

Identifying the Components and Dimensions of the Social Status of Arabic Language Teachers in Iraq: A Qualitative Study Using a Grounded Theory Approach

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to identify the components, dimensions, and interrelationships among the categories shaping the social status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq.

Methods and Materials: This qualitative study was conducted using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The research population consisted of Arabic language teachers, educational administrators, and curriculum planning experts in Iraq. Participants were selected through purposive-theoretical sampling based on criteria including a minimum of 10 years of professional experience, direct experience in teaching Arabic language, and familiarity with educational policies and structures. Data were collected through 23 in-depth semi-structured interviews and continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data analysis was performed through open, axial, and selective coding procedures to identify key concepts, categories, and their relationships and to construct an explanatory model of the social status of Arabic language teachers.

Findings: The analysis revealed seven major categories organized around the core category of “enhancing the social status of Arabic language teachers.” Social flourishing emerged as the primary causal condition influencing status formation. Foundational infrastructures constituted the contextual conditions that shape teachers’ professional and social standing. Institutional inefficiency was identified as the main intervening factor constraining status enhancement. Two strategic categories, namely comprehensive empowerment and systemic optimization, were found to facilitate positive status development. These strategies ultimately led to institutional development as the principal consequence. The inferential relationships among categories demonstrated that the social status of Arabic language teachers is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon formed through the interaction of economic, cultural, institutional, and symbolic factors within the educational system.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that improving the social status of Arabic language teachers requires a systematic and process-oriented approach that simultaneously addresses foundational infrastructures, professional empowerment, and institutional development.

Keywords: Social status; Arabic language teachers; Grounded theory; Professional empowerment; Educational policy; Institutional development; Iraq.

1. Introduction

The social status of teachers has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing educational quality, teacher motivation, professional commitment, and the overall effectiveness of educational systems. Across different societies, teachers occupy a unique position as agents of knowledge transmission, cultural preservation, and social development. However, the level of social recognition and professional prestige accorded to teachers varies considerably across contexts and is shaped by economic, cultural, institutional, and policy-related factors. Contemporary educational research increasingly emphasizes that teacher status is not merely an individual or occupational attribute but a socially constructed phenomenon that emerges through interactions among professional identities, institutional structures, societal expectations, and cultural narratives (Hwa & Pritchett, 2021; See et al., 2022; Wang, 2021). Consequently, understanding the determinants of teacher status has become an important area of inquiry for educational policymakers and researchers seeking to improve teacher recruitment, retention, motivation, and professional development.

Recent studies have demonstrated that perceptions of the teaching profession significantly influence career decisions, occupational commitment, and professional identity formation. Individuals are more likely to pursue and remain in teaching when they perceive the profession as socially respected, professionally rewarding, and aligned with their personal values and aspirations (Adams et al., 2025; Sardana et al., 2021; Wiboolyasarín et al., 2025). Research examining career motivations among pre-service and in-service teachers suggests that professional prestige, social contribution, job security, and opportunities for self-development constitute major determinants of teaching career choices (See et al., 2022; Uygün & Karakaş, 2023; Wiboolyasarín et al., 2025). Similarly, investigations into teacher agency and professional commitment have revealed that positive perceptions of the profession enhance teachers' willingness to engage in educational innovation, assume leadership roles, and contribute actively to school improvement processes (Adams et al., 2025; Ogegbo et al., 2024). These findings suggest that teacher status operates as both an outcome of social valuation and a catalyst for professional engagement.

The issue of professional identity occupies a central place in discussions concerning teacher status. Professional identity reflects teachers' perceptions of themselves as

members of a valued occupational community and shapes their sense of purpose, efficacy, and belonging. Studies conducted in diverse educational contexts have shown that professional identity develops through continuous interaction between individual experiences and broader social structures (Moodie & Greenier, 2023; Vitanova, 2023; Wang, 2023). Language teachers, in particular, often experience complex identity negotiations due to the cultural, linguistic, and symbolic dimensions of their work. Research on multilingual educators and language professionals demonstrates that their identities are frequently influenced by sociocultural expectations, institutional recognition, and perceptions of linguistic prestige (Hiasa, 2025; Lu & Geng, 2022; Shen et al., 2025). Such findings highlight the importance of examining teacher status not only as a structural condition but also as an identity-related phenomenon embedded within broader social and cultural contexts.

