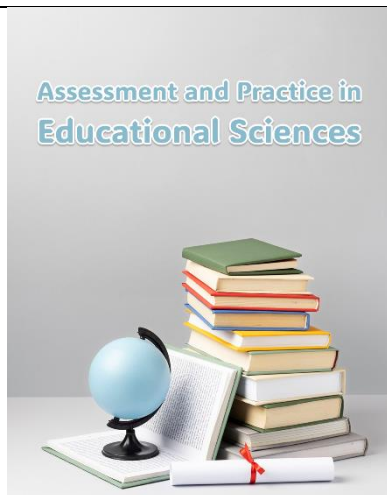




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Institutional Mechanisms Affecting the Professional Status of Arabic Language Teachers in Iraq: A Quantitative Study Using Structural Equation Modeling

ABSTRACT

Institutional transformations in contemporary educational systems have increasingly caused teachers' working conditions to be influenced by managerial structures and organizational policies. In this regard, the quality of supportive mechanisms in schools plays an important role in shaping teachers' occupational position and professional functioning. The present study adopts an explanatory approach to examine the institutional patterns affecting the occupational position of Arabic language teachers in Iraq. Methodologically, this study is quantitative and was conducted using a causal-correlational design. The research population included Arabic language teachers working in public secondary schools in Iraq, from whom a sample was selected through multistage random sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed through structural equation modeling. The results indicated that the quality of organizational support, access to career advancement pathways, and the extent of teachers' involvement in school-level decision-making processes had significant effects on their occupational position. In addition, the findings showed that organizational participation plays a mediating role in the effect of supportive policies on teachers' occupational position. The results of this study can provide a basis for redesigning human resource management policies and improving educational governance mechanisms in the Iraqi educational system.

Keywords: teachers' occupational position, organizational support, career advancement, school governance, secondary education

Introduction

Teachers occupy a central position in educational systems because they translate curricular goals, policy directives, institutional expectations, and social values into classroom practice. In contemporary education, however, the professional role of teachers can no longer be understood only through individual competence or classroom performance. Rather, teachers'

professional status is shaped by a broad set of institutional mechanisms, including organizational support, school governance structures, career development opportunities, professional identity formation, participation in decision-making, and the degree to which educational organizations enable teachers to act as competent and recognized professionals. From this perspective, the professional status of teachers refers not merely to their formal job title, but to their perceived occupational value, authority, autonomy, developmental opportunities, social recognition, and capacity to influence educational processes. This issue is particularly important in contexts where educational systems are undergoing structural change and where teachers are expected to respond simultaneously to curriculum reform, digital transformation, social pressures, and evolving professional standards.

The role and position of teachers have long been considered fundamental to the functioning of educational organizations and to the social mission of education. Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also institutional actors who contribute to socialization, civic development, cultural continuity, and the political and social formation of learners. In this regard, examining teachers' position within educational organizations requires attention to both their pedagogical responsibilities and their broader organizational role. Zare emphasized that teachers play an important role in the management of educational organizations, particularly in relation to the political and social training of individuals, indicating that teachers' professional position is closely linked to the institutional mission of schooling (1). Similarly, Salehinia and Ahyai argued that teachers serve society through their educational, cultural, and social functions, highlighting the importance of recognizing teachers as key contributors to community development rather than viewing them solely as classroom employees (2). These perspectives suggest that teachers' professional status is shaped by how educational systems define, support, and value their broader social and institutional functions.

In the context of language education, the professional status of teachers carries additional significance because language teachers mediate cultural, communicative, and identity-related dimensions of learning. Arabic language teachers in Iraq occupy a particularly important position, as Arabic is not only a subject of instruction but also a core medium of cultural, religious, literary, and national identity. Their professional work therefore extends beyond technical language teaching and includes the development of linguistic competence, cultural understanding, communicative ability, and educational continuity. However, despite this centrality, the professional position of Arabic language teachers may be affected by institutional constraints such as limited professional development pathways, uneven organizational support, inadequate participation in school-level decisions, insufficient recognition, and structural gaps within the educational system. Hussein's study on the impact of e-learning on the professional development of Arabic language teachers in Iraq showed that technological and organizational transformations have become important factors in shaping teachers' professional growth, indicating that the changing educational environment requires stronger institutional support for Arabic language teachers (3). This is especially relevant in Iraq, where the modernization of educational practices and the expansion of digital learning have increased expectations placed on teachers while also revealing gaps in professional support systems.

Professional competence is one of the most important foundations of teachers' occupational legitimacy and professional standing. Competence involves not only subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills but also classroom management, assessment literacy, communication ability, ethical responsibility, reflective practice, adaptability, and the ability to respond to diverse learner needs. Sukma's analysis of teachers' professional competencies emphasizes that teacher competence is multidimensional and includes the integration of pedagogical, personal, social, and professional capacities (4). In relation to Arabic language education, Alhchaimi and colleagues validated a professional competency model for Arabic language teachers in Al-Muthanna City, demonstrating the importance of identifying contextually relevant dimensions of teacher competence in Iraqi educational settings (5). The validation of such a model is significant because it provides a basis for understanding how professional competence can be operationalized, assessed, and supported in the specific institutional context of Arabic language

teaching. Accordingly, teachers' professional status is strengthened when educational systems define clear competency standards and provide the institutional conditions necessary for teachers to meet those standards.

