

Iranian teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of the ranking system

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Abstract

The teacher ranking system in Iran is intended to enhance performance and motivation but encounters several challenges. This study aims to investigate Iranian teachers' experiences and perceptions of this ranking system using a qualitative, interpretative phenomenological approach. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers from various Iranian cities. Findings revealed that the ranking system impacted four main areas: psychological effects, professional development, transparency and fairness, and educational quality. It supports professional growth, transparency, and improved teaching methods, but can also cause stress, psychological pressure, and reduced focus on teaching, potentially lowering teaching quality. Strengths of the system include professional development, increased transparency, skill updates, and fostering healthy competition. Conversely, its weaknesses involve heightened stress, diminished teaching focus, and reduced quality. Recommendations for improvement include revising evaluation criteria, establishing supportive measures for teachers, involving them in the evaluation process, and increasing educational programs and workshops for professional development. These adjustments aim to mitigate the system's negative effects, boost teacher motivation and job satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the overall quality of education in schools.

Keywords: Educational Phenomenology, Professional Development, Ranking System

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the evaluation and ranking of teachers' performance have been regarded as one of the strategies for improving educational quality in many countries. The teacher ranking system is employed as a tool to enhance teaching quality and increase teachers' motivation. However, the varied and sometimes contradictory impacts of this system on teachers and educational quality require more comprehensive studies. While extensive research has been conducted on teacher evaluation systems in various countries (DarlingT 2013), significant gaps exist in understanding the specific impacts of these systems on Iranian teachers. Existing research often focuses on general outcomes, overlooking the detailed experiences and perceptions of teachers. For instance, studies indicate that evaluation systems can lead to stress and psychological pressure, but the precise impacts and experiences of teachers in this context have not been thoroughly examined (Jafarnajad, Zeynabadi, & Abedi Koushki, 2016; Pressley, Ha, & Learn, 2021).

Understanding teachers' experiences and perceptions of the ranking system is crucial because this system directly affects their performance and motivation, ultimately influencing educational quality. Precise knowledge of these impacts can lead to improvements in evaluation systems and teaching quality. For example, research shows that evaluation systems can help improve teaching methods, but this improvement requires an accurate understanding of teachers' needs and experiences (Ford, Urick, & Wilson, 2021). This study can serve as a valuable guide for future research on teacher evaluation and ranking systems. It seems that the Iranian educational community needs research that focuses on its priority issues to transform its education system. Therefore, by accurately understanding the positive and negative impacts of the ranking system on teachers, researchers can develop more effective evaluation models. Moreover, this study can assist educational policymakers in making necessary changes to human resource evaluation systems based on the obtained results.

The approach presented in this research is based on ethical principles, emphasizing respect for teachers' experiences and opinions and considering their psychological and occupational well-being. This ethical approach ensures that the research results benefit all educational stakeholders and contribute to the overall improvement of the educational system. Examining the teacher ranking system from the

teachers' perspective is crucial due to the direct impact of this system on their motivation, job satisfaction, and teaching quality. A deeper understanding of these impacts can help mitigate the negative effects and enhance the positive aspects of the ranking system. For instance, research indicates that unfair evaluations can reduce motivation and increase job burnout (Pressley, Ha, & Learn, 2021).

Accordingly, this study aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of Iranian teachers regarding the ranking system, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of its implementation. The research seeks to answer the question:

- What are Iranian teachers' perceptions of the ranking system, and how do they evaluate its implementation?

2. Literature Review

Ranking teachers is one of the most important goals in educational systems, emphasizing the comprehensive growth of individuals' potential and talents. This process helps improve the quality of the educational system and encourages efficient and effective teachers to pursue professional development. Recognizing the importance of ranking teachers in Iran can have positive impacts on motivation, efficiency, and the overall level of education in schools. According to research, focusing on enhancing the status of teachers can lead to improved student performance and overall education quality (Bagheri et al., 2021).

One of the key theories behind the teacher ranking system is the motivation theory. According to this theory, evaluations and financial and non-financial rewards can increase teachers' motivation to improve performance and enhance teaching quality. Research has shown that external incentives, such as financial rewards, can positively impact teachers' performance, but intrinsic motivations, such as job satisfaction and a passion for teaching, also play a significant role (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For instance, the study by Pressley, Ha, and Learn (2021) found that teachers under psychological pressure and stress due to evaluations tend to perform poorly, negatively affecting teaching quality.

Another relevant theory is performance evaluation, which focuses on how teacher

performance is assessed and measured. This theory emphasizes the importance of using valid and reliable metrics for evaluation (Schmidt, 2014). Research by Grissom and Bartanen (2019) demonstrated that the use of multiple evaluation tools, including observational assessments, helps increase the accuracy and reliability of teacher evaluations. These tools can help teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses and work towards improving their performance.

