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Design and Validation of a School Ranking Model in the Iraqi Educational System

Jumaneh Samir Hariz¹, Mohammad Senobari^{2*}, Najm Abdullah Ghali³, Badri Shah Talebi⁴

1 PhD student, Department of Educational Management, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

2 Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Dezful Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dezful, Iran.

3 Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Management, Al-Mustansiriya University, Babylon, Iraq.

4 Associate Professor, Department of Management, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.

* Corresponding author email address: Senobar364@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: This study aimed to design and validate a comprehensive school ranking model for the Iraqi educational system to enhance educational quality through the identification of key performance indicators and ranking components.

Methods and Materials: This research employed a qualitative design using thematic analysis to develop a model based on expert input. Participants included two groups: twelve university scholars with expertise in educational evaluation, selected through theoretical saturation, and eighteen provincial directors from the Iraqi Ministry of Education, selected via census sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on ranking indicators, contextual conditions, and performance components of schools. Thematic analysis was conducted using the Attride-Stirling method (2001), and coding was performed in multiple stages to extract basic, organizing, and global themes. The content validity of the proposed model was assessed using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI), and model validation was further supported through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Findings: The final model includes 25 components grouped under eight organizing themes: educational, administrative and financial, cultural and social, school leadership, student-related, infrastructure and facilities, research-oriented, and human resources. A total of 69 standardized indicators were identified. CVR and CVI scores for all components exceeded the threshold value of 0.56, with overall values of 0.65 and 0.74 respectively, confirming the model's content validity. Additionally, standardized factor loadings and t-values derived from SEM indicated strong statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) for all latent variables and their corresponding indicators, demonstrating the model's structural validity.

Conclusion: The validated model offers a scientifically grounded framework for evaluating and ranking schools in Iraq, addressing both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. It provides educational policymakers with a strategic tool to assess school performance, allocate resources effectively, and promote continuous improvement in educational outcomes.

Keywords: school ranking, school ranking indicators, school evaluation.

1. Introduction

In today's world, a brief overview of organizational outlooks reveals that most organizations seek to enhance their capacities and capabilities in order to exert greater influence on their natural and social environments, both regionally and globally (Nazari Ardabili et al., 2024; Rasouli et al., 2024; Sharifi Golzardi et al., 2024). One of the most challenged domains in the empowerment of individuals and the cultivation of creative human beings is the field of education. With its multifaceted functions, education is capable of facilitating national development. Formal and widespread education, even through a few hours of daily formal instruction in schools, has the potential to become one of the main stakeholders in the cultural and social transformation of society (Niaz Azari & Taghvai Yazdi, 2016; Salman Al-Oda et al., 2024).

School ranking can serve the function of clarifying school performance for the public, creating awareness in local communities, and acting as a driving force toward achieving educational equity, thereby mitigating many of the aforementioned negative challenges. Furthermore, it can be a competitive advantage for schools. According to Delprato and Chadgar (2018), characteristics such as competition, administrative autonomy, staff selection, accountability, and methods of responsiveness are among the prominent and distinguishing advantages of schools (Delprato & Chudgar, 2018). Ranking, by providing transparency across various criteria and indicators, helps parents to easily identify their priorities. It also serves as a benchmark for assessing capabilities, guiding stakeholders in identifying weaknesses, strengths, threats, and opportunities, and helping school administrators and planners chart a course for development (Khanizad & Montazer, 2017). Ranking reminds us of our position globally, and given the foundational nature and importance of education, ranking educational institutions is of particular significance (Horan & O'Regan, 2021).

Some scholars argue that a distinction must be made between ranking and grading. Richards (2019) defines grading as the assessment, evaluation, and measurement of progress toward achieving predetermined standards, classified into very low, low, medium, and high levels. The position of the entity being graded (e.g., journal, school, university) is determined based on these scores within a limited number of levels, such as first to fourth rank. A school's grade can reflect the extent to which it meets specified standards for an ideal school. In contrast, ranking involves scoring and ordering objects, individuals, or

organizations based on specific traits or a set of attributes (Bozorgi Nejad et al., 2020). The main purpose of ranking is to provide accurate information to stakeholders, enabling them to easily determine a school's relative position among similar institutions. It also acts as a strong motivating force for achieving educational justice (Hassani et al., 2017).

