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Identifying the roles of school principals in improving the job performance of teachers in rural schools in Mashhad

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the roles of school principals in improving the job performance of teachers in rural schools in Mashhad. The research was applied in terms of its purpose and qualitative in terms of its data collection method and descriptive phenomenology. Its potential participants were the principals and teachers of rural schools in the Tabadkan region of Mashhad in the academic year 1402-1403, who were selected using a purposive snowball sampling method based on theoretical saturation. The data collection tool was semi-structured interviews. In order to analyze the data obtained from the interviews, the open and axial coding method of Strauss and Corbin (1990) was used, and the findings were validated using four Lincoln and Guba judgment criteria. In total, after data analysis, 69 open codes and 7 axial codes were extracted. The results of the analysis showed that the roles of rural school administrators in the Tabadkan region of Mashhad that play a role in improving teacher performance include the role of facilitator, support role, empowerment role, education management role, cultural promoter role, incentive role, and the role of promoting creativity and entrepreneurship.

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Introduction

After teachers, school principals are recognized as one of the most important factors affecting students and school success. This success is influenced by factors such as teacher retention and parental involvement (Reed, 2020). In the modern era, the role of management has become more complex and difficult due to the expansion of communication, the complexity of organizational goals and tasks, and the increase in expectations and skills required in the use of equipment (Miayo et al., 2020; Pourhosseini and Montazeri, 2019). The roles and responsibilities of school principals are constantly evolving. Today, principals are expected to act as human resource managers, financial planners, strategic advisors, staff and parent mediators, and educators in addition to educational leadership (Witcher, 2017). As an educational leader, the principal is responsible for controlling and monitoring school resources (Navas et al., 2018) and should act as a valuable source of information to respond to the needs of students and teachers (Piarou, 2018). Administrators should make the most of educational, financial, and spiritual opportunities by effectively communicating with teachers, families, students, and educational districts (Serin, 2017). They should also use existing social capital to promote educational standards and professional development of teachers (Yıldız, 2017) and, by providing the necessary facilities, help develop teaching skills and improve school performance (Dialuk, 2017). Schools in rural communities are particularly important due to their ability to shape and transform the social and cultural context (Tikken, 2021). These schools play an important role in educating students living in areas with special conditions (Galaei et al., 2015). However, they also face unique challenges (Mitchell, 2018) that are often overlooked in the broader educational discourse. These challenges include insufficient parental interest in educating their children (Webster, 2020), lack of funding from departments (Atasoy, 2020), lack of educational resources (Preston, 2017), lack of teachers with specific competencies (Templeton et al., 2019), provision of multi-grade classes (Yokar et al., 2021), lack of classrooms (Zinger et al., 2020), low knowledge of teachers about their responsibilities (Arefnejad et al., 2017), lack of awareness of rural teachers about up-to-date training (Mafora et al., 2012), inability to implement curricula (Sanahoja et al., 2020), lack of adequate preparation of teachers to teach concepts in rural schools (Clark-Howard, 2019), tendency of some administrators to exploit teachers (Mirzai et al., 2016), lack of sufficient resources for education (Justice et al., 2019), Lack of attention to teacher participation (Mehdian et al., 2018), lack of an encouraging and supportive atmosphere from principals (Goran et al., 2019), unfair and unrealistic evaluation of teacher

performance (Sadeghinia et al., 2018), and low risk-taking among them (Akazara et al., 2017). These challenges require attention and effective solutions to improve the quality of education in these schools.

On the other hand, teachers in these schools also need special abilities, including emphasizing new and advanced educational models considering the limited rural conditions (Sezzer and Kahn, 2019), having a positive attitude among colleagues appropriate to the existing atmosphere (Shapiro, 2017), sufficient knowledge and skills in the appropriate educational process and its application in accordance with the region (Saadatzadeh et al., 2013), classroom management and organization (Sprandio, 2011), active and dynamic interactions between teachers and learners and emphasizing their individual differences (Zinger, 2020), awareness of educational values and their implementation (Virinen and Paksoniemi, 2020), great attention to teachers' ability to motivate (Al-Zerbiani, 2020), applying creative strategies in the classroom appropriate to the existing facilities (Doligan and Owen, 2021); establishing effective communication with students with different backgrounds (Hennessy et al., 2022); Designing instructional activities to facilitate learning, taking into account rural conditions (Stewart et al., 2015).

Also, the geographical isolation of these schools can lead to a feeling of disconnection from educational developments in urban areas. Given the prominent role of teacher leaders in rural schools, they can increase teachers' trust and motivation and establish more effective communication by establishing close relationships with teachers, having a similar intellectual understanding with other colleagues, presenting innovative ideas and programs, and encouraging change and improvement in the educational environment (Akazara, 2019), and by creating an open and friendly space for discussion and discussion, providing the necessary resources and support, and creating opportunities for teachers' professional growth (David, 2019), and by encouraging and strengthening teachers' self-confidence and motivation, they can help improve teacher performance and improve the quality of education in the school (Bergman, 2017).

