

The Connection Between English Language Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity in Iranian Context

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Abstract

Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and identities are regarded as the key elements in boosting their effectiveness in improving their learners' performance. Professional identity as a quality of a teacher can be evolved in a constant and continuous process. It is usually shaped in educational and social contexts. Among the teacher characteristics which influence teachers' performance, professional identity and self-efficacy are considered to be vital characteristics. The current study was set to explore the association between Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' professional identity and self-efficacy. Therefore, in order to gather the data required for the aims of this research, 92 English language teachers were chosen as the participants of this research study. Two questionnaires were utilized to gather the data. The data collected was analyzed via Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results revealed a positive bond between Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity and self-efficacy. The findings of this study can be of help for teacher educators and English language teachers.

Keywords: English language teachers, identity, professional identity, self-efficacy, teacher education

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1. Introduction

Throughout the past decades, researchers working in the realm of teacher education have concentrated their studies on different characteristics of teachers and their effects on students' academic achievement. Teachers are regarded as the most effective elements in the education arena and the efficacy of education is dependent on the teachers' effectiveness in any educational system (Coombe, 2014, 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2019). In addition, teachers play a major part in students' educational success through helping them to learn by providing students with chances to examine their talents and transfer them into abilities (Soodmand Afshar & Hamzavi, 2017). Teacher identity, a dynamic quality of teachers, is an inseparable part of the process of language teaching. According to MacLure (1993), identity is "a resource that people use to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others, and to the world at large", (p. 311). Also, Deschamps and Devos (1998) define identity as "what makes you similar to yourself and different from others" (p. 3). In accordance with Pennington (1999), teachers' professional identity is built via linking individual characteristics to contextual characteristics. Furthermore, according to Pennington and Richards (2016), a teacher is required "not only to know things and know how to do things, but also to be her/himself, that is, to adapt and personalize disciplinary or professional knowledge to her/his own individual identity and contexts of teaching" (p. 6). Besides, Varghese et al. (2005) assert that attending to the manifold dimensions of a teacher's identity including individual, social, political, and professional identities helps researchers and teacher educators to have a deeper understanding of teachers and their identities.

Moreover, teachers' self-efficacy is regarded as a significant teacher characteristic in the realm of education. As Bandura (1997) asserts, self-efficacy is "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Based on this definition, self-efficacy contributes to individuals' reflectivity and influences their purposes and behaviors (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Besides, it has an impact on individuals' decisions as well as the amount of attempt they devote to conducting a specific task (Pajares, 1997). As Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) argue, teacher self-efficacy refers to "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required

to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p. 22). In other words, self-efficacy is concerned with the teachers’ insights into their own capability in the act of teaching and their role in helping their learners enhance their performance. Self-efficacy at its lower levels can create a negative attitude in teachers toward their job and educational setting (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015). Research findings have indicated that teachers who possess a high degree of self-efficacy manifest higher levels of planning, organization, and enthusiasm; in addition, they tend to less criticize the learners when they produce erroneous utterances (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Coladarci, 1992). Furthermore, teachers who have high self-efficacy are firmly dedicated to their profession and exhibit collaborative connections with colleagues and parents (Coladarci, 1992). Moreover, teacher self-efficacy as a key variable turns out to contribute to teachers’ psychological status including more job satisfaction and teaching dedication along with less teaching stress and burnout (Aloe et al., 2014; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

1.1. Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Teachers, all around the world, are constantly facing challenges as how to manage diverse roles, expectations, and demands as professionals when circumstances and relationships start changing. Teachers’ identities are influenced by situational and interactional factors, i.e. their conceptualizations and self-images are shaped by the context in which they work and the connections they establish with their colleagues and students. In this regard, Bressler and Rotter (2017) assert that “the political, social, and cultural circumstance of a person and the relation and communication with other persons is seen to be critical external components in the composition of identity” (p. 239). According to Danielewicz (2001), teachers’ identity is concerned with several elements including adjustment, motivation, efficacy, confidence, commitment, and satisfaction with their jobs. Also, it is undeniable that one’s identity is connected to his/her profession, i.e. no one can be isolated from his/her profession. As Loughran (2007) asserts, “it seems unlikely that the core of the person will not impact the core of the professional” (p. 112). Therefore, teachers’ identity as a pivotal element in the educational setting is directly related to their profession. In accordance with Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), teachers’ professional identity is not predetermined or stable, rather, as

