



## Investigate the role of servant leadership and team leadership In team performance mediated by team cohesion and team learning In the teams of secondary school teachers in Kurdistan province

Jamal Abdolmaleki<sup>1</sup>, Siroos Ghanbari<sup>2\*</sup>

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### Abstract:

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of servant leadership and team leadership in team performance mediated by team cohesion and team learning in teacher teams. The study population was all secondary school teachers in Kurdistan province, which was selected by random sampling method of relative classes and based on Cochran's formula, a sample of 346 teachers. The research method was quantitative and correlation-oriented structural equation modeling approach. To collect data from Liden et al.'s (2015) Servant Leadership Questionnaire; Leadership of a research team based on the model of Morgeson, DeRue & Karam (2010); Podsakoff & MacKenzie Team Cohesion (1994); The team learning of Bresó, Gracia, Latorre & Peiró (2008) and the team performance of Puente-Palacios, Martins & Palumbo (2016) were used. The reliability of the questionnaires was assessed by Cronbach's alpha technique, and the validity of the questionnaires was evaluated by first and second order heuristic and confirmatory factor analysis. To analyze the data and test the research hypotheses, correlation matrix analysis and structural equation modeling with SPSS.v25 and LISREL.v10 software were used. The results showed that: 1) Servant leadership had a direct, positive and significant effect on team performance, team learning and team cohesion and through team cohesion and team learning on team performance in teacher teams had an indirect positive and significant effect; 2) Team leadership had a direct, positive and significant effect on team performance, team learning and team cohesion and through team cohesion and team learning had a positive and significant indirect effect on team performance in teacher teams.

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1. Ph.D. Student in Educational Management, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran.

2. Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran.

\*Corresponding Author:

Email: s.ghanbari@basu.ac.ir

**Introduction:**

In the recent decades, organizations across the world have made advances in team building to provide fast, flexible, and responsive reactions in ever-changing complex workplaces (Kozlowski & Beal, 2013; Kozolowski & Ilgen, 2006). The development of teamwork in modern organizations shows to be unstoppable as there is lots of academic evidence that teamwork can help organizations cope with more complex tasks and unstable environments (Mathieu et al., 2008; Zaccaro et al., 2008). Teamwork has become a reality that nearly most organizations benefit from some kinds of team-based work (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). Perhaps a recent survey of top executives, which showed that 91% of them agree with the importance of teams in organizational success, can justify the expansion of teams (Martin & Beal, 2006). New research has also examined the "explosion of work" in teams in this regard (Mathieu et al., 2008: 411). The importance and application of teamwork has increased dramatically in the last three decades in the field of education and professional organizations (Dochy et al., 2014: 988).

However, teamwork is often used as a positive concept; it operates under certain conditions (West, 2004). A common way to develop and change organizations is leadership development, which has been considered as the main factor for organizational performance (Van Dongen, 2014). Therefore, in terms of organizational performance and adaptation to changing environment practitioners often point to the critical role of team leadership in the future of the organization (Hambrick, 2010). Team leadership often operates at the top of the organization and its decisions have long-term strategic and operational consequences for the organization (Hedman, 2016: 593).

Increasing usage of teams in organizations, research has started focusing on the role of leadership in team success (Morgeson et al., 2010: 6). Because teams are determined by members who work interdependently for common goals and over

a specific period of membership (Hackman & Hackman, 2002: 12). As well as, the main characteristic of teams is the interdependence between members (Wageman, 2001: 198). Therefore, as interdependence increases, the need for interaction and coordination in the team increases. Thus, leaders must prepare and motivate not only individuals, but also each team as an identity; Because leadership is a complex and effective process that plays an important role in the coherence of individual activities towards the formation of collaborative groups (Hogg, 2006: 23; Northouse, 2018: 56). Team leadership facilitates social interaction, efficient processes, and transparent communication within team, thereby increasing team motivation and making the team more cohesive (Chen & Kanfer, 2006; Morgeson et al., 2010; Zaccaro et al., 2008).

In the evolutionary process of leadership, Vugt & Ronay (2014: 75) claim that we are evolving and it takes time, and many of our basic institutionalized needs do not flourish. In early societies, leaders were quickly recognized, and there was no distinction between the leader's private and public selves (Van Vugt et al., 2008: 268). We still deal with early small communities, such as families as well as bureaucratic organizations with a global workforce. Therefore, modern organizations often do not evoke a sense of mental belonging (Van Vugt et al., 2008: 183; Vugt & Ronay, 2014: 77). However, the servant leadership fills this gap by creating a sense of social identity in his/her followers (Chen et al., 2015: 512) and by forming teams that remember the same desire of early communities to help team members and build capacity in others (Yoshida et al., 2014: 1396).

Servant leadership is the approach of paying attention to others characterized by prioritizing the individual needs and interests of followers and changing the outward attitude of individuals, the organization, and the larger community (Eva et al., 2019: 119). At the team level, servant leadership

can serve as a kind of "general stimulus" (Hackman, 1992) in which the general pattern of leader behaviors is presented to all team members (Ehrhart, 2004; Liao & Chuang, 2007; Morgeson et al., 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010). The process of exchange between leaders and work teams plays a key role in servant leadership theory (Liden et al., 2008: 163). Although the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964) and reciprocal norm (Gouldner, 1960) are often used to explain the relationship between supervisors and subordinates, servant leadership at the team level is also involved in the exchange process in which leaders acknowledge strengths and weaknesses. The potential of the team, as well as its overall support, help the team. Servant leadership is characterized by a focus on the growth and empowerment of followers, altruism, empathy, good morals, camaraderie, and engagement with the community (Liden et al., 2008). Servant leadership in contrast to other leadership styles that focus on the organization welfare, is unique in that the leader is seen as a "servant" who addresses the needs of his/her followers more than his/her needs (Van Dierendonck, 2011: 1231). The main commitment of servant leadership is to influence organizational outcomes

by enhancing the growth and well-being of followers, especially by meeting the needs of followers (Liden et al., 2008: 167; Mayer, 2010: 150). Servant leaders' positive support for all followers also increases team cohesion, which affects team members' focus, enthusiasm and commitment to tasks and goals leads to increasing team performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018: 336). Cohesion is an important feature of a team that refers to the level of forces that bind team members together and to the team goal (Festinger, 1950: 273; Carron, 1982: 125). Therefore, leadership plays an important role in fostering and promoting team cohesion. Therefore, today's organizations will select servant leadership to enable team cohesion.

