

Iraqi EFL Learners' Professional Identity, Character Strength and their Teaching Success: A Correlational Research

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Abstract

This study looked at how two things—language teachers' professional identity and their independence—affect how successful they are in teaching and helping students learn. This is important because teachers' success is key to good instruction and learning. To achieve this goal, 200 Iraqi English teachers, including university teachers and language school instructors, took part in this study. For collecting information, we handed out three questionnaires: the Teachers' Character Strength (TCS), the Teacher Professional Identity Scale (TPIS), and the Characteristics of Successful Language Teachers Questionnaire (CSLTQ) to the participants. We checked how reliable the questionnaires were using Cronbach's alpha and looked at the relationships between the TCS, TPIS, and CSLTQ. The Pearson correlation results showed that all three teacher factors were positively related to each other. These results were also supported by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, which showed that a teacher's success was strongly linked to both their professional identity and their independence. The results of this research show that a teacher's sense of who they are and their personal strengths help them be successful. This study also talked about the parts of teachers' professional identity that could help them be more successful. In the end, we talk about important teaching ideas.

Key Terms: Professional Identity, Character Strength, Teacher Success

عصر القوة المهنية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلفة اجنبية في العراق ونجاحهم في التدريب: بحث

ترابطي

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المخلص:

هذه الدراسة اهتمت في شيئين لمهنية تدريسي واستقلالهم ومدى تأثيرها على مدى نجاحهم في التدريس ومساعدة، الطلاب على التعلم، هذا مهم لأن نجاح المعلمين هو مفتاح التدريس والتعلم الجيد. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، شارك في هذه الدراسة 200 مدرسة لغة إنكليزية عراقي، بما في ذلك مدرسون جامعيون ومدرسون في مدارس اللغات. لجمع المعلومات، قمنا بتوزيع ثلاثة استبيانات على المشاركين: استبيان قوة شخصية المعلمين (TCS) واستبيان قوة شخصية المعلم المهنية (TPIS) واستبيان خصائص مدرسي اللغة الناجحين (CSLTQ) لقد قمنا بفحص مدى موثوقية الاستبيانات باستخدام ألفا كورنباخ ولا حضنا العلاقة بين TCS, TPIS, و CSLTQ. وظهرت نتائج ارتباط الشخص أن العوامل الثلاثة للمعلم كانت مترابطة بشكل إيجابي مع بعضها البعض. وقد تم دعم هذه النتائج أيضاً من خلال تحليل نمذجة المعادلات البنوية (SEM) والذي أظهر نجاح المعلم مرتبط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بمهنته واستقلاليته. تظهر نتائج هذا البحث أن شعور المعلم بذاته ونقاط قوته الشخصية تساعده على النجاح وتحديث هذه الدراسة أيضاً عن جزء الهوية المهنية للمعلمين الذي يمكن أن يساعدهم على تحقيق المزيد من النجاح. في النهاية، نتحدث عن أفكار التدريس المهمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية المهنية، نقاط القوة، نجاح المعلم.

1. Back ground of the study

In the last 30 years, there has been a slow change in how we think about teacher education. Instead of focusing just on the products or outcomes, we are now looking more at the process and conversations involved in teaching. Pennington (2015) says that teacher identity means how teachers see themselves and what it means to be a teacher. This idea helps teachers know how to act and do their jobs in a way that shows they are teachers.. Teachers' dedication to their job and following the rules of their profession is influenced by how they see themselves as professionals (Hammerness et al. , 2005) Teachers should understand their own personal identity, which is connected to who they are as teachers, what they believe, and their values. Also, some writers are interested in teacher identity. For example, Zainadiny Mofrad (2016) looked at how a group of English teachers in Iran formed their identities. The results showed that teachers see themselves mostly as experts in teaching methods, then in how to help students learn, and least of all in their specific subjects. There was not much of a connection between the gender and experience of the participants and the three parts of professional identity, except for a notable connection between teachers' experience and being a subject matter expert. In another study, Abednia (2012) looked at the job identity of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. The results showed that attending critical teaching courses led to big changes in how teachers see themselves professionally.

Professional identity is how someone sees themselves in their job. It is shaped by things like their experiences, beliefs, values, motivations, and personal traits. It is something that is complicated, always changing, and unique to each person. It grows and develops through interactions with other people. Professional identity is about how you see yourself and who you want to be in your career. You can make it better and stronger by learning and gaining experience in your field. It is personal and related to groups, and it comes from being part of different workplaces and communities. As a helpful idea, it gives teachers a way to decide how to behave and what to do in their jobs and in the community (Sachs, 2005). It's a fascinating area for researchers that hasn't been fully explored yet. Some studies have shared helpful ideas and information about understanding professional identity in education.

