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Presentation of Administrative Standards Model for Educational Leaders in Third Millennium Schools

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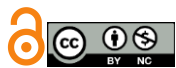
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present article aims to propose a model of administrative standards for educational leaders in third millennium schools.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative research methodology utilizing grounded theory. The statistical population consisted of educational leaders and experts from schools in Iraq, with purposive and snowball sampling methods applied until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data were collected through in-depth and exploratory interviews and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding.

Findings: The findings revealed that 133 different factors influence the development of administrative standards, which are categorized into five groups: causal, core, contextual, intervening, and consequences. The results indicated that causal, core, and intervening factors have a direct impact on the strategies and outcomes of standard development. These standards play a significant role in improving the quality of educational management, increasing staff and student satisfaction, and enhancing teaching-learning processes.

Conclusion: This study emphasizes that educational leadership, as an independent domain, must align with the goals of education and play a key role in improving the quality and efficiency of the educational system. Additionally, the development of specific and efficient administrative standards for educational leaders is essential for effectively contributing to educational quality improvement. It is recommended that policymakers and educational planners consider these findings and take action to improve standards.

Keywords: Administrative standards, educational leaders, third millennium schools, grounded theory, educational management.

1 Introduction

The current education system, due to the necessity of social changes, is considered one of the most complex and large-scale social organizations in every country. It has an inseparable connection with economic, social, and cultural growth and development. Among these, educational leaders are one of the essential requirements for schools, as school administrators cannot achieve the school's goals without fulfilling the role of educational leaders (Adom, 2024; MacKinnon et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers, as the main stewards of the education system, play a fundamental role in the social transformation agenda (Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017), and for the continuation of their flourishing performance, reducing destructive and stressful factors and conditions is an undeniable necessity (Clement, 2017).

What distinguishes school educational leaders from leaders in other organizations is their responsibility for enhancing and strengthening learning and their focus on learners' academic progress (Jafari et al., 2019). Therefore, the need for the existence and standardization of standards is among the issues referenced in various forms, such as the development of qualitative indicators, standard components, in-school factors, space, evaluation, and human resource utilization, in the educational transformation document as one of the most important and effective social institutions for individual growth and social progress (Robert et al., 2018).

In this regard, the findings of the research by Khoobchehreh et al. (2018) indicate that the economic prosperity and educational transformation in developed countries reflect the serious attention of managers and planners in these countries to standards and standardization in education and its promotion within society (Khoobchehreh et al., 2019). Recent research on school effectiveness has focused policymakers' and researchers' attention on educational leaders (Yousefi et al., 2021), such that the research background and patterns for creating a global knowledge base for educational leaders in developing countries are increasing (Harris et al., 2019).

Since its establishment in 1921, Iraq has encompassed a highly mixed population within its borders that had not merged into a single political community with a shared identity. For Iraqi rulers, the education system was the most important and best tool for spreading a common national identity in society. As a result, a centralized education system was created, and new schools were expanded (Najm, 2023). In Iraq, the education system acts as a crucial tool in spreading a shared national identity, and educational leaders

are the best means to instill an Arab identity within Iraqi society. Therefore, through education in schools, Arab identity is easily propagated among the new generation, and the importance of quality and standards in the education system becomes more apparent when we understand that the quality of life for the present and future generations is tied to the quality of education (Gutek, 2017).

Studies show that schools are traditionally managed by individuals with teaching backgrounds who lack expertise in educational management. Moreover, realities reveal that the regulations and performance criteria for educational leaders are general and ambiguous, failing to meet the needs of the education system and being influenced by subjective interpretations in practice (Khoobchehreh et al., 2019).

The deficiencies and problems related to educational leaders in Iraq stem from the fact that, despite the existence of approved job descriptions for educational leaders, there is no clear performance evaluation system, performance standards, or transparent competencies for educational leaders. Human resource management in the education system lacks an appropriate model for the administrative standards of educational leaders for schools. In recent years, the issue of administrative standards in education has gained attention, but no specific and documented standards or models are available to improve the educational subsystems' quality in Iraq. All these issues highlight the importance of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools and suggest the existence of a gap in administrative standard models to achieve the desired quality of educational leaders in schools. Therefore, it can be asserted that to maximize educational and learning opportunities in the teaching and learning process for all learners, policymakers must focus on developing administrative standards for educational leaders. The review of studies indicated that very few models have been presented regarding the development of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools. Utilizing the results of this research might create the necessity for policy focus in this area and significantly impact the path to improving the educational quality level in Iraq, which is one of the current challenges facing this society. Therefore, the researcher seeks to answer the question: How can administrative standards for educational leaders in schools be developed to present an appropriate model?