In contemporary educational systems, school ranking is recognized as a key tool for assessing educational quality and informing stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and policymakers. However, current ranking methods are often based on superficial criteria and tend to ignore the students' socio-cultural backgrounds. This can result in misjudgment of schools serving diverse student populations, making it difficult for them to meet their specific needs (Anderson et al., 2020). Research examining the impact of infrastructure and various factors on school performance shows that a comprehensive ranking model must take into account multiple factors, including infrastructure quality, students' socio-economic status, and instructional strategies (Barrett et al., 2019). Particularly, studies on supervisors' perspectives on educational supervision emphasize the need for deep understanding of school conditions and teachers' competencies (Delaney & Devereux, 2021). Moreover, the role of data mining and the use of evaluation outcomes to enhance educational quality are increasingly being acknowledged (Farrell, 2015). However, it is also important to note that current evaluation criteria may negatively affect schools with less able students, as these criteria can exacerbate existing inequalities (Harris, 2011).

Standardized test scores alone cannot offer a comprehensive picture of educational quality, and in many cases, they amplify systemic educational inequalities (Joshi, 2019). Therefore, any ranking model should incorporate diverse factors such as students' socio-economic status, teachers' competencies, and the quality of educational infrastructure (Delprato & Chudgar, 2018). Especially in a country like Iraq, which faces challenges such as resource imbalances and inadequate infrastructure, developing a multidimensional and comprehensive school ranking model can strengthen school performance and enhance educational quality. Many schools in Iraq are unable to function effectively due to insufficient resources and lack of attention to the specific needs of their students. Thus, a ranking model that addresses these factors can help improve educational conditions in the country and empower underperforming schools to provide quality educational services.

In Iraq's education system, there is a recognized need for a comprehensive and effective school ranking model to

assess school quality. The purpose of this study is to design a new ranking model that considers not only quantitative but also qualitative aspects. This model can facilitate a more accurate depiction of schools' capabilities in delivering education tailored to students' social and cultural needs and enable decision-makers and other stakeholders to make more informed choices. Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to propose a school ranking model for the Iraqi education system. Accordingly, the main research question is: What is the school ranking model in Iraq's educational system? And does the proposed school ranking model in Iraq's educational system possess sufficient validity?

2. Methods and Materials

The present study was conducted using a qualitative method with the aim of designing and validating a school ranking model in the Iraqi educational system. Participants in the study were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of experts in the field of education from universities in Iraq, totaling 112 individuals. Based on the criterion of having publications in the fields of performance evaluation, effectiveness, or school ranking, and following the theoretical saturation sampling method, 12 participants were selected until saturation was reached. The second group comprised 18 directors of provincial departments of education in Iraq, who were selected through a census approach.

To collect field data in the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with educational experts and provincial directors from various regions of Iraq. The interviews focused on identifying the factors, components, and indicators of school ranking in the Iraqi educational system, taking into account the country's economic, political, cultural, and social conditions.

Discussions centered around the question: "What is the ideal school ranking model?" and this issue was explored in depth.

Data analysis was conducted using an interpretive approach and the thematic analysis method. Initially, excerpts from participants' responses were extracted and transformed into initial codes by the researcher. These initial codes were then categorized to identify basic themes. Through abstraction and further categorization, organizing themes and a global theme were subsequently developed.

For description, organization, comparison, coding, and thematic analysis, the data were analyzed using the Attride-Stirling method (2001). The qualitative data derived from the interviews with experts in education and directors of provincial education departments and school administrators in Iraq were analyzed accordingly.

To validate the model, several methods were employed: participant feedback, researcher review and positioning, and alignment with academic sources, plans, guidelines, manuals, educational documents, and related organizational records. The reliability of the findings was confirmed through the input of the advisory committee, which included educational experts from universities and provincial directors of education in Iraq, as well as the dissertation committee. Content Validity Index (CVI) and Content Validity Ratio (CVR) were also calculated and verified.

Furthermore, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to confirm the validity of the data, factor loadings, and the final model.

3. Findings and Results

This section first addresses the first sub-question: What are the school ranking indicators in the Iraqi educational system?

