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Internship as a Process of Professional Socialization: Reproducing the Professional Identity of Pre-Service Arabic Language Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the role of internship as a process of professional socialization in shaping and strengthening the professional identity of pre-service Arabic language teachers at Shahid Beheshti Campus, Bandar Abbas, for the cohorts admitted in 2022.

Methods: In this study, professional identity was conceptualized as a socio-cultural construct and examined through four components — self-efficacy, professional commitment, organizational belonging, and occupational self-awareness — to clarify how practical experiences strengthen the development of these dimensions through symbolic interaction and the internalization of institutional roles. The present study was qualitative and employed a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using a three-stage coding process (open, axial, and selective). Member checking and data triangulation were used to enhance validity and trustworthiness.

Results: The results showed that internship experiences, as a social field, strengthen pre-service teachers' professional identity. Reflection on performance and interaction with students enhanced occupational self-awareness and revealed their strengths and weaknesses. Practical experiences increased self-confidence and self-efficacy and improved classroom-management ability and the implementation of instructional plans. Participation in school activities also strengthened professional commitment and organizational belonging, enhancing a sense of responsibility toward students and the school institution. In their mutual interaction, these components created a supportive cycle that ensures the sustainable development of professional identity.

Conclusions: The study's final conclusion is that internship goes beyond practical experience: it is a transformative, sociological process that, by strengthening the components of professional identity, can meaningfully improve the quality of teacher education.

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Introduction

One of the fields of study within Iran's higher education system is Arabic language and literature. Owing to its rich and firmly established background in religious teachings, this field also possesses considerable cultural[1] and symbolic[2] capital; consequently, its social standing extends beyond national borders and is also recognized regionally and internationally. From a sociological perspective, improving the quality of education and developing this field matters not only as an educational goal but also as a means of reproducing and consolidating the professional and social identity of pre-service teachers. Iranian universities are likewise striving to become credible centers that train professional actors in the field of Arabic language education and, through the creation of social capital[3] and professional networks[4], strengthen the field's influence and standing. The necessity of learning Arabic for Iranians — whether from the standpoint of religious needs or in terms of preserving and transmitting cultural and literary capital — is undeniable. However, a review of the outcomes of educational policies and programs shows that Arabic language education faces inefficiencies and structural challenges that have reduced students' symbolic capital and motivation, rendering the field less appealing and less influential in many universities. Numerous studies indicate that Arabic language education in Iran, both at the school level and in higher education, suffers from a range of shortcomings and problems that diminish students' interest and motivation (Hakimzadeh et al., 2015; Rasolnejad & Khakpour, 2019). Some studies have also shown that university students of Arabic frequently experience a lack of motivation (Yaghoubi & Abdi, 2022; Azarshab & Homayouni, 2015), and in many cases, if they continue into graduate studies, tend to shift toward fields other than Arabic (Rasooli et al., 2015; Alilu et al., 2021).

Researchers have long examined these challenges and identified numerous underlying causes. Some argue that Iran's lack of sustained, direct contact with Arabic-language learning communities, together with a failure to apply linguistic findings to Arabic instruction, has meant that no meaningful momentum or transformation has emerged in this field (Shokrani, 1996); others point to students' lack of enthusiasm resulting from inefficient methods of teaching Arabic at the university level (Motaghi-Zadeh et al., 2010); and others attribute the challenges of Arabic education in Iran to a range of macro- and micro-level causes (Hakimzadeh et al., 2015).

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From a sociological standpoint, the persistence of inefficiencies and structural challenges in Arabic language education — from weak curricula to a shortage of practical opportunities and inadequate processes of professional socialization — not only affects the quality of learning but can also reduce professional commitment and weaken pre-service teachers' sense of belonging toward their future careers. In such circumstances, internship emerges as one of the most important mechanisms for compensating for these shortcomings, since by providing an interactive environment, real teaching experience, and continuous feedback, it enables the reconstruction and strengthening of pre-service teachers' professional identity. Through enhancing self-awareness, increasing self-efficacy, reinforcing motivation, and fostering a sense of professional belonging, this process helps consolidate pre-service teachers' professional capital and social readiness for effective entry into the field of education.

Yet despite the considerable body of research on the challenges of Arabic language education, the role of internship in shaping the professional identity of pre-service teachers in this field remains understudied. Most studies have focused on curricular and instructional weaknesses, with little attention to field experiences and processes of professional socialization. Evidence on how internship strengthens components such as self-efficacy, commitment, and organizational belonging remains limited. The present study therefore seeks to fill this gap through a sociological analysis of pre-service teachers' lived experience in the internship setting.