This is important while changing expectations, attitudes, values, norms, and behaviors in various educational, cultural, and social contexts pose challenges such as managing work-life balance (Northhouse, 2018), meeting students' mental health needs (Fred et al., 2021), addressing toxic staff (Jerput et al., 2019), supporting feedback from special education services (Garba, 2018; Tankdogan, 2017), creativity in teacher retention (Tintore, et al., 2020), securing budgets and financial resources (Tintore, et al., 2020), time

(Crapanza, 2015), parent and family collaboration (Palma et al., 2017), professional development (Su and Yu, 2019), accountability to school staff and responsibilities (Camacho, 2019; Jafari et al., 2010) to maintain balance. The roles and responsibilities of school principals, especially in rural schools, have been established.

The role of teacher principals in rural schools is very important and vital. Due to their close relationship with teachers and similar understanding of educational issues, teacher principals can increase teachers' trust and motivation by presenting innovative ideas and programs and establish more effective communication with them (Akazara, 2019). They can facilitate two-way and active interactions by considering teachers' needs and opinions and create an open and friendly atmosphere for discussion and dialogue. In addition, by strengthening teachers' self-confidence and motivation, they can help them improve their performance and more actively participate in the educational process (Bergman, 2017). Also, by creating a vision and promoting the school's long-term goals, they support teachers in achieving these goals and establish more effective communication (Northhouse, 2018). However, many rural schools face challenges such as lack of resources, facilities, and staff. Teacher leaders must be able to address these challenges and provide appropriate solutions (Ashlok et al., 2016). They also often act as community leaders, helping to build solidarity and motivation in the local community and working to improve the educational and cultural situation in the region. By creating a supportive environment, providing the necessary resources and support, and providing opportunities for teachers to grow professionally, teacher leaders can help improve their performance and enhance the quality of education in the school (David, 2019).

In the city of Mashhad, located in northeastern Iran, there is a network of rural schools that play an important role in shaping the future of local communities. These schools face numerous challenges, including rural displacement, ethnic prejudice, rural sprawl, increasing age of marriage, population decline, lack of skilled manpower, and increasing grade repetition rates (Javadpour, 2010; Ahadi et al., 2012). School principals play a vital role in facing these challenges. Other problems in rural schools in Mashhad include lack of time, low teacher experience, incoherence between age and gender, lack of educational facilities, lack of lesson plans, frequent absences of students and teachers, inadequate educational space, and instability of human resources (Azizi et al., 2014). Therefore, considering what was stated about the importance of the role of rural school principals, as well as the involvement of rural school principals in the

challenges that have affected the job performance of teachers in rural schools, it is of particular importance to identify the roles that principals can play to improve teacher performance despite numerous challenges. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this issue.

On the other hand, the establishment of rural educational schools is an important issue in these areas. These schools have specific characteristics and goals: suitability to the social culture of each region, emphasis on group education, appropriate access to public resources, and adaptation to natural and climatic characteristics based on the type and structure of agriculture. Also, these schools can act as effective tools to support the research community and researchers in various rural fields and provide the necessary information and statistics (Doerksen et al., 2016). Providing desirable models for the development of rural communities and transformation by educators in these schools is also one of their prominent features (Samoun, 2011).

In discussions of national development, education should be considered as one of the fundamental principles and the root of the development tree. Another important issue in the rural school education system is paying attention to the quality and content of education, which should be considered in the programs developed for different rural areas, taking into account different geographical and cultural conditions. Education at different levels and forms (formal, informal, etc.) is considered one of the foundations of development, especially in rural areas. To achieve a dynamic and advanced society, it is essential to provide appropriate and favorable conditions for the residents of that society (Ashlok, 2016).

The importance and role of principals in rural schools is much greater due to the specific conditions of these schools. In these schools, teachers must have high management and teaching skills (Waillant, 2015). Principals have an important responsibility in achieving educational goals in educational settings and do this through the educational process and using specific techniques. They emphasize education and teaching-learning activities and consider teachers as the main factor in achieving the goals of the education system. In our country, there is a significant rural population and the educational needs and facilities of rural children are completely different from their urban counterparts (Majidi, 2013). Focusing on formulating goals by the school principal may initially be an obstacle to educating rural children. In these conditions, teachers in villages and remote areas face many shortcomings and numerous challenges (Dick et al., 2018). In some rural schools, teachers have little understanding of the background

