REPUBLIC OF TURKIYE
ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Business Administration

THE ROLE OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Master Thesis

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Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Aslıhan ÜNAL

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Turkish Abstract	**:**	Bu araştırmada liderliğin Bağdat'taki kamu kurumlarının işyeri kültürünü nasıl etkilediği incelenmektedir. Bu amaçla nitel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiş ve fenomenolojik desen kullanılmıştır. Veriler, Bağdat Belediyesine bağlı farklı birimlerden sorumlu 10 belediye yöneticisiyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Bulgular, Iraklı liderlerin geleneksel (Batılı) dönüşümcü, hizmetkâr ve durumsal liderlik biçimlerinin ötesine geçen "hibrit" bir liderlik türü uyguladıklarını göstermektedir. Dönüşümcü, hizmetkâr ve durumsal liderlik uygulamaları Iraklı liderler arasında açıkça görülmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Iraklı liderler ülkenin kendine özgü kültürel, politik ve idari gerçekliklerinin şekillendirdiği güçlü etik, kişilerarası, insan odaklı ve

pratik liderlik uygulamaları sergilemişlerdir. Örneğin liderler, aşırı kaynak kısıtları, siyasi müdahaleler ve yüksek kamu beklentileriyle karşı karşıyadır; bu nedenle adaleti sağlamak, açık iletişimi sürdürmek, çalışanları motive etmek, çalışanlarla güven inşa etmek ve olumlu bir çalışma ortamı yaratmak için çalışanları güçlendirmek gibi sorumluluklar taşımaktadırlar.

Bunlar tercih edilen liderlik yöntemleri değildir, ancak örgütsel istikrarı korumak ve örgütün günlük olarak işlev görmesine izin vermek için gereklidirler.unlar tercih edilen liderlik yöntemleri değildir, ancak örgütsel istikrarı korumak ve örgütün günlük olarak işlev görmesine izin vermek için gereklidirler. Ayrıca belediye yöneticileriyle yapılan görüşmeler, Bağdat'ta liderliğin çok boyutlu olduğunu ve liderlerin çalışanlarını motive edebilmeleri, sorunları çözebilmeleri, teknik uzman olarak hizmet edebilmeleri ve çalışanlarının refahını destekleyebilmelerine ihtiyaç olduğunu daha da destekledi. Belediye yöneticileri, liderlerinden yalnızca onları motive etmelerini ve yönlendirmelerini değil, aynı zamanda kişisel meselelerinde onlara yardımcı olmalarını, adil muamele görmelerini ve operasyonel zorlukları ele almalarını bekler.elediye yöneticileri, liderlerinden yalnızca onları motive etmelerini ve yönlendirmelerini değil, aynı zamanda kişisel meselelerinde onlara yardımcı olmalarını, adil muamele görmelerini ve operasyonel zorlukları ele almalarını bekler. Yeterince Irak'ın kamu sektöründe liderlik karmaşıklığı açıklayabilecek kimse teorik bir yaklaşım olduğunu bu araştırma elde edilen bulgulara dayalı olarak ortaya çıkmıştı. Bu nedenle, bu araştırmanın bulgularına dayanarak, Irak kamu sektöründeki etkili liderlik, yöneticilerin kendilerine yöneltilen sürekli değişen

taleplere çözümler geliştirmelerine ve tüm çalışanlar için çalışma ortamını iyileştirmelerine olanak tanıyan esnek ve bağlam temelli bir liderlik modeli olarak en iyi şekilde açıklanmaktadır.

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Baraa Estabraq Salman AL-SALIHI

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Istanbul – 2025

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other persons have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

Baraa Estabraq Salman AL-SALIHI

…/…/2025

TO ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY

THE DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE

The thesis study of Baraa Estabraq Salman AL-SALIHI titled as The Role of Effective Leadership in Improving the Work Environment has been accepted as MASTER THESIS in the department of Business Administration by our jury.

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APPROVAL

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Director of the Institute

SUMMARY

The way leadership affects Baghdad's governmental agencies' workplace culture is investigated in this research. For this purpose a qualitative approach was adopted and phenomenology design was followed. Data were gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 Ten municipal managers who are responsible for different departments within the Baghdad municipality.

Findings indicate that Iraqi leaders apply a "hybrid" form of leadership that goes beyond the traditional (Western) forms of transformational, servant and situational leadership. Transformational, servant, situational leadership practices are clearly present among Iraqi leaders. However, Iraqi leaders have demonstrated strong ethical, interpersonal, people-oriented and practical leadership practices which are formed by the unique cultural, political and administrative realities of Iraq. For example, the leaders face extreme resource limitations, political interference, and high public expectations and, therefore, have an obligation to implement justice, maintain open communication, motivate employees, build trust with employees, and empower employees to create a positive work environment.

These are not preferred methods of leadership, however they are necessary to maintain organizational stability and allow the organization to function on a day-to-day basis. In addition, interviews with municipal managers further supported that leadership is multi-dimensional in Baghdad and that there is a need for leaders to be able to motivate their employees, solve problems, serve as technical experts, and support the welfare of their employees. Municipal managers expect their leaders to not only motivate and direct them, but to assist them with their personal issues, provide fair treatment, and address operational challenges. Based upon the findings from this research, it was clear that there was no one theoretical approach that could adequately explain the complexity of leadership in Iraq's public sector. Therefore, based upon the findings of this research, effective leadership in Iraq's public sector is best explained as being a flexible and context-based model of leadership that allows managers to develop solutions to the ever changing demands placed upon them and improve the work environment for all employees.

Key Words: Leadership, Management, Work Environment, Phenomenology

ÖZET

Bu araştırmada liderliğin Bağdat'taki kamu kurumlarının işyeri kültürünü nasıl etkilediği incelenmektedir. Bu amaçla nitel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiş ve fenomenolojik desen kullanılmıştır. Veriler, Bağdat Belediyesine bağlı farklı birimlerden sorumlu 10 belediye yöneticisiyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmıştır.

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Anahtar kelimeler: Liderlik, Yönetim, İş Çevresi, Fenomenoloji

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ABBREVIATIONS

IPA	**:**	Interpretive Phenomenological Approach
LMX	**:**	Leader-Member-Exchange Theory
P1-P10	**:**	Participants One to Ten

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PREFACE

I undertook this research project entitled " The Role of Effective Leadership in Improving the Work Environment " to determine how different forms of leadership have an effect on the quality, stability and success of organizational environments, with particular reference to governmental departments in Baghdad. My motivation for pursuing this research arose out of the increasing number of difficulties encountered by public sector organizations working under the stresses of various environmental factors (political, cultural and administrative). In these difficult settings, the role of a leader extends beyond task direction to promoting trust amongst staff members, inspiring staff and maintaining organizational success.

In researching for this dissertation, I endeavored to establish an understanding of the theory of leadership as well as the everyday experience of leaders who are responsible for balancing numerous conflicting demands, limited resource bases and high levels of expectation from the public and government. Through the perspectives of departmental managers, and by comparing their views with those of established international leadership theories, this dissertation seeks to offer a more accurate representation of leadership as practiced in the Iraqi environment.

The completion of this project was both professionally and personally rewarding. I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to those interview participants who provided their time and insight during periods of high workload. Their participation was critical to illustrating the hybrid, adaptable nature of leadership which exists within the governmental institutions in Baghdad.

My hope is that this dissertation may be helpful to all leaders and employees who strive to develop better, more supportive workplaces. Further, I expect that the research findings included in this dissertation will add value to the field of leadership studies, and contribute positively to ongoing efforts to improve organizational environments in Iraq, and globally.

INTRODUCTION

Today's organizational research demonstrates that successful leadership is a primary factor for an institution’s success and for creating high-quality work environments. Today, leadership is viewed more as an interactive, motivational, and committed approach to influence and less as an exercise of formal authority to achieve common goals. (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2020). Organizations with effective leadership will be able to compete successfully; adapt to both local and international challenges; create an inclusive environment that fosters collaborative and innovative work practices.

For a long time leadership has been an important part of management theory. However, it has developed through various stages of development. Leadership has initially been associated with those inherent characteristics of leaders including intelligence, self-confidence and charisma (Stogdill, 1948). Subsequently, the behavioral and contingency approaches have shifted the emphasis from what a leader does and the context in which they are effective. (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; House, 1971 Over the past few decades there has been an emphasis in the transformational leadership literature on transforming follower value systems and inspiring them to work toward a common vision. (Bass &Riggio, 2006), Transformational leadership models also include transactional leadership; this is focused on providing clarity of purpose and maintaining performance discipline. (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). This illustrates how developing theory indicates that leadership is a complex and multi-dimensional process that will vary across contexts (organizational or culture) and will require some degree of flexibility and adaptability in response to those varying contexts.

Leadership theories in recent times have shown a move from values, ethics and an ability to adjust to unstable environments. A key element of authentic leadership is the ability to be transparent; build trust through integrity; and empower people by giving them opportunities to grow in order to build trust with others (Walumbwa et al., 2008), Servant leadership is about empowerment and putting the needs of others first before your own authority within a hierarchy (Eva et al., 2019). Adaptive Leadership was developed as a way to help leaders respond to rapidly changing and crisis situations. (Heifetz et al., 2009), digital leadership has come to be considered essential as a result of the accelerated pace of technological change and the increased

reliance upon remote working environments. (Avolio et al., 2014). collectively, these models demonstrate that leadership is evolving from traditional authoritative forms to collaborative and ethical types of leadership which are better suited to the needs of contemporary workplaces.

Effective leadership impacts the workplace in many ways; it increases employee job satisfaction, improves employee commitment to an organization, and promotes employee innovation and creativity. The leadership style also influences the culture of an organization by instilling an organization with a set of values that include the creation of trust among employees, collaboration between employees and their leaders and/or colleagues, and fairness amongst all employees. (Schein, 2010; Schneider et al., 2013). Numerous studies have documented that using participative or transformational leadership styles will improve employee engagement, and decrease the rate at which an employer loses employees through voluntary turnover. (Newman et al., 2022; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In contrast to effective leadership, dysfunctional leadership will create an environment of high stress, low employee morale, and poor ability to be adaptable. (Tourish, 2013).

Due to the economic pressure on institutions, and the lack of resources and social complexities in countries such as Iraq, in the Arab region, the need for effective leadership is magnified. As research has demonstrated, leaders who are able to adopt a more flexible and participatory style of leadership can decrease the internal resistance to change, and increase their organization's ability to be adaptable. (Al-Khajeh, 2018). Effective leadership fosters an environment of trust, equity and inclusion in the workplace which will result in a better working environment and a stable institution over time that will contribute to the overall development of the country.

The aim of this study is to integrate all of the above mentioned elements to develop a complete model for understanding and utilizing leadership as a theory and practice; demonstrating how effective leadership creates a workplace culture that produces an exceptionally performing institution while providing an environment for employee well-being.