The results of studies indicate the effect of servant leadership on team performance; For example: Tho, Nakandala & Lan (2020); Chiniara & Bentein (2018); Kiakjuri et al. (2018); Jafari Fekrat & Hosseini Shakib (2018); Katbi et al.

(2016); Rezaei Manesh, B & Siddiqui (2016); Chiniara & Bentein (2016); Sousa & Van Dierendonck (2016); Song, Park & Kang (2015); Mahembe & Engelbrecht (2014); Ashure, Bahr al-Ulum & Hosseini Nia (2014); Izadi Tameh et al. (2012) and Gholipour, Pourezat & Hazrati (2009). The results of studies indicate the effect of servant leadership on team learning, for example: Tho, Nakandala & Lan (2020); Wibowo & Hayati (2019); Song, Park & Kang (2015); Savelsbergh, Poell & van der Heijden (2015); Basmi, Torkfar & Azad Fada (2015) and Bucic, Robinson & Ramburuth (2010). The results of studies indicate the effect of servant leadership on team cohesion; for example: Wibowo & Hayati (2019); Chiniara & Bentein (2018); Chiniara & Bentein (2016); Sousa & Van Dierendonck (2016); Savelsbergh, Poell & van der Heijden (2015); Ashure, Bahr al-Ulum & Hosseini Nia (2014) and Gholipour, Pourezat & Hazrati (2009).

Evidence shows a positive relationship between team cohesion and team performance For example: Appelbaum et al (2020); Van der Voet & Steijn (2020); Black et al., (2019); Ozer & Karabulut (2019); Chiniara & Bentein (2018); Zoroastrians & Khazaei (2017); Abbasian, Mohebbi, & Mirzapour (2016); Tekleab et al., (2016); Chiniara & Bentein (2016); Sousa & Van Dierendonck (2016); Wu & Lu (2012); Talebi & Abdullahi (2012) and Abedini & Sasanpour (2011). Stashevsky, Burke & Koslowsky (2006); Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers & Kirschner (2006) and Beal et al., (2003). Evidence has also shown a positive relationship between team cohesion and team learning For example: Dimas, Lourenço, Rebelo & Rocha (2020); Özer & Karabulut (2019); Wibowo & Hayati (2019); Sánchez et al (2018); Tekleab et al (2016); Savelsbergh, Poell & van der Heijden (2015); Lee, Gillespie, Mann & Wearing (2010) and Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers & Kirschner (2006).

Need of team leadership model in 21st century organizations, leaders must have all the competencies to improve team leadership skills and go beyond the basic principles of leadership competency. Since differences meet the needs of flatter organizations and team members who are

less obedient, today's leaders must develop skills that are somewhat different from their predecessors (Khan et al., 2014: 1). The philosophical foundations of team leadership lie in the ideas of social constructivism (Hedman, 2016: 595). Therefore, team leadership theories are based on the logic of social psychology, which considers communication behaviors because of motivation, skills, and individual knowledge rather than a relational quality (Barge, 2014). Team leadership represents a new era of organizational development that is based more on discourse than on diagnostic mentality (Bushe & Marshak, 2015); This means that human behavior is considered as a result of communication rather than the result of specific characteristics and skills of individuals (Barge, 2014; Barge & Little, 2008). Thus, team leadership helps to facilitate the flow of dialogue between different areas of individual communication behavior, relationships between team members, team, and organizational culture (Hedman, 2016: 599). Team leadership behavior is defined as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to achieve common goals" (Yukl, 2010: 8). Due to the centrality of needs in team performance, team leadership can be recognized as central factor to meeting team needs. Therefore, anyone (inside or outside the team) who is responsible for meeting team needs can be seen as team leader (Morgeson et al., 2010: 8). Team members do not automatically engage in team learning behaviors, as this can cause problems (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018: 476). It is argued that participation in team learning behavior should be encouraged through team leadership (Van der Haar et al., 2017: 217). Edmondson (2003: 1421) believed that team leaders can facilitate interaction in learning team behaviors through actions such as expressing their own weaknesses, tolerating failures, or reflecting and determining the value of the team goal. Therefore, the process of team learning behaviors can help achieve successful team performance in problem solving and team self-efficacy (Sessa & London, 2008: 2).

The results of studies indicate the role of team leadership in team performance. For example: Lyndon, Pandey & Navare (2020); Van der Voet & Steijn (2020); Zardoshtian & Khazaei (2017); Ghanbari, Eskandari & Saed Atani (2016); Khan, Khan & Mahmood (2014); Pinar et al (2014); Wu & Lu (2012); Talebi & Abdullahi (2012); Decuyper, Dochy & Van den Bossche (2010); Lee et al (2010); Sessa & London (2006); Stashevsky, Burke & Koslowsky (2006); Edmondson (2002) and Edmondson (1999).

The results of studies also indicate the role of team leadership in team learning. For example: Lyndon, Pandey & Navare (2020); Koeslag-Kreunen, Van den Bossche, Van der Klink & Gijsselaers (2020); Koeslag-Kreunen, Van der Klink, Van den Bossche & Gijsselaers (2018); Koeslag-Kreunen, Van den Bossche, Hoven, Van der Klink & Gijsselaers (2018); Wang et al (2017); Ghanbari et al (2016); Savelsbergh, Poell & van der Heijden (2015); Pinar et al (2014); Decuyper et al (2010); Lee et al (2010); Sessa & London (2006); Edmondson (2002) and Edmondson (1999).

The results of studies indicate the role of team leadership in team cohesion. For example: Van der Voet & Steijn (2020); Zardoshtian & Khazaei (2017); Savelsbergh, Poell & van der Heijden (2015); Wu & Lu (2012); Vahdani et al. (2012); Talebi & Abdullahi (2012); Bakhshi, Jalali Farahani & Pourhassan (2012); Lee et al (2010); Moradi et al (2007) and Stashevsky et al (2006). Evidence also suggests a positive relationship between team learning and team performance. For example: Tho, Nakandala & Lan (2020); Lyndon, Pandey & Navare (2020); Bron et al (2018); Tekleab et al (2016); Song, Park & Kang (2015); Ghanbari et al (2015); Pinar et al (2014) and Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers & Kirschner (2006).

