

The Interplay of Teacher Energy, Students' Active and Passive Motivation, and Their Willingness to Attend Classes

Hossein Rahimi

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Reza Pishghadam*

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Gulf College, Oman

Shaghayegh Shayesteh

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Taqi Al Abdwani

Gulf College, Oman

Correspondence

Email: reza@gulfcollege.edu.om

Abstract

This study examines the interplay of Teacher Energy (TE) on EFL students' Active/Passive motivation and their willingness to attend classes (WTAC). The study included 300 Iranian EFL learners from various age groups and proficiency levels, who were assessed using already developed and validated scales for TE, Active/Passive Motivation (APM), and WTAC. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the relationships between TE, APM, and WTAC. Results indicated significant positive correlations, with TE having a more substantial influence on WTAC than on motivation. Also, TE was shown to directly and indirectly affect WTAC through APM, establishing motivation as a partial mediator. The findings show that teacher energy not only affects students' class attendance but also enhances their motivation to learn. There were differences in age and gender: younger students (below 20 years) showed greater responsiveness to TE and motivation, while female students showed stronger cognitive/active motivation and greater willingness to attend than male students.

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Introduction

The role of teacher behavior in influencing student outcomes has been widely explored in the literature on education. A substantial body of empirical research indicates that teacher behavior and teacher–student interactions play a central role in shaping the learning process, as well as students’ motivation and willingness to attend classes (Ameen, 2026; Blazar & Kraft, 2016; Gan, 2026; Kudryashova et al., 2016; Ma & Li, 2026; Usher & Pajares, 2008; Xie et al., 2026; Ye, 2024; Ye & He, 2026; Zeng, 2026; Zhang et al., 2026). In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, students’ motivation and their willingness to attend classes are key factors that are largely influenced by teacher behavior (Garay, 2022; Pishghadam, 2025; Pishghadam et al., 2013; Wang & Derakhshan, 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Ye & He, 2026; Zhang et al., 2026). Various factors, such as teacher-student relationship (Akram & Li, 2024), classroom environment (Cayubit, 2021), and teaching practices, have been identified to affect the students’ level of motivation, willingness to attend classes, and overall learning outcomes (Cross Francis et al., 2019; Dörnyei, 2001; Ushioda, 2011; Xie et al., 2026). Research has also shown that EFL learners’ motivation and engagement in attending classes are greatly affected by teacher behavior (Gan, 2026; Ma & Li, 2026; Xie et al., 2026). Recent evidence further highlights the role of the classroom environment and contextual affordances in shaping learners’ cognitive and emotional engagement in English language teaching, which, in turn, influences students’ motivation and classroom participation (Khany & Barzan, 2025; Ma & Li, 2026; Lei, 2026).

However, the significance of “teacher energy” in determining student outcomes has yet to be investigated. The concept of teacher energy captures the behaviors of teachers, encompassing their level of concern for students, the amount of energy and time they devote, and their emotional and mental engagements with students. Teacher energy is deeply connected to the idea of “emotioncy,” which asserts that individuals’ knowledge about others and emotional involvement affect their levels of concern toward others (Pishghadam et al., 2013). Research suggests that teacher energy has the potential to significantly shape students’ learning experiences (Alshammari & Ahmed, 2026; Ameen, 2026; Bandura, 1986; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Fredrickson, 2001; Ma & Li, 2026; Pishghadam et al., 2013; Zhang & Hu, 2025).

When teachers bring high energy into the classroom and show high levels of concern for their students, they can elevate their emotional experiences, which positively affect students (Bandura, 1986; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Grounded in the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), positive emotions expand individuals’ cognitive and behavioral repertoires. According to this theory, when people experience positive emotions, they are more open to new ideas, creative thinking, and engagement in activities. Recent empirical work also confirms that positive emotion broadens thought processes and promotes upward, exploratory action tendencies (Roth et al., 2024), while simultaneously enhancing awareness and engagement-related behaviors (Seehagen et al., 2025). Taken

together, these mechanisms support a shift from passive motivation, characterized by compliance and minimal involvement, to active motivation, reflected in intentional engagement and participatory learning behaviors (Pishghadam et al., 2019). Based on this theoretical and empirical grounding, although teacher energy has the potential to influence students' attitudes, mindsets, and motivation, the specific relationships between teacher energy and students' active and passive motivation, as well as their willingness to attend classes, remain underexplored. Although teacher-student relationships have been investigated extensively, previous studies have mainly focused on general teacher behaviors or general aspects of teacher-student relationships (Burns & Van Bergen, 2025). The particular relationship between teacher energy and the more general categories of active and passive motivation has yet to be investigated.

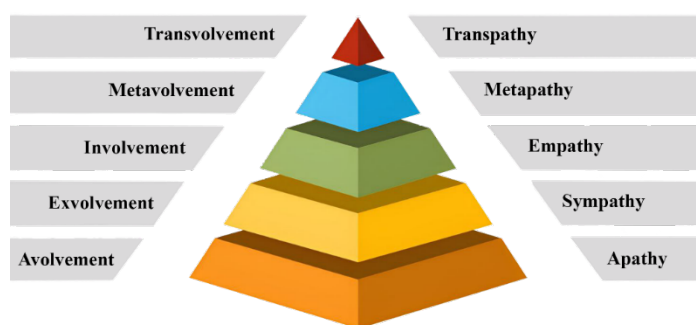
Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the relationship between teacher energy, students' active and passive motivation, and their willingness to attend classes. Specifically, it seeks to determine to what extent teacher energy predicts students' willingness to attend classes, both directly and indirectly, through the intermediate role of active and passive motivation, and whether significant differences exist in teacher energy, willingness to attend classes, and motivation with respect to gender and age. The study's findings draw attention to teacher energy as the neglected part of teacher behavior and raise teachers' awareness regarding its role in impacting students.

Theoretical Frameworks

Human Concern

Pishghadam et al. (2022) presented a new hierarchy of human concern levels using the "emotioncy" framework. This model describes several degrees of human concern, each exactly matched to a certain tier of the emotioncy framework. In the emotioncy framework, People begin in the "avolvement" stage, in which they have no awareness of a given topic, such as someone who has never heard of educational psychology. As they become more familiar with the topic, they enter the "exvolvement" stage, in which their knowledge is still limited, and they acquire distal emotions that might not match reality; at this point, they might have simply heard about the subject.