CHAPTER ONE

LEADERSHIP

One of the most researched areas in management and organizational studies is leadership because of how important it is to the long-term viability of institutions and their ability to adapt to new and ever-changing environments. While leadership can be formally defined as authority and/or an administrative role, leadership can also be defined as a social process that involves ongoing interactive dynamics between leaders and followers with the goal of influencing followers and motivating them toward shared objectives (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2020). The results of recent research show that successful leadership is what creates the distinction between an inspiring and growing organization that fosters new ideas, and an uninspiring organization lacking in harmony and adaptability. A leader can foster and encourage job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and an environment that stimulates creativity and renewal. (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Hoch et al., 2018).

As the rate of change around the globe is increasing (globalization, digital revolution, and health/economic crises), leadership is no longer simply an operational task; it is a strategic necessity in order to navigate today's complex realities. (Heifetz et al., 2009; Zeike et al., 2019). Leaders today are expected to inspire motivation; to handle diverse cultures; to create trust; and to support organizational justice in the contemporary environment. (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Eva et al., 2019). These dimensions reflect the shift from classical perspectives to more comprehensive approaches that respond to the requirements of the modern work environment.

Effective leadership has an important role to play beyond the global arena, it has a distinct value for Arab and Iraqi organizations which are challenged with unique obstacles including; resource shortages, financial pressure, and complex social and political issues. A strong organizational culture can be created through a successful leadership that creates an atmosphere of fairness, openness, and a secure and motivating workplace environment. There have been recent research studies in the Arab world that show that organizations lacking in flexible and genuine leadership have high employee stress, and employees' sense of belonging to their organization is low. Conversely, adopting contemporary forms of leadership like

adaptive and servant leadership has provided organizations with enhanced capacity to deal with crisis, and greater organizational stability. (Al-Khajeh, 2018).

Due to the theory-based and practice-based significance of the above; this chapter is intended to provide an integrated and complete academic basis to understand leadership via three interconnected dimensions:

1. The concept of leadership - An examination of the many different ways of defining it as well as the development of the concept throughout the various Schools of Thought
2. Theoretical basis for leadership - A review of the major theories that describe how leaders act and influence their organizational environment.
3. The chapter discusses contemporary views on leadership (Servant, Authentic, Adaptive, Digital) which have been developed in reaction to changes brought about by globalization and technological advancements.

This chapter develops a theory based upon the idea of understanding leadership as a means to create a better work environment and achieve a balance between organizational needs and employee satisfaction and well-being, in accordance with the aims of this thesis.

1.1 The Concept of Leadership

Due to the importance of the development of successful organizations and effective and adaptable work environments, leadership has become a central focus in both organizational studies and organizational management research. Because of the variety of views on the nature of leadership, many different conceptualizations or definitions of leadership have developed over time as theories of management have evolved; therefore, it is important to review all the definitions that exist in order to understand the various aspects of leadership and how it affects the workplace.

1.1.1 Classical definitions

Early research on leadership defined the subject through the characteristics of the individual who was in a position of leadership. The personality or other individual characteristics of a person were seen to include aspects such as intelligence, motivation and confidence which would enable them to lead others

(Stogdill, 1948). However, researchers have questioned this approach, as the social and organizational context was ignored by Stogdill (1974), and therefore the interaction between the leader and their followers; and ultimately the effectiveness of the leadership, are impacted directly by the workplace environment.

1.1.2 Transformational leadership

The end of the 1970s brought about a large-scale transformation in the leadership paradigm with Burns' (1978) introduction of the concept of transformational leadership as an approach to increase people's self-awareness and transform their values. Bass (1990) expanded upon this theory through including practical aspects such as inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, all of which impacted the work environment positively by increasing creativity and building a loyal organizational culture. A number of subsequent research studies have identified transformational leadership as being positively related to employee job satisfaction and organizational performance. (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Hoch et al., 2018).

1.1.3 Modern definitions

Increasingly in modern-day views, leadership is becoming seen as an interpersonal influence process, with leaders and followers involved in continuous interaction. Yukl (2020) stated that leaders direct people and build their commitment to goals; while Northouse (2021) defines the role of the leader as a mutual influence process in both organizational and social settings. Research has also found that the most successful forms of leadership are those which create workplaces that have a culture of justice, innovation, and trust. (Dinh et al., 2014; Eva et al., 2019 The new forms of leadership (digital leadership) contribute to an organization's capacity to be adaptable in a world of technological (Zeike et al., 2019), change and that authentic leadership provides a level of trust within an organization. (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Comparing both traditional and modern definitions of leadership, we see that this understanding is evolving away from being about the leader's individual characteristics to be seen as an interactive, social process for leading (influencing), motivating, and creating an organization's vision. The multiple viewpoints regarding this subject have emphasized the need for a distinction between leadership, and two similar, but distinct organizational functions; management, and supervision, as well

as, the tendency to confuse them, in literature and practice. Therefore, to better comprehend how they can support one another in developing an optimal, and healthy, work environment, it is essential to identify their similarities and differences. (Kotter, 1990; Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2020).

1.2. Differences between Leadership, Management, and Supervision

The concepts of leadership, management and supervision are often confused or referred to in the same context in the literature and in practice; however, it is necessary to differentiate between the concepts so that we can understand their roles in the workplace environment. Leadership, management and supervision are not conflicting, but complementary concepts. Each of these concepts contributes to the balance of strategic planning, operational implementation, and organizational discipline.

Management vs. Leadership; Leadership is concerned with establishing a vision for the future, motivating employees, and creating an organizational culture that is built around common values. The role of leadership is to create a work environment in which employees can reach their highest potential, and to influence the future of the organization. Northouse (2021) emphasizes that leadership is a process of mutual influence, while Yukl (2020) Views this function as inspiring and creating a group effort in pursuing objectives. This role views leadership as important for producing creative solutions, change and resilience.

Management focuses on the design of systems; development of strategies and operational plans; and making the most of available resources. Mintzberg (1975) stated the manager is a person who organizes, plans and controls the organization's performance, and seeks to maintain stability within the organization. Kotter (1990) stated management is primarily focused on the processes of planning, coordinating and controlling. Leadership is focused on changing and inspiring others. In other words, management is the "backbone" of execution; leadership is about moving individuals into a future of their own creation.

Supervision is the operationally lowest level of supervision for employees at work, as it deals directly with the day-to-day oversight of employee activities, monitors employee performance, and ensures that employees are adhering to the organization's policies, rules and regulations. Fayol (1949) described supervision as

having direct control over an organization's workflow to enforce discipline and obedience. The primary role of a supervisor, although they can be performing certain aspects of leadership, is to supervise employees' daily activities and resolve everyday issues rather than create vision or lead change.

Leadership creates a vision for an organization and inspires people to move toward that vision; Management involves planning, organizing, and controlling; Supervision includes day-to-day implementation and follow-through with others. While there are differences between the three, they work together to create effective and successful organizations by providing direction through leadership, creating order and stability through management, and securing discipline and compliance through supervision. Without leadership an organization becomes inflexible and cannot adapt to changing conditions. Without management an organization will become chaotic. And without supervision an organization's plans are poorly implemented.

Upon differentiating leadership from management, and supervising, it has become clear that leadership is one of many organizational dimensions (distinct but interrelated) to management, etc. However, there remains an essential issue; how does the behavior of leaders themselves explain their behavior? Leadership theories have developed various scientific frameworks for understanding what drives some leaders to successfully influence followers while failing others, and how leaders' behaviors affect the workplace.

1.3. Leadership Theories

1.3.1 Trait Theory

The belief that a person's leadership ability is based upon an individual's innate personality traits (e.g. their intelligence, charisma, self-confidence, and level of ambition) (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959).

The thory has many positive impacts on the work environment; this includes allowing for more effective processes of selecting a leader (based upon successful trait(s), such as integrity and/or emotional intelligence) as well as providing additional evidence that demonstrates the relationship between the leader/follower

trust relationship, and that the existence of these traits will have a positive effect on that relationship. (Judge et al., 2002; Antonakis et al., 2017).

• Negative Work Environment Impacts: Overlooks Training and Organization, and Relying Too Much on Those that Have Specific Traits; Also Does Not Provide a Single List of Traits for Practical Application (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2020).

• Analysis: Leadership Attributes Are Important, However This Theory Is Inadequate For Explaining The Dynamic Nature of Leadership Today; Useful Only for Recruitment Purposes; and Provides Limited Guidance for Developing Leaders.

1.3.2 Behavioral Theories

These theories focus on "what" (the actions of) leaders do, in contrast to "who" they are, as illustrated by the Ohio State and Michigan studies as well as the Leadership Grid theory and model. (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

- A Positive Impact: Illustrate that effective leadership is achieved through the balance between accomplishment of tasks and developing relationships; this balance results in higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011).
- Negative effects of this theory: An overemphasis on task related issues can lead to a high stress working environment as well as an emphasis on relationship can lower productivity>(Northouse, 2021; Hoch et al., 2018).
- Critical Analysis: This provided a solid foundation for the development of leader skills; however it did not provide a reason for the success of certain leader behaviors in some environments and the failure of other similar behaviors in different environments leading to the development of Situational Theories.

1.3.3 Contingency and Situational Theories

These theories argue that leadership is not fixed but varies depending on the situation. Major models include Fiedler’s Contingency Model (1967), Path–Goal Theory (House, 1971), and the Situational Leadership Model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

- The positive influence of flexible leadership is that it will give managers the opportunity to adjust to a crisis or change at an organization's pace. (Day &Antonakis, 2012; Oc, 2018).
- The negative influence is that this type of leadership can be difficult to implement when there are many levels within an organization, and the constant switching of leadership styles may confuse employees and cause them to lose confidence in management. (Yukl, 2020).
- More practical than previous theoretical models of flexible leadership provide additional context; however, they do not clearly describe how to implement flexible leadership in certain organizational contexts.

1.3.4 Modern Theories

1.3.4.1 Transactional leadership

Transactional Leadership is probably the most dominant of all contemporary theories that focus on the transactional relationships between superiors/subordinates based on the idea of rewards/punishments. It is assumed by this theory that employees will comply with an organization's rules and regulations as long as they know what their reward will be for doing so and what penalty there will be for failing to do so. (Bass, 1990; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

this style is said to provide a clear sense of roles for employees, and therefore, can improve the level of discipline inside an organization. Additionally, Judge and Piccolo (2004), indicated that Transactional Leadership would lead to a higher degree of compliance with formal policies and procedures, which would lead to increased efficiency and performance.

Though there are some benefits for utilizing the reward/punishment-based system, a sole reliance on such an approach is detrimental to employee's creativity and innovation because employees will generally only focus on completing their minimum job responsibilities as opposed to identifying potential new developments or ideas. According to Hoch et al. (2018), utilizing only a transactional based leadership model limits the ability to develop a creative and innovative environment for employees. As such, transactional leadership models are most successful in

highly disciplined, rule-bound environments; however, they do little to promote a strategic thinking environment or inspire employee creativity over time.