Professional development is another core institutional mechanism influencing teachers' position. Continuous professional development enables teachers to update their knowledge, respond to emerging pedagogical demands, improve classroom practice, and maintain professional relevance. In modern educational systems, professional development is no longer limited to occasional training workshops; it includes reflective practice, mentoring, collaborative learning, digital competence, research engagement, and career-oriented learning pathways. Yonson's study of teachers' lived experiences in achieving standard competencies emphasizes that continuous professional development is essential for helping teachers meet professional expectations and institutional standards (6). Tian also highlighted the importance of reflective practice in teacher professional growth and teaching improvement, suggesting that professional learning becomes more effective when teachers systematically evaluate their own instructional experiences and transform them into professional knowledge (7). These perspectives indicate that professional development should be treated as an institutional process rather than an individual responsibility alone. When schools and educational authorities create structured, accessible, and meaningful development opportunities, teachers are more likely to experience enhanced competence, stronger professional identity, and improved occupational status.

The professional development of language teachers has also become increasingly important in response to interdisciplinary educational reforms and the changing knowledge economy. Zhao's investigation into the professional development of foreign language teachers in science and engineering colleges within the context of the "New Liberal Arts" highlights the need for language teachers to adapt to changing educational paradigms, interdisciplinary expectations, and new forms of institutional knowledge production (8). Although Zhao's work focuses on foreign language teachers in a different educational setting, its implications are relevant for Arabic language teachers in Iraq because language education increasingly requires teachers to engage with new pedagogical models, digital tools, learner-centered approaches, and broader institutional goals. This suggests that teachers' professional status depends partly on whether educational organizations provide them with opportunities to expand their professional roles beyond traditional instruction and participate in broader educational innovation.

Technological transformation has further intensified the need for institutional support in teacher professional development. Artificial intelligence, digital platforms, e-learning systems, and educational technologies are reshaping how teachers plan instruction, assess learning, communicate with students, and develop professionally. Tan and colleagues' systematic review of artificial intelligence in teaching and teacher professional development indicates that AI has become a significant factor in contemporary teacher learning, offering opportunities for personalized support, instructional innovation, and professional growth (9). Yang's three-phase professional development approach for improving robotics pedagogical knowledge and computational thinking attitudes among early childhood teachers also shows that structured professional development can help teachers acquire new technological and pedagogical competencies (10). For Arabic language teachers in Iraq, these developments imply that digital transformation should not be imposed as an additional burden without institutional preparation. Instead, technological change must be accompanied by organizational support, training, infrastructure, and recognition of teachers' evolving professional responsibilities. Without such mechanisms, digital reforms may weaken teachers' confidence and status rather than strengthen their professional capacity.

Organizational support is one of the most important determinants of how teachers perceive their role, value, and professional future. Supportive educational organizations provide resources, feedback, emotional support, fair administrative procedures, participatory decision-making, professional development opportunities, and recognition of teachers' contributions. These forms of support can enhance teachers' professional identity, psychological empowerment, and job performance. Taghavi Deylami Pour and Pali found that psychological empowerment affects teachers' job performance through the mediating roles of

professional identity and psychological well-being, suggesting that teachers perform more effectively when they experience agency, meaning, competence, and institutional recognition (11). This finding is important for the present study because professional status is closely related to whether teachers feel empowered within their work environment. When teachers perceive that their schools support their growth, trust their judgment, and recognize their professional contributions, they are more likely to develop a stronger sense of professional identity and occupational value.

Professional identity is a key construct connecting institutional conditions to teachers' occupational attitudes and behaviors. It reflects how teachers understand themselves as professionals, how they interpret their responsibilities, and how they evaluate their place within the educational system. Wang's study on teaching autonomy and teachers' turnover intentions, based on labor process theory, showed that work alienation and professional identity play important roles in explaining the relationship between institutional conditions and teachers' intention to remain in or leave the profession (12). In another study, Wang, Zhang, and Bian found that professional identity affects teachers' turnover intentions through the mediating role of work alienation and the moderating role of job autonomy (13). Together, these findings indicate that teachers' professional status is not merely symbolic; it has direct implications for commitment, retention, motivation, and organizational stability. If teachers experience low autonomy, weak recognition, limited participation, or insufficient support, their professional identity may weaken, and they may become more vulnerable to alienation and withdrawal from the profession.

Job autonomy and participation in decision-making are particularly relevant to the professional status of teachers. Teachers are more likely to perceive themselves as professionals when they have meaningful discretion over instructional decisions, classroom strategies, assessment practices, and participation in school-level planning. Conversely, excessive bureaucratic control, rigid administrative procedures, and exclusion from institutional decision-making can reduce teachers' sense of ownership and professional dignity. The findings of the studies by Wang and colleagues suggest that autonomy moderates the relationship between professional identity, alienation, and turnover-related outcomes, confirming that institutional structures can either support or undermine teachers' professional self-concept (12, 13). For Arabic language teachers in Iraq, participation in school governance and access to decision-making processes may therefore be crucial indicators of professional recognition. When teachers are treated as active contributors to school improvement rather than passive implementers of policy, their professional status becomes more institutionally grounded.

Another important issue is the relationship between teacher competence and inclusive educational expectations. Contemporary schools require teachers to respond to diverse learners, differentiated needs, inclusive classrooms, and complex social realities. Tveitnes and colleagues examined mainstream teachers' competence in inclusive special education and showed the importance of teachers' self-reported professional knowledge in inclusive educational settings (14). Although their study was conducted in Norway, it has broader implications for understanding how educational systems define and support teacher competence. In any context, including Iraq, teachers' professional status depends partly on whether they are equipped to address diverse classroom needs and whether institutions provide appropriate professional knowledge, resources, and support. Arabic language teachers, like other teachers, are increasingly expected to address different learning abilities, linguistic backgrounds, socio-emotional needs, and educational challenges. Such expectations can enhance professional status only when accompanied by adequate institutional preparation and support.

