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## Association between Influential Factors and Teaching Profession as Career Choice among Undergraduate Student Teachers: A Structural Equation Study

**Asociación entre factores influyentes y la profesión docente como elección de carrera entre estudiantes docentes de pregrado: un estudio de ecuación estructural**

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### Abstract

This study investigated the fitness of the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice scale in a Kurdish educational setting among undergraduate teacher-training students (N=1335) encompassing nursery, primary and secondary education. The factors motivating this population to become teachers were examined in the Iraqi-Kurdish educational context. The-FIT-Choice scale was translated into the Kurdish language and its reliability and validity were measured. Intrinsic/altruistic and social utility values were found to be the most important factors behind the choice of the teaching profession as a career. Intrinsic career value, social contribution, the experience of prior learning and teaching were also influential motivational factors in this choice, as were social influences and social status factors compared to similar research conducted in Australian and Turkish educational settings, however, fall back career, job security, time for family, job transferability, the opportunity to shape the future of children and enhance social equity did not demonstrate meaningful value as motivational factors in this survey. One of the most important results differentiating this from other studies was that the addition of moral value factors to the original scale revealed that these values played an important role in students' perceptions towards the teaching profession as a career.

**Key Words:** career choice, choosing teaching, FIT-Choice scale, motivation factors, student teachers.

### Resumen

Este estudio investigó la idoneidad de la escala Elección de Factores que Influyen en la Enseñanza (FIT) en un entorno educativo kurdo entre estudiantes de pregrado de formación docente (N = 1335) que abarca educación infantil, primaria y secundaria. Los factores que motivaron a esta población a convertirse en docentes fueron examinados en el contexto educativo iraquí-kurdo. La escala-FIT-Choice se tradujo al idioma kurdo y se midió su fiabilidad y validez. Los valores intrínsecos / altruistas y de utilidad social fueron los factores más importantes detrás de la elección de la profesión docente como carrera. El valor intrínseco de la carrera, la contribución social, la experiencia del aprendizaje previo y la enseñanza también fueron factores motivadores influyentes en esta elección, al igual que las influencias sociales y los factores de estatus social en comparación con investigaciones similares realizadas en entornos educativos australianos y turcos, sin embargo, retroceden carrera, trabajo seguridad, tiempo para la familia, transferibilidad laboral, la oportunidad de dar forma al futuro de los niños y mejorar la equidad social no demostraron un valor significativo como factores motivadores en esta encuesta. Uno de los resultados más importantes que diferenciaron esto de otros estudios fue que la adición de factores de valor moral a la escala original reveló que estos valores desempeñaban un papel importante en las percepciones de los estudiantes hacia la profesión docente como carrera.

**Palabras clave:** elección de carrera, elección de enseñanza, escala FIT-Choice, factores de motivación, estudiantes docentes.

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## Introduction

Unlike many OECD member countries (OECD 2005), Iraqi Kurdistan does not have a shortage of trained teachers, rather, as a result in part of ISIS attacks in the region, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has been unable to run effective teacher recruitment exercises (Balyer and Ozcan 2014; Eren and Tezel 2010a; Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus 2012a; König and Rothland 2012; Richardson and Watt 2006a). As a result of this obstacle, a huge number of prospective teachers waiting to be recruited has built up. Nonetheless, every year the student enrolment quota for the Education Faculties has been increasing (Surchi, 2017). The main reason for this increase is to reduce society's pressure on the government by enrolling all students who receive at least 60% in their University Entrance (Wezari) Examination to the relevant departments. Thus, despite an extremely high number of available teachers who have not yet been appointed, there is an ever-growing number of undergraduate students who are continuing to choose the teaching profession as a career. On the other hand, the quality of teachers has a huge impact on the quality of education (Cuy Herrera, 2016), Kurdistan Region is trying to bring up quality teachers as well.

In this context, this study focuses on the reasons and motivational factors for the growing number of people who choose the teaching profession as a career despite the very limited job vacancies. In other words, what motivates people to become teachers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq?

