

Investigating the Role of School Principals in Attracting Teachers to Schools based on Invitational Theory: A Mixed Method Research

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Abstract

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The quality of school leadership is one of the determining criteria in attracting teachers to schools and their decision to stay or leave the school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the invitational leadership style in the public schools of Sanandaj city during the academic year of 2023 and to study the signs of invitational leadership in attracting teachers to schools. This study was implemented with a mixed-explanatory approach and data was collected from school teachers in two stages. In the first stage, a close-ended questionnaire adapted from Burns (2007) was implemented with the participation of 369 public school teachers in Sanandaj city. Based on the findings from the quantitative phase of the research, invitational school leaders were identified and qualitative data using the findings of the qualitative phase were collected. The data obtained from the results of the qualitative phase were collected using semi-structured interviews with 22 teachers. Data analysis was conducted by the three-step thematic analysis method of Attride-Stirling (2001) and MAXQDA 2020 software. Finally, eight global themes of teacher leadership, synergistic relationships, creating a family school, developing interpersonal relationships, helping teachers' professional development, creating a supportive environment, improving strategies and creating an inviting school were identified as invitational leadership characteristics. The findings of this research, in addition to helping school principals in the attraction and retention of capable teachers, can help teachers achieve their capabilities and use them in line with the prosperity and growth of the school and apply creativity and innovation in teaching-learning process.

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Introduction

Recently, the concept of educational leadership in schools has significantly surpassed the concept of educational administration. Perhaps due to the increase in demands from teachers and the increase in the characteristics of school leaders, educational leadership and administration have become fixed fields of study with their own theories, and various models and theories of leadership and management have been proposed (Newman, 2020). It indicates that the educational system of Iran needs more capable leaders who can manage the school with the desired effectiveness. Therefore, their leadership model determines how to influence the school community. School leadership is a collective effort by one person in relation to others. However, no leadership process can exist without a leader, because educational leadership is a social process that is related to influence (Miller, 2018). Educational leaders are constantly faced with different school cultures and conditions that they have to lead, so they have to adopt a leadership style that they can lead the school towards success and effectiveness. Some researchers have demonstrated that the leadership behaviors of school principals are related to teachers' job satisfaction (Zadin Younis, 2017) and ultimately have a positive relationship with school performance (Burns, 2007; Nivens, 2006; Egley, 2003). School principals' leadership behavior is also one of the significant components in high-quality schools (Egley and Jones, 2005). Researchers have confirmed five aspects of principals' leadership characteristics that affect school climate, which include building relationships, shared leadership, collaboration, purposefulness, and performance improvement (Legros and Ryan, 2016). Invitational leadership model was proposed by William Purkey and Betty in 2003 based on invitational theory. Although the concept of invitational leadership was proposed in the 1990s by Asbill and Gonzalez (2003) before the publication of the book "Becoming an invitational Leader: A New Approach to Professional and Personal Success" by William Purkey and Betty Siegel, the work of Purkey and Siegel (2003) is considered the main model and theoretical framework for invitational leadership. In the book titled, "Becoming an invitational Leader", they argue that this model shifts from an emphasis on control and dominance to the focuses upon connection, collaboration, and communication

(Purkey and Siegel, 2013, p. 1). By clarifying that "invitations are not accidents, but choices", the invitational leadership theory challenges both leaders and followers to present and accept invitations that shape their environment (Purkey & Siegel, 2013, p. 1). Invitational leaders try to create a climate in which employees can reach their goals and potential while contributing to the group's shared vision and mission. They also purposefully create positive physical places to work and implement policies that reflect the leader's optimism and lead to trust and respect among employees (Dorna, 2018).

The present research aims to investigate the role of school principals in attracting teachers to schools based on the invitational theory. Invitational theory seeks to explain the phenomena and provide an instrument for purposefully inciting people to realize their relatively limitless potential in all fields of valuable human effort. Also, the purpose of invitational theory is to deal with the whole universal nature of human existence and opportunity and transform life into an exciting, satisfying and enriching experience. A mixed explanatory approach (quantitative-qualitative) is used in this study, which includes achieving the invitational leadership characteristics in the schools of Sanandaj city and examining the importance of invitational leadership components in attracting teachers to schools from the teachers' point of view. Although the invitational leadership model has not received the attention of researchers in the field of education in Iran, various researches have been conducted at the international level in this area.

Eagly and Jones (2005) conducted a study on Florida elementary teachers' perceptions of principals' personal and professional Invitational behaviors. They found that principals demonstrated a high level of "Invitational leadership" behaviors towards teachers. Their research concluded that there is a positive relationship between elementary teachers' perceptions of principals' Invitational behaviors and their job satisfaction, school climate, and the responsiveness ratings attributed to their schools. Furthermore, they indicated that the way principals interact with teachers is linked to student achievement. Additionally, Zadin (Younis, 2017) examined teachers' perspectives on principals' Invitational leadership behavior, teacher job satisfaction, and principal effectiveness in poor rural elementary schools. He found a significant

difference in teacher job satisfaction based on the level of principals' *Invitational* approaches. Zadin's research also revealed that teachers in high-performing schools rated the impact of their principals' *Invitational* leadership behavior significantly higher compared to teachers in low-performing schools.