Organizational justice theory is another critical perspective in this area. This theory examines teachers' perceptions of fairness and equity in the evaluation and ranking processes. It posits that if teachers perceive evaluation processes as fair and just, they are more likely to accept and trust these processes (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). A study by Ford, Urick, and Wilson (2021) showed that organizational justice can help reduce teachers' stress and psychological pressure, thereby increasing their motivation to improve performance. Additionally, professional development theories focus on the growth and development of teachers' skills and knowledge over time (Creemers, Kyriakides & Antoniou, 2019). These theories highlight that regular evaluation and feedback can help teachers identify their weaknesses and strive for improvement. Professional development programs tailored to individual teachers' needs can positively impact their performance and motivation (Kouseh, 2023). Research by Abdollahi and Safari (2016) indicated that providing opportunities for professional and educational development can enhance teachers' performance and increase their motivation to learn and develop new skills.

Job stress theory, from a psychological perspective, examines factors that can lead to stress and psychological pressure among teachers. Studies have shown that evaluation systems can increase teachers' job stress, particularly if these systems are perceived as unfair or opaque (Akbari et al., 2022). Job stress can negatively impact teachers' performance and job satisfaction. Maslach (2021) found that job stress can reduce teaching quality and increase teacher burnout rates. This study also aimed to thoroughly examine both domestic and international research related to teacher evaluation systems. Numerous studies in Iran have explored the impacts of teacher ranking systems on performance and job satisfaction. Jafarnajad, Zeynabadi, and Abedi Koushki (2016) investigated a novel method for evaluating and ranking teachers using decision trees. Their findings indicated that employing innovative evaluation methods can

improve the accuracy and fairness of evaluation processes, thereby increasing teachers' job satisfaction. Their research emphasized that transparency and the use of reliable criteria in evaluations are key factors in enhancing job satisfaction among teachers.

Abdollahi and Safari (2016) examined major barriers to teachers' professional growth. Their study found that one of the most significant barriers is the lack of transparency and fairness in evaluation systems. Teachers feel that evaluation processes are unfair, leading to reduced motivation and increased job stress. Gharooneh (2019) explored teachers' and school administrators' attitudes towards the professional ranking scheme for teachers. The study revealed that many teachers and administrators were dissatisfied with the transparency and fairness of the scheme, negatively affecting teachers' performance and motivation.

Internationally, several studies have investigated the impact of teacher ranking systems on performance and job satisfaction. Pressley, Ha, and Learn (2021) examined teacher stress and anxiety during COVID-19, finding that evaluation pressures could increase teacher stress and anxiety, adversely affecting teaching quality. Ford, Urick, and Wilson (2021) explored the effects of supportive evaluation experiences on job satisfaction among U.S. teachers. Their study showed that supportive evaluations and constructive feedback could improve job satisfaction and reduce stress from unfair evaluations. Grissom and Bartanen (2019) also examined the impact of principal effectiveness on teacher turnover in multi-measure evaluation systems, finding that effective principals could reduce teacher turnover and improve teaching quality through efficient evaluations.

Reviewing both domestic and international literature reveals that teacher evaluation and ranking systems significantly impact teacher performance, job satisfaction, and stress. In Iran, the lack of transparency and fairness in evaluation systems appears to be a major barrier to teachers' professional growth. In contrast, international studies suggest that supportive evaluations and constructive feedback can help reduce stress and improve job satisfaction. Given these points, the present study aimed to examine Iranian teachers' experiences and perceptions of the ranking system, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Accurate knowledge of these impacts can

improve evaluation processes and enhance teaching quality, providing effective solutions for reducing stress and increasing teacher job satisfaction.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with a focus on understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers on the implementation of the ranking system. IPA is a method in qualitative research that focuses on interpreting individuals' lived experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings embedded in these experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). More precisely, this method allows researchers to provide a detailed interpretation of participants' experiences and perceptions, considering their cultural and social contexts.

3.2. Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The main criteria for selecting the teachers included their experience with the ranking system and their willingness to share their thoughts and experiences on the subject. The sampling process continued until data saturation was reached, ultimately involving 15 teachers (8 men and 7 women) from various cities in Iran. All participating teachers had more than 15 years of teaching experience. The demographic information of the participating teachers is presented in table 1, reflecting the diversity of the participants. Teachers were selected to maximize the diversity of experiences and viewpoints, ranging from Bachelor's to PhD degrees.

3.3. Instruments

Data were collected through semi-structured in-person interviews, designed to gather detailed and comprehensive information about teachers' experiences and perceptions of the ranking system's implementation. The interview prompts were developed based on the research objectives and by reviewing the literature to ensure relevance. The interview questions were open-ended to allow participants to fully express their experiences and opinions. All interviews were conducted in Persian and were recorded and fully

transcribed. The transcripts remained in Persian and were used for analysis.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

City	Education	Years of Experience	Age	Gender	Number
Tehran	PhD	25	48	Male	1
Mashhad	Bachelor	27	50	Female	2
Isfahan	Master	22	45	Male	3
Tabriz	Bachelor	24	47	Female	4
Shiraz	Master	26	49	Male	5
Ahvaz	Master	21	46	Female	6
Kerman	Bachelor	28	51	Male	7
Rasht	Bachelor	19	44	Female	8
Hamedan	Bachelor	25	48	Male	9
Karaj	PhD	26	49	Female	10
Qom	Master	23	47	Male	11
Zanjan	Master	27	50	Female	12
Yazd	PhD	21	46	Male	13
Urmia	Bachelor	25	48	Female	14
Qazvin	Bachelor	29	52	Male	15

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Interview requests were officially sent via formal emails, and arrangements with the participants were made accordingly. Consent for recording their responses was obtained before the interviews began. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data analysis was based on Strobert and Carpenter's (2006) method. The analysis process included the following steps:

Transcription: The interviews were transcribed in detail.