Since there is rarely a straightforward single reason for choosing a particular profession as a career, social scientists, vocational and behavioural psychologists have developed ways to study the influential factors in this choice. Frank Parsons (Parsons 1909), the founder of the career choice concept, was the first to propose that every individual must find and maintain a positive relationship with their work environment to be successful. In the mid-1960s Rene Dawis and Lloyd Lofquist (Dawis, Lofquist, and Weiss 1968) examined the linkage between need/abilities and satisfaction/satisfactoriness in career choice. Later, Holland (1985, 1997) proposed that there should be a close match between an individual's personality and interest types and the dominant work environmental types. Social Cognitive Career Theorists (Lent, Brown and Hackett) went on to claim that individuals make their career choices considering the internal and environmental

factors that have an effect on their self-efficacy and career interest (Sharf 1992). According to Brown (Brown 2002), meanwhile the most influential theoretical underpinnings of career choice and development are psychological and sociological factors. The psychological aspects lead to intrinsic influential factors that focus on personalities, interests, abilities, values and opinions. On the other hand, the sociological aspects lead to extrinsic factors that tend to be based on gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and nationality, as well as family influence, community values, mentors, labour market structure, student academic ability and achievement, and so on (Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith 1989). It is generally accepted that teaching as a career choice is also subjected to these motivational influences.

Motivational factors influencing choice of teaching profession.

In the course of the last five decades, there has been a growing research interest in understanding teachers' motivations, beliefs, values, career guidance and development to figure out the main motivational factors that initiate individuals to choose the teaching profession as a career (Brookhart and Freeman, 1992; Eren and Tezel 2010a; Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000; Malderez et al. 2007; Richardson and Watt 2005; Watt and Richardson 2008). These studies have identified that the most influential factors behind the choice of the teaching profession lie in three main areas, namely: (1) altruistic reasons that deal with the belief that teaching is a socially worthy activity, and the desire to help children and to improve society; (2) intrinsic reasons which cover aspects of the job activity itself, such as the activity of teaching children, and an interest in using subject matter knowledge and expertise; and (3) extrinsic reasons, which entail aspects of the job which are not inherent in the work itself, such as long holidays, level of pay and status. (Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000).

Dick and Rallis (1991) argued that social utility influences students' career choice both directly and indirectly in their model for career choice, which they adapted from Parsons et al. (Eccles, Adler, and Kaczala, 1982). Another study, conducted among two cohorts of first year pre-service education candidates (N=488, N=298) in an urban university in Australia, Watt and Richardson (2007) found that intrinsic value, social utility value and teaching ability have the

greatest influence on career choice. Prior teaching and learning experiences and personal utility value followed those motivational factors. Güneyli and Aslan (2009) figured out in their research, conducted in Cyprus and Turkey, that altruistic motivational effects are more dominant than the other factors among undergraduate prospective teachers, to the extent that teaching is considered almost as a sacred duty.

Eren and Tezel (2010b) emphasised that ability, intrinsic career value, social contribution and career choice satisfaction were the endogenous factors in career choice in terms of future time planning. In their research study, they found out that student teachers' career choice moderately correlated with their ability, intrinsic career value, social contribution and career choice satisfaction, which were higher than the other subscales such as, fall back career, social influences, salary and social dissuasion factors. In a study on these issues, Kiliç, Watt, and Richardson (2012) reported that the highest rated motivational factors were social utility values followed by job security, working with children and prior teaching and learning experiences. Intrinsic career value and ability were the other most motivational factors. Job transferability, social influences, and fallback career were the least effective factors.

Padhy et al. (2015) obtained similar results in their structural equation modelling research, which is the only SEM study in the literature in terms of students' choice of the teaching profession as a career. In this research they have found that the factors related to expectancy-environment, expectancy intrinsic, social media education, social prior experience and social suggestions were the most influential ones, whereas value-related factors and expectancy-extrinsic were insignificant.

Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2012), meanwhile, applied the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice scale to the Dutch context, finding that teaching ability was an influential motivational factor in the decision to become a teacher. Social influences, time for family, prior teaching and learning experiences, and enhanced social equity were the least important. Satisfaction with choice was one of the most highly rated beliefs of pre-service teachers; salary and status, on the other hand, were not highly rated.

The main aims of these studies were to find out the factors motivating undergraduates to seeking to become teachers and, as a result, to improve

the quality of teaching to develop a highly-educated society (Richardson and Watt 2006b) as well as to find solutions for shortages of quality teachers (Eren and Tezel 2010a). As a result of shortages in quality teacher, teaching quality is one of the most important problems among the country members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) especially in the developed countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Woodward 2009). According to Zumwalt and Craig (2008), shortages in quality teachers vary from country to country and from one domain to another. In its report, UNESCO (UNESCO Education 2015) declared that in 30 of the 91 countries with data on trained teachers in 2012, less than 75 percent of teachers were trained to national standards. Eren and Tezel (2010), meanwhile, state that teacher shortages in science and mathematics are the most concerning issues in European countries, in England and Wales (Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000) and in the United States (Padhy et al. 2015). Eren and Tezel (2010) also reported that Turkey has been facing shortages of quality teachers in the fields of preschool teaching, special education teaching and English Language teaching. In Iraqi Kurdistan Region, however, the situation in terms of teacher needs is rather different, with a huge oversupply of trained teachers given that no teachers have been recruited because of financial crises in the Region for the last five years. On the other hand, the problem of a lack of quality teachers remains true for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in all the main educational subjects and this affects the teaching excellence significantly in all K-12 education from kindergarten to grade 12.

There have been very few researches conducted to look for the reasons for motivational factors of choosing a teaching profession and this a big gap to filled out in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In his research Celik (2019) found out that students in Kurdistan Region do not intend to choose teaching as a professional career.

So far, many FIT-Choice scale studies have been conducted in different country contexts, yet this research study will be the first initial investigation to figure out how the scale would function in a culturally and socially different Middle East country where the teaching profession is experiencing expansion.

This study was therefore constructed to test and validate the FIT-Choice scale in the Kurdish Educational context; and to figure out undergraduate prospective teachers' motivations,

views and aspirations for teaching according to the subjects they have been preparing to teach.

Research questions:

1. To what extent is the FIT-Choice scale suitable for the Kurdish context of university-based teacher education?
2. What are the motivational factors and perceptions of undergraduate student teacher candidates in respect to entering the teaching profession in Kurdistan?
3. To what extent do motivations to do with morality inform participants' choice of a teaching career?

### Theoretical framework

In this research, the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) scale, developed by Richardson and Watt (2006, 2007), was used to measure students' motivations for entering the teaching profession. This FIT-Choice scale is grounded in Eccles et al.'s expectancy-value theory (Eccles et al. 1982), which has proven to be valuable for guiding investigation of career choice, including for teaching (Kilinc et al. 2012). The scale includes different dimensions of intrinsic, 'altruistic'/social utility and personal utility values to assess attitudes towards teaching. The social utility values encompass four components: shape future of children/adolescents, enhance social equity, make social contribution and work with children/adolescents; the personal utility values include three components: job security, time for family and job transferability. Perceived teaching ability, prior teaching and learning experiences, social influences and teaching as a 'fall back' career are the four additional motivations measured and theorised by the FIT-Choice scale. Perceptions of task demand (expertise, high demand), task return (social status, salary), experiences of social dissuasion, and satisfaction with the choice of teaching as a career were also measured. In total, twelve motivation factors and six perception factors about the profession are tested in the FIT-Choice scale.

### Methodology

#### Study design

This study was conducted following a quantitative study design. FIT-Choice scale questionnaire survey hands out were delivered to the participants in order to find out motivational factors of teaching professional choice in Kurdistan Universities.

### Participants

Data were collected from the undergraduate students of the education faculties of five Kurdish Universities located in Erbil, Soran and Koya in 2017. To make the survey more reliable in terms of representing the whole population of region, some other universities, including a private one, were added to this study.