asserted by Trent (2010), “it is dynamic and constructed and reconstructed during an active process of learning to teach” (p. 695). Professional identity is prosocial and influenced by interactional contexts, new student populations, experience, and personality. Therefore, exploring teachers’ professional identity and its effect on other teacher-related features is deemed essential. A plethora of studies have been conducted to explore teacher-related factors and their interrelationships. Some researchers have investigated self-efficacy with regard to work stress and burnout in different contexts (Grau et al., 2001; Law & Guo, 2015). However, there seems to be a paucity of research studies examining the interplay between Iranian EFL teachers’ self-efficacy and professional identity.

1.2. Significance and Justification for the Study

As Eslami and Fatahi (2008) assert, teachers play a significant part in the educational system, thus, knowing their insights and beliefs is invaluable since they put theories into practice in educational contexts. Furthermore, according to Ross (1994), teachers’ self-efficacy is considered an influential feature because it is highly possible for teachers who possess higher degrees of efficacy to utilize novel teaching approaches and techniques to overcome the challenges in their teaching and help students with learning difficulties. Also, in accordance with Sheybani and Miri (2019), professional identity is totally associated with teachers’ growth. The findings of the current research may be of help to English language teachers who might have no idea about the different aspects of their professional identity. They can also help them manage the factors influencing their professional identity in different domains.

According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), teachers play a crucial part in ensuring effective teaching and learning. Thus, as Eslami and Fatahi (2008) assert, investigating their perceptions of themselves as teachers is of importance since they put educational theories into practice in their classes. According to Varghese et al. (2005), the key to understanding language teaching is understanding identity. Also, as Fogle and Moser (2017) argue, exploring teachers’ diverse identities is crucial to perceive the factors influencing their attitudes, decisions, and beliefs.

2. Literature Review

Identity is a dynamic construct formed in social contexts which evolves throughout people's lifetime, and it requires certain stages with their own characteristics depending on the individuals' interaction with their environment (Erikson, 1968). According to Mead (1934), there is a relationship between identity and the concept of self, explaining how the self is shaped via interactions with the social context.

In teaching, as Pennington and Richards (2016) point out, "identity emerges as a dynamic construct that is shaped by the context in which the teacher works and that may have different features at different times" (p. 2). Identity is described as one's distinctive quality which is realized in contrast with that of other people (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Also, in accordance with Coldron and Smith (1999), in educational contexts, professional identity is considered an intricate and dynamic feature which makes a balance between teachers' professional self-image and their roles in their workplace. In addition, as Barkhuizen (2016) states, teachers' professional identity is formed historically, contextually, and socially.

Bandura (1986) introduces the notion of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, as Bandura (1997) asserts, is based upon theories of social cognitive theory. It emphasizes the evolvment and agency of humans so that they can exercise more control over what they do. In accordance with Bandura (1994), self-efficacy is defined as "peoples' beliefs and attitudes about their abilities to produce intended levels of performance to exert more influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 8). Later, Bandura (1997) explains self-efficacy as "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Moreover, Usher and Pajares (2008) argue that self-efficacy is a key factor in teaching different subjects to learners. They assert that teachers can make sure that they have helped their students enhance the different skills they need by improving factors influencing their self-efficacy. In addition, according to Usher and Pajares (2008), self-efficacy has significant impacts on "cognitive, motivational, affective and decisional processes, and cause individuals to think positively and hopefully or negatively and cynically, in self-enhancing or self-debilitating manners" (p. 120). In accordance with Bandura (1994), teachers with degrees of self-efficacy can benefit from certain positive traits such as possessing high degrees of self-confidence to accomplish challenging tasks, setting challenging targets and being extremely committed to

them, getting involved in activities, and immediately recovering their positive self-efficacy after failure.