Burns (2007) investigated *Invitational* leadership in American public schools and discovered a significant difference in the quality of this leadership style between effective and less effective schools. The study also revealed no notable difference in the quality of *Invitational* leadership between male and female principals. Teachers viewed respect and trust as the key factors in creating an effective organization, while principals believed that trust was the most significant influence. In a related study, Burns and Martin (2010) examined the effectiveness of male and female principals with an *Invitational* leadership style. Their research involved a survey of 14 principals (seven women and seven men) and 164 teachers. The results indicated no difference in effectiveness between male and female principals as leaders. Additionally, Safravoglou and Zubideh (2018) explored the practice of *Invitational* leadership in a foreign language school from a gender perspective. Both instructors and principals exhibited a positive attitude toward adopting leadership practices in their institution. Their research suggested that both gender and level of experience influenced instructors' perceptions of *Invitational* leadership practices within the school.

In their study titled "Principal Characteristics and School Climate: Is the *Invitational* Leadership Model the Right Choice?" Legros and Ryan (2015) argue that a positive school climate is no longer just an attribute of effective leadership; Ultimately, it stems from intentional choices made by leadership. The way a principal lead has a direct impact on fostering a positive school climate. The *Invitational* Leadership model serves as a framework that highlights the significance of creating a positive school environment while also focusing on student achievement. By adopting an *Invitational* orientation, principals can engage school members in a shared vision, promoting active participation that cultivates a climate of respect, trust, and meaningful relationships within the school. Similarly, Stein (2016) found that teacher engagement in a South African primary school is grounded in four principles: respect, trust, optimism, and purpose. His research showed that when a

school principal is committed to encouraging effective collaboration among teachers, It is essential to create an environment that encourages teamwork based on mutual respect, trust, and care among the staff.

McDowell and Martin (2021) investigated how intentional invitations from principals and social justice leadership affect teacher retention in schools. The research studied two schools and found that a principal's *Invitational* leadership style, combined with a strong social orientation, positively affects teacher retention rates. By intentionally promoting this form of leadership, principals can enhance participation among all educators in the school. This cultivates a strong commitment to social justice, benefiting all students and aiding in the retention of dedicated teachers.

Richardson and Martin (2022) examined teacher preparation programs through the lens of *Invitational Leadership*. Their findings indicate that these programs can be much more effective by incorporating essential principles of *Invitational Leadership*. This approach includes modeling effective practices, fostering relationships within the learning community, and offering opportunities for students to engage and participate actively.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of *invitational* leaders?
2. From the viewpoint of the school teachers, how do the principals' *invitational* leadership components attract and retain teachers in schools?

Research Methodology

The present study seeks to identify the *invitational* leaders and investigate teachers' common understanding of *invitational* leadership behavior of school principals in Sanandaj city. To achieve this goal, a mixed-explanatory design was used. A mixed-explanatory study was conducted by the data collected through the Burns (2007) questionnaire to identify the *invitational* leaders and through in-depth interviews with teachers of the selected schools to investigate their experiences. The quantitative section helps to determine the "what" and the qualitative section and its analysis helps to explain the "how". A sequential descriptive-mixed method design allows primary quantitative results to inform secondary qualitative data collection.

Quantitative Section

The quantitative section of the current research was conducted with the aim of identifying invitational principals. On the other hand, the result of data analysis of the quantitative part revealed the participants of the qualitative part. The participants of the quantitative part were all male and female teachers teaching in Sananj public schools in the academic year of 2023. It should be mentioned that the Plan and Program Department of the Planning and Research Sector of the General Department of Education of Kurdistan Province announced the total number of school teachers in Sanandaj in 2023 as 6184. Due to the existence of different educational levels and different genders among the teachers, sampling was done in a stratified method according to the sample size, in which the statistical population includes classes with homogenous traits and characteristics. According to the total number of school teachers, using Morgan's table, 369 teachers were needed as research sample. The questionnaire was distributed online and in person. An online survey was created by inserting questionnaire items using Google Form and the survey link was shared with teachers. At the beginning of the questionnaire, explanations about the questionnaire and how to answer them were provided so that the teachers could ensure the confidentiality of their information.

The total sample included 171 male respondents (46.3) and 198 female respondents (53.7). All demographic questions except for gender were optional because the effect of gender on the components of invitational leadership was intended in the research, so all the respondents declared their gender.

The evaluation of the measurement model and measurement homogeneity includes examining the reliability and validity of latent variables of the model. Checking the convergent reliability and validity includes the evaluation of the relationship between the latent variables and their related indicators, which is done through the two key factors of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Figure 1, in the purposefulness component question 5; and in the respect component, questions 6, 10, and 11 were removed from the research model to establish validity and reliability. Table 2 indicates the confirmation of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha > 0.70$). Also, the average variance extracted is more than 0.4, which indicates a favorable and acceptable condition of convergent validity. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Internal consistency and convergent validity

Cronbac's alpha Coefficient	Validity index	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	components
0.890	0.906	0.914	0.578	Respect
0.829	0.837	0.868	0.425	Trust
0.825	0.837	0.865	0.419	Optimism
0.912	0.914	0.929	0.622	Purposefulness

In order to check the divergent validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT index were examined. Divergent validity refers to the items related to each specific latent variable that to what extent other latent variables are not measured (Hair

et al, 2017). Based on Table 3, both Fornell-Larcker criteria and the HTMT index indicate the confirmation of the divergent validity condition of the measurement model.

Table 3. Divergent validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT index)

Purposefulness	Optimism	Trust	Respect	Latent Variables
0.469	0.177	0.249	0.760	Respect
0.400	0.550	0.652	0.176	Trust
0.261	0.647	0.480	0.129	Optimism
0.789	0.198	0.367	0.434	Purposefulness

According to the research results, the path coefficients of invitational leadership components in the measurement model (figure 1), including optimism, trust, respect and purposefulness, are equal to 0.57, 0.70, 0.65 and 0.79, respectively. The coefficient was 9.89, 19.75, 11.66 and 24.83, respectively. In this regard, it can be argued that all four components of invitational leadership are approved.

