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The Relationship between Teaching Styles and Autonomy among Iranian Female EFL Teachers, Teaching at Advanced Levels

Abdollah Baradaran[1]

[1] Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence: Abdollah Baradaran, Chairman of the Foreign Languages Faculty and Head of the English Department for MA and Ph.D. Studies, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: Baradaranabdollah@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The current research aimed at inspecting the existence of a significant relationship between teachers' teaching styles and their Autonomy. For this reason, two questionnaires with regard to the main variables were given to 175 female English language teachers, teaching at advanced levels. Moreover, non-parametric Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests were selected to compare the levels of each style in terms of Autonomy scores. The results showed no significant correlation between the two variables.

Keywords: advanced, female, teaching styles; teachers' autonomy

1. Introduction

The globalization of English language teaching and learning is booming as never before. Countries all across the globe are actively promoting their facilities and boosting their budget in order to ameliorate public education. English language instruction has been considered a crucial factor in this regard, which has two sides: teachers and learners, each of which profoundly influences the process of instruction. According to Menken (2000), half of all teachers may expect educating an English language learner during their career. In line with that Vieira and Gaspar (2013) assert that teachers are responsible, in terms of education effectiveness, for 30% of the variance on students' achievement.

In addition, learners hold various learning styles and for teachers, it might materialize, to a large extent, necessary to be familiar with these styles and make every effort to tailor their teaching styles and class setting to meet students' requirements, to put it another way, instructors ought to combine their teaching styles in accordance with the diversity of students' needs and content variations. Purkey and Novak (1984, p. 13), believe that "Good teaching is the process of inviting students to see themselves as able, valuable, and self-directing and of encouraging them to act according to these self-perceptions".

In this effort, one of the viable solutions institutions ought to work towards is laying a primary emphasis on the empowerment of their teachers. Melenyzer, 1990 and Short, 1994, argue that the empowerment of teachers is the suitable stage to commence solving the school problems. In this regard, according to Pearson and Moomaw (2006): if teachers are to be empowered and regarded as professionals, then like other professionals, they must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students as doctors or lawyers do for their clients. This freedom is *teacher autonomy.* (p. 44).

Along the same lines, despite scholars such as Masouleh and Jooneghani (2011) asserted that linguists failed to conclude what autonomy indeed means, in effect, regarding language learning, autonomy is an ambitious objective for practical, pedagogical and philosophical purposes. Street (1988) states that teacher autonomy is "the independence teachers maintain in exercising discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions" (p. 4).

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Autonomy

Over the past few decades, in addition to learners' autonomy, teachers' autonomy has been considered as a major attribute influencing the quality of education. Yet its definition remained obscure. Barfield et al. (2002)

believed that in spite of the fact that learner autonomy gained wide-ranging definitions, teacher autonomy still needs a contextually sensitive and more focused definition.

Arguing that 'autonomy, in the perspective of complexity, encompasses properties and conditions for complex emergence, Paiva and Braga (2008) contended it is inextricably linked to its environment'. (cited in Paiva, 2011) Likewise, Masouleh and Jooneghani (2012) claim that its dynamic structure governs the nature of its interactions with the environment in which it is nested.

Assor et al. (2002) and Wentzel (2002) acknowledged that an autonomy-supportive teaching style is associated positively with better school adjustment, higher grades, and more school engagement. Teacher autonomy, on the other hand, is "the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (Aoki, 2000).

Reviewing the related literature, we come to this conclusion that there are many contradictory statements concerning whether autonomy is an internal or external issue and it is yet to be discussed more, however, according to Lynch (2001) autonomy is a concept to be practiced both, outside and within institutional boundaries. On the other hand, Adamson and Sert (2012) alert that autonomy, if exercised to its full effectiveness, needs to be an all-pervading philosophy of life shaping an individual's personal behaviour and cognition within the community

2.2 Teachers' Teaching Styles

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, teacher's teaching style is one of the most efficacious features when language learning and teaching are considered. According to Grasha (1996) teaching styles represent the pattern of beliefs, needs and behaviour shown by teachers in the classroom. One teaching style involves a complex mix of beliefs, attitudes, strategies, techniques, motivation, personality and control. Gregorc (1979) also holds that teachers' teaching styles are their personal behaviours and the media that they have been using are for transferring data and information to students. On the other hand, Chapman, et al. (2001) acknowledged the role of gender, seniority and time in influencing their teaching. Furthermore, Peacock (2001) declared that teaching styles used by teachers, to a large extent depend on the teacher's ethnicity. He, in addition, discovered that the purpose and design of courses, norms of learning institutions and research results are the other elements that impact teaching styles.

