agreeing or strongly agreeing. This result identifies motivation as a key factor impacting accountability, revealing that EFL teachers might not be able to complete their duties to the fullest without intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

Closely following, Item 8: "Policymakers don't encourage language teachers to consider the implications of being accountable" ($M = 3.754$) and Item 26: "Policymakers don't introduce language teachers to the benefits of accountability" ($M = 3.752$) also point to the crucial role of policymakers' support. These findings show that teachers perceive the absence of encouragement and clear information from policymakers as key systemic barriers to their acceptance of accountability. As shown in Table 8, the lowest mean belonged to item 27 (i.e., Language teachers lack a sense of responsibility), with which nearly 53 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed, followed by item 15 (i.e., Language teachers are unaware of the negative consequences of disregarding teacher accountability), with which only 51 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed.

Across all items, a pattern is seen whereby Internal inhibitors (Motivational Factors), external inhibitors (systemic Constraints and Assessment Deficiencies), and environmental

inhibitors to teacher accountability (Cultural Context, Sociocultural Context, and Political Changes) could help promote accountability among EFL teachers, an actionable area for intervention. Overall, the descriptive data show that Iranian EFL teachers observe several interconnected factors obstructing their accountability, with motivation and policymaking support being most salient. These findings offer a basis for focused intervention aimed at improving teacher accountability through addressing motivational problems and investing in a supportive policy structure.

Discussion

The study's results showed that Iranian EFL teachers mostly identified three main groups of factors that hinder their accountability: Internal inhibitors (Motivational Factors), external inhibitors (systemic Constraints and Assessment Deficiencies) and environmental inhibitors to teacher accountability (Cultural Context, Sociocultural Context, and Political Changes) (Fig. 3). As indicated, accountability encompasses various concepts including organizational, political, educational, legal, professional, moral, or ethical (Levitt et al., 2008).

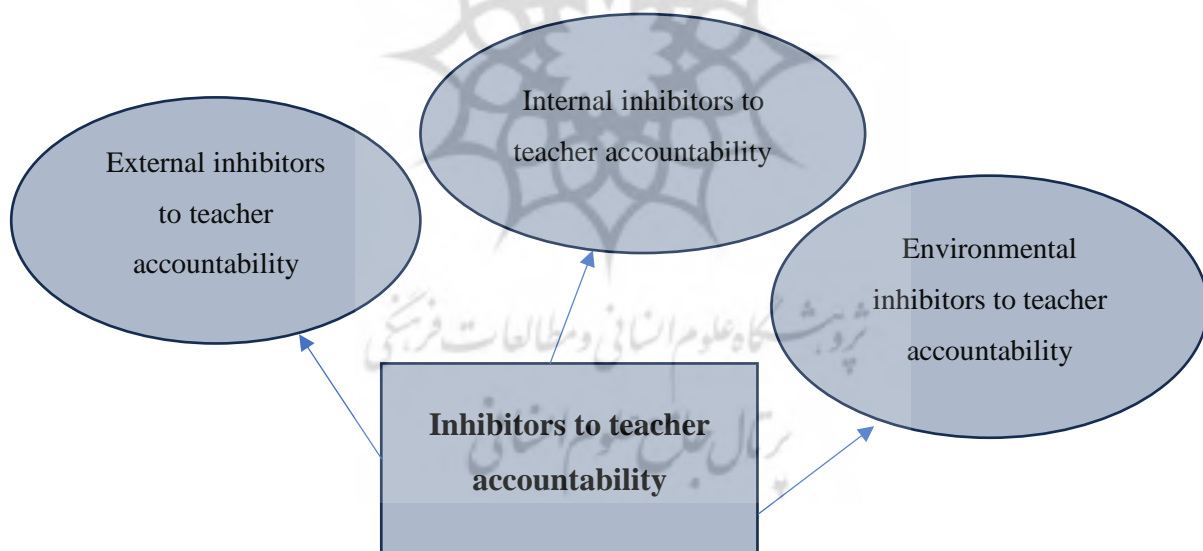


Figure 3. Inhibitors to Teacher Accountability

With respect to internal inhibitors to teacher accountability, Iranian EFL teachers attributed these obstacles to personal factors. The key issues seem to be a lack of familiarity with teacher accountability, negative perceptions of its value, and a general lack of motivation and responsibility among language teachers when it comes to being accountable for their teaching practices. As prior researchers (Orakcı et al., 0000; Rosenblatt, 2017; Rosenblatt & Wubbels, 2021) have argued that it is essential to consider the personal

dimension of accountability to gain a deeper understanding of how accountability affects teachers. Furthermore, the result is not in harmony with [Vosoughi et al. \(2018\)](#), who found that the combination of the pedagogical and personal accounts of teacher variables (language teachers' experience and their educational level) did not predict a high score for autonomy in materials development purposes.

Regarding external inhibitors to teacher accountability, language teachers highlighted several external factors stemming from policymakers that hinder the development of teacher accountability in language education. These include a lack of resources, administrative support, workload, policy regulations, and unfamiliarity with the benefits of accountability among language teachers. It indicates that external factors significantly influence teachers' ability to fulfill their responsibilities effectively, which could lead to decreased morale and job satisfaction.