2 Methods and Materials

This research was conducted using a qualitative research method. The scope of the study in this section included

specialists and educational leaders in schools in Iraq. Theoretical sampling was done purposefully and continued using the snowball method until theoretical saturation was reached. The criteria for entering the study included more than five years of experience in educational leadership, having at least a master's degree, and having authored books or articles on educational leadership and administrative standards. This was done to identify the dimensions and components of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools. The stages of this section included the following:

Identification of Experts (Key Informants): In the first stage, the researcher identified experts in the educational field. Sampling was based on the type of coding (open, axial, or selective). This study employed theoretical sampling, where the data and key informants, who specify the real characteristics of the research subject, were utilized.

In-depth and Exploratory Interviews: The researcher conducted in-depth and exploratory interviews with key informants to examine their internal structure of values, attitudes, and lived experiences regarding the research topic. In these interviews, questions were modified and completed based on informants' responses. Sampling was purposeful and continued using the snowball method until theoretical saturation was achieved.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with the interviews. This analysis was carried out using open coding, categorization, and examining the relationships between them. Open coding identified concepts and discovered their features and dimensions in the data. Then, in axial coding, categories were connected with subcategories.

Delphi Method: In the second stage, to improve the conceptual model and due to the inability to convene a focus group, the Delphi method was used. In this method, qualitative data were discussed, and the final data obtained from this non-present discussion were identified as dimensions and components of administrative standard development, which were then improved through axial and selective coding.

Open interviews were used to gather information. Questionnaires were designed based on a five-point Likert

scale. Data were collected from the study population using a questionnaire. After scoring the responses, the data were analyzed statistically. The Kappa index was used to assess the reliability of the qualitative research section. The Kappa coefficient was employed to evaluate the agreement between codings. In this study, the Kappa coefficient was 0.75, indicating good reliability. MAXQDA software was used for qualitative data analysis, while MICMAC software was used for quantitative data analysis. Open, axial, and selective coding methods were used to extract variables' indicators, components, and categories.

3 Findings and Results

The demographic findings revealed that out of the 10 selected samples, 6 individuals (60%) were male, and 4 individuals (40%) were female. Among the 10 selected samples, 1 person (10%) was under 35 years old; 3 individuals (30%) were between 35 and 40 years old; 4 individuals (40%) were between 41 and 45 years old; 1 person (10%) was between 46 and 50 years old; and 1 person (10%) was over 50 years old. Among the 10 selected samples, 7 individuals (70%) held a master's degree, and 3 individuals (30%) held a doctorate. Out of the 10 selected samples, 6 individuals (60%) had 5-10 years of experience, and 4 individuals (40%) had 11-15 years of experience.

During the detailed analysis of the data, concepts were directly generated from the participants' interview transcripts or based on the common usage of those concepts. The interview transcripts were systematically reviewed to identify the main themes and sub-themes. First, the responses provided by the interviewees were broken down into smaller units; this was done after reviewing the interview transcripts at the sentence or paragraph level. Then, the concepts were placed within larger categories, and after this stage, efforts were made to classify the categories within larger conceptual groups. This stage involved examining the themes and the existing nature in the interviews to allow for the emergence of shared dimensions of concepts in the main themes, part of which is presented as a sample in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Open and Axial Coding

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Objective
Addressing theoretical and practical frameworks, modeling standardized methods, increasing coordination and reducing conflict, focusing on the results of science and technology and human	Structural Factors	Administrative Standards Model for Educational