Career advancement pathways are also central to teachers' professional status. When teachers have access to transparent promotion procedures, leadership opportunities, advanced training, professional recognition, and career mobility, they are more likely to perceive teaching as a sustainable and valued profession. In contrast, limited advancement opportunities can weaken motivation and reduce the perceived attractiveness of the teaching profession. Ramezani and Mirkazemi emphasized professional development strategies with a focus on innovative work behavior among physical education teachers, showing

that structured development strategies can encourage innovation and professional growth (15). Although their study focuses on physical education teachers, its implications extend to other teaching fields: professional growth systems should not only improve routine performance but also enable innovation, initiative, and career progression. For Arabic language teachers, institutional mechanisms that support advancement and innovation may strengthen both professional competence and occupational status.

The institutional position of teachers should also be examined through the lens of educational governance. School governance includes the policies, structures, relationships, and decision-making processes through which schools organize educational work and manage human resources. Governance mechanisms affect how responsibilities are distributed, how teachers are evaluated, how resources are allocated, and how professional participation is encouraged. When governance is centralized, opaque, or weakly responsive to teachers' needs, teachers may experience marginalization. Conversely, participatory and supportive governance can strengthen teachers' professional role and improve organizational outcomes. The literature on teacher role, professional competence, development, empowerment, identity, and autonomy collectively suggests that teachers' professional status is embedded in institutional arrangements rather than determined solely by individual characteristics (2, 4, 11). Therefore, studying the professional status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq requires a model that integrates multiple institutional factors and examines their direct and indirect relationships.

Despite the growing literature on teacher professional development and competence, several gaps remain. First, many studies focus on teachers' skills, competencies, or development experiences without sufficiently examining how institutional mechanisms interact to shape professional status. Second, research on Arabic language teachers in Iraq remains limited, especially in relation to structural factors such as organizational support, governance processes, career pathways, implementation gaps, and professional participation. Third, although professional identity, empowerment, autonomy, and competence have been examined in different educational contexts, there is a need for integrated quantitative models that can test the simultaneous relationships among these constructs. Structural equation modeling provides an appropriate methodological approach for this purpose because it allows researchers to assess complex relationships among latent variables, including direct and indirect effects. Such an approach is especially useful for understanding how institutional support, educational policy infrastructure, managerial mechanisms, and organizational participation may influence the perceived professional status of teachers.

In the Iraqi educational context, examining Arabic language teachers' professional status is both theoretically and practically significant. Theoretically, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how institutional mechanisms affect teachers' occupational position in a specific linguistic, cultural, and educational setting. Practically, it can inform human resource management policies, teacher development programs, school governance reforms, and strategies for improving professional recognition. If educational authorities aim to improve teacher performance, retention, motivation, and institutional commitment, they must identify the organizational conditions that strengthen teachers' professional status. The available literature suggests that such conditions include professional competence, reflective growth, digital readiness, inclusive knowledge, psychological empowerment, professional identity, autonomy, and continuous development opportunities (3, 5, 7, 9, 14). However, these factors need to be examined within a coherent institutional model that reflects the realities of Arabic language teachers working in Iraqi public secondary schools.

Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to analyze the institutional mechanisms affecting the professional status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq using a quantitative structural equation modeling approach.

Methods and Materials

In terms of purpose, the present study is applied, and in terms of nature, it is quantitative and explanatory. The research design was causal-correlational, and structural equation modeling was used to test the simultaneous relationships among the variables. This approach makes it possible to analyze complex relationships among institutional constructs within an integrated framework. The statistical population of the study included all Arabic language teachers working in public secondary schools in Iraq during the academic year under study. The research sample was selected using a multistage random sampling method so that the geographical and organizational diversity of schools would be represented in the sample. The sample size was determined based on the minimum sample size criteria for structural equation modeling. The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire covering the four main constructs of the study: organizational support, career development, organizational participation, and teachers' occupational status. The items were designed based on a five-point Likert scale and were reviewed in terms of clarity and conceptual appropriateness before final administration. The content validity of the instrument was examined using the opinions of experts in educational management. Construct validity was also assessed using confirmatory factor analysis. Factor loadings, convergent validity, and discriminant validity indices were examined to confirm the adequacy of the measurement model. The reliability of the constructs was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability. The results showed that all constructs had an acceptable level of reliability. The collected data were analyzed using SmartPLS software. In the first stage, the measurement model was evaluated, and after confirming validity and reliability, the structural model was tested. Path coefficients, t-values, and fit indices were used to evaluate the research hypotheses. In conducting the study, research ethics principles were observed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary, with confidentiality of information guaranteed.

Findings and Results

This section presents the results of the data analysis using a quantitative approach and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The purpose of these analyses was to examine the status of descriptive indicators, evaluate statistical assumptions, assess the quality of the measurement model, and test the structural relationships among the policy and managerial components affecting the perceived professional status of Arabic language teachers.