The relationship between social status and career satisfaction has received considerable scholarly attention. Career satisfaction is influenced by both objective factors, such as income and promotion opportunities, and subjective factors, including social recognition, symbolic capital, and professional esteem. Research indicates that professionals who perceive their occupations as socially valued report higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being (Li, 2024; Mainali & Belbase, 2023; Mercer, 2020). Conversely, perceptions of low social status may contribute to occupational stress, diminished motivation, and professional disengagement. Studies focusing on teachers have demonstrated that inadequate recognition, limited advancement opportunities, and weak institutional support negatively affect professional satisfaction and retention (Gaihre & Khanal, 2025; Griffiths et al., 2022; Tran & Smith, 2020). These findings underscore the significance of understanding the mechanisms through which social status is constructed and maintained within educational systems.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping teacher status through recruitment practices, professional development opportunities, organizational culture, and policy implementation. Effective educational systems are characterized by coherent career structures, supportive institutional environments, and mechanisms that foster professional growth and recognition (Hwa & Pritchett, 2021; Wang, 2021). Research on teacher recruitment and appointment systems demonstrates that transparent selection procedures, merit-based advancement, and institutional

support contribute positively to perceptions of professional legitimacy and status (Al'Abri et al., 2023; Mia et al., 2023). Similarly, studies examining educational reforms emphasize that institutional participation and professional autonomy strengthen teachers' professional identities and social standing (Jacobs et al., 2024; Ogegbo et al., 2024). Consequently, teacher status cannot be fully understood without considering the institutional contexts within which teachers operate.

The social status of teachers is also closely connected to broader socioeconomic conditions. Economic resources, employment security, and access to professional opportunities influence both public perceptions of teaching and teachers' self-perceptions. Research has shown that socioeconomic factors significantly affect educators' self-efficacy, professional aspirations, and occupational outcomes (Elanthiraiyan & Priyanath, 2023; Li & Primecz, 2023; Mikó & Hatos, 2024). Studies exploring career development across different social groups further indicate that occupational prestige is often shaped by structural inequalities, social mobility opportunities, and access to resources (Abdi, 2021; Flores et al., 2023; Summera & Yasmin, 2025). Such evidence suggests that teacher status should be examined within the broader socioeconomic environment that influences both professional experiences and societal evaluations of educational work.

The growing literature on career choice and vocational development provides additional insights into the factors influencing perceptions of occupational prestige. Scholars have demonstrated that career aspirations are shaped by personal interests, family influences, cultural values, labor market conditions, and societal expectations (Kissi-Abrokwah et al., 2023; Mikó & Hatos, 2024; Summera & Yasmin, 2025). Within the teaching profession, motivations for entering and remaining in the field often reflect a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic considerations, including a desire to contribute to society, opportunities for personal fulfillment, and expectations regarding professional recognition (Sardana et al., 2021; Uygün & Karakaş, 2023; Wiboolyasarin et al., 2025). Studies of language teachers further indicate that professional trajectories are influenced by identity development, emotional experiences, and contextual opportunities (Moodie & Greenier, 2023; Sun, 2021; Vitanova, 2023). These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of professional status and its connection to broader career development processes.

Arabic language teachers occupy a particularly significant position within many Arab societies because of the cultural, historical, and religious importance of the Arabic language. Arabic serves not only as a means of communication but also as a carrier of collective identity, cultural heritage, and intellectual traditions. Despite this central role, anecdotal evidence and emerging educational discussions suggest that Arabic language teachers often face challenges related to professional recognition, institutional support, and public appreciation. Similar patterns have been observed among language educators in various contexts, where symbolic importance does not always translate into professional prestige or favorable working conditions (Hiasa, 2025; Lu & Geng, 2022; Pontillas & Fajardo, 2023). The discrepancy between the cultural significance of language education and the social valuation of language teachers warrants closer scholarly attention.

