



## Developing a Model for Identifying the Competencies of Managers Based on the Fundamental Reform Document of Education

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**Abstract:** The objective of this article is to propose a model for the professional competencies of managers based on the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE). The research employed an applied mixed method study (qualitative-quantitative) with an exploratory approach. Qualitative stage participants consisted of faculty members of the Islamic Azad University of Tehran, staff specialists of the Ministry of Education, and senior organization managers. The quantitative stage target population comprised all middle school educational managers in Tehran city, from which 335 individuals were selected using the cluster sampling method and Morgan's table. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to collect data, and structural equation modeling was utilized to analyze the data. The results revealed that six areas were identified concerning the professional competence of the managers of the country's education system. These six areas include personal competence, moral competence, technical competence, administrative competence, organizational competence, and communication competence, each of which had sub-components suitable for the country's school management system's needs and requirements.

**Keywords:** Professional competence, Fundamental Reform Document of Education, Managers, Mixed method study

## Introduction

The existence of a proper governance system in any country leads to its stability. Therefore, the selection and appointment of individuals, especially competent managers in organizations, is of particular importance ([Harvey & Richey, 2001](#)). The changing world also causes the criteria for success and competence of managers to change ([Harvey & Richey, 2001](#)). Effective management of the past, which focused on command, control, and technical knowledge, has evolved into a new model based on openness, trust, and general knowledge ([Glaser, 2016](#)). In this regard, the human resource management process is one of the most influential and determining processes in all leading and successful organizations and countries ([Zhao et al., 2021](#)).

Many experts believe that school managers play a pivotal role in effectiveness. Research also shows that the performance of educational managers and leaders has a significant impact on the academic success of students ([Supovitz et al., 2010](#)). In schools, the quality depends more than anything on the competence of the managers. All expected activities, including planning, teaching, and evaluation, are carried out

under the supervision of the manager. Therefore, the effectiveness and efficiency of schools depend on the professional competence of their managers ([Jafari et al., 2013](#)).

Appointing educational managers without professional preparation and without attention to professional standards is more like gambling; the main losers of which will undoubtedly be children and students ([Bush, 2008](#)). Research results indicate that most managers have not received enough training to take on the role of school management ([Schleicher, 2012](#)) and are not fully prepared and equipped to deal with the challenges they face ([Farkas, 2003](#)). Managers have also admitted that the training provided in universities has not prepared them for school leadership. Therefore, another concern is that the roles and skills of school managers, which are emphasized in preparation programs, are specific to the industrial age and do not address the challenges and complexities of today's schools. In fact, educational leadership and management are recognized as one of the important factors in improving and enhancing the effectiveness of schools and, consequently, education ([Bush, 2020](#)). Research has extensively shown that successful schools are led by successful leaders ([Huber & Muijs, 2010](#)). The crucial and important role of school managers in the face of fundamental changes, turmoil, and challenges that schools are facing has become more complex and difficult ([Styron Jr & Styron, 2011](#)). Managers help build the future and are responsible for educating children and young people to become successful learners, creative and confident individuals, and aware and active citizens ([Allen et al., 2019](#)). In addition, many researchers question the sufficiency of standard preparation and licensing programs for managers and argue that traditional preparation programs focus on knowledge, but today's managers must have the skills to apply that knowledge in the field of education, as well as the attitudes and perspectives to make effective use of their knowledge and skills. In addition to the lack of application of knowledge by managers, the lack of necessary quality is also questionable. In many countries around the world, requirements such as a master's degree in educational management, experience as a school deputy, and a teaching leadership certificate are necessary for school management positions ([Schleicher, 2012](#)).

The evidence in Iran suggests that there are no specific obligations or scientific regulations in this field. Even according to the latest available statistics, only 8% of school managers in Iran have educational management certificates ([Halimi & Fathi Azar, 2009](#)). Therefore, it can be concluded that the lack of precise regulations and standards for the appointment and non-qualification of managers has resulted in many of them having poor performance in their managerial and leadership roles. In an environment where managers are facing continuous changes due to globalization, rapid technological changes, and competency-based competition, it is necessary for them to acquire the necessary and appropriate competencies for the new situation ([Viitala, 2005](#)).