1.3.4.2 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is concerned with creating a lasting transformation in an organization through creating trust and loyalty, and inspiring employees to put the organizations' overall needs ahead of their own individual needs. Transformational leaders are typically seen as visionaries who can inspire employee innovation and change within an organization. Additionally, research has shown that transformational leadership leads to increased employee creativity, stronger employee commitment, and greater leader and subordinate trust among employees and their superiors. (Burns, 1978; Bass &Riggio, 2006; Wang et al., 2011).

Although an excessive dependence on the leader's charm could result in employees being overly dependent upon the leader, this would reduce employee decision making autonomy, increase the vulnerability to organizational instability due to loss of the leader or decrease in leader influence. In addition, Tourish (2013), stated although Transformational Leadership is considered one of the most effective methods to improve the work environment, create a positive transformation and is one of the most influential approaches, there is a fine line between the leader's personal appeal and the formal system within the organization that regulates relationships and prevents deviation.

1.3.4.3 Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is one of the newer frameworks for understanding leadership. LMX is different from other theories because it focuses on the individual relationships between the leader and each of his/her employees. It also treats all employees as separate units. The way a leader interacts with employees can result in two types of groups within the organization. One is referred to as the "in-group" where there are high levels of trust and support among group members. The "out-group," however, will generally receive low levels of support and interaction from the leader, and may be somewhat isolated from the rest of the organization. (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Leader-member exchanges (LMX) are positive for an organization when they have quality exchanges between a supervisor and their employee; however, these types of exchanges could be seen as unfair, or as favoritism toward certain employees and create conflict or low morale at work (Graen&Uhl-Bien, 1995; Eva et al., 2019). While LMX is beneficial to a workplace by creating a sense of community, or a culture of teamwork; it can have a negative effect on a workplace if there is no equal treatment of all employees. The reason being that if some employees feel that the supervisor favors one employee over another, they will either become less productive, or develop less than a positive attitude toward the workplace, which ultimately results in lower morale.

1.4. Contemporary Approaches to Leadership

Modern globalized markets along with rapid technological advancements in addition to continuous social and economic shifts in a rapidly changing world cause significant changes in business environments that are much too complex for traditional leadership theories to be used today as they were originally intended. As a result, contemporary approaches to leadership have been developed to look beyond the traditional perspectives of what is expected from leaders and focus on ethics, the people relationships between leaders and their followers, and their ability to react positively to continuously changing environments.

1.4.1 Authentic leadership

Authentic Leadership has become an increasingly popular alternative to traditional forms of leadership in recent years; particularly over the last twenty years or so due to widespread institutional distrust as a result of the corruption and ethical scandals that have taken place. Authentic Leaders demonstrate to their followers a commitment to a set of core values, are transparent, self-aware and recognize both their strengths and limitations (Avolio& Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

(2008), confirmed that, authentic leadership provides a framework for building trust via credibility & integrity.

- Positive effects: Develops trust; builds organizational "belonging," fosters participation, etc. (Gardner et al., 2011).

- Negative impacts: Overly transparent management can appear weak to employees, strong adherence to personal values may limit a manager's ability to adapt to changing situations. (Northouse, 2021).

- Critique of an Organization: Ethical Sustainability is well-suited to organizations who pursue sustainable development, however, it can be difficult to implement in bureaucratic environments.

1.4.2 Servant leadership

This idea was originally developed by Greenleaf (1977), and as such, it emphasizes that real leaders always put the interests of their followers before themselves. This concept has been widely adopted in educational institutions and non-profits.

- The positive effects are that job satisfaction increases and loyalty is increased, as well as an improved organizational climate is created. (Eva et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019).
- The negative side is that it may lead to a lack of decisiveness from administration and delayed decision making. (Yukl, 2020).
- This method is good for analyzing the human aspect of leadership, however it is much better suited for service based organizations than strictly structured organizations.

1.4.3 Charismatic leadership

The inspirational vision, personal influence of the leader, and motivational aspects of charismatic leadership encourage cultural transformation by motivating employees to work toward larger, better defined goals (Conger & Kanungo, 1998).

- Benefits from Charismatic Leadership: Enhances an organization's dedication to and passion for overcoming challenges, as well as provides a positive impetus for culture change. (Antonakis et al., 2016).
- Harmful Effects of Adaptive Leadership: Excessive reliance upon leaders to create change can be detrimental to an organization’s continuation as an institution when they are gone. (Tourish, 2013).

- Analysis of the Value of Adaptive Leadership: The use of Adaptive Leadership is very useful in making quick decisions to create change; however, the long-term stability of an organization may be undermined by the type of change created through its use.

1.4.4. Adaptive Leadership

Heifetz et al. (2009) introduced the concept of adaptive leadership and developed a model of how organizations can address unexpected crisis situations and/or sudden changes to an organization by engaging the people within that organization in decision-making.

- Positive impact: Equips organizations with the flexibility to face crises and encourages innovation (Day &Antonakis, 2012; Oc, 2018).
- Adverse effects: Employees may be resistant to an environment where they are expected to have direction, as well as to make decisions with others may result in slower response time. (Northouse, 2021).
- Critical assessment: Highly applicable during crises; however, the organization must be willing to adapt its culture.

1.4.5. Digital leadership

Digital transformation has also changed what we expect from digital leadership. Digital leadership, like other forms of leadership, is about using technology to improve communication, making better decisions, and improving innovation. According to Avolio et al. (2014), digital leadership will be critical to the success of most contemporary organizations since it integrates new technologies into an organization's established ways of leading. El Sawy et al. (2016) note, when used effectively, digital leadership enhances an organization's capability to innovate and stay adaptable over time within fast changing environments.

A key positive effect of digital leadership is that it will allow for increased use of digital innovation and for companies to be able to rapidly respond to changes in the marketplace through the utilization of data driven tools and artificial intelligence. (Northouse, 2021). However, there are some possible negative effects of digital leadership; specifically, the misuse of digital technology has the potential to damage relationships between people and large gaps in technical knowledge and skill levels

of leaders and their employees can severely limit the overall effectiveness of a company. (Hoch et al., 2018).

Crucially, while Digital Leadership is important for modern Organizations (as it provides a foundation for utilizing new technologies), by itself, Digital Leadership is not enough. It must be accompanied by Human-Centered leadership, so as to prevent the implementation of new technologies from undermining Trust; Ethical Standards; and Employee Wellbeing.

- According to Avolio et al. (2014), to successfully manage an organization in the AI-based economy, it is necessary to utilize AI technology.
- Positive impact: Encourages digital innovation in organizations and supports organizational responsiveness to market changes (El Sawy et al., 2016; Northouse, 2021).
- Negative impact: Can negatively affect relationships among people when used poorly; and a gap in technology use by leaders and employees could limit an organization's ability to effectively utilize AI. (Hoch et al., 2018).
- •Critical analysis: Crucial in modern organizations, but insufficient on its own; it must be balanced with the human dimension.

Modern perspectives show that leadership has evolved beyond simply being a management function into a much more complex process built upon human value, fairness, flexibility and creativity. Modern perspectives provide solutions for current problems however in order to successfully apply them consideration should be made for the organizational and cultural context in which they are to be applied.

As evidenced through this review of multiple aspects of the concept of leadership and the theories and applications related to them; leadership is not a singular concept or activity, but instead a multifaceted process that is impacted by the person (i.e., individual), organization and environment. Chapter One reviewed the progression of various theories beginning with individual characteristics of the leader, then moving to examine the behaviors and roles of the leader, and ultimately to link the effectiveness of leaders with situational conditions and interpersonal relationships. The chapter also illustrated the differences between the various

theoretical perspectives to demonstrate the range of the theoretical body of work of leadership and the diversity of the conceptualization of leadership.

With the underlying theoretical structure in place, it is necessary for us to move from a theoretical perspective to a practical one that will demonstrate how leadership influences actual workplace realities. After establishing an overall conceptual framework for the nature of leadership and its various theoretical perspectives, Chapter Two examines the implications of leadership as applied to the workplace, demonstrating how a leader's behavior affects whether they foster a positive or a negative work environment, and further how both of these influence the work environment, increasing productivity, influencing employee satisfaction with their jobs, and creating a positive working relationship among employees.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Leadership is an important factor that has both direct and indirect effects on the workplace in terms of all aspects of the work environment. Leaders are responsible for directing staff towards organizational goals, but also help develop the organizational climate, develop the culture of the organization and reinforce the institutional values which shape the nature of the relationship among the professionals working together in the organization. There is research that indicates that different leadership approaches will result in higher levels of job satisfaction, increased motivation and better individual and team performance in some organizations, whereas, other studies indicate that poor leadership can result in a negative work environment with a high degree of tension or low employee commitment. (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2020).

There are at least three different ways in which the practice of leadership has an effect. First of all, there is the workplace itself; with how leaders relate to their subordinates and each other (their "style") determining whether employees feel they can work together effectively and have confidence in their managers. Secondly, there is the individual employee; since employees rely on leadership to raise their own morale and encourage them to be creative and innovative. (Bass &Riggio, 2006). The third dimension focuses on the performance and productivity of organizations; there has been considerable evidence to show that good leaders are able to make better use of the available resources for their organization and support their organization to achieve its strategic goals. (Kotter, 1996).

Therefore, we can see that leadership is a lot more than just an administrative function — rather, it is a dynamic process and is interrelated with all of the different components of an organization's life and significantly determines how successful an organization will be in creating an effective and healthy working environment. As such, as a foundation for this framework, this chapter will explore the effects of leadership on the working environment using four primary dimensions: developing workplace culture, motivating employees (employee morale), increasing productivity

and performance, and lastly, the challenges of being a leader in today's organizational climate.

2.1. The Role of Leadership in Shaping Workplace Culture

The Organizational Culture is a key aspect of the definition of the institutional identity and influences employee behavior through a non-physical framework to make decisions and have interaction with each other and what are their core values for day-to-day operations; Schein (Schein) (2017, p. 18In) his model on organizational culture, Schein explains that organizational culture is comprised of three layers; first layer being the artifacts level (all external symbols such as logos, structures, etc.), second layer being the values level (what beliefs and goals leaders decide to adopt for the organization); and third layer is the assumptions level (invisible premise that influence individual behaviors). Thus, it can be concluded that leadership is the drive for all three layers of organizational culture by defining values and influencing assumptions that form the identity of the organization.

Leaders who are successful do not only create vision (goals) for their organization; they create a value system that will promote a culture of commitment, loyalty and innovation. (2018, p. 47) As an example, Groysberg, Lee, Price and Cheng found that when there is alignment between the leader and the culture of the organization that it will foster trust amongst employees and decrease employee turnover. The Arab world is characterized by collective values and hierarchical structures. Thus, this creates a greater sensitivity on behalf of the leader to balance respect for traditional values with the desire to adopt modern management practices.