Qualitative Section

The participants of the qualitative part included teachers from schools whose principals were known as invitational leaders. Based on the results of the quantitative section, among schools that were studied, three schools had the highest average of invitational leadership components. Hence, for further investigation in the qualitative part, research sample was selected among the teachers of these schools. Since the questionnaires were coded in the quantitative section, the identification of school teachers was conducted. Using purposeful sampling and considering data saturation, 22 school teachers eventually participated in the research. The data collection tool in the qualitative phase was a semi-structured interview. The interview protocol was designed in six fixed questions, the number of which changed according to the nature of semi-structured interview, the use of supplementary questions, and different experiences. The duration of interviews fluctuated between 40 and 60 minutes.

Findings

According to the results of table (6), in order to investigate successful schools regarding the invitational leadership, schools were examined and

compared in four components of trust, purposefulness, respect and optimism. Meanwhile, schools number 6, 20, and 22 had the highest scores, which were analyzed to further examine the experiences of teachers in these schools.

Examining the Moderating Role of Gender

In order to investigate the role of the moderating variable of gender between the two groups of male and female, the results indicate that there is no significant difference between the opinions or views of the two groups of men and women in all four components of respect, trust, optimism and purposefulness. However, in the optimism component, the difference between male and female groups in terms of the path coefficient was 0.10, which can be said to be a significant difference with a confidence interval of 0.93 between this component in both male and female groups. According to the results, among the investigated components, the respect component with 0.66 and the purposefulness component with 0.84 are more important among men than women, while the trust component with 0.72 and the optimism component with 0.59 was more important among women than men.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In the current research, thematic analysis method of Etid-Sterling (2001) was used to analyze the qualitative data, and finally 391 initial codes, 23 organizing themes and 8 global themes were obtained. The table below indicates the three main stages and six steps of analysis.

No	Basic themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
1	Creating a sense of being a principal in teachers (3), delegating decision-making power to teachers (6), creating a sense of superiority in teachers, lack of a sense of power and rule to teachers (2), creating a sense of leadership in teachers, providing teachers with facilities of administration, providing the freedom for teachers to use instruments, providing additional time for teachers in the classroom, lack of control over teachers in the classrooms, lack of supervisor and subordinate atmosphere in the school, providing conditions for the flourishing of teachers' abilities (4)	Considering teachers' leadership abilities	The principal tries to provide conditions for teachers to lead their activities. The principal tries to delegate some of his responsibilities to the teachers. The principal tries to make teachers independent in the decisions related to their educational activities
2	Introducing the goals of programs to teachers (2), teachers' involvement in administrative and educational affairs (2), making changes in classrooms with teachers' permission (2), asking teachers' opinions (15), believing in a teaching as something more than a duty (2), creating space for teachers to present all their abilities (2), paying attention to teachers' abilities (9), respecting teachers' opinions	Delegation of responsibilities	The principal tries to create horizontal communication in the school The principal tries to inform the teachers about the events and affairs of the school
3	Allocating points to teachers, paying attention to teachers' ideas (8), paying attention to and using teachers' talents (3), interacting with teachers, using teachers' scientific expertise (7), doing activities in a cooperative manner (5), encouraging teachers to participate in decisions (2), providing conditions for teachers' participation (4)	Collaborative decision making	The principal tries to make school decisions based on the opinions of school members The principal welcomes the opinions of teachers in doing school work
4	Transferring positive energy to teachers, respecting the decisions of colleagues, paying attention to teachers' values, increasing more communication with teachers, inducing a sense of attention to teachers (3), creating a spirit of criticism in teachers towards their own teaching and learning, making teachers aware of the problems, holding continuous meetings between teachers and administrators (2), welcoming group works (2)	Development of bilateral and mutual relations	The principal has a positive view of the colleagues' suggestions The principal takes advantage of the abilities and experiences of school staff
5	The importance of principal's follow-up for teachers, providing better educational conditions for teachers (4), changing programs based on teachers' needs (3), creating the ability to analyze and think about their own teaching, the existence of trust between teachers, mutual trust of teachers towards the principal (3), instilling a sense of being important to teachers, respecting teachers' speech and opinions (11), being confidential for teachers	Responding to the needs and feelings of followers	The principal holds various meetings to identify problems The principal asks teachers for their opinions on the problems that have arisen
6	Providing opportunities for educational development for teachers, being aware of scientific background of teachers, helping teachers to plan better, creating the ability of	Facilitating communication structure	The principal tries to provide an atmosphere full of intimacy for school members while being