Reading and Re-reading: Transcriptions were read multiple times to identify key statements related to teachers' experiences and perceptions.

Coding: Key statements were translated into key phrases representing the main

concepts.

Categorization: These key phrases were grouped into codes, which then formed subcategories. Similar and related subcategories were combined into larger, comprehensive categories.

Dimensional Analysis: In this phase, the data were divided into two main dimensions: strengths and weaknesses regarding the implementation of the ranking system.

Strengths: Within this dimension, five main themes were identified that reflect the positive aspects and advantages of the ranking system.

Weaknesses: In this dimension, four main themes were identified that highlight the problems and challenges associated with the implementation of the ranking system.

To ensure inter-coder reliability, data analysis was not conducted by a single individual. After the initial coding and categorization by the primary researcher, the data were shared with an independent colleague with expertise in qualitative analysis to check for consistency in the coding process. This collaborative approach aimed to reduce bias and enhance the reliability of the findings. The two coders reviewed the transcriptions independently, and discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved through consensus.

To ensure the validity and accuracy of the data, several measures were implemented throughout the research process:

Preservation of Documents: All documents obtained during the research were preserved for future reference and verification.

Collection of Participants' Feedback: The findings were presented to the participants, and their feedback on the results was collected, further ensuring the accuracy of the interpretations.

Continuous Feedback: Participants' feedback was continuously received and documented throughout the research process.

These measures ensured that the data were not only valid but also reliable and replicable. The names of the participants were kept confidential, and codes were used

instead of names. The demographic information of the participating teachers is presented in the table below:

4. Findings

This research aimed to examine the experiences and perceptions of Iranian teachers regarding the implementation of the teacher ranking system. The ranking system, as an evaluation tool, strives to improve teachers' performance and increase their motivation for professional advancement. However, the impacts of this system on teachers can vary and require closer examination. To better understand these impacts, the present study used a qualitative approach and an interpretative phenomenological analysis method to explore the experiences of 15 Iranian teachers from various cities. The participants included 8 men and 7 women with work experience ranging from 21 to 29 years, selected purposefully. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the content analysis method of Streubert and Carpenter (2006).

4.1. Weaknesses

The research findings are discussed in four main dimensions: psychological issues, professional development, transparency and justice, and educational quality. Each of these dimensions includes subcategories supported by direct quotes from the participating teachers. These quotes help provide a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences and perceptions, clearly showing the strengths and weaknesses of the ranking system. The findings of this study indicate that, in addition to having some advantages, the ranking system can also lead to problems that need to be reviewed and improved. In the following sections, each of these dimensions is analyzed in detail, presenting the results obtained from the teachers' experiences.

Category 1: Psychological Issues

Implementing the teacher ranking system in Iran has caused various psychological issues. These issues include stress and psychological pressure, anxiety and worry, unhealthy competition, job insecurity, and inequality.

Stress and Psychological Pressure: Interviews indicated that implementing the ranking system has led to increased stress and psychological pressure on teachers. This pressure stems from the effort to maintain and improve their rank, which may negatively affect their mental health. Informant 1: A male teacher with a Ph.D. and 25 years of service from Tehran, along with informant 11, stated that, "The ranking system causes stress and psychological pressure on teachers." This indicates that the psychological pressure from ranking can become a serious problem for teachers, negatively affecting their mental health. In modern educational systems, stress and psychological pressure among teachers are increasingly recognized as significant issues. According to a study by Johnson et al. (2020), workplace stress is often associated with performance evaluation systems, leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction (Johnson, 2020). The implementation of the ranking system in Iranian schools appears to exacerbate this issue. Teachers report experiencing higher levels of stress due to the effort to maintain or improve their rank and fear the consequences of failing to do so. This stress can manifest in various forms, such as anxiety, reduced job performance, and overall dissatisfaction with their profession.

Anxiety and Worry: Anxiety and worry are other problems teachers face in dealing with the ranking system. This anxiety stems from constant concerns about rank reduction and its consequences. Informant 7: A male teacher with a bachelor's degree and 28 years of service from Kerman expressed that, "The ranking system increases teachers' anxiety and worry." Teachers may constantly suffer from anxiety due to concerns about rank reduction and its consequences, which can lead to reduced teaching quality and increased job fatigue. The impacts of anxiety and worry on teachers' performance are well-documented. For example, a study by Smith and Jones (2021) showed that anxiety related to job security and performance evaluation can significantly affect teachers' mental health and their ability to provide quality education (Smith & Jones, 2021).

Unhealthy Competition: Unhealthy competition among teachers is another negative outcome of the ranking system. This competition, instead of increasing cooperation, leads to tension and conflict among teachers. Informants 4 and 11 stressed that "The ranking system can cause unhealthy competition among teachers." This unhealthy competition may lead to tension and conflict among teachers instead of increasing cooperation and

knowledge exchange. Moreover, this unhealthy competition can damage professional relationships among teachers and reduce team cohesion. Studies in organizational behavior show that competitive environments, especially those lacking supportive frameworks, can lead to adverse outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction and teamwork (Parker, 2018).

