



## **Explaining The Approach of Authentic Leadership Competence in Primary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

Education is the most important organization emerging from within the society and at the same time its creator and builder, and its impact on the progress of the society is vital and tangible. In the education system of any country, the primary course has a high position, sensitivity, and importance. It is considered the most important academic course. This research<sup>4</sup> was conducted with the aim of identifying the components of authentic leadership competence in primary schools. Also, in terms of practical purpose, in terms of data type, it is qualitative research and in terms of method, it is phenomenological research. The method and tool used for data collection is a semi-structured interview with experts in the field under study. The participants in the research were managers, professors, and experts in the field of management and leadership, and sampling was done by snowball method until the theoretical saturation limit was reached. To determine reliability and trustworthiness, three techniques of reliability, transferability and confirmability have been used from the finding. After analyzing the data from a semi-structured interview with 15 managers, professors, and experts in the field of management and leadership, 184 concepts (decoder), 15 subcategories and 5 categories (knowledge, attitude, skills, characteristics and abilities, authentic leadership). was extracted and finally the results of this research were examined with the results of previous researches and solutions were proposed to improve the use of authentic leadership in Primary schools.

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## Introduction

Today, we are witnessing extensive and successive developments that make the responsibility and duties of social institutions and organizations heavier day by day. One of the institutions that is directly related to these changes and must be coordinated with these changes is education. The institution of education is the most important institution emerging from the context of society and at the same time its creator and developer, and its impact on the progress of society is vital and tangible (Arefezhad, 2019). One of the areas that has created a lot of preoccupation and concerns for the trustees and experts of education is the issue of management style in education, especially the management of schools and, more sensitively, the management of Primary schools; So that school management has become one of the most challenging and important jobs in today's societies (Mohamadi et al, 2020).

The transformation of human life in different dimensions and the development of human beings in line with the harmony and harmony with this flood of changes is the duty of the education system. If there is to be a transformation in the education system, this transformation should start from the management of the education system (Farahbakhsh et al, 2018). Anastasiou, S., & Garametsi (2020), In the researches of school leadership, they found that the effects of the manager on the academic progress of students as the most important criterion of effectiveness are indirect and occur through effectiveness on the performance of teachers, processes, structure of schools and missions, which are directly related to the learning of students, but the main challenge In the field of school management and leadership, which leadership style and its competencies can turn education and primary schools into successful, effective, creative and innovative institutions

Usually, the creative and innovative performance of any organization depends on the type of leadership of that organization (Černe, Jaklič & Škerlavaj, 2013).

There are different definitions of authentic leadership, which refer to examples of the definition of this new style of leadership: Authentic leadership is a level of awareness and a model of openness and transparency in dealing with others by providing the information needed to make decisions, accepting the achievements of others, revealing value. It is his own motives and feelings so that the subordinates can clearly see the leader's competencies and ethics in his actions and behaviors (Walumbwa et al, 2011). Mohamadi et al (2020), In their research, they identified the factors affecting the merit selection of school principals at the level of the leadership and management system, after reviewing and organizing the texts of the interviews, by identifying the index and categorizing them under 6 main components including: values and attitudes; managerial skills and abilities; Personality characteristics; personal knowledge and skills; organizational knowledge and skills; Monitoring and control, finally with the overall classification of the obtained codes, the competencies needed by school administrators were determined and defined in two dimensions, specialized and general. K. Hanifar et al (2020), A research aimed at designing the competency model of educational managers to be used in the evaluation and development center showed that the components of the competency model of education managers to be used in the evaluation center are: knowledge competence, professional competence, personality competence, executive competence, leadership and guidance competence, communication competence and Perceptual competence, which each of these

components includes sub-components and indicators, most of which are common among school managers, middle managers and higher education managers, and they are different in some indicators. According to previous literature and studies, although researches and studies in the field of competence of managers as well as authentic leadership have been done separately, therefore, it is necessary to examine the position of its competence components in the management of Primary schools, as well as the gaps in the background and research literature. It can be pointed out that after analyzing the interviews, it can be seen that the components of leaders' competence and the main components of authentic leadership have been combined and finally resulted in a general model.

### **Literature**

Authentic leadership as a behavioral model result from positive psychological capacities and a positive moral and organizational atmosphere and provides the means to cultivate self-awareness, internal moral aspects, balanced processing of information and transparency of relationships in working with followers (Olivier & Gardner, 2005). By establishing a positive relationship and yielding values, decisions and even weak points, authentic leadership exposes its mistakes to everyone's view and causes positive consequences, as well as a sense of self-confidence, mutual trust, and freedom of expression in presenting new ideas and it will even follow the unconventional and cause the effectiveness of the organization (Nermen et al, 2011).