Table 1

School Ranking Indicators in the Iraqi Educational System

Core Themes (Indicators)	Initial Codes	No.
Student Academic Performance	Standardized test results	1
	University admission rate	2
	Grade repetition rate	3
	Dropout rate	4
	Average academic scores	5
Teaching Quality	Use of modern teaching methods	6
	Teacher performance evaluation	7
	Student satisfaction with teaching quality	8
Financial Management	Optimal use of the budget	9
	Acquisition of financial support	10
	Collaboration with local organizations for funding	11

	Cost efficiency	12
Human Resource Management	Quality of staff	13
	Professional development programs for teachers	14
	Staff performance evaluation	15
Asset Management	Maintenance of buildings and equipment	16
	Equipment updates	17
	Optimal use of space	18
Promotion of Arts and Music	Organization of arts programs	19
	Instruction in art and music	20
Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity	Availability of sports equipment	21
	Organization of sports competitions	22
Religious and National Ceremonies	Organization of national events	23
School Management	School leadership	24
	Parental involvement in school affairs	25
	School programs	26
Vision and Mission	Clear educational vision	27
	Defined school mission	28
Attitude Toward Learning	Interest in education	29
	Academic self-confidence	30
	School satisfaction	31
Personal Development	Creativity and innovation	32
	Life skills	33
Student Satisfaction with Teachers	Surveys of students and parents (satisfaction indicators)	34
Educational Equipment	Audio-visual equipment	35
	Library	36
	Laboratory facilities	37
	Workshops	38
Physical Infrastructure	School building	39
	Classrooms	40
	Educational spaces	41
	Sports areas	42
	Green spaces	43
Information and Communication Technology Equipment	Internet access	44
	Computer laboratories	45
	Internal school network	46
Safety and Health Equipment	Fire extinguishing systems	47
	First aid equipment	48
	Sanitation equipment	49
Instructional Aids	Educational aids	50
Student Research Activities	Participation in science fairs and research projects	51
	Presentation of papers at conferences	52
Support for School Research	Allocation of research funding	53
Engagement with Scientific and Research Centers	Collaboration with universities	54
	Organization of training workshops	55
	Inviting university professors for lectures	56
	Establishment of student research networks	57
Research Achievements	Student participation in science Olympiads	58
	Number of student inventions and innovations	59
Teachers' Professional Competence	Educational qualifications	60
	Specialized certifications	61
	Teaching experience	62
	Teaching skills	63
Teachers' Professional Development	Participation in in-service training courses	64
	Conducting educational research	65
	Authorship of books and articles	66
Teachers' Motivation and Job Satisfaction	Working conditions	67
	Motivation for teaching	68
	Job satisfaction	69

Table 2 addresses the second sub-question: What are the components of school ranking in the Iraqi educational system?

Table 2

Organizing Themes and Basic Themes of School Ranking in the Iraqi Educational System

Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	No.
Educational	Student academic performance	1
	Teaching quality	2
Administrative and Financial	Financial management	3
	Human resource management	4
	Asset management	5
Cultural and Social	Promotion of arts and music	6
	Promotion of sports and physical activities	7
	Organization of religious and national events	8
School Leadership	School management	9
	Vision and mission	10
Student-Related	Attitude toward learning	11
	Personal development	12
Infrastructure and Facilities	Student satisfaction with teachers	13
	Educational equipment	14
	Physical infrastructure	15
	ICT equipment	16
	Safety and health equipment	17
	Instructional aids	18
	Research-Oriented	19
Human Resources	Student research activities	19
	Research support in schools	20
	Engagement with scientific and research centers	21
	Research achievements	22
	Teachers' professional competence	23
	Teachers' professional development	24
	Teachers' motivation and job satisfaction	25

The next table presents the answer to the main research question: What is the school ranking model in the Iraqi educational system? It includes the main domains,

components (organizing themes), and indicators (basic themes) derived from the coding of interviews with subject matter experts.