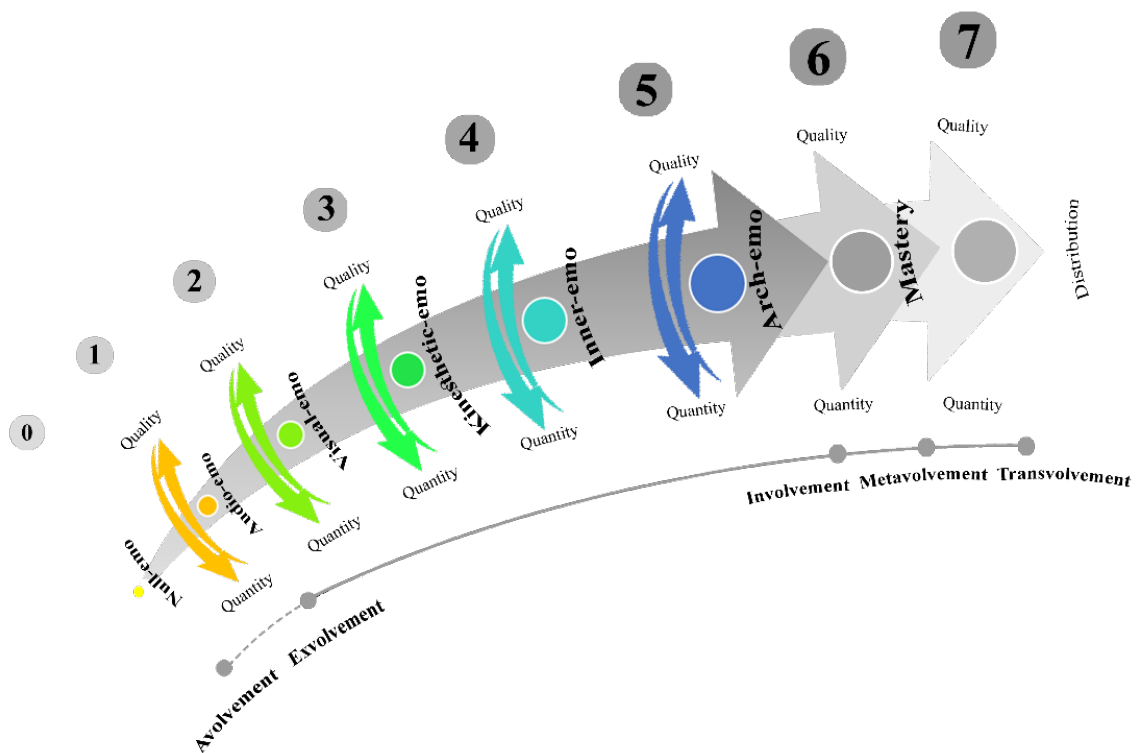
Figure 1
New Concern Types



Note: This figure shows the updated human concern levels aligned with different emotioncy stages. Adapted from "Emotions and Success in Education: From Apathy to Transpathy," by Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., Rajabi Esterabadi, A., & Parsae, A., Journal of Cognition, Emotion & Education, 1(1), p. 10. © 2023 by the authors. Reprinted with permission.

The next stage is called “involvement”, when people dig further into a subject, experience and internalize it, and develop proximal emotions. Pishghadam et al. (2019) later included “metavolvement” as a third level. Here, people not only grasp the subject thoroughly but also develop the necessary skills to impart it to others. In 2022, Pishghadam added “transvolvement” level into their framework, which describes people so informed and competent that they generate fresh ideas or innovations in their field. For example, someone who has studied and taught psychology extensively for many years might contribute fresh ideas or disciplines of research. Now “transvolved” with the idea, this person is more of a pioneering and powerful figure than a follower.

Figure 2
Levels of Emotioncy



Note: This figure depicts the latest version of the emotioncy model, illustrating the transition from avolvement to transvolvement as described by Pishghadam et al. (2023). Adapted from “Emotions and Success in Education: From Apathy to Transpathy,” by Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., Rajabi Esterabadi, A., & Parsae, A., Journal of Cognition, Emotion & Education, 1(1), p. 10. © 2023 by the authors. Reprinted with permission.

Teacher Energy

Pishghadam et al. (2023a) proposed the concept of “teacher energy” as a fresh perspective for examining teachers’ behavior in class. According to Pishghadam et al. (2023a), teachers may show varying degrees of emotional, cognitive, and physical involvement with their students in the classroom. Depending on the extent of their involvement (Disengagement, Underengagement, Engagement, and Overengagement) and their levels of concern (Apathy, Sympathy, Empathy, Metapathy, and Transpathy) for

students, they invest differing amounts of energy, enthusiasm, time, and care into the academic achievement and lives of their students. The relationship between emotioncy and teachers' levels of concern is intertwined, as emotioncy influences how teachers perceive, understand, and respond to their student's needs and emotions. Also, it determines teachers' devotion and commitment to their job and the total amount of energy they bring to the class. Teachers who have low levels of emotioncy, such as avolvement towards their students, may exhibit apathy. They do not know much about their students. They may feel disconnected from their students' needs and emotions, leading to a lack of concern or interest in students' academic progress and overall well-being (Nobis & Husain, 2018). Apathetic teachers may view teaching as a routine task rather than a meaningful interaction with students, resulting in minimal emotional investment in their students' success. Teachers who are in the exvolvement level of emotioncy may show sympathy towards their students. They may recognize and acknowledge students' emotions and challenges, but may not deeply engage with them (Malbois, 2022). These teachers may offer verbal support and express compassion. However, their empathy may be limited to a surface level, leading to a passive form of concern that stays within the walls of the classroom without making an effort to address students' issues or difficulties. In contrast, Teachers with an involvement level of emotioncy are more likely to exhibit empathy towards their students. They deeply engage with students' emotions and experiences, seeking to understand their perspectives and needs; they try to actively engage themselves with their students' needs and challenges. These teachers are more likely to take proactive steps to support their students, offering guidance, encouragement, and practical help. Their emotional investment in their student's well-being and their awareness of their needs and preferences lead to a more genuine and effective form of concern. Teachers with the metavolvement level of emotioncy may demonstrate metapathy towards their students. These kinds of teachers consider themselves as an envolver who always tries to help and guide students positively. They not only empathize with their students but also take decisive actions to support their long-term growth and success (Pishghadam et al., 2023b).

Going beyond the ultimate form of concern, Pishghadam et al. (2023b) introduced "transpathy," which corresponds with the transvolvement level of emotioncy. Teachers with the transvolvement level of emotioncy show transpathy. Transpathy happens when a teacher, known as a transvolver, deeply cares about their students. They blend compassion, concern, and a deep understanding of students' feelings with sharing knowledge and making a real impact on their students' lives. A transpathetic teacher feels their students' emotions as their own. They see their students' successes as their successes and their students' failures as their failures. Such teachers strive tirelessly to guide their students toward progress and excellence. These types of teachers care so deeply about their students that they often feel more joy and pride in their student's growth and success than the students themselves. If their students face any difficulties or

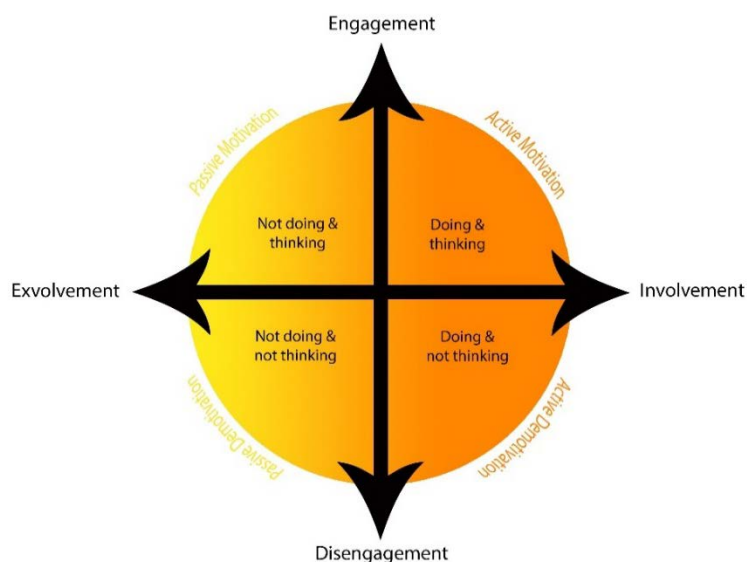
concerns, these dedicated teachers remain deeply invested and concerned until the issue is resolved (Pishghadam et al., 2023b).