In Iraq, educational institutions have undergone substantial transformations due to political, social, and economic changes over recent decades. These transformations have affected educational governance, professional development structures, teacher recruitment systems, and public perceptions of educational professions. Although research has increasingly examined teacher motivation, professional identity, and career development in diverse international settings (Gaihre & Khanal, 2025; Levpušček & Steiner, 2024; Valeeva et al., 2024), limited attention has been devoted to understanding the specific factors shaping the social status of Arabic language teachers within the Iraqi context. Existing studies have largely focused on teacher motivation, recruitment, or professional development rather than the complex interactions among institutional, cultural, symbolic, and socioeconomic factors that contribute to social status formation. Moreover, previous investigations have frequently employed quantitative approaches that may not adequately capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings that individuals attach to professional status.

Given the multidimensional, context-dependent, and socially constructed nature of teacher status, a qualitative approach capable of generating theory from participants' experiences is particularly appropriate. Grounded theory provides a valuable methodological framework for exploring complex social phenomena and uncovering the relationships among contextual conditions, intervening factors, professional strategies, and resulting outcomes. Such an approach enables researchers to move beyond descriptive accounts and develop a comprehensive

explanatory model of status formation grounded in empirical evidence.

Therefore, the present study aimed to identify the components, dimensions, and interrelationships among the categories shaping the social status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq and to develop a grounded theoretical model explaining this phenomenon.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study was conducted as an applied qualitative inquiry using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The selection of grounded theory was based on the assumption that the social status of Arabic language teachers is a complex, multidimensional, and context-dependent phenomenon shaped through the interaction of institutional structures, educational policies, cultural discourses, and the lived experiences of educational actors. Rather than merely describing existing conditions, the study sought to generate a substantive theory capable of explaining the mechanisms underlying the formation, maintenance, and transformation of the social status of Arabic language teachers within the Iraqi educational system. The research setting included public secondary schools and educational institutions associated with Arabic language education across Iraq. Participants consisted of Arabic language teachers, educational administrators, and experts in education and curriculum planning who possessed substantial professional experience and direct familiarity with the Iraqi educational context. A purposive sampling strategy was initially employed to identify individuals with the greatest relevance to the phenomenon under investigation. As data collection and preliminary analysis progressed, theoretical sampling was subsequently utilized to select additional participants who could contribute to the refinement, comparison, and expansion of emerging categories. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no new concepts or categories emerged from subsequent interviews and the relationships among categories had been fully elaborated. The final sample consisted of 23 participants, including 15 Arabic language teachers, 5 educational administrators, and 3 experts in education and curriculum planning. Participants had between 10 and 28 years of professional experience. Inclusion criteria required participants to possess a minimum of ten years of teaching or educational leadership experience, direct involvement within the Iraqi educational system, familiarity with

educational policies and programs, and willingness to participate actively in in-depth interviews. The diversity of professional roles and experiences among participants provided a rich and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and facilitated the development of a robust theoretical explanation.

2.2. Measure

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which served as the primary instrument for exploring participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations regarding the social status of Arabic language teachers. Semi-structured interviewing was selected because it offers a balance between systematic inquiry and flexibility, allowing researchers to investigate predetermined topics while also exploring unexpected themes that emerge during the conversation. The interview protocol was developed based on an extensive review of the relevant literature, the objectives of the study, and preliminary theoretical considerations concerning teacher status and professional identity. The interview questions addressed several domains, including participants' perceptions of the social status of Arabic language teachers, factors contributing to the enhancement or decline of that status, the influence of educational policies and institutional practices, professional challenges, societal attitudes toward teachers, and recommendations for improving professional recognition and prestige. Interviews were conducted individually and in a confidential setting to encourage open and candid discussion. Throughout the data collection process, researchers employed probing questions and follow-up inquiries to gain deeper insight into participants' lived experiences and interpretations. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, member checking was employed by returning preliminary interpretations to participants for verification and clarification. Furthermore, detailed analytical memos were maintained throughout the study to document emerging insights, conceptual developments, and methodological decisions.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection in accordance with the principles of grounded theory methodology. The analytical process followed the

