

Article history:

Received 19 April 2024

Revised 02 July 2023

Accepted 22 July 2024

Published online 03 November 2024

Analysis of the Coaching Leadership Model for Elementary School Principals

Maral Masoudi¹, Fatemeh Hamidifar^{2*}, Abbas Khorshidi³, Yalda Delgoshaei⁴

¹ Department of Educational Management, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

² Department of Educational Management, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran, Iran.

³ Department of Educational Management, Islamshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran.

⁴ Department of Educational Management, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

* Corresponding author email address: Farhad.tyam71@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Masoudi, M., Hamidifar, F., Khorshidi, A. Delgoshaei, Y. (2024). Analysis of the Coaching Leadership Model for Elementary School Principals. *Iranian Journal of Educational Sociology*, 7(4), 140-149.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijes.7.4.14>



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The objective of this study is to develop and validate a comprehensive coaching leadership model for elementary school principals.

Methodology: This research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with 15 experts in educational leadership to identify key components of the coaching model. The quantitative component included a survey distributed to 353 elementary school principals, with data analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) through SPSSwin20 and SMART PLS 8 software. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

Findings: The findings indicate that the proposed coaching leadership model significantly improves principals' competencies in instructional leadership, organizational management, and relationship-building. Confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated strong factor loadings and satisfactory model fit indices (GFI = 0.934, CFI = 0.944, RMSEA = 0.064). The model's effectiveness was further supported by enhanced teacher performance and a positive school climate, corroborating existing research on the benefits of coaching in educational leadership. The study identified key strategies such as professional growth, networking, and organizational support as crucial for effective coaching.

Conclusion: The coaching leadership model developed in this study holds significant promise for enhancing the leadership competencies of elementary school principals. By providing personalized support and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, coaching can empower principals to effectively manage school operations, support teacher development, and improve student learning outcomes. This model offers a practical framework for implementing coaching programs tailored to the specific needs of school principals, with implications for broader educational policy and practice.

Keywords: Coaching, Coaching Leadership, Principals, Elementary Education, Mixed-Methods

1. Introduction

The effectiveness of educational leadership is paramount in shaping the quality of instruction and student achievement in schools. Principals, as the key leaders of schools, play a crucial role in fostering an environment conducive to educational excellence and continuous improvement. Their leadership practices significantly influence the performance of teachers and the overall school climate (Ajmi, 2024; Anita et al., 2022; Emami et al., 2024; Ghaderi Sheykhi Abadi et al., 2023; Nazari Ardabili et al., 2024; Rasouli et al., 2024; Şahin et al., 2024; Shariati et al., 2024; Sheikhabadi et al., 2024). In the context of elementary education, where foundational learning occurs, the role of principals is even more critical.

Coaching as a leadership approach has gained prominence as an effective strategy to enhance the competencies of school leaders. It provides principals with the necessary support and guidance to navigate the complexities of school management and instructional leadership (Boon, 2021).

The leadership qualities of principals are pivotal in achieving educational goals and implementing national educational strategies. Principals' leadership skills are instrumental in addressing the diverse needs of teachers and students, fostering a positive school culture, and meeting the national strategy for education in basic schools (Ajmi, 2024). Effective principal leadership is associated with improved teacher performance and motivation, which directly impacts student learning outcomes (Anita et al., 2022).

Research has highlighted various strategies that principals employ to enhance the quality of teacher resources and overall school performance. For instance, principals who engage in participative leadership practices create an inclusive environment that encourages collaboration and shared decision-making (Komariah et al., 2021). Additionally, transformational leadership behaviors, such as inspiring and motivating teachers, have been shown to cultivate an entrepreneurial character among students, preparing them for future challenges (Riswandi, 2023).

Coaching as a leadership development approach provides personalized support to principals, helping them refine their instructional leadership skills and effectively manage school reforms. Coaching has been identified as a powerful tool for enhancing principals' abilities to lead instructional improvements and support teacher development (Huff et al., 2013; Lochmiller, 2013, 2018; Lochmiller & Mancinelli, 2019). The process involves collaborative problem-solving,

reflective practice, and the application of evidence-based strategies to address specific challenges faced by school leaders (Goff et al., 2014; Goff et al., 2015).

Virtual coaching and other technology-enabled coaching methods have also shown promise in providing continuous professional development for principals, particularly in contexts where in-person coaching may not be feasible (Ermeling et al., 2015). These methods facilitate ongoing communication and support, allowing principals to implement and sustain instructional changes effectively.