Authentic leadership is a behavior that deals with providing and encouraging positive psychological dimensions to a fundamental aspect and brings self-awareness, institutionalized ethics perspective, balanced information processing and relationship transparency (Gatling et al, 2016). By

examining various researches, we find that the four main components of authentic leadership include self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalized moral aspects. self-awareness; It targets capacities, activities, energy and resources and reminds employees of more effectiveness and empowerment according to the situation with a guidance approach (Arefi & SHekoh, 2020). balanced processing; It includes the analysis of all relevant information before deciding. Leaders who seek the views and opinions of others and challenge existing situations have such characteristics (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011) moralized inner aspect; An ethical indicator is for evaluating the values and intentions of leaders and their degree of harmony, authentic leaders always compare and evaluate their behavior with their ethical indicators so that they can maintain maximum compatibility (Siadat & Ghaznavi, 2020). Transparency in relationships; presenting and expressing one's authenticity to others, such behaviors improve the disclosure and sharing of information and the expression of mutual true thoughts and feelings (Nieder and Krishim, 2011), and improve employee productivity and motivation (Bao-Da Xu et al, 2017).

Authentic leaders can support and increase the creativity of employees by creating the required creativity, giving timely feedback, advancing goals, and improving positive psychological capital (Müceldili, 2013 & Turan, & Erdil), they are very optimistic, flexible and have a very ethical personality. (Gardner et al., 2011).

Also, authentic leaders influence their abilities by motivating and motivating people to perform better, and as a result, people appear at the highest level of effort and performance (Crawford, Dawkins, Martin, & Lewis, 2020); Therefore, it can be concluded that managers and leaders, especially

authentic leaders, do not have competence components, which causes them to perform poorly in their leadership role and lead to incompetence and decrease in the performance of subordinates and the organization, which is tried to understand the concept It deserves to be explained further.

The term competence was proposed by White (1995), for the first time. White became famous by introducing the term competence to describe the characteristics of a person related to superior performance (White, 1995). The concept of competence was proposed by McClelland (1973), in an article entitled, measuring competence instead of intelligence, McClelland considered competence as behavioral and psychological characteristics that are related to successful outcomes in work and life.

Lucia & Lepsinger (2015), Competency is also considered as a group of related knowledge, skills and attitudes that affect a major part of a person's job and are correlated with job performance. According to the definitions of authentic and competent leadership, it can be concluded that an authentic and competent leader must be self-aware, transparent, have an internal moral aspect, have skills, abilities, attitudes, etc. The main problem of the research at a smaller level is to identify Competency components are in Primary schools.

Komalasari et al (2020), In research that studied the relationship between management competencies and improving the quality of education, they showed that management competencies have a direct effect on improving the quality of education, so it can be said that the influence of manager competencies on the quality of education is undeniable. Yasin, B & Mustafa, F (2020), In a study that investigated the correlation between school principal's competence and teachers' social behavior, they showed that school principals' competence structures have a positive

relationship with social behavior structures. Robert K et al (2020), in research, they investigated the characteristics of leadership in new schools and the challenges faced by managers, and the results indicated that the effective leadership of the school should have the main competencies in order to achieve effective and efficient results. Based on this research, twelve effective competencies of school managers are presented, which are related to each other, they are: school management, school law, educational leadership, resource management, leadership perspective, leadership change, communication, strategic planning, data management, social relations, different learner strategies. and cooperation.

Kaykhani & Nastizaei (2020), In research aimed at investigating the effect of authentic leadership on the effectiveness of school management with the mediating role of organizational knowledge sharing, they showed that school principals by applying authentic leadership style caused the sharing of organizational knowledge, which in turn will lead to an increase in the effectiveness of school management. Karimi & Mardani (2020), In a research aimed at investigating the relationship between authentic leadership and job enthusiasm of education and training workers with the mediation of psychological capital, they showed that the proposed model has a good fit with the data and authentic leadership and psychological capital have a positive and meaningful relationship with job enthusiasm, although leadership Authenticity has a positive relationship with job enthusiasm, but its effect through psychological capital on job enthusiasm is significant and alone has no effect on employees' job enthusiasm. Baghkhasti et al (2020), In research aimed at providing an authentic leadership model for the internationalization of macro-medical sciences universities in region one, they showed that authentic leadership has two

dimensions (individual and organizational) and in the quantitative part of the research, the results of the structural equation model test of the influence of authentic leadership on the internationalization of medical sciences universities approved the contract.