Table 3

Domains, Components, and Indicators of the School Ranking Model in the Iraqi Educational System

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Initial Codes
School Ranking	Educational	Student academic performance	Standardized test results – University admission rate – Grade repetition rate – Dropout rate – Average scores
		Teaching quality	Use of modern teaching methods – Teacher performance evaluation – Student satisfaction with teaching quality
	Administrative and Financial	Financial management	Optimal use of budget – Acquisition of financial support – Cooperation with local organizations – Cost efficiency
		Human resource management	Staff quality – Professional development programs – Staff performance evaluation
		Asset management	Maintenance of buildings and equipment – Equipment updates – Optimal use of space
	Cultural and Social	Promotion of arts and music	Organization of arts programs – Instruction in art and music
		Promotion of sports and physical activities	Availability of sports equipment – Organization of sports competitions
		Religious and national ceremonies	Organization of national events

School Leadership	School management	School leadership – Parental involvement in school affairs – School programs
Student-Related	Vision and mission	Clear educational vision – Defined school mission
	Attitude toward learning	Interest in education – Academic self-confidence – School satisfaction
	Personal development	Creativity and innovation – Life skills
Infrastructure and Facilities	Student satisfaction with teachers	Student and parent surveys – Satisfaction indicators
	Educational equipment	Audio-visual equipment – Library – Laboratory – Workshops
	Physical infrastructure	School building – Classrooms – Educational spaces – Sports areas – Green spaces
	ICT equipment	Internet access – Computer laboratories – Internal school network
	Safety and health equipment	Fire extinguishing system – First aid equipment – Sanitary facilities
Research-Oriented	Instructional aids	Educational support materials
	Student research activities	Participation in science competitions – Conducting research projects – Presenting papers at conferences
	Research support in schools	Allocation of research budget
	Engagement with scientific and research centers	Collaboration with universities – Organizing training workshops – Inviting university faculty for lectures – Establishment of student research networks
	Research achievements	Student participation in scientific Olympiads – Number of inventions and innovations
Human Resources	Teachers' professional competence	Educational qualifications – Specialized certifications – Teaching experience – Teaching skills
	Teachers' professional development	Participation in in-service training – Conducting educational research – Authorship of books and articles
	Teachers' motivation and job satisfaction	Working conditions – Motivation for teaching – Job satisfaction

The presented list constitutes a comprehensive set of components and indicators that can be utilized to evaluate and rank schools in the Iraqi educational system. These indicators address multiple dimensions of school performance, including educational quality, management, infrastructure, school culture, and student engagement.

Fourth Research Question: Does the Proposed School Ranking Model in the Iraqi Educational System Have Validity?

Based on the components of the school ranking model in Iraq's educational system, the questions presented in table below were included in the questionnaire distributed to

experts. In this study, a panel of 12 individuals was selected as the core group. The group's consensus served as the basis for analysis, and the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was calculated for each item. As noted, the expert panel consisted of directors of education and school principals in Iraq who had at least 25 years of service and had received recognition as exemplary school principals by the Ministry of Education of Iraq. The minimum required threshold for CVR for each indicator was set at 0.56. Accordingly, the overall CVI and CVR values for the proposed model were calculated as 0.74 and 0.65, respectively, confirming the structure of the school ranking model in Iraq's educational system.

Table 4

Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of the School Ranking Model

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Agreement Coefficient	Approval Status
School Ranking	Educational	Student academic performance	0.83	Approved
		Teaching quality	0.85	Approved
	Administrative and Financial	Financial management	0.78	Approved
		Human resource management	0.62	Approved
		Asset management	0.72	Approved
	Cultural and Social	Promotion of arts and music	0.78	Approved
		Promotion of sports and physical activity	0.67	Approved
		Organization of religious and national events	0.65	Approved
	School Leadership	School management	0.60	Approved
		Vision and mission	0.67	Approved
	Student-Related	Attitude toward learning	0.71	Approved
		Personal development	0.68	Approved
		Student satisfaction with teachers	0.67	Approved

Infrastructure and Facilities	Educational equipment	0.75	Approved
	Physical infrastructure	0.76	Approved
	ICT equipment	0.75	Approved
	Safety and health equipment	0.76	Approved
	Instructional aids	0.75	Approved
Research-Oriented	Student research activities	0.76	Approved
	Research support in school	0.75	Approved
	Collaboration with scientific centers	0.76	Approved
	Research achievements	0.78	Approved
Human Resources	Teachers' professional competence	0.86	Approved
	Teachers' professional development	0.69	Approved
	Teachers' motivation and job satisfaction	0.69	Approved

Based on the CVR results, it can be concluded that the identified indicators in the final model were approved, and

the proposed model has the capacity to evaluate all aspects of school ranking.