Since the mid-1980s, the development and evaluation of managerial competencies have been of great interest to organizations. The main reason for such attention was the belief that the development of managerial competencies brings countless benefits to organizations, and this belief still holds true. Incompetence and inefficiency of some employees in government agencies, institutions, and companies have become a problem that has plagued most government organizations and some non-governmental organizations. Incompetence and lack of awareness among employees are a deviation from a balanced state in the organization. In crisis management, crisis is defined as a deviation from the equilibrium state ([Melnik et al., 2020](#)). Therefore, incompetence and lack of awareness among employees can also be considered a crisis, which can be viewed as a destructive factor in the organization ([Nesari et al., 2022](#)). With a systemic view of education in Iran, it can be acknowledged that the issues and problems of this organization are manifold. On the one hand, school managers in Iran are still selected without professional and scientific regulations and are promoted from teaching to management positions. On the other hand, there are no consistent professional standards for their preparation and development, and the evidence suggests that the determination of regulations for the selection and appointment of managers and their approval by the Supreme Council of Education and Training relies more on the perspectives and personal experiences of experts and council members than on research data and comparative studies ([Safi, 2008](#)).

In fact, according to the decisions of the Supreme Council of Education and Training, the following factors have been considered as the conditions for selecting and appointing school managers. These include adherence to Islamic ethics, breadth of vision, fairness, spirit of sacrifice and trustworthiness as perceived by colleagues, having successful practical experience and a good reputation and popularity among colleagues, having management skills and team spirit. As the school is a sensitive and important organization in society, it is necessary that its managers are selected from the best, most deserving and competent people who have the necessary qualifications for this position, so that education and training can achieve its long-term goals and reach its desired destination.

However, there is a lack of sufficient research and a native model for the education system in Iran, which is one of the main motivations for this research. Competency is a term used to describe a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to successful job performance and ultimately achieve organizational goals and priorities. Competencies are often developed through participation in training programs, individual coaching, as well as job opportunities such as involvement in projects and teamwork. Competency studies are one of the most strategic research areas and the most fundamental ways to identify job qualifications, a profession whose main goal is to identify the knowledge and skills required for a job.

According to [Dzwigol et al. \(2020\)](#), competency refers to observable behaviors that an individual must have to perform their role successfully and is based on knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal characteristics. They believe that competency, the impact of employees on customers in the shadow of education and expertise in terms of knowledge, skills, and professional behavior.

In recent years, a significant portion of the efforts and studies of organizational scholars and researchers have been devoted to identifying those characteristics of managers that provide the conditions for superior performance. In management literature, the recent proposition of the necessary characteristics of managers for superior performance is referred to as managerial competencies.

In general, when we want to explain why some individuals have better performance than others, competencies will be useful concepts ([Wong, 2020](#)). Therefore, competency has become one of the most popular terms in recent decades ([Capaldo et al., 2006](#)) and is considered a very important and common concept in scientific circles ([Simonet & Tett, 2013](#)). Professional competency is defined as the ability to achieve success based on skills, knowledge, and experience when performing tasks and solving problems in professional activities ([Belyukova et al., 2015](#)). In fact, competency refers to a combination of an individual's capabilities or abilities, including motivation, traits, self-perception, social role, and relevant knowledge that is directly related to job performance ([Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014](#)) in a way that affects job effectiveness ([Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006](#)).

In the literature of human resource management, competency refers to how an individual excels in specific job situations and responsibilities ([Soderquist & Overakker, 2010](#)). Management competencies include skills and abilities that help managers perform excellently in critical situations ([Tomastik et al., 2015](#)). In general, it can be said that the competency of managers refers to a set of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes that an individual needs for action in a wide range of managerial and organizational positions ([Tomastik et al., 2015](#)), so that their effectiveness in the work environment and ultimately the effectiveness of the organization is achieved ([Goodarzvand & Taheri, 2012](#)).

