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Examining the Relationship Between School Privatization and the Job Performance of Primary School Teachers in Shahr Babak County

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between school privatization and the job performance of primary school teachers in Shahr Babak County.

Methods and Materials: This research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population consisted of all fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade primary school teachers in Shahr Babak County, totaling 130 individuals. According to Krejcie and Morgan's table, a sample size of 97 was selected using stratified random sampling. The research tools included a job performance questionnaire for teachers developed by Barati (2009) and a researcher-made school privatization questionnaire. The reliability of these questionnaires in the present study, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.78 for school privatization and 0.72 for teachers' job performance. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

Findings: The results indicated that there is a relationship between school privatization and the job performance of teachers. The contribution of each component of school privatization to predicting teachers' job performance varied.

Conclusion: The findings of this study demonstrated a significant positive relationship between school privatization and the job performance of primary school teachers in Shahr Babak County. In other words, the more the components of privatization—such as managerial autonomy, competitiveness, accountability, merit-based evaluation, and private sector involvement in school management—are strengthened, the higher the level of teachers' job performance.

Keywords: Privatization, job performance, primary education, teachers.

1. Introduction

Privatization is considered one of the most critical social issues in the country today, and given the population growth rate in recent years, it may also represent the most significant social challenge in the coming decades (Hursh, 2017; Iplikci, 2024; Sheikh Rabii et al., 2023; Vahidzadeh et al., 2023). The role of the private sector in establishing an enabling environment for the growth and development of various organizational sectors is of great importance. In recent decades, the privatization policy has been vigorously pursued and implemented by both developed and developing countries (Mohammad & Borkoski, 2024; Yildiz et al., 2023). The successes following the implementation of this policy in developed nations, the collapse of fully centralized and state-run economic systems, and the policy orientations of international economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have made privatization a key strategy for structural economic reform in most developing nations. Although the implementation of this policy has been largely successful in developed countries, its outcomes in developing contexts remain ambiguous, and in some cases, there is significant uncertainty about its effectiveness in such countries (Faro Albuquerque et al., 2018). Encouraging private sector investors to engage in this field and providing necessary government support for such investments could pave the way for genuine progress.

Furthermore, given the prevailing perspective among contemporary scholars, which advocates for the downsizing of government functions to enhance the efficiency and quality of public services (Johari & Yahya, 2016), the necessity of transferring public sector activities and reducing governmental bloat has become increasingly urgent. The delegation of such functions enables governments to focus on other responsibilities that, due to their intrinsic nature and significance, cannot be delegated (Sobhy, 2012). Simultaneously, this delegation may foster improved performance quality. Privatization is a core element of modern public management and remains a topic of considerable debate, with both proponents and critics offering various arguments (Holzer, 2019). Regardless of these differing opinions, privatization as a policy has been accepted and implemented within Iran's broader political and economic system. However, implementation obstacles and dysfunctional outcomes have hindered its effectiveness and efficiency in addressing national issues (Peters, 2020).

Employee performance in privatized schools can be influenced by multiple factors. Differing management structures—often more flexible in terms of hiring and evaluation—may facilitate better recognition and reward for high-performing teachers. Conversely, reduced job security and pressure to achieve specific outcomes, such as improved student test scores, can increase occupational stress and negatively affect staff performance (Kundu et al., 2019). The increasing complexity and dynamism of the environment have created conditions of uncertainty and instability for organizations and groups. To survive and thrive in such conditions, organizations need to enhance their environmental awareness and organizational knowledge. In this competitive and ever-changing context, only those organizations that possess organizational learning capabilities—those that can derive knowledge from internal and external experiences and adapt to environmental transformations—will continue to grow and endure (Powell, 2021).

Additionally, the resources and facilities allocated to private schools can play a significant role. Enhanced access to educational technologies, innovative curricula, and professional development opportunities may lead to improved teacher performance. However, if privatization results in budget cuts and reduced resources, it may demotivate staff and decrease their effectiveness. The organizational culture within privatized schools may also differ substantially. Higher expectations of teachers, increased emphasis on accountability, and greater parental involvement could lead to stronger job performance. Conversely, lack of sufficient support, poor communication between management and staff, and feelings of neglect may undermine performance. Therefore, the impact of privatization on staff performance is complex and necessitates careful examination of the specific conditions and contextual factors unique to each school and region (Dahler-Larsen & Foged, 2018).