Table 5

Content Validity Index (CVI) of the School Ranking Model

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Agreement Coefficient	Approval Status
School Ranking	Educational	Student academic performance	0.85	Approved
		Teaching quality	0.84	Approved
	Administrative and Financial	Financial management	0.80	Approved
		Human resource management	0.78	Approved
		Asset management	0.83	Approved
	Cultural and Social	Promotion of arts and music	0.84	Approved
		Promotion of sports and physical activity	0.62	Approved
		Organization of religious and national events	0.67	Approved
	School Leadership	School management	0.71	Approved
		Vision and mission	0.69	Approved
	Student-Related	Attitude toward learning	0.76	Approved
		Personal development	0.75	Approved
		Student satisfaction with teachers	0.65	Approved
	Infrastructure and Facilities	Educational equipment	0.75	Approved
		Physical infrastructure	0.69	Approved
		ICT equipment	0.63	Approved
		Safety and health equipment	0.70	Approved
		Instructional aids	0.85	Approved
	Research-Oriented	Student research activities	0.84	Approved
		Research support in school	0.80	Approved
		Collaboration with scientific centers	0.78	Approved
		Research achievements	0.83	Approved
	Human Resources	Teachers' professional competence	0.84	Approved
		Teachers' professional development	0.73	Approved
		Teachers' motivation and job satisfaction	0.72	Approved

To validate the final model, the Content Validity Index (CVI) of the school ranking model was calculated. The results indicate that the constructs of the model possess sufficient validity and that the proposed model is capable of

assessing all dimensions of school ranking within Iraq's educational system.

The critical threshold for acceptable factor loadings is 0.40. If the factor loading is below 0.40, the corresponding factor must be revised or removed from the research model.

Figure 1

Standardized Factor Loadings Between Latent Variables and Their Indicators in the School Ranking Model in the Iraqi Educational System

