

The Effectiveness of Strategic Leadership in Promoting Organizational Innovation: An Applied Study in The Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

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Abstract: *The current research aims to determine the extent to which the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and its various departments are interested in strategic leadership methods, which play a significant role in enhancing organizational Innovation. Thus, the research problem emerged from the intellectual theories of the research variables. To achieve its objectives, two main hypotheses were formulated. The research adopted an applied methodology and targeted the senior, middle, and executive management levels within the ministry. One hundred questionnaires were distributed to the research sample, and ninety-six were returned. The current research concluded that there is an acceptable level of strategic leadership in its various dimensions within the Ministry of Higher Education, which indicates the existence of effective and purposeful strategic policies that can be continuously developed and improved in light of diverse environmental changes. Among the most important recommendations was the necessity of creating a Innovative environment characterized by openness, trust, and cooperation among all members of the ministry, because good and effective leadership cannot fully achieve its goals if there is no climate that encourages learning, experimentation, and the implementation of required changes.*

Keywords: Strategic leadership, organizational innovation, core competencies, human capital, generating new idea.

INTRODUCTION

The world today is witnessing rapid and dynamic changes in all institutions, and the alignment between effective leadership and organizational Innovation has become a strategic necessity to ensure their success and distinction. Leadership is a broader concept than just managing and organizing material and human resources; it is an art of enhancing capabilities and directing them towards performing tasks with innovation and high efficiency by building an environment that encourages Innovative ideas and generating appropriate and unconventional solutions. Innovation is a pillar of institutions that enhances their ability to develop the services and products they offer and to create strategies and policies that contribute to improving and developing

organizational performance in general. The current research aims to delve into the study of the effectiveness of leaders and identify the most important mechanisms that enable them to support and develop Innovative methods within institutions to achieve strategic excellence. It also seeks to provide a practical framework in a scientific manner that can be applied in reality to improve and enhance organizational Innovation to achieve its goals in particular, which leads to achieving the goals of sustainable development in advanced and contemporary environments.

Research problem

The current research problem lies in the fact that Iraqi institutions, including the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, face many challenges, most notably the adoption of strategic leadership practices and innovative methods that are realistic and tangible, enhancing their true role and distinguished performance. This is due to the weakness in utilizing core competencies, the absence of a concept of organizational culture, and the slowness in absorbing and adapting to new, non-traditional, and decentralized approaches. This weakens the institution's ability to achieve its goals effectively and efficiently. The following questions can be posed:

1. What challenges does the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research face when adopting strategic leadership methods?
2. To what extent does strategic leadership enhance organizational Innovation within the Ministry.
3. What is the level of organizational Innovation within the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research?
4. What is the effectiveness of the relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational Innovation within the Ministry?

Research significance

1. This research contributes to identifying the leadership skills that support strategies and policies that play a role in promoting innovation and improving decision quality.
2. This research serves as a reference for future researchers to understand how leaders can influence Innovation processes and the possibility of applying its findings in other, different organizations.
3. Emphasizing the activation of the role of strategic leaders and organizational Innovation policies in current organizations.

Research objectives

1. To study the extent of the impact of strategic leadership styles on the level of Innovation in the Ministry.
2. To develop organizational strategies and methods that help leaders encourage a Innovative and sustainable environment.
3. To identify the obstacles and problems that limit Innovation within the Ministry.
4. To present well-considered conclusions that the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research can use to improve its performance.

Research hypotheses

To achieve the research and its objectives, the main research hypothesis was formulated in a way that clarifies the research problem and contributes to the research questions, as follows:

First main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation between strategic leadership and organizational Innovation.

The second main hypothesis: Strategic leadership has a statistically significant effect on organizational Innovation.



Figure 1. The Relationship between organisational innovation and strategic leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Strategic Leadership

Management behaviour and organizational outputs were defined after the 1960s. Initially, there was no unified view on the existence of a positive, interactive relationship between organizational effectiveness and leadership in general. Subsequently, the features of leadership began to emerge, as its skills became increasingly influential on organizations. The theory of senior management levels (Hambrick and Mason) demonstrated that the age, experience, and education of senior managers significantly impact the type of information they seek and utilize in strategic decision-making and organizational management, thus affecting the organization's growth and success. Consequently, the perspective on leadership began to shift from administrative to strategic, and this concept began to pique the interest of researchers, prompting them to conduct various studies on it (Neyisci & Erdogan, 2022:18). Management thinkers and researchers have excelled in generating new ideas stemming

