

Construction and Validation of the “Wise Educational Leaders” Audit Questionnaire

Mona Mehnani¹, Behrang Esmailishad², Roya Afrassiabi³, Farhad Shafipour Motlagh⁴

1. Department of Educational Sciences, Boj. C., Islamic Azad University, Bojnord, Iran

2. Department of Educational Sciences, Boj. C., Islamic Azad University, Bojnord, Iran, esmaeli@bojnourdiau.ac.ir

3. Department of Educational Sciences, Boj. C., Islamic Azad University, Bojnord, Iran

4. Department of Educational Administration, Maha. C., Islamic Azad University, Mahallat, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The primary aim of this research was to validate an audit questionnaire specifically designed for wise educational leaders.

Methods: This study employed a quantitative and descriptive research design. The statistical population consisted of all school principals in Bojnurd city during the 2024-2025 academic year who possessed at least 20 years of service experience. Sampling was conducted using a simple random method. The research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire for auditing the wisdom of educational leaders, which was initially developed based on qualitative interviews. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through face and content validity, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data analysis was performed using first-order and second-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Results: Overall, the findings indicated that all nine dimensions exhibited significant factor loadings at the $P < 0.05$ level.

Conclusions: The results demonstrated that the studied model possesses a relatively desirable goodness-of-fit, confirming the questionnaire's efficacy as a valid tool for auditing wise educational leadership.

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Introduction

Educational leadership is a systematic process through which a leader influences the improvement of teaching quality, professional development of teachers, and the academic progress of learners by directing instruction and learning (Bush, 2020). Wise educational leaders are individuals who possess the ability to manage and lead within the field of education. They place great importance on improving the educational system and, by leveraging their knowledge and experience, create positive enhancements in the pedagogical process (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). Wise educational leaders must possess skills and attributes such as effective communication, the ability to analyze and solve problems, motivating and inspiring colleagues and students, the ability to plan and manage classrooms and instructors, and alignment with educational needs and goals, among others. With the necessary abilities and skills, these leaders can implement fundamental improvements in the educational system and enhance the quality of the education process (Jamadi, Nemati, & Nemati, 2021). Wise educational leaders must not only possess technical and specialized knowledge in education but also maintain strong motivation and provide inspiration for their educational teams and students. They must be capable of guiding their teams toward shared goals and beliefs and, through proper management, provide a positive and dynamic environment for learning and growth. Wise educational leaders must demonstrate flexibility and the ability to adapt to daily changes, stay updated with innovations and new technologies in education (Ghasemi, 2021), and be able to face various challenges and encounters, utilizing them to improve the educational system.

Auditing and supporting wise educational leaders, along with the improvement of educational standards by them, can be the most effective path for the progress and development of the educational system (KarAmad, 2018). The “Wisdom Audit” of an educational leader refers to evaluating and assessing the efficiency and performance of a leader using wise and effective methods and tools. In this type of evaluation, through precise and efficient analysis, the performance and efficiency of the educational leader are examined across various dimensions to ensure the best possible assessment (Bustali, 2023).

A wisdom audit of an educational leader allows for the identification of their limitations and deficiencies, providing the necessary improvements to enhance their performance and efficiency. In this way, the educational leader is helped to benefit from the audit results in their personal

learning and development process (Branson, 2010). If the wisdom audit of an educational leader is conducted correctly, leadership strengths and weaknesses are identified; consequently, it leads the educational leader to implement the necessary strategies to improve their performance and efficiency. Therefore, auditing an educational leader enables them to pursue professional and personal development and achieve the best results in their educational activities. Generally, the wisdom audit of an educational leader is an effective tool for improving efficiency and performance, allowing them to utilize their abilities and skills in the best possible way to reach optimal outcomes in educational activities (McKenna, 2023). Given these considerations, the primary problem of this research is: What are the factors involved in auditing wise educational leaders?