One of the implications of self-efficacy theory, proposed by Bandura (1997), is reflected in teacher efficacy. As Bandura (1994) states, teachers' self-efficacy is "the degree to which teachers believe they have the ability to affect students' performance" (P. 12). Bandura (1994) mostly emphasizes individuals' realizations of their abilities rather than their actual potential abilities. Also, as Rich et al. (1996) put it, teacher efficacy is "a teacher's general feeling that the education system is capable of fostering student academic achievement satisfactorily despite negative influences external to the teacher" (p. 101). According to Berman et al. (1977), teacher efficacy refers to "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance" (p. 137). Also, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) explain teacher self-efficacy as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (p. 22).

2.1. Empirical Studies

Vaezi and Fallah (2011) carried out a research study to examine the bond between Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy and occupational stress. The findings of their study indicated a significant relationship between self-efficacy and stress among EFL teachers. Babaei and Abednia (2016) conducted a study to investigate the bond between reflective teaching and teachers' self-efficacy. They reported a significant association between self-efficacy and reflective teaching. Malmir and Mohammadi (2018) investigated the bond between English language teachers' reflective teaching and self-efficacy and professional achievement. The results of their study indicated that teachers' achievement had positive connections with self-efficacy and reflective teaching. Motallebzadeh and Kazemi (2018) investigated the interplay between EFL instructors' self-esteem and professional identity. They found that self-esteem sub-constructs (satisfaction, communication, commitment, knowledge, and adaptation,) could positively predict professional identity. Fathi and Derakhshan (2019) examined the effect of teachers' emotional regulation and self-efficacy in anticipating the amount of teaching stress among English language teachers. They reported that teacher self-efficacy positively

anticipated teaching stress. Moslemi and Habibi (2019) conducted a study to examine the link among English language teachers' self-efficacy, professional identity, and critical thinking skills. They found a positive association between English language teachers' self-efficacy and professional identity and their critical thinking skills. Derakhshan et al. (2020) explored the impacts of autonomy and professional identity on EFL teachers' success and found that EFL teachers' success was significantly influenced by their autonomy and professional identity. Parsi and Ashraf (2020) investigated the correlation among English language instructors' professional identity, critical thinking, and teaching experience. The results demonstrated that EFL instructors' critical thinking was positively related to professional identity and teaching experience. Aghaei et al. (2021) examined the association between Iranian English language instructors' reflectivity and professional identity. Their results demonstrated a positive bond between the two variables. Gümüş and Bellibaş (2021) examined the bond between instructors' self-efficacy and the kinds of professional development activities they participate in. Their findings revealed that instructors taking part in job-embedded professional development activities were likely to gain a deeper understanding of self-efficacy. Kalali Sani et al. (2021) studied the link between Iranian English language instructors' goal orientation and their professional identity. They reported a significant association between English language instructors' professional identity and goal orientation. Hamilton and Reeves (2022) explored the links between self-efficacy, course-taking, and anxiety for data-driven decision-making (DDDM). They reported that taking courses in DDDM is significantly linked with instructors' self-efficacy for DDDM. Mohammadi et al. (2023) examined the impact of teacher self-efficacy, burnout, teaching style, and emotional intelligence on teacher motivation. Regarding self-efficacy, they found that it had a significant influence on teachers' motivation. Kamyabifar and Safdari (2024) explored the effect of high school English language instructors' emotional experiences on their professional identity. They found that teachers' emotional experiences can have a positive effect on forming their identities.

This study aimed at answering the following research question:

RQ: Is there an association between Iranian English language instructors' self-efficacy and professional identity?

3. Method

3.1. Design

The current research followed a survey design. In accordance with Brown (2001), language surveys refer to research “that gather data on the characteristics and views of informants about the nature of language or language learning through the use of oral interviews or written questionnaires” (p. 2). In addition, this study was correlational as its goal was to explore the association between Iranian EFL instructors’ self-efficacy and professional identity. In other words, this survey study followed a correlational design which focused upon exploring the variables in relation to each other. The variables of this research study included Iranian EFL instructors’ self-efficacy and professional identity.

3.2. Participants

Efforts were made to select teachers from both genders with different age groups and years of teaching experience to ensure generalizability. Accordingly, a sample of 92 Iranian EFL instructors teaching at public or private schools, language institutes, and universities of Bukan, Iran, were chosen to take part in the study. They were chosen on the basis of convenience sampling. The participants were full-time and part-time teachers teaching English at different levels.