Overall, 2500 paper-based questionnaires, with the help of the deans of education faculties of those universities, were distributed to all levels of undergraduate students at the Education Faculties of the representative universities and 1750 of them were returned with a 70% response rate. 477 were excluded because of missing data, thus 1335 education faculty undergraduate students 476 (35.65%) female and 859 (64.34%) male represented the final samples.

### Procedure

After approval by the University Scientific Committee, data from participants were collected between February 1, -April 30 2017. The study was undertaken in two phases. In the first stage, the FIT-choice scale, adapted from Watt and Richardson's previous study (2007) was translated from English to Kurdish language by a bilingual lecturer of English-Kurdish translator, then by a bilingual third lecturer as a back translation. Since it was a translation, a piloted study was administered to the 50 university students at different levels to test the consistency of the language and level of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha .844). Based on the feedback from the pilot study, the questionnaire was tailored again in terms of the language consistency and administered to another 50 university students. These 100 students were not included in the final survey. After the consistency was completed, the final version of the questionnaire included 54 questions that took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. In the second phase of the study, the scientific committees of the five different universities scrutinised the questionnaires in terms of ethical issues and provided permission to conduct the study survey. With the help of the Deans of each Education Faculty, a lecturer was appointed to conduct the questionnaire in each faculty. Before administering the questionnaires, the researcher met with these lecturers to inform them about the aim of the research study, possible questions that may be raised during the survey and how to administer the questionnaire. All the participants were informed that taking part in this research study was voluntary and were guaranteed that the

information would be kept confidential. Also, they were informed that these data would be used only for this research study. The questionnaires were distributed to the 2500 participants who were asked to return them within one week. After collecting the questionnaires, the data were analyzed with IBM SPSS23.0 and IBM AMOS 23.0 software. For the initial validity of the collected data exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used. After the validation process, we used Cronbach's alpha to figure out the convergent and discriminant validities. Finally, we did structural equation modelling and a hierarchical regression analysis to estimate the impact of independent variables on dependent variables.

## Results

### Validity and Reliability

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alpha for a confirmation of the initial validity and reliability of the scale was utilised by using image extraction and varimax rotation to indicate the structure of important factors in this study. To indicate the proportion of variance in the variables that might be caused by underlying factors, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was used. This test measures the sampling adequacy for each variable in the model and for the complete model. The statistic is a measure of the proportion of variance among variables that might be common. High values (close to 1.0) generally indicate that a factor analysis is useful with the data (Cerny, Kaiser and Henry, 1977). It can be seen in table 2 that the KMO actually comes exactly .908, which indicates there is a very strong common variance in the correlation matrix and that it would therefore be appropriate to analyse the data in a factor analysis (Demir and Mukhlis 2017)

### Factor Analysis of Satisfaction construct

The context in which we administered the study is highly influenced by traditional Arab and Islamic culture, where morals and morality are key elements both in society as a whole and in the lives of individuals. Teachers play a major role in educating individuals in terms of morals and morality. We believe that this cultural context underpins a situation in which teachers are appreciated by society and this in turn means

that teachers feel that their occupation has a high social status. This is a motivational factor that needs to be taken account of in addition to the conventional FIT-Choice scale factors.

To begin, 18 FIT-Choice scale factors, as theorized and validated by Watt and Richardson (2008), were specified. Yet, ten of those 18 validated motivational factors, (fallback career, job security, time for family, job transferability, shape future, enhance social equity, salary, high demand, expert career and social dissuasion) did not show high loadings and meaningful values in this Iraqi Kurdistan study context and were therefore excluded from the analysis. After excluding those factors, Ability, Intrinsic Career Value, Social Contribution, Work with children/ adolescence, Prior teaching and learning experiences, Social influences, Social status satisfaction, and the extra Morale values remained as motivational factors. Looking at the mean, one can conclude that working with children and social contribution are the most influential factors on satisfaction of choosing teaching profession as a career.

Since the reliability and validity of the measures were positive, the eight-dimensions solutions were used, which explained for a total of 73.093 percent of the overall variance. Besides, the observed communality values were acceptable. These results opened the doors for further analysis for this study.