Although no identical research was found in the scope of the current study, this section mentions some related research concerning the analysis of wise educational leaders:

The results of Heydari Ileyi and Khodadadi Poshtei (2024) indicated that strategic leadership models, depending on their type and structure, can have different impacts on the educational environment. The collaborative leadership model appears to be more effective than the hierarchical model in improving motivation, educational quality, and interaction with parents. The selection of an appropriate model should be made considering the specific needs and characteristics of each school to achieve optimal results. The results of Ghaffari and Hoveida (2023) showed that management and leadership components include the principal’s educational vision, human resources, the teaching and learning environment, support and backing, participation, facilities, and the core of activities. Using these, educational administrators can take steps toward strengthening schools in the identified areas.

The study by Jamadi, Nemati, and Nemati (2021) showed that wise leadership can act as an important organizational variable affecting empowerment, moral resilience, and employee retention, alongside the variable of organizational agility. Organizations must consider the wise leadership style to succeed in promoting empowerment, moral resilience, employee retention, and organizational agility. According to the study by Rahimi, Zarei Matin, Tavakkoli, and Yazdani (2021), Islamic rationality consists of three main dimensions: contexts, consequences, and spheres of rationality. These spheres include “thoughts, insights, and attitudes,” “tendencies, motivations, and character,” and “actions and behaviors.” The study by Neisi, Azar, Moqbel Ba’arz, and

Naghipourfar (2020) indicates that wise leadership is directly related to the decision-making process. In other words, by utilizing experience, knowledge, and a deep understanding of situations, wise leaders are able to make informed, logical decisions tailored to the circumstances that both advance organizational goals and satisfy stakeholder interests.

According to the study by Hart and Nolan (2024), one of the indicators of wise leadership is servant leadership; they believe that altruism is the fundamental ethics fueling the success of a servant leader. According to the study by Jumadi, Yasa, and Yudana (2023), among the strategies of a wise leader is “building trust and long-term success.” Wise leaders are those capable of integrating knowledge, experience, and intuition to make informed decisions in the face of complex and dynamic challenges, guiding their team through the necessary changes to achieve organizational goals. An important aspect of a wise leader’s strategy is the ability to listen to and understand the perspectives of others to create an inclusive workspace where all team members feel heard, valued, and motivated to contribute their best.

According to the study by Al-Shilma and Al-Hamad (2023), high discernment or the ability to make precise and informed decisions is one of the key dimensions of wise leadership. This capability allows leaders to correctly analyze complex issues and uncertain situations and choose appropriate actions. According to the study by Van der Zee (2022), school leaders, by combining deep theoretical knowledge and extensive practical experience, are able to analyze situations correctly and make effective, purposeful decisions. This ability reflects “practical wisdom” in leadership, meaning the leader knows how to interact with staff, boost their motivation, and direct appropriate behaviors to optimize the overall performance of the organization. Practical wisdom in this context includes a precise recognition of the capacities, limitations, and needs of individuals and the organization, ensuring that the leader’s decisions and actions are both effective and ethical. According to the study by Mercado (2021), leadership must act wisely and compassionately. Leadership requires providing equal educational opportunities, which is one of the wisdom indicators for educational leaders that helps improve leader performance. The study by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) showed that fundamental leadership practices represent a responsiveness to the conditions in which they work, rather than being dictated by them. The study by Manolopoulos (2019) showed that educational leadership requires following rationality, and utilizing codified strategies enables leaders to courageously reimagine and reconstruct society. The

study by Santizo Rodall (2018) showed that each school principal acts according to their own context, and the design of competency-based management model rules is dominated by a personal heroic leadership perspective—which assumes an omniscient and all-encompassing principal—and also promotes a centralized management model for all schools.

Material and Methods

The research method was descriptive in terms of approach. The statistical population included all school principals in the Department of Education of Bojnord County with more than 20 years of service during the 2024–2024 academic year. The sampling method was simple random sampling. The research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire on the wisdom audit of educational leaders. This questionnaire consisted of nine factors: multi-criteria decision-making (Items 1–13), situational decision-making (Items 14–22), ethical insight (Items 23–30), branding (Items 31–43), strategic planning (Items 44–55), school capital development (Items 56–69), empowerment (Items 70–77), educational technology development (Items 78–88), and systems thinking development (Items 89–98).

The validity of the questionnaire was established through face validity and content validity, and its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach’s alpha formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.95.

The data were analyzed using the statistical software packages SPSS 29 and AMOS 29. For validation, the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was employed in the AMOS 29 environment. In addition, before conducting the main analyses, statistical prerequisites such as the KMO (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin) index and Bartlett’s test were examined using SPSS 29.