three interconnected stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During the open coding phase, interview transcripts were examined line by line to identify meaningful units of information and generate initial conceptual labels. This process resulted in the emergence of a large number of preliminary concepts reflecting participants' experiences and perceptions. In the axial coding phase, conceptually related codes were grouped into broader categories, and the relationships among categories were systematically explored. Attention was directed toward identifying causal conditions, contextual influences, intervening factors, action strategies, and consequences associated with the social status of Arabic language teachers. Finally, during selective coding, the major categories were integrated around a central core category that represented the primary explanatory theme of the study. Through iterative comparison and theoretical integration, a coherent grounded theory model was developed to explain the factors shaping and influencing the social status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several rigor-enhancing strategies were employed, including constant comparative analysis, continuous review of data, member validation of interpretations, maintenance of analytical memos, and reflexive engagement by the researchers throughout the coding process. Ethical principles governing qualitative research were strictly observed. Participants were informed of the objectives and procedures of the study prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed throughout the research process. These procedures contributed to the credibility, dependability, and overall rigor of the study while ensuring the ethical treatment of all participants.

Table 1

Sample Open Codes Extracted from Interview Data

Participant Statement	Initial Code
Society no longer grants teachers the level of respect they once enjoyed.	Decline in social respect
There is no clear support from educational institutions.	Weak institutional support
Our income is not aligned with living expenses.	Economic pressures
No clear pathway for professional advancement has been defined.	Limited professional growth
The cultural role of Arabic language teachers is overlooked.	Neglect of cultural role
Educational policies are formulated without teachers' input.	Exclusion from decision-making
The media portrayal of the teaching profession is weak.	Erosion of symbolic capital

To demonstrate the prominence and recurrence of the extracted concepts, the frequency of open codes was examined. The results indicated that codes associated with institutional inefficiency, declining symbolic status, and

3. Findings and Results

The findings of the present study were derived from the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection and followed the logic of grounded theory methodology. During this process, the data were analyzed through three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The purpose of this analytical procedure was to identify concepts, explain the relationships among them, and ultimately develop a conceptual model for explaining the social status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq.

During the open coding stage, interview transcripts were analyzed line by line, and initial concepts were extracted. These concepts reflected the lived experiences of Arabic language teachers regarding their social position, professional conditions, interactions with educational institutions, and perceptions of societal attitudes toward the teaching profession. Data analysis revealed that participants repeatedly referred to issues such as declining social respect, weak institutional support, economic pressures, limited opportunities for professional advancement, and the neglect of the cultural role of Arabic language teachers.

Examination of the initial concepts indicated that many statements reflected feelings of "social undervaluation" and "lack of recognition of professional roles." For example, participants reported that despite the central role of the Arabic language in the cultural and religious identity of society, Arabic language teachers receive limited attention in educational policymaking and public discourse.

economic pressures appeared most frequently across the dataset.

During the axial coding stage, the concepts extracted during open coding were organized into broader categories

based on conceptual similarities, causal relationships, and contextual connections. This stage aimed to reduce the volume of data and establish a coherent structure for explaining the phenomenon under investigation. The analysis demonstrated that the initial concepts could be grouped into several major categories, each explaining a distinct dimension of the social status of Arabic language teachers.

Table 2

Sample Initial Codes and Main Categories

Initial Codes	Main Categories
Job satisfaction; Organizational satisfaction; Performance satisfaction; Financial satisfaction	Perceptual Factors
Sense of value; Job security; Self-confidence; Sense of effectiveness	Emotional Factors
Organizational participation; Political participation; Scientific participation; Cultural participation	Social Identity
Provision of up-to-date knowledge; Effective interaction skills; Professional teaching competence; Problem-solving ability	Functional Identity

Table 3

Axial Categories and Their Relationship with Open Codes

Open Codes	Axial Category	Conceptual Explanation
Economic pressure, job insecurity	Foundational Infrastructures	Material and economic conditions influencing social standing
Decline in social respect, negative media image	Social Flourishing	Degree of social acceptance and respect for the teaching profession
Bureaucracy, lack of organizational support	Institutional Inefficiency	Weakness of structures and policies supporting teachers
Professional training, occupational autonomy	Comprehensive Empowerment	Enhancement of teachers' competencies and professional capabilities
Policy reform, institutional participation	Institutional Development	Improvement of educational structures and processes
Professional credibility, occupational prestige	Social Status	Social and symbolic standing of Arabic language teachers

During the selective coding stage, the axial categories were integrated around a central category. Final analysis revealed that "Enhancement of the Social Status of Arabic Language Teachers in Iraq" constituted the core category of the study. The remaining categories were conceptualized as contextual conditions, intervening factors, strategies, and consequences associated with this core category.