Table 2 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis. Generally, the observed reliable factors were consistent with the ones identified by Watt and Richardson (2007). The first factor was 'Intrinsic career value' which also combined 'Ability' (number of questions=5, eigenvalue=7.591, variance=14.121, Cronbach's alpha=0.843) followed by 'Social contributions' (2, 3.413, 10.412, 0.650), the third factor was 'Working with children' (3, 2.933, 10.098, 0.775), and 'Experiences' (2, 2.509, 9.378, 0.798) comes next. The fifth factor was 'social influences' (3, 2.026, 9.012, 0.770), social status (2, 1.790, 7.139, 0.685) was the sixth, morale (2, 1.665, 6.829, 0.752), and satisfaction (3, 1.303, 6.106, 0.903). The numbers in parenthesis correspond to number of equations, eigenvalue, variance and Cronbach's alpha for the listed factors. Observed values of Cronbach's alpha were a minimum of 0.650 and a maximum of 0.903 (see Table 1).

**Table 1.**  
 Results of the exploratory factor analysis.

	M	S. D.	COMMUNALITIES	FACTOR LOADINGS	R
MONETARY1	2.927	1.869	0.450	0.405	
MONETARY2	4.067	1.972	0.359	0.156	
MONETARY3	5.032	2.985	0.368	-0.042	0.206
MONETARY4	2.434	1.757	0.440	0.645	
MONETARY5	3.375	1.865	0.560	0.769	
ABILITY1	4.983	1.606	0.520	0.224	-
ABILITY2	5.096	1.546	0.818	0.840	
ABILITY3	5.098	1.685	0.755	0.696	
INTRINSIC CAREER VALUE1	4.957	2.011	0.762	0.680	
INTRINSIC CAREER VALUE2	4.168	2.134	0.777	0.841	0.843
INTRINSIC CAREER VALUE3	4.663	2.032	0.804	0.841	
FALLBACK CAREER1	3.984	2.072	0.746	0.787	
FALLBACK CAREER2	4.633	2.497	0.633	0.702	0.605
FALLBACK CAREER3	3.715	2.215	0.593	0.498	
JOB SECURITY1	4.731	1.821	0.709	0.066	
JOB SECURITY2	3.774	1.940	0.652	0.646	0.356
JOB SECURITY3	5.089	1.854	0.604	0.142	
FAMILYTIME1	4.834	1.845	0.746	0.673	
FAMILYTIME2	4.562	1.708	0.633	0.777	0.745
FAMILYTIME3	4.775	1.692	0.593	0.671	
JOB TRANSFERABILITY1	4.871	1.789	0.559	0.036	
JOB TRANSFERABILITY2	4.796	1.872	0.597	0.545	0.308
JOB TRANSFERABILITY3	4.090	1.921	0.573	0.358	
BLUDINGA1	4.486	2.092	0.571	0.655	0.671
BLUDINGA2	4.067	1.789	0.649	0.754	
SOCUTILITY1	5.136	1.597	0.586	0.553	0.745
SOCIAL UTILITY2	5.519	1.704	0.604	0.539	
SOCIAL EQUITY1	4.879	1.828	0.653	0.734	0.756
SOCIAL EQUITY2	4.871	1.844	0.597	0.548	
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION2	5.599	2.502	0.620	0.322	-
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION1	5.670	1.804	0.559	0.642	0.650
SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION3	5.410	1.547	0.574	0.613	
WROK WITHCHILD1	5.940	1.502	0.701	0.797	
WORK WITHCHILD2	5.800	1.513	0.670	0.798	0.775
WORK WITHCHILD4	5.780	1.569	0.649	0.767	
EXPERIENCES2	5.275	2.720	0.645	0.256	-
EXPERIENCES1	5.290	1.696	0.736	0.754	0.798
EXPERIENCES3	4.920	1.706	0.775	0.806	
SOCIAL INFLUENCES1	4.690	1.787	0.730	0.755	
SOCIAL INFLUENCES2	4.980	1.765	0.702	0.798	0.770
SOCIAL INFLUENCES3	4.650	1.809	0.721	0.779	
SOCIAL STATUS1	4.920	2.002	0.679	0.245	-
SOCIAL STATUS2	4.580	1.863	0.808	0.855	0.685
SOCIAL STATUS3	4.560	1.962	0.752	0.791	
MORALE1	4.810	1.771	0.541	0.404	
MORALE2	4.620	1.851	0.737	0.719	0.752
MORALE3	4.630	1.853	0.798	0.821	
SOCIAL DISSAUASION1	4.376	1.941	0.643	0.726	
SOCIAL DISSAUASION2	3.995	2.435	0.777	0.625	0.850
SOCIAL DISSAUASION3	4.204	1.926	0.621	0.750	
SATISFACTION1	4.750	1.907	0.763	0.794	
SATISFACTION2	5.010	1.967	0.847	0.789	0.903
SATISFACTION3	5.030	2.076	0.831	0.764	