Grasha (1996) defines the teaching styles as the pattern of belief, knowledge, performance and behavior of teachers when they are teaching. He divided the teaching styles into five dimensions which are the expert style, formal authority style, personal model style, delegator style and facilitator style. Peacock (2001), on the other hand asserted that the teaching style is the way a person teaches by nature, habitual, inclination or even a custom that is used to convey information and skills in the classroom.

Reviewing the related literature reveals that so much information is available regarding teachers' teaching styles and their implications for teaching and learning, much of which is confusing to follow: Williamson & Watson (2007) claim that meeting the needs of students is essential if educators desire to make considerable progress towards the objective of developing lifelong learners. Hence, it is of paramount importance for teachers to choose the best teaching style for various situations and different students.

2.3 Statement of the Research Question

Is there any significant relationship between teaching styles and autonomy among Iranian female EFL teachers, teaching at advanced levels?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

In this study, 129 female teachers teaching at advanced levels in the age range of 22-45 at various language schools inter alia, Asre Zaban Language Academy, in Tehran, Iran, cooperated with the researcher and accurately completed the questionnaires. The selection was based on willingness to participate and teachers were selected non-randomly based on convenient non-random sampling. The oarticipants of this study possessed at least 2 years of teaching experience.

3.2 Instrumentation

3.2.1 Grasha Teaching Style Inventory Questionnaire

Grasha's Teaching Style Inventory: Version 3.0 (1994), was employed in this research The researcher asked English language teachers to fill out the instrument concerning their teaching preferences.

The questionnaire itself commences with an unfinished sentence: "When teaching my class, I would most be likely to". Each sentence is scored using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Responses are scored for each teaching method on this 5-point scale. The five teaching styles (Grasha, 1994) considered in this scale are Expert (Qs: 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36), Formal Authority(Qs: 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37), Personal Model (Qs: 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38), Delegator (Qs: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40) and Facilitator (4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39).

3.2.2 Teacher Autonomy Survey (TAS)

Pearson and Moomaw's Teacher Autonomy Survey (2005), is comprised of 18 questions originally designed so as to elicit the extent to which teachers consider themselves autonomous in the following areas: (1) instructional sequencing and planning, (2) personal on-the-job decision-making, (3) selection of activities and materials, and (4) classroom standards of conduct. The options vary from "Definitely True" to "Definitely False" and "More or Less True" and "More or Less False" appear in between. Moreover, items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 were recoded so that the high score denoted increased autonomy.

3.3 Procedure

The procedures in a descriptive study need to be completely and accurately described so that its replication is possible for other researchers (Best & Kahn, 2006).The researcher, at the onset of this research, administered two instruments namely Grasha's Teaching Style Inventory: Version 3.0 (1994), and Teaching Autonomy Scale (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005) among 175 female English language teachers teaching advanced students in different Language institutes inter alia Asre-Zaban Language Academy. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires during non-instructional times at their convenience, enclose and return them to the researcher within 1 week of receipt. Teachers responded anonymously to the instruments, and, in total, 138 questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Afterwards, following an in-depth verification, 129 questionnaires – which had been accurately and completely filled out, were selected.

In the next stage, the responses of all the partakers were meticulously scrutinized and scored. Afterwards, the relationship between the two variables underwent statistical analyses..

4. Results

4.1 Testing the Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' Autonomy and their teaching styles.

In order to test the above null hypothesis, the frequencies of teachers' teaching styles — Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator and Delegator, were calculated, which are presented in Tables 1 to 5.

Table 1. Expert frequency statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	14	10.9	10.9	10.9
	Moderate	113	87.6	87.6	98.4
	High	2	1.6	1.6	100
	Total	129	100	100	

Table 2. Formal Authority frequency statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	96	74.4	74.4	74.4
	Moderate	33	25.6	25.6	100
	Total	129	100	100	

Table 3. Personal Model frequency statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	104	80.6	80.6	80.6
	Moderate	25	19.4	19.4	100
	Total	129	100	100	