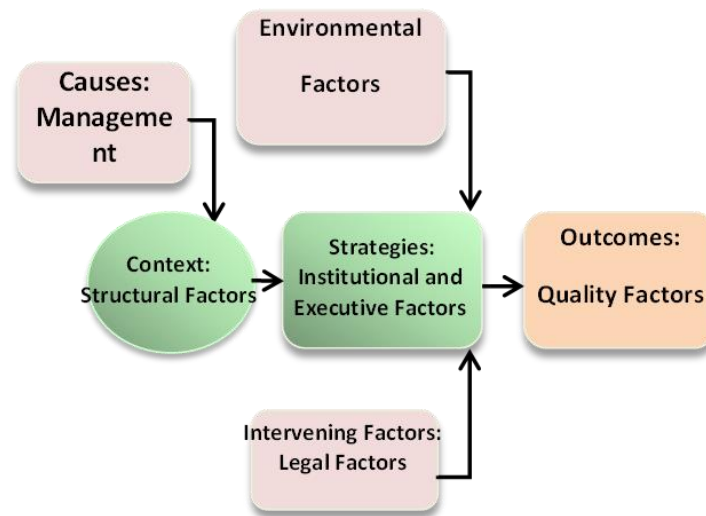
<p>experiences, rewarding successful work (material or spiritual), maintaining honesty and friendly relations with subordinates, having ideal technical knowledge, setting high, clear, and transparent expectations for teachers, staff, and students, encouraging others to move towards the school's mission and goals, creating a shared understanding of the school's vision, mission, and goals among others</p> <p>Preventing the increase in educational costs, predicting staff behavior and performance, the feasibility of evaluation, agility in facing changes, attention to future stakeholder values, having a future-oriented culture and individuals with positive psychological traits and knowledge-based approach, improving management and facilitating supervision and guidance on educational activities, employing capable individuals as educational leaders with the aim of enhancing the quality of educational and training affairs, improving teachers' professional skills and preventing academic decline by providing counseling and educational leadership services, weaknesses in the management system, centralization, administrative bureaucracy, lack of coordination and participation among the components of the educational system, the low importance of conducting educational research and its application at various decision-making levels, traditional and closed culture dominating the education system, lack of appropriate and scientific monitoring systems, inadequate funding, low status of teachers in terms of education, financial and livelihood aspects, considering the leader's views and preferences, the amount of job experience and managerial skills, innovation and motivation creation, increasing risk management at the school level, the possibility of continuous development of ideal educational leaders in schools, improving educational leaders' communication skills, managing educational programs, the ability to manage and administer school affairs, increasing educational leaders' satisfaction levels, strengthening teamwork in schools and classrooms, increasing teacher satisfaction, increasing student and family satisfaction, preventing the increase in educational costs, the possibility of supervision, evaluation, and feedback in the classroom, improving educational leaders' performance, predicting teachers' behavior and performance, increasing interaction and participation among educational leaders, improving actions and improving the level of learners and teachers, the possibility of continuous development of ideal educational leaders in schools, financial management and budget provision, common managerial abilities, managing educational programs, curriculum management, willingness to lead, guide, and influence others, high self-confidence, providing adequate time for teachers' professional development, supporting programs for improving teachers' education and learning, encouraging teachers to develop and grow professionally, making continuous efforts to improve one's professional and occupational skills</p> <p>Organizational alertness to the environment, multidimensionality, lack of space and educational equipment, clarifying educational goals, creating a safe learning environment for students, creating a positive atmosphere in the school, creating an excellent educational and learning environment, promoting a positive learning atmosphere in the school, enhancing the educational atmosphere, creating a supportive work environment for teachers and staff, ensuring a calm and tension-free environment in schools</p> <p>Updating standards in accordance with environmental and organizational requirements, the existence of a tribal organizational culture, exerting influence, emphasizing consistency and efficiency, focusing on planning, organizing, budgeting, evaluation, and supervision, influencing and guiding others in achieving goals, educational supervision and guidance, assigning leadership of educational activities to a leader, changing values and behaviors, planning goal-setting, organizing, leading and leadership, increasing coordination and reducing conflict, creating coordination between curricula to advance students, planning maintenance and upkeep of facilities, paying attention to specific aspects of education and learning, creating a learning-centered education system, standard-based structure, effective decision-making, creating a context and means for the emergence and utilization of students' talents, strengthening group human relations, adopting methods and determining principled policies in all matters to cultivate educational goals</p> <p>Based on regulations and rules with the aim of providing better quality services and greater efficiency to serve society, failure to establish educational justice, using scientific findings, the opinions of experts, the philosophy and objectives of educational system resources, programs, and policies, the rules and regulations governing the country, providing administrative standards, education system, reforming laws and regulations, formulating evaluation criteria with the assistance of subordinates to improve the evaluation method, ensuring security and peace in the work environment, clarifying tasks in the work environment, creating a healthy and orderly educational environment, ensuring a stress-free environment at the workplace</p>	<p>Leaders in Third Millennium Schools</p> <p>Managerial Factors</p> <p>Environmental Factors</p> <p>Institutional and Executive Factors</p> <p>Legal Factors</p>
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In this stage, by examining the themes and the existing nature in the interviews, the emergence of common dimensions of concepts in the main themes occurred. Based on the results obtained from interviews with 10 experts, it can be said that 133 factors have influenced the development of an administrative standards model for educational leaders in third millennium schools. At this stage, the grounded theory researcher selects an open coding category and places