Researchers and various experts have raised different dimensions and models of competencies. A review of these studies shows that each author and thinker has raised specific competencies based on their nature of study. In many cases, researchers have mentioned similar competencies, and in some cases, other competencies have been considered. In addition, for some competencies, although their title may differ in various studies, their meaning is the same or at least similar.

[Jokar et al. \(2017\)](#) introduced a competency model for managers, including individual, group, technical, and organizational competencies, all of which had a significant and positive impact on organizational development. [Kermani et al. \(2017\)](#) designed a competency model for hospital managers, which included three dimensions of personal, technical, and interactional competencies. The personal

dimension had seven components, the technical dimension had 25 components, and the interactional dimension had four components. [Torkzadeh and Mohammadi \(2016\)](#) revealed that in general, research managers possess the necessary competencies in three dimensions of values and ethics, knowledge and insight, and skills and methods. Furthermore, [Zareei Matin et al. \(2014\)](#) presented a competency model for managers of cultural organizations, which included three central competencies (cultural intelligence, cultural motivation, and emotional intelligence), eight main competencies, and 23 sub-competencies.

[Mahmoudi et al. \(2011\)](#) demonstrated that in the views of professors, the highest average for identifying professional competencies belongs to the personality competency factor, while the lowest average belongs to the political competency factor.

[Sparrow and Otaye-Ebede \(2017\)](#) in their study pointed out that leadership, as one of the parameters of management competency, can influence creative behavior and create an environment that motivates entrepreneurship by its influence on followers. [Tripathi and Agrawal \(2014\)](#) found in their research that the competencies of managers include personal, interpersonal, organizational, technical, specialized, and interactive competencies.

[Bhardwaj and Punia \(2013\)](#) showed in their research that identifying and developing managerial competencies is an important tool for human resource management, enabling the organization to achieve its strategic goals. In another study, [Hsieh et al. \(2012\)](#) reported that the competencies of managers include leadership, decision-making, executive, communication, teamwork, and ethical competencies. Scholars and researchers from various fields have explored this phenomenon from diverse perspectives, as evident in the research literature. Despite the significance of managerial decisions in the fast-paced educational setting, no comprehensive and specialized research has been conducted in the education and training domain. Thus, it is imperative to address this gap to elucidate the essential competencies of managers and develop an appropriate model in the current study.

## Material and Methods

The current study is an applied work utilized a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. Given the unique management, cultural, and environmental conditions of the Iranian's educational system, the study employed a qualitative approach to initially extract relevant concepts, followed by a quantitative study based on the qualitative data to confirm and validate the findings. As a result, the research approach was comparative-inductive. The quantitative research population consisted of all educational managers in Tehran, selected via cluster sampling, with 335 individuals chosen using Morgan's table.

To collect information, two methods were employed:

1) The documentary method involved gathering information through the review of books, journals, online sources, and databases, extracting relevant texts, and identifying necessary skills and assessment indicators based on theoretical and empirical foundations.

2) The field method was carried out in two ways: first, by purposive sampling method snowball type, experts, faculty members, and staff of the educational organization in Tehran were selected for exploratory interviews. Interviews conducted in their workplace after necessary coordination; and second, by distributing questionnaires among a statistical sample for quantitative data collection and analysis. The qualitative section utilized open, axial, and selective coding methods. Following this stage, the researcher employed quantitative research methods to test the developed model's validity using data obtained from the qualitative stage. The use of qualitative methods was necessitated by the weak theoretical and empirical background and the lack of consensus among researchers regarding educational managers' competencies.

## Results

The research findings have been analyzed in two qualitative and quantitative sections. Initially, the professional competence components of educational managers in Iran were identified, and then based on questionnaire development, a model test was performed.

First, for statistical tests, to confirm the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. Table 1 shows the calculation of Cronbach's alpha for professional competence components.

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha for professional coefficients of competence components

Component	Cronbach Alpha	Items number
Individual competency	.73	16
Ethical competency	.71	11
Performance competency	.77	9
Technical competency	.79	8
Administrative competency	.73	13
Communication competency	.79	17
Organizational competency	.81	9

Table 2 shows the findings obtained from the questionnaire and the dimensions and components of professional competence based on the Fundamental Transformation Document. Based on the data obtained from Table 2, the findings of the questionnaire and the dimensions and components of professional competence of managers are shown based on FRDE.