Active/Passive Motivation

Pishghadam et al. (2019) introduced a comprehensive model of motivation that considers engagement as an indicator of mental activity and involvement as a measure of physical activity. This model examines the interplay between engagement, sensory involvement, and motivation across a continuum split into active and passive categories, each containing two distinct slices of motivation.

The continuum delineates four categories of motivation: active motivation, passive motivation, active demotivation, and passive demotivation. Active motivation describes a state where an individual is fully mentally engaged with a task and actively involved in its execution. For example, a student who eagerly participates in class discussions and completes assignments with enthusiasm demonstrates active motivation. Conversely, active demotivation occurs when a person is physically involved in an activity but lacks mental engagement or attention. An employee who mechanically performs tasks without genuine interest or focus illustrates active demotivation. Passive motivation manifests when an individual harbors positive thoughts or intentions towards an activity, concept, or idea but fails to translate this mental interest into action. For instance, a person who admires the idea of exercising regularly but does not commit to a fitness routine demonstrates passive motivation.

Figure 3
Active/Passive (De)Motivation



Note: The dual continuum of active and passive motivation, Adapted from "Unveiling the Passive Aspect of Motivation: Insights from English Language Teachers' Habitus," by Pishghadam, R., Makiabadi, H., Shayesteh, S., & Zeynali, S., 2019, International Journal of Society, Culture & Language, 7(2), p. 20. © 2019 by the authors. Reprinted with permission.

Finally, passive demotivation represents a state of disengagement where an individual lacks both mental engagement with an activity or idea and physical involvement in its execution. This state reflects a simultaneous absence of interest and active participation. An example could be a student who feels indifferent towards studying and seldom completes assignments, showing neither interest nor effort in academic tasks.

Literature Review

Empirical Research on Teacher Behavior, Motivation, and Willingness to Attend Classes

In recent years, research in second and foreign language education has increasingly acknowledged that learners' engagement is shaped not only by instructional practices or task design, but also by the emotional and relational dynamics of the classroom environment (Gan, 2026; Ma & Li, 2026; Wang & Derakhshan, 2023; Xie et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2026). Within EFL contexts in particular, teachers' affective and interpersonal behaviors, such as enthusiasm, immediacy, emotional support, and caring, have been identified as influential contextual factors shaping learners' motivation and behavioral participation (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Wang & Derakhshan, 2023; Wu & Cai, 2025; Xu et al., 2026). Across recent studies, teacher-related affective resources appear to influence learners' engagement primarily through internal psychological mechanisms rather than exerting purely direct effects (Wu & Cai, 2025; Zhang & Hu, 2025). For example, perceived teacher enthusiasm has been shown to enhance student engagement indirectly through self-efficacy beliefs, while teachers' caring behavior predicts engagement through mediational pathways involving peer support and perceived competence (Wu & Cai, 2025). Similarly, instructional styles characterized as humorous, creative, or supportive appear to influence learners' behavioral engagement indirectly by strengthening students' perceived capability to manage academic tasks (Zhang & Hu, 2025). Extending this line of research, Gan (2026) reported that teacher support predicts student engagement through epistemic beliefs and self-regulatory processes, suggesting that learners' underlying beliefs about knowledge and their capacity to manage learning tasks function as key mediating factors.

All in all, these studies have contributed to the growing adoption of mediation-based frameworks in EFL classroom research, in which teacher behavior is conceptualized as a contextual antecedent that enhances learners' internal motivational or emotional orientations, which in turn determine whether students actively participate in instructional activities. However, despite the increasing sophistication of such models, they tend to rely on a largely implicit assumption, namely, that behavioral participation is the outcome of already-developed motivational states. In this view, learners are expected to attend classes or engage in learning tasks because they feel interested, competent, or motivated. Yet this assumption has rarely been critically examined in communicative EFL environments where classroom attendance itself constitutes a prerequisite for meaningful exposure to interactional input and opportunities for language use. In such contexts, learners may initially decide to attend classes not because

they possess strong intrinsic motivation, but because they perceive the classroom environment as emotionally supportive or relationally safe. Consequently, participation may function not only as an outcome of motivation but also as a context in which motivational orientations gradually emerge through continued interaction with teachers and peers.

Evidence from Iranian EFL contexts further underscores the importance of teachers' relational involvement in shaping learners' classroom participation, as interpersonal communication behaviors such as teacher stroke have been shown to significantly predict students' willingness to attend classes through motivational pathways (Pishghadam et al., 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Rajabnejad et al., 2017; Yuan, 2024). For instance, perceived teacher stroke, defined as any verbal or non-verbal indication of recognition or acknowledgment of learners' presence, has been shown to significantly enhance students' active motivational involvement in foreign language learning, which in turn predicts perceptions of teacher success (Pishghadam et al., 2021). Likewise, teacher concern has been found to influence learners' motivation and academic achievement through mediational pathways, although its impact may vary depending on how such concern is enacted in classroom interaction (Hasanzadeh et al., 2024).

Another important limitation of the current literature concerns the fragmentation of teacher-related affective constructs. Variables such as enthusiasm, rapport, immediacy, emotional support, or teacher confirmation are frequently examined independently, despite their conceptual overlap in capturing teachers' emotional and interpersonal involvement with learners. In practice, however, learners are unlikely to experience these interpersonal qualities as isolated behavioral signals; rather, these dimensions collectively shape the emotional climate of the classroom and influence how students interpret their relationship with the teacher. In communicative EFL environments where classroom attendance represents a prerequisite for meaningful exposure to language input, learners' participation decisions may be especially sensitive to the relational dynamics of teacher-student interaction. Despite these advances, previous investigations have typically examined teacher-related interpersonal behaviors as isolated predictors of learner outcomes. As a result, the cumulative influence of teachers' broader emotional, cognitive, and relational involvement may remain underrepresented in existing models of engagement.