it at the center of the process being studied (as the "central phenomenon") and then links other categories to it. These other categories include "causal conditions," "strategies," "contextual and intervening conditions," and "outcomes." This stage involves drawing a diagram called the "coding paradigm," which illustrates the relationships between causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions, and outcomes.

Figure 1

Key Factors of the Paradigm Model of Administrative Standards for Educational Leaders in Third Millennium Schools



The research findings indicated that the core factors influencing the development of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools include the following: organizational alertness to the environment, multidimensionality, lack of space and educational equipment, clarifying educational goals, creating a safe learning environment for students, creating a positive atmosphere in the school, creating an excellent educational and learning environment, promoting a positive learning atmosphere in the school, enhancing the educational atmosphere, creating a supportive work environment for teachers and staff, ensuring a calm and tension-free environment in schools.

The research findings showed that the causal factors influencing the development of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools include the following: preventing the increase in educational costs, predicting staff behavior and performance, the feasibility of evaluation, agility in facing changes, attention to future stakeholder values, having a future-oriented culture and individuals with positive psychological traits and knowledge-based approaches, improving management and facilitating supervision and guidance on educational activities, employing capable individuals as educational leaders with the aim of enhancing the quality of educational and training affairs, improving teachers' professional skills and preventing academic decline by providing counseling and educational leadership services, weaknesses in the management system, centralization, administrative

bureaucracy, lack of coordination and participation among the components of the educational system, the low importance of conducting educational research and its application at various decision-making levels, traditional and closed culture dominating the education system, lack of appropriate and scientific monitoring systems, inadequate funding, low status of teachers in terms of education, financial and livelihood aspects, considering the leader's views and preferences, the amount of job experience and managerial skills, innovation and motivation creation, increasing risk management at the school level, the possibility of continuous development of ideal educational leaders in schools, improving educational leaders' communication skills, managing educational programs, the ability to manage and administer school affairs, increasing educational leaders' satisfaction levels, strengthening teamwork in schools and classrooms, increasing teacher satisfaction, increasing student and family satisfaction, preventing the increase in educational costs, the possibility of supervision, evaluation, and feedback in the classroom, improving educational leaders' performance, predicting teachers' behavior and performance, increasing interaction and participation among educational leaders, improving actions and improving the level of learners and teachers, the possibility of continuous development of ideal educational leaders in schools, financial management and budget provision, common managerial abilities, managing educational programs, curriculum management, willingness to lead, guide, and influence others, high self-confidence,

providing adequate time for teachers' professional development, supporting programs for improving teachers' education and learning, encouraging teachers to develop and grow professionally, making continuous efforts to improve one's professional and occupational skills, valuing others' criticisms and suggestions and using them to improve one's performance, creating opportunities for the participation of educational leaders, maintaining supportive resources for educational leaders to achieve goals, effective cooperation and interaction.

The research findings indicated that the contextual factors influencing the development of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools include the following: addressing theoretical and practical frameworks, modeling standardized methods, increasing coordination and reducing conflict, focusing on the results of science and technology and human experiences, rewarding successful work (material or spiritual), maintaining honesty and friendly relations with subordinates, having ideal technical knowledge, setting high, clear, and transparent expectations for teachers, staff, and students, encouraging others to move towards the school's mission and goals, creating a shared understanding of the school's vision, mission, and goals among others.