To explain the second part of the study better, character strength is understood as the natural qualities that come out in a person. These qualities make someone feel special and give them energy and motivation from within (Brdar & Kashdan, 2010). In their detailed study, Peterson and Seligman (2004) found that we can improve skills not just by thinking or talking about them, but also by actually practicing (Park & Peterson, 2009). Family, teachers, friends, good role models, and youth programs are very important for helping children build their character strengths (Park, 2004). Good role models, especially when kids are young, help build strong character. In this way, the people around the child are important for

helping them grow and develop their personality, and they should act thoughtfully (Haslip & Donaldson, 2020; Park & Peterson, 2009). Early childhood teachers, the ones who spend the most time with young children, have a special role in this area. In fact, young children's growth and development are greatly influenced by having strong, safe connections with their teachers (Haslip, Allen-Handy & Donaldson, 2019).

Moreover, the issues related to teachers' professional identity in schools are seen as complex and changing. This creates challenges in balancing how teachers see themselves and the roles they believe they should have at work (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) thought that knowing about teachers' professional identity is very important because it helps us understand how language teaching works. Fogle and Moser (2017) noted that knowing about the different identities of teachers is important to better understand what influences their decisions, attitudes, and beliefs. In summary, teachers' professional identity greatly affects their motivation (Richardson & Watt, 2018), confidence (Azim, 2017), commitment (Troman, 2008), and effectiveness (Khalid, 2015). So, how teachers see their job and the different factors that affect it. The researcher wants to find out if there is a connection between teachers' professional identity and their feelings of burnout.

This study helps English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, workers, and students understand how regularly thinking about and changing their professional identity can lead to better success in their jobs. The results of this research can provide helpful advice for training teachers. These programs should show how important burnout, personal qualities, and professional identity are to help teachers do their jobs better.

1.5. The Research Questions

The major end of this study is to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranqi EFL teachers' professional identity and their character strength?
- 2- Is there any significant relationship between Iranqi EFL teachers' professional identity and their Teaching Success?

2. Literature Review

Teacher identity has become an important topic in education research, and it's a topic that has been studied more recently. The idea of identity has been understood in many ways in different writings. Gee (2000) explained that teacher identity is a key way to understand schools and society. I'm sorry, but it appears that your message only contains "99). ". It is said that teachers' identity can be used as a way to look at different parts of teaching. Defining identity is hard because it's complex and always changing. However, most people agree that

identity is something that relates to others, and it can be chosen by teachers or given to them (Miller, 2009).

Using the word 'professional' helps to tell the difference between professionals and non-professionals. Teacher professional identity is how teachers see and describe their own job qualities and roles. Recently, Borg (2017) described teacher professional identity as the roles that teachers and others think they should have. A teacher's professional identity is how teachers see themselves and who they are as educators. It comes from their thoughts and reflections on their experiences in their teaching career. Teachers' professional identity is shaped by many things and is developed over time, in different situations, and within society (Barkhuizen, 2016; Hamilton, 2013; Kao & Lin, 2015). In teaching, a person's professional identity is shaped by three things: (1) the skills they have in their area of expertise; (2) being honest and having strong morals; and (3) being knowledgeable about teaching methods (Carr, 2005).

Also, we can think of teacher success as how well a teacher does their job. What makes teachers successful has been an important topic for many researchers in education. In a study about what makes a good language teacher, Brosh (1996) said that successful language teachers are knowledgeable, have a lot of information about the language they're teaching, are good at organizing the classroom, can explain things well, and are available to help students both during and after class. Tamblyn (2000) identified some important qualities of good teachers. These include being creative, knowing enough about their subject, encouraging students, being adaptable and willing to try new things, treating students with respect, showing care for their students, having a sense of humor, and feeling proud to be a teacher.

In conclusion, besides just talking about what teachers are like, it's important to say that not many studies have looked at how a teacher's sense of who they are and their independence are important for their effectiveness in teaching. So, this study aims to fill the gap by looking at how well language teachers do in relation to their professional identity and their personal strengths.

3. Methodology

3.1. Instrumentations

3.4.2. Teacher Professional Identity Scale (TPIS). Teacher professional identity was measured using the Teacher Professional Identity Scale created by Kao and Lin in 2015. This scale has 22 questions, and participants answer them using a 5-point scale. The scale goes from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale has six parts: 1. Self-Expectation (questions 1 to 5)

2. Teachers' Duties (questions 6 to 8) ; 3. External Influential Factors (questions 9 to 12) ; 4. Teaching Methods (questions 13 to 15); 5. Teaching Skills and Knowledge (questions 16 to 19); 6. Teachers' Behavior in the Community (questions 20 to 22). The reliability of this tool was measured using Cronbach's alpha, and it was found to be . 86 in this study.

3.4.3. Teachers' Character Strength: Furnham and Lester (2012) created a shorter version of the character strengths inventory based on the original one. In a brief measure of character strength, based on the original version, there are 24 strengths linked to six main qualities: wisdom and knowledge, courage, kindness, fairness, self-control, and spirituality. In this study, the reliability scores for the virtues of courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence were 0. 77, 074, 072, 077, 067, and 081, respectively.

3.3.2 Characteristics of successful teachers' questionnaire (CSTQ):

To check how well language teachers are doing, a survey called the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ) was created. This questionnaire was created and tested by Moafian and Pishghadam in 2009 to measure how well EFL teachers are doing by gathering information from their students. The questionnaire has 47 questions that use a five-point scale. You can answer with options from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree. " Your total score can be between 47 and 235.