Results

Before conducting the main analyses, statistical prerequisites such as the KMO (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin) index and Bartlett’s test of sphericity were examined. The values presented in Table 1 indicate that the research data were suitable for factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy, with a value of 0.966, indicates that the level of correlation among the variables was highly appropriate and that the data were excellent for factor analysis. Moreover, the results of Bartlett’s test of sphericity confirm this point, as the chi-square

statistic of 24406.713 with a significance level of 0.000 shows that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that the relationships among variables are sufficient for factor analysis.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Measure	Value
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.966
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity – Chi-square	24406.713
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity – Degrees of freedom	561
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity – Significance level	0.000

First question: Are the components of the wise educational leaders' audit model questionnaire valid?

To answer this question, first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used. The results are presented separately in table 2.

Table 2. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Multi-Criteria Decision-Making

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Multi-criteria decision-making (Xi1)	Ethical and value-based criteria	X1	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Innovative educational and pedagogical criteria	X2	0.97	Confirmed (>0.30)	2
	Managerial and executive criteria	X3	0.93	Confirmed (>0.30)	3

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of multi-criteria decision-making, one latent variable with the symbol Xi1 was assessed, which was explained by three observed variables with the symbols X1, X2, and X3. The results in the table show that all three components had high factor loadings, all exceeding the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, they were significant and confirmed.

The component "ethical and value-based criteria" with the symbol X1 had a factor loading of 0.98 and contributed the most to explaining the latent variable of multi-criteria decision-making; therefore, it ranked first. Next, the component "innovative educational and pedagogical criteria" with the symbol X2 and a factor loading of 0.97 ranked second and also played an important role in explaining the construct. The third component, "managerial and executive criteria" with the symbol X3 and a factor loading of 0.93, was likewise significant and, despite having a lower value than the previous two components, was confirmed in the model.

Table 3. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Situational Decision-Making

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Situational decision-making (Xi2)	Considerate decision-making	X4	0.89	Confirmed (>0.30)	2
	Participatory decision-making	X5	0.95	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Fair decision-making	X6	0.79	Confirmed (>0.30)	3

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of situational decision-making, one latent variable with the symbol Xi2 was examined, which was measured by three observed variables with the symbols X4, X5, and X6. The results in Table 3 show that all three components had factor loadings higher than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, all were significant.

The component “participatory decision-making” with the symbol X5 had the highest factor loading, namely 0.95. This value indicates that this component had the greatest contribution to explaining the latent variable of situational decision-making and therefore ranked first. It was followed by “considerate decision-making” with the symbol X4 and a factor loading of 0.89, which ranked second; this value indicates a strong and significant relationship with the latent construct. The component “fair decision-making” with the symbol X6 and a factor loading of 0.79, although lower than the other two components, still had an appropriate and significant factor loading, played a considerable role in explaining the construct, and ranked third.

Table 4. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Ethical Insight

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Ethical insight (Xi3)	Collaborative ethics	X7	0.94	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
	Supportive ethics	X8	0.99	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Empathetic ethics	X9	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	2

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of ethical insight, one latent variable with the symbol Xi3 was examined, which was measured by three observed variables with the symbols X7, X8, and X9. The results in Table 4 show that all components had factor loadings higher than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, all were significant and confirmed in the model. The component “supportive ethics” with the symbol X8 had the highest factor loading, namely 0.99, and contributed the most to explaining the latent variable of ethical insight; therefore, it ranked first. It was followed by “empathetic ethics” with the symbol X9 and a factor loading of 0.98, which ranked second. The component “collaborative ethics” with a factor loading of 0.94

also had an appropriate factor loading, played an important role in explaining the construct, and ranked third.

Table 5. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Branding

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Branding (Xi4)	Educational–pedagogical	X10	0.95	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
	Effective communication with parents	X11	0.87	Confirmed (>0.30)	4
	School vitality	X12	0.96	Confirmed (>0.30)	2
	Quality enhancement	X13	0.97	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Technological and innovative	X14	0.70	Confirmed (>0.30)	5
	Opportunity creation and differentiation	X15	0.95	Confirmed (>0.30)	3

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of branding, one latent variable with the symbol Xi4 was examined, which was measured by six observed variables with the symbols X10 to X15. The results in Table 5 show that all components had factor loadings higher than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, all were significant.