Accordingly, this article focuses on the framework of the four key components of professional identity — self-efficacy, professional commitment, organizational belonging, and occupational self-awareness — to examine the sociological mechanisms underlying the development of pre-service teachers' professional identity in the internship setting. The overall aim of the study is to clarify how internship contributes to the reproduction of the professional identity of pre-service Arabic language teachers and to offer a practical analysis of strategies that teacher-education planners can adopt to sustainably strengthen pre-service teachers' professional identity. These strategies include designing purposeful internships with clearly defined practical experiences, regular reflection sessions, and opportunities for active participation in school life, so as to strengthen pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, commitment, organizational belonging, and occupational self-awareness. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

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1. How does internship contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' occupational self-awareness and self-efficacy?

2. What role does internship play in strengthening pre-service teachers' professional commitment?

3. How do pre-service teachers evaluate their internship experiences in terms of enhancing their organizational belonging?

Theoretical Framework and Foundations

Professional identity[5] is an interconnected set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and competencies that defines an individual as a specialist in his or her field of work and, functioning as a strategic framework, organizes that individual's orientations and actions within the professional environment (Beijaard et al., 2004). Teachers' professional identity has, in recent decades, become one of the most prominent themes in educational research, since it is said to play a foundational role in the quality and effectiveness of their professional performance (Meyer et al., 2023). Broadly speaking, four main components play a central role in strengthening professional identity:

Self-Efficacy: self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her own ability to organize, manage, and effectively carry out the actions necessary for confronting and coping with the situations and challenges that lie ahead (Bandura, 1977). This belief rests on the premise of agency: an individual is more likely to engage in a given activity when he or she believes in his or her own ability to carry out that task successfully (Choong & Ng, 2024). Bandura identifies four main sources that shape self-efficacy expectations — sources that acquire meaning within the context of society and social interaction.

First, performance accomplishments[7] — the strongest source — become significant when an individual experiences success in the course of social activities, an experience that constitutes both a personal achievement and a reproduction of symbolic capital within the educational environment. Second, vicarious experience[8], which, through observing the successes of others within professional social networks, reinforces belief in one's own abilities and facilitates the internalization of professional identity. Third, verbal persuasion[9], which, in the form of positive feedback and verbal encouragement and support from mentors, peers, and students, strengthens motivation and social capital. Fourth, physiological and emotional states[10], whereby emotional and bodily experiences can redefine individuals' perceptions of their own abilities and affect professional identity in either a positive or negative direction.

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In the context of education and internship, sources of self-efficacy operate as a network within a sociological framework. Successful teaching experiences, observation of professional role models, receipt of positive feedback, and emotion management enhance pre-service teachers' self-confidence and individual motivation and, within the context of social and symbolic interactions, improve the quality of their teaching, their organizational belonging, and their engagement with the educational community (Bandura, 1977).

In general, self-efficacy, as a psychological resource, reflects an individual's evaluation of his or her own future performance and emphasizes the perception of one's abilities rather than one's actual competence (Sun et al., 2025).

Organizational Belonging: organizational belonging is a psychological state that determines the degree of an individual's attachment to an organization and guides his or her professional behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Organizational belonging reflects an individual's willingness to remain in the organization, motivation for active participation, and adherence to the organization's values and goals. Within a sociological framework, organizational belonging — particularly in educational settings — refers to a sense of attachment and loyalty to the organizational structure, collective goals, and cultural norms.

Over the past decade, organizational belonging has become one of the most important outcomes examined within the field of psychological capital and reflects the psychological bond and loyalty of employees to their organization (Muhammad Khan et al., 2025).

This psychological bond has a direct effect on employees' performance, mental health, and job satisfaction and can improve their perception of organizational constraints, interpersonal conflicts, and work–family conflict. It can also reduce cognitive failures and fatigue, both directly and through reducing work-related stress (Petitta & Ghezzi, 2025).

