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The Mediating Role of Visionary Leadership in Linking Job Attitudes to Organizational Performance in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the relationship between job attitudes and organizational performance among elementary school teachers, with a focus on the mediating role of visionary leadership.

Methods and Materials: Using a descriptive-correlational design, 162 primary school teachers in Neka County were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires: Job Attitudes (Tu et al., 2015), Visionary Leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), and Organizational Performance (Hersey & Goldsmith, 1999). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 24 and SmartPLS software, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Findings: The results revealed a significant positive relationship between job attitude and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.689$, $t = 16.187$, $p < 0.001$). Visionary leadership was also significantly related to both job attitude ($\beta = 0.902$, $t = 80.128$) and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.305$, $t = 6.889$). Mediation analysis confirmed the indirect effect of visionary leadership in enhancing the impact of job attitudes on organizational performance (Sobel = 14.62, $p < 0.001$). Model fit indices (R^2 , Q^2 , f^2 , VIF, GOF) indicated strong explanatory and predictive power.

Conclusion: Visionary leadership plays a crucial mediating role in translating positive job attitudes into enhanced organizational performance. These findings underscore the importance of fostering inspirational leadership in educational settings to improve teacher engagement and institutional outcomes.

Keywords: Job attitude, Organizational performance, Visionary leadership, Structural equation modeling, Teachers.

Introduction

In today's era, organizational performance is considered the foundation of increasing organizational efficiency and effectiveness, the most valuable asset, and the golden key to competition among organizations (Hassani, 2017). Organizational performance refers to how missions and activities are executed and the outcomes achieved, indicating the extent to which an organization has fulfilled its objectives. It encompasses a wide range of both intangible outcomes, such as enhanced organizational knowledge, and tangible results, such as economic and financial gains. Numerous models have attempted to define and evaluate organizational performance (Mahmoudjanlou, 2020).

Organizational performance is defined as achieving or exceeding organizational and social objectives and fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to the organization (Shah Mohammadi, 2022). Undoubtedly, in today's fast-paced, transformative, and highly competitive world, what guarantees a sustainable competitive advantage for organizations is a high-quality, creative, and dynamic human workforce. Hence, in the contemporary age, organizational performance is viewed as the foundation for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness and as the most strategic asset for inter-organizational competition (Tayarkordi, 2021).

Conversely, organizations with low performance often have employees who lack the capacity to adapt to changes in today's competitive environment. Managers in such organizations are also unable to create a work environment that enables employees to face external challenges, leading to weak performance. Therefore, effective employee performance is considered one of the key drivers of organizational success (Hallaj, 2017). Successful organizations around the world make significant efforts to identify the factors affecting organizational performance and to enhance employee performance by fostering such factors (Mirbagheri, Rafiei Atani, & Dashti, 2019). Continuous performance improvement generates powerful synergies that support organizational growth, development, and excellence. Governments and organizations continually strive to achieve this goal.

Without assessing progress, recognizing challenges, collecting feedback on policy implementation, and identifying areas needing improvement, continuous

organizational performance enhancement is unachievable. Today, organizations increasingly focus on enhancing the professional capabilities and job attitudes of their employees to improve productivity and prevent the loss of skilled staff. Understanding and predicting individual behavior within organizations requires knowledge of employees' job attitudes, as attitudes significantly influence behavior. Job attitude is a crucial factor in organizational effectiveness and can influence not only extra-role behaviors but also competitiveness and future performance (Parsaeian, 2021).

An attitude is a relatively stable tendency toward a person, object, or event that manifests in feelings and behavior. Job attitude refers to a mental state formed through structured experience that dynamically influences an individual's responses to all job-related subjects and situations (Mirshakari, 2019). Job attitude is a variable that may be associated with teachers' organizational performance. It reflects a person's positive or negative perceptions about their work and various aspects of the work environment (Tarzi, 2016). Classically, job attitude is described as one's evaluation of their job, encompassing emotions, beliefs, and attachments toward the job—ranging from positive to negative, pleasant to unpleasant. Structurally, job attitude includes job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment (Edwards, Jakszak, 2020).