Table 4. Facilitator frequency statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	48	37.2	37.2	37.2
	Moderate	81	62.8	62.8	100.0
	Total	129	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Delegator frequency statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	9	7.0	7.0	7.0
	Moderate	120	93.0	93.0	100.0
	Total	129	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 to 5 illustrate that 113, 33, 25, 81, 120 teachers in Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator and Delegator teaching styles, respectively, held the moderate level of the styles. In addition, Personal Model with 104 respondents had the highest number of low category by contrast to delegator style with 9. Furthermore, two teachers possessed a high level of Expert teaching style which was, in fact, the only style with a high level

Table 6 to 10 also provide the descriptive statistics on Autonomy scores alone and in terms of different levels of each teaching style separately.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics

		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Mean	52.7519	.46093
	Median	52.0000	
	Variance	27.407	
	Std. Deviation	5.23514	
	Minimum	42.00	
	Maximum	68.00	
	Skewness	.396	.213
	Kurtosis	.028	.423

As can be seen in Table 6, the mean for Autonomy is 52.7519. On the other side, the minimum and maximum statistics are 42.00 and 68.00 respectively. In addition, the Table shows that the skewness and kurtosis for Autonomy are .396 and .028 respectively.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics on autonomy for different levels of expert teaching style

	Expert		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Low	Mean	53.5	1.7089
		Variance	40.885	
		Std. Deviation	6.39411	
		Minimum	44	
		Maximum	64	
		Skewness	0.157	0.597
		Kurtosis	-0.666	1.154
	Moderate	Mean	52.7611	0.4789
		Variance	25.916	
		Std. Deviation	5.09074	
		Minimum	42	
		Maximum	68	
		Skewness	0.4	0.227
		Kurtosis	0.221	0.451
	Expert		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Low	Mean	53.5	1.7089
		Variance	40.885	
		Std. Deviation	6.39411	
		Minimum	44	
		Maximum	64	
		Skewness	0.157	0.597
		Kurtosis	-0.666	1.154
	Moderate	Mean	52.7611	0.4789
		Variance	25.916	
		Std. Deviation	5.09074	
		Minimum	42	
		Maximum	68	
		Skewness	0.4	0.227
		Kurtosis	0.221	0.451

Autonomy is constant when Expert = High. It has been omitted.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics on autonomy for different levels of formal authority teaching style

	Formal authority		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Low	Mean	52.5729	0.51762
		Std. Deviation	5.07158	
		Minimum	42	
		Maximum	64	
		Skewness	0.098	0.246
		Kurtosis	-0.42	0.488
	Moderate	Mean	53.2727	0.99836
		Std. Deviation	5.73516	
		Minimum	47	
		Maximum	68	
		Skewness	0.994	0.409
		Kurtosis	0.648	0.798

Table 9. Descriptive statistics on autonomy for different levels of personal model teaching style

	Personal model		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Low	Mean	52.8173	0.49224
		Variance	25.199	
		Std. Deviation	5.01989	
		Minimum	42	
		Maximum	64	
		Skewness	-0.016	0.237
		Kurtosis	-0.49	0.469
	Moderate	Mean	52.48	1.23169
		Variance	37.927	
		Std. Deviation	6.15846	
		Minimum	47	
		Maximum	68	
		Skewness	1.474	0.464
		Kurtosis	1.492	0.902

Table 10. Descriptive statistics on autonomy for different levels of facilitator teaching style

	Facilitator		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Low	Mean	52.1042	0.78564
		Variance	29.627	
		Std. Deviation	5.44309	
		Minimum	42	
		Maximum	64	
		Skewness	0.352	0.343
		Kurtosis	-0.15	0.674
	Moderate	Mean	53.1358	0.56704
		Variance	26.044	
		Std. Deviation	5.10332	
		Minimum	43	
		Maximum	68	
		Skewness	0.475	0.267
		Kurtosis	0.207	0.529

Table 11. Descriptive statistics on autonomy for different levels of delegator teaching style

	Delegator		Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	Low	Mean	55.4444	1.6759
		Variance	25.278	
		Std. Deviation	5.0277	
		Minimum	51	
		Maximum	64	
		Skewness	1.317	0.717
		Kurtosis	0.281	1.4
	Moderate	Mean	52.55	0.47601
		Variance	27.191	
		Std. Deviation	5.21448	
		Minimum	42	
		Maximum	68	
		Skewness	0.378	0.221
		Kurtosis	-0.01	0.438

Tables 7 to 11 show that Facilitator teaching style with 52.1042 has the lowest mean, by contrast, Delegator teaching style possesses the highest mean with 55.4444 regarding the low level. On the other hand, in terms of the moderate level, Personal Model teaching style with 52.4800 has the lowest mean while Facilitator teaching style with 53.1358 owns the highest.