	self-evaluation in teachers, strengthening the problem-solving skills of teachers (3), ensuring the conscientiousness of teachers, mutual trust of teachers towards the principal (3), having a friendly behavior, transferring positive energy to teachers (3), having cooperative behavior with teachers, introducing school programs to teachers, creating the view of the usefulness of programs in teachers (2)		serious in his work The principal provides a space for teachers to express their opinions easily
7	Having cooperative behavior with teachers, trusting teachers (14), having a positive attitude towards constructive suggestions, paying attention to the human relations governing the school, trying to do better work as a goal, considering different aspects for success, lack of absolute decision-making power in the school, solving conflicts that arise in the school, preventing the increase of conflicts in the school	Creating social capital in the school	The principal tries to prevent conflicts in the school The principal is confident in the abilities of teachers in carrying out educational activities The principal tries to create an atmosphere in the school so that teachers can cooperate with each other
8	Trying to improve teachers' abilities towards school success (2), creating a sense of empowerment in teachers, trying not to upset teachers, helping teachers in bad emotional situations (3), teachers' interest in holding multiple meetings, teachers' interest in holding opinion exchange meetings (2), considering the mental conditions of teachers in classrooms (2), teachers' interest in holding opinion exchange meetings (2)	Creating a sense of belonging to the school in teachers	The principal tries to enrich the nature of relationships among school members The principal tries to make teachers feel a sense of belonging to the school
9	Holding training classes for teachers, holding in-service training courses for teachers, encouraging teachers to increase their specialized knowledge, using teachers' achievements (3)	Providing professional development context for teachers	The principal helps the professional development of teachers by holding educational workshops The principal tries to provide a space so that teachers can present their abilities
10	Guiding teachers towards the goals, explaining the method of programs to teachers (2), forming various councils in order to advance the school's goals, teachers' interest in holding educational workshops, helping teachers in school affairs on a voluntary basis, instilling a sense of success in teachers, trying to solve challenges and problems (6), dealing intelligently with creative thinking, sharing teachers' opinions (10)	The principal's efforts to create a space for learning for all school members	The principal provides conditions so that teachers can share their experiences with each other The principal tries to provide conditions for school members to learn from each other
11	Determining work results for teachers (6), using teachers' experiences, having high experience, high ability to implement programs, complete mastery over policies, complete implementation of programs (2), being experienced, having teaching experience, having administration	Sharing information and experiences	The principal tries to transfer his knowledge and experience to the teachers The principal in the school provides a space so that

	experience, colleagues benefiting from each other's help, colleagues benefiting from each other's capabilities (11)		teachers can exchange information with each other
12	Explaining duties to teachers, helping teachers to solve problems, teachers' accountability to the principal, identifying educational weaknesses, trying to solve educational problems and challenges, identifying teaching weaknesses, increasing the positive aspects of education in classrooms	Facilitator of creating a space to help teachers' self-assessment	The principal tries to create a critical environment in the school so that teachers can evaluate their activities The principal helps teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses
13	Providing services to teachers to implement directives, reminding teachers in an encouraging way to solve the problems, not being strict with teachers, listening to teachers, pointing out the shortcomings of teachers in private, teachers not being afraid of being punished by the principal (2), paying attention to the problems of teachers as a member of the school (4)	Efforts to create a supportive environment	The principal tries to create an atmosphere in the school where the teachers feel safe
14	The same position of principal and teacher (2), not having pride for job position (12), not forcing teachers to follow instructions (7), establishing social relations in school (2)	Avoiding an authoritarian point of view	The principal tries to have a flexible and appreciative view towards the teachers
15	Not being indifferent to the shortcomings of teachers, paying attention to the regular and timely arrival and departure of teachers and students (6), paying attention to the start and end of classrooms on time, checking teachers' performance indirectly (2), monitoring educational activities, evaluating all the necessary conditions for education	Indirect supervision	The principal tries to indirectly monitor the educational conditions and atmosphere of school
16	Creating a comfortable environment for teachers, encouraging a sense of cooperation in teachers, cooperating with teachers to solve problems, cooperating with teachers in teaching students, receiving feedback from teachers, guiding teachers' work (5), the importance of allowing teachers in making decisions, having a plan in doing activities, changing plans if they fail, completing plans (2), trying to advance plans, implementing plans in a long-term way (4)	Strategic thinking	The principal believes in the impact of school programs on the progress of the school The principal considers the relations of the school members as one of the factors of the effectiveness and success of the school
17	Trying not to oppose the teachers, holding various meetings with the aim of identifying problems, holding purposeful and regular meetings, using school forces, all the school members' effort to improve the school, asking teachers about the problems that have arisen, investigating the conditions that cause conflict (6), finding the reason of disagreement (2), making changes based on the discretion of the school members, asking for opinions from the group, instilling decision-making power in the members, making decisions based on the opinions of the group, helping school members to solve problems, transferring positive energy	Consultative discourse	The principal tries to strengthen the relationships among school members The principal looks at the school and the relationships of its members as a whole

	in discussions (5), using parents' opinions (2)		
18	Creating sports spaces, paying attention to making the physical space of the school happy, enriching the educational conditions (3), increasing the educational facilities of the classrooms (4), trying to make the most of the school's physical space, enriching the physical space of the school with diverse colors (2), holding happy programs for students, having a sense of humor while being serious at work (2), taking care of the school environment on a voluntary basis (18)	Enriching the school	The school principal paints the school walls with happy colors The principal tries to make the teachers use various educational instruments in the classrooms
19	Having a proper treatment, having fairness, having temperance in words and behavior (2), dealing with different people according to their age, different duties of teachers and students, showing the future of implementing programs, keeping promises, activating the proposal system (2), establishing and maintaining honesty, hope for the future	Doing supportive activities	The principal organizes various extracurricular programs in the school The principal helps teachers in solving the problems in the classrooms
20	A positive view towards the education of students (5), striving for the success of talented students (2), paying attention to the mental and physical preparation of students in classrooms, creating a paternal atmosphere in the relationship between students and teachers, paying attention to students' learning, paying attention to diverse educational methods for students, making changes in the school based on students' needs (2), using students' achievements, creating a sense of belonging to the school in students, providing educational facilities for students (2), asking students about teachers' performance, providing comprehensive support to students, paying attention to students, providing services to students, trying to make weak students learn better (3), providing timely information to students, paying attention to the health of students (3), holding sports programs with the aim of increasing the health of students, carefulness in choosing nutrition for students at school	Improving the process of teaching	The principal pays attention to holding various consultation and guidance meetings for teachers The principal pays attention to the educational weaknesses in the school and tries to improve them The principal tries to coordinate the members of the school in order to achieve the educational goals The principal tries to solve the educational problems of the students with the help of teachers
21	Paying attention to the importance of the school's physical space in attracting students' attention, emphasizing students learning as much as possible, justifying students, interacting more with students	Self-discovery learning	The principal tries to pay attention to the diverse needs of students in providing educational conditions The principal emphasizes that teachers should play a guiding role in the education process
22	Receiving feedback from students (2), trying to increase parents' awareness of students' needs, helping poor students, holding meetings for parents (2), accompanying parents and students	Removing educational barriers	The principal welcomes teachers' opinions and suggestions in the area of education and their

