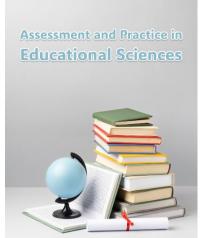
# Assessment and Practice in Educational Sciences





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# Presenting a Model of Social Accountability of Secondary School Authorities with an Emphasis on the Dimension of Biological and Physical Education: A Thematic Analysis Approach

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to present a model of social accountability of secondary school authorities with an emphasis on the dimension of biological and physical education. Based on data collection, this research is descriptive-analytical in nature, and regarding research orientation, it follows an inductivedeductive approach. Participants in the qualitative method of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis were 21 university experts, managers, and teachers from Mazandaran Province who had published relevant articles and possessed more than 10 years of experience in the field of social accountability in biological and physical education in schools. Sampling continued purposefully until theoretical saturation was reached with 19 participants. Initial interview questions were designed through a documentary study (books, articles, and related research). Before conducting each interview, the researcher first provided the interviewees with explanations regarding the subject and objectives of the study and then asked them to respond to the interview questions. It should be noted that the researcher, with due respect, requested that the interviewees themselves determine the appropriate time for the interviews so that they could respond in complete comfort. Furthermore, the researcher collected all interviews using both audio recording and note-taking. After preparing the written transcripts of the participants' responses, the process of examining the explicit and implicit content of the collected data from statements and texts began. The aim of this process was to extract the components of the social accountability model of secondary school authorities with an emphasis on the dimension of biological and physical education, using the qualitative approach of thematic analysis. MAXQDA software was employed for analyzing the interview texts. From the analysis of 21 interviews, a total of 158 initial codes were extracted. Following the analysis, 56 selective codes and 10 sub-themes were identified. In the final stage, by reviewing the organizing themes, five overarching themes were obtained, namely: awareness and education; parental and community participation; resources and facilities; management and leadership; and the evaluation and supervision system.

Keywords: Social accountability, school authorities, biological and physical education

# Introduction

Education systems around the world are increasingly recognized not only as sites of academic instruction but also as central institutions responsible for shaping cultural values, social identity, and public responsibility. Within this framework, schools are expected to adopt models of accountability that reflect broader cultural and social needs, particularly when addressing issues related to biological and physical education. The necessity of embedding social accountability into educational governance

arises from the growing awareness that cultural and social development is inseparable from the well-being of students and their surrounding communities (1).

In the Iranian context, policy-making in the cultural and social fields has long faced structural and operational challenges. Scholars emphasize that weaknesses in institutional frameworks, fragmented strategies, and political constraints often limit the effectiveness of cultural policy implementation (2). At the same time, recent efforts to design supportive models—such as those targeting vulnerable children through social organizations—highlight the urgency of linking cultural policy to broader social accountability mechanisms (3). These efforts demonstrate that schools, as social institutions, cannot operate in isolation; instead, they must engage with families, communities, and state institutions to ensure that accountability extends beyond the classroom.

At the international level, cultural policy is increasingly viewed as a driver of sustainable development and innovation. For example, Mickov (4) argues that the cultural sector contributes directly to economic resilience through creativity and innovation, which are also linked to educational policy. This resonates with the understanding that cultural participation and accountability in schools have significant implications for long-term societal growth. Thus, embedding accountability in educational governance aligns both with global cultural policy discourses and with localized needs for reform.

The Iranian educational system, however, reveals particular complexities. Analyses of public policy highlight that cultural governance structures often lack coherence and fail to fully integrate educational and social objectives (5). The absence of an integrated model leads to gaps in implementation, particularly in relation to youth cultural identity and the promotion of physical and mental health. Efforts to strengthen cultural identity among youth in provinces such as Ilam further show the necessity of embedding accountability frameworks into school governance structures (6). Without such integration, schools risk being disconnected from the broader cultural and social realities shaping students' lives.