Within this framework, foundational infrastructures and social flourishing function as contextual conditions shaping

The identified axial categories included social flourishing, foundational infrastructures, institutional inefficiency, comprehensive empowerment, institutional development, and social status. These categories indicate that the social status of Arabic language teachers emerges from the interaction between structural conditions, institutional policies, and teachers' professional actions.

the formation of social status. Institutional inefficiency operates as an intervening factor that simultaneously constrains development and stimulates institutional reform. Comprehensive teacher empowerment emerged as the principal strategy for improving social status, while institutional development was identified as the ultimate outcome of the process.

Table 4

Selective Coding and Explanation of the Core Category

Category	Role in the Theory
Foundational Infrastructures	Contextual Condition
Social Flourishing	Contextual Condition
Institutional Inefficiency	Intervening Condition
Comprehensive Empowerment	Strategy
Institutional Development	Consequence
Enhancement of the Social Status of Arabic Language Teachers	Core Category

The conceptualization process presented in the above tables resulted in the identification of seven highly abstract conceptual units representing the principal dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation.

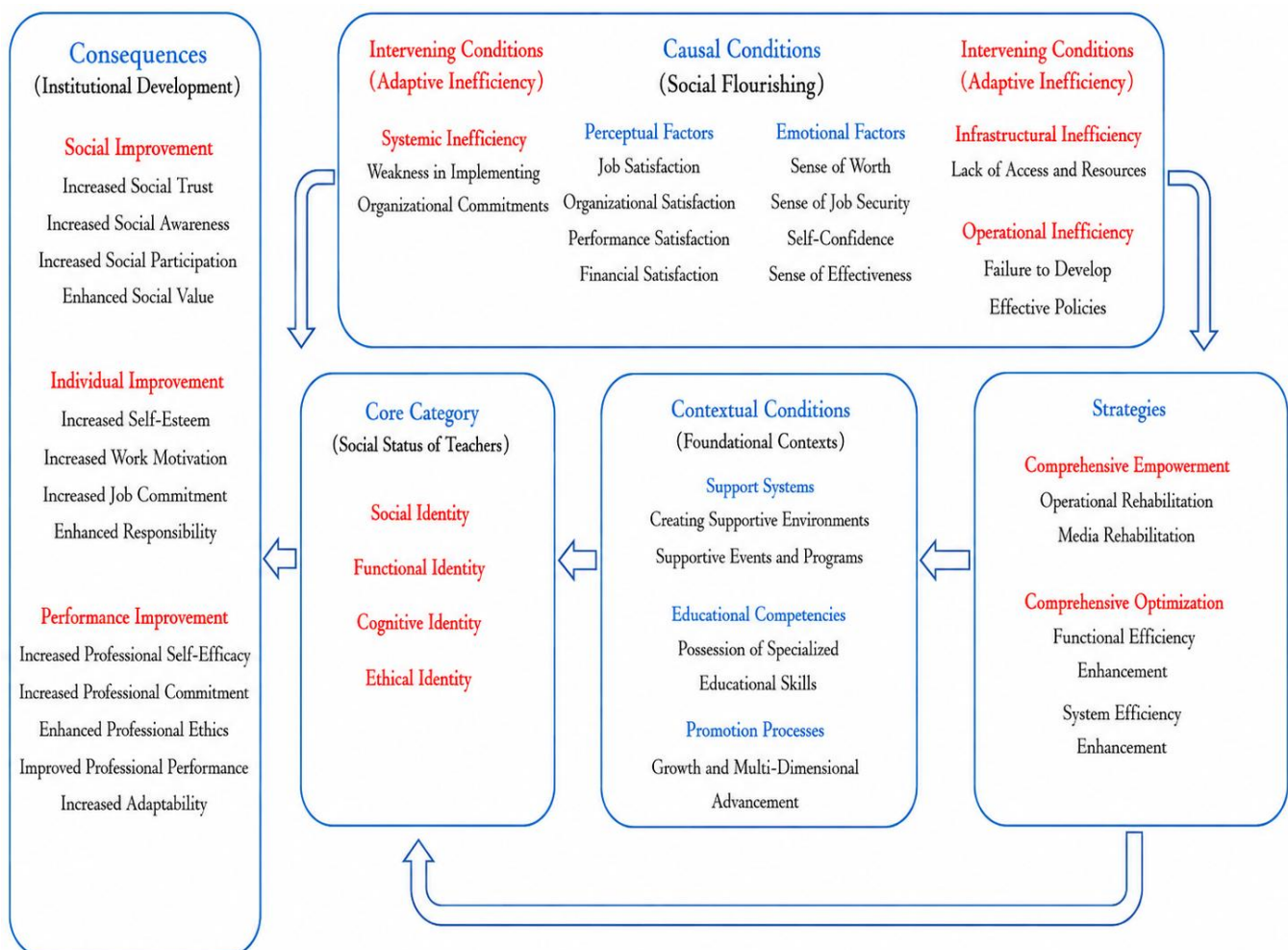
Based on the results of selective coding and the relationships among categories, the final conceptual model of the study was developed. The model demonstrates that the social status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq is a dynamic and process-oriented phenomenon that develops through the interaction of social, institutional, and professional conditions. Within this model, institutional inefficiency acts