One of the key values that leadership promotes is the concept of Organizational Justice; this is defined as a work environment that demonstrates to employees that they are being treated fairly in terms of their assignments, compensation and opportunities. According to Colquitt et al. (2001, p. 430) Organizational Justice has been confirmed to be directly related to employee job satisfaction and engagement, therefore when leaders demonstrate fair practices, they create a workplace that is built on trust, respect and a sense of community; this also corresponds with the findings of Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov (2011, p. 76) The importance of perspective concerning the dimension of organizational culture, which relates to the

avoidance of inequality and injustice, is especially important within Arab cultures due to their strong social preference for fairness

Leadership also has an essential influence upon the development of the organization's identity and shared values. Yukl (2020, p. 38) explains that Leaders establish this identity through their visions of strategy and communications with staff. By doing so, Employees' individual objectives are linked to the larger objective of the organization; as a result, employees will be more committed to the organization; they perceive themselves as being part of a larger endeavor.

In practice, Al-Khajeh's (2018, p. 5) A study on the institutions of the Arab world demonstrated that a lack of participatory leadership in an authoritarian setting promotes withdrawal and reduces engagement; conversely, it was shown that participatory leadership fosters communication and a culture of cooperation. The results of this study were consistent with those of Schein. (2017, p. 22) Schein's assertion that leaders are the "engineers of culture," defining whether the workplace will be a place of fear or of trust and innovation.

Leadership is responsible for developing an organizational culture that fosters innovation as well. Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, and Kramer (2004, p. 7) leaders that create an atmosphere where employees feel free to express themselves and allow for experimentation are successful at creating an innovative work environment; one that allows employees to be creative, and therefore, enables the organization to compete successfully. on the other hand, when no such leadership exists, it creates a repetitive culture, stifles growth, and promotes stagnation.

Overall, while leadership can be seen as simply an administrative role; it can be viewed as a general approach or perspective for how one sees the organization's culture in every aspect, from visible and tangible elements (such as physical space) to less visible aspects (values). Overall, leadership will define the overall climate of the workplace, the stability of the institution and ultimately its ability to continue successful over time.

2.2. Leadership and Employee Morale and Motivation

Employee motivation and employee morale are both well-established as important contributors to long-term success of an organization. Employee motivation is also influenced by leadership (in addition to monetary incentives) with respect to

motivating employees by creating an environment that supports employees in achieving their personal goals, and creates an atmosphere that inspires employees. Employees have been shown to be more motivated to contribute to an organization (and to achieve the organizations objectives), and therefore are able to perform at a higher level, and are committed to the organization when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are being met; this fulfillment of the three need categories identified in Self-Determination Theory, results in higher levels of employee motivation and engagement. (Deci & Ryan, 2000, pp. 231–233).

Transformational leadership builds on employee motivation with an inspirational and clearly defined vision for the organization and increases the sense of organizational loyalty and job satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Employee morale is enhanced as well through authentic leadership through its emphasis of being transparent, honest and adhering to ethical values and therefore increasing employee trust, employee commitment and decreasing the employee's intention to leave their current position (Avolio& Gardner, 2005). Servant leadership puts the needs of the follower first than that of the leader, which builds a sense of belonging among employees and increases the internal motivation for employees to be able to meet the goals of the organization (Eva et al., 2019).

When combined, these leadership methods illustrate how leadership is central to developing an engaged and committed workforce which has employee morale and motivation as the key drivers of organizational effectiveness and resilience in turbulent environments.

Authentic leadership is also instrumental in creating motivation for employees through fostering an environment of transparency, integrity and consistency between what leaders say and do which can create and maintain trust with both the leader and the company, thus contributing to improved employee morale as well as reducing the prevalence of burnout (Avolio& Gardner, 2005). Similarly, it has been found that the application of servant leadership has promoted the employees' sense of belonging, because servant-leaders are concerned with meeting the employees' needs; thus they enhance their commitment and motivation to be at their best (Eva et al., 2019).

Conversely, research has demonstrated that authoritarian leadership results in lower employee morale through creating an atmosphere of fear that limits employee's

freedom to express themselves or take initiative; therefore, this type of leadership environment will result in higher psychological stress for employees and will also lead to lower motivation for employees. (Chan, Huang, Snape, & Lam, 2013). Although this style may achieve rapid discipline, it does not contribute to building high morale or sustainable intrinsic motivation.

Based upon the conceptual frameworks previously discussed, it is also evident that there are disparate impacts of various types of leadership (on) the morale and motivation of employees. The self-determination theory provides evidence to support how important it is to satisfy an individual's psychological needs to inspire and motivate them. (Deci& Ryan, 2000). The transformational leader instills a sense of vision within their employees, which ultimately enhances the level of employee job satisfaction. (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The authentic leader is able to build trustful relationships with his/her employees through creating an atmosphere of reduced stress by communicating openly and ethically (Avolio& Gardner, 2005). Servant leadership increases employee belonging as it puts followers first, (Eva et al., 2019), while the authoritarian leadership model reduces employee morale as it generates employee fear and discourages engagement. (Chan et al., 2013).

The above table (Table 1) provides a graphic illustration of how employee morale is affected by the type of leader an organization has, including the positive and negative effects of each type of leader.

Table 1. The effect of leadership style on employee morale

Negative Impact on Morale and Motivation	Positive Impact on Morale and Motivation	Brief Description	Leadership Style
High pressure if organizational structure is lacking	Enhances commitment, builds trust, encourages initiative	inspires employees and develops their capabilities	Transformational Leadership
Limits intrinsic motivation and creativity	Clarifies roles, increases discipline	Relies on rewards and punishments	Transactional Leadership
May be perceived as overly idealistic, hindering decisiveness	Promotes trust and fairness, reduces burnout	Based on transparency and consistency	Authentic Leadership
May be exploited due to excessive leniency	Fosters belonging, enhances organizational	Prioritizes employees' needs	Servant Leadership

Negative Impact on Morale and Motivation	Positive Impact on Morale and Motivation	Brief Description	Leadership Style
	loyalty		
May confuse employees if guidance is absent	Promotes flexibility, encourages learning	Addresses change and solves problems	Adaptive Leadership
May increase isolation and weaken human connections	Facilitates communication, supports motivation through flexibility	Uses technology and data	Digital Leadership
Generates fear, frustration, and high turnover	Quick decision-making in crises	Centralized decision-making and direct orders	Authoritarian Leadership

Thus, it can be said that leadership is a major factor in determining whether or not an employee's morale will be high or low; and positively impacting an employee's morale can create a motivating work environment for them, while negatively impacting an employee's morale may lead to demotivation. This is due to the fact that leaders are able to fulfill the psychological needs of employees, foster trust among employees and between employees and management, and strengthen the commitment of employees to the organization. The comparison of the types of leadership identified in this study (positive, i.e., transformational, authentic, and servant; and negative, i.e., transactional and authoritarian) show that positive types of leadership have the ability to positively affect employee morale and job satisfaction, while negative types of leadership have the potential to negatively affect employee morale and job satisfaction through undermining intrinsic motivation and creating a culture of disengagement. In addition to affecting employees' attitudes and behaviors, positive and negative types of leadership also have the potential to affect the overall productivity of organizations.

2.3. Leadership’s Influence on Productivity and Performance

Productivity and organizational performance can be regarded as two of the most critical measures of how successful an organization is and its likelihood to continue to exist in today's fast-paced competitive world. The leader plays a key role in managing both human and physical resources in such a way that they produce

efficiency and effectiveness by inspiring employees, establishing strategies for their direction, and motivating employees to perform at the highest possible level.

Transformational leaders can profoundly affect employee performance in that they inspire employees to work hard (motivation) increase each employees confidence in their own abilities and link their personal objectives to the overall organizational strategy for success (Bass &Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transformational leaders can enhance employee productivity as it is based upon both developing each employee's skill set and increasing each employee's motivation and emotional attachment to the job and company. (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, &Bommer, 1996; Bono & Judge, 2003). In addition to this, when a leader provides an environment of support (the) ability to create and develop is enhanced; and both creativity and innovation contribute to the sustainable development of organizational productivity and competitive success in today's workplace (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004).

As opposed to this, a transactional type of leader can produce good enough performance for the immediate future using rewards and punishment as motivators. Studies have found that when rules and expectations are clearly established, it leads to improved daily work performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). However, this style often fails to encourage long-term innovation, making its outcomes less sustainable.

In addition to leadership in terms of productivity, leadership has an impact on creative innovation and, therefore, is important for developing innovation, which is necessary for development of increased productivity in today's work place. Leaders that create a workplace for experimentation and calculated risk taking as outlined by Amabile et al. (2004), are able to develop an innovative productive culture where employee ideas result in improved efficiency and competitive advantage.

In addition to enhancing employee engagement and commitment; research demonstrates that authentic (transparent) leadership creates an environment of trust among employees as well as among management. Furthermore, when there is a high level of trust among all employees, they are generally more cooperative with each other and ultimately produce better results for the organization, creating higher levels of organizational performance. (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Additionally, servant leadership produces similar outcomes as it focuses on meeting the needs of employees, which creates the same result of producing highly engaged employees who will be highly committed to the organization. (Eva et al., 2019).

Adaptive leadership is very important for an environment of fast changing circumstances. Leadership that is capable of adapting to the needs of the organization, such as changes in the economy or technology, will be better equipped to provide a stable work environment and maximize productivity (Heifetz et al., 2009).

In the context of the Middle East (Arab) and Iraq, participative leadership has been found to be a significant component in enhancing organizational performance. Research has also indicated that adopting a participative approach to leadership enhances employee participation in the decision making process; thereby increasing performance and productivity. (Al-Khajeh, 2018).

On the flip side, though authoritarian leadership may provide for immediate discipline, in the long run it will typically lead to poor long-term employee productivity as it provides less motivation (less morale) and less individual initiative. (Chan et al., 2013). this style of leadership creates an environment of fear that stifles innovative ideas so therefore it limits your organizations potential to grow sustainably.

To sum up, leadership has an impact on not only ethical or social aspects of organizations, but also on production and performance (motivating employees, establishing trust among employees, encouraging innovative thinking, and bringing about focus on overall company goals). Those leaders that have both a clear vision for their organization and provide hands-on assistance are successful in creating an environment that will lead to superior and long-lasting performance from their employees.

The preceding material clearly demonstrates that leadership has an immediate and direct effect upon an employee's job performance by enhancing job performance through increased productivity, encouraging creativity, building employee trust, and through guiding an employee's efforts toward achievement of their organization's strategic goals. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these beneficial results do

not occur independently from the practical realities faced by today's leaders, including but limited to employee resistance to change, lack of resources, and the complexity of an organization. For this reason, the importance of Section 2.4, "Challenges in Leadership and Work Environment Management," cannot be overstated as a critical element to determine the sustainability of the effects of leadership on employee job performance and organizational effectiveness.

2.4. Challenges in Leadership and Work Environment Management

Although leaders have a significant role in shaping the workplace environment, motivating staff, and increasing productivity; there are many obstacles or challenges that limit the ability of leaders from realizing maximum results. Some of these challenges are based on the skills of the leader as an individual, while others can be attributed to the broader organizational culture, climate, politics etc., within which the organization exists.