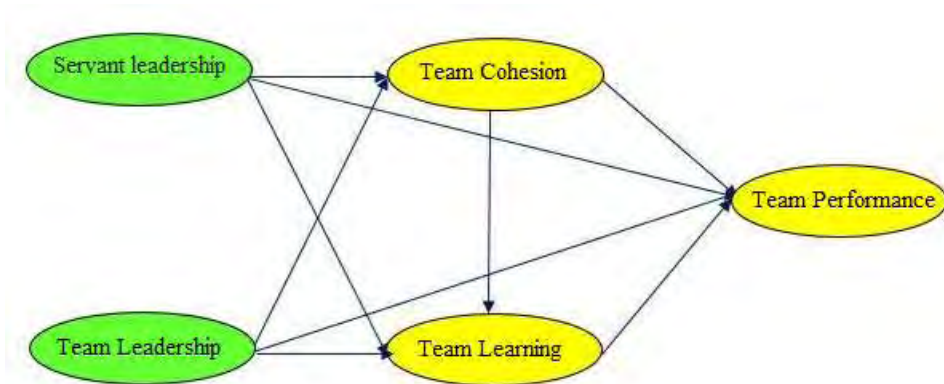
By analyzing the theories and empirical studies of servant leadership and team leadership, the following results can be reached. 1) The importance and increasing attention of professional organizations as well as researchers to the positive consequences of these two types of leadership for organizations; 2) the diversity of studies in terms of organizations; 3) Variety of analysis methodology

based on two, three or four variables in theories of servant leadership and team leadership; 4) Lack of attention to the development of comprehensive model due to the positive relationship between servant leadership and team leadership with team performance, team learning and team cohesion; 5) Accumulation of studies in some organizations (companies) and lack of studies in educational systems.

Since the characteristics and constructive effects of these two types of leadership are important in team performance, cohesion and learning; training and professional organizations, need more attention to servant leadership and team leadership. In addition, literature indicates the lack of coherent and ongoing studies on the team and the role of leadership in it. However, accepted collectivist culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran and efforts to strengthen it practically, especially in educational and professional institutions as the agents of society transformation, have explained the necessity of conducting the present research. The educational system was selected as the context of this study due to the mission of the educational system; the importance of socio-political domain among six areas of the educational system in fundamental transformation document; strengthen social skills in teamwork; and respect the culture of collectivism. Teachers were selected as the research community because the researcher's goal is to examine the status of teachers in the areas of personal performance, job stagnation, lack of motivation to work, job dissatisfaction and management issues. It is believed that the team and its related factors and the role of team leadership will be able to solve some of these issues. Teachers also act as role models for students. Therefore, by identifying the situation of teachers in research variables, analyzing them and providing solutions to strengthen teamwork in teachers in the form of team leadership, servant leadership, team cohesion,

team learning, and team performance nurtured capable teachers and fostered a culture of collectivism in students. In terms of innovation, the present research model is the result of in-depth, comprehensive and multifaceted studies on team with emphasis on servant leadership and team leadership. Therefore, by analyzing theoretical and experimental evidence, it presents the results of previous studies in the form of a new, comprehensive and coherent model with high logical explanatory ability, so that it can be known as a based theory and initiates the birth of specialized models in the various field of team and leadership in educational and professional organizations.

Based on theoretical foundations and empirical studies, the present study intends to formulate a comprehensive model about the relationship of servant leadership and team leadership with the performance, cohesion and team learning. Therefore, the discrete relationships of previous studies about servant leadership and team leadership are tested in the form of a comprehensive model and simultaneously with the structural equation modeling technique. In this study, servant leadership styles and team leadership determined as independent variables; team cohesion and team learning as mediating variables; and team performance as a dependent variable. However, the problem of the present study is to investigate whether the role of servant leadership and team leadership in team performance mediated by team cohesion and team learning are significant or not? Considering the importance and application of teamwork in the past three decades in the field of education and professional organizations as well as the lack of the studies in educational organizations, the present study intends to test this model in the education system and especially the teams of secondary school teachers that has the most diversity.



**Figure 1: Research conceptual model: The role of servant leadership and team leadership in team performance mediated by team cohesion and team learning**

### **Research hypotheses:**

#### **A: Direct effects:**

1. Servant leadership has an effect on team cohesion, team learning and team performance of teachers.
2. Team leadership has an effect on team cohesion, team learning and team performance of teachers.
3. Team cohesion has an effect on team learning and team performance of teachers.
4. Team learning has an effect on teachers' team performance.

#### **B: Indirect effects: single mediator**

5. Servant leadership has an effect on teachers' team performance through team cohesion.
6. Servant leadership has an effect on teachers' team performance through team learning.
7. Servant leadership has an effect on teachers' team learning through team cohesion.
8. Team cohesion has an effect on teachers' team performance through team learning.
9. Team leadership has an effect on teachers' team performance through team cohesion.
10. Team leadership has an effect on teachers' team performance through team learning.
11. Team leadership has an effect on teachers' team learning through team cohesion.

#### **A: Indirect effects: two mediators**

12. Servant leadership has an effect on teachers' team performance through team cohesion and team learning.
13. Team leadership has an effect on teachers' team performance through team cohesion and team learning.

#### **Method:**

According to the conceptual model test derived from theories and experimental studies and the use of a questionnaire, the type of research was quantitative. Because we wanted to examine the relationships between variables in the form of a model, the research method was correlation. Since the aim of this study was to investigate the structural relationships between the five variables in the form of several simultaneous regression equations and to investigate the pattern fit, the correlation-covariance matrix structural equation modeling approach was used. The research population is all secondary school teachers in Kurdistan province in 2020(N=3475). Cochran's formula was used to determine the sample size ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ; error value = 0.05 and P, O ratio = 0.5). Therefore, the sample size were 346 teachers. According to the different clusters of the research population such as the type of region (privileged, semi-privileged and deprived), towns (eleven towns) and gender (male and female), stratified random sampling method was used, which is described in tables 1 & 2.