The research findings indicated that the outcomes resulting from the administrative standards for educational leaders in schools include the following: maximizing educational and learning opportunities in the teaching and learning process, improving actions, improving the level of learners and teachers, the quality of educational management activities, raising teachers' awareness by managers about new educational strategies and training, maximizing educational and learning opportunities in the teaching and learning process, simplifying affairs, the possibility of their interchangeability, increasing the efficiency of teachers' activities, saving material, economic, and human resources, benefiting schools and society, increasing trust among different social groups, changing the educational dimension of schools, improving the quality of education, improving teacher productivity, and maintaining and preserving educational facilities.

The research findings indicated that the intervening factors influencing the development of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools include the following: based on regulations and rules with the aim of providing better quality services and greater efficiency to serve society, failure to establish educational justice, using scientific findings, the opinions of experts, the philosophy

and objectives of educational system resources, programs, and policies, the rules and regulations governing the country, providing administrative standards, education system, reforming laws and regulations, formulating evaluation criteria with the assistance of subordinates to improve the evaluation method, ensuring security and peace in the work environment, clarifying tasks in the work environment, creating a healthy and orderly educational environment, ensuring a stress-free environment at the workplace.

The research findings indicated that the strategies influencing the development of administrative standards for educational leaders in schools include the following: updating standards in accordance with environmental and organizational requirements, the existence of a tribal organizational culture, exerting influence, emphasizing consistency and efficiency, focusing on planning, organizing, budgeting, evaluation, and supervision, influencing and guiding others in achieving goals, educational supervision and guidance, assigning leadership of educational activities to a leader, changing values and behaviors, planning goal-setting, organizing, leading and leadership, increasing coordination and reducing conflict, creating coordination between curricula to advance students, planning maintenance and upkeep of facilities, paying attention to specific aspects of education and learning, creating a learning-centered education system, standard-based structure, effective decision-making, creating a context and means for the emergence and utilization of students' talents, strengthening group human relations, adopting methods and determining principled policies in all matters to cultivate educational goals, providing the necessary resources for learning, creating new learning opportunities for learners, defining the school's mission, the amount of equipment and budget available to schools, goal-setting and envisioning the school's future, control and supervision system, personality traits, budgeting, having advanced technology and equipment, providing necessary equipment in schools, supporting and assisting teachers in education, improving conditions for teaching and learning, effective use of educational time, providing the necessary infrastructure in the education system.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to present a model of administrative standards for educational leaders in third millennium schools. Using grounded theory, 133 different factors were identified, including 50 causal factors,

11 core factors, 10 contextual factors, 16 outcomes, 11 intervening factors, and 35 strategies. Subsequently, the model was quantified using structural equation modeling, and the results indicated significant relationships between these factors.

The field of educational leadership and management is a multifaceted domain with various perspectives. A key debate in this area is whether educational leadership is an independent field or a subset of general management. When education is influenced by other disciplines, educational leadership and management must align with educational objectives. These objectives provide direction and leadership to support school management. The decision-making process regarding goals is at the heart of educational management. In most schools worldwide, goals are set by the school principal, often in collaboration with the senior management team or the school's governing body. However, school goals are heavily influenced by external pressures, particularly governmental expectations, and are usually articulated through formal rules or decrees (Eadens & Ceballos, 2023).

This research identified 133 factors using grounded theory, which were categorized into causal factors, core factors, contextual factors, outcomes, intervening factors, and strategies. The results of structural modeling showed that causal factors, with a coefficient of 0.405 and a t-value of 4.051, significantly impact the core category. Additionally, intervening factors, with a coefficient of 0.233 and a t-value of 4.051, influence strategies. Moreover, contextual factors, with a coefficient of 0.085 and a t-value of 2.298, affect core strategies. Finally, the core category, with a coefficient of 0.234 and a t-value of 4.877, impacts strategies, and strategies, with a coefficient of 0.449 and a t-value of 4.877, influence outcomes.