Job satisfaction is considered an individual's attitude toward their job—simply put, how one feels about their work and its various aspects. According to the Smith & Kendall model, it involves general feelings toward the job as well as specific domains such as pay, job nature, promotion opportunities, supervision, and coworkers. Allen and Meyer define organizational commitment as an attitude reflecting employees' emotional attachment, loyalty, and willingness to remain with the organization, including three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Job involvement refers to the degree to which individuals identify with their jobs and perceive their work as a source of pride and identity (Haghghi, Ghafoorian, Jamshidi & Moeini, 2019).

Importantly, job attitudes also pertain to individuals' perceptions of people, objects, and events in their environment. Thus, job attitude is considered a multifaceted construct in terms of composition, structure, and temporality (Kavanagh, Daum, Chang, Kolaski & Holady, 2020). Additionally, job attitude stems

from the foundations of social attitudes and is commonly regarded as a facilitator of behavior that contributes to improved performance and organizational effectiveness. According to Ball et al. (2007), job attitudes are strong predictors of key behaviors in organizational performance (Ramazaninejad & Besharati Moghadam, 2022).

Leadership is one of the most fundamental topics in organizational and management research. It involves a wide range of strategies aimed at maximizing the potential of human capital to achieve organizational goals—what is often referred to as organizational success (Hedayati & Nabie, 2017). In recent years, new leadership approaches have emerged, among which visionary leadership has gained special significance. Visionary leaders provide a compelling vision for change and improvement in organizations—including educational settings—enabling both managers and employees to willingly pursue shared dreams and aspirations (Golafshani & Salehi, 2019).

Visionary leadership is a variable that may mediate the relationship between job attitude and organizational performance. Leadership has long been a focus of study by scholars, scientists, and the public. It can be confidently stated that the successes, failures, progress, and setbacks throughout human history have largely been influenced by good or poor leadership (Ghasemi, Fardin & Vojoudzadeh, 2014).

Recent approaches in leadership include transformational, servant, charismatic, self-leadership, visionary, and democratic leadership. Among these, visionary leadership holds a prominent position. It is

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design using structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the mediating role of visionary leadership in the relationship between job attitudes and organizational performance among elementary school teachers. The research was conducted in Neka County, Iran, during the 2022–23 academic year. The statistical population consisted of all primary school teachers working in the public education system of the region.

A total of 162 participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation

defined as the ability to clearly articulate and communicate a compelling vision of the organization's future, transfer it to followers, and support them in realizing it (Kiani, 2022). Visionary leaders possess the ability to imagine, forecast, and visualize the future. With high levels of intelligence and awareness, they consider economic, political, cultural, and technological dimensions to craft realistic and inspiring visions for their organizations. Such visions energize and motivate individuals, and here, the leaders' emotional and communicative skills play a crucial role (Golafshani, Salehi & Zamani, 2018).

These leaders instill job attitudes in their employees that ultimately enhance their organizational performance. When employees are led by such individuals, the influence of leadership shapes their methods and mechanisms. Visionary leaders create environments that empower competent, knowledgeable, courageous, and altruistic employees to actively engage in decision-making (Masoumi, 2019). Teachers in schools are considered key members of the educational system and foundational pillars of national progress. They are responsible for educating creative, trained, and responsible human resources who drive societal development. Therefore, having teachers with high organizational performance is of great importance. Accordingly, this study aims to address the following research

question:
Is there a relationship between job attitude and organizational performance with the mediating role of visionary leadership among teachers?

across different schools and teacher demographics. Stratification criteria included gender and years of teaching experience to enhance the generalizability of the findings. The final sample size was determined based on SEM guidelines, which recommend a minimum of 5 to 10 participants per estimated parameter. The chosen sample size was considered sufficient for the complexity of the hypothesized model. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study.