Descriptive Analysis of Policy and Managerial Indicators

In the first step, to provide an overall picture of the research variables, descriptive statistical indicators including mean, standard deviation, variance, minimum, and maximum were calculated. These indicators make it possible to assess the general level of each component and the dispersion of responses, and they serve as a basis for subsequent inferential analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Main Research Components (n = 384)

Research Component	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived professional status	67.88	11.944	142.668	31	93
Dimensions of perceived occupational identity	18.31	2.920	8.523	11	25
Organizational interaction capacities	26.75	5.717	32.684	10	40
Human resource functional capabilities	27.86	5.801	33.647	10	40
Managerial optimization mechanisms	31.10	5.858	34.313	14	45
Structural reform outcomes	49.26	8.721	76.048	27	68
Educational policy infrastructures	41.51	8.445	71.316	17	59
Implementation gaps in the educational system	45.47	8.474	71.817	22	64

The obtained means show that most components are at a level above the midpoint, indicating respondents' relatively favorable perception of the status of managerial and professional structures in the educational environment.

To determine the appropriate type of statistical tests, the normality of data distribution was examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The results of this test showed that the distribution of data in all components did not follow a normal pattern. Accordingly, the use of nonparametric methods, as well as the application of SmartPLS software for analyzing structural relationships, is justified.

Table 2. Assessment of Normality of Data Distribution

Indicators Examined	KS Statistic	Significance Level
Perceived professional status	0.055	0.007
Professional social interaction dimension	0.079	0.000
Occupational executive function dimension	0.096	0.000
Professional cognitive processing dimension	0.082	0.000
Normative responsibility dimension	0.070	0.000
Organizational interaction capacity	0.069	0.000
Institutional perception component	0.103	0.000
Occupational emotional experience component	0.082	0.000
Human resource functional capabilities	0.067	0.000
Operational executive capacities	0.072	0.000
Communication and media capacities	0.095	0.000
Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.064	0.001
Organizational functional efficiency	0.109	0.000
Managerial systemic coherence	0.079	0.000
Structural reform outcomes	0.059	0.003
Reconfiguration of social interactions	0.096	0.000
Reconstruction of individual capabilities	0.076	0.000
Improvement of executive functions	0.084	0.000
Educational policy infrastructures	0.049	0.025
Institutional support frameworks	0.083	0.000
Organizational educational competencies	0.078	0.000
Structural advancement pathways	0.090	0.000
Implementation gaps in the educational system	0.050	0.024
Infrastructural deficiencies	0.089	0.000
Managerial systemic disruptions	0.082	0.000
Operational deficiencies	0.093	0.000

According to the results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the significance level of all examined indicators was less than 0.05. This finding indicates that the data distribution does not follow a normal pattern. Accordingly, the use of nonparametric methods, particularly partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), is appropriate and justified for analyzing the structural relationships of the study.

At this stage, the quality of the measurement model was evaluated by examining factor loadings, internal reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. The results showed that all indicators had factor loadings above the threshold level and significantly measured their corresponding constructs.

Table 3. Factor Loading Values of Indicators in the Measurement Model

Items / Constructs (New and Safe Names)	Organizational Interaction Capacity	Educational Policy Infrastructures	Managerial Optimization Mechanisms	Human Resource Functional Capabilities	Structural Reform Outcomes	Perceived Professional Status	Implementation Gaps in the Educational System
Communication and media capacities				0.995			
Operational executive capacities				0.995			
Reconfiguration of social interactions					0.962		
Improvement of executive functions					0.986		

Reconstruction of individual capabilities		0.988	
Institutional support frameworks	0.991		
Organizational educational competencies	0.979		
Occupational emotional experience component	0.992		
Institutional perception component	0.992		
Structural advancement pathways	0.988		
Infrastructural deficiencies			0.986
Managerial systemic disruptions			0.992
Operational deficiencies			0.984
Professional social interaction dimension		0.982	
Normative responsibility dimension		0.971	
Professional cognitive processing dimension		0.979	
Occupational executive function dimension		0.968	
Managerial systemic coherence	0.987		
Organizational functional efficiency	0.988		