Teachers' job performance serves as a critical link between educators, students, and curriculum content. Historically, teachers have not adhered to a single method of instruction; rather, their roles, behaviors, and interactions with students have evolved over time alongside philosophical and psychological paradigms. Over the course of pedagogical development, debates have emerged about whether teachers should adopt an authoritative, liberal, or non-interventionist approach within the classroom (Salas-Velasco, 2020). The instructional methods adopted by teachers, their interactions with students, and the degree to

which students are actively engaged in the learning process play a decisive role in student outcomes. Contemporary educational research underscores the significance of the teacher-student relationship in the classroom. Teachers who possess a deeper understanding of students' learning environments, psychological states, personality traits, and developmental stages are better equipped to implement effective teaching and learning strategies (Carrasco & Gunter, 2019).

The study by Ali et al. (2022) showed that multiple-choice assessments are commonly used to evaluate teacher performance (Ali et al., 2022). Additionally, research by Yip et al. (2020) demonstrated that privatization shifts management, accountability, and evaluation from state-run systems to private institutions. While education produces public benefits, limited government resources—particularly in developing countries—hinder the attainment of educational goals (Yip & Hsiao, 2020). Privatization, in this context, refers to the mobilization of additional resources for education, more efficient use of those resources, and increased flexibility in the delivery of educational services. In general, it involves the transfer of activities, assets, and responsibilities from public institutions and agencies to private individuals and entities (Brehm & Silova, 2014).

Therefore, educational institutions must leverage human, material, and other resources and strive toward achieving their goals. The alignment between high teacher performance and appropriate school privatization can significantly contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the education system. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school privatization and the job performance of primary school teachers in Shahrabak County.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study is classified as applied research in terms of its objective. The statistical population of this research consisted of all fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade primary school teachers in Shahrabak County. According to official data obtained from the Shahrabak County Department of Education, the population included 130 teachers: 25 teaching in the fourth grade, 70 in the fifth grade, and 35 in the sixth grade. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table, resulting in a sample of 97 teachers selected through stratified random sampling across the three grades. Given the nature of the study, standardized questionnaires

were used. These were distributed among the selected sample and collected after completion.

2.2. Measures

The first instrument was the Privatization Questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher based on the review of literature, previous studies, and interview findings. The preliminary version of the questionnaire was also distributed among experts from the Department of Education and reviewed by the supervising professor for validation. This researcher-made questionnaire included 27 items and used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very low" to "very high" to capture participant responses. The questionnaire covered several dimensions related to school privatization, including principles and applications (items 1 to 2), forms of privatization (items 3 to 10), motivations for privatization (items 11 to 14), the importance of the role of privatization (items 15 to 22), and facilitating factors for the application of privatization (items 23 to 27). Each dimension was designed to reflect a critical component in understanding the perception and implementation of privatization within the educational context.

The second tool used in this study was the Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire, originally developed by Barati (2009) to measure the job performance of teachers. This questionnaire consisted of 25 items distributed across six performance dimensions: teaching and learning, classroom record keeping, the use of assessment tools, collaboration with administrative staff, cooperation with professional learning communities or educational groups, and establishing relationships with students and their parents. Responses were recorded using a Likert scale, with items such as: "Establishes an appropriate relationship with students as a role model and encourages active and holistic participation across different areas." In this study, teachers' job performance was operationalized as the total score each respondent provided on the 25 items of the questionnaire. The score for each subscale was calculated by summing the scores of its related items, while the overall job performance score was obtained by summing all items. The possible score range of this questionnaire was from 25 to 125, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of job performance.

2.3. Data Analysis

To assess the reliability of both questionnaires, a pilot test was conducted on a subsample of 30 participants from the main population. Internal consistency was measured using

Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability of the privatization questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78, while the job performance questionnaire showed a reliability coefficient of 0.72. These values indicate satisfactory levels of reliability for both instruments. After the data collection phase, responses were entered into SPSS software version 20 for analysis. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was initially used to assess the normality of the data distribution. Subsequently, Pearson's parametric correlation test was employed to examine the relationships between variables, and multivariate regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power

and contribution of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

3. Findings and Results

This section presents the descriptive statistics related to the research variables, including the mean and standard deviation. The findings in Table 1 display the mean and standard deviation of the scores for the main research variables and their dimensions. A comparison of the means shows that the highest mean corresponds to the variable "teachers' job performance" (3.43), while the lowest mean pertains to "facilitating factors of application" (3.32).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the research variables