Within the three-component model, organizational belonging is divided into three key elements: affective commitment[12], continuance commitment[13], and normative commitment[14]. Affective commitment reflects an individual's psychological attachment and sense of belonging to the organization and, in educational settings, is strengthened through successful teaching experiences and positive interaction with students. Continuance commitment stems from practical considerations and the costs of leaving the organization; pre-service teachers, owing to limited alternative opportunities and reliance on school resources, tend to remain connected to the

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organization. Normative commitment refers to a sense of moral responsibility and adherence to collective goals; influenced by school culture and professional norms, pre-service teachers carry out their duties beyond formal obligations, regarding this as a moral and cultural matter (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Accordingly, designing internship programs that strengthen all three components of organizational belonging can lay the groundwork for developing professional identity and increasing pre-service teachers' occupational loyalty.

Interpersonal interactions also play a fundamental role in shaping employees' sense of belonging. Based on the need-to-belong theory, this sense reflects the extent to which individuals wish to identify with and align themselves with the organization — a process indicating the degree to which employees consider themselves part of the organization (Su et al., 2024).

In general, teachers' sense of belonging can be examined at two related but distinct levels: workplace belonging and professional belonging. Workplace belonging reflects a teacher's sense of connection and attachment to the school, colleagues, students, and administrators, whereas professional belonging goes beyond a specific school and refers to a teacher's identification with the teaching profession more broadly, encompassing alignment with professional values and standards, disciplinary identity, and participation in the overall development of the field of education. This type of belonging is formed through professional networks, continuous learning, and shared educational goals (Wator et al., 2025).

Professional Commitment: Professional commitment reflects the depth of an individual's attachment to his or her profession and sense of responsibility, which leads to the thorough and precise performance of occupational duties (Yavuz, 2025). This attribute is one of the fundamental components intertwined with a teacher's professional identity, since teachers must sustain and reinforce stable intrinsic motivation in order to respond effectively to the expectations of the education system, meet the diverse needs of learners, and achieve their personal and professional goals (Ma, 2022).

In other words, professional commitment is not limited to performing one's duties; rather, it represents the psychological bond and deep sense of belonging a teacher feels toward the teaching profession. This bond reflects the degree of value, interest, and engagement a teacher brings to professional duties, and its multidimensional nature encompasses commitment to the profession, the school, and the students (Cheng & Zhao, 2023).

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One study shows that professional commitment is a primary factor in pre-service teachers' motivation and persistence on the path to learning and entering the teaching profession, and has a considerable effect on their future professional development and performance. Pre-service teachers with high commitment are more likely to successfully complete their training programs, pursue their teaching path with clear goals, and avoid leaving the profession (Cheng & Zhao, 2023). These findings show that professional commitment both affects individual performance and has multiple manifestations and dimensions that can shape teachers' level of professionalism.

Moreover, professional commitment has diverse dimensions that affect teachers' level of professionalism and the manner of their engagement with the school environment. These dimensions create important differences in teachers' behavior and attitudes. Teachers with restricted professionalism tend to focus primarily on curricular content and classroom-level teaching processes, whereas teachers with extended professionalism generalize their attitudes and activities to the school organization as a whole. In this approach, teachers with restricted professionalism consider themselves responsible only for the students in their own classroom, whereas teachers with extended professionalism regard student development and progress as a collective responsibility shared among all members of the teaching staff (Bolat & Toytok, 2023). Professional commitment therefore both enhances teachers' individual performance and contributes to the formation of a professional school culture and the overall improvement of educational quality.

Occupational Self-Awareness: Self-awareness is one of the fundamental components of human cognition and enables an individual to examine his or her inner self, recognize himself or herself as distinct from the surrounding environment, and accurately understand his or her own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Ohlsson & Sjöstrand, 2025). This basic cognitive capacity lays the groundwork for the formation of occupational self-awareness and enables teachers to reflect on their beliefs and professional identity. As a central element in the structure of teachers' beliefs and professional identity, occupational self-awareness guides them on the path of continuous development and improved quality of educational performance, and over time empowers teachers and improves students' learning experiences and academic outcomes (Juma, 2024).

Reflection, in addition to its key role in learning, also forms the basis for the development of teachers' professional identity. Through reflection, teachers can carefully analyze their

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instructional activities, identify strengths and weaknesses, recognize obstacles, and undertake the planning necessary for continuous improvement — a practice that empowers them on the path of independent professional development and lays the foundation for the formation of a stable and dynamic professional identity throughout their careers (Protassova et al., 2021).

Self-awareness also plays a pivotal role in identifying areas for growth and personal development. Pre-service teachers with higher levels of self-awareness are more likely to be receptive to learning and personal development and therefore make more effective use of opportunities to grow and improve their professional skills. Teacher-education programs should therefore focus on strengthening self-awareness, provide adequate space for reflection, and integrate strategies for personal development into the process of teacher training. Such an approach can help produce capable, authentic teachers who are prepared to face the educational challenges of primary schools (Ertanti et al., 2024).