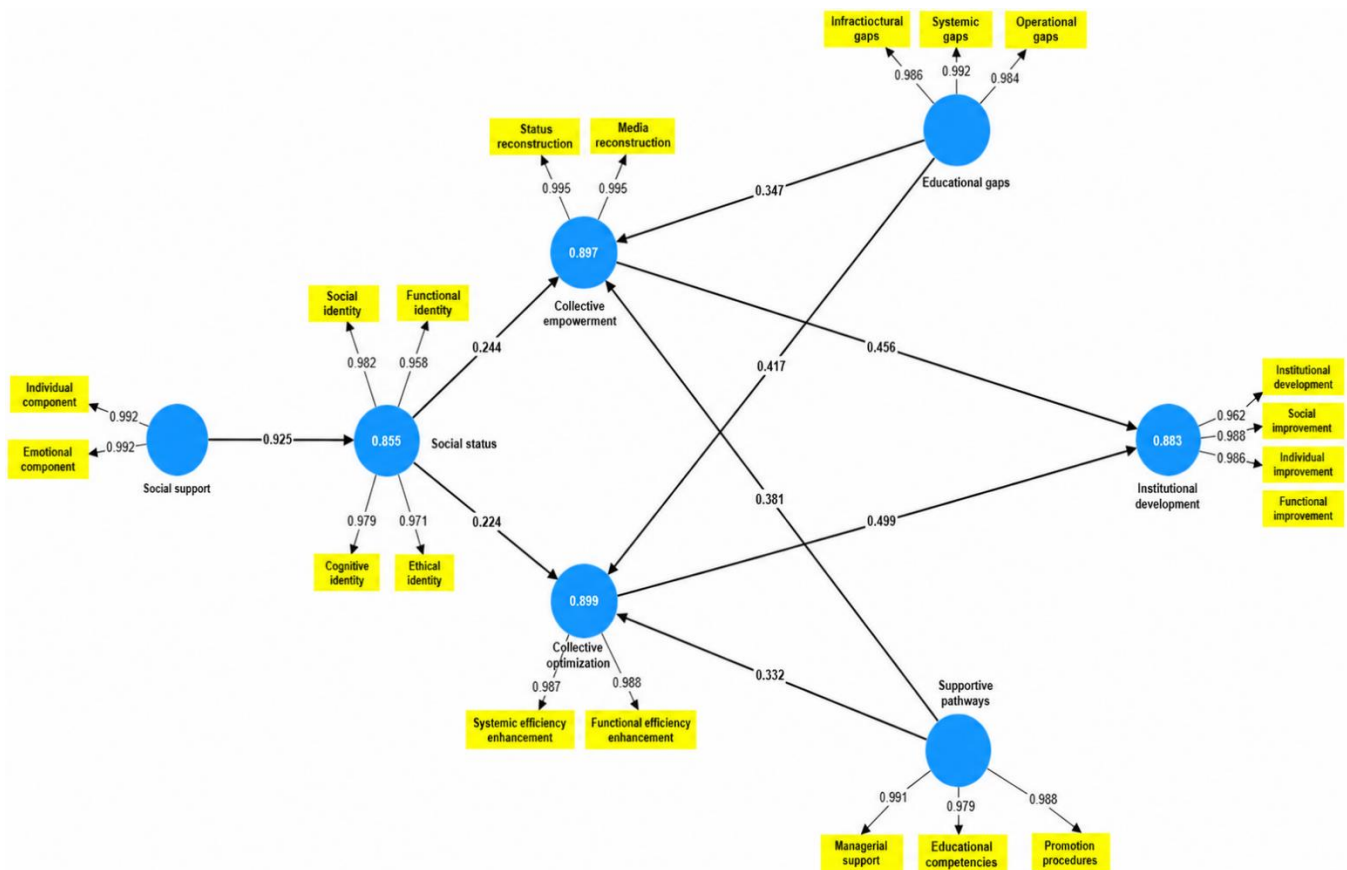


Figure 1. Measurement Model with Standardized Factor Loading Coefficients

Table 4. Reliability and Convergent Validity Indices of the Research Constructs

Component	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Organizational interaction capacities	0.984	0.992	0.984
Educational policy infrastructures	0.986	0.991	0.972
Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.975	0.988	0.975
Human resource functional capabilities	0.990	0.995	0.990
Structural reform outcomes	0.978	0.986	0.959
Perceived professional status	0.983	0.987	0.951
Implementation gaps in the educational system	0.987	0.991	0.975

Next, the discriminant validity of the constructs was examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. According to this criterion, discriminant validity is acceptable when the square root of the AVE value of each construct is greater than the correlation coefficients of that construct with other constructs in the model. The results of this analysis showed that in all cases, the values on the main diagonal of the Fornell–Larcker matrix were greater than the corresponding correlation values. This finding indicates that the research constructs have appropriate conceptual distinctiveness and that each construct measures a distinct phenomenon within the theoretical framework of the model.

Table 5. Fornell–Larcker Matrix for Examining the Discriminant Validity of the Constructs

Components	Organizational Interaction Capacity	Educational Policy Infrastructures	Managerial Optimization Mechanisms	Human Resource Functional Capabilities	Structural Reform Outcomes	Perceived Professional Status	Implementation Gaps in the Educational System
Organizational interaction capacity	0.992						
Educational policy infrastructures	0.936	0.986					
Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.937	0.925	0.988				
Human resource functional capabilities	0.929	0.928	0.937	0.995			
Structural reform outcomes	0.936	0.938	0.926	0.923	0.979		
Perceived professional status	0.925	0.909	0.907	0.909	0.914	0.975	
Implementation gaps in the educational system	0.937	0.935	0.932	0.927	0.937	0.916	0.987

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model of the study was evaluated. At this stage, the coefficient of determination (R^2), the Stone–Geisser predictive relevance index (Q^2), and the overall model fit index (GOF) were calculated. The obtained R^2 values for the endogenous constructs showed that the research model had high explanatory power and that a substantial portion of the variance of the dependent variables was explained by the predictor constructs.

In addition, the Q^2 values for all endogenous constructs were higher than the criterion value of 0.15, indicating the appropriate predictive power of the model. Finally, the GOF value was calculated as 0.926, which is considerably higher than the proposed threshold for strong model fit. This result indicates that the overall research model has a very favorable fit and can reliably explain the relationships among the research constructs.

Table 6. Coefficients of Determination (R^2) of the Endogenous Constructs in the Structural Model

Endogenous Construct	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.899	0.898
Human resource functional capabilities	0.897	0.897
Structural reform outcomes	0.883	0.882
Perceived professional status	0.855	0.855
Mean R^2	0.883	—

The R^2 values show that the predictor variables were able to explain a substantial portion of the variance in the outcome constructs. The mean R^2 value of 0.883 indicates the very high explanatory power of the structural model.

Table 7. Stone–Geisser Predictive Relevance Index (Q^2) for Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
Organizational interaction capacities	768.000	188.340	0.755
Educational policy infrastructures	1152.000	147.431	0.872
Managerial optimization mechanisms	768.000	203.636	0.735
Human resource functional capabilities	768.000	178.722	0.767
Structural reform outcomes	1152.000	174.125	0.849
Perceived professional status	1536.000	174.914	0.886
Implementation gaps in the educational system	1152.000	141.838	0.877

Given that all Q² values are greater than 0.15, it can be concluded that the research model has strong predictive power and that the predictor constructs are capable of adequately explaining changes in the dependent constructs.