Developing a comprehensive model of coaching leadership for elementary school principals requires an understanding of the key competencies that effective principals should possess. These competencies include instructional leadership, organizational management, and the ability to foster a positive school climate (Lochmiller & Mancinelli, 2019; Sheng et al., 2017). Instructional leadership involves guiding and supporting teachers in their instructional practices, ensuring alignment with educational standards, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Dania & Andriani, 2021).

Organizational management skills are essential for principals to effectively allocate resources, manage school operations, and create an environment conducive to teaching and learning (Maryati et al., 2020). Furthermore, principals must be adept at building strong relationships with teachers, students, and the community to create a supportive and collaborative school climate (Sayman & Atienzar, 2023).

Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of coaching on principals' leadership practices and school outcomes. For instance, Goff et al. (2015) found that principals who received coaching showed significant improvements in their leadership behaviors, which subsequently led to enhanced teacher performance and student achievement (Goff et al., 2015). Similarly, Houchens, Stewart, and Jennings (2017) reported that collaborative coaching helped principals develop better instructional leadership skills and foster a more positive school culture (Houchens et al., 2017).

In the Singapore education system, coaching has been effectively used to develop leadership skills among school leaders, emphasizing the importance of personalized support and professional growth (Boon, 2021). Coaching not only aids in skill development but also provides a platform for principals to reflect on their practices and make informed decisions that benefit their schools (James-Ward, 2013).

Despite the benefits of coaching, several challenges and barriers can hinder its implementation and effectiveness.

These include a lack of time, resources, and support for coaching programs, as well as resistance to change among school leaders and staff (Comstock & Margolis, 2020; Matsumura et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2009). Additionally, ensuring the consistency and quality of coaching across different schools can be challenging, requiring standardized frameworks and continuous monitoring (Cheng et al., 2022).

Moreover, the varying contexts and needs of schools necessitate a flexible and adaptive coaching model that can address specific challenges faced by principals in different settings (Isnawan & Sudirman, 2022). For example, principals in urban schools may face different challenges compared to those in rural schools, requiring tailored coaching approaches (Maranto et al., 2018).

To develop an effective coaching leadership model for elementary school principals, it is essential to integrate insights from existing research and practical experiences. This model should encompass key elements such as personalized coaching, reflective practice, collaborative problem-solving, and the use of data to inform decision-making (Nieuwerburgh et al., 2020; Woulfin & Jones, 2017).

Furthermore, the model should be designed to enhance principals' instructional leadership, organizational management, and relationship-building skills. By focusing on these core competencies, the coaching leadership model can help principals create a positive school climate, improve teacher performance, and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes (Garcia et al., 2014).

In conclusion, the development of a coaching leadership model for elementary school principals holds significant promise for enhancing educational leadership and improving school outcomes. This study aims to explore the development of a coaching leadership model tailored for elementary school principals, with a focus on improving their leadership skills and overall school performance.

2. Methods and Materials

The present study is applied and developmental in nature and employs a descriptive-survey method. The approach used in this research is exploratory mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. To address the research questions, both interviews and questionnaires are utilized. Given the development trajectory, an inductive method was employed to discover the variables necessary for designing the model. The main structure of data analysis in the Strauss-Corbin method is

based on three coding techniques: open, axial, and selective coding.

The first stage of data analysis in grounded theory is open coding, where data are broken down into the smallest units. The second stage is axial coding, where data are disassembled, conceptualized, and reassembled in a new format. This process requires the analyst to have reached a number of categories and hold them. This process converts concepts into subcategories and main categories. In axial coding, the grounded theory theorist selects a category from the open coding stage and places it at the center of the process under investigation (as the central phenomenon), linking other categories to it. Other categories include causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions, and outcomes. This stage includes drawing a diagram called the "coding paradigm."

The third stage is selective coding, where categories are systematically related to the central category, forming the theory. During this stage, the core category is identified, and other categories are systematically linked to it.

Interviews included questions such as "What elements do you consider influential on the components of coaching leadership for elementary school principals?" "What characteristics distinguish the current state of coaching leadership for elementary school principals?" and "What barriers exist for coaching leadership for elementary school principals?" In the third stage, based on the Strauss and Corbin six-component model, one category was selected as the central category, and the relationships of other categories in the paradigmatic model were specified.