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the four components of professional identity

Literature Review

Over the past several decades, numerous studies have examined teachers' professional identity and the role of practical experience in strengthening it. These studies have sought to examine various aspects of professional-identity development — including self-efficacy, organizational and professional belonging, and occupational self-awareness — and to show how internship

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experiences and practical training can play an effective role in shaping and strengthening these components. Much of this research has examined the factors influencing pre-service teachers' motivation, commitment, and performance and has emphasized that the development of professional identity is a dynamic, ongoing process requiring interaction between theoretical education and practical experience. The following section reviews some of these studies and their key findings, which form the theoretical and practical basis for the present study:

Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) showed that teacher self-efficacy is one of the key factors in instructional success and is directly related to teachers' persistence, motivation, commitment, and instructional behavior, as well as to student performance and motivation. Their findings indicate that self-efficacy not only affects teaching quality but also functions as a driving force in classroom interactions and in managing difficult situations. Accordingly, strengthening pre-service teachers' self-efficacy during internship is of particular importance, since teachers with higher self-efficacy have greater confidence when facing instructional challenges and, through deeper professional commitment and a willingness for continuous learning, also foster the growth and progress of their students.

Rastgari et al. (2023), in an article titled “Representation of the Professional Identity of Farhangian University Pre-Service Teachers during Their Studies,” presented pre-service teachers' reported experiences in four categories: a sense of being a student who thinks like a teacher; confrontation with present and past experiences, including internal tensions and dilemmas; increased awareness of the complexity of the classroom context and the teaching profession, encompassing future teachers' aspirations and concerns; and, finally, they concluded that the findings could inform the planning of pre-service teacher education at Farhangian University.

Torres-Cladera et al. (2021) describe pre-service teachers' professional identity during internship as a dynamic, social process shaped through interaction with mentors, the university, and practical experience. They identify three key factors in this process: professional self-awareness, university reflection seminars, and interaction and cooperation between the university and the school. The study specifies that, for professional identity to fully form, internship programs must provide opportunities for reflection, practical experience, and effective social interaction; the absence of any of these factors can reduce pre-service teachers' motivation and commitment. Internship

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programs should therefore be designed to establish a meaningful link between theoretical and practical training and to strengthen pre-service teachers' professional identity.

Moghimi et al. (2023), in a study titled “From Motivations to Fears: An Exploration of Teachers' Professional Identity in Yazd,” showed that the state of teachers' professional identity is in decline. Teachers have become dissatisfied and protesting subjects; their professional identity is beset by challenges, fears, and concerns; their motivations have shifted and even diminished; and they report disappointment, discouragement, and anxiety about their professional future.

Chen et al. (2020) examined the relationship among social support, professional identity, and academic self-efficacy among pre-service special-education teachers and showed that these three variables are positively and significantly related to one another. They emphasized that professional identity fully mediates the relationship between social support and academic self-efficacy. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening professional identity alongside social support in order to improve the quality of education and occupational readiness; internship programs and university support have the greatest effect when combined with strategies for strengthening professional identity. In other words, social support that does not take professional identity into account has only a limited effect on academic and professional success.

Adib et al. (2017), in a study titled “Professional Identity of Pre-Service Teachers at Farhangian University, East Azerbaijan Province,” showed that the professional identity of pre-service teachers at Farhangian University in East Azerbaijan Province is influenced by several factors. The qualitative findings pointed to the agency of three categories: “perception of the realities of the teaching profession,” “expectation of incongruence with the teaching profession,” and “the dignity of the teaching profession.” In the quantitative section, “the role of teaching and learning” had the highest mean score.

Taghizadeh (2021), in a study titled “The Role of Internship in Professional Development Related to Arabic Language Teaching,” showed that the internship course has a considerable effect on improving the teaching competencies of pre-service Arabic language teachers. Pre-service teachers who participated in internship teach with greater confidence after graduation and are able to translate knowledge into practice in real instructional settings. The study recommends that Farhangian University establish a program enabling Arabic-major pre-service teachers to benefit

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from internship experience in Arabic-speaking countries and from professional development there, so as to organize their own learning and teaching skills.