Policy analysis studies also stress that the cultural economy itself plays a significant role in shaping governance frameworks (7). Schools, as institutions where cultural reproduction takes place, cannot be separated from broader policy trends in culture and economy. The growing emphasis on evidence-based decision-making in cultural policy suggests that education authorities need to adopt systematic approaches for accountability that mirror developments in other sectors. For example, Wahba and Chun (8) illustrate how local governments enhance competitiveness by supporting creative industries. Similarly, the education sector must adopt accountability mechanisms that support both cultural identity and innovation in teaching practices.

Beyond Iran, advocacy frameworks in cultural and educational policy highlight the importance of professional engagement in shaping public agendas. Schuster and colleagues (9) present a legislative advocacy model that emphasizes the role of students and professionals in advancing public accountability. Applied to the context of schools, this suggests that teachers, administrators, and even students must become active agents in cultural and social policy implementation. This approach parallels calls for greater social accountability in education, particularly in dimensions such as health and physical education.

The literature further emphasizes that cultural policy models require localized adaptation. Ansari and colleagues (10) propose transformational approaches in higher education institutions, highlighting the need to move beyond traditional bureaucratic mechanisms. In schools, too, transformational models of accountability can bridge the gap between cultural aspirations and educational practices. Such approaches are particularly relevant when considering how schools address the biological and physical needs of students as part of their holistic development.

Cultural accountability is also linked to broader community identity and self-esteem. Skillman (11) shows how community advocacy for culture can strengthen collective identity. Applied to school contexts, this perspective indicates that educational accountability must incorporate cultural participation to foster stronger ties between schools and their communities. In Norway, Røyseng and colleagues (12) reveal how performance measurement can both enhance and constrain professional autonomy in

cultural institutions. This insight is significant for schools, where evaluation systems must balance accountability with professional autonomy of teachers and administrators.

Iranian research highlights deep-rooted policy shortcomings that require structural transformation. Mehdipour (13) introduces a three-base model of instruments for cultural policy implementation, stressing the need for coherence across institutions. Likewise, Mahdavi and colleagues (14) analyze cultural development policies within Iran's Fifth Development Plan, underscoring systemic weaknesses. These studies point to the relevance of designing comprehensive accountability frameworks that connect cultural, educational, and social objectives at multiple levels of governance.

Comparative studies enrich this discussion by offering insights into cultural participation and its relationship with educational governance. Oman and Taylor (15) show how subjective well-being intersects with cultural advocacy, a finding that highlights the emotional and psychological dimensions of accountability in education. Similarly, Lluís and Emmanuel (16) document the participatory turn in cultural policy, underscoring the importance of community involvement in decision-making. These findings align with Ebn Yamini's (17) work on cultural identity, which emphasizes the necessity of comparative perspectives in cultural policy.

Within Iran, cultural diplomacy has been another area of concern. Azhdari and colleagues (18) highlight weaknesses in Iran's cultural diplomacy strategies, pointing to the broader challenge of connecting national cultural objectives with educational institutions. Cultural diplomacy is not only a foreign policy tool but also a framework for embedding global cultural values within domestic education systems. Schools, therefore, must serve as both transmitters of local cultural identity and as agents of international cultural dialogue.

The literature further stresses the need for effective advocacy strategies in influencing government policy. Cullerton and colleagues (19) provide a conceptual model for nutrition policy advocacy, while their earlier work identifies barriers to policy change (20). These studies highlight that advocacy in education must similarly confront structural barriers, whether in curriculum development, teacher training, or health promotion. Schools must engage in systematic advocacy to secure the resources and recognition needed for biological and physical education.

Broader theoretical debates also shape the discourse on cultural accountability. Meyrick and Barnett (21) critique Australian cultural policy in the context of global change, raising questions about cultural sustainability. Engelstad (22) examines the role of power elites in cultural fields, revealing how governance structures influence cultural outcomes. These insights are critical for understanding how educational accountability operates within hierarchical systems of power.