### **Method**

The present study was qualitative research in terms of its practical purpose, in terms of the type of data, and in terms of its method, it is descriptive phenomenological research. The method and tool used for data collection is a semi-structured interview with experts in the field under study. The participants of the research include managers, professors, and experts in the field of management and leadership, and the sampling was done by snowball method until reaching theoretical saturation (15 tons); Sampling ended when the theoretical saturation of a category or a group of items was achieved, that is, nothing new was obtained; And the obtained data were analyzed using three methods of open, central, and selective coding, which includes the following steps:

**Open coding:** after collecting the interviews, the text of all the interviews was implemented and standardized, and according to the theoretical literature of the research, scientific terms were chosen for them, so that a list of concepts and categories was obtained at this stage.

**Axial coding:** In this step, all the obtained open codes were categorized and each of the codes that were conceptually very close to each other were placed in one category, and in this way the relationship between the open codes was determined.

**Selective coding:** In this stage, the core codes extracted related to the main concept of the research, i.e. (authentic leadership competence),

and any categories that needed to be modified and further developed were completed .

And to determine the validity and reliability of the findings from three reliability techniques (in the present study, first, all the interviews were recorded by the researcher and a colleague interviewer. Also, the voice of the interviewer and the interviewee in the meeting was recorded by a recorder with the permission of the interviewee. Then a written version of the recorded interviews was prepared.

Transferability (Transferability refers to the nature of the researcher's working hypothesis that can be used in another context. It is not the researcher's responsibility to provide an index of transferability, and to some extent he is responsible for creating a set of data and explanations that are valuable enough, so providing Demographic information such as gender, level of education, field of study and experience of people in the company, along with their field of activity, were the things that were presented in this research about the interviewees).

Verifiability (Verifiability is a gradual and continuous process criterion. Step-by-step recording of data and the time sequence of the data collection process is very important in verifiability. In the present research, the verifiability of all research findings and how to interpret and analyze them are documented and in each step is recorded and reported) was used.

### **Findings**

Considering that the main goal and question of the research is to identify the components of authentic leadership competence of primary school principals, the researcher has answered this question by applying the interview coding method. The researcher prepared the interview form with the experts (interview questions:

Question 1: What are the components of authentic leadership of primary schools?

Question 2: What are the required characteristics of authentic leadership of primary schools?

Question 3: What are the required abilities of authentic leadership of primary schools?

Question 4: What are the skills required for authentic leadership of primary schools?

Question 5: What are the required attitudes of authentic leadership of primary schools?

Question 6: What are the skills needed for genuine leadership in primary schools?

Question 7: What are the ways to improve authentic leadership in primary schools ?

And then interviews were conducted with 15 experts, professors, and experienced managers of education, then the researcher extracted open codes by separating the interview text into elements with a key message or concept, inside the lines and paragraphs; In other words, the results of the interviews were analyzed and open coding was

done, and by implementing the open coding process, 184 indicators were obtained. In the second stage, that is, the axial coding stage, the categories were grouped into 15 larger clusters.

After coding, in the selective coding phase, the relationships between the categories were revealed. In this phase, the researcher reviewed the results of the previous two phases to summarize and categorize the indicators and components. The output of the selective coding phase identified 5 main categories or components. The competence of authentic leaders of Primary school principals was: knowledge component, attitudinal component, skill component, ability component, component of authentic leadership characteristics. Finally, 5 main categories or components, 15 sub-categories and 184 concepts or open codes were identified for the competence of authentic leaders of primary schools, which is reflected in the following table:

**Table1: three-step coding**

concepts (open codes)	Sub-components (core codes)	Main components (optional codes)
basic knowledge	Professional Knowledge	Authentic Leadership Knowledge
Knowledge of pedagogy		
Analytical knowledge		
Knowledge of professional ethics		
Knowledge of management theories		
Knowledge of educational planning		
Content knowledge		
Educational knowledge		
Educational knowledge		
Combined knowledge		
Technological knowledge		
Economic knowledge		
thinking knowledge		
Knowing the teacher		