**Table 2.**  
*Measurement model.*

Item	Standardised	Composite
	Estimates	Reliability
Monetary1	0.498	
Monetary2	0.303	
Monetary3	-0.035	-
Monetary4	0.489	
Monetary5	0.655	
Ability1	0.558	-
Ability3	0.719	
Ability2	0.635	
Intrinsic career value 3	0.754	0.771
Intrinsic career value 2	0.664	
Intrinsic career value 1	0.877	
Fallback career 1	0.299	
Fallback career 2	0.43	-
Fallback career 3	0.777	
Job security1	0.383	
Job security2	0.433	-
Job security3	0.657	
Familytime1	0.578	
Familytime2	0.45	-
Familytime3	0.647	
Job transferability1	0.49	
Job transferability2	0.589	-
Job transferability3	0.33	
Bludginga1	0.398	
Bludginga2	0.54	-
Social utility1	0.523	-
Social utility2	0.485	
Enhance social equity1	0.573	-
Enhance social equity2	0.448	
Make social contribution2	0.445	-
Makesocial contribution3	0.747	0.849
Makesocial contribution1	0.706	
Satisfaction3	0.901	
Satisfaction2	0.898	0.703
Satisfaction1	0.715	
Prior t&l experiences 2	0.377	-
Prior t&l experiences 3	0.64	0.879
Prior t&l experiences 1	0.691	
Social influences3	0.752	
Social influences2	0.709	0.7
Social influences1	0.73	
Morale3	0.646	
Morale2	0.691	0.774
Morale1	0.695	
Social status1	0.458	-
Social status3	0.815	0.718
Social status2	0.769	

Workwithchildren 4	0.359	-
Workwithchildren 3	0.731	
Workwithchildren 2	0.737	0.798
Wrokwithchildren 1	0.794	
Social dissuasion1	0.52	
Social dissuasion2	0.503	-
Social dissuasion3	0.379	

Fit indices:  $X^2$  (CMIN/DF)=3.256; GFI (goodness of fit index)=0.96; AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index)=0.94; CFI=0.97; RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation)=0.042;

\*Standardised factor loadings significant at less than the 1% level.

**CFA, Convergent and Discriminant Validity**

Since the data were gathered from a previously validated scale, confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) and discriminant and convergent validity were utilised in order to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire more deeply. The resulting standardised factor loadings and composite reliability index are presented in Table 3. which shows the standardised loadings of each item under the respective factors, the composite reliability of that factor and the average variance extracted for each factor. Further, the  $X^2$  statistic, which is 3.256, shows an acceptable fit. Hence, the dimensions fit sufficiently well to suggest validity and to support analysis of the results.

above 0.6 and thus have an acceptable value. Secondly, all composite reliabilities, which assess the dimension’s reliability, are above the threshold (0.7). Thirdly, the average variance extracted (AVE), which shows the squared inter-construct correlations with other relevant dimensions, shows a determinant for discriminant validity; they are all above 0.5 for each dimension and are at acceptable values. Finally, the fit indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI and RMSEA) also show acceptable results and fit (shown at the bottom of Table 2). Table 3 gives the squared inter-dimension correlations. The values explained earlier show adequate measures of validity and reliability. Thus, the model is appropriate for further analysis.