**Table 2.** Findings related to dimensions and components of professional competence of managers based on FRDE

Dimension	Component	Indicator	Total score	Mean	Cluster mean	Indicator loading	Indicator weight	Cluster weight mean
Individual	Individual attitude	Intellectual indépendance	20	4.3	4.5	1.23	.041	.041
		Self-efficace	21	4.7		1.39	.041	
organizational	Central justice	job improvement	22	4.3	4.6	1.21	.045	.043
		Supportive commitment of managers	24	4.8		1.42	.042	
Individual	Ethical Leadership	Perception of development and growth	22	4.4	4.6	1.45	.046	.045
		Commitment	23	4.6		1.49	.048	
		Being a role model	24	4.8		1.43	.048	
Ethical	Respect for values	Commitment to values	24	4.8	4.53	1.49	.041	.040
		Respect	22	4.4		1.46	.049	
		Compliance with norms	22	4.4		1.45	.045	
Official	responsibility	Responsiveness	21	4.2	4.4	1.43	.046	.043
		Organizational responsibility	23	4.6		1.41	.044	
Organizational	Conscious perception of performance	Alignment with goals	23	4.6	4.2	1.46	.045	.043
		Support the elite	20	4		1.42	.049	
		Continuous monitoring	20	4		1.42	.049	
Technical	Professional development	Expertise and experience	23	4.6	4.4	1.47	.047	.046
		Improving job quality	21	4.2		1.45	.046	
Performance	Performance evaluation	Evaluating staff training	20	4	4.4	1.40	.050	.046
		Shadow inspection and monitoring	22	4.4		1.46	.049	
		Identification of capabilities	24	4.8		1.45	.046	
Official	Professional learning	Systematic thinking	22	4.4	4.47	1.47	.043	.041
		Administrative skills training	23	4.6		1.43	.045	
		Administrative self-efficacy training	22	4.4		1.47	.042	
Communicational	Personal communication	Consultation and cooperation	21	4.5		1.40	.049	.047
		Qualified consultants	22	4.4		1.46	.048	
	Social communication	Perception of social skills	24	4.7		1.45	.051	.052
		Quality of communication skills	20	4.3		1.40	.053	

Table 3 shows the normal distribution test of research variables. Based on Table 3, which shows the normality test of research variables, the results indicate that given the obtained values, which are all greater than 0.05, all variables have a normal distribution. Therefore, for validating the research model, partial least squares approach should be used with the help of AMOS software.

**Table 3.** Normality test of research variables

Component	K-S			S-W		
	Value	DF	p	Value	DF	p
Individual competency	.16	322	.43	.88	322	.56
Ethical competency	.14	322	.41	.76	322	.64
Performance competency	.18	322	.13	.87	322	.44
Technical competency	.09	322	.76	.91	322	.41
Administrative competency	.13	322	.65	.88	322	.55
Communication competency	.13	322	.82	.95	322	.23
Organizational competency	.14	322	.78	.95	322	.82

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the main research variables. Based on the data obtained from the descriptive analysis of data (Table 4), all research variables are in a medium to high situation, considering that the empirical average of research is based on the five-point spectrum of research tools. Table 5 shows the fit indices of the model.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics of the main research variables

Component	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis		T value	p
						Value	SD	Value	SD		
Individual competency	323	1	5	3.77	.97	-.49	.19	-.28	.38	3.74	.001
Ethical competency	323	1	5	3.59	.87	-.45	.19	-.025	.38	3.93	.001
Communication competency	323	1	5	3.51	.92	-.40	.19	.027	.38	2.87	.001
Performance competency	323	1	5	3.57	.085	2.70	.19	21.89	.38	2.77	.001
Administrative competency	323	1	5	3.63	.90	.90	.19	4.64	.38	4.23	.001
Technical competency	323	1	5	3.45	.88	-.24	.19	-.43	.38	2.33	.001
Organizational competency	323	1	5	3.73	.85	-.31	.19	-.28	.38	3.91	.001