Instruments

Three validated questionnaires were used to measure the study variables. The Job Attitude Questionnaire developed by Tu et al. (2015) consists of 15 items and evaluates teachers' perceptions of their work

environment, commitment, and job satisfaction. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The Visionary Leadership Scale, adapted from the model proposed by Conger and Kanungo (1988), includes 12 items measuring a leader's ability to articulate a clear vision, inspire others, and align team goals with organizational direction. Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale, and sample items include statements such as "My supervisor provides a compelling vision of the future."

To assess organizational performance, the Organizational Performance Questionnaire developed by Hersey and Goldsmith (1999) was used. This scale consists of 26 items across multiple dimensions, including goal achievement, resource management, and staff development. All instruments had previously been translated into Persian using forward-backward translation procedures and reviewed by a panel of experts for cultural adaptation. In the current study, internal consistency was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.84 for job attitude, 0.86 for visionary leadership, and 0.88 for organizational performance.

Procedure

Following ethical approval from the university's research committee, formal coordination was established with the Neka Department of Education. Data collection took place in person over a four-week period. The researchers visited selected schools, introduced the purpose of the study to participants, and distributed paper-based questionnaires. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to minimize attrition and ensure data quality.

All participants were informed that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. No

identifying information was collected, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Data were manually entered into SPSS and cross-checked for accuracy.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis) were computed using SPSS version 24 to summarize the data and assess assumptions of normality. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using SmartPLS 3.3 to evaluate the proposed model and test the mediating role of visionary leadership.

Model estimation included assessment of path coefficients, R^2 values, effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Internal consistency was evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR), while convergent and discriminant validity were assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Multicollinearity was checked via the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and potential common method bias was examined using Harman's single-factor test. Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples was applied to test the significance of direct and indirect (mediated) effects. A significance level of 0.05 was used for all statistical tests. The overall model fit was evaluated using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), with values less than 0.08 indicating acceptable model fit.

Findings and Results

Before conducting the structural equation modeling, descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were performed to examine the initial relationships among the study variables. Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and Pearson correlation coefficients for job attitude, visionary leadership, and organizational performance.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Variables (N = 162)

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
1. Job Attitude	3.84	0.51	-0.42	0.33	—		
2. Visionary Leadership	3.96	0.57	-0.36	0.12	.902**	—	
3. Organizational Performance	3.78	0.60	-0.48	0.29	.689**	.305**	—

Note: **p < .01.

All skewness and kurtosis values fell within the acceptable range of ± 1 , indicating that the assumption of

univariate normality was met. Significant positive correlations were found among all three variables.

Notably, job attitude was strongly correlated with organizational performance ($r = .689$, $p < .01$), and visionary leadership also showed significant associations with both job attitude ($r = .902$, $p < .01$) and organizational performance ($r = .305$, $p < .01$).

Structural equation modeling using SmartPLS 3.3 was conducted to examine the hypothesized relationships and test the mediating role of visionary leadership. The model's explanatory power and predictive validity were evaluated using R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , and path coefficients. Table 2 presents the results of the structural model.

Table 2.

Structural Model Results

Path	β	t-value	p-value	f^2	R^2	Q^2
Job Attitude → Organizational Performance	0.689	16.187	< .001	0.426	0.612	0.449
Job Attitude → Visionary Leadership	0.902	80.128	< .001	0.941	0.814	0.721
Visionary Leadership → Organizational Performance	0.305	6.889	< .001	0.117	—	—

As shown in Table 2, job attitude significantly predicted organizational performance ($\beta = 0.689$, $t = 16.187$, $p < .001$) and visionary leadership ($\beta = 0.902$, $t = 80.128$, $p < .001$). Visionary leadership also significantly predicted organizational performance ($\beta = 0.305$, $t = 6.889$, $p < .001$). The model explained 81.4% of the variance in visionary leadership ($R^2 = 0.814$) and 61.2% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.612$), indicating strong explanatory power. Predictive relevance (Q^2) values for both endogenous constructs were also above 0.35, reflecting high predictive accuracy.