2.4.1 Resistance to change

A major issue for today’s leaders is overcoming resistance to change. According to Kotter (1996), the primary reasons why many organizational change initiatives fail are the result of poor leadership and the leader's failure to effectively manage resistance from their employees. Employees resist change for a variety of reasons including; uncertainty regarding what will happen next, loss of control over their work environment, and job security. In order to be effective as a leader, it is essential to successfully engage your employees in the change process, clearly communicate the long-term advantages of the change, and allow your employees to feel a sense of ownership with regard to the new direction of the organization.

2.4.2. Balancing centralization and decentralization

Achieving the right amount of balance between centralized and decentralized decision making is one of the biggest challenges faced by today’s leaders. Overcentralizing decision making can slow the process down for all parties involved, while total decentralization can create an organization with no direction or cohesion. Yukl (2020) found that the most effective leaders in their respective organizations were able to create a balance in how much they were willing to relinquish strategic decision making responsibility to their team members while at the same time

providing them enough autonomy to allow for timely operational decision making. This challenge is compounded by the bureaucratic system within Iraq where the existing bureaucratic structure creates barriers that limit leaders from being able to adapt and respond to new opportunities and problems.

2.4.3. Digital transformation and technology

The rapid evolution of technology is one of the most significant challenges facing twenty-first-century business leaders. While digital transformation can require significant investment in technology, it also necessitates a cultural shift in how organizations utilize these tools. Zeike et al. (2019), for example, have identified that as organizations are moving toward using digital platforms, digital leadership will be necessary in order to manage distributed teams effectively and achieve higher levels of productivity with technology-based solutions. Unfortunately, introducing new technology into an organization without proper training on how to use those systems will create inequities between employees and increase resistance to the implementation of that technology within the organization.

2.4.4. Leadership fatigue and psychological pressure

In addition to motivating and guiding others, leaders experience burnout from continuous pressure to meet the demands of their job in a rapidly changing environment. The authors of this article point out that when leaders fail to develop or use the necessary tools to handle workplace related stress they have higher levels of stress and burnout as well as lower motivation of subordinates and therefore less productivity.

The challenge may be greater in Arab institutions due to the fact that there are many social expectations on the part of society, and the role of a leader is seen as a symbol of both authority and responsibility which increases the mental or emotional burden of leadership. (Al-Asfour & Khan, 2014).

2.4.5. Justice and cultural diversity

For leaders of organizations with a variety of cultures within the workforce, they will encounter numerous challenges to ensure equity and inclusion in their organization. Lack of fairness can result in decreased employee trust, and internal conflict; conversely, the way that a leader respects the diversity of culture, and

creates an inclusive environment for employees, results in increased teamwork and cooperation (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). As far as the Iraqi situation is concerned, which has an extremely wide variation in terms of social and sectarian environments; it can be said that the need to confront this problem becomes more urgent to create a fair and transparent working environment, to prevent divisions from developing at work (Al-Khajeh, 2018).

To conclude, the challenges facing managers in organizing and creating a favorable working environment are certainly very difficult and interconnected. However, the best managers have the potential to turn these problems into opportunities for their personal and professional development as well as for the development of the organization itself.

2.5. The Summary of the Chapter

Following this review of many ways in which the impact of leadership impacts the workplace; it is apparent that leadership serves as the motivational force that defines and ultimately influences organizational culture, employee morale and the levels of performance/productivity within the organization. It was also evident from the discussion that while the administrative function of the leader is important; it is the human and strategic nature of leadership that affects every aspect of the institution's environment.

While leadership can create an environment of trust, innovation, and motivation for employees; at the same time there are very real challenges that leaders face in creating this kind of environment including employee resistance to change, pressure from the rapid pace of technological (digital) transformations, balancing the need for centralized decision-making with the desire for decentralized decision-making, and a leadership that is exhausted by the demands on their time and energy.

Therefore, this chapter serves as the theoretical basis to understand the impact of Leadership on the Work Environment through all of its aspects and prepares the ground for Chapter Three (Methodology) that describes the research framework of this study including the qualitative nature of the research framework, the tools for collecting and analyzing the data and thus creates the link between the Theoretical Framework and Practical Application.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Approach (Phenomenological Research)

The Phenomenological Qualitative Approach adopted for this research is focused on how to interpret and describe social and human phenomena from an individual's perspective of his/her lived experiences; therefore, the focus will be on the subjective meanings that each participant attaches to his/her lived experiences. Therefore, the main goal of using a qualitative phenomenological approach will be to gain insight into the phenomenon as it is experienced and understood within the participants' world (i.e., as it exists) rather than the way it has been previously conceptualized, measured or theorized by others. The emphasis here is consistent with qualitative phenomenology where the focus is on understanding the essence of lived experience as told or described by the participants themselves. (Groenewald, 2004).

Because leadership has an emotional, social, and ethical component in addition to being an administration-based experience, I believe a phenomenological method would be best suited to accomplish the goals of this study. The qualitative aspects of phenomenology are best suited for researching complex human experiences which include emotion, value systems, and relationship as well as just the behavior that can be observed. (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019).

3.1.1. Interpretive philosophical perspective

The focus of the research described here is based upon an interpretivist epistemological base, which defines organizational leadership as both subjective and experiential; as a lived experience that is represented in the actions, interactions and social dynamics of employees in their work environment. From this interpretive stance, meaning is generated through people's experiences and social relations and are shaped by their cultures, emotions, and social contexts — a belief that is widely supported in interpretative qualitative research (Alase, 2017).

As a shared experience of leaders and employees alike, as well as being shaped by emotions, values and culture in addition to organizational structure and policy; this perception of leadership makes it an ideal subject for the study using the

interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA). The focus of IPA is to understand the meaning leaders assign to their practice of leadership and the way they reflect upon their actions and decisions as opposed to merely describing them. (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The above vision is consistent with the study's purpose of identifying the human and ethical aspects of the way leaders lead in Iraqi public institutions, and of demonstrating how values like justice, responsibility, and communication are realized in the day-to-day realities of local government. On this philosophical base, the study will be a true qualitative study — it will be about understanding (and less about generalizing), it will focus on the experiences of those who have lived through municipal work (and not just measure them), and it will be concerned with the human aspect of municipal work (as opposed to its statistical or quantitative nature).

In selecting this methodology, I am consistent with the assumptions of the interpretive philosophy of science that there are multiple realities and they evolve over time, and that all meaning is socially created. Therefore, as an interpretive researcher, I do not aim to discover universal laws, but rather I am seeking an in depth understanding of people's lived experiences in their actual context; a fundamental tenet of phenomenological research inquiry. (Groenewald, 2004; Alase, 2017).

Phenomenologists have used phenomenology to investigate the essence of human experience, as well as to understand how people live their experiences as they are experienced, and thus fits the objective of this study to understand what being a manager (as lived) and how managers in Baghdad municipalities perceive leadership (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Based on this methodological framework, the study aimed to address a set of research questions that guide the phenomenological inquiry, as follows:

Main Research Question:

How does leadership influence the overall work environment in the public sector?

Sub-Research Questions:

1. How do managers perceive their role in shaping the work environment?

2. What leadership strategies do managers use to enhance team morale and motivation?
3. How do managers influence employee productivity and overall workplace performance?
4. What leadership behaviors do managers believe contribute to a positive workplace culture?
5. What challenges do managers face in fostering an effective and supportive work environment?

3.2. Sampling Strategy

The study adopted a purposeful sampling strategy which has been the method of choice for qualitative studies emphasizing the importance of the depth and diversity of data collected in preference to generalizing to large populations statistically.

Ten municipal managers who are responsible for different departments within the Baghdad municipality were selected to represent different departments such as; human resource, public relations, projects, services, financials, training, planning, and technology.

The participants were selected according to the following selection criteria:

1. The participant must be employed by a municipal department in a managerial capacity

2. The participant must have at least 5 years of work experience in a public service leadership role.

3. Participants were informed of the academic nature of the study prior to volunteering for it.

4. Participants demonstrated a desire to provide genuine reflection on their experiences as leaders.

Due to data saturation (the point at which additional interviews do not provide further insight), the number of participants in this study was limited to ten.

To create geographic and administrative variety in each of the Karkh and Rusafa districts, municipalities were selected with great care so that a wide range of perspectives would be represented in this study.

3.3. Data Collection Method

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which is widely regarded as an ideal method of collecting data for use in qualitative phenomenological studies. (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). The use of this research technique will allow for a combination of the rigidity of structure with the fluidity of flexibility that allows participants to share their perceptions in an unstructured way, however the interviews remain focused on the research objective(s).

The following steps were followed in the interview process:

- An open-ended interview guide was developed that included several open-ended questions that covered aspects including leadership perceptions, motivations, issues faced, interpersonal relationships, and the impact of ethics on work-related decision making.
- Interviews for WhatsApp (voice) were completed in October 2025 as preferred by each participant.
- The average length of time per interview was thirty to forty minutes.
- Informed consent was given verbally at the beginning of each interview prior to either recording or note-taking.
- All recordings were transcribed manually and reviewed carefully to ensure the accuracy and integrity of participants' original meanings.

A structured interview form was developed using an open-ended approach to elicit participant responses to eleven (11) questions, each exploring different aspects of public-sector leadership. The eleven questions were grouped under specific themes such as; how managers perceive themselves in terms of being leaders, how managers use various strategies to motivate and lead employees, what challenges managers encounter during their administrative day-to-day activities, how managers practice interpersonal communication, what ethical considerations managers use when making decisions, and finally the impact that manager leadership has on employee attitudes toward their workplace culture and performance. A structured

format for the interviews was established to allow a comprehensive review of the research objectives, and to provide participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences thoroughly and in detail.

Detailed information about the participants and interviews are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Information about the participants and interviews

Participant Code	Gender	Position/Role	Experience	Interview Mode (Face-to-Face / Online)	Language of Interview (Arabic/English)	Interview Duration (Minutes)	Recording Method
P1	male	Director of Human Resources Department	15	**Online**	**Arabic**	40	WhatsApp Voice
P2	female	Director of Strategic Planning Department	5	**Online**	**Arabic**	38	WhatsApp Voice
P3	male	Director of Projects Department	+8	**Online**	**Arabic**	35	WhatsApp Voice
P4	female	Director of Public Relations Department	7	**Online**	**Arabic**	33	WhatsApp Voice
P5	male	Director of Municipal Services Department	+10	**Online**	**Arabic**	40	WhatsApp Voice
P6	male	Director of Finance Department	9	**Online**	**Arabic**	32	WhatsApp Voice
P7	female	Director of Monitoring & Evaluation	+8	**Online**	**Arabic**	37	WhatsApp Voice

Participant Code	Gender	Position/Role	Experience	Interview Mode (Face-to-Face / Online)	Language of Interview (Arabic/English)	Interview Duration (Minutes)	Recording Method
		Department					
P8	male	Director of IT Department	6	**Online**	**Arabic**	34	WhatsApp Voice
P9	female	Director of Training & Development Department	8	**Online**	**Arabic**	37	WhatsApp Voice
P10	male	Director of Personnel Affairs Department	9	**Online**	**Arabic**	38	WhatsApp Voice

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted on the data obtained in accordance with the thematic analysis six phase model for qualitative data as described in Braun and Clarke (2006).