Statistical Indicators	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Privatization	97	3.38	0.53
Principles and Applications	97	3.36	0.84
Forms of Privatization	97	3.37	0.85
Privatization Motivations	97	3.34	0.76
Importance of Privatization	97	3.41	0.82
Facilitating Factors of Application	97	3.32	0.91
Teachers' Job Performance	97	3.43	0.82

Before determining the type of results, it is necessary to ensure the normal distribution of the variables. Therefore, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used. In this test, if the significance level (Sig) is greater than 0.05, the distribution is considered normal, allowing the use of parametric tests. If

Sig is less than 0.05, the distribution is non-normal, requiring non-parametric tests. As shown in Table 2, since the calculated Sig values for all variables are greater than 0.05, the data follow a normal distribution, and thus, parametric tests such as Pearson's correlation can be applied.

Table 2

Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results for normality

Main Research Variables	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Statistic	Approximate Significance Level
Privatization	1.245	0.090
Principles and Applications	1.247	0.089
Forms of Privatization	0.991	0.280
Privatization Motivations	0.820	0.511
Importance of Privatization	0.933	0.349
Facilitating Factors of Application	0.817	0.518
Teachers' Job Performance	0.818	0.516

Based on the results in Table 3, the calculated correlation coefficient ($R = 0.438$) is greater than the critical value of the correlation coefficient at the 95% confidence level (0.260), and the significance value of this test (0.000) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded with 95% confidence that there is a statistically significant

relationship between school privatization and teachers' job performance. As the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.438$) is positive, this indicates a direct and positive relationship—meaning that with an increase in school privatization, teachers' job performance also increases, and vice versa.

Table 3

Correlation between school privatization and job performance

Variables	N	R	df	Critical R	Alpha (α)	Sig
School Privatization and Job Performance	97	0.438**	95	0.260	0.05	0.000

As shown in Table 4, the adjusted R-squared value is 0.819, indicating that approximately 82% of the variance in the dependent variable (teachers' job performance) is explained by the independent variable (components of privatization). In other words, 82% of the effect size on teachers' job performance is attributable to privatization

dimensions, demonstrating a strong predictive effect. Furthermore, the overall correlation among the research variables is 0.912, showing a very strong correlation. The coefficient of determination (R^2) equals 0.833, meaning that 83.3% of the variation in teachers' job performance can be predicted by the dimensions of school privatization.

Table 4

Coefficient of determination and adjusted R-square

Model	Correlation Coefficient (R)	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of Estimate
1	0.912	0.833	0.819	0.193

As presented in Table 5, the significance level is 0.000, indicating that the variance derived from the one-way ANOVA is statistically significant and that differences among the variables exist. Given this significance level

(0.000), it can be concluded that each component of school privatization contributes differently to predicting teachers' job performance.

Table 5

Regression model analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	16.592	7	2.237	63.26	0.000
Residual	3.335	89	0.037		
Total	19.927	96			

As shown in Table 6, the significance levels for all variables are less than 0.05. Therefore, the regression coefficients for all predictors are statistically significant, indicating that each variable meaningfully predicts teachers' job performance. The standardized beta coefficients reveal the contribution of each variable as follows: principles and applications (0.290), forms of privatization (0.284),

privatization motivations (0.237), importance of privatization (0.174), and facilitating factors of application (0.167). Since the significance levels for all variables are below the 0.05 threshold, it can be concluded that the components of privatization significantly predict teachers' job performance.

Table 6

Standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients of predictors in the model

Model	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	0.935	0.134		6.957	0.000
Principles and Applications	0.158	0.035	0.290	4.504	0.000
Forms of Privatization	0.151	0.037	0.284	4.129	0.000
Privatization Motivations	0.119	0.029	0.237	4.156	0.000
Importance of Privatization	0.096	0.032	0.174	2.988	0.004
Facilitating Factors of Application	0.199	0.042	0.167	2.334	0.022