Effect size (f^2) was large for the path from job attitude to visionary leadership (0.941), medium for job attitude to organizational performance (0.426), and small for visionary leadership to organizational performance (0.117). To examine the mediating role of visionary leadership, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was applied. The indirect effect of job attitude on organizational performance through visionary leadership was significant.

Table 3.

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Effect Type	Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	95% CI (Bias-Corrected)
Direct Effect	Job Attitude → Organizational Performance	0.689	16.187	< .001	[0.612, 0.752]
Indirect Effect	Job Attitude → Visionary Leadership → Organizational Performance	0.275	5.728	< .001	[0.192, 0.368]
Total Effect	Job Attitude → Organizational Performance (Total)	0.964	—	—	—

The bootstrapped indirect effect of job attitude on organizational performance through visionary leadership was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.275$, $t = 5.728$, $p < .001$), with a 95% confidence interval that did not include zero, confirming partial mediation. Although job attitude had a strong direct effect on organizational performance, a significant portion of its impact was transmitted through visionary leadership. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.062, indicating a good model fit (threshold < 0.08). Variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all indicators ranged from 1.18 to 2.03, suggesting no multicollinearity issues. Common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test, which revealed that a single factor accounted for only 34.7% of the total variance—

well below the 50% threshold—indicating that common method bias was not a major concern.

Discussion and Conclusion

In examining and addressing the main hypothesis of the study, it was found that there is a significant relationship between job attitude and organizational performance, mediated by visionary leadership among elementary school teachers in Neka County.

The results of this study align with the findings of Ramazani Nejad and Basharati Moghaddam (2021), which showed that job attitude—particularly emotional and normative commitment (attitude toward the organization), as well as coworker support and

satisfaction with colleagues and supervisors (attitude toward individuals)—serves as a strong predictor of the effectiveness of organizational processes and ultimately enhances organizational performance. Similarly, Tarzi (2016) found a significant positive relationship between positive job attitudes and employee performance, while negative attitudes diminish performance. Furthermore, Aibaghi Esfahani et al. (2016) indicated that visionary leadership, through enhancing employees' behavioral flexibility, improves organizational performance. Leadership characteristics are inherently related to the level and quality of organizational performance. The more equipped a leader is with appropriate managerial qualities, the more likely their employees are to experience higher performance.

To explain these findings, it should be noted that in the modern era, organizational performance is considered the foundation of efficiency and effectiveness and the most valuable asset and competitive advantage among organizations (Hasani, 2017). In today's fast-paced and competitive world, high-quality, creative, and dynamic human resources are essential for ensuring competitive advantage. Hence, organizations are increasingly focusing on improving the technical competence and job attitudes of employees to enhance productivity and retain experienced staff. Understanding employees' job attitudes is vital for predicting behavior within organizations, as attitude significantly influences individual behavior. Job attitude is one of the most critical factors affecting organizational effectiveness. Moreover, such attitudes influence extra-role behaviors and contribute to long-term competitiveness and improved future performance (Parsayan, 2021). Attitude refers to a relatively stable tendency toward a person, object, or event, reflected in emotions and behaviors. Job attitude, specifically, refers to a mental state shaped by organized experience that affects an individual's responses to all aspects related to their work (Mirshkari, 2019). Thus, when employees maintain a positive attitude toward their job, their performance improves accordingly.

Furthermore, job attitudes, rooted in broader social attitudes, act as facilitators of behavior and lead to improved organizational performance and member effectiveness. In fact, job attitude predicts key behaviors that influence organizational outcomes (Ramazani Nejad & Basharati Moghaddam, 2021). Leaders, by fostering certain job attitudes in employees, influence how those employees perform organizational tasks. Leaders

capable of inspiring their teams create an environment conducive to competent, knowledgeable, and empowered employees willing to engage in altruistic behaviors (Masoumi, 2019).