According to our results, all standardised loadings, which assess the item’s reliability, are

**Table 3.**  
*Constructs’ relations.*

	CR	AVE	SocStat	InCarVal	SocContr	Satisfaction	Experience	SocInf	Morale	WorkChild
<b>Social Status</b>	0.771	0.628	<b>0.892<sup>a</sup></b>							
<b>Intrinsic career value</b>	0.849	0.534	0.209 <sup>b</sup>	<b>0.731</b>						
<b>Social contribution</b>	0.703	0.529	0.473	0.503	<b>0.827</b>					
<b>Satisfaction</b>	0.879	0.710	0.362	0.724	0.556	<b>0.843</b>				
<b>Prior teaching and learning experience</b>	0.700	0.544	0.274	0.326	0.632	0.430	<b>0.666</b>			
<b>Social influence</b>	0.774	0.534	0.397	0.438	0.531	0.472	0.528	<b>0.731</b>		
<b>Morale</b>	0.718	0.559	0.898	0.355	0.621	0.543	0.411	0.458	<b>0.878</b>	
<b>Work with children</b>	0.798	0.569	0.335	0.420	0.818	0.456	0.628	0.426	0.476	<b>0.854</b>

a: Square root of average variance extracted in bold, b: Correlation coefficients not in bold.



## Discussion

The two important aims of this research study were to investigate the performance of the FIT-Choice scale among a large sample of diverse undergraduate teacher candidates in the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq; and to examine the basic motivational factors of students in choosing the teaching profession in an autonomous region where there is a major economic crisis and the value given to teachers and teaching is very desperate in the Kurdish community. In other words, why would students choose the teaching profession as a career in a context where the prospects for recruitment are very limited. Moreover, since Kurdistan is non-Western country, we tried to find out whether Islamic culture, in which teaching is considered as a job of Prophets, plays a crucial role in students' choice of the teaching profession as a career. This is currently the only study to have adopted the FIT-Choice framework in a Middle Eastern culture while explicitly testing for construct validity using statistical procedures. The broadness of the sampling from freshmen to senior students in many universities in Kurdistan region also makes this study very significant.

The FIT-Choice scale theorised by Watt and Richardson, (2007) and used by other researchers such as Eren and Tezel, (2010), Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, (2012), and Kiliç, Watt, and Richardson, (2012) was used in this study with small modifications. We added moral values to the motivational constructs in the scale to figure out the students' perceptions of the teaching profession in terms of moral values.

As in Australian education settings, where the FIT-Choice scale was developed (Watt and Richardson 2007), perceived teaching ability and intrinsic career value factors are the most influential factors in the Iraqi Kurdistan educational setting. For the perception of teaching constructs, the social utility values like social contribution and working with children also play an important role in choosing the teaching profession as a career in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It is hard to say that the overall results of this study coincide with the ones presented by Watt and Richardson (2007) in Australia, Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, (2012) in the Netherlands, and Kiliç, Watt, and Richardson (2012) in Turkey.

So then, what are the motivational factors and perceptions of undergraduate student teacher candidates in respect to the teaching profession in a Kurdistan context? In this study, we found

that Intrinsic/altruistic and social utility values are the most important factors behind the choice of the teaching profession as a career. The reason for this is that Kurdish society has been under the pressure of the ba'ath regime for many years and now wants to be an independent country, thus the social utility values come before the individualism. Social utility values emerge as collectivism, which supports social goals rather than the individual aims. Especially after the independence referendum in October 2017, social utility values have become more important.

It was observed that ability and working with children and adolescents were the other most influential factors behind deciding to become a teacher. Similar to the Australian, Turkish and Dutch study, intrinsic career value, social contribution, the experience of prior learning and teaching were also influential motivational factors in choosing teaching as a career. Social influences and social status factors also played an important part in students' career choice. Interestingly, as opposed to the Australian and Turkish Education setting, fallback career, job security, time for family, job transferability, shape future of children and enhance social equity did not demonstrate a meaningful value and we excluded those motivational factors in the survey.