**Table 1: Research sample**

Region	Town	Male	Female	Total
Privileged	Sanandaj(1)	29	27	56
	Sanandaj(2)	27	30	57
	Total	56	57	113
Semi- Privileged	Marivan	27	13	40
	Qorveh	18	16	34
	Kamyaran	16	15	31
	Bijar	10	13	23
	Saqez	27	14	41
	Total	98	71	169
Deprived	Baneh	12	6	18
	Sarvabad	11	4	15
	Dehgolan	9	6	15
	Divandareh	10	6	16
	Total	42	22	64
<b>Total</b>	-	196	150	346

To collect data Liden et al.'s (2015) servant leadership questionnaire in five items; researcher-made team leadership questionnaire based on Morgeson, DeRue & Karam (2010) model in the form of two dimensions of transitional leadership (items one to seven) and action leadership (items eight to fifteen); Podsakoff & MacKenzie Team Cohesion (1994) in six items; Bresó, Gracia, Latorre & Peiró (2008) team learning in four dimensions include continuous improvement (items one to seven), promoting dialogue and open communication (items eight to twelve), collaborative learning (items thirteen to sixteen) as well as strategic and active leadership for team development (seventeenth to twentieth items) and Puente-Palacios, Martins & Palumbo (2016) team performance in nine items were used in a five-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the research tool. The alpha values of the questionnaires are: servant leadership (0.88); Team leadership (0.885), transitional dimension of team leadership (0.826) and action dimension of team leadership (0.915); Team cohesion (0.90); Team learning (0.859), continuous improvement dimension (0.814), dialogue and open communication dimension (0.843), collaborative learning dimension (0.803) and strategic and active leadership dimension for team development (0.796) as well as team

performance (0.902). Therefore, all the questionnaires have adequate reliability.

Confirmatory factor analysis technique was used to determine the validity of the instrument. Fit indicators for servant leadership questionnaire:  $\chi^2$  (24/90), degree of freedom (14), chi-square ratio to degree of freedom (1.77), RMSEA (0.048), CFI (0.99), GFI (0.98) and AGFI (0.96). Due to the researcher-made team leadership questionnaire, first, exploratory factor analysis was performed by Varimax rotation and then confirmatory factor analysis was used. In exploratory factor analysis, the value of KMO was 0.876. The value of Bartlett was 1960.260 (df =105). The value of the total explained variance was 57%. In addition, the fit indices in the confirmatory factor analysis for the team leadership questionnaire are:  $\chi^2$  (165.04), degree of freedom (89), ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom (1.85), RMSEA (0.049), CFI (0.96), GFI (0.93) and AGFI (0.91). Due to the standardization of team learning questionnaires, team cohesion and team performance, only confirmatory factor analysis was used. Therefore, the fit indicators for team learning questionnaire are  $\chi^2$ (314.16), degree of freedom (166), ratio Chi-square degrees of freedom (1.89), RMSEA (0.050), CFI (0.97), GFI (0.94) and AGFI (0.92). Fit indicators for team cohesion questionnaire are  $\chi^2$ (14.51), degree of freedom (9), chi-square ratio

to degree of freedom (1.61), RMSEA (0.042), CFI (0.97), GFI (0.93) and AGFI (0.92). Fit indicators for team performance questionnaire are  $\chi^2$  (52.66), degree of freedom (27), Chi-square ratio to degree of freedom (1.95), RMSEA (0.052), CFI (0.96), GFI (0.92) and AGFI (0.90). According to the results of the questionnaire measurement models, it can be said that research questionnaires have a suitable and acceptable validity.

To analyze the data in the test of research hypotheses (effects test), statistical techniques of frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, skewness, elongation, Pearson correlation matrix

and structural equation modeling were used by SPSS.25 and LISREL10.30.

### Findings:

*Sample Description:* 56.5% of the sample are men and 43.5% are women. 32.7% of the them are serving in privileged areas, 48.8% in semi-privileged areas and 18.5% in deprived areas. 47.4% have a bachelor's degree and 52.6% have a master's degree or higher. 30.1% of the sample members have less than 7 years of service, 50% have 7 to 15 years and 19.9% have more than 15 years.

**Table 2: Correlation matrix of research variables and descriptive indicators**

Variable	Team leadership	Servant leadership	Team cohesion	Team learning	Team performance
<b>Team leadership</b>	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Servant leadership</b>	0.28*	1	-	-	-
<b>Team cohesion</b>	0.63*	0.54*	1	-	-
<b>Team learning</b>	0.58*	0.46*	0.41*	1	-
<b>Team performance</b>	0.67*	0.52*	0.59*	0.61*	1
<b>Mean</b>	2.76	2.94	2.65	2.81	2.53
<b>SD</b>	0.572	0.668	0.807	0.480	0.738
<b>Skewness</b>	-0.574	-0.973	-0.879	-0.742	-0.898
<b>Kurtosis</b>	0.444	1.15	-0.68	0.665	1.24

P- Valued= 0.05\*

Mean and standard deviation of research variables are respectively: team leadership (2.76, 0.572); Servant leadership (2.94, 0.668); Team cohesion (2.65, 0.807); Team learning (2.81, 0.480) and team performance (2.53, 0.738). Indicators of skewness and Kurtosis indicate the normal data distribution in five variables include team leadership, servant leadership; team cohesion and team learning in teacher teams.

The team leadership variable has a positive and significant correlation at the level of 0.05 with

servant leadership (0.28), team cohesion (0.63), team learning (0.58) and team performance (0.67). The servant leadership variable has a positive and significant correlation at the level of 0.05 with team cohesion (0.54), team learning (0.46) and team performance (0.52). The team cohesion variable has a positive and significant correlation at the level of 0.05 with team learning (0.41) and team performance (0.59). Team learning variable has a positive and significant correlation at the level of 0.05 with team performance (0.61).