Pi et al. (2024) showed that special-education teachers' professional identity is positively related to their professional development, with self-efficacy acting as a mediating variable in this process. Perceived social support also plays a moderating role in strengthening this relationship, particularly for teachers with lower self-efficacy who require greater support. The findings emphasize the importance of attending to professional identity and providing appropriate social support in enhancing pre-service teachers' motivation, commitment, and competence, and specify that combining internal components such as professional identity with external factors such as social support provides a comprehensive foundation for teachers' professional growth and development — a foundation of great importance when confronting professional challenges.

Ahmadi (2020), in a study titled "An Analysis of Professional Identity Formation among Farhangian University Pre-Service Teachers," showed that the university's role in shaping students' professional identity has been both negative and positive. Analysis of the notes indicated that students who entered university with high expectations had those expectations moderated upon confronting reality, while students who held negative preconceptions gradually came to understand the importance of teaching and adapted more successfully to university conditions.

A review of prior research shows that existing studies have mainly focused on identifying the factors influencing teachers' professional identity and on examining the role of practical experience and field-based training in enhancing occupational self-awareness, professional commitment, and organizational belonging. These studies have demonstrated the importance of interaction with the educational environment, professional reflection, observation of teaching role models, and receipt of social support in strengthening teachers' professional identity. However, most of these studies have addressed the effects of internship on each component of professional identity separately and in a limited way, and have paid insufficient attention to internship as an integrated process of professional socialization and to the mutual interaction among the components in strengthening the professional identity of pre-service Arabic language teachers. By focusing on the four key components of occupational self-awareness, self-efficacy, professional commitment, and organizational belonging, and by analyzing internship experiences, the present study seeks to fill this gap and to show how practical experiences and structured reflection within a real school

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environment can lead to the sustainable development of pre-service teachers' professional identity. The innovation of the present study thus lies in its integrated, sociological examination of the role of internship in reproducing the professional identity of pre-service Arabic language teachers.

Material and Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and a descriptive–explanatory method, with the aim of examining the role of internship in enhancing pre-service teachers' professional identity. The study focused on four main components of professional identity — occupational self-awareness, self-efficacy, professional commitment, and organizational belonging — and sought to provide an in-depth analysis of the effect of pre-service teachers' field experiences on the formation and strengthening of these components.

The study population consisted of 100 pre-service teachers at the Shahid Beheshti Campus in Bandar Abbas who had completed Internship courses 1, 2, and 3. Of these, 20 individuals were selected using a purposive–random sampling method, based on academic records, active participation in internship courses, and diversity of school experiences, so that the sample would reflect a broad range of real encounters with the educational environment.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and covered themes such as the quality of the internship experience, interaction with mentors and cooperating teachers, ways of engaging with students, teaching challenges, and the effect of these experiences on the development of pre-service teachers' skills and professional identity. All interviews were recorded, fully transcribed, and archived in both written and digital form.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through the stages of open, axial, and selective coding. Initial codes were first extracted based on participants' statements and shared experiences. Similar codes were then grouped into conceptual categories related to the components of professional identity. At this stage, participants' experiences were compared with one another, and both common patterns and meaningful differences were identified. Finally, the themes were linked to the theoretical framework of professional identity and to the findings of prior research in order to provide a more precise interpretation of the results.

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To enhance the study's validity and reliability, the interview guide was first designed drawing on credible sources, prior research, and relevant theoretical frameworks, so that the questions would cover all intended dimensions of professional identity and potential bias would be avoided. In addition, the data-analysis process was peer-reviewed by other researchers to ensure the accuracy of the coding, the coherence of the themes, and the robustness of the study's conclusions. The preliminary findings were also shared with the participants, who offered their views on how well the results matched their actual experiences; this feedback was used to refine or complete the analyses. Together, these measures considerably enhanced the trustworthiness, credibility, and validity of the results and ensured that the study's final narrative offered a realistic and accurate reflection of pre-service teachers' lived experiences.

Results

The findings were organized around the four key components of professional identity — occupational self-awareness, self-efficacy, professional commitment, and organizational belonging — and are presented using pre-service teachers' conversational quotations together with qualitative content analysis. In each section, pre-service teachers' statements are presented directly and numbered so that the analytical process remains transparent and traceable.

Question 1: How does internship contribute to the development of your occupational self-awareness?

To answer this question, data from interviews with pre-service Arabic-language teachers at Farhangian University of Hormozgan were analyzed; the results are presented in the table 1.