In this regard, the newly introduced construct of teacher energy (Pishghadam et al., 2023a) might provide a potential framework for integrating teachers' affective engagement in the classroom. Defined as the learners' perception of teachers' emotional, cognitive, and physical engagement in the classroom, teacher energy could potentially encapsulate the dynamics that are instead fragmented across various constructs such as enthusiasm, immediacy, rapport, or emotional support (Pishghadam et al., 2023a). Although the initial validation of the Teacher Energy Scale has provided evidence for its

multidimensional nature, empirical research on its explanatory power in influencing learners' motivational orientations and class attendance is still in its infancy.

Furthermore, although recent studies have acknowledged the mediating role of motivational processes in linking teacher behavior to engagement-related outcomes, most investigations have relied on global conceptualizations of motivation without distinguishing between qualitatively different motivational orientations. In particular, the potential role of active versus passive motivation in mediating the relationship between teacher-related affective input and behavioral engagement has remained largely unexplored. Within the dual continuum model of motivation, active motivation reflects learners' behavioral engagement in performing learning tasks, whereas passive motivation involves cognitive or emotional investment without overt participation (Pishghadam et al., 2019). Despite the theoretical relevance of this distinction, empirical investigations examining how teacher-related affective behaviors influence these differentiated motivational orientations remain limited. This becomes particularly consequential when motivation is operationalized in behavioral terms, such as learners' willingness to attend classes, which may not always emerge as a direct reflection of internal motivational states. Importantly, willingness to attend classes (WTAC) has rarely been examined as an outcome variable in mediation-based models of teacher influence, despite its relevance as an observable behavioral indicator of engagement in communicative language learning contexts. Existing research suggests that teacher communication behaviors, instructional style, and interpersonal rapport may influence learners' attendance decisions (Rajabnejad et al., 2017), yet the psychological processes through which such relational factors translate into behavioral participation remain underexplored.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the associations between perceived teacher energy, learners' willingness to attend classes, and their active and passive motivational orientations in Iranian private EFL institutes. By focusing on willingness to attend classes as a behavioral indicator of engagement, this study further explores how learners' motivational orientations may be related to their participation decisions within communicative classroom environments.

Methodology

Participants

The study sample included 300 Iranian EFL learners, with 122 males and 178 females aged 16 to 54 years old ($M = 22.69$, $SD = 8.21$). The participants were enrolled in 10 private English language institutes in three major Iranian cities: Mashhad, Sari, and Gorgan. These institutes provide extracurricular English language learning outside the formal education system and generally adopt CLT methods. The participants represented a range of English language proficiency levels based on the institutional placement system, including Beginner/Elementary ($N = 46$), Pre-Intermediate ($N = 36$),

Intermediate (N = 96), Upper Intermediate (N = 57), Advanced (N = 52), and Proficient (N = 13). Convenience sampling was used, and the participants volunteered to take part in the study.

Instruments

Teacher energy scale (TES)

The Teacher Energy Scale, designed and validated by Pishghadam et al. (2023a), is used to measure the students' perceptions of their teachers' energy levels. The scale consists of two sub-constructs, namely Energy Creator and Energy Drainer, each of which has six items. The scale uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the current study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.93.

Active/passive motivation scale (APMS)

The APMS, created by Alami (2020), is used to measure the active and passive motivation of the participants. The scale has six sub-constructs, namely cognitive active motivation, cognitive passive motivation, socio-cultural active motivation, socio-cultural passive motivation, sensory active motivation, and sensory passive motivation. Overall, the scale includes 24 items measured on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The reliability of the scale in our study was 0.93

Willingness to attend classes scale (WTAC)

The WTAC scale, developed by Rajabnejad et al. (2017), is used to measure the participants' willingness to go to class. The scale consists of 25 items, and it measures the extent to which the participants are willing to attend EFL classes. The participants are required to respond to the items using a five-point Likert scale, with options from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.86.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the first researcher obtained administrative permission from the participating institutes and coordinated with institute staff to access intact EFL classes comprising both male and female students across different proficiency levels. Participants were approached during regular class sessions and told about the purpose of the study and that it was voluntary. To reduce the possibility of response bias and social desirability, the teachers were not told about the purpose of the study until the data collection was finished. The questionnaire was administered in the absence of the teachers to ensure that the students' responses were not affected by the perceived evaluation or classroom authority. All the responses were collected anonymously, and the participants were assured that their information would be used for research purposes only. The questionnaire was administered in a paper format during class time. The instructions were given in Persian (L1) to ensure that the participants understood the

instructions clearly, and the participants were given about 30-40 minutes to complete the instruments.

Data Analysis

The data for this study were analyzed using SPSS (version 26) to answer the research questions. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation, were calculated for all the variables in the study. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was employed to explore the inter-relationships between teacher energy (TE), active/passive motivation (APM), and willingness to attend classes (WTAC). To determine the structural relationships between the variables, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed using the AMOS computer program. The purpose of the SEM analysis was to determine the direct and indirect effects of TE on WTAC, with APM as the mediator. The fit of the model was evaluated using a set of recommended indices, such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df). In addition, independent samples t-tests were used to explore possible gender differences in APM and WTAC. One-way ANOVA was used to compare APM across different age groups.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, for the Active/Passive Motivation (APM), Willingness to Attend Classes (WTAC), and Teacher Energy (TE) scales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for APM, WTAC, and TE

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
APM	42	144	115.92	18.28
Cognitive/Active	7	24	18.81	3.73
Cognitive/Passive	6	24	18.81	3.61
Socio-Cultural/Active	5	24	20.09	3.39
Socio-Cultural/Passive	7	24	19.54	3.80
Sensory/Active	5	24	19.64	3.90
Sensory/Passive	4	24	19.03	4.44
WTAC	60	125	96.51	12.36
Teacher Knowledge	11	35	26.21	4.16
Teacher Methodology	15	35	28.75	4.21
Teacher Care	4	20	16.21	2.94
Teacher Characteristics	3	15	9.91	2.79
Teacher Environment	4	20	15.43	2.71
TE	12	60	46.89	9.59
Energy Boosting	6	30	23.43	4.98
Energy Draining	6	30	23.45	5.67

Table 2*Normality Test for APM, WTAC, and TE*

	Skewness	Kurtosis
APM	-1.05	1.34
Cognitive/Active	-.60	.04
Cognitive/Passive	-.62	.06
Socio-Cultural/Active	-.10	1.06
Socio-Cultural/Passive	-1.12	1.09
Sensory/Active	-1.03	.92
Sensory/Passive	-1.00	.68
WTAC	.03	-.23
Teacher Knowledge	-.30	.67
Teacher Methodology	-.37	-.25
Teacher Care	-.92	1.29
Teacher Characteristics	.34	-.72
Teacher Environment	-.67	1.62
TE	-.55	.04
Energy Boosting	-.67	.50
Energy Draining	-.69	-.15

In the initial stage of the analysis, the normality of the data was examined. Table 2 displays the Skewness and Kurtosis estimates, which fall within the range of -2 and +2, indicating that the distribution of the data is normal.