as a structural barrier; however, by generating pressure for reform, it can also serve as a catalyst for institutional development.

Comprehensive teacher empowerment, including the enhancement of professional competencies, increased occupational autonomy, and the strengthening of symbolic capital, plays a central role in transforming existing conditions into institutional development. Institutional development, in turn, contributes to the reconstruction of teachers' social status and strengthens public trust in the teaching profession.

Figure 1

Paradigmatic Model of Teachers' Social Status



As noted, the paradigmatic model of the study consists of seven axial categories positioned according to their significance and the results of qualitative data analysis. The category of *Social Status of Teachers*, comprising four dimensions—social identity, functional identity, cognitive identity, and ethical identity—was identified as the central

category influencing strategic actions. The axial category of *Social Flourishing*, consisting of two dimensions—perceptual factors and emotional factors—was identified as the causal condition affecting the central category. Furthermore, the axial category of *Adaptive Inefficiency*, comprising infrastructural inefficiency, systemic

inefficiency, and operational inefficiency, was identified as an intervening condition influencing strategic actions.

In addition, the axial category of *Foundational Contexts*, consisting of supportive policies, educational competencies, and promotion processes, was identified as a contextual condition affecting strategic actions. The axial category of *Comprehensive Empowerment*, consisting of operational rehabilitation and media rehabilitation, was identified as a strategy influencing outcomes. The model also included another strategic axial category, *Comprehensive Optimization*, composed of functional efficiency enhancement and systemic efficiency enhancement. Finally, the axial category of *Institutional Development*, consisting of social improvement, individual improvement, and performance improvement, was identified as the principal outcome within the model.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to identify the components, dimensions, and relationships among the categories shaping the social status of Arabic language teachers in Iraq and to develop a grounded theoretical model explaining this phenomenon. The findings revealed that the social status of Arabic language teachers is a multidimensional and dynamic construct shaped through the interaction of social flourishing, foundational infrastructures, institutional inefficiency, comprehensive empowerment, institutional optimization, and institutional development, all organized around the core category of enhancing the social status of Arabic language teachers. The grounded theory model generated in this study suggests that teacher status is neither a fixed characteristic nor merely an outcome of individual performance; rather, it is a socially constructed phenomenon emerging from the interaction of contextual, institutional, professional, and symbolic factors.