**Table 5.** Fit indices of the model

Indices	Accepted	Individual	Ethical	Communication	Performance	Administrative	Technical	Organizational
$X^2$	-	45.26	49.14	39.25	47.56	35.68	51.01	53.003
DF	-	39	37	41	37	49	41	43
$X^2/df$	< 3	1.16	1.33	.96	.29	.73	1.24	1.23
RMSEA	< .08	.016	.013	.015	.051	.076	.029	.043
RMR	< .08	.041	.011	.009	.035	.047	.033	.037
NFI	Close to 1	.89	.91	.93	.99	.95	.98	.97
CFI	Close to 1	.87	.93	.96	.97	.98	.99	.96
GFI	Close to 1	.91	.95	.97	.96	.96	.95	.97
AGFI	Close to 1	.89	.96	.97	.98	.99	.91	.95

The calculated RMSEA for the entire model is 0.016 for "individual competence," 0.013 for "ethical competence," 0.015 for "communication competence," 0.051 for "performance competence," 0.076 for "administrative competence," 0.029 for "technical competence," and 0.043 for "organizational competence." The calculated RMR for the entire model is 0.041 for "individual competence," 0.011 for "ethical competence," 0.009 for "communication competence," 0.035 for "performance competence," 0.047 for "administrative competence," 0.033 for "technical competence," and 0.037 for "organizational competence." Furthermore, the calculated NFI for the entire model is 0.89 for "individual competence,"



0.91 for "ethical competence," 0.93 for "communication competence," 0.99 for "performance competence," 0.95 for "administrative competence," 0.98 for "technical competence," and 0.97 for "organizational competence." The calculated CFI for the entire model is 0.87 for "individual competence," 0.93 for "ethical competence," 0.96 for "communication competence," 0.97 for "performance competence," 0.98 for "administrative competence," 0.99 for "technical competence," and 0.96 for "organizational competence." Finally, the calculated GFI for the entire model is 0.91 for "individual competence," 0.95 for "ethical competence," 0.97 for "communication competence," 0.96 for "performance competence," 0.99 for "administrative competence," 0.95 for "technical competence," and 0.97 for "organizational competence." It is worth noting that the RMSEA and RMR values less than 0.08, GFI and AGFI values above 90%, and close to 1, all indicate the validity of the model. All of these indices have desirable values. The model includes the competence components (individual competence, ethical competence, communication competence, performance competence, administrative competence, technical competence, and organizational competence). The fit indices of the model in factor analysis confirm the fit of the model.

**Table 6.** Correlation coefficient matrix among research components

Component	Individual	Ethical	Communication	Performance	Administrative	Technical	Organizational
Individual	1	.69	.70	.65	.81	.63	.54
Ethical	.69	1	.69	.56	.72	.60	.57
Communication	.70	.69	1	.66	.75	.65	.53
Performance	.65	.56	.66	1	.72	.63	.58
Administrative	.81	.72	.75	.72	1	.71	.65
Technical	.63	.60	.65	.63	.71	1	.68
Organizational	.54	.57	.53	.58	.65	.68	1

Based on the questionnaire items, the research components are at a desirable level higher than .30, and the questions and model fit indices can be investigated based on the existing structure, where there is a significant correlation between the competence components of managers and the indices.