Table 1. Internship contribute to the development of occupational self-awareness

No.	Sample Quotation	Conceptual Code	Sub-category	Key Component
1	"When the cooperating teacher was beside me and explained things, I realized where I was making mistakes and how to do better." / "The school mentor gave me feedback regularly..."	Observation and Feedback	Learning from Feedback and Performance Correction	Occupational Self-Awareness
2	"After every class, I would critique myself and think about what I had done right and what I needed to change." / "Some of what I had learned in class had to be adjusted once it came to practice..."	Analysis of Experience	Self-Evaluation and Internal Critique	Occupational Self-Awareness
3	"Connecting with the children helped me understand how my teaching persona affects their learning." / "When I entered the classroom and worked with real students, I finally understood where I was strong and where I needed to improve."	Interaction with Students	Recognizing Professional Strengths and Weaknesses	Occupational Self-Awareness
4	"Sometimes at night I would think about the classes and ask myself what I would do differently if I did it again." / "Internship made me really think about what kind of teacher I actually want to be..."	Deep Reflection	Reflective Thinking and Professional Identity Formation	Occupational Self-Awareness

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The table above shows that the internship experience was effective in reproducing and strengthening pre-service teachers' occupational self-awareness through several complementary pathways. First, observing mentors' performance and receiving regular, purposeful feedback revealed pre-service teachers' individual strengths and weaknesses, and through these symbolic actions[17], they were able to identify and evaluate their position within the school's social and professional network. This observation and feedback led pre-service teachers not only to assess their own performance but also to understand effective professional behaviors and practices. Second, analyzing experiences and conducting self-evaluation after each internship session created a kind of reflective process that contributed to the formation of symbolic capital, the strengthening of professional judgment, and a structured understanding of personal abilities and limitations, and also made it possible to plan for performance improvement and to formulate professional-development goals. Third, direct, day-to-day interaction with students provided an opportunity to practically experience reciprocal interaction[18] and to receive social feedback, and revealed to pre-service teachers the effect of their teaching style and professional role in a real environment; this interaction enabled them to observe students' reactions, adjust their instructional decisions, and arrive at a more operational and realistic understanding of their role in the classroom and the school. Overall, the combination of these three pathways elevated pre-service teachers' occupational self-awareness from a descriptive level to an analytical, professional level and provided a solid foundation for the growth of their professional identity.

Question 2: What role does internship play in your self-efficacy?

To answer this question, data from interviews with pre-service Arabic-language teachers at Farhangian University of Hormozgan were analyzed; the results are presented in the table 2.

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Table 2. Role of internship in self-efficacy

No.	Sample Quotation	Conceptual Code	Sub-category	Key Component
1	"When I was able to run the lesson without the cooperating teacher's full assistance, my self-confidence rose considerably." / "When I taught on my own and managed the class, my self-confidence increased a great deal..."	Confidence in Abilities	Strengthening Professional Self-Confidence	Self-Efficacy
2	"When I managed a difficult situation and kept the students under control, I felt I could solve any problem." / "Dealing with real classroom problems taught me how to find solutions..."	Problem-Solving	Skill in Managing Difficult Situations	Self-Efficacy
3	"With every teaching session, I felt my teaching skills were becoming better and more professional." / "Seeing how experienced colleagues teach made me realize I could try similar methods too..."	Skill Practice	Gradual Improvement of Teaching Abilities	Self-Efficacy
4	"When the teacher and students praised my performance, my motivation and self-belief increased." / "Every time I managed the class well and the students engaged with me, my sense of self-efficacy grew stronger..."	Triangulated Feedback	Strengthening Motivation and Self-Belief	Self-Efficacy

The table above shows that the internship experience, as a social and interaction-based setting, played an important and central role in strengthening pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. First, independent teaching and successful classroom management increased pre-service teachers' confidence in their individual abilities and enabled them to make their professional decisions with greater assurance. Second, reciprocal interaction with students and engagement with school staff helped pre-service teachers identify and evaluate their position and role within the school's professional social network and to receive concrete, practical feedback. Third, confronting difficult situations and solving real school problems created an opportunity to practically experience decision-making and the management of complex circumstances, enabling pre-service teachers to strengthen their problem-solving skills and flexibility. In addition, through social modeling and observing the behavior of mentors and professional colleagues, pre-service teachers were able to model effective instructional practices and gradually enhance their abilities and teaching style. In this way, the combination of these practical and feedback-based experiences transferred pre-service teachers' self-efficacy from a theoretical, potential level to a practical, tangible ability and created a solid foundation for their professional confidence.