Since the teaching styles are categorized into low, moderate, and high levels, each teaching style is considered as a nominal variable. Moreover, as the autonomy is on an interval scale, the choice of statistic to measure the relationship between one nominal variable and one interval variable is eta. However, since the frequencies of some of the styles' levels are quite low, the researcher chose to select non-parametric Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests to compare the levels of each style in terms of autonomy scores. The reason for choosing non-parametric tests was that the test of normality results in Tables 12 to 16 indicated non-normality of the data

($p < .05$).

Table 12. Tests of normality regarding expert

	Expert	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Autonomy	Low	0.137	14	.200*	0.944	14	0.475
	Moderate	0.108	113	0.002	0.978	113	0.058

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

b. Autonomy is constant when Expert = High. It has been omitted.

Table 13. Tests of normality regarding formal authority

	Formal authority	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Autonomy	Low	0.091	96	0.05	0.981	96	0.185
	Moderate	0.166	33	0.022	0.874	33	0.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 14. Tests of normality regarding personal model

	Personal model	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Autonomy	Low	0.093	104	0.026	0.982	104	0.165
	Moderate	0.251	25	0	0.795	25	0

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 15. Tests of normality regarding facilitator

	Facilitator	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Autonomy	Low	0.101	48	.200*	0.966	48	0.178
	Moderate	0.144	81	0	0.963	81	0.018

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

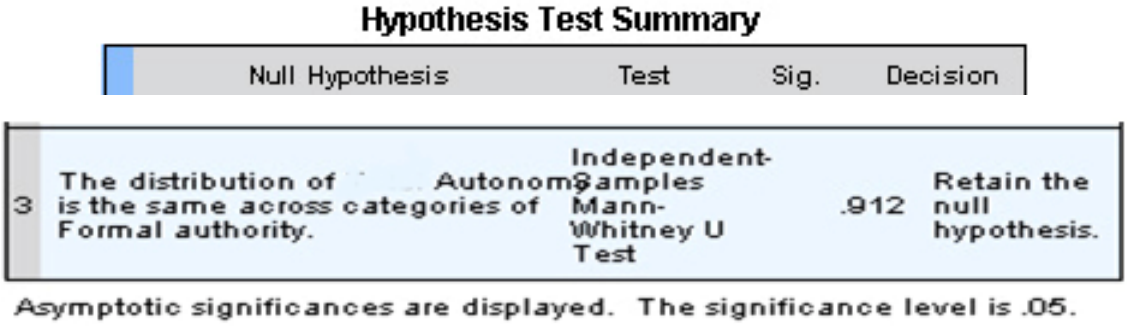
Table 16. Tests of normality regarding delegator

	Delegator	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Autonomy	Low	0.313	9	0.011	0.755	9	0.006
	Moderate	0.109	120	0.001	0.976	120	0.031

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Figures 1 to 5 present the results on Autonomy scores across the various categories of teaching styles. Evidently, the categories of Expert, Personal Model, Delegator and Facilitator are significantly different from Formal Authority in terms of Autonomy. However, no significant relationship was detected between different categories of teaching styles and Autonomy. To put it bluntly, none of the teaching styles namely Deligator, Facilitator, Personal Model, Expert and Formal Authority are significantly related to Autonomy.

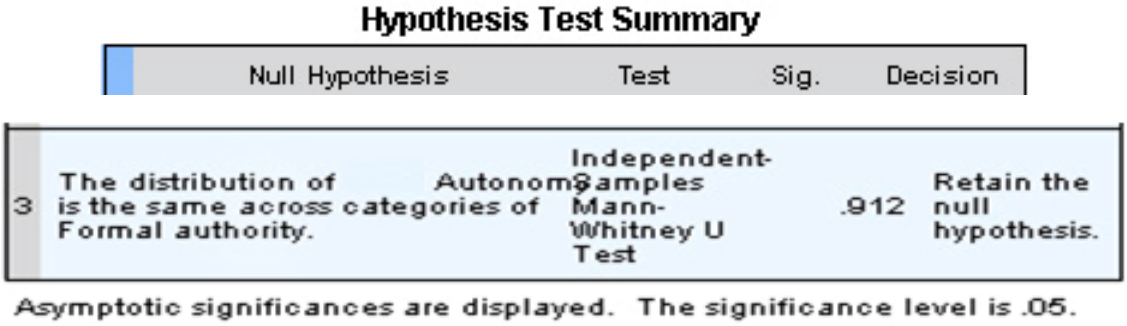


Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
3	The distribution of Autonomy is the same across categories of Formal authority.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.912	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 1. Comparing autonomy across categories of expert