of their students. Therefore, administrators need to plan to solve such problems. They may abandon some teaching methods and models due to the conditions and educational environment in the village and, as a result, have less commitment to their work (Irvan et al., 2019). Opportunities for career enrichment and advancement are usually limited to those living in cities and their suburbs. These teachers may feel isolated, especially if they are from the city or feel a large educational distance from their community (Amran et al., 2019). Teachers and administrators in rural schools face a heavy workload because the number of educational and administrative staff in these schools is small. They have multiple responsibilities, including teaching, service, administration, teaching, construction, management, and leadership. Rural teachers, especially in small and single-teacher schools, have less opportunity to exchange ideas and connect with external staff, such as coaches or supervisors. Rural principals and teachers may also have less managerial support than their urban counterparts. At the same time, expectations of school leaders and public opinion in rural communities can be high, and the impact of leadership in small schools can be felt significantly (Redingrow et al., 2019). All of these issues can lead to teacher burnout and confusion, negatively impacting their performance in school (Manam et al., 2018), and leaving them with professional isolation and limited access to professional learning (Franco et al., 2019). For this reason, school principals in these specific circumstances must have the necessary educational leadership, theoretical knowledge, skills, responsibilities, and experience in managerial aspects. Several studies have examined the relationship between the different roles of school principals on teacher performance, some of which are mentioned below.

Baghi Nasrabadi et al. (2019) conducted a study titled "Investigating the Relationship between Managers and Teachers' Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Ethical Climate." The results showed that by promoting and strengthening the role of managers and correctly evaluating teachers as human capital, job performance can be improved and the benefits of ethical climate in the organization can be enjoyed.

Pourhosseini and Montazeri (2019) conducted a study titled "The Relationship between Transformational Leadership of School Managers and Teachers' Job Performance: Explaining the Moderating Role of Public Service Motivation." The results showed that public service motivation moderates the effect of transformational leadership and management on teachers' job performance. At the same time, transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on job performance, public service motivation has a positive and significant effect on job performance, and transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers' public service motivation.

Imani (2019) conducted a study titled "Explaining the Role of Management Skills with Organizational Climate and Teachers' Job Performance from the Perspective of Secondary School Teachers in Hormozgan Province." The results showed that there is a significant relationship between management skills, organizational climate, and teachers' job performance, and the dimensions of management skills are able to predict organizational climate and improve teachers' job performance.

Erfanian and Torkanloo (2017) conducted a study entitled investigating soft factors affecting job performance: The effect of the role of educational managers on achievement motivation, inspirational motivation, and subjective motivation. The results showed that capable managers have an effect on subjective motivation, inspirational motivation, and achievement motivation of teachers, and the moderating role of inspirational motivation has an effect on the relationship between the role of managers and employees' achievement motivation. However, subjective motivation does not moderate this relationship.

Soprianto et al. (2020) used data from a survey of 102 work groups in the United States in a study entitled Leadership in Management Groups: Impact on Knowledge Sharing, Efficiency, and Performance to examine the effect of knowledge management and teacher effectiveness on the relationship between the role of managers and their performance. The results of the study showed that the effective role of managers has a significant positive effect on knowledge sharing and teacher effectiveness and, through these two mediating variables, improves performance.

Waltz et al. (2018) conducted a study titled The Role of Managers on Work Performance and Work-Family Problems: The Role of Gender to examine the relationship between effective managers and teacher performance and work-home conflict and important factors that affect this relationship. In this study, the explanation of a conceptual model including manager effectiveness as a cause, work participation as a content, and work performance as a positive outcome while family is considered as a negative outcome has been examined.

Cockerman (2012) conducted a study titled The Role of Effective Communication Skills in Improving Employee Performance. The results showed that the role of teaching skills is used as one of the skills used by managers to increase job

satisfaction, which has a great impact on employee performance and user feedback, and as a result, leads to success and advancement of employee performance goals.

Research Method

The aim of the present study was to identify the role of school principals in improving the performance of teachers in rural schools in Tabadkan, Mashhad. This research is applied in terms of its purpose and qualitative in terms of its data collection method with a descriptive phenomenological strategy that was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The findings of this approach make it possible to understand the reality of experience and provide a systematic and accurate method for extracting and introducing human perceptions of phenomena from the language of the audience. Phenomenology mainly focuses on the study of first-hand experiences or lived experience (Gall et al., 2017). Husserl believes that the goal of descriptive phenomenology is to describe without interpretation the structures that embody the essence of the phenomenon (Husserl, 2008). This method includes three stages of direct understanding, analysis, and description, and it identifies the roles of managers in improving job performance using the lived experience of teachers and principals of elementary schools to identify what the role of managers is and describe the roles and responsibilities of managers that play a role in improving teacher performance in schools from the perspective and language of the managers and teachers who experience them. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data and continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