Table 3*Reliability Estimates for APM, WTAC, and TE Scales*

	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
APM	24	.93
Cognitive/Active	4	.79
Cognitive/Passive	4	.73
Socio-Cultural/Active	4	.78
Socio-Cultural/Passive	4	.75
Sensory/Active	4	.83
Sensory/Passive	4	.85
WTAC	25	.86
Teacher Knowledge	7	.78
Teacher Methodology	7	.81
Teacher Care	4	.71
Teacher Characteristics	3	.70
Teacher Environment	4	.70
TE	12	.93
Energy Boosting	6	.90
Energy Draining	6	.94

The reliability estimates for APM, WTAC, and TE scales all exceed the threshold of .70 and are deemed satisfactory.

Correlational Analysis

To examine the potential relationships among the variables, the Pearson product-moment correlation was used. Correlational analysis revealed significant positive relationships between TE and APM ($r = .24, p < .01$), TE and WTAC ($r = .48, p < .01$), as

well as between various subconstructs of APM, WTAC, and TE. Notably, TE showed stronger correlations with WTAC than with APM.

Table 4
Correlational Analysis for APM, WTAC, and TE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. APM	1															
2. Cognitive/Active	.77**	1														
3. Cognitive/Passive	.71**	.53**	1													
4. Socio-Cultural/Active	.78**	.62**	.48**	1												
5. Socio-Cultural/Passive	.80**	.44**	.47**	.57**	1											
6. Sensory/Active	.84**	.58**	.48**	.55**	.62**	1										
7. Sensory/Passive	.85**	.54**	.49**	.54**	.68**	.74**	1									
8. WTAC	.34**	.35**	.22**	.36**	.23**	.26**	.23**	1								
9. Teacher Knowledge	.28**	.31**	.16**	.27**	.19**	.19**	.20**	.83**	1							
10. Teacher Methodology	.39**	.37**	.25**	.34**	.27**	.32**	.30**	.82**	.60**	1						
11. Teacher Care	.22**	.15**	.15**	.23**	.18**	.20**	.16**	.74**	.49**	.57**	1					
12. Teacher Characteristics	.09	.20**	.07	.18**	.00	.04	-.02	.49**	.34**	.22**	.16**	1				
13. Teacher Environment	.20**	.18**	.10	.27**	.15**	.14*	.12*	.67**	.45**	.40**	.49**	.19**	1			
14. TE	.24**	.33**	.15**	.19**	.13*	.20**	.15**	.48**	.44**	.44**	.22**	.42**	.17**	1		
15. Energy Boosting	.16**	.23**	.07	.12*	.08	.14*	.11*	.50**	.45**	.44**	.25**	.37**	.24**	.88**	1	
16. Energy Draining	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.08	-	-	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

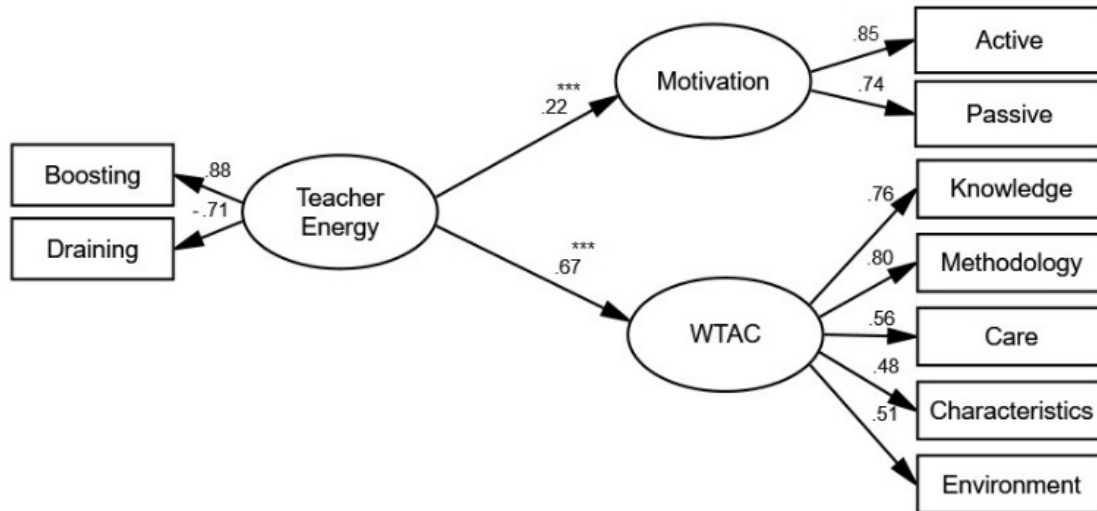
Two models were proposed for the prediction of the dependent variables (i.e., APM & WTAC). Goodness of fit indices showed that the models fit the data adequately.

Model 1

SEM analysis confirmed that TE significantly predicts both APM ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) and WTAC ($\beta = .67, p < .001$). TE more strongly predicts WTAC than APM. The mediation model showed that TE indirectly predicts WTAC through APM ($\beta = .06, p < .05$), indicating that motivation partially mediates the relationship between teacher energy and willingness to attend classes.

Figure 4

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships among TE, APM, and WTAC



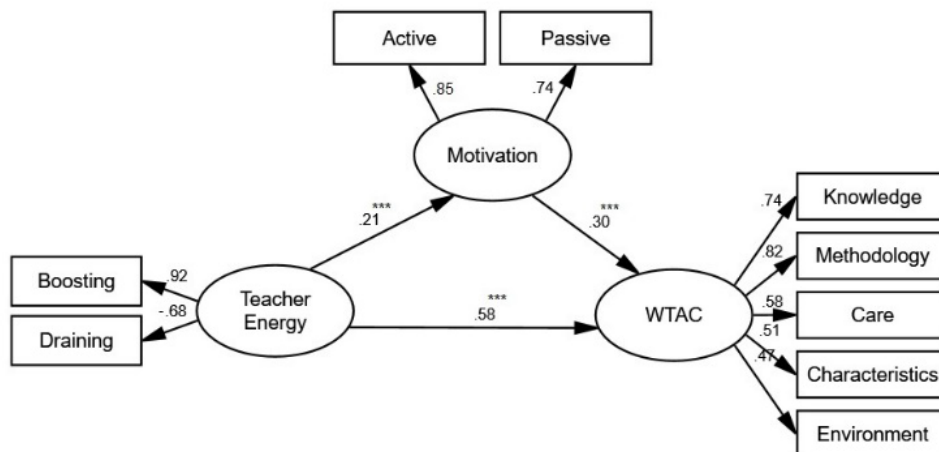
The coefficient for TE predicting WTAC is $\beta = .67$, indicating a strong direct relationship. On the other hand, the coefficient for TE predicting APM is $\beta = .22$, indicating a weaker direct relationship. Thus, TE has a stronger direct impact on students' willingness to attend classes than on their motivation levels.

Model 2

The second model verifies the power of TE in predicting WTAC with APM as the mediator. The bootstrap analysis of mediation was performed for the indirect effects. As Figure 5 illustrates, TE and APM are positive predictors of WTAC ($\beta = .58, p < 0.001$; $\beta = .30, p < 0.001$). Moreover, mediated by APM, TE can positively predict WTAC ($\beta = .06, p < 0.05$).