Table 8. Redundancy and GOF Overall Model Fit Indices

Construct	Redundancy
Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.860
Human resource functional capabilities	0.872
Structural reform outcomes	0.835
Perceived professional status	0.807
Mean Redundancy	0.844
Overall Model Fit Index (GOF)	0.926

The GOF value was obtained as 0.926, which is considerably higher than the threshold value of 0.36. This result indicates that the overall research model has a very strong fit and simultaneously confirms the quality of both the measurement model and the structural model.

In the final step of the analysis, the significance of the structural paths in the model was examined using the t-statistic. The results showed that most of the predicted relationships in the model were statistically significant, and their corresponding hypotheses were confirmed. In contrast, some direct paths were not statistically significant, indicating the indirect or mediating role of some constructs in explaining the relationships within the model.

These findings indicate that the relationships among institutional and managerial components in the research model have a multilevel and nonlinear nature, and that the effects of some constructs are realized through mediating mechanisms.

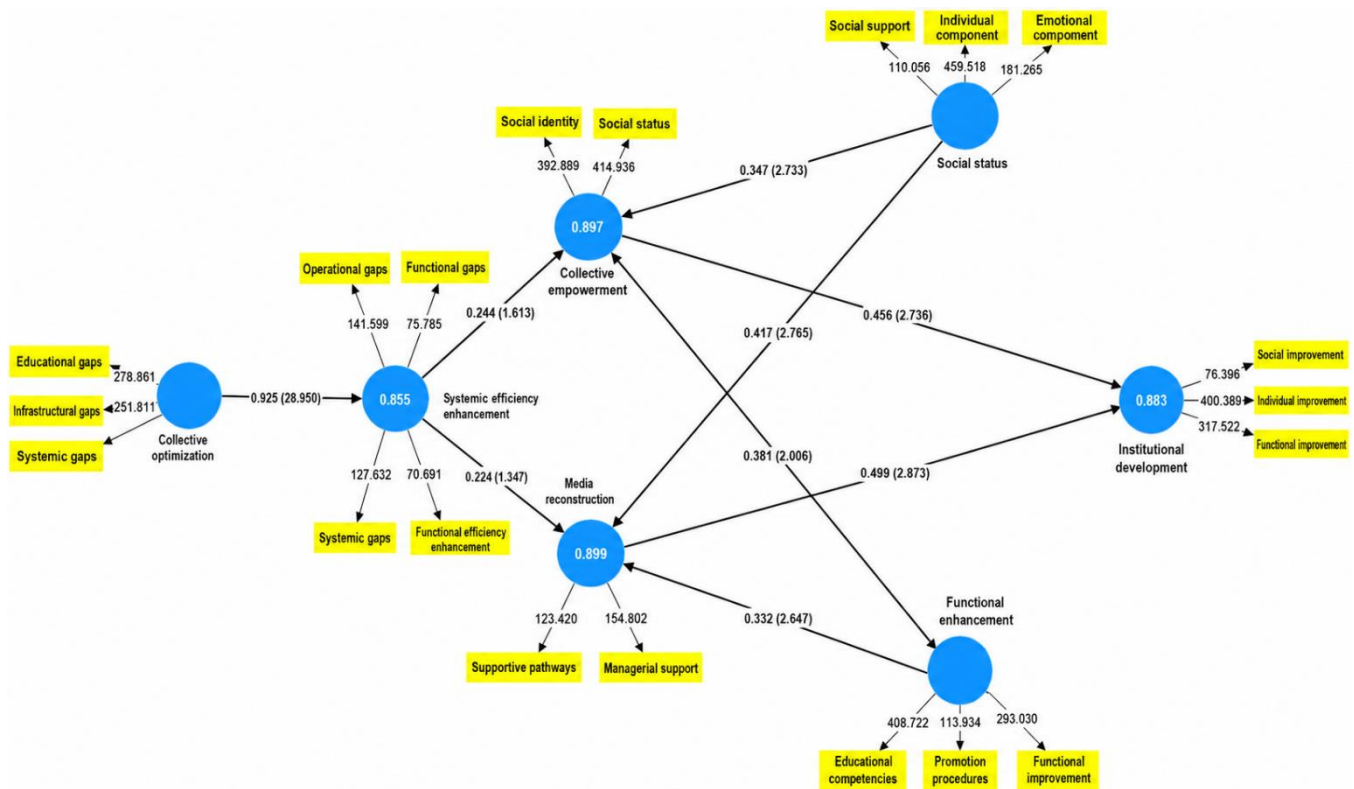


Figure 2. Final Structural Model with Path Significance Values (t-values)

Table 9. Results of Testing Structural Relationships and the Significance of Model Paths

Row	Structural Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t-statistic	p-value	Test Result
1	Organizational interaction capacities → Perceived professional status	0.925	0.032	28.950	0.000	Confirmed
2	Perceived professional status → Human resource functional capabilities	0.244	0.151	1.613	0.107	Rejected
3	Perceived professional status → Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.224	0.166	1.347	0.178	Rejected
4	Implementation gaps in the educational system → Human resource functional capabilities	0.347	0.201	2.733	0.033	Confirmed
5	Implementation gaps in the educational system → Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.417	0.236	2.765	0.028	Confirmed
6	Educational policy infrastructures → Human resource functional capabilities	0.381	0.190	2.006	0.045	Confirmed
7	Educational policy infrastructures → Managerial optimization mechanisms	0.332	0.202	2.647	0.039	Confirmed
8	Human resource functional capabilities → Structural reform outcomes	0.456	0.262	2.736	0.035	Confirmed
9	Managerial optimization mechanisms → Structural reform outcomes	0.499	0.266	2.873	0.022	Confirmed