	in achieving school goals, correct treatment with parents, trying to solve the misunderstanding of parents towards the school, satisfying parents, interacting with parents in all dimensions		challenges The principal tries to identify students who have problems The principal has a regular contact with students' parents so that he can identify the problems of weak students The principal tries to involve parents and students in school affairs
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As it can be observed, in the first column of Table 2, the initial codes that were extracted from the text of the interviews are given. In the second column, the essence or topics discussed in the primary codes identified are presented, and finally, in the third column, the basic themes identified based on the thematic analysis model of Ettrid-Sterling (2001) are

counted.

In the following section, after reviewing the basic themes, organizing and global themes were identified. In this part of the analysis, 23 organizing themes were obtained, followed by 8 global themes, which are shown in Table 2.

The principal tries to provide conditions for teachers to lead their activities	Every teacher as an educational leader	Teacher Leadership
The principal tries to delegate some of his responsibilities to teachers	Delegation of authority to teachers	
The principal tries to make teachers independent in the decisions related to their educational activities	Work independence	
The principal tries to create horizontal communication in the school	Participatory culture	Synergistic Relationships
The principal tries to transfer his knowledge and experience to the teachers	Democratic behavior	
The principal provides a space so that teachers can exchange information with each other	Welcoming group work	
The principal tries to inform teachers about the events and affairs of the school	Providing tangible rewards	
The principal tries to make school decisions based on the opinions of school members	Reasonable and positive expectations	
The principal welcomes the opinions of teachers in doing school work	Friendly atmosphere	Family School
The principal looks at the school and the relationships of its members as a whole		
The principal has a positive attitude towards the colleagues' suggestions		
The principal takes advantage of the abilities and experiences of the school staff		
The principal holds various meetings to identify		

problems		
The principal asks teachers for their opinions about the problems that have arisen		
The principal tries to provide an atmosphere full of intimacy for the school members while being serious in his work		
The principal provides a space for teachers to express their opinions easily		
The principal tries to enrich the nature of relationships among school members	Facilitating communication Creating a sense of belonging to the school	Development of Interpersonal Relationships
The principal is confident in the abilities of teachers in carrying out educational activities		
The principal tries to create an atmosphere in the school so that teachers can cooperate with each other		
The principal tries to prevent conflicts in the school		
The principal tries to make teachers feel a sense of belonging to the school		
The principal tries to provide a space so that teachers can present their abilities	Creating learning opportunities for teachers Facilitating the conditions for self-improvement	Helping the Professional Development of Teachers
The principal helps teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses	Transferring work experience Developing the ability of self-assessment	
The principal helps the professional development of teachers by holding educational workshops		
The principal provides conditions so that teachers can share their experiences with each other		
The principal tries to provide conditions for school members to learn from each other		
The principal tries to provide a critical environment in the school so that teachers can evaluate their activities		
The principal tries to create an atmosphere in the school where teachers feel safe	Responding to the needs and feelings of teachers Supporting and approving teachers Welcoming constructive views	Creating a Supportive Environment
The principal tries to have a flexible and appreciative view towards teachers		
The principal tries to indirectly monitor the conditions and atmosphere of education		
The principal considers the relations of school members as one of the factors of the effectiveness and success of the school	Paying attention to human relations governing the school Having a long-term view	Improving Strategies
The principal tries to strengthen the relationships among school members		
The principal believes in the impact of school programs on the progress of school		

<p>The principal paints the school walls with happy colors</p> <p>The principal tries to make teachers use various educational instruments in the classrooms</p> <p>The principal organizes various extracurricular programs in the school</p> <p>The principal helps teachers in solving the problems in the classrooms</p> <p>The principal pays attention to holding various consultation and guidance meetings for teachers</p> <p>The principal pays attention to the educational weaknesses in the school and tries to solve them</p> <p>The principal welcomes teachers' opinions and suggestions in the area of education and their challenges</p> <p>The principal tries to coordinate the members of the school in order to achieve the educational goals</p> <p>The principal tries to pay attention to the diverse needs of students in providing educational conditions</p> <p>The principal emphasizes that teachers should play a guiding role in the education process</p> <p>The principal tries to identify students who have problems</p> <p>The principal is in regular contact with the parents of students so that he can identify the problems of weak students</p> <p>The principal tries to solve the educational problems of students with the help of teachers</p> <p>The principal tries to involve parents and students in school affairs</p>	<p>Establishing educational justice</p> <p>Organization of learning</p> <p>Humanistic education</p>	<p>Creating an Invitational School</p>
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As it was mentioned at the beginning of the present article, the current research seeks to achieve the characteristics of invitational school leaders.

Data analysis indicated that invitational school leaders have eight characteristics, which are displayed in the below figure.