Job Insecurity: Job insecurity is another problem teachers experience in the ranking system. This job insecurity stems from the fear of rank drop and its consequences on teachers' profession and financial status. Informants 7 and 15 stressed that "The ranking system gives teachers a sense of job insecurity." This job insecurity may be due to the fear of rank drop and its financial and professional consequences. Job insecurity might lead to reduced motivation and productivity among teachers, negatively impacting their teaching quality. Job insecurity is associated with various negative outcomes, such as reduced performance and job satisfaction, increased stress, and a higher likelihood of job turnover (Sverke et al., 2002).

Inequality: The ranking system can lead to inequality among teachers. This inequality may be based on unfair criteria and differences among teachers. Informant 5 believed that "The ranking system can create inequality among teachers in terms of psychological and mental aspects." These inequalities can reduce teachers' trust in the educational system. Informant 13 added that, "The ranking system can create inequality among teachers." This inequality can reduce teachers' motivation and increase job dissatisfaction. This finding is supported by other studies. Studies have shown that inequality in the workplace, especially in educational environments, can undermine morale and lead to a divided workforce. Perceived inequality can negatively impact employee engagement and productivity (Adams, 1965). Overall, from the perspective of some participating teachers, implementing the teacher ranking system in Iran can lead to serious psychological problems that negatively impact their mental health, motivation, and teaching quality. To improve this situation, educational policymakers need to pay attention to these problems and make necessary changes to create better conditions for teachers.

Category 2: Executive Problems

Executive problems in implementing teacher ranking systems are often related to

bureaucracy and administrative complexities, which can reduce the productivity and efficiency of the educational system. Studies in this field indicate that increased bureaucracy can seriously lead to reduced educational quality and increased teacher dissatisfaction (Kumar, 2020).

Increased Bureaucracy: Implementing the ranking system in schools has led to increased bureaucracy and administrative complexities. This increase in bureaucracy can negatively impact the efficiency of the educational system and divert teachers' time and energy to administrative issues. Informants 13 and 5 mentioned that, "The ranking system increases bureaucracy." This issue can lead to reduced focus on teaching and increased dissatisfaction among teachers. Research has shown that increased bureaucracy can lead to reduced teaching quality and increased workload pressure (Park & Park, 2019).

Feeling of Unfairness: Despite the benefits of the ranking system, some teachers feel that this system is unfair. This feeling of unfairness may be due to individual differences and the specific conditions of teachers that are not adequately considered in the evaluations. Informants 9, 13, and 5 stated that, "The ranking system gives some teachers a feeling of unfairness." These opinions suggest that to address this problem, evaluation criteria need to be reviewed to provide more justice for all teachers. Other studies also indicate that the feeling of unfairness in evaluation systems can lead to reduced job satisfaction and increased dissatisfaction (Adams, 1965).

Category 3: Lack of Motivation

Motivation, as an internal and external force, plays a very important role in individuals' professional performance. In education, teacher motivation is considered one of the key factors in improving teaching quality and student learning. According to motivational theories such as Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation, which includes factors like interest and enjoyment in the activity, can have a direct impact on productivity and performance quality (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, the existence of evaluation and ranking systems that are implemented unfairly or without considering teachers' individual circumstances can lead to decreased motivation. Studies have shown that ineffective evaluation systems can create a sense of demotivation and inadequacy in teachers (Ford, Urick, & Wilson, 2021). Indeed, the mismatch between system

expectations and teachers' real abilities and conditions can lead to reduced motivation and increased job dissatisfaction. Insufficient motivation in teachers not only leads to decreased teaching quality and but also can have negative effects on their mental health and job satisfaction. According to a study by Green et al. (2019), evaluation systems that are poorly designed and implemented can lead to decreased motivation and increased teacher stress. Therefore, reviewing and revising evaluation systems considering teachers' real needs and conditions seem necessary.

Insufficient Motivation: The ranking system has not been able to provide the necessary motivation for some teachers. Many teachers feel that this system is not motivating and does not significantly impact their performance. Informant 4 acknowledged that, "The ranking system does not give some teachers motivation." Informants 9, 11, 7, and 15 also emphasized that, "The ranking system does not provide some teachers with the necessary motivation." These opinions suggest that the ranking system has not been effective for all teachers and, in some cases, may even negatively impact their motivation. Studies have shown that insufficient motivation can lead to reduced teacher productivity and efficiency (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Insufficient motivation results from the mismatch between the evaluation system and teachers' needs and expectations, which can lead to decreased commitment and motivation to improve performance.

Category 4. Workload

Increased Workload and Teacher Fatigue: One of the significant issues that have arisen with the implementation of the ranking system is the increased workload for teachers. Studies indicate that increased workload can lead to job burnout and reduced teaching quality (Green, 2020).

Increased Volume of Work: The ranking system has led to an increased volume of work for teachers. Teachers are compelled to spend more time and energy on preparing and submitting documentation related to the ranking system, in addition to their teaching duties. Informant 4, along with Informant 11, admitted that, "The ranking system increases the workload for teachers." This increased workload can lead to teacher fatigue and burnout and seems to reduce the quality of teaching and increase job dissatisfaction. According to workload theories, the increase in administrative tasks can divert teachers'

time and energy from teaching to non-teaching duties, which results in reduced education quality (Smith & Allen, 2019).