One of the most significant findings was the identification of social flourishing as a causal condition influencing the social status of Arabic language teachers. Participants emphasized that societal respect, positive public perceptions, and emotional recognition contribute substantially to the professional prestige of teachers. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that public perceptions of teaching strongly influence professional attractiveness, occupational commitment, and career satisfaction (Adams et al., 2025; Levpušček & Steiner, 2024; See et al., 2022). The findings also align with research indicating that positive perceptions of teaching

encourage stronger professional engagement and reinforce occupational identity among educators (Sardana et al., 2021; Wiboolyasarin et al., 2025). In the Iraqi context, participants perceived social appreciation as a fundamental prerequisite for restoring the professional dignity of Arabic language teachers. This finding can be understood through symbolic interactionist perspectives suggesting that professional identities are shaped through social recognition and interactions with significant others. When society acknowledges the cultural and educational contributions of teachers, professional prestige is reinforced; conversely, declining respect may weaken teachers' perceptions of their occupational value.

Another important finding concerns the role of foundational infrastructures as contextual conditions affecting teacher status. Participants highlighted economic security, educational competencies, promotion pathways, and supportive policies as essential foundations for enhancing social status. This result is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that professional prestige is strongly influenced by working conditions, institutional resources, and opportunities for career advancement (Gaihre & Khanal, 2025; Griffiths et al., 2022; Mainali & Belbase, 2023). Similarly, research on teacher career systems suggests that coherent promotion structures and supportive institutional environments contribute to professional satisfaction and retention (Hwa & Pritchett, 2021; Tran & Smith, 2020). The findings indicate that social status cannot be separated from material realities. Teachers who experience financial insecurity, limited advancement opportunities, or insufficient institutional support are less likely to perceive themselves as valued professionals. Consequently, improving teacher status requires structural reforms that address both symbolic and material dimensions of professional life.

The study further identified institutional inefficiency as a major intervening condition affecting the development of teacher status. Participants repeatedly referred to bureaucratic obstacles, exclusion from decision-making processes, weak organizational support, and ineffective educational policies. This finding is congruent with studies showing that institutional structures significantly influence teachers' professional experiences and perceptions of occupational legitimacy (Jacobs et al., 2024; Mia et al., 2023; Ogegbo et al., 2024). Research has consistently demonstrated that teachers who perceive their institutions as supportive and participatory report higher levels of professional commitment and stronger occupational

identities (Adams et al., 2025; Wang, 2021). Interestingly, the present study revealed that institutional inefficiency serves a dual function. On one hand, it undermines professional status by restricting opportunities and diminishing recognition. On the other hand, it creates pressure for institutional reform and therefore becomes a catalyst for change. This dynamic perspective extends previous research by demonstrating that institutional challenges may generate conditions conducive to transformation when stakeholders recognize the need for systemic improvement.

The findings also emphasized the central role of comprehensive empowerment as a strategic mechanism for enhancing teacher status. Participants identified professional development, occupational autonomy, operational rehabilitation, and media empowerment as key strategies for strengthening professional standing. This result corresponds with studies suggesting that teacher empowerment increases self-efficacy, professional commitment, and career satisfaction (Elanthiraiyan & Priyanath, 2023; Ogebo et al., 2024; Sun, 2021). Research on language teachers has similarly shown that opportunities for professional growth and autonomy strengthen occupational identity and enhance perceptions of professional competence (Hiasa, 2025; Lu & Geng, 2022; Moodie & Greenier, 2023). In the present study, empowerment was viewed not merely as skill development but as a multidimensional process involving the strengthening of professional, social, and symbolic capital. This finding supports theoretical perspectives emphasizing that professional status emerges when individuals possess both the competencies and the social recognition necessary to exercise their expertise effectively.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of the findings was the identification of institutional optimization as an additional strategic category. Participants emphasized the importance of improving both functional efficiency and systemic efficiency within educational institutions. This finding reflects broader educational research suggesting that effective organizations contribute significantly to teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and professional prestige (Hwa & Pritchett, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2024; Wang, 2021). The results indicate that improving teacher status requires not only empowering individuals but also reforming institutional processes. Teachers are more likely to experience professional recognition when they work within systems characterized by transparency, efficiency, responsiveness, and participatory governance. Consequently, the enhancement of teacher status should be

viewed as an organizational as well as an individual endeavor.