The systematic method of thematic analysis allows researchers to identify and explore recurring themes and meaningful patterns within qualitative data.

The following steps were followed during the analysis:

1. Data familiarity through multiple readings of all interview transcripts

2. Coding of initial data to identify important terms or phrases (e.g., justice, inspiration, motivation, communication).

3. Categorizing similar codes into an initial set of categories for analysis.

4. Establishing common concepts among all codes in order to develop a broad theme that reflects the most fundamental conceptual ideas.

5. Revisiting and revising these themes to confirm their consistency and cohesiveness among each other.

6. Developing the participant-based interpretation with corresponding participant quotation support.

Manual analysis was used due to the small sample size; manual analysis allowed for neutrality and objective interpretation through the entire data analysis process.

Through this systematic review eight major themes emerged which represent the overall experience of these participants with regards to their leadership experiences, i.e. ethics, justice, motivation, barriers/challenges, communication, continuous learning and empowerment.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

All ethical processes that are required at Istanbul Gelişim University for conducting research on people were completely followed in order to protect participants from harm and preserve the integrity of the study.

Additionally, the following ethical conditions have been met.

- Informed Consent: Participants were given a full description of the purpose of the study and they gave their verbal consent before participating in the study.
- Confidentiality: Pseudonyms (P1-P10) were used as opposed to using the actual names of the participants in order to keep them anonymous.
- All of our participants' involvement is strictly on a volunteer basis; there will be no obligation, coercion, etc.
- Participants are able to leave the study at any time without penalty.
- The participant's data (all interviews) are stored in secure, password-protected, encrypted digital files.
- Each question we asked was carefully developed to minimize potential discomfort due to politics or professionalism.

Throughout the entire interview process, the researcher acted professionally, confirmed with the supervisor that he followed all of the appropriate ethical standards for this type of research; therefore, both the credibility and reliability of the study were enhanced.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

Although a lot of thought and time was spent in planning and conducting the interviews, there are some limitations to consider:

1. The sample size was limited to just ten participants who were employees of Baghdad's municipalities; thus, this will limit the ability to generalize statistically to other populations.

2. Interview schedules were subject to limitations from time and administrative constraints.

3. Some managerial positions presented sensitive issues which produced selective reservations in response

4. There is possible slight interpretative bias due to the repeated validation checks (though this was minimized).

5. The lack of a quantitative element in the research resulted in a qualitative depth of interpretation rather than statistically generalizable results.

Despite being based on a single case study in a specific country, this study is academically valuable and has significant practical application. The study accurately captures an Iraqi public sector leader's experiences and the social and management realities that shape the functions and operations of municipal institutions.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the Research

In order to determine the quality and validity of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985), developed a set of four criteria referred to as trustworthiness. These criteria are Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability. To provide greater assurance for the accuracy, clarity, and reliability of the research findings each of these criteria were used throughout the study.

Credibility

Credibility is a measure of how well the results reflect participants' real-life experiences. The researcher used several methods to ensure credibility for this study:

- Semi-structured interviews were used, allowing participants to provide an open-ended perspective on their experience.

- Data saturation occurred by the tenth interview with municipal managers; therefore, there were no additional thematic areas, nor were any new insight(s) provided.
- Manual transcriptions were completed for each interview in order to accurately capture participants' original language and intended meanings.
- Regular consultations and guidance from an academic supervisor also contributed to the consistency of the researcher's interpretation with the participant's experience, as opposed to interpretation based on the researcher's personal assumptions.

These processes enhanced both the validity and the reliability of the results.

Transferability

The transferability of this study refers to how well the results can be applied in a different setting. To address the issue of transferability, I provided:

- A rich description of the study context (including Baghdad municipalities, administrative divisions and characteristics of public sector leadership).
- The demographic table clearly showed what positions participants held, their years of experience, and the conditions under which interviews were conducted.
- More in depth discussion about the types of information that were discussed during the interviews. The interviews focused on several topics: the challenges faced by the participants; their leadership styles; ethical values; ways they communicate with each other; and how they perceive the work place culture of where they work.

The above context will provide for future research or practice related to this topic to determine if the findings are applicable to similar contexts.

Dependability

Reliability is a measure of the consistency/stability of the research process. In order to achieve reliability, the following must be done:

- The process of maintaining a well-documented record of all methods used in this study is to ensure clarity throughout all phases of the research (i.e., interviewing, sampling, collecting data, and analyzing the data).

- Documentation for each decision made regarding methodology in this study provides an "audit trail" which could allow for replication of the study by another researcher, or by a reviewer from outside the research team.

- Regular supervision meetings with the supervisor were held to ensure that the analysis process of this study would remain as systematic, organized, and methodically sound as possible.

These steps guaranteed that the research process was coherent and logically consistent.

Confirmability

Confirmation of the experience of the participants with their views expressed by them as opposed to the views of the researchers, was ensured via:

- The verbatim transcription of all interviews so no participant's response was altered.

- Relying directly on participant’s statements for coding and developing themes, thereby ensuring that the interpretation is based upon what participants have actually stated.

- Neutral position as a research scientist, in which the researcher's individual views and assumptions regarding the study were intentionally removed from the findings.

- Securely maintaining all recorded audio, and notes in order to provide evidence for the relationship between the original data collected and the final identified themes.

These methods collectively ensure that the findings are based on participants' experiences rather than on subjectivity.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The intent of this chapter is to present and interpret, in detail, and in an organized manner, the ten municipal manager's lived leadership experiences as described by them in their interview responses. The ten municipal managers represented different administrative departmental entities within Baghdad's public sector. The intention of this chapter is to connect the participant's lived experiences, as identified through their phenomenological experience, to the emergent themes from the phenomenological analysis. Qualitative phenomenology emphasizes depth, meaning and the richness of experience in its findings; therefore, it allows for themes to emerge directly from participants' narratives versus themes based upon researcher assumption. This methodological approach is consistent with Creswell's (2013) guidelines for qualitative research. (2013, pp. 187–190) suggestion that qualitative studies should be focused upon providing a description of participants' voices, providing illustrations of common meanings among participants, and establishing connections between the emergent themes and the broader study context for the phenomenon under investigation.

Therefore, the analysis in this chapter follows the manner in which managers conceptualize their leadership roles; the strategies managers employ to improve the operation of the workplace; the ethical and relational dimensions of the managerial practices; and the challenges managers experience operating in Iraq's public sector environment. The chapter offers an integrated comprehension of leadership by providing an interpretation grounded in participants' authentic voice.

4.1 Data Analysis and Emerging Themes

Eight overarching themes were identified from the thematic analysis of the 10 interviews, these themes represent all the key areas that underpinned the participants' leadership experiences.

The eight themes provide a broad overview of leadership in the Iraqi municipal sector and encapsulate the human, organisational and cultural influences on how leaders operate in this context.

the eight identified themes included:

1. Participants views on Leadership
2. Qualities of a good Leader
3. Effectiveness of Leadership in the workplace
4. Strategies for Effective Leadership
5. Challenges with Leadership
6. Factors that impact on Leadership
7. Development of Leadership
8. Insights to apply to Practical Leadership

Each of the above eight identified themes contained multiple sub-themes based on direct quotes from each participant (P1-P10)

In here please insert a table that presents the 8 main themes and the subthemes, and sample quotations of participants.

Table 3. Summary of the findings from the thematic analysis

Themes	Definition	Sub-themes	Sample Quatations
Participants' perceptions of leadership	Leadership is viewed as a human, ethical, and responsibility-based process rather than administrative authority.	• Moral responsibility • Fairness & justice • Empowering others • Leading by example • Balancing order with humanity	Leadership means creating an environment where employees feel secure and valued." (P1) — "Leadership is the ability to influence through belief, not enforcement." (P2)
Qualities of an effective leader	Effective leaders demonstrate fairness, patience, courage, empathy, and consistent ethical behavior.	• Fairness • Patience • Courage in decision-making • Being a role model • Transparency	An effective leader must be fair, patient, and realistic." (P5) — "A leader balances being lawful and humane." (P10)

Themes	Definition	Sub-themes	Sample Quatations
Impact of leadership on the work environment	Leadership directly shapes employees' morale, stability, trust, and teamwork.	• Stabilizing the environment • Enhancing employee trust • Creating supportive culture	My leadership stabilized the work environment because I rely on appreciation rather than blame." (P5) — "I transformed the department from rigid management to participatory interaction." (P1)
Effective leadership strategies	Leaders apply practical strategies to motivate teams, communicate clearly, and promote collaboration.	• Open communication Recognition & appreciation • Team-based management • Delegation	"I sustain engagement by giving each employee a mini-project they own." (P8) — "I use open-door policy and full transparency with staff." (P10)
Leadership challenges	Leaders face challenges related to pressure, limited resources, staff conflict, and administrative constraints.	• High workload Employee behavioural issues • Crisis situations • Bureaucratic delays	Municipal services operate under heavy pressure with daily complaints." (P5) — "Media approvals are slow, which affects our work." (P4)
External influencing factors	Work environment and leadership are influenced by political, social, financial, and organizational conditions.	• Election period constraints • Public expectations • Budget limitations	Sometimes employees act under stress due to financial or family pressure." (P4) — "Decisions must consider public interest and stakeholders." (P6)

4.2 Identified Themes and Sub-Themes

Eight major themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews conducted to reflect on the real life experiences of municipal managers in Baghdad. The eight themes were inductively developed based on the same phenomenological approach used for this research and they all include authentic direct quotes of the participants (P1-P10). No additional data was added to the original interviews to support the themes or the sub-themes. The sub-themes show how leaders perceive and apply leadership in their workplace.

4.2.1 Theme one: participants' perceptions of leadership

The participants' view of leadership was largely a humanistic and an ethical process that is based on employee-respect, employee-trust and employee-responsibility, versus simply having administrative authority. The five sub-themes of these perceptions were as follows

4.2.1.1 Leadership as Moral Responsibility and Justice

Leadership starts with respect for every person's human dignity and is fair.

Quotation:

"Leadership is a responsibility before it is authority." (P1)

Literature on ethical leadership shows that fairness and moral responsibility are strong in building an organization's trust. (Northouse, 2019).

4.2.1.2 Leadership as Inspiration and Empowerment

The participants stated that they perceived leaders as inspirational and as empowering their staff to grow professionally and per

Quotation:

"I deal with minds and ambitions more than with files." (P9)

Empowerment and inspirational leadership are two key elements of transformational leadership that define positive influence. (Northouse, 2019).

4.2.1.3 Leadership as Trust-Building

Trust is important for defining successful leadership.