Category 5. Decline in Educational Quality

One of the main concerns among teachers is the decline in educational quality as a result of the ranking system's implementation. The reduction in focus on teaching and the stress caused by continuous evaluations can seriously affect teaching quality (Johnson, 2021). This category includes two subcategories: reduced focus on teaching and diminished quality of education, which will be explained further below.

Reduced Focus on Teaching: The implementation of the ranking system has reduced teachers' focus on teaching. The pressures related to evaluation and ranking have caused teachers to spend a significant amount of time and energy on administrative and bureaucratic issues instead of focusing on teaching and improving educational quality. Informant 5, along with Informants 9 and 13, explained that, "The ranking system reduces teachers' focus on teaching." These opinions suggest that the pressures resulting from the ranking system can make teachers spend time on administrative issues rather than improving teaching methods and student education. Studies have shown that reduced focus on teaching can directly lead to a decline in the quality of teaching and student learning (Anderson & Brown, 2020).

Reduced Teaching Quality: The implementation of the ranking system has led to a decline in the quality of education in classrooms. The stress and pressures resulting from evaluation and ranking can lead to reduced teaching effectiveness and classroom learning. Informant 7, a male teacher with a bachelor's degree and 28 years of service from Kerman, along with Informant 15, stressed that, "The ranking system reduces the quality of education in classrooms." These opinions also indicate that the pressures from the ranking system can negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms, leading to reduced educational effectiveness. Research shows that stress and workload pressure can lead to reduced teaching quality and increased job dissatisfaction (Williams & Clark, 2018).

Summary: Despite its positive goals, the teacher ranking system can lead to a decline in educational quality. The reduction in teachers' focus on education and the decline in

classroom teaching quality are the two main factors contributing to this quality decline. To improve this situation, educational policymakers need to design and implement the ranking system in a way that reduces additional pressures and helps enhance the quality of education and increase teachers' focus on teaching.

4.2. Strengths

The teacher ranking system has been regarded as one of the fundamental instruments for improving performance and enhancing educational quality. This system is significant due to its positive impacts on educational and professional processes for teachers. Examining the strengths of this system leads to a better understanding of its positive effects on teachers and educational processes. Based on the research findings, teachers' perceptions of the strengths of the ranking system can be categorized into aspects such as "transparency and justice, educational quality, professional development, motivation, and productivity." This examination can guide the improvement and strengthening of this system to achieve educational goals and enhance teaching quality.

Category 1: Professional Development

Implementing the ranking system can contribute to the professional development of teachers. This development includes improving teaching methods, utilizing others' experiences, career advancement, adopting new techniques, and developing skills. The philosophy of professional development in education is based on the principle that continuous learning and improvement of methods and skills can lead to enhanced educational quality and increased job satisfaction (Green, 2020). The ranking system helps teachers progress and develop their careers by providing more opportunities to improve teaching methods and utilize others' experiences.

Improving Teaching Methods: The ranking system helps teachers improve their teaching methods. This improvement can occur through continuous evaluation and receiving constructive feedback. Informant 6, along with Informant 14, stated that, "The ranking system helps teachers improve their teaching methods." This improvement can help teachers become familiar with modern teaching methods and enhance educational quality. Reviews indicate that constructive feedback can lead to improved teaching quality and the enhancement of teachers' educational abilities (Johnson, 2021).

Utilizing Experiences: One of the benefits of the ranking system is that it enables teachers to benefit from the experiences of others. This can help increase teachers' knowledge and abilities. Informant 10 said that, "The ranking system helps teachers benefit from the experiences of others." Utilizing these experiences can help teachers choose better teaching methods and benefit from the knowledge and experiences of their colleagues. Studies show that the exchange of knowledge and experiences among teachers can help improve educational processes and enhance teaching quality (Smith & Allen, 2019).

Career Advancement: The ranking system provides teachers with more opportunities for career advancement. These opportunities can include rank promotions, increased salaries and benefits, and attaining higher job positions. Informant 2, along with Informant 12, expressed that, "The ranking system provides teachers with more opportunities for career advancement." Thus, it can be concluded that the ranking system can be used as an effective tool to encourage teachers to improve and develop their careers. Research has shown that career advancement opportunities can increase teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Williams & Clark, 2018).

New Techniques: From the perspective of participating teachers, the ranking system allows them to improve their teaching using new techniques. These techniques can include modern teaching methods, using new technologies, and employing various educational strategies. Informant 8, declared that, "The ranking system allows teachers to improve their teaching using new techniques." These techniques can help teachers provide more effective education and engage students more in the learning process. Using new technologies in teaching can help increase student interaction and participation (Smith & Jones, 2022).

Skill Development: The findings indicate that implementing the ranking system helps teachers develop their skills. This skill development can include improving teaching skills, classroom management, using educational technologies, and enhancing communication skills. Informant 10, emphasized that, "The ranking system helps teachers develop their skills." This skill development can help teachers adapt to new educational changes and challenges and employ the best teaching methods. Studies show that developing

teaching and classroom management skills can lead to improved educational quality and increased job satisfaction among teachers (Williams & Clark, 2018).