The final research question for this study was whether moral values would be one of the motivational factors in terms of professional commitment. The results show that moral value factors were important in students' decisions to become a teacher. The Kurdish society, as a predominantly Muslim nation with a population of 5 million people initially experienced very rapid economic growth until the ISIS attack in 2015. With the economic and social development, the influence and change of secularism were felt in every aspect of life. Although the region is considered one of the most secular and modern states in the Middle East, the influence of traditional Arab and Muslim culture is still significant and Islamic moral values play an important role in society. In this Islamic culture and beliefs, teachers are regarded as the representative of the missions of the Prophets, idea workers and architects who can fix the conflict between younger and older generations regarding modernity. In this society, teachers are expected to bring up children with this notion and many of the respondents rated these moral factors highly. Another important result derived from this study is that factors related to social utility values and moral values

were very close to each other in terms of their meanings to society. Social utility values were supposed to be as effective as moral values, yet those motivational factors were not as influential as the moral values in choosing the teaching profession as a career.

### Conclusion

The standard FIT-Choice scale provided an opportunity to find out how different predominant factors affect the motivation behind being a teacher for a diverse culture in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Also, this standard scale yielded a possibility of comparing important factors affecting the selection of teachers in other countries. The results of this research indicate that the FIT-Choice scale did not function as well as in Australian, Turkish and Dutch education settings. There are some factors especially fall back career, job security, time for family, job transferability, shape future of children/ adolescent, expert career, salary, high demand and enhancing social equity that did not coincide with the original FIT-Choice scale as it functioned in Australia Turkey and Dutch context. In the Kurdistan Region, social utility values, being a model for students and ability to teach were the most influential factors for choosing to teach as a career. In addition to these FIT-Choice scale factors, moral values also played an important role in this predominantly Muslim cultural context.

The Kurdistan region of Iraq has its own unique status in the Middle East. The growing and young population is the region's most important resource, energising rapid economic and social development. According to research conducted by Numbeo (<https://www.numbeo.com/crime/in/Irbil>), Erbil, the capital of The Kurdistan Region ranks among the top five safest cities in the world. Also, the relationship between the central government and the Kurdistan Government has been developing, especially after the independence referendum held in September 2017. The authorities can use empirical studies like this to develop educational policy suited to the unique Kurdish context rather than policies transferring from other educational settings. The Kurdish government has sent many graduate students abroad, particularly to the UK for postgraduate degrees. On their return, those students have been ready to serve the region in all education fields. Many scholars agree that if those graduate students were given the opportunity through policy reform they would be able to improve the quality of teaching at Universities and this would help to enhance the

quality of teachers to serve the society. Due to financial problems, however, the Government of the Kurdistan Region has not been able to invest sufficiently in the development of quality education and especially the quality of teacher education. This study monitors the teachers and teacher candidates' circumstances and therefore it gives an idea for better policies regarding teacher education and training in Kurdish context.

There are some limitations of this study. Although, the total number of the participants was high enough to be considered valid in respect to illustrating undergraduate students' perceptions and motivational factors for the whole Kurdistan region, consideration should be given to including the rest of the students in the Education Faculty students. Also, while analysing the data we had to delete some items regarding the motivation and perception of teaching constructs since the confirmatory factor analysis results were meaningless, either because the respondents did not answer the questions carefully or they did not know how to fill out a survey. Besides, even though we followed the official procedures of translation of the FIT-Choice scale, there could have been some obstacles in understanding the survey items due to the linguistic differences between Kurdish language and English language. In a further study, it would be more effective to examine the motivational factors in the rest of the Kurdish educational context. Although there is a huge problem in respect to the payment of salaries for teachers, very few respondents mentioned this in their answers. Mixed method research to capture more qualitative data would be worth considering in further investigations since participants cannot always demonstrate their ideas clearly just with surveys.

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