The Iranian literature also reflects long-standing concerns about the pathology of cultural policy-making. Moghtaddaei and Azghandi (23) analyze policy failures in Iran, while Mosleh and Alizadeh (24) review existing models of cultural policy-making. Together, these works emphasize the persistent need for reform and the challenges of aligning policy objectives with actual practice. For schools, these challenges translate into inconsistent strategies for implementing accountability, particularly in the area of health and physical education.

Earlier discussions on governmental cultural structures provide historical context. Gray and Wingfield (25) empirically examined the importance of governmental culture departments, questioning their capacity to shape effective cultural governance. These insights remain relevant today, as cultural accountability in education requires institutional support and coherent governance mechanisms that extend from ministries to local schools.

Recent scholarship further highlights the intersection of education, belonging, and cultural identity. Yelland and colleagues (26) examine student identity and belonging across global cities, showing that cultural participation is central to educational engagement. Silke and colleagues (27) also demonstrate how social-emotional learning programs foster empathy and

accountability in schools. These findings reinforce the view that accountability in education must extend beyond administrative mechanisms to include social, emotional, and cultural dimensions.

Porter and colleagues (28) offer a contemporary example by exploring how physical education uniform policies affect body image and student engagement. Their findings highlight the intersection of accountability, he alth, and cultural norms in schools. This is particularly relevant for Iranian contexts, where issues of biological and physical education are intertwined with cultural identity and social expectations.

Taken together, the literature demonstrates a consistent call for more coherent, participatory, and accountable frameworks in educational governance. Schools must serve not only as academic institutions but also as cultural and social hubs that foster health, identity, and participation. Addressing the biological and physical dimensions of education within this framework is essential to meeting contemporary challenges in both Iranian and global contexts. The purpose of this study was to present a model of social accountability of secondary school authorities with an emphasis on the dimension of biological and physical education.

### **Methods and Materials**

The purpose of this study was to present a model of social accountability of secondary school authorities with an emphasis on the dimension of biological and physical education. Based on the method of data collection, this research is descriptive—analytical, and in terms of research orientation, it follows an inductive—deductive approach. Participants in the qualitative method of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis were 21 university experts, administrators, and teachers from Mazandaran Province, who had published related articles and had more than 10 years of experience in the field of social accountability in biological and physical education in schools. Sampling was conducted purposefully. Initial interview questions were designed through documentary study of books, articles, and related research. Before conducting each interview, the researcher provided explanations to the interviewees regarding the subject and objectives of the research and then asked them to respond to the interview questions. It should be noted that the researcher, with due respect, asked the participants to determine the appropriate time for the interview themselves so that they could answer with full ease. Furthermore, the researcher collected all interviews using both audio recording and note-taking. After preparing the written transcripts of the participants' responses, the process of examining the explicit and implicit content of the collected data from statements and texts began. The aim of this process was to extract the components of the social accountability model of secondary school authorities with an emphasis on the dimension of biological and physical education, using the qualitative approach of thematic analysis. The interview transcripts were analyzed with MAXQDA software.

### Findings and Results

As shown in Table 1, out of a total of 21 participants, 19% (4 individuals) were women and 81% (17 individuals) were men; 71% (15 individuals) held doctoral degrees and 29% (6 individuals) held master's degrees; 9% (2 individuals) had between 1 to 10 years of experience, 62% (13 individuals) had between 11 to 20 years of experience, and 29% (6 individuals) had over 21 years of experience; 33% (7 individuals) were between 30 to 40 years old, 43% (9 individuals) were between 41 to 50 years old, and 24% (5 individuals) were 51 years and older.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Interview Participants** 