Table 1

The Participants

Number of the participants	92 Iranian English language teachers
Gender	Male (N = 39), Female (N = 53)
Education	PhD, PhD candidates, MA, and BA
Field of study	English language teaching, English translation, and English literature
L1 background	Kurdish and Turkish
Teaching Experience	4-23 years
Age	21-49

The participants were native Kurdish and Turkish speakers, and they were regarded as multilingual since they had some level of language proficiency in Kurdish and Turkish as their mother tongue, Farsi as the language of their country, as well as English as the language of

their educational fields. They included female (N = 53) and male (N = 39) instructors who possessed diverse levels of educational degrees (PhD, PhD candidates, MA, and BA). The age range of the teachers taking part in the present research was 21-49. Besides, the participants' teaching experience varied from 4 to 23 years.

3.3. Instruments

The following questionnaires were employed to gather the data required for the current research.

3.3.1. *Teacher Professional Identity Scale (TPIS)*

Zhang et al. (2011) introduced this scale, comprising two sections: the first section contains Background Information which elicits information regarding participants' gender, age, teaching experience, and the like, and the second section includes 15 items scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4: 1 "I strongly disagree", 2 "I disagree", 3 "I agree", and 4 "I strongly agree". The respondents needed 10 minutes to fill out the questionnaire, and its scores ranged from 4 to 60. This questionnaire encompasses three factors including intrinsic value identity, which mostly pertains to participants' subjective feelings toward the teaching job (seven items), extrinsic value identity, which centers around cognition about external factors of the teaching job (three items), and voluntary behavior identity, which is mainly concerned with one's willingness to enter the job (five items). The total reliability index of the TPIS used in this research turned out to be 0.75, suggesting an acceptable reliability index.

3.3.2. *Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES)*

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) developed the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES). It was utilized to assess the participants' self-efficacy. This questionnaire consists of 24 items involving three efficacy sub-categories: educational techniques (eight items), class control (eight items), and learner involvement (eight items). The items require teachers to rank their level of competence in each item on a five-point Likert scale using the following scale: 1= Nothing, 2= Very little, 3= Some influence, 4= Quite a bit, 5= A great deal. In the present research, the reliability of the scale was 0.78.

3.4. Procedure

Data for this research study was collected using the scales described in the instruments section. The process of the study began by finding and contacting English language teachers whether in person through attending language institutes, schools, and universities in Bukan or on the phone and social media (like Telegram, WhatsApp, and Instagram). Then, online versions of the scales were produced by Google Docs so as to facilitate administration and scoring processes. The online versions included explanations about the scales, instructions on how to fill out them, and the questionnaires themselves (i.e., TSES and TPIS). After informing the teachers about the study and its objectives and getting their consent to take part in this research study, the questionnaires were sent to the participants via social media and email, in accordance with their convenience. The online versions were also shared in WhatsApp and Telegram groups whose members were English language teachers. The teachers engaging in the present research study were assured that their data would remain confidential and would only be utilized for the aims of the current research. The total amount of time for both questionnaires was 30 minutes.

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 software. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Also, to investigate the association between the participants' self-efficacy and professional identity, Pearson's product-moment correlation was utilized.

4. Results

The results of the data analysis along with their explanations are provided in the following sections.

4.1. Normality Assumption

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to ensure the normal distribution of data. Table 2 exhibits the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for self-efficacy and professional identity questionnaires.

Table 2

The Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Self-efficacy	0.7	92	0.09
Professional Identity	0.8	92	0.2

As depicted in Table 2, the p-values reported for self-efficacy and professional identity were 0.09 and 0.20. Since the significance values of both variables are larger than 0.05, the normality of the data can be confirmed for both scales.

4.2. Reliability Analysis of the Instruments

To check the reliability of the items in the questionnaires employed in the current research study, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Reliability Statistics of TSES

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.78	24

TSES comprises 24 items assessing three dimensions of efficacy, i.e., educational techniques, class control, and learner involvement. As presented in Table 3, the reliability index for the self-efficacy questionnaire used in this research equaled 0.78, revealing an acceptable index of reliability. Table 4 displays the results of the reliability coefficient of TPIS.