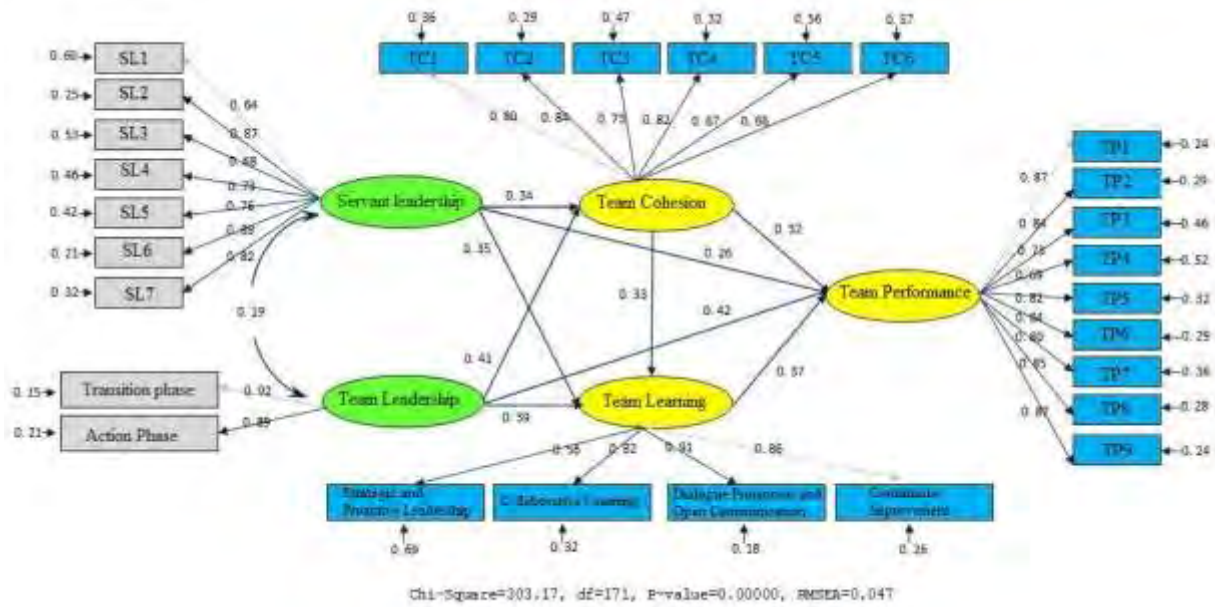


Figure 2: General experimental model of research with standard coefficients

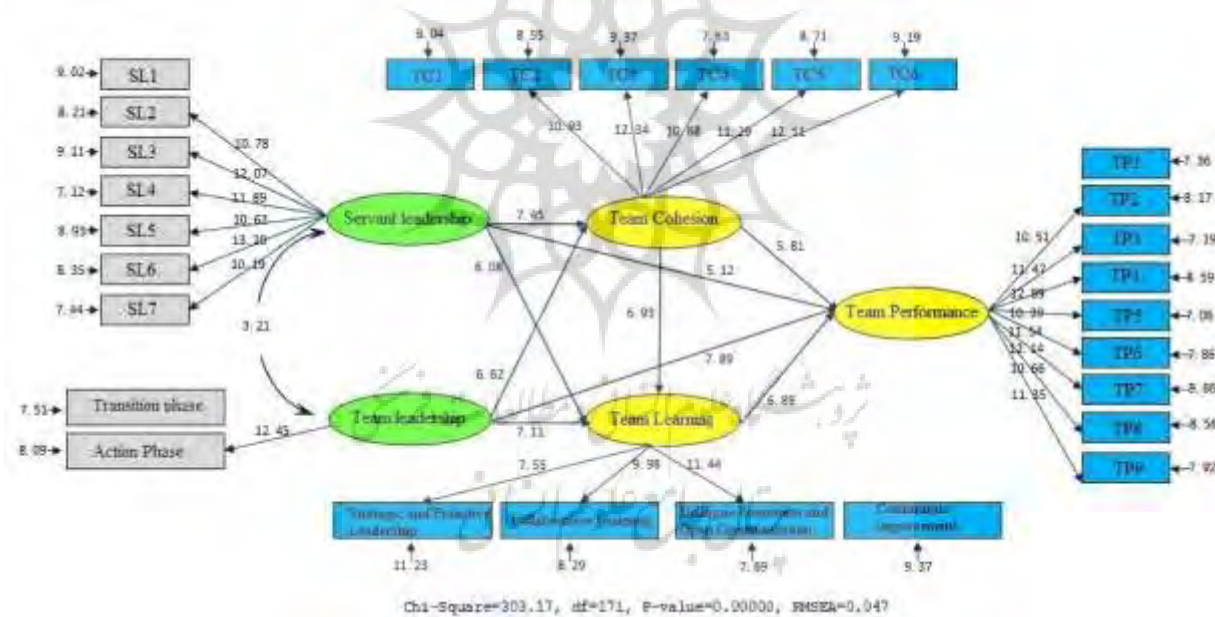


Figure 3: General model of T-index coefficients of experimental research model

The fit indicators of the model are  $\chi^2$  (303.17), degree of freedom (171), chi-square ratio to degree of freedom (1.77), RMSEA (0.047), CFI (0.96), GFI (0.92) and AGFI (0.90). According to the results of the fit indicators in the confirmatory path analysis of the research model, it can be said the ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom

indicates the appropriate fit of the conceptual model with the experimental model. The value of the RMSEA index is acceptable. The values of CFI, GFI, and AGFI also indicate the proper fit of the structural model. Therefore, the structural model of the research has a proper and acceptable fit.

## Testing Hypotheses: Direct and Indirect Effects

**Table 3: Test of direct effects hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Independent	Dependent	Path Coefficient	T	Result
1	Servant leadership	Team cohesion	0.34	7.45*	approved
		Team learning	0.35	6.08*	approved
		Team performance	0.26	5.12*	approved
2	Team leadership	Team cohesion	0.41	6.62*	approved
		Team learning	0.39	7.11*	approved
		Team performance	0.42	7.89*	approved
3	Team cohesion	Team cohesion	0.33	6.93*	approved
		Team learning	0.32	5.81*	approved
4	Team learning	Team performance	0.37	6.89	approved

\* T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

The results of structural equation modeling analysis indicate that servant leadership has a direct and significant effect on team cohesion variables (0.34); Team learning (0.35) and team performance (0.26). Team leadership has a direct and significant effect on the variables of team cohesion (0.41);

Team learning (0.39) and team performance (0.42). Team cohesion has a direct and significant effect on team learning variables (0.33) and team performance (0.32). Team learning has a direct and significant effect on the team performance variable (0.37).