from the effects and roots of the past, extending into a future with distinct directions and horizons embodied in strategic leadership. This term is subject to multiple interpretations due to the diversity and abundance of researchers who refer to it. Azmi (2010:56) defined it as leadership capable of predicting outcomes. With the changes occurring in the external environment and the ability of the internal environment to respond to them through development methods, success and survival are achieved by better investing existing resources. Singh et al. (2023:1) indicated that strategic leadership encompasses the functions that individuals within an organization can perform, including strategic decision-making, communication with stakeholders outside their organization, implementation of human resource activities, information management, motivation, development, and management oversight. It is a leadership that focuses on strategic roles and tasks, whether administrative, operational, or supervisory, within organizations. Al-Anzi (2024:117) views it as the systematic processes that organizations define and implement, aiming to adopt their vision and achieve their goals through collaboration among all their members at all levels. These processes include planning, implementation, analysis, training, and others. It is a set of unique abilities and capabilities for visualization, prediction, and Innovative thinking, enabling individuals to generate innovative ideas that lead to a high level of performance by identifying available opportunities and utilizing them to make wiser decisions (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018: 127). Strategic leadership is one of the most important elements that organizations can rely on for their development and success, as its activities are based on several axes: determining the future direction, implementing the strategy, empowering employees, employing effective elements, and developing the organization's strategy (Davies, 2006: 128). Hassan, 2017: 40, also defined it as the ability of employees to think strategically, predict, maintain flexible policies, and cooperate with others to make the organization's future adaptable and evolving. Rowe, 2018: 83, defined it as the ability to influence others to make decisions that enhance the organization's ability to survive and continue in the long term while maintaining balance and financial stability in the short term. It focuses on the present and future in setting its priorities. Al-Sharifi, 2004, emphasizes: 17) It is defined as an individual's ability to possess unconventional skills in strategic thinking and future vision, adapting to rapid changes with skill and flexibility, thus making the organization stand out in its competitive field. Strategic leadership is therefore an administrative ability to envision, maintain flexibility, and empower the organization to implement changes as needed. It encompasses a series of crucial strategic decisions aimed at propelling the organization to levels of growth, innovation, and development (Banda, 2022: 142). Argus & Samson (2021: 7) describe it as a comprehensive and integrated unification process for the organization, supported by an effective reward system for outstanding performance and commitment from employees at all levels, leading to quality and success. Bin Shweha & Tawahir (2019: 118) indicate that strategic leadership is leadership capable of defining strategic forecasting and effectively enhancing the organizational culture. All of this contributes to employee Innovation and development by fostering alignment and alliances within the organization at all levels, making its future adaptable and evolving. Based on various definitions, it is defined as a set of functions performed by individuals working at the highest levels of the organization (executive directors, senior

management teams, and managers) aimed at achieving the organization's strategic goals (Samimi et al., 2019: 3).

Lumumba (2021: 170) adds that strategic leaders always demonstrate a balance between managerial skills and human competencies, which play a crucial role in determining the organization's long-term strategic positioning, leading to high and superior performance. Leaders always need to possess leadership skills and are willing to learn and improve their abilities to guide their organizations toward achieving optimal performance. Strategic leadership is a leadership style that can reflect the organization's orientations to achieve long-term goals and deal with changing and complex environments. It requires forward-thinking mindsets to set goals clearly and flexibly so that they are adaptable to all changes. Strategic leaders inspire and coordinate work teams by promoting common goals among them and adopting innovative ideas and a culture of continuous development and improvement. They are skilled in the successful analysis of competitors' trends and the strategic management of human resources, through cooperation, ethical decision-making at work, and their commitment to organizational values (Mohammad et al., 2024: 4).

The Importance of Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership plays a crucial role in guiding, managing, and developing human resources through efficient performance. This empowers organizations to achieve their goals, prioritize objectives, and establish a future vision (Figuroa et al., 2019: 1). Organizations may find it extremely difficult to survive, grow, and meet future challenges without strategic leadership, hindering their ability to achieve outstanding performance and development—a key objective of strategic leadership (David et al., 2015: 14). Its importance stems from its focus on attracting innovative human resources and developing their capabilities to address problems and challenges through thoughtful, innovative, and long-term thinking. This positively impacts the achievement of organizational goals, contributing to its prosperity, continuity, and increased competitiveness (Hammoud, 2018: 24). Strategic leadership is also one of the most prominent organizational factors that enables an organization to improve and develop its performance, especially in changing and turbulent environments. Furthermore, a leader motivates individuals to perform at their best, making them more committed to achieving the organization's goals, which are linked to achieving higher levels of innovation (Mohammad et al., 2024: 4).