Figure 5

The Schematic Representation of the Relationships between TE and WTAC with APM as the Mediator



TE not only directly affects WTAC but also influences it indirectly through APM. This indirect effect is quantified by the coefficient $\beta = .06$, which is statistically significant ($p < .05$). This indicates that part of the reason TE impacts WTAC is that it first influences APM, which in turn affects WTAC. In other words, teacher energy boosts students' motivation, and this increased motivation makes them more willing to attend classes. Motivation (APM) acts as an intermediate step or mechanism through which teacher energy (TE) affects students' willingness to attend classes (WTAC). However, since TE also has a direct significant impact on WTAC ($\beta = .67$), motivation does not fully account for the relationship. Therefore, it is described as partial mediation.

Goodness of Fit Indices for the Models

To see whether the models fit the data, goodness of fit indices were calculated using Amos. Table 5 shows the relative chi-square (i.e., chi-square index divided by the degrees of freedom (χ^2/df)), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Squared Error (SRMR). The criterion for acceptance is different across researchers. In the present study, values for χ^2/df should be less than 3 (Ullman, 2001), TLI and CFI were over .90, and RMSEA and SRMR were equal to or less than .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

Table 5

Goodness of Fit Indices for the Models

Models	χ^2/df	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1 (Figure 4)	2.90	19	.96	.93	.08	.05
Model 2 (Figure 5)	2.80	18	.97	.94	.08	.05

Gender Differences

In order to examine if there is any significant difference between males and females with regard to APM, a series of independent samples t-tests was run. As Table 6 shows, No significant gender differences were found, except for 'cognitive/active' motivation, where females scored higher ($t(298) = 2.91, p < 0.01$) with females scoring higher in cognitive/active motivation ($M = 19.32, SD = 3.47$) compared to males ($M = 18.06, SD = 3.99; t(298) = 2.91, p < 0.01$).

As Table 7 shows, there are significant differences in 'WTAC', 'teacher knowledge', 'teacher methodology', and 'teacher characteristics' between males and females ($t(298) = 3.03, p < 0.01; t(298) = 3.72, p < 0.01; t(298) = 3.36, p < 0.05; t(298) = 2.24, p < 0.05$). That is, in general, female learners are more willing to attend classes. To be specific, factors like teacher knowledge, teacher methodology, and teacher characteristics make female learners more willing to attend classes in comparison to their male counterparts.

Table 6*Independent Samples T-Test for APM*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
APM	Female	178	116.45	18.93	298	.60	.55
	Male	122	115.16	17.36			
Cognitive/Active	Female	178	19.32	3.47	298	2.91	.00
	Male	122	18.06	3.99			
Cognitive/Passive	Female	178	18.74	3.61	298	-.44	.65
	Male	122	18.93	3.63			
Socio-Cultural/Active	Female	178	20.24	3.47	298	.88	.35
	Male	122	19.89	3.29			
Socio-Cultural/Passive	Female	178	19.37	4.00	298	.93	.38
	Male	122	19.79	3.51			
Sensory/Active	Female	178	19.56	4.08	298	.42	.68
	Male	122	19.75	3.65			
Sensory/Passive	Female	178	19.22	4.60	298	.92	.36

Table 7*Independent Samples T-Test for WTAC*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
WTAC	Female	178	98.28	12.58	298	3.03	.00
	Male	122	93.93	11.62			
Teacher Knowledge	Female	178	26.94	3.81	298	3.72	.00
	Male	122	25.16	4.43			
Teacher Methodology	Female	178	29.22	4.10	298	3.36	.02
	Male	122	28.06	4.29			
Teacher Care	Female	178	16.40	3.03	298	1.27	.17
	Male	122	15.93	2.80			
Teacher Characteristics	Female	178	10.21	2.94	298	2.24	.03
	Male	122	9.48	2.51			
Teacher Environment	Female	178	15.51	2.79	298	.60	.55
	Male	122	15.32	2.60			

No significant gender differences were found in TE. In other words, both male and female participants perceived their teachers' energy similarly. Both genders equally recognize the positive aspects of teacher behavior that enhance their energy, as well as the negative aspects of the classroom environment or teacher behavior that diminish their energy.

As Table 8 shows, there are no significant differences in 'TE', 'energy boosting', or 'energy draining' between males and females ($t(298) = 1.90, p > 0.05$; $t(298) = 1.77, p > 0.05$; $t(298) = 1.65, p > 0.05$)

Table 8*Independent Samples T-Test for TE*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
TE	Female	178	47.75	9.40	298	1.90	.06
	Male	122	45.62	9.77			
Energy Boosting	Female	178	23.85	4.88	298	1.77	.08
	Male	122	22.82	5.08			
Energy Draining	Female	178	23.90	5.57	298	1.65	.10
	Male	122	22.80	5.78			

Age Differences

Based on the ANOVA results with Bonferroni correction, significant differences were found in cognitive/active, socio-cultural/active, sensory/active, and sensory/passive motivations among different age groups. Younger learners (below 20 years) exhibited higher levels of cognitive/active motivation, indicating they are more actively engaged in thinking and learning activities compared to older learners. They also showed higher levels of socio-cultural/active motivation, suggesting a greater involvement and inclination in social and cultural learning experiences. Additionally, younger students demonstrated higher levels of sensory/active motivation, meaning they are more engaged in sensory-based learning activities such as those involving touch, sight, and hearing. Even in passive sensory experiences, such as listening or observing, younger learners displayed higher sensory/passive motivation.

Table 9

One-Way ANOVA for APM and its Subconstructs across Different Age Ranges

	Subconstruct	N	Mean	SD	df	F	Sig.
APM	Below 20	128	119.08	17.56	2	3.47	.03
	20 to 30	127	113.93	17.87			
	Above 30	45	112.58	20.41			
Cognitive/Active	Below 20	128	19.58	3.30	2	6.35	.00
	20 to 30	127	17.95	4.12			
	Above 30	45	19.02	3.26			
Cognitive/Passive	Below 20	128	19.06	3.58	2	.53	.59
	20 to 30	127	18.63	3.52			
	Above 30	45	18.62	3.99			
Socio-Cultural/Active	Below 20	128	20.69	3.21	2	3.52	.03
	20 to 30	127	19.61	3.45			
	Above 30	45	19.78	3.57			
Socio-Cultural/Passive	Below 20	128	19.84	3.71	2	1.52	.22
	20 to 30	127	19.54	3.71			
	Above 30	45	18.69	4.26			
Sensory/Active	Below 20	128	20.08	3.71	2	3.47	.03
	20 to 30	127	19.67	3.78			
	Above 30	45	18.31	4.53			
Sensory/Passive	Below 20	128	19.84	4.38	2	3.85	.02
	20 to 30	127	18.53	4.26			
	Above 30	45	18.16	4.87			

Based on the ANOVA results with Bonferroni correction, significant differences were found in WTAC. Younger learners (below 20 years) exhibited a greater willingness to attend classes. Additionally, these students had higher perceptions of positive teacher characteristics and gave higher scores regarding the classroom atmosphere and environment created by their teachers. Overall, younger learners demonstrated more engagement and satisfaction with their educational experiences.