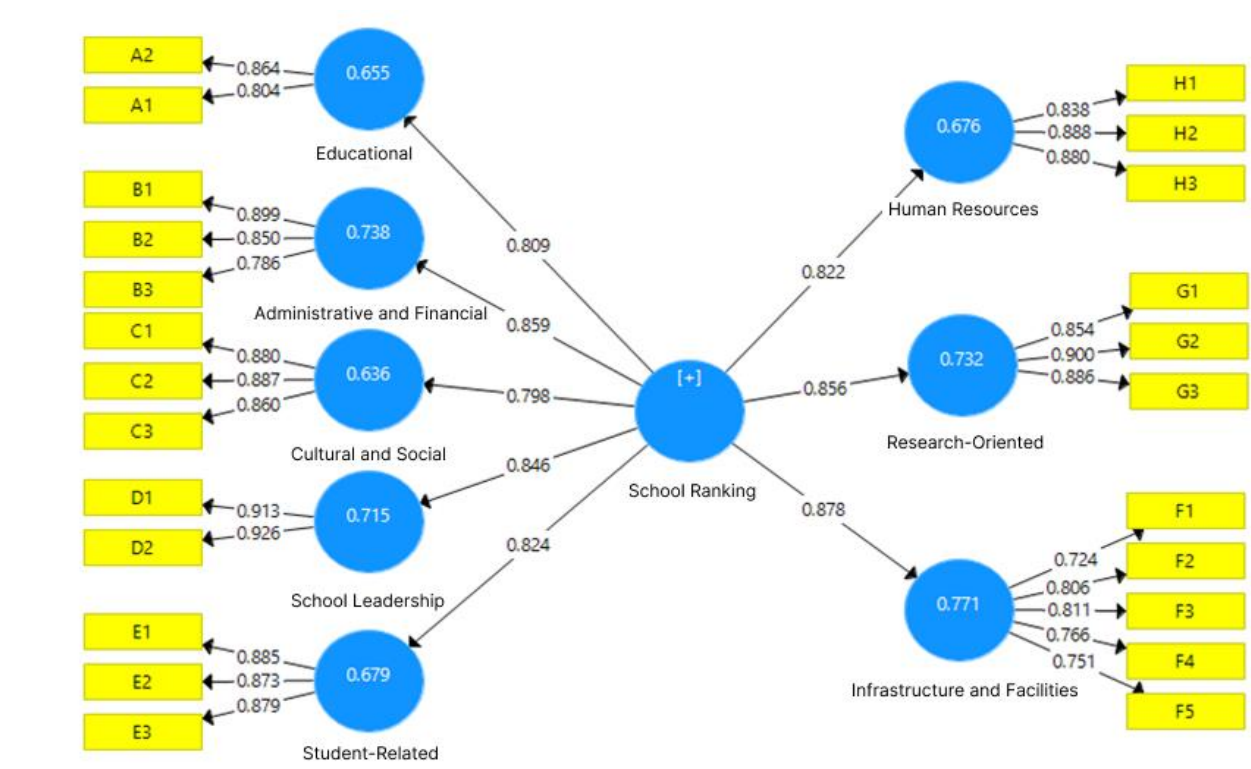


Figure 2

T-Values Between Latent Variables and Their Indicators in the School Ranking Model in the Iraqi Educational System

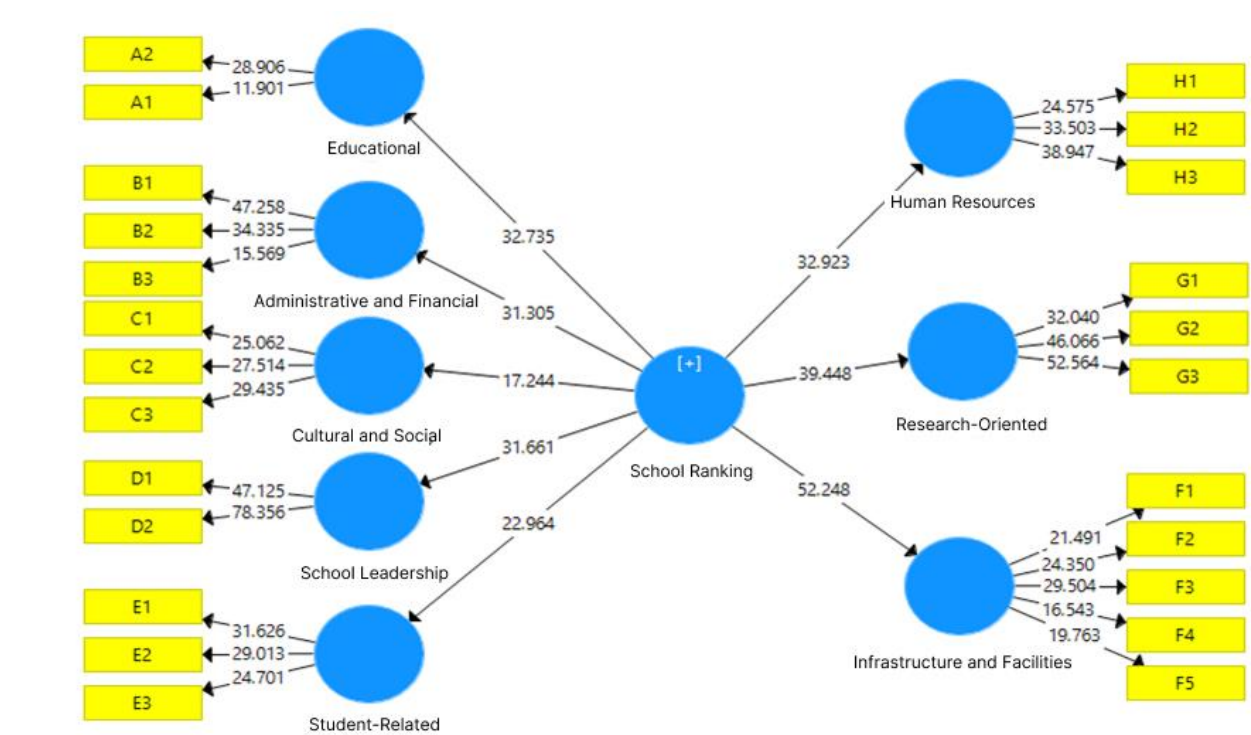


Table 6

Standardized Factor Loadings and T-Values Between Latent Variables and Their Indicators in the School Ranking Model in the Iraqi Educational System