**Table 4: Test the hypotheses of indirect effects of single mediator**

H	Independent	Mediator	Dependent	Path Coefficient	T	Result
5-7	Servant leadership	Team cohesion	Team performance	0.1088	4.60*	approved
		Team learning	Team performance	0.1295	4.58*	approved
		Team cohesion	Team learning	0.1122	5.09*	approved
8	Team cohesion	Team learning	Team performance	0.1221	4.91*	approved
9-11	Team leadership	Team cohesion	Team performance	0.1312	4.39*	approved
		Team learning	Team performance	0.1443	4.97*	approved
		Team cohesion	Team learning	0.1353	4.81*	approved

T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

The results of structural equation modeling analysis indicate that servant leadership has a significant indirect effect (0.1088) on the team performance variable due to team cohesion. Servant leadership through team learning has a significant indirect effect (0.1295) on the team performance variable. Servant leadership has a significant indirect effect (0.1122) on the team learning variable due to team cohesion. Team

cohesion through team learning has a significant indirect effect (0.1221) on the team performance variable. Team leadership due to team cohesion has a significant indirect effect (0.1312) on the team performance variable. Team leadership through team learning has a significant indirect effect (0.1443) on the team performance variable. Team leadership has a significant indirect effect (0.1353) on the team learning variable due to team cohesion.

**Table 5: Testing the hypotheses of indirect effects of two mediators**

H	Independent	Mediator1	Mediator2	Dependent	Path Coefficient	T	result
12	Servant leadership	Team cohesion	Team learning	Team performance	0.2383	7.09*	approved
13	Team leadership	Team cohesion	Team learning	Team performance	0.2755	7.97*	approved

T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

The results of structural equation modeling analysis indicate that servant leadership has a significant indirect effect (0.2383) on the team performance variable through team cohesion and

team learning. Team leadership through team cohesion and team learning has a significant indirect effect (0.2775) on the team performance variable.

### Investigating the direct, indirect and total effects of variables on dependent variables:

**Table 6: Effects of variables on Team Performance**

Variable	Type	Value	T
1	Servant leadership	Direct	0.26
		Indirect	0.2383
		Total	0.4983
2	Team leadership	direct	0.42
		indirect	0.2755
		Total	0.6955
3	Team cohesion	direct	0.32
		indirect	0.1221
		Total	0.4421
4	Team learning	direct	0.37
		indirect	-
		Total	0.37
Team performance Variance	Explained	0.26	6.17*
	Error	0.74	15.73*

T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

**Table 7: Effects of variables on Team Learning**

Variable	Type	Value	T
1	Servant leadership	Direct	0.35
		Indirect	0.1122
		Total	0.4622
2	Team leadership	Direct	0.39
		Indirect	0.1353
		Total	0.5253
3	Team cohesion	Direct	0.33
		Indirect	-
		Total	0.33
Team learning Variance	Explained	0.19	4.52*
	Error	0.81	14.16*

T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

**Table 8: Effects of variables on Team Cohesion**

Variable	Type	Value	T	
1	Servant leadership	Direct	0.34	7.45*
		Indirect	-	-
		Total	0.34	7.45*
2	Team leadership	Direct	0.41	6.62*
		Indirect	-	-
		Total	0.41	6.62*
3	Team cohesion Variance	Explained	0.14	4.13*
		Error	0.86	14.61*

T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

### Summary of total effects analysis:

**Table 9: Summarizing the total effects of independent variables on dependent variables**

Independent variables	Dependent variable		
	Team cohesion	Team learning	Team performance
Servant leadership	0.34*	0.4622*	0.4983*
Team leadership	0.41*	0.5253*	0.6955*
Team cohesion	-	0.33*	0.442*
Team learning	-	-	0.37*

T -values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

**Table 10: Summary of explained & not explained variance of dependent variables**

Independent variables	Dependent variable		
	Team cohesion	Team learning	Team performance
Servant leadership	*	*	*
Team leadership	*	*	*
Team cohesion	-	*	*
Team learning	-	-	*
Explained variance	0.14*	0.19*	0.26*
T	4.13*	4.52*	6.17*
Error of variance	0.86*	0.81*	0.74*
T	14.61*	14.46*	14.73*

$\chi^2$ : 303.17, df: 171,  $\chi^2$ /df: 1.77

AGFI(0.90) و GFI(0.92) ،CFI(0.96) ،RMSEA(0.047)

T- values equal to and greater than 1.96 are significant at the 0.05 level.\*

### Conclusion:

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of servant leadership and team leadership in team performance mediated by team cohesion and team learning in teacher teams. In order to present a comprehensive model with emphasis on the role of servant leadership and team leadership and a

coherent and logical explanation of the model and its relationships, explanation of the results of the present study is presented in four main areas and final conclusion. The results showed that:

**Servant leadership** had a direct, positive and significant effect on team performance, team

learning and team cohesion in teacher teams. In addition, servant leadership through team cohesion and team learning had a positive and significant indirect effect on team performance in teacher teams. Therefore it can be argued: When followers' well-being and development are prioritized, they become more efficient and engaged. Therefore, servant leaders see themselves as stewards of organizations (Van Dierendonck, 2011: 1229), who seek to grow financial resources and do things entrusted to them. Likewise, they do not ignore performance expectations and focus on sustainable performance in the long run (Sendjaya, 2015: 4). Servant leaders also act in favor of their subordinates (Walumbwa et al., 2010) and care about the needs and personal growth of each subordinate (Mayer, Bardes & Piccolo, 2008). Therefore, servant leaders gain the trust of team members and establish long-term relationships by showing real concern for all team members (Liden et al., 2008). As team leaders, followers rely on leadership actions to increase members' trust in the team's ability to be effective. It can be said that servant leadership is an important factor in strengthening team performance. Servant leaders are considered role models. They have the greatest motivation to pursue the interests of the team due to their real commitment to service and team development. Therefore, teams are more eager to influence new leadership programs as well as to make greater efforts to achieve those programs (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Sluss et al., 2012). Servant leadership at the team level is also involved in the transactional process, in which leaders help empower the team through team training and learning by acknowledging the team's strengths and potentials, as well as general support. In addition, due to the complexity of modern work environments, many potential changes and unexpected problems need to be addressed by team members. As servant leaders have high conceptual skills, they determine the direction (Van Dierendonck, 2011) and guide team members to gain an accurate understanding of the changing environment and facilitate the development of shared team mental models (Zaccaro et al., 2001). Therefore, it can be said that servant leadership is an important factor in strengthening team learning. Guidance from servant leaders is critical to effective collaboration between team members (Cannon-Bowers, Salas & Converse, 1993) and