| Interviewee Code | Position                                                   | Education | Work Experience | Age | Gender |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----|--------|
| 1                | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 10 years        | 36  | Male   |
| 2                | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 16 years        | 48  | Male   |
| 3                | Deputy of Cultural and Educational Affairs, General Office | Ph.D.     | 28 years        | 59  | Male   |
| 4                | Senior Expert of Women's Affairs, General Office           | M.A.      | 26 years        | 57  | Male   |
| 5                | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 15 years        | 48  | Male   |
| 6                | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 10 years        | 44  | Female |
| 7                | Head of County Education Department                        | M.A.      | 14 years        | 45  | Male   |
| 8                | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 12 years        | 43  | Male   |
| 9                | Deputy of Physical Education and Health, General Office    | Ph.D.     | 18 years        | 46  | Male   |
| 10               | Head of County Education Department                        | M.A.      | 12 years        | 36  | Male   |
| 11               | Head of Parents and Teachers Association Department        | Ph.D.     | 27 years        | 55  | Male   |
| 12               | Head of County Education Department                        | M.A.      | 25 years        | 53  | Male   |
| 13               | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 13 years        | 37  | Male   |
| 14               | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 11 years        | 35  | Male   |
| 15               | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 22 years        | 48  | Male   |
| 16               | Head of Non-Governmental and Public Participation Schools  | Ph.D.     | 15 years        | 38  | Male   |
| 17               | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 12 years        | 36  | Female |
| 18               | University Faculty Member                                  | Ph.D.     | 17 years        | 44  | Female |
| 19               | Head of County Education Department                        | Ph.D.     | 20 years        | 55  | Female |
| 20               | Head of County Education Department                        | M.A.      | 18 years        | 40  | Male   |
| 21               | Head of County Education Department                        | M.A.      | 22 years        | 45  | Male   |

All stages of qualitative thematic analysis were conducted according to the six-step approach presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first stage, familiarization with the data, the researcher transcribed all recorded interviews by hand before beginning coding, listened to the interviews again, and compared them with the handwritten transcripts to ensure no sentence was omitted. The transcripts were then typed in Microsoft Word, and all data from the interviews were read once more.

The second stage, generating initial codes, began when the typed interview transcripts were transferred from Microsoft Word to MAXQDA, and the interviews were coded. In total, 158 initial codes were obtained.

In the third stage, searching for selective codes, incomplete or irrelevant codes, as well as duplicate codes, were excluded, resulting in 56 selective codes. In interviews 20 and 21, due to theoretical saturation, no new codes were identified.

In the fourth stage, forming sub-themes, from 70 selective codes identified in the previous stage, 56 basic themes were extracted. At this stage, the researcher aggregated the selective codes into broader semantic categories, leading to the identification of sub-themes and main themes, with 10 sub-themes identified.

The fifth stage began when a satisfactory picture of the sub-themes had emerged. In this study, the definition and naming of the main themes and the preparation of the thematic analysis report were carried out based on the classification of themes in the thematic network into basic themes, organizing themes, and overarching themes. As presented in Table 2 and Figure 1 (output of MAXQDA software), the extracted sub-themes, also referred to as organizing themes, were categorized and presented under six overarching themes: awareness and education; parental and community participation; resources and facilities; management and leadership; and evaluation and supervision system.

Table 2. Basic, Organizing, and Overarching Themes Extracted from the Interviews

| Basic Theme                                                                                                   | Sub-Themes                                                                                         | Overarching Themes                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Awareness and Education                                                                                       | Awareness of teachers and principals regarding the importance of biological and physical education | Holding workshops and training courses in this field                                           |
| Preparing and distributing educational resources                                                              |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Creating or using online platforms and webinars in this area                                                  |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Inviting specialists to hold educational and                                                                  |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| counseling sessions in schools                                                                                |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
|                                                                                                               | Educational programs for promoting students' physical and mental health                            | Developing motor skills                                                                        |
| Raising awareness about mental health                                                                         |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Organizing healthy nutrition workshops                                                                        |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Planning school meals                                                                                         |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Creating spaces for social interaction                                                                        |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Encouraging students to participate in volunteer and community service activities                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Establishing a counseling unit in the school and providing psychological support for students                 |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Parental and Community Participation                                                                          | Parents' collaboration in health-related educational programs                                      | Organizing regular orientation meetings with parents to introduce related programs             |
| Using technology or educational platforms for information sharing and exchanging views with                   |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| parents                                                                                                       |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Creating parent committees for planning and implementing relevant activities                                  |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Holding training workshops for parents                                                                        |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Encouraging parents to monitor their children's habits                                                        |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
|                                                                                                               | The role of community and local institutions in supporting educational activities                  | Collaborating with local organizations to provide financial resources and necessary facilities |
| Forming local networks for planning and implementing group educational activities                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Holding festivals or events with the participation of families, students, and local institutions              |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Organizing sports competitions with community participation                                                   |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Creating and maintaining sports facilities for students' physical and recreational activities                 |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Supporting the establishment of libraries, art, and cultural centers aimed at improving education             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Resources and Facilities                                                                                      | Access to sports equipment and suitable educational spaces                                         | Launching fundraising campaigns                                                                |
| Using local and national support programs aimed at promoting students' health and physical activity           |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Encouraging community members to cooperate with schools in organizing sports programs and providing equipment |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
| Pursuing renovation and improvement projects for sports and educational facilities                            |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |
|                                                                                                               | Recreational facilities and extracurricular activities                                             | Designing multiple types of activities such as fine arts, mental health, and various sports    |