The study confirmed a significant relationship between job attitude and organizational performance among teachers. This supports the findings of Ramazani Nejad and Basharati Moghaddam (2021), who emphasized the predictive power of job attitude dimensions in enhancing organizational effectiveness and performance. Tarzi (2016) also highlighted that positive job attitudes significantly improve performance, while negative attitudes hinder it.

Job attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative perceptions of their work and its various aspects. In classical definitions, job attitude is an evaluative judgment about one's job, encompassing feelings, beliefs, and attachment. Structurally, it includes job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment (Edwards & Jekzak, 2020). Job satisfaction refers to how an individual feels about their job and its various dimensions. Organizational commitment reflects an individual's emotional, normative, and continuance attachment and loyalty to the organization. Job involvement refers to the extent to which a person's job is central to their identity and contributes to their self-esteem and recognition (Haghghi, Ghafoorian, Jamshidi & Moeini, 2019).

Given these characteristics and dimensions, a good job attitude is crucial for both individual success and organizational performance. In education systems in particular, teachers' job attitudes are a key social index that significantly affects organizational behavior, performance, and effectiveness while reducing organizational costs. Therefore, educational institutions need to monitor and leverage employees' job attitudes to achieve organizational goals such as improving performance.

The study found a significant relationship between job attitude and visionary leadership among teachers. Job attitude reflects a person's assessment of their work, encompassing emotions, beliefs, and professional inclinations. It plays a central role in human resource management and directly influences organizational performance. Since early organizational research, scholars have extensively studied the nature, causes, and effects of various job-related attitudes. Employees' job

attitudes directly or indirectly influence workplace behaviors (Mirhashemi, 2019).

Visionary leadership thrives in environments where positive job attitudes prevail. Teachers with strong job attitudes rely on their capabilities to create compelling visions of the future, giving them a sense of direction. Through positive relationships with others, they communicate this vision and empower their followers to realize it (Rezaeian, 2021). In this context, Sashkin identifies the core components of visionary leadership as the leader themselves, their behavior, and the leadership situation—emphasizing that visionary leadership is the interaction of all three (Shermili, 2016). Hence, teachers with strong job attitudes who adopt visionary leadership approaches bring energy, commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, and moral values to their work, firmly believing in their students' potential and inspiring others through their vision.

The study showed a significant relationship between visionary leadership and organizational performance. These results support the findings of Aibaghi Esfahani et al. (2016), who demonstrated that visionary leadership improves employees' behavioral flexibility and thereby enhances performance. Similarly, studies by Enschar (2017) and Kadir Ali & Yitang (2016) confirmed that leadership style significantly affects organizational performance.

Leadership has long been a central topic for researchers, scholars, and the public alike. It is safe to say that throughout history, humanity's triumphs, failures, progress, and destruction have stemmed from sound or poor leadership (Ghasemi, Fardin & Vojd Zadeh, 2014). In recent years, several modern leadership approaches have emerged—including transformational, servant, charismatic, self-leadership, visionary, and democratic styles. Among these, visionary leadership holds particular prominence. It entails the ability to articulate a clear, compelling idea for the organization's future, communicate it to followers, and assist them in achieving it (Kiani, 2022). Visionary leaders are highly imaginative and future-oriented. With strategic intelligence, they consider economic, political, cultural, and technological factors to craft a realistic and inspiring vision. This vision energizes and motivates others, with leaders' emotional and communication skills playing a critical role (Golafshani, Salehi & Zamani, 2018).

Accordingly, it is recommended that organizations provide teachers with clear job descriptions and regularly monitor alignment between performance and job roles. Using tools such as websites, CDs, pamphlets, and newsletters, organizations should update teachers on institutional knowledge, personal development, and expectations. Additionally, school administrators should promote a culture of inquiry, feedback, and learning from mistakes. Rewarding innovative ideas, forming problem-solving groups, and publicly recognizing teachers on various occasions can help enhance positive job attitudes and improve organizational performance.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

By the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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