The key subjects of this study were the managers and teachers of rural elementary schools in the Tabadkan region of Mashhad in the academic year 1402-1403. Since rural schools in Mashhad include Tabadkan, Ahmadabad, Razavieh, and Torqeba; therefore, the present study was conducted in the Tabadkan region of Mashhad due to the comprehensiveness of the human resource and the diversity of the work environment and abundant data. The study sample was selected based on the purposeful snowball sampling method. Considering criteria such as high managerial experience and selection as teacher managers or top teachers in the region, 8

elementary school principals and 7 elementary teachers who have been teacher managers during their service were selected as key informants to describe their roles and responsibilities in the school based on their lived experiences. Finally, theoretical saturation was achieved with 15 interviews. In order to analyze the data from the interviews, the open and axial coding method of Strauss and Corbin (1990) was used. Therefore, all interviews were carefully examined and the key points of each interview were extracted and documented. These points were identified in the form of basic concepts and then, to summarize the information, more general categories were made and classified in the form of categories. The categories were formed based on common concepts from 15 interviews and a title or definition was determined for each. Some similar categories were also aggregated and common themes were extracted from them, and the findings were validated using Lincoln and Guba's four criteria for judgment. In this regard, the researchers used the "participant review" method to ensure the reliability of the results, and after each interview, the interview content was provided to the interviewee along with the analyses performed. To ensure the transferability of the findings, a comprehensive description of the conditions of school principals and teachers, their work history, level of education, working conditions, and environmental conditions of school principals and teachers was provided to provide conditions for applying the findings in other situations. To ensure the reliability of the findings, direct quotes from principals and teachers were used, and the accuracy of the data analysis process was assessed by providing a number of interviews and analyses to specialists and experts and reviewing them.

Findings

In this section, the data analysis is conducted to answer the question of how school principals can help improve teachers' job performance in rural schools in Mashhad, along with examples of participant quotes. In total, 69 concepts and 7 categories were extracted. The identified categories include facilitating, empowering, supportive, managerial, cultural promoter, and encouraging and promoting creativity and entrepreneurship in the school. Table 1 shows an example of open and axial coding of the data:

Table 1. Example of open and axial coding related to the category of empowerment role

Idem	Key points from the interview	Concepts	Category
T1M2D12 F2M3D10 F2M3D12 F4M7D14 F1M1D8	Identifying and developing teachers' capabilities and appropriately combining them with the school's needs to improve its performance, taking into account the regional situation	Identifying, developing and combining strengths with school needs	
T3M6D6 F2M3D15 F4M7D6 F8M15D2 F3M5D10 F2M3D10 F4M7D7 F7M13D15 F5M9D7	Providing opportunities for teachers to participate in educational/specialized courses and activities of interest outside the school environment in order to become familiar with specific local and regional conditions	Creating educational opportunities	
F1M1D12 F7M13D6 F2M3D3 F3M5D5	Development of support and guidance programs by teacher managers to enhance teachers' professional skills and abilities	Development of support programs	
F6M11D6 F5M9D8 F1M1D15	Determining the educational and professional development needs of teachers and planning training courses tailored to the needs of the region on an ongoing basis	Educational needs assessment	The role of empowerment
F2M3D10	Individual planning and consultation with teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses and set professional development goals	Individual planning and consultation with teachers	
T6M12D12 F2M3D10	Designing and implementing special training programs to develop the skills and knowledge of teachers in rural schools	Design and implementation of educational programs	
F7M13D6 T2M4D10 T2M4D8 F5M9D8 T2M4D10 T6M12D3	Holding group meetings and specialized workshops to exchange experiences and increase teachers' technical knowledge and necessary training according to the service area	Holding specialized meetings and workshops	
T1M2D7 F3M5D15	Holding meetings to review and review educational documents and demands in rural areas to develop teachers' critical thinking	Educational requirements review meetings	

Idem	Key points from the interview	Concepts	Category
T1M2D12 F8M15D3 F1M1D15	Providing educational opportunities in the use of educational technologies, considering the limitations aimed at using digital tools and resources	Improving technical and technological skills	
F2M3D8 T7M14D14 F2M3D2	Providing opportunities for teachers to attend observational training classes and exchange experiences with colleagues on a special basis	Teacher presence in observational training classes	
T7M14D12	Providing opportunities for teachers to participate in research and investigation projects in rural areas with the aim of developing their scientific and specialized capabilities for special conditions	Participation in research projects	
F2M3D10 F2M3D12 F6M11D10 F3M5D2 T4M8D10 T6M12D15 T2M4D5 F8M15D5 F2M3D6 T2M4D10	Facilitating the personal development process of teachers, given the lack of professional growth opportunities, by providing the necessary resources and facilities to enhance their skills and knowledge in their specialized field	Providing resources for personal and professional development	
F1M1D12 F3 M5D4 F8M15D15	Encourage the development of appropriate and specific problem-solving and decision-making skills in teachers in order to give administrators confidence in their strength and ability	Developing decision-making skills in teachers	
F4M7D5 F1M1D15	Supporting rural teachers in facing specific educational challenges and issues and providing solutions to solve problems and improve their performance	Developing teaching skills	
F3M5D10 F8M15D14 T1M2D2 T2M4D12	Providing opportunities for career advancement for teachers to attract and retain committed and expert staff, taking into account local conditions	Creating opportunities for career advancement for teachers	

After extracting the initial codes and including redundant and repetitive codes, 93 open codes were obtained in the first stage. In the second stage, after eliminating redundant and repetitive codes, the process of summarizing and classifying the data continued until the researchers reached 69 open codes and 7 central categories in the research. What can be seen in Table 2 is the two-stage coding process (open and central) related to the research question.