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to analyze the institutional mechanisms affecting the professional status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq using structural equation modeling. The descriptive findings showed that most of the main components of the model, including perceived professional status, organizational interaction capacities, human resource functional capabilities, managerial optimization mechanisms, structural reform outcomes, educational policy infrastructures, and implementation gaps in the educational system, were evaluated at levels above the midpoint. This indicates that the teachers participating in the study generally perceived the institutional and managerial environment of Arabic language education as relatively active and structured, although the presence of implementation gaps also suggests that this institutional environment is not free from operational, infrastructural, and systemic deficiencies. This pattern is consistent with the view that teachers' professional status is formed at the intersection of competence, institutional recognition, organizational participation, and structural support. Previous studies have similarly emphasized that teachers' position in society and educational organizations is not limited to classroom instruction but is linked to their broader social, organizational, and developmental functions (1, 2). In the Iraqi context, where Arabic language teachers carry both instructional and cultural responsibilities, these findings suggest that professional status should be understood as a multidimensional institutional construct rather than a simple occupational label.

The results of the measurement model confirmed the adequacy of the latent constructs used in the study. The factor loadings were all above the acceptable threshold, and the values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE indicated strong internal consistency and convergent validity. The Fornell–Larcker matrix also confirmed discriminant validity, showing that the constructs were conceptually distinct despite their strong correlations. These findings are important because they demonstrate that the proposed model captured separate but interrelated dimensions of teachers' professional environment. The high reliability and validity indices suggest that constructs such as organizational interaction capacities, educational policy infrastructures, managerial optimization mechanisms, human resource functional capabilities, structural reform outcomes, perceived professional status, and implementation gaps can be empirically distinguished in the context of Arabic language teachers in Iraq. This is compatible with Alhchaimi et al.'s validation of a professional competency model for Arabic language teachers in Al-Muthanna City, which showed that teacher professionalism in this context can be meaningfully examined through structured and measurable dimensions (5). It also aligns with broader literature indicating that professional competence includes multiple pedagogical, social, personal, and organizational elements (4).

The structural model showed strong explanatory and predictive power. The R^2 values for endogenous constructs were high, with a mean R^2 of 0.883, indicating that the predictor variables explained a substantial proportion of the variance in the outcome variables. The Q^2 values were also greater than 0.15 for all relevant constructs, confirming the predictive relevance of the model. Moreover, the GOF value of 0.926 indicated very strong overall model fit. These findings suggest that the institutional model proposed in this study is capable of explaining the professional status of Arabic language teachers and related organizational outcomes with considerable accuracy. From a theoretical perspective, this supports the argument that teacher professionalism is embedded in institutional arrangements, including school governance, support systems, career pathways, organizational participation, and policy implementation. The importance of institutional support is emphasized in studies showing that teachers' professional development and performance improve when educational organizations provide structured opportunities for learning, reflection, autonomy, and empowerment (6, 7, 11).

The strongest direct relationship in the model was the effect of organizational interaction capacities on perceived professional status, which was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.925$, $t = 28.950$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that when teachers experience stronger institutional interaction, social support, emotional support, and professional communication within the school environment, they are more likely to perceive their professional status positively. This result is highly meaningful because professional status is not constructed only through formal regulations or official titles; it is also shaped through everyday organizational relations, collegial interactions, administrative support, and recognition within the school. Teachers who feel included, supported, and connected within their organizational environment are more likely to develop a stronger professional identity and occupational dignity. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of professional identity, psychological empowerment, and well-being in teachers' job performance (11). It is also consistent with findings that professional identity plays a central role in teachers' organizational attitudes and reduces negative outcomes such as alienation and turnover intention (12, 13).

The finding regarding organizational interaction is also consistent with the literature on professional development, which suggests that teachers' growth is enhanced through collaborative learning, reflective dialogue, and institutional participation. Tian's work on reflective practice highlights that professional growth occurs when teachers actively engage with their own instructional experiences and receive opportunities to transform those experiences into improved teaching practice (7). Similarly, Yonson's study on teachers' lived experiences in achieving standard competencies showed that continuous professional development is closely related to teachers' ability to meet institutional standards (6). Therefore, the strong effect of organizational interaction capacities on professional status in the present study can be interpreted as evidence that Arabic language teachers' perceived status improves when schools function as professional communities rather than merely administrative workplaces.

In contrast, the direct effect of perceived professional status on human resource functional capabilities was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.244$, $t = 1.613$, $p = 0.107$), and the direct effect of perceived professional status on managerial optimization mechanisms was also not significant ($\beta = 0.224$, $t = 1.347$, $p = 0.178$). These nonsignificant paths suggest that although professional status is important, it may not directly generate functional capability or managerial optimization unless mediated or supported by other institutional mechanisms. In other words, teachers' perception of their status alone may not be sufficient to improve human resource performance or managerial processes if the organizational system lacks structured training, policy support, autonomy, resources, or implementation capacity. This interpretation is consistent with the argument that teacher development requires systematic institutional planning rather than relying only on teachers' self-perception or motivation. Studies on professional development indicate that teachers need organized opportunities, technological support, reflective structures, and competency-based frameworks to translate professional identity into actual performance improvement (8-10).