increases team members' confidence in their team abilities. In addition, service leaders convey the importance of honesty, personal integrity, and fairness (Russell & Stone, 2002), which creates genuine, problem-oriented communication (Harter, 2002; Spears & Lawrence, 2004) and a spiritual climate in the team (Liden et al., 2008). The spiritual climate encourages team members to work together and take care of each other (Fry et al., 2005; Pawar, 2008) and to be optimistic about the team's ability to be effective (Wong et al., 2007). Therefore, by creating a sense of social identity in their followers (Chen et al., 2015: 512), the servant leader causes the development, cohesion and improvement of team performance (Yoshida et al., 2014: 1396). Servant leaders' positive support of all followers increases team cohesion, which affects team members' focus, enthusiasm and commitment to tasks and goals in order to improve team performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018: 336). Then, it can be said that servant leadership is an important factor in strengthening team cohesion.

**Team leadership** had a direct, positive and significant effect on team performance, team learning and team cohesion in teacher teams. In addition, team leadership through team cohesion and team learning had a positive and significant indirect effect on team performance in teacher teams. To explain this results, we can say: Morgeson et al (2010: 10) discuss team leadership functions or the things to be done to meet team's needs and perform effectively in two dimensions including transitional function and action function. Therefore, teams go through implicit cycles of purposeful behavior over time that can be organized in transition and action phases. The transition phase is a period of time when teams focus on activities related to team structure, team activity planning, and team performance appraisal so that the team can eventually achieve its short-term and long-term goals. In this sense, the main focus of the teams in the transition phase is not on the work. It focuses on activities that create the structures and processes that make future effectiveness. During the transition period, important team leadership functions, including ensuring the proper composition of the team, determining the mission, setting goals and standards of team performance, developing the roles' structures and responsibilities in the team, ensuring that all team members are able to do things

efficiently, understanding the team environment as well as facilitating feedback processes are performed. As leadership functions evolve over time, teams form the basis on which to implement the team's future actions that directly play a role in achieving the goal, and ultimately achieve highly desirable team performance (Morgeson et al., 2010: 11). Therefore, the role of team leadership in team performance can be explained by considering its transactional function. Needs in the action phase include monitoring the outputs as the team moves toward the goals, monitoring the team internal and external systems, coordinating team actions, participating in quality communications, monitoring team behavior, coaching team members, and maintaining boundaries so that teams can communicate effectively with groups outside the team (Marks et al., 2001: 363). In addition, interpersonal processes must be managed during the transition and action phases. Basic interpersonal needs include strengthening the motivation of team members, promoting a sense of psychological security, managing the feelings and conflicts (Edmondson, 1999: 372). Therefore, the role of team leadership in team cohesion can be explained by considering its action function. Team leadership behavior is defined as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to achieve common goals" (Yukl, 2010: 8). Edmondson (2003: 1421) argued that team leaders can facilitate interaction in learning team behaviors through actions such as expressing their weaknesses, tolerating failure, or reflecting and determining the value of the team goal. Team members do not automatically engage in team learning behaviors, as it can lead to some difficulties (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018: 476). For example, level differences can lead to unconstructive dominance by more authoritative members (Brooks, 1994: 217), and members experience more cognitive burden when faced with unstructured tasks (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003: 742). For this reason, it is argued that participation in team learning behavior should be encouraged through team leadership (Van der Haar et al., 2017: 217). Hoch (2014) also argued that distributing team leadership behaviors among team members can help resolve their unconstructive disagreements and provide member support deal with such unique information.

Therefore, it can be said that team leadership is an important factor in team learning.

*Team cohesion* had a direct, positive and significant effect on team performance and team learning in teacher teams. In addition, team cohesion through team learning had a positive and significant indirect effect on team performance in teacher teams. To explain this results, we can say that: Team cohesion is an essential factor in team continuity and development (Heuzé et al., 2007: 385). It is a dynamic process arising from the intimacy, commitment and unity of team members in pursuing team goals (Carron et al., 2002: 170). Mutual respect, shared values, trust and intimacy of team members, as indicators of team cohesion, is a key factor in maintaining team survival. Team survival requires the development of team capabilities. The development of team capabilities is achieved through team learning. Thus, the team has maintained its survival and at the same time has achieved more capabilities for team learning. Therefore, it can be said that team cohesion is an essential factor in team learning and team performance.

*Team learning* had a direct, positive and significant effect on team performance in teacher teams. In explaining the mentioned result, we can say: Team learning is one of the most effective processes in teams, through which teams are able to adapt and improve knowledge (Mathieu et al, 2008: 411). Team learning behaviors enable teams to improve existing techniques, approaches, products, or knowledge in a short period of time (Sessa & London, 2008: 3). Team learning is a factor in the growth and development of the team and improving the abilities of team members in achieving team goals. Team learning is the real engine of a learning organization. Therefore, by using dialogue and collective thinking on complex issues, creative, coordinated actions and good communication within organizations, teams are equipped to create a potential basis for continuous development and organizational change (Dochy et al., 2014: 987). Effective teams with an innovative task can adapt to new situations by applying team learning behaviors and develop new knowledge, which demonstrates their success (Lee et al., 2010; Srivastava et al., 2006). Learning effects on the effectiveness of the organization by empowering teams to create knowledge between team members and with those outside the team and interact with

the environment to adapt to changing conditions. Therefore, team learning leads to improved performance in the team, which ultimately leads to organizational performance (Kayes & Burnett, 2006: 3). The process of team learning behaviors can help achieve successful team performance in problem solving and team self-efficacy (Sessa & London, 2008: 2). Therefore, teams should strengthen themselves by using the features of team learning, such as continuous improvement, promoting open communication, participatory learning, strategic and active leadership. Therefore, it can be said that team learning is an important factor in team performance. At last, it can be said that team leadership as a servant facilitates social interaction, efficient processes and transparent communication in the team, as well as increase team motivation and makes it more cohesive (Chen & Kanfer, 2006; Morgeson et al., 2010; Zaccaro et al., 2008). Cohesive teams seek to strengthen and develop their capabilities through team learning to improve performance.