Question 3: How do pre-service teachers evaluate their internship experiences in terms of strengthening their professional commitment and organizational belonging?

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To answer this question, data from interviews with pre-service Arabic-language teachers at Farhangian University of Hormozgan were analyzed; the results are presented in the table 3.

Table 3. Role of internship experiences in professional commitment and organizational belonging

No.	Sample Quotation	Conceptual Code	Sub-category	Key Component
1	"After seeing the school's challenges, I understood that teaching is a difficult job, but I want to stay on this path." / "Internship showed me how influential the teaching profession can be..."	Commitment to the Profession	Accepting Difficulties and Remaining Committed to the Profession	Professional Commitment
2	"When I took part in school activities, I felt I was part of the teaching team." / "I felt I was part of a real teaching team..."	Belonging to the School	Participation and Connection with the Educational Community	Organizational Belonging
3	"A sense of responsibility toward the students made me teach more seriously and devote more time." / "When I saw that what I did had a real effect on students' learning..."	Sense of Responsibility	Strengthening Diligence and Accountability	Professional Commitment
4	"Every successful experience strengthened my motivation to continue on my professional path and try harder." / "Working with mentors and fellow students made me feel like a member of a professional community..."	Connection to Professional Goals	Increased Motivation and Occupational Purposefulness	Professional Commitment and Organizational Belonging

The table above shows that the internship experience, as a broad interactional and social setting, played a very important role in strengthening pre-service teachers' understanding of the value, importance, and complexity of the teaching profession. Active participation in school activities, planning and delivering lessons, and sustained interaction with mentors, colleagues, and peers not only increased their practical skills but also strengthened the processes of reproducing social capital and forming collective identity[19] among pre-service teachers. These experiences enhanced their sense of belonging to the educational community and connection with the school environment and led pre-service teachers to a deeper understanding of their professional roles and responsibilities.

Observing the effect of teaching on student learning and accepting responsibility for instructional outcomes, through reciprocal interaction with students and receiving symbolic feedback[20], made pre-service teachers both more committed and adherent to their professional duties and more confident in their abilities and decision-making power. Confronting real classroom situations and solving practical school problems provided an opportunity to practically experience decision-making and the management of complex circumstances and allowed them to concretely strengthen their flexibility and problem-solving skills.

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In addition, experiencing small successes and observing the positive results of individual efforts, and connecting these to long-term professional goals, increased pre-service teachers' motivation and occupational purposefulness within the framework of social networks and symbolic interactions. Sustained interaction with mentors and professional colleagues, observation of effective teaching practices, and modeling on them helped pre-service teachers improve their teaching style and develop stable professional behaviors. Together, these experiences elevated pre-service teachers' professional identity from a theoretical, abstract level to a practical, tangible, and stable level and formed a solid foundation for their professional confidence, belonging, and commitment.