Table 3. Open and axial coding of the roles of rural school principals affecting the improvement of teacher performance

Pivotal codes	Open Source
Facilitator Role	Encouraging cooperation and interaction, encouraging the development of positive and constructive relationships, mediation, developing communication skills, two-way communication between administrators and teachers, creating opportunities for developing positive relationships, creating an open and friendly communication environment, holding consultation sessions, using active communication methods, communication networking, strengthening interpersonal communication, and providing positive feedback.
Support Role	Supporting teacher training and psychological support, providing educational guidelines, providing technical support, providing up-to-date resources and tools, creating opportunities for testing, supporting in facing challenges, and providing a supportive atmosphere.
Empowerment Role	Identifying, developing, and combining capabilities with school needs, creating educational opportunities, developing support programs, assessing educational needs, individual planning for teachers, designing and implementing educational programs, holding specialized meetings and workshops, reviewing and reviewing educational demands, improving technical and technological skills, teachers' attendance at observational training classes, participating in research projects, providing resources for personal and professional development, developing decision-making skills in teachers, developing teaching skills, and creating opportunities for career advancement for teachers.
Management Role	Evaluating teacher performance based on specific standards, providing constructive feedback to teachers, providing educational and research resources, corrective and justification measures in specific situations, making decisions based on available evidence, paying attention to needs and making changes in school policies, developing leadership skills, clear goals and standards, and implementing action plans to prevent school problems.
Cultural Promoter Role	Acting on school values, promoting a culture of continuous learning, a culture of flexibility, a culture of valuing the sharing of experiences and knowledge, participating in social and cultural activities, promoting values based on professional ethics, selecting expert and committed teachers, developing policies and increasing teacher confidence, promoting a culture of problem-solving in the school environment, and understanding the long-term values of the school.
Encouraging Role	Transparency in evaluation and reward, expressing appreciation and gratitude to teachers, participation in decision-making, space for expressing ideas, encouragement for professional development and motivation in specialized, personal and professional training.
Creativity and Entrepreneurship Promotion Role	Encouraging innovation in content and classroom management, creating an environment based on psychological safety, encouraging the use of innovation and technology, presenting entrepreneurial plans in school development, participating in innovation processes, developing entrepreneurial skills, networking towards entrepreneurship, promoting an entrepreneurial culture by teachers, carrying out entrepreneurial activities, and promoting entrepreneurial linguistics.

Based on the data from the data coding table, the extracted components are analyzed as follows:

1. The role of facilitator

In this role, rural school principals encourage cooperation and interaction, encourage the development of positive and constructive relationships, mediate, develop communication skills, two-way communication between principals and teachers, create opportunities for the development of positive relationships, create an open and intimate communication environment, hold consultation meetings, use active communication methods, build communication networks, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and provide positive feedback. Given the closeness of teachers to the teacher manager and the fact that in rural schools, teacher managers are teachers themselves and have complete knowledge of the teachers in these schools. They become more empowered by using social networking and communicating and interacting with other teachers in groups and virtual channels, and benefiting from the information and experiences of others alongside teachers, and they walk the path to success faster and easier. By encouraging the development of positive and constructive relationships between teachers and principals, teacher leaders seek to create a dynamic and effective environment for improving performance in rural schools.

"One of the most important aspects of management in rural schools in Tabakan is that the principal needs to create a sense of empathy and participation. For example, once in a rural school, I do not remember the exact name, the principal realized that the teachers were under a lot of pressure due to the living conditions in the village. Long distances to school, lack of amenities, and even a shortage of teaching materials, all of these had made the teachers tired and discouraged. To solve this problem, instead of just talking to the administrative department, he decided to talk to the teachers themselves and ask them to suggest solutions. As a principal, I seek to create a dynamic and effective work environment to improve the performance of teachers. As a principal, I am committed and trained to do a job very well. We regularly give our teachers positive and constructive feedback to boost their self-confidence and strengthen their motivation so that we can facilitate their improvement in performance" (M.S.:15). Given the closeness of teachers to the teacher managers and the fact that in rural schools, teacher managers are teachers themselves and have complete knowledge of the teachers in these schools. By using social networking

and communicating and interacting with other teachers in groups and virtual channels and benefiting from the information and experiences of others alongside teachers, they become more empowered and walk the path to success faster and easier. By encouraging the development of positive and constructive relationships between teachers and managers, teacher managers seek to create a dynamic and effective environment for improving performance in rural schools.