Quotation:

"A leader is the one who plants trust, not imposes it." (P2)

Leadership in the Public Sector- Studies of Public Leadership point out that for effective leadership, trust is a key element for successful leadership in the public sector. (Van Wart, 2013).

4.2.1.4 Leadership as Role Modelling and Human Conduct

The participants viewed the leader as an example (role model) that will cause people to follow his or her lead through what he does rather than by what he says.

Quotation:

"They also viewed the leader as a facilitator/role model and not as a controller." (Interview Summary)

Social learning theory suggests that employees mirror the leader's behavior (Bandura, 1977).

4.2.1.5 Leadership as Balancing Formality and Humanity

Participants highlighted the importance of balancing administrative duties with empathy and respect for employees' needs.

Quotation:

"There must be a balance between responsibility and humanity." (General Participant View)

The situational leadership theory emphasizes that a leader must be able to vary their firmness (independence) and flexibility (interdependence) based on the situation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

4.2.2 Theme two: qualities of an effective leader

Important qualities of leadership were identified by participants; these included being fair, patient, courageous when making decisions, emotionally balanced, and transparent.

Quotation:

“An effective leader must be fair, patient, and realistic.” (P5)

Research into leadership has shown that public leaders who are effective have two important attributes; integrity and consistent behavior. (Van Wart, 2013).

4.2.3 Theme three: the impact of leadership on the work environment

The interviews indicated that leadership has an immediate impact upon team spirit, employee confidence in their organization, and stability of the organization

Quotations:

"My leadership established stability in the workplace due to my use of appreciation instead of blame"(P5)

"I changed the entire way we did things in our department, moving us from top-down/management type of behavior to one of participation and communication with all employees.” (P1)

Research supports this by indicating that supportive leadership will lead to improvements in organizational climate and relational quality (Northouse, 2019).

4.2.4 Theme four: effective leadership strategies

Research participants employed several methods for managing their teams, such as:

- Open communication
- Recognition and appreciation of employees' contributions to their jobs.
- Participatory management (employees have input into decision making).
- Delegating responsibility for tasks or projects to team members.

Quotation:

“I sustain engagement by giving each employee a mini-project they own.” (P8)

Transformational leadership views employee participation as an element in creating a high level of employee commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

4.2.5 Theme five: challenges faced by leaders

According to public sector research, the top challenges cited by participants included:

- Heavy workloads
- Limited resources
- Employee performance problems
- Bureaucracy
- Slowness of administrative media processes

Quotations:

“Municipal services operate under heavy pressure with daily complaints.” (P5)

“Media approvals are slow, which affects our work.” (P4)

Research in public sectors also found that limited resources and bureaucratic obstacles were two of the most consistent leadership challenges. (Orazi et al., 2013).

4.2.6 Theme six: external influencing factors

According to participants, the public administration work environment is influenced by political, social, and economic factors.

Quotations:

“Sometimes employees come under pressure due to financial or family stress.” (P4)

“Decisions must consider public interest.” (P6)

Literature in public administration has indicated that a leader's style is determined by the socio-political context of their surroundings. (Van Wart, 2013).

4.2.7 Theme seven: leadership development

The participants reported that they develop their leadership skills through:

- Practical experience
- Observing others
- Training
- Continuous learning

Quotation:

"I learned leadership from direct experience and observing my former manager."

Leadership is developed through experience and observation, according to Social Learning Theory. (Bandura, 1977).

4.2.8 Theme eight: practical leadership tips and behaviors

Participants shared actionable leadership practices such as:

- Leading by example
- Persuasion-based motivation
- Empowering employees
- Attention to details
- Flexibility in decision-making

Quotation:

"I prefer an open-door policy and discussion before making decisions." (P10)

Leadership research confirms that effective leaders rely on dialogue and adaptability (Northouse, 2019).

4.3. Interpretation of Findings

In this segment, I will interpret the results from the interviews through the lens of the Phenomenological method, for the purpose of identifying the meaning that participants' experiences reflect about the lived experience of being a leader in Baghdad municipal departments; it does not seek to describe the data, but rather to provide insight into why leaders understand and practice leadership in ways that are reflective of the complexity of the lived experience of being a leader in the municipal environment. The findings from the analysis demonstrate that leadership in the municipal context is a multi-faceted human experience influenced by a number of variables including ethical values, interpersonal relationships, the limits imposed by administration and/or the influences of external environmental factors.

4.3.1. Leadership as an ethical and human experience

The interview data shows that Managers see their role of leader as being morally accountable to their employees and less about administering, as opposed to seeing it as having an administrative accountability to employees. The leaders interviewed believe in leadership based on the principles of justice, respect and accountability towards employees. This belief was clearly stated by participant P1:

"Leadership is a responsibility before it is authority." (P1)

This perspective also corresponds with the idea from research, that Ethical Leadership creates Trust and Integrity within organizations (Northouse, 2019). Within the municipal context, this perspective reflects the sensitivity of public service roles that require fairness, transparency, and respect for employee dignity.

4.3.2. Leadership as empowerment and inspiration

Leadership is about developing and motivating workers in order to help them develop to their full capacity (as P9 said):

"I deal with minds and ambitions more than with files." (P9)

This corresponds to the ideas of transformational leadership theory; which suggests that employee motivation/engagement and productivity can be increased by empowering and motivating employees to take action, and by providing inspirational support to encourage employee development. (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The reliance on morale building within a municipal workplace (which has many challenges due to its high levels of stress and limited resources) instead of relying on rigid, bureaucratic-type management controls.

4.3.3. Trust-building as the foundation of leadership

Participants found that building trust was a vital component for those who were effective leaders. Participants also emphasized that trust could never be imposed by a leader; it would need to grow from actions of a leader such as being sincere, transparent and supportive

"A leader is the one who plants trust, not imposes it." (P2)

This is in line with the body of public sector leadership research that indicates that one key factor to an organization's success is that of trust in the organization.

(Van Wart, 2013). Trust in Baghdad municipal employees is especially important due to the unstable financial situation of many employees; this instability often causes employee turnover.

4.3.4. Balancing formality and humanity

Participants all emphasized that as municipal administrators, there is a need to balance adherence to administrative policies with the ability to be empathetic toward employees. Participants described how leadership needed to follow the law and policies, but they also needed to take into account the personal and emotional lives of employees.

"There must be a balance between responsibility and humanity." (General participant view)

This reflects principles of situational leadership, which advocate flexible leadership responses depending on the needs of the situation and the employees involved (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). This balance is especially relevant in municipal institutions where strict procedures intersect with daily human interactions.

4.3.5. Leadership's influence on organizational climate

Interview data show that leadership strongly shapes the work environment by improving stability, strengthening trust, and enhancing teamwork. For example, P5 described:

"My leadership stabilized the work environment because I rely on appreciation rather than blame." (P5)

Similarly, P1 stated:

"I transformed the department from rigid management to participatory interaction." (P1)

These findings align with scholarly discussions indicating that supportive leadership improves organizational climate and social cohesion (Northouse, 2019).

4.3.6 Leadership strategies used by managers

Participants reported using several practical strategies to lead their teams effectively, including:

- Open communication
- Recognition of achievements
- Participatory management
- Delegation of responsibilities

As P8 explained:

"I sustain engagement by giving each employee a mini-project they own." (P8)

Such strategies reflect transformational leadership practices, which link responsibility delegation to a stronger sense of empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

4.3.7 Leadership challenges in the municipal sector

Participants identified multiple challenges that hinder effective leadership, including workload pressure, limited resources, low employee performance, and bureaucratic procedures. P4 emphasized the administrative barriers:

"Media approvals are slow and affect our work." (P4)

According to public administration literature, bureaucracy and resource scarcity are key obstacles in governmental settings (Orazi et al., 2013). These challenges highlight the need for adaptable leadership capable of navigating complex organizational conditions.

4.3.8. External factors shaping leadership practices

Leadership practices are heavily influenced by external factors such as political instability, financial pressures, social expectations, and personal employee circumstances. As P4 noted:

"Sometimes employees come stressed because of financial or family pressures." (P4)

These findings illustrate that leadership in Baghdad municipalities requires high emotional intelligence and sensitivity to contextual dynamics, as external pressures shape workforce behavior and motivation.

4.4. Discussion

The findings of this research reveal a distinctive leadership model practiced within Baghdad's municipal institutions—one that diverges significantly from traditional Western leadership theories discussed in Chapters One and Two. The emerging model is neither purely transformational, nor entirely servant-based, nor strictly situational; rather, it represents a hybrid leadership approach that blends ethical, motivational, human-centered, and situational elements, all shaped by Iraq's unique social, cultural, and political context. This hybrid nature indicates that leadership in Iraq is not a direct application of global theories but a locally adapted practice aligned with the daily realities of municipal work.

Global leadership literature—such as Northouse (2021), Bass & Riggio (2006), and Yukl (2020)—emphasizes justice, relationship-building, motivation, empowerment, and communication as core components of effective leadership. These elements clearly appeared in the participants' accounts, especially in their emphasis on ethical responsibility, employee empowerment, trust-building, and balancing formal duties with human considerations. However, what distinguishes the Iraqi context—as reflected in the findings—is that these practices are not simply leadership preferences; they are administrative survival strategies essential for maintaining institutional stability amid numerous challenges.

Municipal leaders in Baghdad must operate within:

- Complex bureaucratic constraints
- Continuous daily workload pressure
- Limited human and material resources
- Wide variation in employee competency
- Political and social influences
- High public expectations and direct community pressure
- The necessity to sustain organizational stability

The very difficult and dynamic work environment creates more complex leadership challenges than are represented in the theoretical models of leadership. The leaders have to make use of their accumulated experience as well as be flexible and make quick decisions so that they can maintain the unity of the group. The interview results indicate that leaders practice leadership by using their experience and judgment of the situation, instead of by means of some pre-determined model of leadership.

This aligns with principles of situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard), yet the Iraqi application is notably more complex due to layered administrative and societal pressures.

The findings further show that Iraqi leaders simultaneously integrate four major leadership roles:

1. Inspirational Leader – motivating and empowering employees (as shown in the accounts of P2 and P9).

2. Ethical/Servant Leader – emphasizing justice and fairness (clearly reflected by P1 and P10).

3. Human-Centered Leader – acknowledging employees' personal and social pressures (noted by P4).

4. Technical/Detail-Oriented Leader – focusing on accuracy, follow-up, and solving operational issues (highlighted by P7 and P8).

Leadership within this role performance is a multi-dimensional role performance as it involves a combination of many different types of leadership, and cannot be defined by a single western model of leadership; because Iraqi leaders have to use multiple forms of leadership at the same time in order to keep the work going with high pressure on a daily basis.