The component “quality enhancement” with the symbol X13 had the highest factor loading and the greatest contribution to explaining the latent variable of branding. It was followed by “school vitality” with the symbol X12 and a factor loading of 0.96, which ranked second. The components “educational–pedagogical” with the symbol X10 and “opportunity creation and differentiation” with the symbol X15 both had factor loadings of 0.95 and ranked third.

Table 6. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Strategic Planning

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Strategic planning (Xi5)	Identifying constraints	X16	0.89	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
	Mapping the future path	X17	0.93	Confirmed (>0.30)	2
	Identifying opportunities	X18	0.99	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Progressive philosophy of education	X19	0.99	Confirmed (>0.30)	1

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of strategic planning, one latent variable with the symbol Xi5 was examined, which was measured by four observed variables with the symbols X16 to X19. The results show that all components had factor loadings higher than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, all were significant and confirmed.

The components “identifying opportunities” with the symbol X18 and “progressive philosophy of education” with the symbol X19 both had the highest factor loading of 0.99, and thus jointly ranked first. After these, “mapping the future path” with the symbol X17 and a factor loading of 0.93

ranked second. Finally, “identifying constraints” with the symbol X16 and a factor loading of 0.89 ranked third, though it still had a strong and significant contribution to explaining the construct.

Table 7. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of School Capital Development

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
School capital development (Xi6)	Human capital	X20	0.96	Confirmed (>0.30)	2
	Psychological capital	X21	0.97	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Social capital	X22	0.67	Confirmed (>0.30)	3

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of school capital development, one latent variable with the symbol Xi6 was examined, which was measured by three observed variables with the symbols X20 to X22. The results indicate that all components had factor loadings higher than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, all were significant. The component “psychological capital” with the symbol X21 had the highest factor loading, namely 0.97. It was followed by “human capital” with the symbol X20 and a factor loading of 0.96, which ranked second. The component “social capital” with the symbol X22 and a factor loading of 0.67, although lower than the other two components, was still significant and confirmed in the model, ranking third.

Table 8. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Empowerment

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Empowerment (Xi7)	Professional empowerment	X23	0.85	Confirmed (>0.30)	5
	Psychological–emotional empowerment	X24	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Individual–personal empowerment	X25	0.93	Confirmed (>0.30)	4
	Self-management and self-leadership empowerment	X26	0.95	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
	Knowledge management empowerment	X27	0.97	Confirmed (>0.30)	2

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of empowerment, one latent variable with the symbol Xi7 was examined, which was measured by five observed variables with the symbols X23 to X27. The results in the table above show that all components had factor loadings greater than the criterion value of 0.30 and were therefore all significant.

The component “psychological–emotional empowerment” with the symbol X24 and a factor loading of 0.98 had the greatest explanatory power. This component indicates that psychological

and emotional dimensions play a central role in the empowerment of staff, especially educational leaders. It was followed by “knowledge management empowerment” with the symbol X27 and a factor loading of 0.97, which ranked second. Next, “self-management and self-leadership empowerment” with the symbol X26 and a factor loading of 0.95 ranked third. The component “individual–personal empowerment” with the symbol X25 and a factor loading of 0.93 ranked fourth, while “professional empowerment” with the symbol X23 and a factor loading of 0.85 ranked fifth. Although it had the lowest loading among the components, it still showed a significant and acceptable contribution to the construct.

Table 9. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Educational Technology Development

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Educational technology development (Xi8)	Management of the school’s digital environment	X28	0.95	Confirmed (>0.30)	2
	Use of artificial intelligence to analyze school needs	X29	0.93	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
	Analysis of emotions and behavioral data	X30	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Use of technology to enhance learning	X31	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	1

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of educational technology development, one latent variable with the symbol Xi8 was examined, which was measured by four observed variables with the symbols X28 to X31. Based on Table 9, all components had factor loadings higher than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, all were significant and confirmed in the model.