Pathway	Beta Coefficient	T-Statistic	Significance Level
Educational → Ranking	0.809	32.735	0.001
Student Academic Performance → Educational	0.804	11.901	0.001
Teaching Quality → Educational	0.864	28.906	0.001
Administrative and Financial → Ranking	0.859	31.305	0.001
Financial Management → Administrative and Financial	0.899	47.258	0.001
Human Resource Management → Administrative and Financial	0.850	34.335	0.001
Asset Management → Administrative and Financial	0.786	15.569	0.001
Cultural and Social → Ranking	0.798	17.244	0.001
Promotion of Arts and Music → Cultural and Social	0.880	25.062	0.001
Promotion of Sports and Physical Activities → Cultural and Social	0.887	27.514	0.001
Religious and National Ceremonies → Cultural and Social	0.860	29.435	0.001
School Leadership → Ranking	0.846	31.661	0.001
School Management → School Leadership	0.913	47.125	0.001
Vision and Mission → School Leadership	0.926	78.356	0.001
Student-Related → Ranking	0.824	22.964	0.001
Attitude Toward Learning → Student-Related	0.885	31.626	0.001
Personal Development → Student-Related	0.873	29.013	0.001
Student Satisfaction with Teachers → Student-Related	0.879	24.701	0.001
Infrastructure and Facilities → Ranking	0.878	52.248	0.001
Educational Equipment → Infrastructure and Facilities	0.724	21.491	0.001
Physical Infrastructure → Infrastructure and Facilities	0.806	24.350	0.001
ICT Equipment → Infrastructure and Facilities	0.811	29.504	0.001
Safety and Health Equipment → Infrastructure and Facilities	0.766	16.543	0.001
Instructional Aids → Infrastructure and Facilities	0.751	19.763	0.001
Research-Oriented → Ranking	0.856	39.448	0.001
Student Research Activities → Research-Oriented	0.854	32.040	0.001
Collaboration with Scientific Centers → Research-Oriented	0.900	46.066	0.001
Research Achievements → Research-Oriented	0.886	52.564	0.001
Human Resources → Ranking	0.822	32.923	0.001
Teachers' Professional Competence → Human Resources	0.838	24.575	0.001
Teachers' Professional Development → Human Resources	0.888	33.503	0.001
Teachers' Motivation and Job Satisfaction → Human Resources	0.880	38.947	0.001

Based on the results obtained from the standardized factor loadings and t-values between latent variables and their corresponding indicators it can be concluded that all indicators in this model have met the required threshold. The research model demonstrates acceptable fit and structural validity.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

To provide a scientific and detailed justification for each component of the school ranking model in the Iraqi educational system, this section elaborates specifically on the themes and their relevance to the existing literature.

Student academic performance is one of the most prominent indicators in evaluating educational quality. Standardized test results and university admission rates not only reflect students' academic capabilities but also serve as

criteria for assessing the quality of school instruction. Specifically, how these test results are viewed can be associated with academic institutions and serve as a foundation for qualifying students for higher education. Research shows that academic performance is influenced by teaching methods, students' interest, and the quality of educational resources (Hassani et al., 2017).

Teaching quality is recognized as the primary factor in students' academic success. The use of innovative instructional methods, such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and active learning, not only increases motivation to learn but also fosters deeper understanding and retention. Studies indicate that teachers who continuously engage in learning and update their teaching practices tend to achieve better student outcomes. Moreover, continuous and accurate evaluation of teacher performance can help

identify strengths and weaknesses, ultimately leading to improved instruction (Bozorgi Nejad et al., 2020).

Financial management in schools is considered one of the key pillars. Transparency in budget expenditures and the ability to attract financial support significantly impact the quality of educational services and facilities. Collaborating with governmental and non-governmental organizations, especially in attracting supplementary funding, contributes to the enhancement of infrastructure and equipment used by students. Accordingly, effective financial management supports the implementation of appropriate educational programs and the improvement of the learning environment (Haji Bagheri & Davami, 2021).