Interviewer's narratives also showed that culturally and socially, leadership in Iraq is based on a number of cultural and social values including

- Mutual respect
- Family-oriented ethics
- Community responsibility

- Cooperation
- Maintaining harmony within the workplace

Chapter One stated that: leadership is not simply an administrative function; it has both social and environmental contexts, therefore, as Chapter Two explains in regards to the municipal working environment: leadership plays the most important role in maintaining organizational stability in Iraqi Municipalities. P1 and P5 describe how appreciation, trust, and open communication can alter the work place atmosphere and conflict resolution among employees.

Furthermore, this phenomenological methodology of Chapter Three allowed for a research focus on how leaders' experience leadership as it happens, not as described by theoretical definitions of leadership. Therefore, it presents a valuable academic contribution with an authentic Iraqi leadership model based upon lived experiences as opposed to being imported from Western literature.

Leadership behavior is influenced by both the changing political landscape and the institutional environment in Baghdad's municipal government. As such, leaders are often faced with a variety of challenges which are seldom noted in Western literature on the subject (i.e., bureaucracy, lack of resources, public pressure, high turnover of personnel and work-related stressors). The above referenced developing literature surrounding contextual leadership practices in developing nations clearly indicates that these types of leadership will need to be flexible enough to adapt to a constantly shifting and unpredictable environmental context.

The study also illustrates that successful leadership in Iraq is defined in a number of fundamental ways:

- Contextual – defined by the realities of public institutions in Iraq
- Ethical – based upon the principles of fairness and personal responsibility
- Relational – depends upon the level of trust and interpersonal relationship established with others.
- Employee-Centered – Responds to employee's individual needs and circumstances as well as their job responsibilities.

- Practical – centered on finding solutions, providing follow-through and being technically competent.

As such, the research is an important framework for leadership development of Iraqi government institutions, providing insight for government training programs. The study also makes a contribution to both international and regional literature as it offers a realistic model of leadership developed from local cultural perspectives and demonstrates how human value and social process can be combined with current management concepts in public sector settings.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's data shows that Baghdad city governmental agency leadership presents a hybrid model (of leadership) that goes beyond what has been proposed by western leadership theory; when comparing the theoretical models presented in chapters one and two to the empirical data developed from the interviews in chapter four it can be seen that the type of leadership being implemented in Iraq does contain some elements of both transformational and servant-based models of leadership as well as situational elements of leadership but it also contains many other types of leadership characteristics such as ethical, interpersonal, people-oriented and practical and these are all operating in an environment which is culturally and politically unique.

Global leadership literature—such as Northouse (2021), Bass & Riggio (2006), and Yukl (2020)— the narrative also emphasizes the importance of justice; motivation; building relationships among staff members; open and honest communication; and empowering employees as being important to the success of an organization. Leaders participating in this study illustrated a strong connection between their emphasis on moral obligation; respect for employees; establishing trust with their employees; and inspiring/motivating them to help deal with each day's challenges. It was, however, the emphasis on the Iraqi context which made the differences apparent; these approaches are not simply options available to those who lead organizations — they are essential to the maintenance of organizational stability in an environment which is characterized by limited resources; bureaucratic pressure; political obstacles; high public expectations; and variability in the ability of employees to perform their jobs effectively.

Interviews further illustrated how the day-to-day experience of practicing leadership by Baghdad's municipal departmental managers is different from adhering to a particular theory of leadership. In addition to serving many other roles, (e.g., inspirational leader, servant leader, human centered leader and technical leader) Iraqi managers are also expected to serve as motivators for their employees, ensure justice and respect for their employees, understand the employees' personal concerns and focus on improving their organization at an operational level. The many roles that these managers must perform reflect the type of leadership practiced in the Iraqi

context, which cannot be explained by a single theoretical model, but can best be described using a flexible and practical model to operate effectively within a highly complex organizational environment.

Social cultural of Iraq as well as the ways leaders are viewed as leaders in relation to their community - such as a need for respect, family values, an ethical commitment, and cooperation —also shape the way leaders see themselves and act as leaders. Leaders in Iraq do not build their influence through formalized structure or process like they would in many Western countries, but by building trust with others, through being good examples (role-models), through verbal communication, and providing other types of support to people. As such, leadership in Iraq is very relationship-based; it is based upon a leader's moral legitimacy versus having formal authority, and a leader's ability to connect with people versus having a very structured administrative environment.

The results of this chapter also provide evidence that when related to Chapter Two's examination of the work environment, that while leadership can be a useful tool to increase an organization's productivity, it is the basis for the overall stability of an organization. All participants stated that they had experienced improved morale at their place of employment; reduced conflict among staff members; increased teamwork; and were able to improve the quality of relationships between themselves and other colleagues as a result of experiencing positive leadership, such as through showing appreciation, having employees participate in the decision-making process regarding the distribution of tasks, communicating openly and honestly, and treating each employee with respect. This is consistent with research that has demonstrated that supportive leadership is one of the most important factors influencing an organization's climate and the quality of interpersonal relationships found in many public sector agencies.

In addition to that, this phenomenology in chapter three provided the context for identifying leadership as experienced by leaders rather than as it exists within the confines of literature on the subject of leadership. The phenomenology used within this research methodology highlighted the distinction between theory and practice and demonstrated how leaders find ways to address problems, make choices, and adapt or improve their methods of operation as they develop from experience; therefore, providing evidence of why it is important to consider leadership in

developing countries as a context-specific activity with an emphasis upon understanding local conditions.

The research results demonstrate that Leadership within Baghdad's Municipal Institutions is Ethical, Human-Centered and Contextual. As such, it is built upon a balance between Authority and Responsibility, Inspiration and Discipline, Firmness and Flexibility. The effective leader in the Public Sector of Iraq cannot solely rely on Administrative Principles to build relationships, but also requires understanding of the Human Values that are at the core of Professional Relationships within Iraq's Workplace Culture.

The study's findings contribute to both global and Arab leadership studies through its creation of a realistic model that is reflective of the Iraqi context and demonstrates the manner in which human and social values can be synthesized into contemporary leadership principles for use within government institutions. The findings are also a solid foundation upon which to develop future training programs for municipal officials to assist them in the development of their communication skills, flexibility, trust building, stress management, and ethical commitment.

In addition to offering a valuable foundation for future research (through comparative research with various government sectors within the Arab world; as well as through use of mixed methods to expand on our knowledge of how leaders practice), these results demonstrate that developing leaders in Iraq represents more than just an administrative improvement – it also represents a cultural and organizational transformation which will require investing in people prior to investing in systems.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Interview Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Baraa Al-Salihi, and I am a master's student at Istanbul Gelisim University, Institute of Graduate Studies. I am conducting a research study as part of my master's thesis, titled "The Impact of Effective Leadership on Improving the Work Environment: A Qualitative Study of Managers in Iraq."

The aim of this study is:

To explore how leadership impacts work environments in the public sector in Iraq.

To identify the role of effective leadership in improving team morale, productivity, and overall workplace culture.

This research focuses on managers who are recognized as leaders within their organizations. Your insights and experiences as a leader are invaluable in understanding how leadership practices influence workplace dynamics.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential. The information collected will be used solely for academic purposes. If you agree to participate, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions about your leadership experiences and their impact on the work environment. The interview is expected to last approximately 30–45 minutes.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and valuable contribution to this research.

Best regards,

Baraa Al-Salihi
Master's Student, Institute of Graduate Studies
Istanbul Gelisim University

QUESTIONS

Section 1: Leadership Background

1) Can you describe your role as a manager and what leadership means in your position?

- How long have you been in this leadership role?
- What are your key responsibilities as a leader?

2) In your experience, what qualities define an effective leader?

- Can you provide examples of leadership behaviors that you believe contribute to effectiveness?
- How do you measure your effectiveness as a leader?

Section 2: Leadership's Role in Shaping the Work Environment

3) How does your leadership influence the work environment in your organization?

- Can you describe specific instances where your leadership positively impacted employees?
- Have you ever had to change your leadership approach to improve the work environment?

4) What leadership strategies do you use to create a supportive and productive work environment?

- How do you ensure open and effective communication with employees?
- What steps do you take to build trust within your team?

5) Can you share an example of a time when your leadership helped resolve a workplace challenge?

- What actions did you take, and what was the outcome?
- How did this experience shape your leadership approach?

Section 3: Challenges and Adaptation

6) What are the biggest challenges you face as a leader in maintaining a positive work environment?

- How do you address conflicts among employees or teams?
- Have you encountered resistance to your leadership style? If so, how did you handle it?

7) How do external factors, such as organizational policies, economic conditions, or cultural expectations, influence your leadership?

- Can you provide an example of a time when you had to adapt your leadership style due to external pressures?

Section 4: Employee Engagement and Motivation

8) How do you ensure that employees remain engaged and motivated under your leadership?

- What role does recognition and appreciation play in your leadership?
- Can you share an example of a successful initiative you implemented to boost employee motivation?

9) What strategies do you use to encourage teamwork and collaboration in your organization?

- How do you handle situations where employees struggle to work together?
- What steps do you take to foster a culture of mutual respect and cooperation?

Section 5: Leadership Development and Future Outlook

10) As a leader, how do you continue to develop and refine your leadership skills?

- Have you participated in any leadership training or mentoring programs?
- What sources of inspiration or learning do you rely on?

11) What advice would you give to future leaders who want to create a positive work environment?

- Based on your experience, what are the most important lessons you've learned about leadership?
- If you could change one thing about leadership practices in your organization, what would it be and why?

Appendix 2. Ethical Committee Aproval Form

T.C.
İSTANBUL GELİŞİM ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Etik Kurul Başkanlığı

ETİK KURUL KARAR ÖRNEĞİ

Toplantı No	Toplantı Tarihi	Toplantı Saati	Toplantı Yeri
2025 – 11	30.05.2025	14.00	Rektör Yardımcısı Odası

KARAR NO: 2025-11-28: Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, İşletme (İngilizce) Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı 241432151 numaralı Baraa Estabraq Salman AL-SALIHI' nın, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Aslıhan ÜNAL' ın danışmanlığında yürütülen "The Impact of Effective Leadership on Improving the Work Environment: A Qualitative Study of Managers in Iraq" konulu çalışması görüşüldü yapacağı anket sorularının, etik kurallara uygun olup olmadığını tespit etmek üzere, İGÜ Etik Kurulumuzun 18.04.2025 tarih ve 2025-06 sayılı toplantısında, İGÜ Etik Kurul Yönergesinin 12(1) maddesine göre değerlendirme yapmak üzere görevlendirilen öğretim elemanlarının raporları incelenmiş olup, ilgili çalışmada yer alan bilimsel araştırmanın etik kurallara uygun olduğuna oy birliği ile karar verildi.

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RESUME

Personal Information

Surname, name : Al-Salihi, Baraa Estabraq Salman

Nationality : Iraqi

Education

Degree	Education Unit	Graduation Date
Master	Istanbul Gelisim University	In progress
Bachelor	University of Baghdad	2015
High School	Dhat Al-Sawari	2012

Work Experience

Year	Place	Title

Foreing Language: English (Advanced)

Publications

Hobbies

Painting

Scientific development