The component “analysis of emotions and behavioral data” with the symbol X30 and a factor loading of 0.98, together with the component “use of technology to enhance learning” with the symbol X31 and the same factor loading of 0.98, had the greatest contribution to explaining the latent variable of educational technology development. These findings indicate that the analysis of behavioral data and the use of technology to enhance learning play the most important role in the development of educational technology. The component “management of the school’s digital environment” with the symbol X28 and a factor loading of 0.95 ranked second and highlights the importance of managing digital spaces, technological infrastructure, and the school’s virtual ecosystem in strengthening the construct. The component “use of artificial intelligence to analyze

school needs” with the symbol X29 and a factor loading of 0.93 ranked third, but still demonstrated a strong and significant contribution.

Table 10. Significance of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Components of Systems Thinking Development

Dimension and Symbol	Components	Symbol	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
Systems thinking development (Xi9)	Input thinking	X32	0.89	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
	Process thinking	X33	0.95	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
	Output thinking	X34	0.90	Confirmed (>0.30)	2

In the first-order confirmatory factor analysis related to the dimension of systems thinking development, one latent variable with the symbol Xi9 was examined, which was measured by three observed variables with the symbols X32 to X34. Based on Table 10, all components had factor loadings greater than the criterion value of 0.30; therefore, their relationships with the latent variable were significant, and all were confirmed in the model.

The component “process thinking” with the symbol X33 and a factor loading of 0.95 had the highest value and ranked first. This indicates that a process-oriented perspective and attention to the flow of activities play the greatest role in explaining the construct of systems thinking development. It was followed by “output thinking” with the symbol X34 and a factor loading of 0.90, which ranked second. This value shows that focusing on the outcomes and outputs of the system also makes an important contribution to shaping systems thinking. Finally, “input thinking” with the symbol X32 and a factor loading of 0.89 ranked third, though it still had a strong and significant contribution to the construct.

Second Question: Are the Dimensions of the Wise Educational Leaders’ Audit Model Valid?

To answer this question, second-order confirmatory factor analysis was used.

In second-order confirmatory factor analysis, a set of latent variables, each measured by observable indicators, is itself influenced by a higher-order overarching latent variable. In this study, the conceptual model included nine factors, such that the variable “XI” played the role of the main latent construct, and the factors “Eta1” to “Eta9”, as first-order variables, were all influenced by this higher-level variable. The construct “XI,” representing the “wise educational leaders’ audit model,” was introduced and measured through 12 indicators.

The significant results of this analysis, including statistical indices, construct dimensions, and their prioritization, are presented in Table 11, along with the structural equation model.

Table 11. Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Structural Model of the “Wise Educational Leaders’ Audit Model”

No.	Symbol	Factors	Factor Loading	Result	Rank
1	Eta1	Multi-criteria decision-making	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	4
2	Eta2	Situational decision-making	1.04	Confirmed (>0.30)	1
3	Eta3	Ethical insight	0.98	Confirmed (>0.30)	4
4	Eta4	Branding	1.00	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
5	Eta5	Strategic planning	0.97	Confirmed (>0.30)	5
6	Eta6	School capital development	0.97	Confirmed (>0.30)	5
7	Eta7	Empowerment	1.00	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
8	Eta8	Educational technology development	1.00	Confirmed (>0.30)	3
9	Eta9	Systems thinking development	1.02	Confirmed (>0.30)	2

The results in Table 11 show that all nine dimensions constituting the wise educational leaders’ audit model were statistically significant, and their factor loadings were fully confirmed, since in all cases they were reported to be higher than 0.30. This indicates that each of the first-order variables plays a distinct and influential role in explaining the main construct, namely the latent variable “XI,” and that the measurement model has appropriate coherence and construct validity. Among the factors examined, the highest factor loading belonged to “situational decision-making” with a value of 1.04, placing it in the first rank. This finding suggests that wise educational leaders rely more than anything else on the ability to make decisions appropriate to the situation, conditions, and environmental contingencies, and that this component plays the greatest role in explaining the main construct.

In second place was “systems thinking development” with a factor loading of 1.02. This result highlights the importance of a holistic, network-based perspective grounded in an understanding of interrelationships in the process of auditing educational leadership. In this model, systems thinking emerges as one of the principal pillars of educational leaders’ behavior.