**In order to** make better use of the results of the present study by officials at different levels of education administration, the following practical implications are proposed to strengthen servant leadership, team leadership, team cohesion, team learning and team performance in teacher teams.

In order to improve servant leadership in teacher teams, the following suggestions are provided to the authorities:

1) They should work continuously to promote the servant culture among teachers as much as possible through supports, reward and evaluation system especially in teacher teams and schools.

2) Provide sufficient resources and facilities to cultivate the spirit and quality of servant traits in teachers in the form of in-service training courses, training camps and teachers' focus meetings to share experiences.

3) To model servant teachers, strengthen and promote their motivation and efforts by evaluating the servant status of teachers through comprehensive evaluation and holding the festival of servant teachers of the year.

4) Select and train leaders for servant leadership. Servant leaders focus on educating followers to reach their full potential, to be able to perform their tasks and decisions, and to share decisions publicly and adapt the culture of serving

others. Using such a culture, teachers get good service from leaders.

5) Education officials should be prepared to make extraordinary efforts to develop a culture of servant leadership, starting with themselves as role models. As a role model, prioritizing the needs of followers in many ways conflicts with the human instinct to focus on self-interest. Servant leaders can mitigate this by role modeling and encouraging followers to share and help others.

6) As the skill in applying servant leadership is difficult, it requires conscious and continuous practice to maintain the orientation of servant leadership. In this regard, necessary training and actions should be done with emphasis on servant leadership. Therefore, benefits of developing strong relationships based on mutual trust between leaders and followers benefit the organization.

7) Creating a culture of servant leadership requires selecting motivated social individuals along with servant leadership training. The choice is important. There is a limit to the amount of exercise that can change personality traits. For example, regardless of the quality of a training program, it is unlikely that selfish and fanatic individuals can be transformed to altruistic, sensitive, empathetic servant leaders.

8) However, in any major organizational change, it will take several years for the organization to move from a culture of command and control to a culture based on servant leadership. So, be patient.

**In order to** improve the leadership situation of the team in the teacher teams, the following suggestions are provided to the officials:

1) Strengthen team culture in the education organization and especially in teachers by informing, raising awareness and changing the attitude of individualistic conservative teachers.

2) Develop, implement and continuously improve the comprehensive training program in the field of team with emphasis on teamwork, team building, team leadership, team learning, team improvement and development and team performance.

3) Improve the role of teachers in schools and educational committee based on the teachers' knowledge, understanding and ability of teamwork and team leadership.

4) Considering the impact of team arrangement on processes and team performance, it is suggested

the team arrangement should include members who have a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and previous experiences. In cases where the team arrangement is already formed, the team leader should evaluate and reconstruct the capabilities of different team members and finally replace the team members.

5) Determine and express the performance expectations and goals of the organization in order to become clear and understandable tasks for the team. So, make sure the team mission is clear, convincing, challenging and shareable with other team members.

6) Determining the structure and program of the team, including helping to develop the way of doing work (method); Who does this part of the job (role clarification), or when it should be done (scheduling and workflow).

7) Continuous improvement of team learning through training, instructions, ongoing coaching and encouraging team members to utilize the training resources provided.

8) Attention to sense making includes identifying important environmental events, interpreting these events according to the performance of the team and transmitting this interpretation to the team. In fact, this function of team leadership provides an understanding of the meaning and impact of events on team performance, and by doing so, the way the team thinks about internal or external events or experiences can be managed.

9) Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the team, the available resources of the team, the external environment of the team and the performance of team members.

10) Managing team relationships and the larger organizational context by communicating and coordinating with key units outside the team (such as other teams, leaders, and senior management) and protecting the team from outside forces and events in order to integrate teamwork.

11) Challenge the team according to its performance and face the assumptions, methods and processes of the team to find the best ways to do the teamwork by encouraging opportunistic thinking.

12) Accept an active role in teamwork. This task-oriented role includes performing tasks on the team, accepting responsibility for completing team

tasks, and helping other members complete their tasks.

13) Define team leadership based on "problem-solving activities to produce solutions that are effective in advancing team goals." Therefore, in solving problems, have a direct participation in supporting the team in evaluating the problem, developing a solution and implementing it.

14) Provide the necessary team resources, including collecting and providing information, economic, material and personnel resources for the team, adding or identifying team members who can perform important tasks or social roles in the team such as "budgeting, financing and acquisition new technologies necessary to do the desired work."

15) Strengthen self-management in the team by encouraging team members to solve task problems and problems related to teamwork and relying on their own resources instead of seeking expertise outside the team.

16) Continuous attention to the social environment of the team, respect for team members and addressing interpersonal issues in the team.

**In order to improve the situation of team learning, team cohesion and team performance in teacher teams, the following suggestions are provided to the authorities:**

1) Strengthen the culture of collectivism in teachers and encourage them to participate as much as possible in teams by emphasizing teamwork and considering teamwork as a key element in their annual evaluation.

2) To solve the lack of knowledge, insight and application of teamwork, train and develop teachers in team formation, team leadership, team resources and performance team evaluation through in-service training courses.

3) Improve the teacher evaluation system in the form of comprehensive system of teacher evaluation based on the collective culture through indicators such as the number of participated teams, their performance status as well as individual and team accountability.

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## 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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**Author 1 Name:** Mr. *Jamal Abdolmaleki* is a PhD student in Educational Management at Bu Ali Sina University. He received a master's degree in educational research from the University of Tehran, Iran. he has published numerous articles in the field of educational management.

**Email:** [j.abdolmaleki@ltr.basu.ac.ir](mailto:j.abdolmaleki@ltr.basu.ac.ir)

[jmaleki@alumni.ut.ac.ir](mailto:jmaleki@alumni.ut.ac.ir) [Abdolmaleki1984@gmail.com](mailto:Abdolmaleki1984@gmail.com)



**Author 2 Name:** Mr. *Siroos Ghanbari* is a professor in the Department of Educational Sciences, Bu Ali Sina University, Hamadan, He received his PhD in Educational Management from Kharazmi University of Iran. and is engaged in research and education in the field of educational management, and has authored works in the field of educational management.

**Email:** [s.ghanbari@basu.ac.ir](mailto:s.ghanbari@basu.ac.ir)

[siroosghanbari@yahoo.com](mailto:siroosghanbari@yahoo.com)