Table 4

Reliability Statistics of TPIS

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.75	15

In accordance with Table 4, Cronbach's alpha for TPIS turned out to be 0.75. This coefficient value suggests that the professional identity scale developed by Zhang et al. (2011) can be considered a reliable instrument for measuring the participants' professional identity.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 contains the descriptive statistics related to professional identity and self-efficacy scales including mean, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum scores.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of EFL Teachers' Self-efficacy and Professional Identity

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
Self-efficacy	92	118	214	191.25	8.64
Professional Identity	92	21	57	45.27	4.39

In accordance with Table 5, the range of score for the professional identity scale with 15 items was between 21 and 57, and for self-efficacy with 24 items was between 118 and 214. As the table shows, the mean score of teachers' professional identity was 45.27 with a standard deviation of 4.39. Regarding the self-efficacy scale, the mean score was 191.25 with a standard deviation of 8.64.

4.4. Inferential Statistics

The research question probed into the bond between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and professional identity. A Pearson correlation test was run to answer this question. This test was employed to analyze the teachers' professional identity and self-efficacy scores so as to find out the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables under the focus of the current research study. The results of the Pearson correlation test are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Pearson's Correlation Between EFL Instructors' Self-efficacy and Professional Identity

		Self-efficacy	Professional Identity
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.42**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
	N	90	90
Professional Identity	Pearson Correlation	0.42**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	N	90	90

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

Pearson correlation was carried out at a 95% significance level. As shown in Table 6, the correlation was 0.42, and the obtained level of significance equaled 0.00, which was less than 0.05. This means that there was a positive association ($r = 0.42$, $P = 0.00$) between Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity and self-efficacy. The significant bond between the variables indicated that English language instructors' self-efficacy grows when their professional identity rises.

5. Discussion

The major objective of this research was to investigate the bond between Iranian English language instructors' professional identity and self-efficacy. The findings confirmed a positive link between Iranian EFL instructors' self-efficacy and their professional identity. The significant association between the variables meant that a rise in Iranian EFL instructors' level of professional identity would lead to a rise in their self-efficacy. In other words, the English language instructors with higher levels of professional identity have better self-efficacy tendencies.

Furthermore, the findings of the current research are in line with the results of Vaezi and Fallah (2011), who reported a significant bond between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and stress, Malmir and Mohammadi (2018) who found that instructors' self-efficacy was positively associated with their professional success, Motallebzadeh and Kazemi (2018) who reported that self-esteem had a positive link with professional identity, Moslemi and Habibi (2019) who found a significant bond between EFL instructors' professional identity, self-efficacy, and critical thinking skills, Derakhshan et al. (2020), who found the significant impact of EFL instructors' professional identity and autonomy on their success, Aghaei et al. (2021), who reported a significant bond between Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity and reflectivity, Kalali Sani et al. (2021), who found out a significant association between English instructors' professional identity and goal orientation, Hamilton and Reeves (2022), who found that taking courses in DDDM is consistently linked with teachers' self-efficacy for DDDM, Mohammadi et al. (2023), who reported that self-efficacy had a significant effect on teachers' motivation, and Kamyabifar and Safdari (2024), who reported that teachers' emotional experiences can have a great effect on forming their identities.

The link between EFL instructors' professional identity and self-efficacy can be explained from a socio-psychological point of view. As Day et al. (2006) argue, instructors' professional identity is generally built not only by practical and emotional aspects of their professional and personal lives, but by the interactions within the educational, social, and cultural milieus. In the same vein, Fajardo Castaneda (2011) asserts that "a teacher's identity not only comprises personal knowledge and action, but is also influenced by the ideological, political and cultural interests and circumstances surrounding teachers' lives and work" (p. iii). Thus, as Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) believe, emotional and personal aspects of teachers' lives and professions along with their cultural and educational contexts can impact their ability to organize their efforts, plans, opinions, and the strategy they use when facing challenges. Furthermore, becoming a competent teacher is a dynamic system consisting of a teacher's personality, identity, responsibilities, and professional ability (Smith, 2014). Based on this view, both instructors' identity and self-efficacy are features of a dynamic concept (Kelchtermans, 2009).