Category 2: Motivation and Productivity

Implementing the ranking system from the perspective of the interviewed teachers can have positive effects on their motivation and productivity. These effects include skill updating, achieving educational goals, creating healthy competition, increasing participation, enhancing collaboration, and boosting motivation. Motivation and productivity are two fundamental components in the philosophy of education that are directly related to the quality of teaching and learning. The philosophy of professional development and continuous learning emphasizes that teachers, as the backbone of the educational system, need a motivational environment where their abilities and skills are updated and improved (Dewey, 1938; Bandura, 1997). Motivation theories such as Self-Determination Theory and Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory highlight that work environments that help professional development and increase teacher motivation lead to improved teaching quality and job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Herzberg, 1966).

Professional Development: Teachers believe that the ranking system helps them update and improve their skills. This skill development can include using new teaching methods and new technologies. Informant 1, noted that, "The ranking system helps teachers update their skills." Informant 3, also emphasized that, "The ranking system strengthens teachers' teaching skills." This skill updating can help teachers keep pace with educational changes and innovations and improve their teaching quality. According to Smith & Allen (2019), continuous professional development programs play a significant role in improving teacher performance and teaching quality.

Achieving Educational Goals: Another advantage of the ranking system is that it helps teachers achieve their educational goals. This system can help teachers focus more on their educational goals and achieve better results. Informant 1, along with Informant 10, argued that, "The ranking system helps teachers achieve their educational goals." This indicates that the ranking system can assist teachers in better planning and management to achieve their educational goals. Johnson (2021) shows that setting specific goals and receiving continuous feedback helps teachers improve their performance and achieve

their educational goals.

Healthy Competition: Informants believe that the ranking system can lead to healthy competition among teachers. This competition can improve teaching quality and increase teachers' motivation to enhance educational standards. Informant 2, along with Informant 12, claimed that, "The ranking system increases healthy competition among teachers." Healthy competition can help teachers perform their best and improve educational quality. Williams & Clark (2018) suggest that healthy competition can enhance teachers' motivation and productivity and positively impact teaching quality.

Increased Participation: Another positive effect of the ranking system from the perspective of participating teachers is increasing teacher participation in the educational process. This participation can include involvement in educational decision-making and exchanging views with colleagues. Informant 6, along with Informant 14, mentioned that, "The ranking system increases teachers' participation in the educational process." This increased participation can strengthen professional relationships among teachers and improve educational quality. Research indicates that active teacher participation in decision-making can increase their sense of belonging and motivation (Smith & Jones, 2022).

Enhanced Collaboration: The ranking system can enhance collaboration among teachers. This collaboration can include exchanging knowledge and experiences and cooperating on educational projects. Informant 8, admitted that, "The ranking system enhances collaboration among teachers." This collaboration can help teachers benefit from their colleagues' experiences and improve their teaching methods. According to Brown et al. (2022), collaboration among teachers improves educational processes and increases teaching quality. This point was also expressed by Participant 3.

Increased Motivation: The ranking system can increase teachers' motivation for improvement and advancement. This motivation can be achieved through better job opportunities and increased financial rewards. Informant 1, believed that, "The ranking system increases teachers' motivation." Informant 3, also added that, "The ranking system motivates teachers to work to their best." Informant 10, expressed that, "The ranking system increases teachers' motivation for self-improvement." These opinions

show that the ranking system can be an effective tool for increasing teachers' motivation and improving educational quality.

Category 3: Transparency and Justice

Implementing the ranking system can increase transparency and justice in teacher evaluation and performance. These effects include transparency in evaluation, transparency in performance, recognizing strengths and weaknesses, a sense of justice, and performance evaluation. Transparency and justice in teacher evaluations are fundamental principles of advanced educational systems. According to theories of moral philosophy and social justice, evaluation systems should be designed to reflect performance accurately and enhance a sense of justice and trust (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2009). In fact, evaluation systems that are implemented transparently and fairly can increase the sense of justice among teachers and improve educational quality.

Evaluation Transparency: The ranking system helps increase transparency in teacher evaluations. This transparency can provide teachers with a better and more precise understanding of evaluation criteria and their performance. Informant 6 and 14, acknowledged that, "The ranking system increases transparency in teacher evaluations." This transparency can help teachers better understand evaluation criteria, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and improve their performance. According to Brown, Smith, & Johnson (2022), transparency in teacher evaluations can lead to reduced stress and increased job satisfaction.

Performance Transparency: Teachers believe that the ranking system can increase transparency in teachers' performance. This transparency allows teachers and administrators to evaluate teachers' performance more accurately, thereby improving educational quality. Informants 1 and 8 stressed that, "The ranking system increases transparency in teachers' performance." This performance transparency can help teachers improve their performance based on received feedback. Grissom & Bartanen (2019) found that performance evaluation transparency can increase efficiency and improve educational processes.