Table 10*One-Way ANOVA for WTAC and its Subconstructs across Different Age Ranges*

	Subconstruct	N	Mean	SD	df	F	Sig.
WTAC	Below 20	128	100.30	13.85	2	11.94	.00
	20 to 30	127	93.06	10.13			
	Above 30	45	95.44	10.66			
Teacher Knowledge	Below 20	128	27.33	4.30	2	8.87	.00
	20 to 30	127	25.21	3.92			
	Above 30	45	25.87	3.68			
Teacher Methodology	Below 20	128	29.66	4.38	2	6.45	.00
	20 to 30	127	27.80	4.09			
	Above 30	45	28.80	3.49			
Teacher Care	Below 20	128	16.56	3.24	2	1.74	.18
	20 to 30	127	15.88	2.69			
	Above 30	45	16.11	2.71			
Teacher Characteristics	Below 20	128	10.99	2.96	2	19.04	.00
	20 to 30	127	9.20	2.33			
	Above 30	45	8.84	2.50			
Teacher Environment	Below 20	128	15.76	3.02	2	3.29	.04
	20 to 30	127	14.97	2.49			
	Above 30	45	15.82	2.21			

Based on the ANOVA results with Bonferroni correction, significant differences were found in TE. Younger students (below 20 years) perceived their teachers to have higher overall energy levels (TE), rated the aspects of teacher behavior that enhance their energy (energy boosting) more positively, and viewed the factors that reduce their energy (energy draining) less negatively compared to older learners.

Table 11*One-Way ANOVA for TE and its Subconstructs across Different Age Ranges*

	Subconstruct	N	Mean	SD	df	F	Sig.
TE	Below 20	128	50.18	9.33	2	14.33	.00
	20 to 30	127	44.52	9.50			
	Above 30	45	44.20	7.81			
Energy Boosting	Below 20	128	25.02	4.79	2	12.31	.00
	20 to 30	127	22.12	5.04			
	Above 30	45	22.64	4.11			
Energy Draining	Below 20	128	25.16	5.44	2	11.24	.00
	20 to 30	127	22.40	5.82			
	Above 30	45	21.56	4.58			

Discussion

The findings indicated that the amount of energy a teacher brings into the classroom, resulting in different levels of involvement with students' issues, is not a desirable stylistic element of teaching but a meaningful affective force that shapes how students emotionally interpret and respond to both the learning process and their relationship with the teacher.

The primary finding of our study was that teacher energy is significantly and positively correlated with all aspects of both active and passive motivation for male and female

students, as well as with their willingness to attend classes. While this finding is consistent with previous research (Dörnyei, 2001; Gan, 2026; Ma & Li, 2026; Mahnaz et al., 2022; Ruiz-Alfonso et al., 2020; Ushioda, 2011; Wu & Cai, 2025; Xie et al., 2026; Xu et al., 2026; Zhang & Hu, 2025; Zhang et al., 2026 ; Lei, 2026), which has documented the positive relationship between teacher behavior, supportive classroom environments, student motivation, and attendance, the present study advances this line of work by demonstrating that teacher energy may operate more immediately at the behavioral level than at the motivational level. More specifically, teacher energy was found to be more strongly associated with students' willingness to attend classes than with their motivation. It also invites a more nuanced interpretation of how such influences may unfold over time. Much of the existing literature implicitly assumes that students attend classes as a result of already-developed motivational orientations (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Wang et al., 2024). However, the present findings raise the possibility that teacher-related affective input may, in some cases, encourage students to attend class even before strong internal motivation has fully developed. This is important because it suggests that teacher-related affective input, such as energy and emotional involvement, may influence students' behavioral decisions before reshaping their internal motivational orientations. In other words, students' willingness to attend a class represents an immediate and momentary behavioral choice, whereas motivation typically develops gradually through processes of internalization (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wu & Cai, 2025). Consequently, the stronger predictive power of teacher energy on students' willingness to attend classes in comparison to Active/Passive motivation implies that students may decide to attend not only because they are deeply motivated to learn English, but because the classroom feels emotionally rewarding, socially supportive, and psychologically meaningful.

Put differently, teacher energy may compel students to attend classes, thereby making attendance feel less like an obligation and more like a voluntary engagement (Ameen, 2026; Loh & Liew, 2021). This explanation becomes even clearer when considered through the lens of the emotioncy framework, which is a staple to the concept of Teacher Energy. The emotioncy theory (Miri & Pishghadam, 2021) posits that involvement (sensory, emotional, and cognitive) determines the depth of engagement with a phenomenon. Accordingly, teachers who behave at higher levels of involvement (e.g., metainvolvement or transinvolvement) are more likely to demonstrate empathy, metapathy, or deeper forms of concern (transpathy) in their interactions with students. Such involvement may elevate students' emotioncy levels from passive exposure to more active emotional engagement, thereby reducing the psychological cost of classroom participation and making attendance a more approachable behavioral choice. As a result, they do not merely transmit instructional content; rather, they communicate visible emotional investment in students' progress. A teacher's high amount of investment in their students may increase students' emotional proximity to the learning experience, raising their emotioncy levels from indifference to engagement and fostering a stronger sense of psychological connection to the classroom environment (Jia & Cheng, 2024).

Therefore, in the eyes of such teachers, education is not merely the transmission of knowledge; it is the expression of real emotional investment in the personal and academic development of each student. This emotional investment of teachers can pull students towards the process of learning.

Building on this interpretation, when students perceive that their teacher genuinely values and supports them, they are more likely to experience a sense of belonging and emotional safety in the classroom (Dudaité et al., 2026; Gan, 2026; Lei, 2026; Osterman, 2010; Wang et al., 2024;). In such circumstances, the classroom may gradually transform from a purely academic space into a relationally supportive environment. For some students, particularly those facing personal challenges or emotional stress, attendance may therefore be motivated less by academic goals and more by the opportunity to interact with a teacher who demonstrates care and concern (Cayubit, 2021). From another perspective, this process can also be understood through the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which suggests that positive emotional experiences expand individuals' thought-action repertoires. When students perceive their teacher as energetic and emotionally present, the classroom may feel psychologically lighter and less threatening, which in turn encourages approach-oriented behaviors such as attendance. Over time, repeated exposure to such positive emotional environments may not only increase attendance but also indirectly strengthen students' motivational engagement.

Collectively, these findings indicate that teacher energy could play a role that is more than just a facilitating aspect of instruction; instead, it could play a role as an affective catalyst that influences students' first experience with the learning environment. Through emotional proximity and the reduction of the psychological cost of participation, teacher energy could influence students to be engaged in the classroom activities even before the internal motivational orientation is fully developed. Using the emotioncy framework, this means that the emotional involvement of teachers, as exhibited by empathy, metapathy, or concern, could influence the engagement of learners from passive exposure to active participation. In this regard, attendance in the classroom may not always be the result of motivation but could instead be a precursor that influences the development of motivation over time.