Next, the three components branding, empowerment, and educational technology development, each with a full factor loading of 1.00, ranked third. These three factors indicate that wise leaders must simultaneously attend to creating a positive image of the school, empowering human resources, and making intelligent use of technology, because all three dimensions have equal influence in strengthening the main construct.

The components “multi-criteria decision-making” and “ethical insight”, with factor loadings of 0.98, ranked fourth. Although their factor loadings were slightly lower than those of the preceding factors, they still had a strong influence on the main construct. These two components reflect the important role of ethics, values, and analytical skills based on multiple indicators in educational leadership.

Finally, the components “strategic planning” and “school capital development”, both with factor loadings of 0.97, ranked fifth.

Proper planning and the development of human, psychological, and social capital constitute the operational foundations of any effective leadership model. Overall, the table indicates that the second-order model has a high level of consistency and a logical structure.

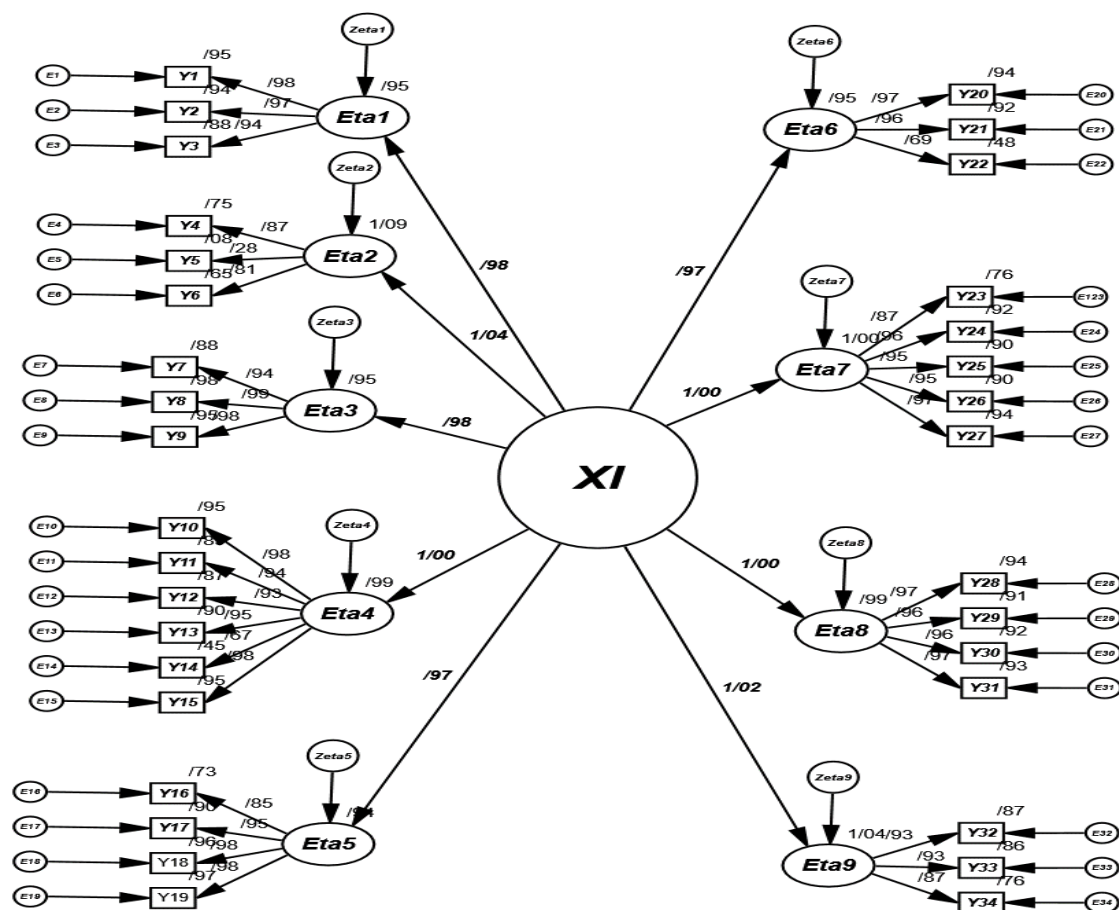


Figure 1. Structural Model of the Construct “Wise Educational Leaders’ Audit Model”

The structural model presented in Figure 1 displays, in an integrated and coherent structure, the relationship between the main construct, namely the “wise educational leaders’ audit model,” and the nine first-order factors reported in Table 11. In this model, the higher-level latent variable is represented by the symbol XI, and all factors from Eta1 to Eta9, as first-order observed variables, are influenced by this overall construct. Next to each of these variables, the amount of measurement error is indicated by the symbol (D) so that the share of measurement error can be distinguished from the true share of the construct.