The identification of social identity, functional identity, cognitive identity, and ethical identity as dimensions of teacher status further contributes to understanding the complexity of professional prestige. This finding aligns with literature emphasizing that professional identity consists of multiple interconnected dimensions involving competence, values, social belonging, and self-perception (Shen et al., 2025; Vitanova, 2023; Wang, 2023). Previous studies have demonstrated that language teachers frequently construct their professional identities through ongoing negotiations among personal beliefs, institutional expectations, and societal discourses (Hiasa, 2025; Moodie & Greenier, 2023). The present findings extend this literature by illustrating how these identity dimensions collectively shape perceptions of social status. Teachers who perceive themselves as competent, ethical, socially valued, and intellectually respected are more likely to experience stronger professional prestige and occupational commitment.

The findings regarding symbolic recognition are also consistent with research on career satisfaction and professional identification. Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of media representation, public discourse, and cultural acknowledgment. Similar conclusions have been reported in studies demonstrating that symbolic capital significantly influences occupational prestige and professional satisfaction (Flores et al., 2023; Li, 2024). In educational settings, public narratives about teachers shape how society values educational work and influence how teachers perceive their own contributions. The findings suggest that enhancing teacher status requires deliberate efforts to strengthen the symbolic representation of teachers in public and institutional discourse.

The study also revealed that socioeconomic and career-related factors play a substantial role in shaping teacher status. Participants associated professional prestige with economic stability, career progression, and employment security. These findings are supported by research showing that socioeconomic conditions influence occupational aspirations, career development, and professional satisfaction (Li & Primecz, 2023; Mikó & Hatos, 2024; Sumnera & Yasmin, 2025). Similar patterns have been observed among diverse professional groups, where social status is closely connected to opportunities for advancement and economic well-being (Abdi, 2021; Kissi-Abrokwah et al., 2023). The findings indicate that policies aimed at

enhancing teacher status should address both symbolic recognition and material conditions.

Finally, the identification of institutional development as the ultimate outcome of the model provides an important theoretical contribution. The findings suggest that enhanced teacher status contributes not only to individual well-being but also to broader institutional improvement. This conclusion is consistent with studies demonstrating that respected, motivated, and professionally empowered teachers contribute to educational quality, organizational effectiveness, and student success (Gaihre & Khanal, 2025; Mainali & Belbase, 2023; Ogebo et al., 2024). The results further support research indicating that positive perceptions of the teaching profession strengthen recruitment, retention, and long-term commitment to educational careers (Al'Abri et al., 2023; Pontillas & Fajardo, 2023; Valeeva et al., 2024). Therefore, investing in teacher status should be viewed as a strategic investment in the overall development of educational systems.

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations. First, the findings were derived from a relatively limited number of participants within the Iraqi educational context, which may restrict the transferability of results to other cultural or educational settings. Second, the study relied exclusively on qualitative interviews, and therefore the findings reflect participants' perceptions and experiences rather than objective measures of social status. Third, the study focused primarily on Arabic language teachers, educational administrators, and curriculum experts, which may have excluded perspectives from students, parents, policymakers, and broader community stakeholders. Finally, the grounded theory approach emphasizes contextual understanding, and thus the resulting model should be interpreted within the specific social, cultural, and institutional conditions of Iraq.

Future studies could employ mixed-methods or quantitative designs to test and validate the conceptual model developed in this research. Comparative studies across different subject specializations, educational levels, or national contexts may provide deeper insights into the similarities and differences in teacher status formation. Longitudinal research could explore how changes in educational policies influence teacher status over time. Researchers may also investigate the perspectives of students, parents, policymakers, and community members to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the social construction of teacher status. Additionally, future studies could examine the relationships among teacher status,

professional identity, job satisfaction, educational quality, and student outcomes.

Educational authorities should prioritize policies that strengthen the professional recognition and social visibility of Arabic language teachers. Improving compensation systems, establishing transparent promotion pathways, and increasing teachers' participation in educational decision-making processes can contribute significantly to enhancing professional status. Professional development programs should focus not only on instructional competencies but also on leadership, communication, and public engagement skills. Educational institutions should create supportive organizational environments that encourage autonomy, collaboration, and innovation. Furthermore, media organizations and educational stakeholders should collaborate to promote positive public representations of teachers and highlight their cultural, intellectual, and social contributions to society. Such initiatives can contribute to rebuilding public trust in the teaching profession and strengthening the social status of Arabic language teachers within the broader educational system.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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