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the correlation between Iranian English language instructors' professional identity and self-efficacy. The findings of statistical analysis revealed that the professional identity perception of Iranian EFL instructors was positively related to their self-efficacy beliefs. This relationship was also found to be statistically significant. This finding highlights the impact of identity development in enhancing instructors' self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be proved that the identities that Iranian English language teachers develop when it comes to their teaching profession can contribute to their views of themselves as competent individuals to accomplish specific tasks in various contexts. The positive bond between professional identity and self-efficacy specifies that the higher the level of professional identity, the more efficacious EFL instructors will be when they are involved in teaching English courses. The important characteristic of these two variables is a desire to teach well. When scrutinizing these variables, it can be concluded that they share a common feature that aims at a shared target. They both intend to provide better chances for influential teaching and teacher development.

Kalali Sani et al. (2021) hold that “identity is a powerful component of the inspiration, self-efficacy, engagement, and effectiveness of teachers” (p. 142). In a similar vein, Hammerness et al. (2005) assert that the identities developed by teachers can “shape their dispositions, where they place their effort, whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities, and what obligations they see as intrinsic to their role” (p. 384). According to Fogle and Moser (2017), investigating teachers’ identities can greatly contribute to a deeper understanding of the circumstances influencing their decision-making process, values, and behaviors. As Smith et al. (1999) state, individual identity helps people greatly manage the way they view others, their motivation, efficacy, self-confidence, self-esteem, as well as efforts they make in different spheres of their lives. Murray and Male (2005) argue that identity is placed at the center of academics’ professional practice and constant progress. As an affective variable, self-efficacy can also impact individuals’ decision-making, efforts, and actions when confronting challenges (Bandura, 1986). Also, professional identity plays a crucial part in perceiving instructors’ effectiveness because it is firmly related to the view instructors hold toward themselves and their roles in their workplace (Varghese et al., 2005). Day and Gu (2007) point to the importance of instructors’ self-efficacy in the process of shaping identity suggesting that a person establishes one’s identity somewhat by means of a self-assessment of his/her capability in the particular roles.

Furthermore, as Bandura (1998) opines, one’s profession is an important indicator of his/her personal identity. He also maintains that a sense of efficacy plays a critical part in professional development. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) put it, teacher efficacy hinges on several significant educational matters such as instructors’ perseverance, commitment, eagerness, and educational behavior. It also depends upon student issues like accomplishment, self-efficacy beliefs, and motivation. As Volkmann and Anderson (1998) avow, professional identity is an elaborate construct in which an instructor’s image of him/herself is evaluated via different social parts she/he has to play.

6.1. Pedagogical Implications

The results of the present research can familiarize instructors, especially EFL instructors, with the notion of professional identity when involved in the process of instruction. Instructors need

to be aware of self-efficacy as an important affective factor. They also should know that their professional identity is shaped through the evolvement of their self-efficacy dimensions and this identity determines their professional success in the workplace. In addition, one's perception of professional identity is regarded as a strong element of his/her identity (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Moreover, the results of the current research may be of use to EFL instructors as they need to strive to discover the potential sources of boosting their self-efficacy and the ways their professional identity is formed and developed. As Varghese et al. (2005) assert, understanding one's identity is one of the effective ways whereby teachers, especially teachers, can realize their professional, political, cultural, and social identities. Teacher educators and administrators of English language teacher development centers may gain profits from the results of the present research. They should focus more on various kinds of instructors' identities (like professional identity) and their self-efficacy as two influential factors in teachers' professional development and performance. Instructors who possess high levels of professional identity and self-efficacy can demonstrate better and more effective performance.

6.2. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The current research suffered from some limitations. Firstly, this study was undertaken only in Bukan, West Azerbaijan, Iran. Secondly, the instructors taking part in this study were selected via convenience sampling which might endanger the representativeness of the sample of the study. Furthermore, because of the relatively low number of instructors, generalization of the results of this research for all English language teachers should be done with caution. Finally, this research study examined the link between professional identity and self-efficacy; however, other qualities like stress, motivation, and so on were not considered in this study which might affect the quality and direction of the bond between the variables under the focus of this research.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) certify/certifies that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-

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