Emotional Intelligence	Psychological Knowledge	Authentic Leadership Original
Developmental Psychology		
personality psychology		
Educational Psychology		
social Psychology		
Human knowledge		
New science		
Recognizing mental patterns		
Principles and techniques of counseling		
Knowledge related to facilitating affairs		
Student knowledge	Management Knowledge	
Planning knowledge		
Knowledge of sources		
Supervision		
Decision making		
Communication knowledge		
Economic knowledge		
Technical knowledge		
Knowledge of leadership		
organizational behavior		
human resources	Social Attitude	
Knowledge of public management		
Developmental attitude		
Change in behavior		
Respecting values		
Transformational attitude		
Favorable attitude to the organization		
Demographic attitude		
change management		
Organizational attitude		
Social changes	Cognitive Attitude	
Cultural attitude		
Idealistic attitude		
Creating knowledge		
Build skills		
The flourishing of talents		
Sharing knowledge		
Technological attitude		
Futuristic attitude		
Realistic attitude		
A multifaceted approach	Behavioral attitude	
Behavioral attitude		
Human attitude		
Collaborative attitude		
Moral attitude		

Fair attitude	The Attitude of internal ethics	
Sharing emotions		
Honesty		
Personal value	Communication skills	Authentic Leadership skills
communication skill		
Interactive skills		
social skill		
Human skill		
Team building skills		
mutual communication		
Explaining skills		
Interview skills		
Clear expression of ideas		
Active listening		
conversation skills		
Expressing skills		
Criticism of flexibility		
Behavioral flexibility		
frankness of speech		
Persuasion		
Leadership skills		
Decision making		
Problem Solving		
Understanding complexity		
Recognition skills	Cognitive skills	
overview		
Leadership perspective		
Creative thinking		
Knowledge sharing		
Learning knowledge		
Cultural struggle		
Systematic thinking		
Create a positive atmosphere		
Crisis Management		
Understanding the complexities of the environment		
organizational intelligence		
Initiative and creativity		
Analytical skills		
Familiarity with teaching methods		
Getting to know new technologies		
Familiarity with performance evaluation methods		
The skill of setting goals		
Use of technology		