Organizing seasonal classes (e.g., swimming classes in summer) Holding recreational camps Establishing reward systems and friendly competitions in extracurricular activities Holding ceremonies honoring outstanding students in various areas Management and Leadership Leadership style of school principals in Applying transformational leadership promoting a culture of health and physical education Creating a culture of participation Forming health teams composed of teachers, counselors, parents, and experts Active participation of teachers in decisionmaking and planning educational and sports programs Promoting a culture of health in the school community to raise awareness regarding health and physical education concepts Developing transparent and measurable programs for improving students' physical and mental health Establishing a supportive environment for Investing in sports facilities, parks, and biological and physical activities biological centers Providing financial support from the government and private sector for sports and biological programs Training and capacity building for coaches, sports instructors, and volunteers to raise professional standards Developing and implementing policies that lead to physical activity and a healthy lifestyle Launching awareness-raising campaigns Defining clear objectives, including Evaluation and Supervision System Evaluation systems for assessing the effectiveness of educational programs health promotion Identifying evaluation indicators such as the level of student participation and health improvements Designing surveys and questionnaires for students, parents, and teachers Observing and practically evaluating students' behavior and performance Collecting and analyzing data obtained from surveys Preparing periodic reports to assess program effectiveness and provide feedback Comparing results with best practices Supervision of adherence to health Establishing health standards standards in schools Mandatory and continuous training for teachers, educational staff, and students Appointing a health officer Creating health committees Conducting planned inspections Encouraging healthy behaviors Using health-related applications

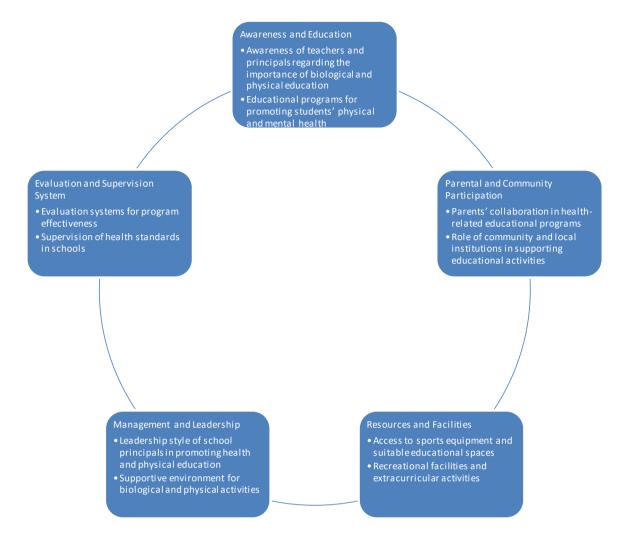


Figure 1. Model of Social Accountability of Secondary School Authorities with an Emphasis on Biological and Physical Education Extracted from MAXQDA Software

# **Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to develop a model of social accountability of secondary school authorities with an emphasis on the dimension of biological and physical education. Through thematic analysis of 21 expert interviews, five overarching themes were identified: awareness and education, parental and community participation, resources and facilities, management and leadership, and evaluation and supervision systems. Together, these themes constitute a comprehensive framework for understanding how social accountability can be embedded in the cultural and educational responsibilities of schools. The results show that accountability in the educational field is multidimensional, involving both internal mechanisms within schools and external relationships with families, communities, and broader governance structures.