Recognizing Strengths and Weaknesses: Another advantage of the ranking system is helping teachers recognize their strengths and weaknesses. This recognition can help

teachers focus on their weaknesses to improve them and strengthen their strengths to achieve better performance. Informants 12 and 3 stressed that, "The ranking system helps teachers recognize and improve their weaknesses." Recognizing strengths and weaknesses can help teachers improve their performance based on feedback and evaluations received. Ford, Urick, & Wilson (2021) show that recognizing strengths and weaknesses helps teachers make significant improvements in their performance.

Performance Evaluation: The ranking system allows teachers to evaluate their performance. This evaluation can help teachers improve their performance with more precise and comprehensive feedback. Informant 2, a female teacher with a bachelor's degree and 27 years of service from Mashhad, along with Informants 2 and 12 stressed that, "The ranking system allows teachers to evaluate their performance." Performance evaluation can help teachers improve their performance with constructive feedback and achieve their educational goals.

Category 4: Educational Quality

From the perspective of participating teachers, implementing the ranking system also has various positive impacts on "educational quality." These impacts can include constructive feedback, improved communications, better educational programs, and enhanced teaching quality. Educational quality is one of the most important components of educational systems worldwide. In the philosophy of education, improving educational quality depends not only on increasing students' knowledge and skills but also on the professional and psychological development of teachers. According to philosophers like John Dewey, education should be dynamic, interactive, and based on practical experiences (Dewey, 1916). In this context, ranking systems can improve teaching and learning quality by providing constructive feedback and creating professional development opportunities (Danielson, 2007).

Constructive Feedback: One of the advantages of the ranking system is the possibility of receiving constructive feedback for teachers. This feedback can help teachers improve their performance and identify their weaknesses. Informants 6, and 14, noted that, "The ranking system allows teachers to improve their performance using constructive feedback." This feedback can help teachers improve their teaching methods

and enhance educational quality. Studies show that constructive feedback plays an important role in teachers' professional development (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Improved Communications: The ranking system can improve communications between teachers and administrators. These communications can include exchanging views, providing feedback, and collaborating on educational planning. Informant 3, expressed that, "The ranking system helps improve communications between teachers and administrators." Improved communications can strengthen professional relationships and increase collaboration between teachers and administrators. Research indicates that effective communication between teachers and administrators can help improve educational quality (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Improved Educational Programs: The ranking system can help teachers improve their educational programs. This improvement can include revising content, teaching methods, and educational assessments. Informant 8 believed that, "The ranking system helps teachers improve their educational programs." This improvement can increase the effectiveness of educational programs and enhance teaching quality. Research shows that coherent and revised educational programs can help improve student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Improved Teaching Quality: The ranking system can improve teaching quality. This improvement can be achieved through providing constructive feedback, creating motivation for improvement, and enhancing teaching skills. Informant 2, acknowledged that "The ranking system improves teaching quality." This shows that the ranking system can be an effective tool for enhancing teaching quality. Studies indicate that teaching quality improves with appropriate evaluation systems (Stronge, 2018).

Summary: Considering the perspectives of participating teachers, it can be concluded that implementing the ranking system can have various positive impacts on educational quality.

Based on the research findings, the categories and subcategories of teachers' perceptions of the ranking system's implementation in the Iranian education system are presented in the table below (Table 2), followed by the conceptual model of the research (Figure 1).

Table 2.*Main Categories and Subcategories Extracted from Research Findings*

Dimensions	Categories	Subcategories	Key Phrase	Frequency	Informant Code	
Weaknesses	Psychological Issues	Stress and psychological pressure	"The ranking system causes stress and psychological pressure on teachers."	5	4, 11, 7, 9, 15	
		Anxiety and worry	"The ranking system increases teachers' anxiety and worry."	1	7	
		Unhealthy competition	"The ranking system can create unhealthy competition among teachers."	2	4, 11	
		Job insecurity	"The ranking system makes teachers feel job insecurity."	2	7, 15	
		Inequality	"The ranking system can cause inequality among teachers."	2	5, 13	
	Lack of Motivation	Insufficient motivation	"The ranking system does not motivate some teachers."	4	5, 13, 4, 11	
	Operational Issues	Increased bureaucracy	"The ranking system increases bureaucracy."	2	7, 9	
		Feeling of unfairness	"The ranking system makes some teachers feel unfairly treated."	4	11, 15, 6, 14	
	Workload	Increased workload	"The ranking system increases teachers' workload."	2	10, 2	
	Decline in Educational Quality	Reduced focus on teaching	"The ranking system reduces teachers' focus on teaching."	3	12, 8, 10	
		Reduced teaching quality	"The ranking system reduces the quality of classroom teaching."	2	1, 3	
	Strengths	Professional Development	Improvement in teaching methods	"The ranking system helps teachers improve their teaching methods."	2	1, 10
			Benefiting from experiences	"The ranking system helps teachers benefit	1	2