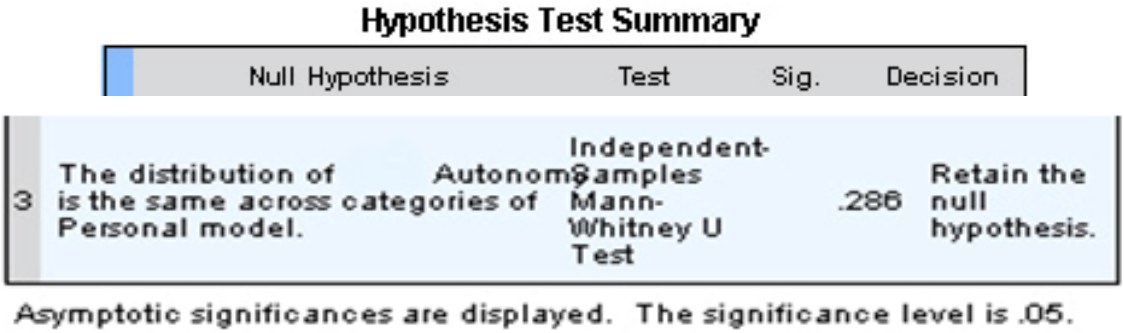


Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
3	The distribution of Autonomy is the same across categories of Formal authority.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.912	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 2. Comparing autonomy across categories of formal authority



Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
3	The distribution of Autonomy is the same across categories of Personal model.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.286	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 3. Comparing autonomy across categories of personal model

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
3	The distribution of Autonom is the same across categories of Facilitator.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.261	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 4. Comparing autonomy across categories of facilitator

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
3	The distribution of Autonom is the same across categories of Delegator.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.143	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 5. Comparing autonomy across categories of delegator

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to put a major emphasis on teachers and their attributes; in this regard, the researcher opted for teachers' various teaching styles and their Autonomy as the two major and influential factors in the field of teacher education. At the outset of the study, following the gathering of data through two aforementioned questionnaires, responses were all scored and a painstaking data nalysis was performed. As a consequence, it was proved that there was no significant correlation between teachers' autonomy and their teaching styles. Simplistically put, no significant correlation was detected between teachers' Expert, Personal Model, Facilitator, Delegator and Formal Authority teaching styles and their Autonomy. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained.

The results of a study conducted by Hosseinzadeh and Baradaran (2015) on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' autonomy and their Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) suggested that exclusive of General autonomy which was positively and significantly related to NLP, other sub-categories of autonomy—Curriculum and Total -- were not correlated significantly with NLP. In addition, the findings of a research done by L Carolyn Pearson and William Moomaw (2005) were to some extent in line with the results of the present study, in that teachers' autonomy was found correlated with professionalism, on-the-job stress and empowerment; in addition, a decline was observed in on-the-job stress when the Curriculum autonomy maximized,, but only little correlation was found between job satisfaction and Curriculum autonomy; the study, also proved that as General autonomy increased, so did professionalism and empowerment, but no correlation was found between autonomy and teaching level (elementary, middle and high school).

Furthermore, regarding teachers' teaching styles, Hosseinzadeh and Baradaran (2015) on the relationship between English language teachers' teaching styles and their Neuro-linguistic Programming revealed that teachers' Expert, Formal Authority, Facilitator, and Delegator teaching styles and their NLP were significantly and positively related; a closer look at the descriptive statistics of these teaching styles also revealed that the moderate category of the above teaching styles are of higher NLP in comparison to their low categories. Moreover, Baradaran and Hosseinzadeh (2015), in their research on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' teaching styles and their Curriculum and General autonomy, concluded that there was a significant and negative relationship between teachers' Expert, Personal Model, and Delegator styles and Curriculum autonomy; however, no significant relationship was detected between these styles and General autonomy.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was proved that teachers' various teaching styles and Autonomy were not significantly related to each other. In addition, it is important to emphasize that this research sustained the following limitations which are expected to be removed in the future,

Firstly, the researcher based his selection of the teachers on available sampling. The replication of the study is recommended provided that procedures that allow a greater degree of randomization and eventually more generalizability are employed.

Secondly, owing to the similar nationality of all the participants – Iranian, the results cannot be generalized to teachers of other countries.

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