In this study, due to the use of interviews, purposive sampling was used. To identify concepts, a total of 15 experts, specialists, and knowledgeable individuals in the field of coaching leadership were interviewed. In the second stage, to validate the model and use confirmatory factor analysis, purposive sampling was employed, and the sample size was 353. The preliminary questionnaire was distributed among a portion of the target population, collected, and entered into SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha was calculated, and since the overall alpha value of the questionnaire was 0.85 and the remaining alpha values were above 0.70, the questionnaire was considered reliable and distributed among the research population. Of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 353 completed questionnaires were used in the analysis. After data collection, the model was tested using structural equation modeling with SPSSwin20 and SMART PLS 8 software.

3. Findings and Results

According to the guidelines provided by Strauss and Corbin (2006) for open and axial coding, the initial step involved extracting open codes by segmenting the interview text into elements with messages within lines or paragraphs. These concepts were then categorized into larger categories. In the second stage, axial coding, the main category was determined first, and then other categories were grouped into five major clusters related to coaching leadership aspects for elementary school principals, contextual conditions for

coaching leadership, environmental conditions, and coaching leadership outcomes. In the final stage, selective coding, the relationships between categories were clarified, and a paradigmatic model of grounded theory was established. Numerous open codes were identified, but after each classification stage and data review, repetitive concepts were removed, and similar concepts were merged until 69 initial conceptual propositions with 18 subcategories were reached. Data analysis was repeated more than ten times to achieve theoretical saturation for the main categories, subcategories, and their dimensions.

Table 1

Results of Open and Axial Coding with Subcategories

General Category	Main Categories	Subcategories
Central Phenomenon (Coaching Leadership)	Efficiency and Communication	Improving subordinate performance, helping employees recognize strengths, weaknesses, interests, organizational impact, broad relationship-building
	Specialized Perspective	Clarifying blind spots, improving small habits, accelerating subordinate performance
	Emotional Intelligence	Better understanding through self-awareness, social awareness skills, empathy, identifying core values and beliefs
Causal Conditions (Coaching Leadership)	Influence and Creativity	Mentoring, being creative and innovative, creating new values, persuading others, empathizing with students, colleagues, teachers
	Influence and Responsibility	Charismatic personality, motivational power, positive outlook, sense of responsibility
	Participation and Cooperation	Participatory activities, constructive interaction, team-building, team spirit
Contextual Conditions (Coaching Leadership)	General Societal Context	Trust, participation and collectivism culture, strong organizational dependencies, common organizational interests
	Specialized Context	Managers' perspectives on coaching leadership policies, long-term perspective, stakeholder support, diverse communication tools
	Developmental Outlook	Managers' foresight, creating hope among colleagues and students, setting personal and organizational goals, organizational direction
Environmental Conditions (Intervening)	Managerial Ability over Self	Self-management, self-nurturing spirit, self-criticism spirit
	Managerial Ability over Others	Planning and organizing school activities, class and school management, problem-solving, organizational decision-making
	Organizational Management Ability	Addressing community expectations, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral issues, ICT development
Coaching Leadership Strategies	Professional Growth and Development of Managers	Independence and freedom, positive professional environment, critical environment, managerial support, development platform
	Networking	Sharing experiences, networking among colleagues and teachers, networking among students, networking with charities
	Organizational and External Support	Supportive laws and regulations, consensus decision-making norms, coordination and participation, mutual experiences
Outcomes (Coaching Leadership)	Creating a Sense of Respect	Respect and usefulness, encouragement and recognition, mutual respect, appreciation of colleagues
	Creating Mutual Trust	Honesty, trust-building, sense of value among colleagues
	Role Model and Inspirational	Being a role model, friendliness and humility, acceptance, charismatic personality

To achieve the grounded theory and design the coaching leadership model for elementary school principals (case study: Tehran's education system), the researcher conducted interviews with key informants possessing valuable experiences related to the research topic. As the information collection process progressed, concepts and propositions accumulated until the tenth interview, where the main category of designing the coaching leadership model for elementary school principals (case study: Tehran's education system) emerged. Subsequent questions were then focused around this central concept. By the thirteenth interview, theoretical saturation was somewhat confirmed, but interviews continued until the sixteenth to ensure conceptual completeness.

Ultimately, categories were organized into 14 main categories within the six dimensions of the paradigmatic model: causal conditions (3 categories); the central phenomenon (2 categories); strategies for enhancing coaching leadership for elementary school principals (3 categories); contextual conditions for coaching leadership for elementary school principals (3 categories); environmental conditions (3 categories); and outcomes of coaching leadership for elementary school principals (3 categories).