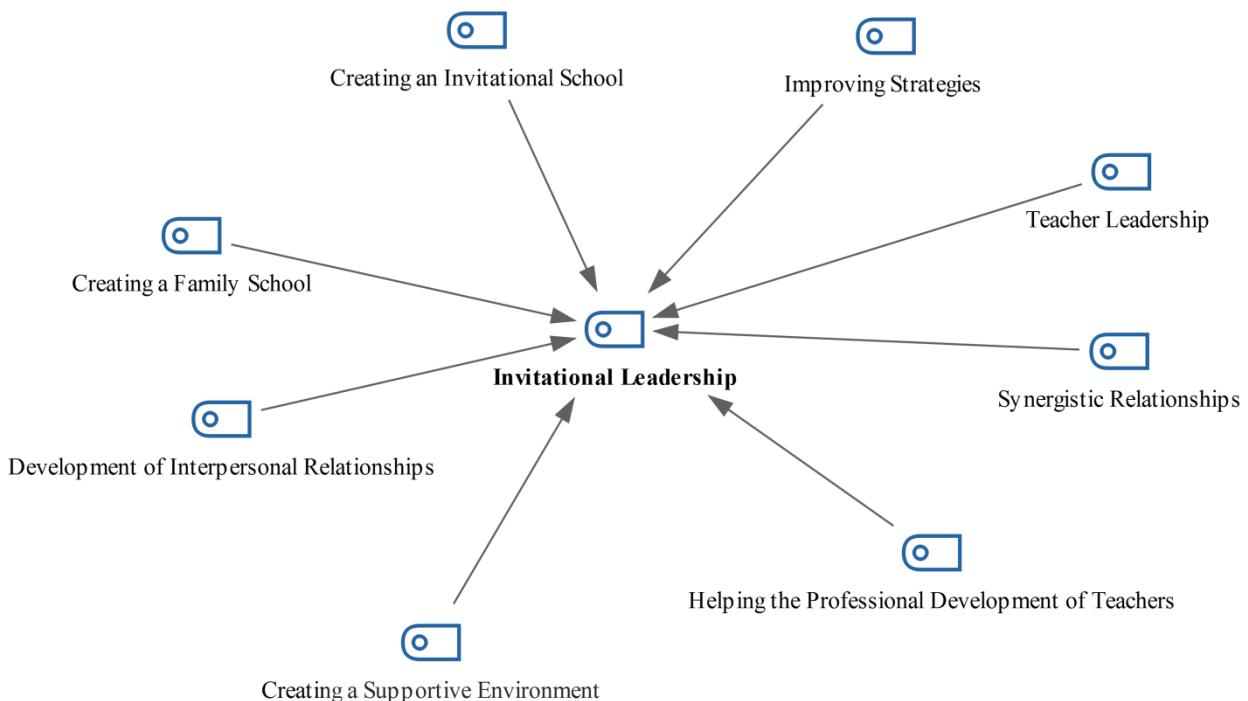


Figure 4. Features of invitational leader (MAXQDA 24 software)

As it is observed in Figure 4, invitational leadership in schools was counted in the form of eight features of teacher leadership, synergistic relationships, creating a family school, development of interpersonal relationships, helping the professional development of teachers, creating a supportive environment, improving strategies, and creating an invitational school, which will be explained in the following.

- Teacher Leadership

One of the characteristics of invitational leaders in schools is the principal's attention to teacher leadership in the school. Data analysis demonstrated that school leaders provide a space for teachers so that they can make decisions in their affairs and act independently. Also, invitational leaders, believing in the unique abilities of teachers, delegate some of their authority to teachers because they believe that every teacher is an educational leader and the school does not have only one educational leader and one decision maker.

- Synergistic Relationships

Based on the results of data analysis, one of the other characteristics of invitational leadership in schools is the existence of synergistic relationships. The teachers stated that their principals believe that when there is more communication between school

members and a collaborative culture prevails in the school, the decisions that will be made are better than the decisions made by the principal and the results are more effective. In this situation, the excellence of the school is achieved by the coordination and companionship of all the members of school, and the abilities and expertise of the members should be used. Only in this case, the efficiency and impact of thoughts and actions can have higher effects. The success of the school can be guaranteed through relationships that lead to synergy.

- Creating a Family School

A family school is a school where each member of the school is invited to realize his/her potential. In fact, the metaphor of family school means that invitational leaders in schools provide grounds for the positive personal and professional growth of teachers. The teachers stated that their school leader pays attention to the uniqueness of teachers and respects them, in other words, the principal does not expect all teachers to be the same and understands the individual differences of teachers, which indicated the supportive attitude of the leader towards teachers. Invitational leaders consider school members as a family, the members of which learn from each other, and cooperation is more valuable than competition in it. When one member

succeeds, all members feel part of the success, and when there is a problem with the members, that problem is a collective and family concern for all the members. The teachers specified that their leaders strengthen group discussions and the sharing of feelings and knowledge among teachers, which leads to deep emotional solidarity and their sense of belonging to the school.

- Development of Interpersonal Relationships

According to the results of data analysis, the development of interpersonal relationships is another characteristic of invitational leaders in schools. In fact, the development of personal relationships in schools helps members to raise their problems and measure the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed solutions before finding the final solution. Interpersonal relationship refers to the strong relationship between teachers. The development of interpersonal relationships has a direct impact on the culture and organizational climate of the school and causes the exchange of knowledge, information and the development of new skills and capabilities, and this plays an important role in the progress and career success of teachers. The teachers explained that school leaders provide opportunities for free expression and share of opinions and ideas with regard to the development of interpersonal relationships and reduce tension and conflict in the school. The teachers indicated that principal's attention to the development of interpersonal relationships in the school will satisfy their personal and work needs and provide the grounds for their professional growth, because the lack of interpersonal relationships will stop growth and prosperity. Also, the participants explained that the development of interpersonal relationships in school makes them have more effective communication with other colleagues so that understanding, trust and positive feelings are maintained with each other.