In the model shown in the figure, the factor loadings of all factors are fully significant, indicating that each component is strongly and reliably associated with the main construct.

Third Question: How well does the Wise Educational Leaders’ Audit Model fit?

To answer this question, the **fit indices of the second-order confirmatory factor analysis** were used.

Table 12. Fit Indices of the Construct “Wise Educational Leaders’ Audit Model”

Index	Symbol	Estimate	Result
Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio	CMIN/DF	2.001	Confirmed (< 5)
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	0.041	Confirmed (< 0.05)
Goodness of Fit Index	GFI	0.975	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	AGFI	0.980	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	0.980	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Bentler–Bonett Normed Fit Index	NFI	0.990	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Tucker–Lewis Index	TLI	0.976	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Incremental Fit Index	IFI	0.979	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Relative Fit Index	RFI	0.992	Confirmed (> 0.90)
Parsimony Ratio	PRATIO	0.402	Confirmed (< 0.50)
Parsimonious Normed Fit Index	PNFI	0.668	Confirmed (> 0.50)
Parsimonious Comparative Fit Index	PCFI	0.688	Confirmed (> 0.50)

The results in Table 12 show that the proposed model demonstrates a good fit with the data both statistically and conceptually. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF = 2.001) indicates that the difference between the sample covariance matrix and the model covariance matrix is very small, and a value lower than 5 indicates an acceptable model fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.041) is also lower than 0.05, indicating that the model’s approximation error in the population is acceptable and that the model fit is appropriate. The goodness-of-fit indices, including GFI = 0.975 and AGFI = 0.980, are both higher than the criterion threshold of 0.90, indicating that the model is in a very good condition in terms of overall

correspondence with the data. The comparative and relative fit indices, including CFI = 0.980, NFI = 0.990, TLI = 0.976, IFI = 0.979, and RFI = 0.992, are also all above 0.90, showing that the proposed model performs better than the baseline model and that the relationships among the latent and observed variables are well explained.

The parsimony ratio (PRATIO = 0.402) is slightly lower than 0.50, indicating that the model is relatively simple and parsimonious and does not involve unnecessary complexity. In addition, PNFI = 0.668 and PCFI = 0.688 are both above the criterion value of 0.50, indicating that while maintaining simplicity, the model also has an appropriate fit and achieves a desirable balance between complexity and precision.

Overall, all model fit indices fall within accepted criteria. This demonstrates that the structural model of the “wise educational leaders’ audit model” has good coherence, validity, and fit, is capable of explaining the relationships between the latent and observed variables with high accuracy, and that the hierarchical and multidimensional structure of the model is well aligned with the sample data.

Discussion

Auditing wise educational leaders requires attention to the factors that enhance such leadership. Accordingly, the findings of the present study indicate that the construct of multi-criteria decision-making is significantly explained by three components: ethical and value-based, innovative educational and pedagogical, and managerial and executive dimensions. The ethical component plays a central role and forms the core of decision-making; the innovative educational component highlights the importance of quality and innovation in learning; and the managerial component completes the structure of management and implementation. Overall, this construct represents a multilayered combination of ethical, innovative, and managerial foundations that provides a comprehensive picture of decision-making logic. These findings are consistent with the studies of Heydari Ileyi and Khodadadi Poshteh'i (2024) and Al Shima and Al Hamed (2023).

The construct of situational decision-making is significantly explained by three components: participation, consideration, and justice. Participatory decision-making plays the principal role, considerate decision-making demonstrates the importance of attending to surrounding conditions, and fair decision-making serves as a stable and reliable basis for decision-making. Overall, this

construct provides a multidimensional and functional picture of how leaders respond to different situations. These findings are in line with the studies of Neysi, Azar, Moghbel Barez, and Naghipourfar (2020) and Boland (2014).