Addressing these issues from a policy level could help foster greater accountability in the language teaching profession. As [Liebowitz \(2021\)](#) states, introducing teacher accountability policies can improve the quality of education. These policies can motivate teachers, help retain effective educators, eliminate those who are underperforming, and establish feedback systems to develop the skills of existing teachers. Empirical evidence from Iranian EFL contexts supports this perspective. [Makkie and Kargozari \(2025\)](#) found professional accountability as a significant predictor of teachers' sense of professional development.

Additionally, language teachers identified several environmental factors that negatively impact teacher accountability, particularly among language teachers. [Bahrami and Hamzavi \(2022\)](#) provide empirical evidence highlighting how environmental factors influence teacher accountability within Iranian EFL contexts. These environmental factors collectively contribute to a culture where language teachers in Iran struggle with accountability, primarily due to financial, structural, and training-related challenges. This result agrees with [Rosenblatt and Wubbels \(2021\)](#), who explained that understanding teachers' cultural values, beliefs, ideas, and life views can help explain different types of individual accountability at work.

Moreover, as the number of items indicates, it was reported that internal inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability are higher in comparison to the other inhibitors; that is, internal factors among EFL teachers might be the main reason for inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability. As [Frink and Klimoski \(2004\)](#) state, interpersonal accountability is the crucial factor that has an effect on both the person and the organization.

It was revealed that the highest mean belonged to item 19 (i.e., Language teachers lack motivation in carrying out their duties) with which 62 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed, followed by item 8 (i.e., Policymakers don't motivate language teachers to reflect on the consequences of being accountable) with which 61 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed. This finding indicates that a lack of motivation could be regarded as a typical instance of obstacles to EFL teachers' accountability. Therefore, the results seem to lend support to Liewowitz's (2000) reasoning that teacher accountability might promote the average quality of instruction through motivating teachers. It is also in harmony with Kozuka et al. (2016) and Okitsu and Edwards Jr (2017), who highlighted the significant role that accountability can play in enhancing learners' motivation.

Additionally, it was found that the lowest mean belonged to item 27 (i.e., Language teachers lack a sense of responsibility), with which nearly 53 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed, followed by item 15 (Language teachers are not familiar with the detrimental outcomes of disregarding teacher accountability), with which only 51 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed. It shows that the lack of teachers' accountability could be referred to as the lack of teachers' familiarity with the detrimental outcomes of disregarding teacher accountability rather than the lack of their responsibility. As previously mentioned, while accountability aims to drive improvement, it can also create tensions for teachers that undermine their working conditions and professional fulfillment: Decreased job security, satisfaction, and autonomy due to a prescribed curriculum aligned with high-stakes tests (Kraft et al., 2020), challenges to teachers' identities, demoralization of their agency and sense of professionalism (Guenther, 2021), and increased workloads that negatively impact teacher well-being (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). These findings highlight the complex nature of stakeholder pressures in education.

Moreover, in their interview, EFL teachers found three factors to act as inhibitors to their accountability: 1) Systemic Constraints, 2) Motivational Factors, and 3) Assessment Deficiencies. The identified factors that EFL teachers believe hinder their accountability suggest that they may not have received adequate training to be accountable in their profession, to share their responsibilities, to set standard rules/regulations, and now have little information about accountability in the education system, leading to low levels of standardization. The result is also justified by those of researchers who argued that accountability may also have unintended and undesirable consequences. In some countries with particularly rigorous accountability systems, there are growing challenges in attracting

and keeping teachers, largely because of heavier workloads and the resulting negative impact on their well-being (Craig, 2017; Perryman & Calvert, 2019).

However, it is possible to promote accountability by promoting better teaching practices, democratic control, continuous cultural improvement, enhancing professional collaboration among teachers, enhancing the legitimacy and integrity of public governance, spending more time on arrangements, communication of expectations to students and parents, performance enhancement and widening achievement gaps (Guenther, 2021; Jenkins, 2000; Liebowitz, 2021; Öztuzcu Küçükbere & Balkar, 2021; Smith & Benavot, 2019; Taylor, 2023). Furthermore, Öztuzcu Küçükbere and Balkar (2021) state that it is necessary for teachers to act on the basis of accountability that guarantees the success of education systems.

Conclusions and Implications

As it is required to set goals and assign responsibilities for EFL teachers to be answerable for their actions and to provide a satisfactory explanation for his/her activities (Atuhurra, 2016; Ng, 2010; Shibuya, 2020), an attempt was made to develop a Questionnaire of inhibitors to Iranian EFL teachers' accountability to see barriers to their accountability. In the current study, inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability were found to be Internal inhibitors (Motivational Factors), external inhibitors (systemic Constraints and Assessment Deficiencies) and environmental inhibitors to teacher accountability (Cultural Context, Sociocultural Context, and Political Changes). Regarding the items of inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability, it was found that internal inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability are higher in comparison to the other inhibitors, which indicates internal inhibitors as potential impediments to their accountability. Moreover, EFL teachers identified three factors that hinder their accountability in their interview: 1) systematic constraints, 2) motivational factors, and 3) assessment deficiencies.