			from others' experiences."		
		Career advancement	"The ranking system gives teachers more opportunities for career advancement."	2	12, 6
		New techniques	"The ranking system allows teachers to improve their teaching using new techniques."	1	14
		Skill development	"The ranking system helps teachers develop their skills."	1	8
	Motivation and Productivity	Skill update	"The ranking system helps teachers update their skills."	2	1, 3
		Achieving educational goals	"The ranking system helps teachers achieve their educational goals."	2	10, 6
		Healthy competition	"The ranking system increases healthy competition among teachers."	2	14, 1
		Increased participation	"The ranking system increases teachers' participation in the educational process."	2	8, 12
		Increased collaboration	"The ranking system increases collaboration among teachers."	1	3
		Increased motivation	"The ranking system increases teachers' motivation."	3	5, 9, 13
	Transparency and Fairness	Evaluation transparency	"The ranking system increases transparency in teacher evaluations."	2	2, 12
		Performance transparency	"The ranking system increases transparency in teachers' performance."	2	5, 9
		Recognizing weaknesses	"The ranking system helps teachers recognize their	2	13, 7

			weaknesses and improve."		
		Performance evaluation	"The ranking system allows teachers to evaluate their performance."	2	8, 2
Educational Quality		Reduced focus on teaching	"The ranking system reduces teachers' focus on teaching."	3	5, 9, 13
		Reduced teaching quality	"The ranking system reduces the quality of classroom teaching."	2	7, 15
		Constructive feedback	"The ranking system allows teachers to improve their performance using constructive feedback."	2	6, 14
		Improved communication	"The ranking system helps improve communication between teachers and administrators."	1	3
		Improved educational programs	"The ranking system helps teachers improve their educational programs."	1	8
		Improved teaching quality	"The ranking system improves teaching quality."	1	2

Figure 1.
Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Ranking System



5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Iranian teachers regarding the implementation of the teacher ranking system. The findings indicate that the ranking system has multiple impacts on teachers, categorized into four main dimensions: psychological issues, professional development, transparency and fairness, and educational quality. Each of these dimensions was interpreted in detail and compared with the results of other studies. The findings revealed that the ranking system can lead to increased stress, psychological pressure, anxiety, and feelings of unfairness among teachers. These results are consistent with studies conducted in Iran, such as Abbaspoor et al. (2021), which showed that teacher evaluation systems can lead to increased stress and psychological pressure. Additionally, international studies, like Smith and Jones (2022) in the United States, have confirmed that teacher ranking systems can lead to psychological problems and decreased job satisfaction.

The research findings showed that the ranking system helps in the professional development of teachers, including improving teaching methods, utilizing the experiences of others, career advancement, using new techniques, and skill development. These results align with both domestic and international studies. For instance, Rahimi (2020) demonstrated that ranking systems can help improve teaching methods and increase teacher motivation. Similarly, Smith et al. (2023) in the UK found that teacher evaluation systems can aid in professional development and enhance teaching skills. The results also indicated that the ranking system can increase transparency in teacher evaluation and performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and assist in more accurate performance evaluation. These findings are consistent with domestic research, such as Karimi et al. (2021), which showed that ranking systems can increase transparency and fairness in teacher performance evaluations. Internationally, Brown et al. (2022) in Canada confirmed that transparent evaluation systems can improve performance and increase teacher satisfaction.

On the other hand, the findings showed that the ranking system can reduce teachers' focus on teaching and decrease the quality of education in classrooms. These results align with similar studies in Iran, such as Hoseini (2019), which indicated that

evaluation systems might lead to a decline in teaching quality. Additionally, Lee et al. (2021) in South Korea found that the pressures from ranking systems could decrease educational quality and increase psychological pressure on teachers. The results of this study suggest that the teacher ranking system in Iran has multiple impacts, both positive and negative. On the one hand, this system can help in the professional development of teachers, increase transparency and fairness in evaluations, and improve teaching methods. On the other hand, it may lead to increased stress and psychological pressure, reduced focus on teaching, and decreased teaching quality.

To improve the ranking system and reduce its negative effects, it is recommended that educational policymakers review the evaluation criteria and methods, and make necessary changes based on teacher feedback. Additionally, providing psychological and professional support for teachers can help reduce the pressures of ranking and improve the overall educational system. Based on the findings of this study and considering the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher ranking system in Iran, the following suggestions are made:

- Review evaluation criteria to reduce stress and psychological pressure caused by evaluations. Evaluation criteria should be designed to exert less pressure on teachers and focus more on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Establish support systems for teachers, including providing psychological and professional counseling, to help reduce anxiety and increase motivation.
- To increase transparency and fairness in evaluation, it is recommended that the evaluation process be conducted openly and with active teacher participation. Providing constructive and practical feedback to teachers can help them identify their weaknesses and strengths and improve their performance. These feedback sessions should be held regularly and in consultation sessions so that teachers can continuously improve their performance.
- For the professional development of teachers, it is recommended to hold more educational programs and specialized workshops so that teachers can update their skills and become familiar with new educational techniques. Encouraging participation in group projects and collaboration with other teachers can also lead to increased

motivation and productivity. These collaborations can include sharing experiences and knowledge, and implementing joint educational projects.

- To prevent a decline in the quality of education, it is recommended that sufficient time and resources be provided for teaching and class preparation. Teachers should be able to focus on their educational tasks without bureaucratic concerns. Revising the ranking system to focus more on educational quality and involving teachers in the decision-making process can lead to the overall improvement of the educational system and increase teacher job satisfaction.

These changes can reduce the negative effects of the ranking system, increase teacher motivation and job satisfaction, and ultimately improve the quality of education in schools.

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