Educational leadership is considered a highly significant dimension because it focuses on the school's main activities, namely teaching and learning. This model also impacts other aspects of school life, such as sports, socialization, student well-being, and self-confidence (Bush, 2019). For example, the South African operational team's report (2020) emphasizes the importance of management for supporting the teaching and learning process. Management in education is not an end in itself; rather, effective management is a crucial aspect of any education system, with the primary goal being the advancement of teaching and learning. The role of management at all educational levels is ultimately to create and support conditions in which teachers and students can achieve learning objectives. However, despite this

explanation, there is limited evidence of managers' impact on learning progress in schools across various countries.

Transformational leadership is a method that, through various styles, keeps staff prepared for continuous learning and growth. This type of leadership always looks to the future, knows the destination, and has high confidence in making changes. The use of different styles and skills is a good sign of an effective manager. The impact of change in an organization is observed when its pace increases. Acquiring appropriate knowledge, utilizing individual skills, and embracing creative thinking are characteristics of transformational leaders. Identifying the destination, creating appropriate methods to reach it, and gathering the necessary tools to achieve it are among the critical tools for transformational managers (Balwant, 2016; Bauwens et al., 2024).

Almost all education specialists believe that the current era is an era of management and leadership. They believe that the success of educational institutions and organizations depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of their managers. We all know that today's education is entirely different from the past and requires its unique and appropriate behavioral methods. The social functions of society, the information institutions, and the availability of amazing tools and students' extensive access to communication resources, which can be beneficial when used correctly, are pushing our schools and education systems in a direction where if our educational system does not grow and develop alongside it, the gap between managers, teachers, and students will increase day by day, and this gap will widen significantly. Leadership-based management defines its most important task based on predetermined goals. Establishing and coordinating resources and various activities within the educational organization, improving the flow of education, and making educational goals more meaningful to students and teachers—motivating a sense of responsibility and fostering positive human relationships and mutual respect—are the primary features and goals of leadership-based management (Cemaloğlu, 2011; McDonnell et al., 2024; Rahimi et al., 2023; Sadat Mousavi & Ebrahimi, 2024).

Leadership-based management considers its mission to be the achievement of the necessary resources to reach educational goals and continuously strives to attain them. In this regard, managers play the most crucial role. While maintaining the school's ethical goals and values, through proper management and effective leadership, they procure the necessary resources, distribute them logically among

different sections, and oversee their use. Managers' knowledge is divided into two broad categories: general knowledge and specialized knowledge. Experience, in addition to the above skills, is an appropriate complement and plays a significant role. Effective leadership-based management must have the authority within the educational unit, which largely depends on the individual's personal characteristics. When these characteristics are combined in a group, they can turn the school's potential academic resources into actual achievements and meticulously nurture latent energies. It is no secret that a significant portion of managers' time is devoted to decision-making and problem-solving. Since planning, organizing, leading, and controlling require proper decision-making, this is considered one of the most critical functions of managers. Leadership-based management places particular emphasis on decision-making.

According to Follett, human relations refer to establishing human connections with teachers and students by recognizing their existence, personality, individual characteristics, and all the differences they might have with the manager. In leadership-based management, the manager of the educational unit should elevate their leadership role in human relations to the highest level. Like a kind father, with patience and prudence, the manager should guide the entire group toward comprehensive progress and development and create an environment conducive to fostering positive relationships within the educational unit (Eadens & Ceballos, 2023). In education, many definitions of management exist, but the most complete is that which considers management as leadership-based. Today, our schools do not need mere managers; they need educational leaders. The features inherent in educational leadership are rare, and perhaps unique. The functions of educational leadership are highly positive and proactive. The acceptance rate of this method, based on experience and reality, is far greater than that of other functions and roles defined for managers.

It is possible that the inferential statistics section of this research may experience minor or major changes over time due to shifting perspectives and conditions, making it impossible to generalize the results to the future. Additionally, there may be errors affecting the respondents, such as leniency bias, where individuals give overly high ratings, or central tendency bias, where individuals lean towards moderate ratings on the questionnaire, which the researcher cannot control. Indifference or inadequate responses to the questionnaire by some respondents were

evident in some questionnaires, which were partially corrected but could still influence the results. Conducting research to identify the implementation barriers to this study's recommendations is suggested. Ranking the identified influential factors using methods such as ANP or Topsis could be useful to determine the importance of each identified subcategory.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

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

Transparency Statement

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

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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