The first major finding of this study relates to the role of awareness and education. Participants emphasized that teachers and principals must be equipped with adequate training and resources to understand the importance of biological and physical education. This finding aligns with Porter and colleagues (28), who revealed that issues such as uniform policies in physical education significantly affect students' engagement and body image, thereby necessitating teacher awareness of the

psychosocial dimensions of physical education. Similarly, Silke and colleagues (27) found that school-based social and emotional learning programs enhance empathy and accountability, underscoring the importance of training educators in holistic approaches. Within Iran, Soleimani and colleagues (5) also pointed out that strengthening cultural identity among youth requires deliberate educational strategies, which resonates with the present finding that awareness-building is a critical foundation for social accountability.

The second overarching theme, parental and community participation, highlights the importance of cooperative relationships between schools and families. The findings demonstrated that parent committees, orientation sessions, and partnerships with local organizations are essential mechanisms for accountability. This result is consistent with Zare and Safari (2), who emphasized that social support systems for vulnerable children depend heavily on cooperation between formal institutions and families. Globally, Yelland and colleagues (26) documented how students' sense of belonging and identity are shaped by their interactions with family and school activities, indicating that cultural and social participation must be embedded in school practices. Wahba and Chun (8) further confirm that local governments can strengthen competitiveness by supporting creative and cultural sectors, suggesting that schools, as local institutions, must also actively collaborate with community structures to expand opportunities for youth development.

The third finding concerns resources and facilities. Participants identified significant challenges regarding access to proper sports equipment, extracurricular programs, and recreational opportunities. The availability of resources is a crucial determinant of accountability, as schools cannot implement effective biological and physical education without adequate facilities. This finding supports earlier analyses by Mahdavi and colleagues (14), who identified systemic weaknesses in Iran's Fifth Development Plan concerning cultural development, particularly in terms of resource allocation. At the international level, Mickov (4) emphasized that cultural sectors can contribute to sustainable economic development through creative investments, indicating that similar investments in educational facilities are necessary for accountability and sustainability. Røyseng and colleagues (12) also highlighted the tension between performance measurement and resource autonomy in cultural institutions, which parallels the need for schools to secure resources without undermining professional flexibility.

The fourth key finding relates to management and leadership. The results indicated that transformational leadership styles, transparent planning, and the creation of participatory cultures are central to accountability in schools. This resonates strongly with the work of Ansari and colleagues (10), who proposed a transformational model of cultural policy-making in higher education. Applied to secondary schools, such models encourage principals and administrators to involve teachers, parents, and students in decision-making. Similarly, Schuster and colleagues (9) demonstrated the importance of advocacy and professional engagement in shaping public policies, which is echoed in this study's finding that school leaders must serve as advocates for health and education. In the Iranian context, Zargham Afshar and colleagues (1) revealed structural weaknesses in policy-making processes, showing that without strong leadership and accountability frameworks, policies are unlikely to achieve their intended outcomes.

The fifth overarching theme is evaluation and supervision systems, which participants considered essential for ensuring the effectiveness of educational and health programs. The development of clear objectives, performance indicators, surveys, and monitoring mechanisms reflects the global trend toward evidence-based accountability. This result aligns with Entezari and Derakhshan (7), who argued that the culture economy requires rigorous policy analysis and monitoring frameworks to remain effective. Similarly, Gray and Wingfield (25) questioned the effectiveness of governmental culture departments, emphasizing the need for strong evaluation structures to measure outcomes. Internationally, Oman and Taylor (15) stressed that subjective well-being must also be measured within advocacy frameworks, showing that evaluation systems must address not only quantitative but also qualitative aspects of accountability. Within the Iranian policy landscape, Sohrabi and Ghasemi (3)

demonstrated how weak performance in the Sixth Development Plan undermined cultural and educational outcomes, reinforcing the need for robust evaluation mechanisms.