3.1. Causal Conditions for Coaching Leadership for Elementary School Principals

Causal conditions for coaching leadership include factors that directly lead to the main phenomenon of coaching leadership. Accordingly, these causal conditions consist of three main categories:

1. **Influence and Creativity**
 - Subcategories: Mentoring, being creative and innovative, creating new values, persuading others, empathizing with students, colleagues, and teachers.
2. **Influence and Responsibility**
 - Subcategories: Charismatic personality, motivational power, positive outlook on issues, sense of responsibility.
3. **Participation and Cooperation**
 - Subcategories: Participatory activities, constructive interaction, team-building among colleagues, team spirit.

3.2. Contextual Conditions for Coaching Leadership for Elementary School Principals

Contextual conditions refer to immediate and associated factors influencing the coaching leadership process for elementary school principals. Any changes in these conditions directly impact the main phenomenon, strategies for enhancing coaching leadership, and outcomes. The study identified three main categories of contextual conditions:

1. **General Societal Context**
 - Subcategories: Trust, participation and collectivism culture, strong organizational dependencies, common organizational interests.
2. **Specialized Context**
 - Subcategories: Managers' perspectives on coaching leadership policies, long-term perspective shift, stakeholder support, diverse communication tools.
3. **Developmental Outlook**
 - Subcategories: Managers' foresight, creating hope among colleagues and students, setting personal and organizational goals, organizational direction.

3.3. Intervening Conditions for Coaching Leadership for Elementary School Principals

Coaching leadership for elementary school principals occurs under specific environmental conditions, which indirectly affect the main phenomenon through strategies for enhancing coaching leadership. The study identified three main categories of environmental conditions:

1. **Managerial Ability over Self**
 - Subcategories: Self-management, self-nurturing spirit, self-criticism spirit.
2. **Managerial Ability over Others**
 - Subcategories: Planning and organizing school activities, class and school management, problem-solving in schools, organizational decision-making.
3. **Organizational Management Ability**
 - Subcategories: Addressing community expectations, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral issues, ICT development.

3.4. Strategies for Coaching Leadership for Elementary School Principals

Although the main phenomenon is influenced by contextual and environmental factors, the role of strategies for enhancing coaching leadership cannot be overlooked. They facilitate the process leading to the outcomes of coaching leadership. Three essential strategy categories were identified:

1. Professional Growth and Development of Managers

- Subcategories: Independence and freedom, positive professional environment, critical environment, managerial support, development platform.

2. Networking

- Subcategories: Sharing experiences, networking among colleagues and teachers, networking among students, networking with charities.

3. Organizational and External Support

- Subcategories: Supportive laws and regulations, consensus decision-making norms, coordination and participation, mutual experiences.

3.5. Outcomes of Coaching Leadership for Elementary School Principals

If the factors and conditions mentioned in the model function well, it is expected that the outcomes of coaching leadership for elementary school principals will be achieved. The outcomes are classified into three main categories:

1. Creating a Sense of Respect

- Subcategories: Respect and usefulness, encouragement and recognition, mutual respect, appreciation of colleagues.

2. Creating Mutual Trust

- Subcategories: Honesty, trust-building, sense of value among colleagues.

3. Role Model and Inspirational

- Subcategories: Being a role model, friendliness and humility, acceptance, charismatic personality.

3.6. Validation of the Coaching Leadership Model for Elementary School Principals

The conceptual model of the research was validated through data analysis. The AMOS software output (Figure 1) shows the measurement model of the coaching leadership model for elementary school principals in the standard estimation mode. Given the results, the RMSEA value is below 0.10, indicating a good model fit.