2. Supportive role

Regarding the supportive role, it can be said that this role includes supporting the training and psychological support of teachers, providing educational guidelines, providing technical support, providing up-to-date resources and tools, creating opportunities for testing, supporting in facing challenges, and providing a supportive atmosphere. "Principals need to make the most of opportunities and seek to provide opportunities for teachers to experiment and implement their own new teaching methods in the classroom. As a principal, I have always said and will say again that the teacher principal in rural schools has a very supportive role. For example, when a teacher faces teaching problems, instead of criticizing, he or she sits down with the teacher, talks with the teacher, and offers solutions. For example, he or she may teach new techniques, add teaching resources, or even hold group counseling sessions with teachers. This type of support helps teachers with problems to improve their performance and expression. Sometimes the school principal encourages colleagues to share their experiences with each other, sometimes the school staff says, "We are paying attention to your classes, but you should share your experiences and solve educational problems in order to support and support each other." Teacher principals seek to help teachers by providing educational guidance and, on the other hand, by developing appropriate resources. "They are teachers" (M.Sh:7). Teacher managers in rural schools support teachers' efforts and educational activities by holding numerous meetings to exchange experiences and resolve educational problems. They strive to achieve the set goals by continuously following up on teachers' performance and providing the necessary support. While accompanying teachers in better implementing educational plans and programs, managers cooperate and provide the necessary assistance to them. Teacher managers' support is provided with the aim of flexibility and change in facing new challenges and opportunities. On the other hand, given that the atmosphere of rural schools is such that teachers face many challenges and seek help from each other to resolve problems, teachers

also feel this supportive atmosphere in the interpersonal behaviors of their colleagues and thus attach importance to valuing teachers' ideas.

3. The role of empowerment

Regarding the role of empowerment, it can be said that this role includes identifying, developing, and combining capabilities with school needs, creating educational opportunities, developing support programs, assessing educational needs, individual planning for teachers, designing and implementing educational programs, holding specialized meetings and workshops, reviewing and reviewing educational demands, improving technical and technological skills, teachers' attendance in observational training classes, participating in research projects, providing resources for personal and professional development, developing decision-making skills in teachers, developing teaching skills, and creating opportunities for career advancement for teachers.

"If teacher managers organize training programs and workshops for teachers, teachers can learn new skills and as a result, the quality of their teaching will improve. Also, when managers show more attention and support to teachers, teachers are more motivated to work and feel that their work is being noticed. Managers can provide teachers with training opportunities in the use of educational technologies and teach them how to use digital tools and resources. Teachers seek information in different ways and in different places. Managers can give teachers opportunities to actively participate in research and investigation projects that can help develop their own scientific and professional capabilities" (M.S.:7). Teacher managers in rural schools can play an important role in teacher training and teacher activity in various educational and training areas. They strive to empower teachers. Rural school administrators, taking into account specific local conditions, provide the basis for identifying capable teachers and, after identification, introduce them to higher levels such as educational groups. They also pay special attention to young teachers and encourage them to grow and improve their performance in rural schools. This approach helps to improve the quality of education and upgrade the skills of teachers.

4. Management role

In this role, rural school principals evaluate teacher performance based on specific standards, provide constructive feedback to teachers, provide educational and research resources, provide corrective and corrective measures in specific situations, make decisions based on available evidence, pay attention to needs and make changes to school policies, develop leadership skills, set clear goals and standards, and implement action plans to prevent school problems.

"I observe the classes. I go to the classroom myself, sit in the classroom, and observe the teacher's performance. I am in the classroom myself and observe both the teacher's teaching method and the children. However, in my opinion, the evaluation of teacher performance is based on specific standards and criteria determined by the school administration." (M.S.:12). In their managerial role, principals can play a vital role in improving the performance of teachers in rural schools by planning strategically and emphasizing educational perspectives. Like other schools, principals of rural schools can give appropriate direction to school activities by setting clear and measurable goals for students' academic progress and teacher performance. These goals should be long-term and medium-term and serve as a guide for all school programs and activities. Administrators can help increase coordination and collaboration by developing and communicating a shared vision for the school that all staff, teachers, students, and parents can believe in and work toward. School administrators should carefully analyze the school's internal and external environments. This analysis includes examining internal strengths and weaknesses (such as human resources, equipment, and instructional processes) and external opportunities and threats (such as demographic changes, government policies, and technological developments).

5. The role of cultural promoter

Principals in the role of cultural promoter prioritize the implementation of school values, promoting a culture of continuous learning, a culture of flexibility, a culture of valuing the sharing of experiences and knowledge, participation in social and cultural activities, promoting values based on professional ethics, selecting expert and committed teachers, developing policies and increasing teacher confidence, promoting a culture of problem-solving in the school environment, and understanding the long-term values of the school.