Taken together, the results of this study contribute to the broader literature on cultural and educational policy. The identification of five interrelated themes suggests that accountability in schools is not limited to administrative structures but is deeply embedded in cultural, social, and community contexts. This multidimensional approach echoes findings by Lluís and Emmanuel (16), who argued that cultural policy has increasingly taken a participatory turn, requiring active engagement of stakeholders at multiple levels. Likewise, Ebn Yamini (17) emphasized the comparative perspectives of cultural identity and policy, which suggest that Iranian schools must not only adopt domestic frameworks of accountability but also learn from international practices.

The findings also reflect the persistent pathologies of policy-making in Iran. Studies by Moghtaddaei and Azghandi (23), Mosleh and Alizadeh (24), and Azhdari and colleagues (18) highlight long-standing challenges in policy coherence and implementation. The present study extends this literature by showing how these weaknesses manifest at the school level, particularly in biological and physical education. Without comprehensive models of accountability, policies remain fragmented, resources underutilized, and communities disengaged. This underscores the necessity of integrated accountability frameworks that link policy-making, school governance, and community participation.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that accountability is not solely a matter of institutional design but also of cultural practice. Meyerick and Barnett (21) described how cultural policies in Australia faced challenges in adapting to global realities, while Engelstad (22) examined how power elites influence cultural outcomes. These findings parallel the Iranian context, where cultural accountability in education is shaped by both institutional hierarchies and broader sociopolitical structures. Schools, therefore, must navigate these dynamics by fostering inclusive, transparent, and participatory practices.

Finally, the integration of international and local perspectives reveals that accountability in biological and physical education requires not only administrative mechanisms but also advocacy and cultural sensitivity. Cullerton and colleagues (19, 20) demonstrated how effective advocacy strategies can overcome barriers to policy change, suggesting that schools must also adopt advocacy strategies to secure resources and recognition for health programs. Skillman (11) further emphasized the role of cultural advocacy in building community self-esteem, which resonates with the finding that schools must strengthen ties with families and communities to enhance accountability.

This study, while comprehensive, is not without limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single Iranian province (Mazandaran), and the findings may not fully reflect the diversity of cultural and educational practices across the country. Second, the reliance on qualitative interviews, while valuable for capturing in-depth insights, may limit the generalizability of the results to larger populations. Third, the study focused exclusively on experts, managers, and teachers, and did not directly include the voices of students or parents, whose perspectives are central to the implementation of social accountability. Finally, although the thematic analysis captured a wide range of issues, it is possible that some nuanced perspectives were overlooked due to the constraints of interview design and time.

Future research should expand the scope of investigation by incorporating multiple provinces and diverse school contexts, including rural and urban settings, to capture regional variations in accountability practices. Longitudinal studies could also provide valuable insights into how accountability frameworks evolve over time and how they impact student outcomes. Additionally, mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys could strengthen the robustness of findings. Future studies should also prioritize the perspectives of students and parents, ensuring that account ability models reflect the lived experiences of those most affected. Comparative studies between Iran and other countries in the region could further illuminate best practices and provide policymakers with evidence-based recommendations for reform.

In practice, the findings suggest that educational authorities should invest in professional development programs for teachers and administrators, with a focus on the biological and physical dimensions of education. Schools should establish structured mechanisms for parental and community participation, such as advisory committees and joint initiatives with local organizations. Resource allocation should prioritize the development of sports facilities, extracurricular programs, and health services within schools. Principals and school leaders should adopt transformational leadership practices, fostering participatory decision-making and transparent planning. Finally, evaluation systems should be strengthened to ensure continuous monitoring, feedback, and improvement of accountability practices, aligning with both national cultural policies and global educational standards.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

Not applicable.

# **Declaration of Interest**

The author of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

# **Transparency of Data**

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

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