The construct of ethical insight is significantly explained by three components: helpfulness, empathy, and cooperation. Supportive ethics plays the central role, empathetic ethics highlights the importance of emotional sensitivity and attention to others, and cooperative ethics reflects the capacity for collaboration and ethical interaction. Overall, this construct provides a multidimensional and comprehensive picture of an individual's ethical behavior. These findings are consistent with the studies of Manolopoulos (2019) and Ghaffari and Hoveida (2023).

The construct of branding is significantly explained by six components. The highest contribution belongs to quality enhancement, indicating the importance of the quality of school services and performance in shaping the school brand. School vitality shows that a cheerful and energetic environment strengthens the school's positive image, while the educational-pedagogical and opportunity creation and differentiation components reflect the importance of high-quality educational programs and unique opportunities in branding. In this model, school branding is focused on quality of performance, a joyful and energetic environment, high-quality educational programs, and opportunity creation, while innovation and effective communication with parents play complementary and supportive roles in strengthening the brand. These findings are in agreement with the studies of Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) and Rahimi, Zarei Matin, Tavakkoli, and Yazdani (2021).

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis show that the construct of strategic planning is explained through four axes: identifying opportunities, a philosophy of progressive education, mapping the future path, and managing constraints. The components of identifying opportunities and a philosophy of progressive education play central roles, the component of mapping the future path highlights the importance of designing an operational vision, and the component of identifying constraints plays a complementary role in managing challenges. This combination provides a comprehensive and practical picture of the school's strategic process. These findings are aligned with the studies of Bustali (2023) and Akinyi and Sadler-Smith (2023).

The construct of school capital development is explained by three components: psychological capital, human capital, and social capital. Psychological capital and human capital play the main

roles in shaping the construct, while social capital serves a complementary role. Together, these three dimensions provide a complete picture of school capital development. These findings are consistent with the studies of Yang, Zhang, and Chen (2019) and Jumadi, Yasa, and Yudana (2023).

The construct of empowerment is explained by five components: psychological–emotional empowerment, knowledge management, self-management, individual capability, and professional skills. Psychological–emotional empowerment and knowledge management empowerment play the principal roles. These findings are in line with the studies of Van der Zee (2022) and Jamadi, Nemati, and Nemati (2021).

The construct of educational technology development is explained by four components: analysis of behavioral data, use of technology to enhance learning, management of the school’s digital environment, and use of artificial intelligence to analyze school needs. Analysis of behavioral data and use of technology to enhance learning play the principal roles. These findings are consistent with the studies of Jumadi, Yasa, and Yudana (2023) and Ghasemi (2021).

The construct of systems thinking development is explained by the components of process thinking and output thinking. Process thinking plays the main role and focuses on analyzing the stages of activities, while output thinking highlights the importance of attention to consequences and outcomes. These findings are in line with the studies of Mercado (2021) and Hart and Nolan (2024).

To promote wise leadership in schools, the following actions can be recommended. First, strengthening situational decision-making through workshops and simulation exercises based on real school situations can help leaders enhance their ability to analyze conditions and make decisions appropriate to environmental demands and the needs of staff and students. Second, developing systems thinking through training in systems analysis methods, especially with an emphasis on identifying interrelationships among different parts of the school, can strengthen a holistic perspective in management and decision-making. Third, reinforcing complementary dimensions, including school branding, staff empowerment, and educational technology development, is essential. In school branding, creating programs to improve educational quality, providing unique opportunities for students, and maintaining active interaction with parents are important. Staff empowerment can be achieved through programs for individual development,

self-leadership, and knowledge management. Educational technology development can likewise be strengthened through the use of technology and behavioral data to enhance learning and manage the school's digital environment. Fourth, establishing an ethical culture in decision-making by encouraging leaders to adhere to ethical principles and empathy in decision-making can ensure that decisions are both effective and sustainable. Finally, strategic planning and school capital development can strengthen the operational foundations of wise leadership through the formulation of a clear vision and operational plans for the development of staff members' human, psychological, and social capital. Implementing these actions, in addition to enhancing the competencies of educational leaders, can also ensure improved school performance and increased stakeholder satisfaction.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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