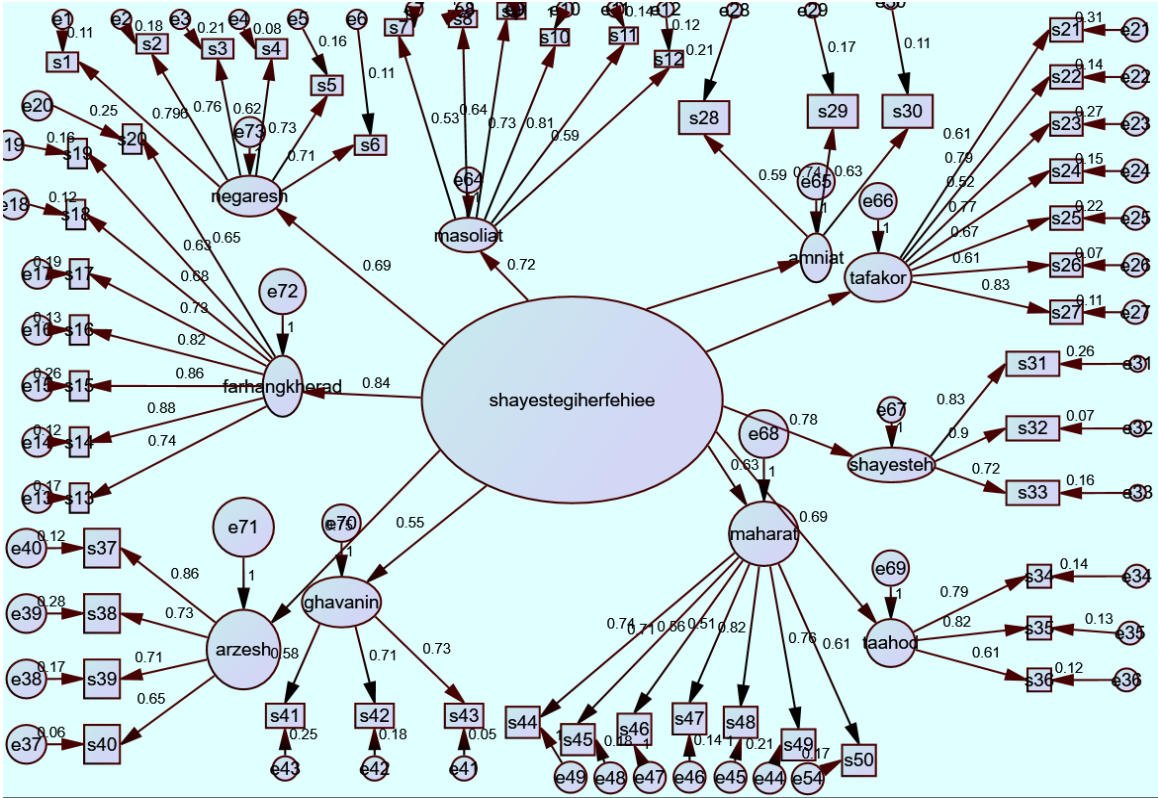


Figure 1. Model of factor loading coefficients of the research

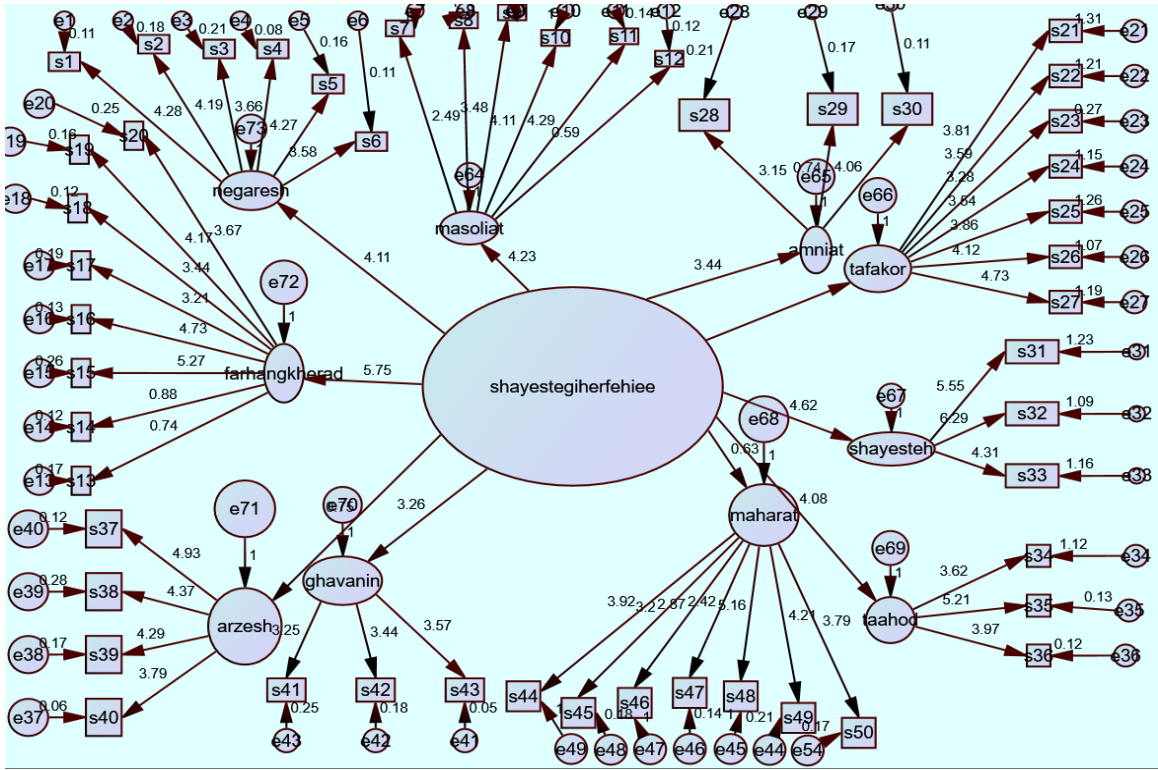


Figure 2. T value fit indices of the model

Initially, using confirmatory factor analysis, the factor loading coefficients of each of the research items were examined, and after confirming the appropriate level of factor loading coefficients for each of the items, the fit indices of the research model were examined. Finally, the hypotheses presented were examined using structural equation modeling. The t-value statistic is used to examine the significance of the relationship between variables. Since significance is examined at the 0.05 level of error, if the observed factor loading coefficients are less than 1.96 using the t-value statistic, the relationship is not significant.

## Discussion

Iran's national vision aims to become a leading economic, scientific, and technological power in the region with an Islamic and revolutionary identity that inspires the Islamic world, and constructive and influential interaction in international relations. To achieve these goals, competent managers are required in both public and private sectors ([Pourezzat et al., 2017](#)). Organizations recognize the importance of competencies and aim to identify, attract, and retain competent managers as a competitive advantage ([Hoshyar & Rahim nia, 2013](#)). Without the necessary qualifications and competencies, managers cannot be expected to perform extraordinary and creative work. Therefore, identifying and developing leadership skills and competencies, recognizing individuals capable of accepting higher responsibilities, and empowering them with education, training, and the latest scientific and managerial skills have been emphasized by many management experts.

The country's education system is a value-based and human-oriented institution, where human resources have the greatest impact and creativity, and other resources play a lesser role. As a result, the presence of high-quality human resources is critical. Administering reforms, improving school managers' weaknesses, technological advancements, and