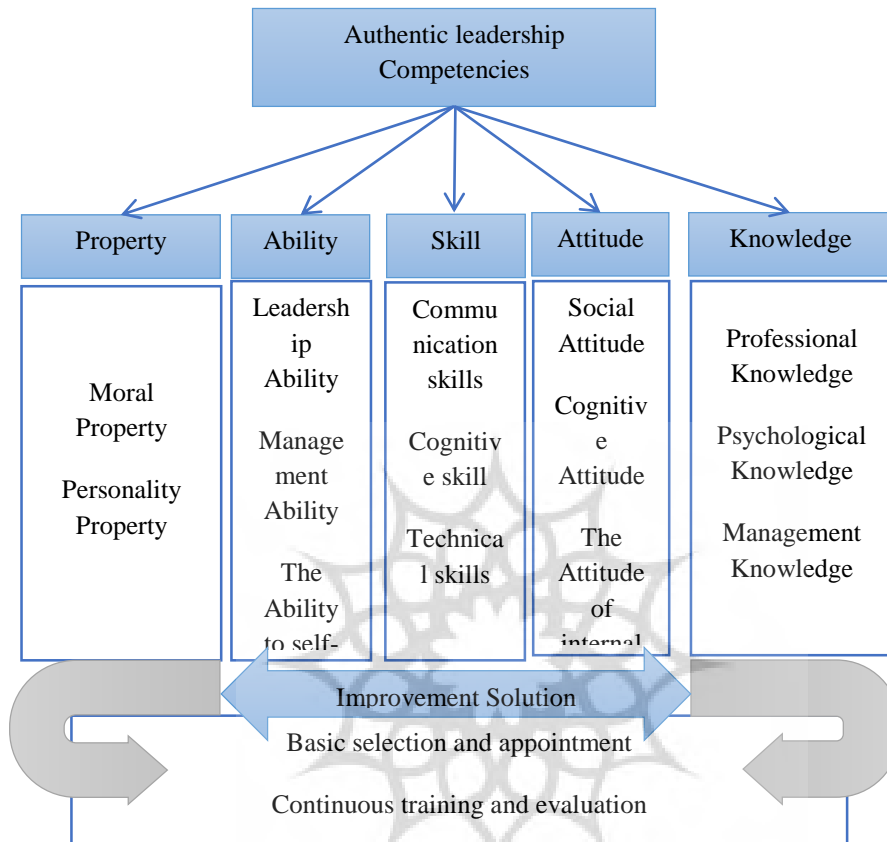


Instrumental skill	Technical skills	
Professional development		
Economic skill		
Political skill		
planning		
Supervision		
coordination		
guidance	Leadership	Authentic Leadership Ability
natural ability		
Communication ability		
doing the right thing		
Penetration ability		
Dealing with challenges and issues		
impact		
Two-way communication		
Create a positive atmosphere		
seek participation		
Networking ability		
Creating culture in school		
team building		
Acquired ability		
planning		
Professional ability		
Ability to control external and internal behavior		
coordination		
resource allocation		
Decision making		
Ability to perform specific tasks		
Technical ability		
Budgeting management		
research and investigation		
Attract resources		
guidance		
Supervision		
Cognitive ability	self-awareness	
Clear communication		
Ability to tolerate comments		
Accepting individual differences		
Understanding others		
Situational awareness		
Understanding personality traits		
self-awareness		
motivating		
Self-management		
Management over others		
Self Knowledge		
responsibility		
Identify strengths and weaknesses		

conformity	Balanced processing	Property Authentic leadership
Correct judgment		
Problem Solving		
Critical Thinking		
Being creative		
Being an artist		
reflection		
Analytical ability		
Self-assessment ability		
Balanced processing		
Human ethics	Moral Property	
Adherence to the written ethical framework		
Ethics		
Clear communication		
Follow the specialized framework		
Following the ethical standard		
Adherence to the ethical system		
Believer		
Qualification of experience responsibility		
Individual originality		
flexible		
Quiet		
Acceptor		
hopeful		
Personal discipline		
Participant		
accuracy		
High emotional intelligence		
committed		
Management intelligence		
Charisma and attractive		
Desire for self-improvement		

As mentioned earlier, the present research was followed by semi-structured interviews with implementation experts and three stages of open, central, and selective coding. The result obtained from this process was the identification of 5 main components, 15 sub-components and finally 184 open codes. Finally, as a result of the findings of the research, the researcher concluded that

authentic leadership can be improved in primary schools through the principled selection and appointment of school principals, providing training conditions and continuous evaluation of principals' performance. The obtained results are presented in the form of a schematic model as follows:

**Figure1: Final model (Summary results of the interview)**

### Discussion and conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that the competencies of authentic leaders of elementary schools include 5 main components, 15 sub-components and 184 indicators or open codes, which are explained below:

#### Component Knowledge

Based on the analysis of the results of the interviews, in the first stage of open coding, 184 open codes were extracted, and in the second stage, 36 open codes were classified into 3 subcategories: specialized knowledge, psychological knowledge, and managerial knowledge. In the last stage, these 3 sub-categories were categorized in the main category of authentic leadership knowledge. Most

of the experts stated that it is necessary and essential for authentic leaders to have management knowledge. Another promise from the participants was that it is not enough to have only management knowledge and authentic school leaders must have the necessary knowledge of pedagogy and psychological knowledge. To perform well in their role and position, because this will increase creativity and job satisfaction and organizational commitment for themselves and their subordinates.

In terms of alignment and misalignment of the results, it can be mentioned that the psychological knowledge component is aligned with the results of Mirmohamadi & Rahimyan (2015), and Rego et al (2012) showed in their research that psychological capital influences the relationship between

authentic leadership and individual creativity. It has relative and significant positive. No research has been done on other components related to the knowledge needed by authentic leaders, or if there is any research in this field, it has little resemblance to the components of this research.

### **Component Attitude**

Based on the analysis of the results of the interviews, in the first stage of open coding, 27 open codes were extracted, and in the second stage, these concepts were classified in the form of 3 subcategories: social attitude, cognitive attitude and internal ethics. In the last stage, these 3 subcategories were categorized in the category of authentic leadership attitudes. In explaining the findings of the research, it can be stated that an authentic leader must have a positive and constructive attitude in order to maintain his originality and apply the main components of authentic leadership, so that he welcomes change and respects organizational values and with multifaceted and realistic attitudes. Examined the ideas of employees and try to share knowledge and skills and develop talents. This also requires having social, cognitive, and internal moral attitudes. There has been no research on the social attitude and cognitive attitude of authentic leaders, but the attitude of internal ethics is in line with the research of Abdollahi (2018) and Derakhshani & Zandi (2018). The attitude of internal ethics is one of the components of authentic leadership, which according to the participants, it is necessary for an authentic leader to have a social, cognitive, and internal ethics attitude as a worthy leader.