- Helping the Professional Development of Teachers

Since teachers are the main agents of the educational system and the goals of education and training will be realized through teachers, it is necessary to pay attention to the training of teachers and familiarizing them with the skills of the day. Data analysis showed that invitational leaders believe that the professional development of teachers is an important issue and if the school wants

teachers to have a clear image of their professional self, it is better to focus on professional development and be aware of its effectiveness and ways to achieve it. According to the analysis, school leaders believed that the professional development of teachers improves teaching methods and students' learning results. On the other hand, since teachers are facing many challenges of today's changing world in the teaching profession and society's expectations from schools and teachers are increased, schools should pay more attention to the professional development of teachers.

- Creating a Supportive Environment

Creating a supportive environment is another feature of invitational leadership in schools. According to the results of this study, leaders believed in the existence of unique potential and abilities in teachers, so they considered the creation of a supportive environment in the school as one of the factors that can help to realize these potentials and abilities. The teachers stated that their leader tries to understand the feelings of the teachers and sympathize with them. According to the teachers, in some cases when one of the teachers had a mental problem, the principal attended the classroom and taught the intended course instead of the teacher. The analysis also demonstrated that the school leader tries to provide a supportive environment for teachers by accepting the views of the teachers, so that they can work without any tension and stress and can fully control their classrooms and supervise them.

- Improving Strategies

According to the data analysis, the participants explained that the school leader does not consider the unquestioning implementation of programs and rules of the Department of Education, but he has a long-term view towards the programs and tries to implement the programs based on students' needs and teachers' requirements and abilities. The principal also tries to reform the programs within the determined frameworks, and to achieve this, he tries to strengthen the human relations among the school members in order to get familiar with the problems of the school. In other words, he tries to identify the problems and based on this understanding of the problems, takes steps to improve educational strategies and finally evaluates the results of the implementation of programs and reforms.

- Creating an Invitational School

Another characteristic of invitational leaders is their efforts to create an invitational school for teachers and students. The meaning of invitational school is a school that has a welcoming atmosphere and purposefully values students and teachers. In such an environment, learning will become an enjoyable process for students and it can make them capable and independent individuals. The analysis indicated that the school leader tries to turn the school into a student-friendly environment. In the present study, it was observed that the school yard was painted with happy colors and motivational sentences were written on the walls of the school. Also, the school corridors were decorated with the achievements of students and were turned into a welcoming and attractive environment, which increased students' self-confidence and motivation. In an invitational school, education in classrooms is rooted in humanistic psychology, which means that students are involved in the education process as capable people with potential forces, and the process of thinking, reasoning and problem solving is much more important than accumulating information. In this type of education, teachers are the ones who lead the process of teaching students and have the role of a facilitator. This causes students to achieve a positive self-concept and develop their individual skills. On the other hand, the school leader tries to organize various educational programs and facilities for students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first finding of this research was the identification of invitational leadership components in the leadership behavior of school principals whose teachers wanted to work and teach in their schools. The results of teacher interviews indicated that the four principles of trust, respect, optimism and purposefulness were higher than the assumed average in the leadership behavior of principals. In other words, principals who attract teachers to their school have the components of invitational leadership in their behavior. This is in line with the results of Egely and Jones (2005). As it was mentioned, one of the important principles from teachers' point of view is respect, which is in line with Burns' (2007) research. The existence of the principle of respect indicates the importance of principals' paying attention to teachers and colleagues and believing that they are valuable and responsible. The second principle was

purposefulness, which is in line with Dorna's research (2018). An existentialist psychologist called Rollo May, quoting from Perki and Siegel (2003), considers purposefulness to be the ability of people to link their inner conscious thinking with the obvious goals and behavior. Trust was another principle of invitational leaders. Education in schools is an activity, the process and result of which, are equally important and should be taken into account. Hence, the existence of trust among teachers and principals can guarantee the progress of achieving educational goals and the growth and development of teachers.

The second finding of the quantitative part of this research was related to the moderating role of gender among male and female teachers, the results of which showed that there was no significant difference between the opinions of men and women. However, it can be argued that with a confidence interval of 0.93 among the investigated components, respect component with 0.66 and purposefulness component with 0.84 among men, and trust component with 0.72 and optimism component with 0.59 among women were more important. In this context, it can be supposed that due to the fact that in the current study the effect of teachers' gender on their opinion regarding the principal's leadership behavior has been investigated, no similar research has been conducted in this regard. However, the researches of Dorna (2018) and Burns and Martin (2018) are conducted regarding the impact of principals' gender in this field. The reason for investigating the effect of teachers' gender on their opinions about principals' invitational leadership behavior was to consider gender perspectives.

The results of the qualitative part of the research indicated that invitational leaders have eight characteristics, which include teacher leadership, synergistic relationships, creating a family school, developing interpersonal relationships, helping teachers' professional development, creating a supportive environment, improving strategies and creating an invitational school. According to the results of the research, the school leader considers each of the teachers as an educational leader and always conveys the feeling of being a leader to the teachers because he believes that the school is not run by only one educational leader and there are several educational leaders in the school who work together to advance the goals of the school.