The findings of the study might have several important implications for education policy-makers, EFL teachers, learners, and teacher educators. As teacher professionalism is built upon three key principles: Tailoring instruction based upon individual student needs, implementing standardized practices and policies, and being held responsible for student achievements for enhancing public sector services and protecting the rights of citizens (Nordin, 2016; Kraft et al., 2020), the EFL education policy makers should prioritize standardization, redefine its role in education system as a whole and encourage teachers to reflect on accountability in order to promote their knowledge and awareness of the factors inhibiting EFL teachers' accountability. Moreover, it is recommended that policy-makers and

teacher educators equip teachers with some standardized strategies to apply the theoretical knowledge of accountability in practical teaching contexts. Also, language teaching institute managers and other administrative bodies should recognize inhibitive factors to teacher accountability to devote more time to reflect upon their accountability more conveniently. By promoting accountability, English teachers can create a conducive learning environment that motivates English learners and contributes to better results in teaching and learning English (Zarei et al., 2019).

As today teachers hold accountable to standards to better achieve the quality of teaching and learning, enhance the quality of instruction and find a way through which they can improve their abilities (Guenther, 2021), curriculum/syllabus designers and material developers need to take into consideration accountability and standardization when designing a curriculum and encourage teachers to have reflection on their standardization in teaching processes, and on their whole standardization educational process. Additionally, language teachers and managers should pay more attention to both intentionally and unintentionally potential impediments to their teaching processes and the education system, and hold teachers responsible for both the quality of their teaching and their students' achievement.

Measuring the inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability, constituting the theoretical construct in the questionnaire, will contribute to educational institutions to find the issues that block the attainment of teacher accountability and hence to develop treatments for improving standardization throughout the educational system. Since the development of the inhibitors to the EFL teacher accountability questionnaire involved thorough procedures—such as identifying items from common response patterns, conducting pilot testing, obtaining expert evaluations, using Amos version 24, and applying maximum likelihood estimation—the questionnaire can be confidently used in future research examining inhibitors to EFL teacher accountability in different contexts.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of teacher accountability in education? Have you ever heard about the concept? How do you define the concept?
2. Have you ever held accountable during your teaching? If yes, when was it? What was the purpose of the course?
3. Did your accountability enhance your teaching? How?
4. What factors could inhibit accountability of the teachers?
5. Do policy makers have any role in order to inhibit teacher accountability? How?
6. What are your final words/suggestion about accountability?



Appendix B: Inhibitors to EFL teachers' accountability (internal and external factors inhibiting teacher accountability)

Number	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly agree
	Internal factors					
1	Language teachers are not familiar with the concept of teacher accountability.					
2	Language teachers don't perceive accountability as an opportunity for improvement of their teaching practice.					
4	The personality type of a teacher determines the extent to which he/she holds accountable.					
5	Language teachers do not tend to be restricted by any regulation.					
6	Language teachers think they know everything; therefore, their knowledge is enough for being accountable.					
7	Language teachers believe that it is wasting of his/her time to hold accountable on their teaching.					
9	Language teachers believe that teacher accountability may lead to minimize student-centered instruction learning, which makes them demotivated for being accountable.					
14	Language teachers are not familiar with the beneficial outcomes of teacher accountability.					
15	Language teachers are not familiar with the detrimental outcomes of disregarding teacher accountability.					
16	Novice teachers usually don't have any information about teacher accountability and its advantages and disadvantages.					

Number	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly agree
19	Language teachers lack motivation in carrying out their duties.					
23	Language teachers don't satisfy with its theoretical precision and general framework.					
27	Language teachers lack sense of responsibility.					
	Environmental factors					
3	Low salary demotivates some teachers to be accountable.					
10	There is no mutual relationship between managers and teachers about how to be accountable in teaching.					
11	Language teachers are not theoretically strong enough for having reflection on their accountability.					
12	Language teachers have not been trained to be accountable					
13	There are no in-service training courses on teacher accountability.					
17	Language teachers suffer from job insecurity which demotivates them from holding accountable.					
18	Most language teachers are not satisfied with their wage. Consequently, they don't have the motivation to think about their responsibility.					
20	The rules and regulations of some schools and institutes are too strict to let teachers to be accountable.					
21	Huge load of materials to be covered in the syllabus make teachers always think about covering the materials rather being accountable on their teaching					

Number	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly agree
22	In all language teaching school and institute of Iran, there is no 'Reflection Session' to think about their accountability at work.					
	External factors					
8	Policymakers don't motivate language teachers to reflect on the consequences of being accountable.					
24	Policymakers don't set high expectations for teacher accountability.					
25	Policymakers don't develop a precise system of shared responsibility among teachers to hold accountable for their responsibilities.					
26	Policymakers don't make familiar language teachers with advantages of accountability.					

Thank you for your collaboration

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