### **Component Skill**

Based on the analysis of the interview results, in the first stage of open coding, 48 open codes were extracted, and in the second stage, these concepts were classified in the form of 3 subcategories: clear

communication skills, cognitive skills, and technical skills. In the last step, these 3 sub-categories were categorized in the category of authentic leadership skills. In explaining the findings of the research, it can be stated that the management of elementary schools in the role of authentic leadership is tied to concepts such as clear communication skills, cognitive skills, and technical skills. Due to the nature of educational organizations, especially schools, managers and leaders need strong and clear communication with other human forces, Also, in the cognitive dimension, managers need to make decisions about goals and solve problems, which increases the importance of this dimension. Also, school management requires having technical skills to formulate goals and professional development. The sub-component of transparent communication, which is also one of the main components of authentic leadership, with the research of Karimi & Mardani (2020) and Darabaygi et al. (2020), Abdollahi. (2020) is aligned, but research has not been done for other sub-components of the skill of authentic leaders, i.e., cognitive skill and technical skills of authentic leaders.

### **Component Ability**

d on the analysis of the results of the interviews, in the first stage of open coding, 50 open codes were extracted, and in the second stage, these concepts were classified into 4 subcategories: leadership ability, managerial ability, self-awareness ability, and balanced processing ability. In the last stage, these 4 sub-categories were categorized in the category of authentic leadership abilities. It can be inferred from the research findings Management of educational organizations, especially schools, is very difficult and important, and therefore it is necessary for them to have leadership and management abilities for team building and networking, as well as necessary

coordination and decision-making, and authentic leaders, by using the process of self-awareness, increase the independence of subordinates. They become themselves, which increases creative behavior and clarification, and in terms of balanced processing, they should be able to make correct judgments and self-evaluation and balanced processing of information before deciding. In the field of leadership abilities, the management ability needed by authentic leaders has not been researched, but the sub-components of self-awareness and balanced processing are consistent with the researches of Darabaygi et al. (2020) and Karimi et al. (2020), Abdollahi. (2018) is aligned, Derakhshani et al. (2018) also showed in their research that balanced processing alone can be a significant predictor of organizational transparency. Also, Iqbal, S. (2020) et al, showed that emotional and cognitive trust has a positive mediating effect on the relationship between authentic leadership and cooperative employee relations.

### **Component Property**

Based on the analysis of the results of the interviews, in the first stage of open coding, 23 open codes were extracted, and in the second stage, these concepts were classified in the form of 2 subcategories: personality traits and moral traits. In the last stage, these 2 subcategories were categorized in the category of authentic leadership characteristics. Findings from expert interviews mostly indicated that authentic school leaders should focus on psychological characteristics, also deduced from the interviews that the leaders should adhere to written moral and personality frameworks and in line with this framework, provide a context for teachers and other school staff to participate and be creative easily and with mutual trust, these characteristics reflect the originality of authentic leaders. The moral characteristics of

authentic leaders are in line with Abdulahi's (2016) research. But there is no research on the personality characteristics of authentic leaders. Regarding the characteristics of school principals, this component is aligned with researches: the main characteristic component is also aligned with the research of Panhi et al. (2019) and the personality and moral characteristics of this component are also aligned with the researches of Mohamadi et al. (2020), (2020) KHanifar et al. and Abdollahi et al (2018), Jahaniyan. (2014), is consistent.

According to the findings of the research, one of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of schools can be considered as a weakness in the system of attracting, selecting, appointing, and hiring managers, because the competencies based on which school leaders and managers are selected are not considered and in many cases the choices are based on taste and relationship. It fuels these ambiguities. If managers are selected and appointed with the knowledge of these competencies and their components, they will be able to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of schools, and this is also subject to the preparation and preparation of training courses and continuous evaluations.

Holding training and specialized courses in this field to familiarize managers with the categories related to the competencies of authentic leaders as one of the types of leadership can increase their efficiency and productivity in schools as school leaders.

In the end, according to the results obtained from the research, some suggestions are also presented:

This research can be useful for the principals of elementary schools, based on which, they can learn about the status of authentic leadership, the conditions for its realization, and ways to improve it. Based on the components identified in this research, by examining the current situation,

managers can identify their strengths and weaknesses and take action to resolve possible problems.

### **Ethical Considerations**

During the implementation of this research and the preparation of the article, all national laws and principles of professional ethics related to the subject of research, including the rights of statistical community, organizations and institutions, as well as authors and writers have been observed. Adherence to the principles of research ethics in the present study was observed and consent forms were consciously completed by all statistical community.

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### **Conflict Of Interest**

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