globalization require changes and transformation to provide a model for training school managers in the country's unique administrative system and policies. Identifying the managerial competencies of school managers is particularly crucial due to the importance and sensitivity of their activities, the need for a consistent and scientific approach, and the lack of comprehensive studies on school managers in the country's education system. Managers, as the primary decision-makers in dealing with various internal and external organizational issues, have a significant and determining role in the success or failure of the organization.

This study identifies the professional competencies of school managers in the country, which can be categorized into five domains: personal, ethical, communication, performance, and technical competencies. Personal competencies include individual attitudes, intellectual independence, self-efficacy, idea orientation, and awareness of development and progress, which should be taken into

account during the appointment and selection of managers. Ethical competencies, such as respect and commitment to values, are also crucial and should be emphasized. Communication competencies, including quality of communication skills, responsibility, consultation and collaboration, and access to qualified advisors, should be prioritized in the selection of managers. Performance competencies, such as inspection and oversight of others, educational assessment, and identification of abilities, should also be emphasized. Technical competencies, including specialization and improving job quality, are also important considerations. The Ministry of Education can select competent and deserving managers by considering these factors. However, one limitation of this study is the lack of a standardized questionnaire, as an exploratory approach was used to identify effective dimensions and indicators of professional competencies. Future research should focus on designing a specific competency model for primary and secondary education levels based on the country's unique geographic situations.

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