Interestingly, we also observed an unexpected finding regarding gender. Teacher energy impacted both male and female students similarly in terms of perception, indicating that both groups showed comparable sensitivity to their teacher's emotional presence. Although previous research often suggests that females are more responsive to relational cues due to heightened sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics (Ali et al., 2020; Katz, 2017; Fischer & LaFrance, 2014), more recent evidence from Hall et al. (2025) specifically indicates that women, on average, tend to show greater accuracy and attunement in processing emotional and relational cues, particularly in contexts involving interpersonal

sensitivity and social information processing, though these effects are also strongly shaped by situational and power-related factors. However, contrary to previous studies, the current study showed that the communicative and interactive nature of EFL classrooms in private language institutes may create shared affective conditions that engage both genders in similar ways. Recent empirical evidence in EFL contexts supports this. For example, research has shown that perceived teacher support enhances students' engagement primarily by fostering positive academic emotions, with no statistically significant gender differences reported in perceived teacher support or emotional engagement among male and female learners (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). It can be concluded that teacher energy operates not as a gender-sensitive relational factor but rather as an environmental affective resource within the broader communicative learning environments. In other words, when expressed in the form of empathy, metapathy, or concern, the involvement of the teacher could create an emotional atmosphere within the learning environment that is collectively experienced by the students.

At the same time, despite the similarity in perception of teacher energy, female students reported higher levels of cognitive/active motivation and a greater willingness to attend classes. This shows that while teacher energy may establish a shared motivational climate for all learners, individual students may respond to this environment differently. Female learners, for instance, may be more likely to translate teachers' emotional involvement into actively engaged learning behaviors, thereby strengthening their willingness to attend classes (Spinath et al., 2014; Voyer & Voyer, 2014). This is consistent with the partial mediation observed in this study and aligns with literature indicating that female students often demonstrate greater willingness to attend and more favorable attitudes toward educational settings (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Kuśnierz et al., 2020; Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020; Yu, 2021).

With regards to the age factor, we found that there are significant differences between age groups, with younger learners (< 20 years) showing higher active and passive motivation levels across various dimensions, including cognitive, socio-cultural, and sensory motivations. These findings align with previous research suggesting that teenage students are more willing to attend classes and show greater motivation to learn and participate actively in learning activities (Singh & Manjaly, 2022).

Additionally, younger students showed more sensitivity to teacher energy, which aligns with research suggesting that younger students are generally more responsive to teachers' behavior, concern, supportiveness, and the overall classroom atmosphere compared to older students (Ruzek et al., 2016; Verdugo, 2026; Whitehead et al., 2021; Zarra, 2013; Zheng, 2022). This age-related sensitivity may be explained by developmental differences (Nelson et al., 2016) in how learners engage with classroom environments (Lu & Lien, 2019). Adolescents are typically more reliant on external social

and emotional cues, such as teacher support, warmth, and involvement, to regulate their participation and persistence in academic (Burns & Van Bergen, 2025; Eccles & Roeser, 2009; Foulkes & Blakemore, 2016). In this sense, teacher energy may function as an important motivational signal that fosters engagement and lowers the psychological effort associated with attending and participating in class (Rastegar & Karami, 2015). In fact, given the magnitude of influence that subtle affective cues can have on developing minds (Ebrahimi et al., 2025; Eisenberg et al., 2015; Rokhsari, 2025), teacher energy may enhance their willingness to attend classes by creating a socially meaningful and emotionally safe learning environment. However, studies suggest that as students mature, they gradually develop self-regulation skills and coping mechanisms that allow them to rely less on external support from teachers and peers (Pitzer & Skinner, 2016; Scott et al., 2014; Verdugo, 2026; Walker et al., 2017).

Conclusion


The current study has a number of implications for EFL teachers and administrators working in private language institutes. The findings of the study regarding the relationships between students' perceptions of teacher energy, their motivational orientations, and their intentions to attend classes suggest that students' attendance decisions can be affected not only by teaching practice or course design but also by the level of their perceived emotional support and engagement in the classroom. In communicative language learning environments where frequent attendance is crucial for effective communication, creating a classroom environment where students feel valued and supported may help retain them. For classroom teachers, this highlights the importance of dealing with the relational aspects that are implicit in teaching. Activities such as taking notice of students' efforts, being responsive to their concerns, and being present in a supportive manner could help create a learning environment where students are more likely to pay attention to and engage with the teaching sessions. Such activities may appear trivial, but they can help shape students' attitudes towards classroom interaction. Institutionally, the management of language institutes can incorporate relational teaching skills into teacher development programs. Providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their interpersonal communication styles and emotional responsiveness might make it easier to develop more engaging learning environments. Finally, curriculum planners and educational coordinators may benefit from recognizing that learners' attendance decisions are not solely driven by academic or logistical considerations, but may also be related to the perceived emotional quality of classroom interaction. Supporting teachers in cultivating a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere may thus serve as a complementary approach to promoting sustained learner engagement in private EFL institutes.


Though the study yields important insights into the relationships between teacher energy, learners' motivational orientations, and their intention to attend classes, there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the


findings. Firstly, the nature of the study, which is a cross-sectional correlational study, does not allow for the determination of the causal relationships between the variables. Secondly, all the variables in the study were measured using self-report questionnaires, which may be susceptible to common-method variance. Finally, since the study was carried out in private EFL language institutes in Iran, the generalizability of the findings may be limited.


Future studies might benefit from the application of multilevel modeling techniques to better capture the nested nature of the classroom environment and tease apart the teacher-level factors from the student-level perceptions. Experimental studies or interventions aimed at improving teachers' emotional engagement, for example, through empathy or metapathy-based training, could also help clarify the role of teacher energy in influencing learners' engagement and motivation to attend classes. In addition to methodological issues, future research could investigate other mechanisms through which teacher energy is related to students' engagement in the classroom. Although motivation was included as a variable in the current study, other variables, such as teacher credibility, classroom belongingness, emotional contagion, or autonomy support, could also be potential mechanisms through which teacher involvement is related to behavioral engagement. Moreover, future studies might investigate possible moderating variables such as language ability, personality characteristics, or previous learning experiences, as well as contextual variables such as class size, institutional culture, or teaching format. Research on teacher energy at the classroom or institutional level might also provide insight into whether teacher energy is more of an individual subjective experience or a collective affective climate that shapes students' engagement.

ORCID

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6183-5348>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6876-5139>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2375-285X>

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4830-8062>

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Shaghayegh Shayesteh: Investigation, Supervision, Formal Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing

Taqi Al Abdwani: Methodology, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing

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Ethics Declarations

World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki–Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and their confidentiality and anonymity were strictly ensured throughout the research process.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Data Availability

The datasets analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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