"In rural schools like Tabadakan, promoting a positive culture can have a huge impact on improving teachers' job performance. When administrators can create a good culture in the school, not only teachers but also students will be more motivated and energized. Administrators can create a culture of encouraging initiative and creativity in teachers and can also improve their performance by providing innovative solutions." (M.Sh:11). Administrators of rural schools can have a

significant impact on improving teachers' performance by promoting the school's culture towards promoting a culture of effective and open communication between administrators and teachers to solve problems and issues that have been jointly raised. This includes promoting the values and practices in promoting a culture of valuing shared experiences and knowledge, promoting values such as commitment, empowerment, justice, and respect for teachers, and creating motivation to advance educational goals.

6. Incentive role

In fulfilling this role, rural school principals provide transparency in evaluation and reward, express appreciation and gratitude to teachers, participate in decision-making, provide space for expression of ideas, encourage professional development, and motivate in specialized, personal, and professional training.

"I personally take some courses based on my personal interest. For example, I currently purchased a course titled Helping Teachers Improve Their Performance in Various Ways and am learning it. Principals can work towards the success of the school by creating opportunities to express appreciation and gratitude to teachers and show their value and expertise, which can facilitate their improvement in performance." (M.S.:14). The desire to improve teachers' performance stems from their motivation and interest and enthusiasm for learning. Teacher principals work towards the success of the school by creating opportunities to express appreciation and gratitude to teachers for their superior performance and show their value and expertise. They enjoy taking on responsibilities that lead to learning new material, and the enjoyable and pleasant results in their classrooms engage them in educational activities.

7. The role of promoting creativity and entrepreneurship

Regarding the role of promoting entrepreneurship by principals, it can be said that this role includes encouraging innovation in content and classroom management, creating an environment based on psychological safety, encouraging the use of innovation and technology, presenting entrepreneurial plans in school development, participating in innovation processes, developing entrepreneurial skills, networking towards entrepreneurship, promoting an entrepreneurial culture by teachers, carrying out entrepreneurial activities, and promoting entrepreneurial linguistics.

"In our Tabakan district, at the Creative Teacher Festival, colleagues shared their creative work in a group set up for this purpose, such as colleagues' crafts, new lesson plans, and games they had designed. In this way,

principals can organize educational programs and workshops related to entrepreneurship to familiarize teachers with entrepreneurial concepts and skills. Principals can create a space where teachers can try out their new and creative ideas. For example, if a teacher has an idea for a new teaching method or an interesting project, the principal can listen to these ideas and support them." (M.S.:6). Promoting entrepreneurship by principals can accelerate the improvement of teachers' performance in rural schools and encourage them to create new environments and opportunities for personal and professional growth and development.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, various roles of managers were identified to improve teacher performance in rural schools in Mashhad. The results showed that the managerial role with 25 concepts and the empowerment role with 20 concepts were the most frequent. After that, the facilitator role with 14 concepts, the cultural promoter role with 10 concepts, the role of promoting creativity and entrepreneurship with 10 concepts, the support role with 8 concepts, and the incentive role with 6 concepts were in the next ranks. By playing these roles, managers provide the basis for improving teacher performance in rural schools. According to the opinions of managers and teachers, the most important roles of managers include the roles of facilitator, empowerment, support, management, cultural promoter, incentive, and promotion of creativity and entrepreneurship in the school.

Rural school principals, by playing a facilitating role through developing communication skills and using active communication methods, seek to provide teachers with information and educational resources on a continuous and immediate basis to promote effective collaboration and communication in the educational environment. The results of this role are consistent with the research of Siu and Ma (2021), Yang and Zheng (2021), Kane (2021), Mi Zhang (2021), Dugan and Adams (2018), Carpenter (2018), Prince (2018), Zheng and Liu (2017), Netoliski (2016), Chen (2012), Ghasemzadeh et al. (2019), Rifai et al. (2019), Hejazi et al. (2019), and Hosseinpour et al. (2017). Prince (2018) believes that teachers regularly seek out connections and interactions with colleagues and other experienced individuals to improve their performance and grow the quality of their work, and this factor leads to improved professional performance beyond the boundaries of the school. Similarly, school-based communication also leads to improved performance in rural schools and increased teacher effectiveness, as well as increased student achievement (Dugan & Adams, 2018, Prince, 2018). Principals also improve the professional