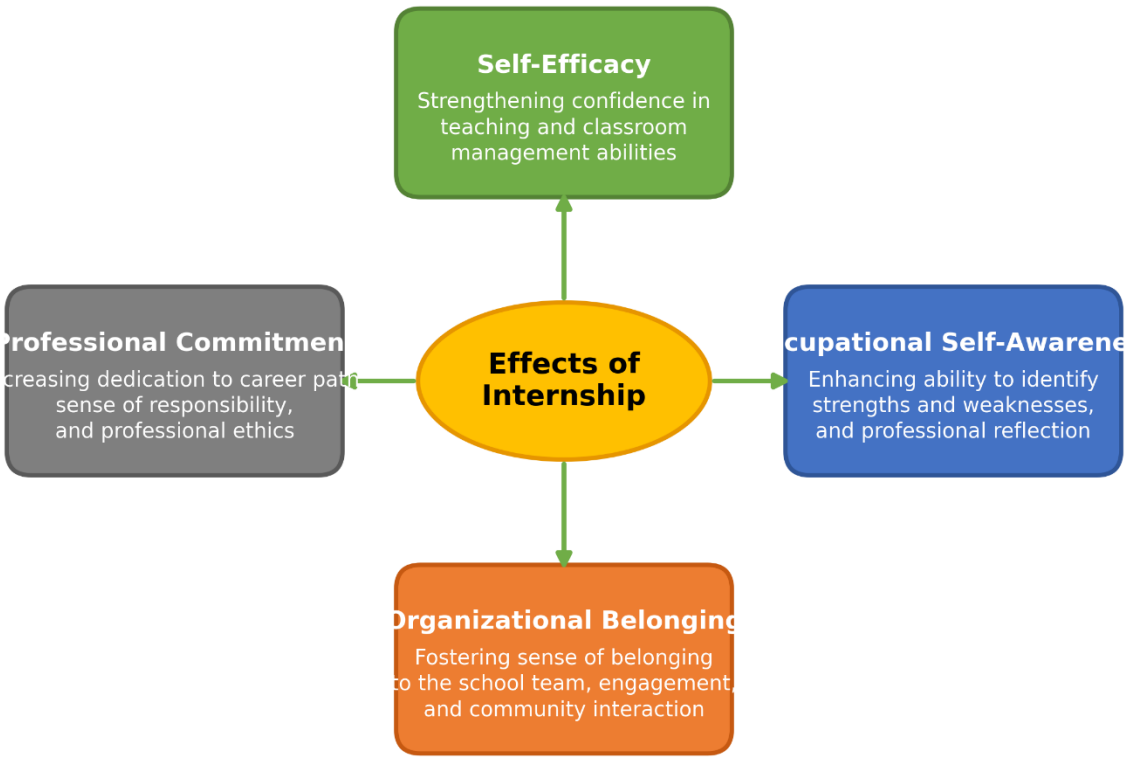

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram of the components of internship's effect

The diagram above shows that internship, by providing practical experience and structured reflection, strengthens teachers' self-awareness and self-confidence, consolidates applied skills and professional commitment, and increases their sense of organizational belonging and participation in school goals.

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Discussion

In response to the first research question, the results showed that internship plays an effective role in developing pre-service teachers' occupational self-awareness. Through observing and receiving feedback from mentors, analyzing their own experiences after classes, interacting with students, and engaging in deep reflection, pre-service teachers identified their professional strengths and weaknesses and strengthened their skills of professional reflection and self-evaluation. This finding is consistent with those of Torres-Cladera et al. (2021) and Rastgari et al. (2023), which emphasize that practical experience and structured reflection enhance teachers' professional self-awareness and competence. In analyzing this finding, it can be said that internship, as a social-interactional field, enables the recognition of one's professional position and the internalization of the teacher's role, thereby facilitating the process of professional-identity development.

Based on this finding, it is recommended that internship programs include regular reflection sessions and opportunities for active interaction with mentors and students so that pre-service teachers' occupational self-awareness is sustainably strengthened.

In response to the second research question, the results showed that internship helps increase pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. Independent teaching, classroom management, confronting difficult situations, and receiving positive feedback enhanced their confidence in their professional abilities and improved their problem-solving skills and their ability to implement instructional plans. These results are consistent with the findings of Bandura (1977), Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), and Chen et al. (2020), which emphasize the role of practical experience, observation of professional role models, and social feedback in strengthening self-efficacy. Analysis of this finding shows that strengthening self-efficacy through internship not only increases individual ability but also enables active participation in the school environment and the effective implementation of instructional programs. A practical recommendation related to this finding is that internship programs include independent teaching practice, management of real situations, and structured feedback from mentors and colleagues so that pre-service teachers' self-efficacy is strengthened.

In response to the third research question, the results showed that internship increases pre-service teachers' professional commitment and organizational belonging. Participation in school activities, observing the effect of teaching on students, collaborating with colleagues, and receiving

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continuous feedback strengthened affective, normative, and continuance commitment, as well as a sense of belonging to the school and the educational community. These findings are consistent with the results of Pi et al. (2024), Ahmadi (2020), and Adib et al. (2017), which show that practical experience and identity-related reflection enhance teachers' professional commitment and organizational belonging. Analysis of this finding indicates that creating opportunities for active participation and observing the effect of professional actions increases pre-service teachers' motivation and sense of responsibility and provides the groundwork for the sustainable development of professional identity. A practical recommendation related to this finding is that internship programs be designed to provide pre-service teachers with active participation in school programs and activities, group collaboration, and opportunities for continuous feedback.

Overall, the study's findings show that internship, by strengthening occupational self-awareness, self-efficacy, professional commitment, and organizational belonging, lays the groundwork for the formation of pre-service teachers' sustainable professional identity. These experiences enhance teaching and classroom-management skills, strengthen professional motivation and competence, and prepare pre-service teachers to fulfill diverse roles within the school.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Farhangian University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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