Therefore, the nonsignificant direct paths should not be interpreted as reducing the importance of professional status, but rather as showing that status requires institutional mediation to become operationally effective.

The results also showed that implementation gaps in the educational system had significant positive effects on human resource functional capabilities ($\beta = 0.347$, $t = 2.733$, $p = 0.033$) and managerial optimization mechanisms ($\beta = 0.417$, $t = 2.765$, $p = 0.028$). At first glance, the positive effect of implementation gaps may appear unexpected, but it can be interpreted as indicating that the recognition of systemic, infrastructural, and operational deficiencies creates pressure for functional adaptation and managerial optimization. When gaps become visible, schools and teachers may be compelled to develop compensatory strategies, strengthen operational capabilities, and improve managerial processes. In the context of Arabic language teaching in Iraq, infrastructural limitations, digital transformation challenges, and organizational constraints may motivate schools to seek new forms of teacher support and administrative improvement. Hussein's study on e-learning and the professional development of Arabic language teachers in Iraq similarly indicates that technological and institutional changes have affected teachers' professional development and created new demands for adaptation (3). This finding also aligns with literature showing that educational change often requires teachers to develop new competencies in response to emerging institutional demands (9, 10).

Educational policy infrastructures also had significant positive effects on human resource functional capabilities ($\beta = 0.381$, $t = 2.006$, $p = 0.045$) and managerial optimization mechanisms ($\beta = 0.332$, $t = 2.647$, $p = 0.039$). These findings confirm that policy-level support, institutional frameworks, educational competencies, and structural advancement pathways are important determinants of teacher-related organizational outcomes. When policy infrastructures are clear, supportive, and aligned with school-level needs, teachers are more likely to develop functional capabilities and schools are more likely to improve managerial mechanisms. This finding is consistent with the broader literature on teacher professional development, which emphasizes that teacher growth should be supported by structured institutional policies and not left to individual initiative alone (6, 15). It also aligns with Zhao's emphasis on the need for foreign language teachers to adapt to new interdisciplinary and institutional expectations, which requires supportive policy frameworks and professional development structures (8). For Arabic language teachers in Iraq, the implication is that policy infrastructures must provide concrete support for training, promotion, professional recognition, and participation in school development.

Finally, human resource functional capabilities and managerial optimization mechanisms both had significant positive effects on structural reform outcomes. The effect of human resource functional capabilities on structural reform outcomes was significant ($\beta = 0.456$, $t = 2.736$, $p = 0.035$), and the effect of managerial optimization mechanisms was also significant ($\beta = 0.499$, $t = 2.873$, $p = 0.022$). These findings show that structural reform in education depends not only on policy declarations but also on the functional capacities of teachers and the quality of managerial systems. In other words, reforms become meaningful when teachers possess the competencies required to implement them and when school management systems are optimized to support their realization. This result aligns with studies emphasizing that professional competence, autonomy, reflective practice, and institutional empowerment are essential for effective teacher performance and educational improvement (4, 7, 14). It also supports the view that teachers' job autonomy and professional identity influence organizational stability and professional commitment (12, 13). Overall, the findings suggest that the professional status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq is best strengthened through an integrated institutional strategy that combines organizational support, policy infrastructure, functional capability development, managerial optimization, and structural reform.

The present study had several limitations. First, the study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design; therefore, although structural relationships among variables were tested, causal conclusions should be made cautiously. Second, the data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be affected by response bias, social desirability, or participants'

subjective perceptions of institutional conditions. Third, the study focused on Arabic language teachers in public secondary schools in Iraq, and the findings may not be directly generalizable to teachers in private schools, primary schools, universities, or other subject areas. Fourth, although the model showed strong statistical fit, some contextual factors such as regional differences, school resources, administrative culture, curriculum pressure, and teacher workload were not examined in depth. Fifth, the study relied on the variables included in the proposed model, while other psychological, cultural, and policy-related variables may also influence teachers' professional status.

Future research should use longitudinal designs to examine how institutional support, professional identity, career advancement, and managerial mechanisms influence teachers' professional status over time. Qualitative and mixed-methods studies are also recommended to explore the lived experiences of Arabic language teachers and to better understand how they interpret organizational support, professional recognition, and participation in school governance. Future studies can compare teachers across different provinces, school levels, gender groups, and institutional types to identify contextual variations in professional status. Researchers may also examine additional mediating and moderating variables, such as job autonomy, organizational justice, digital readiness, teacher motivation, workload, leadership style, and professional learning communities. Comparative studies between Arabic language teachers and teachers of other disciplines could also clarify whether the institutional mechanisms identified in this study are generalizable across teaching fields or specific to language education.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that educational authorities and school leaders should strengthen the institutional foundations of teachers' professional status through coherent human resource policies, transparent promotion systems, participatory governance, and sustained professional development opportunities. Schools should create more supportive organizational climates in which Arabic language teachers are recognized as professional actors, included in decision-making, and provided with opportunities for collaboration and reflective practice. Teacher development programs should move beyond short-term training and focus on continuous competence-building, digital readiness, pedagogical innovation, and leadership preparation. Educational policymakers should also address infrastructural and operational gaps that restrict teachers' professional functioning. Improving the professional status of Arabic language teachers requires an integrated strategy that simultaneously supports teachers' identity, competence, autonomy, career growth, and organizational participation.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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