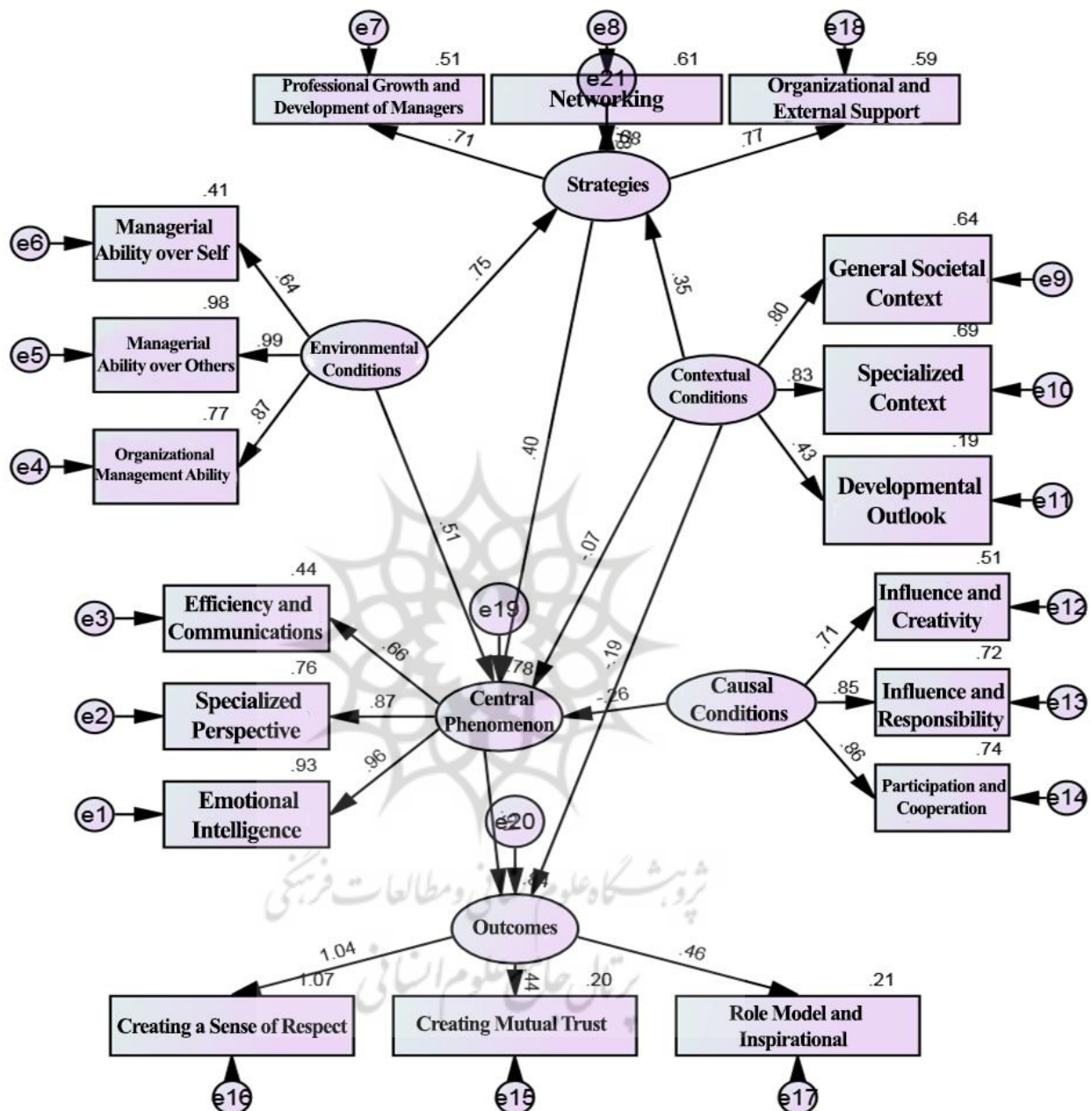
Table 2

Model Fit Indices Using AMOS Software Development

Fit Index	Value	Criterion	Interpretation
Absolute Fit Index (χ^2)	238.596 with 127 df	$\chi^2/df = 1.878 < 3$	Good Fit
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	0.934	> 0.90	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.945	> 0.90	Good Fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.944	> 0.90	Good Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.064	< 0.08	Good Fit
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	0.421	> 0.50	Good Fit

Figure 1

Measurement Model of Coaching Leadership for Elementary School Principals using Structural Equation Modeling in Standard Estimation Mode



To test the fit of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) measurement model, fit indices were used. In structural equation modeling using AMOS software, three indices of fit are emphasized: absolute, incremental, and parsimonious. According to the results in Table 2, the chi-square value (χ^2) is 238.596 with 127 degrees of freedom, yielding a χ^2/df ratio of 1.878, which is less than 3, indicating model acceptance. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is 0.934, showing acceptable model fit. The Root

Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.064, which is below 0.08, indicating model acceptance. Other fit indices such as the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) further confirm the model's relative and overall fit.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to develop a comprehensive coaching leadership model for elementary school principals and examined its effectiveness in enhancing leadership skills and school performance. The findings indicate that the proposed coaching leadership model significantly improved principals' leadership competencies, including instructional leadership, organizational management, and relationship-building skills. The model's effectiveness was validated through confirmatory factor analysis, which demonstrated strong factor loadings and satisfactory model fit indices ($GFI = 0.934$, $CFI = 0.944$, $RMSEA = 0.064$).