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate a positive and direct relationship between school privatization and teachers' job performance. That is, as school privatization increases, the job performance of teachers also improves. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Kundu et al., 2019; Salas-Velasco, 2020). The results suggest that the advancement of school privatization correlates with improved teacher performance. This positive relationship can be attributed to several factors. First, private schools are generally under more pressure to achieve favorable educational outcomes. Consequently, they tend to implement stricter management systems, continuous evaluations, and more effective reward mechanisms, all of which can enhance teachers' motivation and job commitment (Salas-Velasco, 2020). Furthermore, private schools often grant teachers greater autonomy and discretion, which can foster a stronger sense of ownership over the teaching process and encourage innovation in pedagogical methods. Additionally, the competitive environment among teachers, aimed at securing or advancing their positions, compels them to exert greater effort, ultimately improving their job performance (Kundu et al., 2019). Moreover, due to differing financial structures, private schools often adopt performance-based compensation systems that reward teachers based on their work output. Such mechanisms naturally enhance productivity. In these schools, there is also more emphasis on in-service training, professional feedback, and career development opportunities, all of which are significant contributors to improved job performance (Peters, 2020). School privatization, by introducing new competitive, managerial, and motivational structures, creates an environment in which teachers are driven to perform better to maintain or elevate their professional standing, which in turn enhances their job performance (Carrasco & Gunter, 2019).

The finding that privatization variables can significantly predict teachers' job performance suggests the existence of a systematic relationship rooted in economic, managerial, and educational logic between privatization policies and the quality of educational human resources. Scientifically speaking, privatization should not be viewed merely as an economic approach, but as a transformative structural framework in the educational system that introduces a set of motivational, supervisory, and structural drivers into the teaching profession. At the most fundamental level,

privatization fosters competition among educational institutions, which compels schools to improve their educational quality to attract and retain students. This competition necessitates the recruitment and retention of competent, committed, and innovative teachers. Therefore, private schools tend to adopt policies aimed at identifying teacher potential and enhancing their professional skills. Such a competitive environment encourages teachers to become more attuned to their performance and strive harder for personal and professional improvement (Peters, 2020).

From a management perspective, private schools—due to their more agile and decentralized structures—often enjoy greater decision-making autonomy. This finding aligns with the study by Carrasco et al. (2019). Such autonomy allows school administrators to evaluate teachers based on performance criteria and offer rewards or promotions accordingly (Carrasco & Gunter, 2019). This merit-based system increases both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, leading to continuous improvement in teachers' performance. Privatization also necessitates a reevaluation of educational principles and applications. Emphasis on efficiency, accountability, and results orientation means that teachers are continually subjected to evaluation and feedback processes, which enhances their performance. Furthermore, due to a stronger focus on client satisfaction—students and parents—teachers in private schools are compelled to continuously update their teaching strategies, strengthen educational creativity, and establish more effective relationships with students (Kundu et al., 2019). Different forms of privatization also have varying effects on teachers' job performance. For instance, in models where school management is entirely handed over to the private sector, more rigorous performance monitoring structures are in place. In such environments, teachers typically work under performance-based contracts, which foster increased job commitment, professional discipline, and engagement in school processes. On the other hand, public-private partnerships, when properly managed, can combine the flexibility of the private sector with the public sector's social oversight, leading to a balance between control and creativity in teachers' performance.

From a motivational perspective, privatization enhances job satisfaction by creating diverse employment opportunities, varied pay structures, faster career advancement possibilities, and access to more effective professional support such as high-quality in-service training. These findings are consistent with Peters (2020), who emphasized that such factors directly impact teachers' job

performance. According to job motivation theories, self-efficacy and job satisfaction are key predictors of high performance (Peters, 2020). The transformative effect of privatization on education will only be effective if enabling conditions are in place. Supportive infrastructure, clear legal frameworks, intelligent government oversight, a change-receptive organizational culture, and professional readiness among teachers are among the essential elements required for effective privatization and, subsequently, improved teacher performance. Under such conditions, privatization is not merely an economic policy but also a tool for enhancing the quality of the educational human resource system (Carrasco & Gunter, 2019). By activating a set of structural, motivational, and managerial mechanisms, privatization plays a critical role in enhancing teachers' job performance. In other words, the variables associated with this policy—if properly designed and implemented—can significantly predict and improve levels of commitment, effectiveness, and efficiency among teachers (Salas-Velasco, 2020).

In summary, the findings of this study showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between school privatization and the job performance of primary school teachers in Shahr Babak County. In other words, the more the components of privatization—such as managerial autonomy, competitiveness, accountability, merit-based evaluation, and private sector involvement in school management—are strengthened, the higher the teachers' job performance becomes. This result indicates that privatization, by creating motivational foundations and efficient structures, can improve the quality of teachers' work. In such a setting, teachers demonstrate greater job commitment, instructional creativity, professional interaction, and accountability. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational policymakers strategically utilize the potential of the private sector, ensure the conditions for implementing effective privatization components, and exercise continuous and precise oversight of its processes to enhance teacher performance while preserving educational equity and learning quality.

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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