3.2. Procedure Data Collection

In this study, the researcher wanted to find out how Iraqi EFL teachers' professional identity, personal qualities, and teaching success are connected. To achieve this, first, 200 Iraqi English teachers were chosen from students in public schools and language institutes in Najaf, Iraq. The researcher followed the rules by talking to the students and the school leaders before giving out the surveys. They handed out the "Teacher Professional Identity Scale (TPIS)," the Teachers' Character Strength scale, and the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ) for the Iraqi EFL teachers to fill out. The researcher also sent it to participants they couldn't contact through Telegram or email, and those participants completed it. After gathering the needed information by using the mentioned surveys, the researcher compared the results.

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Results and Discussion

The study aims to find out how EFL teachers' professional identity and character strengths might relate to their teaching success. So, the first step was to see if

there is any important connection between the things we are looking at in the study. The results are displayed in the table below.

Table 1. ANOVA,

Relationship between Professional Identity and Character Strength

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	82.211	2	41.123	47.600	.011
Residual	847.400	96	8.711		
Total	931.710	98			

The data in the table shows that ANOVA found a significance level of .01, which is lower than .05. This means there is a strong relationship between teachers' responsibility and their professional identity.

Table 2.

Model	Coefficients		Coefficients	T	Sig	Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error				
Constant	13.572	2.250		5.401	.000	
Motivation	.134	.052	.272	2.401	.011	.810 1.181
Commitment	.021	.040	.060	.518	.601	.814 1.172

The data in table 1. 2 shows that the tolerance values for the two parts of Professional Identity (Occupational Commitment and Motivation) are both smaller than 0.10. This suggests that there is a possibility of multicollinearity with other variables in the study, particularly with the strength of teachers. On the other hand, there was a positive connection between Professional Identity and teachers' strengths (Sig. 011 < .05). In Table 2, the Beta value shows that motivation, a part of professional identity, plays a big role (0.272) in predicting the factors that influence teachers' strengths.

This is much more than its impact on occupational commitment, which is only 0.054, then, the Sig values were used to see if these predictions were important or not. In the two parts of Professional Identity, motivation plays an important role in predicting the outcome, showing a significant effect (0.01 is less than 0.05).

In conclusion, it can be said that a teacher's motivation affects how responsible they are in their job. To see how teachers' professional identity relates to their success in teaching, a Pearson test was used. The researcher used the Pearson test to look at how their scores on a scale related to their class performance, which was measured by the average scores of the teachers.

Table 3.

		Correlations	
		PIQ	CSTQ
TPIS	Pearson Correlation	1	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	50	50
CSTQ	Pearson Correlation	.402**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	50	50

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

But, as shown in the table above, the first row and second column meet the second row and first column. The P-Value is less than 0.05, which means there is a strong connection between TPIS and CSTQ. The correlation coefficient is 0.402, which means that when OCS goes up by one unit, CATQ increases by 0.402 units, and the same goes the other way.

This correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive link between these two things. In simple terms, if teachers are very motivated in their job, they are more likely to be successful at teaching. This means we reject the idea that there's no connection, and we can say there is a strong and positive relationship between teacher motivation and their success in teaching.

There has not been much research on how teachers see their own identity and their responsibilities (Delimma, 2015; Koohkan & Motallebzadeh, 2016). So, this study aims to address This gap is explored by looking at how teachers' professional identity is connected to their personal strengths. But, two signs of how teachers see themselves in their jobs show that there is a strong link between a teacher's sense of professional identity and their personal strengths.

The connection between a teacher's sense of identity and their success can be understood because how teachers see themselves and their roles is very important.

This self-view plays a big part in how well they teach and succeed in their work. Cheung (2008) said that a teacher's professional identity is linked to what they believe about their rights and duties. This helps them to be more successful.

Also, this result agrees with what Fogle and Moser (2017) said, which is that a teacher's professional identity is important for their dedication and effectiveness. This study looked at different parts of professional identity for teachers, such as outside influences, personal expectations, teaching methods, job responsibilities, knowledge and skills, and how teachers behave as citizens. It found that teacher success varies greatly, with some having very high success and others much lower. In simple words, important outside factors greatly affect teachers' success.

Conclusion

This research shows that teachers are more successful when they have the freedom to teach how they want and have a strong sense of their own professional identity. In simple terms, how teachers see themselves and their independence are very important for how successful they believe they are. The results of this study can be helpful for language teachers. According to Ramos (2006), teachers with strong character can break free from the limits set by their bosses or school systems. They see these limits as chances to make things better. This not only helps their students become more independent and successful but also improves the teachers' own effectiveness, as shown by this study's results.

So, teachers are encouraged to learn more about their school to better deal with challenges in teaching and learning. Like all studies, this one has some limits. One limitation of this study is that the number of people involved was quite small. So, this research can be repeated with more people to see if the same results are found. The next limitation is that this study only looked at Iraq. So, we should be careful when applying these results to other situations. So, future research should focus on different EFL situations to see if the results change. In this study, we only used numbers to collect and analyze data. In future studies, we might be able to get better results by combining data with interviews or focus groups.

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