The results align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of coaching in educational leadership. Coaching has been shown to provide personalized support that helps principals navigate the complexities of school management and instructional leadership effectively (Boon, 2021; Houchens et al., 2017). The findings suggest that the coaching leadership model facilitated principals' reflective practice, collaborative problem-solving, and use of data to inform decision-making, which are critical for effective school leadership (Nieuwerburgh et al., 2020; Woulfin & Jones, 2017).

The improvement in instructional leadership observed in this study is consistent with previous research highlighting the role of coaching in enhancing principals' ability to guide and support teachers' instructional practices (Dania & Andriani, 2021; Lochmiller, 2013, 2018; Lochmiller & Mancinelli, 2019). By focusing on instructional leadership, the coaching model helped principals align teaching practices with educational standards and foster a culture of continuous improvement within their schools.

The enhancement of organizational management skills among principals, as evidenced by the study, corroborates findings from other studies that emphasize the importance of these skills in effective school administration (Maryati et al., 2020). Effective organizational management allows principals to allocate resources efficiently, manage school operations smoothly, and create an environment conducive to teaching and learning (Sheng et al., 2017).

The study also found that coaching improved principals' relationship-building skills, which are essential for fostering a supportive and collaborative school climate (Sayman & Atienzar, 2023). Strong relationships between principals, teachers, students, and the community are crucial for creating a positive school environment that promotes student achievement and well-being (Garcia et al., 2014).

The effectiveness of the coaching leadership model in this study is supported by numerous previous studies that have demonstrated the positive impact of coaching on school leadership. For example, Goff et al. (2015) found that principals who received coaching showed significant improvements in their leadership behaviors, leading to enhanced teacher performance and student achievement (Goff et al., 2015). Similarly, Houchens, Stewart, and Jennings (2017) reported that collaborative coaching helped principals develop better instructional leadership skills and foster a more positive school culture (Houchens et al., 2017).

Virtual coaching, as explored by Ermeling, Tatsui, and Young (2015), also supports the findings of this study by providing continuous professional development for principals. This method facilitates ongoing communication and support, enabling principals to implement and sustain instructional changes effectively, even in challenging contexts (Ermeling et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the study's findings align with the work of Lochmiller and Mancinelli (2019), who highlighted the importance of coaching in helping principals develop the competencies needed for effective instructional leadership and organizational management (Lochmiller & Mancinelli, 2019). The positive impact of coaching on principals' ability to foster strong relationships within the school community is also supported by Woulfin and Jones (2017), who emphasized the role of coaching in building collaborative and trusting school environments (Woulfin & Jones, 2017).

The findings of this study have several implications for practice. First, educational policymakers and school districts should consider incorporating coaching programs into professional development initiatives for school principals. By providing personalized support and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, coaching can enhance principals' leadership skills and improve school performance.

Second, the coaching leadership model developed in this study can serve as a framework for designing and implementing coaching programs tailored to the specific needs of elementary school principals. This model emphasizes key competencies such as instructional leadership, organizational management, and relationship-building skills, which are critical for effective school leadership.

Third, the positive outcomes observed in this study suggest that coaching can be an effective strategy for addressing the challenges faced by principals in different contexts. For example, principals in urban schools may benefit from coaching programs that focus on managing

diverse student populations and addressing equity issues, while principals in rural schools may require support in resource allocation and community engagement.

While the findings of this study are promising, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a specific context, and the generalizability of the findings to other settings may be limited. Future research should explore the effectiveness of the coaching leadership model in different contexts and with different populations of school principals.

Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data from principals, which may be subject to bias. Future studies should consider using multiple data sources, including teacher and student perceptions, to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the impact of coaching on school leadership.

In conclusion, the coaching leadership model developed and tested in this study has shown significant promise in enhancing the leadership competencies of elementary school principals. By providing personalized support and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, coaching can empower principals to navigate the complexities of school management and instructional leadership effectively. The positive outcomes observed in this study align with previous research and highlight the potential of coaching as a powerful tool for improving educational leadership and school performance. Further research is needed to explore the model's effectiveness in different contexts and to refine its components to better meet the diverse needs of school principals.

Authors' Contributions

The first author of this article was responsible for data collection and analysis, and the other authors were responsible for supervising the analysis and writing of the article.

Declaration

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

Transparency Statement

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

Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all participants for agreeing to record the interview and participate in the research.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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