The quality of human resources and professional development programs for teachers are two critical components of educational quality. Investment in teacher training can profoundly impact the quality of instruction and learning. Research indicates that experienced and competent teachers, through effective teaching and communication skills, positively influence students' academic trajectories. Furthermore, regular evaluation and constructive feedback help teachers enhance their skills and support the learning process (Saeedi Moghadam et al., 2022).

A suitable educational environment and effective maintenance of scientific and instructional equipment play a vital role in improving learning quality. Schools should focus on creating engaging and diverse learning environments that encourage student participation and learning. Additionally, promoting arts and sports in schools can contribute to students' holistic development. Studies have shown that flexible and varied learning environments are directly linked to students' motivation and creativity (Golbargi, 2019).

Effective and efficient leadership is a key principle in enhancing educational quality and fostering satisfaction among students and families. A clear vision and mission help align the efforts of teachers and students toward common goals. Furthermore, involving parents in school decision-making contributes to a positive school atmosphere and strengthens the connection between home and school. These interactions build trust and support for educational programs (Mehdikhani, 2015). Kalule and Bouchamma (2013) found that providing teachers with opportunities to assess their strengths and weaknesses through guided reflection led by skilled educational leaders may be one of the best investments a school can make (Kalule & Bouchamma, 2013).

Interest in learning, self-confidence, and creativity are important factors that influence educational quality and student satisfaction. Periodic surveys can help identify students' and parents' views and needs. Creating a supportive environment that encourages creativity and learning can positively influence students' attitudes toward school and motivate them to put more effort into their education (Mir Kamali & Saadati Taba, 2015). Recent work by Iachini et al. (2016) emphasized the integration of mental health, family engagement, and leisure opportunities as part of youth development. Bryk et al. (2010) stressed the importance of shared vision, goals, and clarified values as a pathway to school improvement (Bryk et al., 2010). Achieving a shared vision, goals, and values requires ongoing professional learning. While developing teacher expertise is desirable, student needs must also be prioritized. School administrators should focus on improving academic outcomes for all students. Leadership should include supervision and offer learning opportunities for educators as learners, thus enhancing teacher effectiveness (Matulová, 2023). Loertscher and Choechlin (2015) proposed two strategies for promoting school improvement and fostering internal collaboration: transforming the school library into a learning center and adopting co-teaching methods between specialists and classroom teachers (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015).

School safety and hygiene hold special importance. Equipping schools with basic safety and health facilities—such as fire suppression systems and first aid kits—not only increases students' and staff's sense of security but also enhances their concentration during the learning process. Studies have shown that a secure school environment is directly associated with improved educational quality and the preservation of students' mental health (Haji Bagheri & Davami, 2021).

Strengthening collaboration with universities and research centers can significantly improve the academic standards of schools. Organizing educational workshops and inviting academic experts to deliver lectures in schools not only increases students' awareness but also opens doors for more research opportunities. These types of partnerships facilitate the exchange of experiences, information, and knowledge, and play a vital role in enhancing educational quality in schools (Anderson et al., 2020).

One of the primary limitations of this study is its reliance on qualitative data collected through interviews, which, while rich in depth, may not fully capture the broader variability of school contexts across all regions of Iraq. The

findings are based on the perspectives of a limited group of experts and education administrators, which may introduce bias due to subjective interpretations or localized experiences. Additionally, the validation process, although rigorous, was confined to a specific sample and may not generalize to different educational levels or private schools. The absence of longitudinal data also restricts the ability to assess the long-term applicability and stability of the proposed model.

Future research should incorporate a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative insights with quantitative data from a larger and more diverse sample of schools across different provinces and educational systems. Longitudinal studies are recommended to evaluate the stability and effectiveness of the model over time. It is also suggested that further validation be conducted across varying educational contexts, including rural and urban settings, as well as private and public schools. Additionally, integrating the perspectives of students and parents could enrich the model's relevance and comprehensiveness, thereby enhancing its utility for educational policymakers and stakeholders.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this 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.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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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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