performance of teachers in rural schools by feeling committed and supportive (Kane, 2021). In the supportive role, rural school principals can promote teachers' professional growth by creating and promoting a sense of cooperation and collaboration between themselves and teachers and providing comprehensive support. What is discussed in this role is in line with the findings of research by Gao (2023), Hong and Lee (2022), Kane (2021), Tayag (2020), Baktash (2019), Liu and Hallinger (2018), Hong (2018), Volkel et al. (2017), Harris (2010), Hassani et al. (2019), Diyanet (2019), Ahmadyousefi (2018), Khabaze et al. (2017), Abbasian (2017). By supporting teachers in rural schools, teacher principals increase their group participation, which in turn helps improve their performance in rural schools (Volkel et al., 2017). Rural school administrators who want to improve teacher performance must simultaneously focus on motivating, supporting, and maintaining their teachers' performance (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). In playing the role of empowerment, administrators take steps to appropriately combine teachers' capabilities with the needs of the school and students with the aim of improving effective performance. In other words, administrators seek to develop teachers' capabilities by creating an organizational culture and emphasizing values such as collaboration, professional development, and acceptance of mistakes (Ahmadian et al., 2017). The efforts of principals in this regard have been confirmed in studies such as Zi and Li (2023), Zhao (2022), Jiang (2020), Zhou and Hu (2019), Liu and Hallinger (2018), Feng (2016), Netulski (2016), Qureshi (2016), Wallstrom et al. (2010), Ahmadyousefi et al. (2018), and Abdollahi et al. (2017). Of course, school principals, especially teacher principals in rural schools, can help develop teachers' critical thinking by holding meetings to review and review educational documents and requirements, because teachers are more aware of their weaknesses than anyone else. When teachers are responsible for their professional development, they consider themselves managers and responsible for their continuous growth and do their best to improve their performance (Abdollahy et al., 2017).

Rural school principals must allocate school financial, human, and equipment resources appropriately to effectively implement the strategies developed. This includes allocating funds for teacher professional development, purchasing educational equipment, and improving school infrastructure. By implementing these strategies and paying attention to the importance of visioning and strategic planning, school principals can

play an effective role in improving the performance of rural school teachers and help improve the quality of teaching and learning by creating a supportive and motivating environment. The realization of this depends on the managerial role of rural school principals, which has been confirmed in numerous studies, including Sun (2022), Zhou (2021), Feng and Huang (2020), Hallinger and Hossein-Gholizadeh (2020), Wu and Chen (2019), Liu and Hallinger (2018), Diyant (2019), and Sivaninejad (2008).

Rural school principals, as cultural promoters, can take an effective step towards improving teacher performance by promoting values such as accepting and strengthening critical thinking, collaboration, and mutual respect in the educational environment. Finally, teacher principals can also help improve teacher performance and improve the quality of education in the school by creating a learning culture and sharing experiences among teachers through collaborative and professional development structures. This has been confirmed in numerous studies (Liu and Chen, 2023; GAO, 2022; Yang, 2021; Zhou, 2020; Prince, 2018; Hosseinpour Tolazdehi et al., 2017; Rifai et al., 2019).

Teacher motivation is one of the most important factors and the role of managers in improving teacher performance is being promoted (Dianat, 2010). Rural managers, by supporting teachers in special circumstances and providing specified rewards, motivate teachers to participate in training workshops, thereby providing the basis for improving their performance. Therefore, playing the role of an incentive, which has also been proposed in the studies of Li and Zhang (2023), Sun (2022), Chen (2021), Hong (2020), Jones (2019), Liu and Hallinger (2018), Wang (2015), Gaffey et al. (2013), plays a fundamental role in teacher motivation.

Principals can help teachers promote a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship in their schools. This includes creating entrepreneurship-related lessons and activities, holding entrepreneurship events and competitions, and creating spaces for students to carry out entrepreneurial projects and plans. The results of this research are consistent with the findings of Lin (2022), Wang (2021), Purcell (2020), Sun and Chen (2020), Buchan (2019), Koratko (2018), Gohar (2017), Furnham (2016), Hu et al. (2011), Sikula (2010), Fayol (2008), and Yasini (2013). Principals can provide teachers with successful entrepreneurial role models to inspire and motivate them. This includes introducing successful people in the field of entrepreneurship, providing inspiring stories, creating opportunities to observe and

experience the successes of others. Rural school principals create continuous educational opportunities in the field of entrepreneurship for teachers. These opportunities can include training courses related to entrepreneurial skills, workshops, and online training courses that allow teachers to keep their skills up to date and improve. Teacher principals can help teachers improve their time management skills, which is an important skill for success in entrepreneurship in rural schools. This includes teaching time management methods, encouraging them to set priorities, and providing various tools and techniques for better time management. According to the results of the research, it is recommended that rural school principals in the Tabakan district of Mashhad provide support programs and services to teachers and administrators of Tabakan rural schools, including holding training courses, providing consulting services, and improving working conditions, to improve performance. Principals should be selected as school liaisons in a variety of educational programs and plans and should receive adequate training before teachers. Principals can provide specific times to recognize outstanding teachers to motivate teachers. They can also use boards to introduce outstanding educational individuals in the school. They can also help teachers more effectively promote innovation and creativity in the classroom by creating training opportunities for teachers in the field of creative leadership and by providing specialized training courses and workshops to strengthen teachers' creative leadership skills.

Resources

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