The analysis demonstrated that the school leader provides grounds for teachers so that they can

achieve their abilities. As Perki and Novak (2008) state, human potential can be best developed by places, policies, processes and programs that are specifically designed for the development of invitation by people who personally and professionally invited others and themselves. The leader believes in the abilities that teachers bring to the workplace and tries to provide conditions in the school where not only teachers can use their abilities in the classrooms and the teaching process, but also can transfer their knowledge and ability to each other. In other words, an invitational principal helps teachers share their knowledge among each other. According to the results of the research in these schools, the participation between teachers and principals is at a high level because the school leader believes that the result of collective and collaborative decisions is more than the result of an individual decision. On the other hand, teachers believed that participation is an organizing factor that puts them together in a particular way and calls them to achieve the common goal of the school and decreases the competition among members. It also makes members not to be isolated and calls them to join the group, even if there is competition, the leader turns competition into a form of participation by presenting the view that all members of the school play a role in school's success. Leaders for whom participation is important, are constantly looking for common and mutual goals, and teachers' participation in planning and decision-making will be voluntary without using authoritarian methods. From the point of view of the school leader, the goal is for teachers to willingly, voluntarily, enthusiastically, and even obligingly accept opportunities to express their opinion for decision-making and participation in school planning.

Hansen (1998) approves that investing in people leads to effective change (p. 17) and Halpin (2003) and Telon (1997) explain that teachers and students alike enjoy feeling appreciated for a job well done. This simple truth is a basic need of all humanity. The school leader has a positive attitude towards teachers' opinions and suggestions. Allowing teachers to express their opinions freely sends the message to teachers that they are capable, valuable, and responsible. According to the results of the research, the school leader, by stating the desired and future results of the school programs and explaining what the teachers are doing, allows the teachers to choose the methods of achieving the results and, if necessary, make suggestions to the

leader. From the principals' point of view, their point of view, as school leaders achieve more professional success, delegating responsibilities to school members becomes more important, and in this situation, invitational leaders know how to delegate responsibilities.

The results of the analysis indicated that the leader considers members of the school as a family, who have intimate relationships with each other and behave compassionately towards each other. In these schools, the leader of the school is not indifferent to the shortcomings and mistakes of the teachers, and if a teacher suffers from a deficiency or makes a mistake, the leader, away from other teachers and in private, will inform him of his mistake and help him to correct his mistake.

According to the results of the research, the school leader tries to facilitate the communication structure in the school and provides friendly relations along with official relations and professional duties and creates a sense of belonging to the school in the teachers. According to the participants, the school leader, after asking teachers about their educational needs, holds meetings with the help of expert consultants in the field of teachers' problems and needs, and helps teachers to answer questions and meet their educational needs. The school leader tries to provide an environment so that the teachers can learn in addition to performing their duties. In other words, the professional development of teachers is important for the school leader and he pays special attention to it and tries to achieve it.

Field observations showed that the school leader holds training courses based on the needs of teachers so that teachers can update their information and knowledge, especially in today's world where we are facing a phenomenon called globalization and information technology. This phenomenon requires us to continuously update our information and knowledge, which is more necessary for teachers, because teachers play a key role in the education process, and they must use different educational technologies in their classrooms and education process. In addition to continuous training and increasing professional knowledge in teachers, the invitational leader tries to support teachers mentally and psychologically and create a supportive environment so that teachers feel relaxed and don't suffer from work pressure and stress. The invitational leader understands teachers' feelings and accepts them, and on the other hand, he has a flexible view towards teachers and tries to indirectly

influence the teaching process and supervise teachers' classrooms by analyzing and reviewing the educational results and asking for opinions from parents and students. The research results showed that the invitational leader has a long-term view of the school's plans and has a forward-looking attitude when making decisions and planning, and he also conveys this view to the teachers because he believes that foresight can help the school achieve its goals.

The results of the analysis showed us that the invitational leader intends to create and maintain a call school in which the school pays attention to all aspects of the school, including teaching-learning environment and the physical space of the school. The invitational leader tries to ensure that the students have up-to-date and advanced educational facilities. The school leader equips the classrooms with modern technologies in order to help establish educational justice in the school. This was more evident in marginal and isolated urban schools, because these schools benefit from less educational facilities than other schools, and the invitational leader tries to fill this gap for students. In addition to the educational facilities, the invitational leader has various programs in mind for the students so that the students can participate in those programs and be aware of their abilities and develop them. By holding various meetings for parents, the invitational leader tries to familiarize them with the education programs and processes in order to identify the students' problems and inform the parents about their children's problems.

In conclusion, it can be argued that leadership and teamwork among educational staff are essential components of invitational leadership and can have the capacity to make great changes in schools. In other words, one of the most important things that invitational leaders do in schools is to work together and learn from each other. The experiences of invitational leadership described by teachers of schools with invitational leadership can be a promising option for schools that seriously need to provide quality education.

Research Limitations

Every research has its limitations and the present research is no exception to this rule. One of the limitations of this study is that the type of schools considered for interviewing teachers are public schools, so the research results cannot be generalized to private schools. Another limitation of

this study is the lack of sources to compare the results in Iran, which is due to the novelty of the research topic. The third limitation is related to the principal's view of the educational system, which is out of the researcher's control and can affect teachers' view of the principal's leadership behavior.

Recommendations for Future Research

For researchers who wish to conduct research in this field, the following are suggested:

- Considering all members of the school community (teachers, parents, administrators, students) as a statistical population in the field of leadership behaviors of principals.
- Investigating the leadership behavior of invitational principals of different schools, such as private schools, public schools, for-profit schools, etc., and examining the influence of the type of schools upon the leadership behavior of invitational principals.

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