Characteristics of Strategic Leader

Swayne et al., 2006: 17, summarize the characteristics that strategic leaders should possess as follows:

- Possesses a distinctive vision of the future.
- Ensures the participation of all individuals at all administrative levels and utilizes their expertise in strategic management processes.
- Thinks about the future, not just the present.
- Understands the problems of their employees and dedicates sufficient time to speaking with and listening to them.
- Allows for mistakes and encourages them to take risks to achieve success.

- Develops the organization in all aspects by taking responsibility, motivating employees, and making purposeful decisions. Hitt et al. (2011: 363) identified the most important characteristics of strategic leadership as: defining the organization's direction strategically, optimally managing human resources in particular and the organization in general, focusing on and developing human capital, creating an effective organizational environment, promoting ethical practices among employees, and establishing strategic performance controls. According to Ali (2021: 48), a strategic leader possesses a distinctive set of traits and skills. Organizations describe them as having clear future visions and broad thinking, enabling them to make rational decisions to define the organization's direction in a flexible, strategic manner. Furthermore, they have the ability to influence individuals both inside and outside the organization to implement their planned vision. Samimi et al. (2019: 3) added that a strategic leader possesses eight essential functions: making strategic decisions, communicating with external stakeholders, performing human resource management activities, influencing and motivating individuals, managing information, managing and supervising operations, managing ethical and social matters, and managing the diverse and conflicting demands of individuals. In addition, Hitt et al. (2010: 439) identified the capabilities of strategic leaders in their organizations as follows:

- 1- Developing and implementing the organization's vision.
- 2- 2- Motivating and harnessing human talent.
- 3- Activating and effectively utilizing human resources.
- 4- Developing new technologies and methods.
- 5- Planning beneficial and valuable strategies.
- 6- Building and maintaining organizational culture.
- 7- Implementing controls in a balanced manner and continuously improving them.
- 8- Adhering to ethical practices among employees.

Whitehead et al. (225: 8) identified these characteristics as follows:

- 1- Inspirational vision: Leaders' behaviour influence individuals to achieve the strategic vision at all levels of the organization.
- 2- Decision-making: Strategic leaders use their influence and role within organizations by making strategic decisions that lead to Innovation and innovation in performance, thus impacting the organization's results.
- 3- Strategic management: This involves leaders overseeing management and operations, as well as their role in shaping organizational structures and influencing the implementation of strategies.
- 4- Building Relationships: This involves aligning goals, negotiating with others, and focusing on flexibility in decision-making.

Dimensions of Strategic Leadership

The dimensions of strategic leadership were identified by Fadhel & Alqurs (2025: 829) and are as follows:

Defining the strategic direction

The strategic direction defines the image of the organization that it seeks to continuously develop. The strategic direction consists of two parts: the first is the ideological component, and the second is the envisioned future of the organization, which it aspires to achieve in the long term. This is accomplished by motivating employees based on the organization's history and encouraging them to exceed expectations during implementation (Hitt et al., 2007: 384). It is the development of a strategic vision that reflects the ideas and aspirations of the organization's leadership by engaging individuals and gaining their support and endorsement to achieve positive and purposeful results that align with the future vision (Al-Gharib, 2022: 233). It also studies the internal organizational environment, identifying strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external environment, recognizing opportunities and threats. This allows for the formulation of strategic alternatives that guide the organization to achieve its goals (Malhambani, 2021: 13). Dess et al. (2007: 390) indicated that strategic leaders must establish a clear, understandable, and comprehensive future strategic vision and direction. This involves examining the internal and external environment to identify the organization's opportunities and threats in order to develop its mission and objectives.

Investing in core competencies

Olaka et al. (2017:8) explained that core competencies are a set of capabilities that are a primary source of an organization's competitive advantage. These competencies have become more effective and can be utilized sufficiently, creating sustainable value. Therefore, successful and purposeful organizations should work to optimally invest in such distinctive and unique resources. Al-Mashhadani (2019: 39) indicated that senior management should establish a set of controls to build an organization capable of achieving the targeted goals, enhancing the organizational culture, paying attention to the internal work environment, re-engineering processes, implementing total quality management processes, and investing in competitive capabilities and competencies through empowerment, motivation, and increasing wages. Irtaimah (2018: 172) added that these competencies are the capabilities of strategic importance that are essential for achieving its tasks and that provide the organization with greater opportunities and better performance. The absence of such competencies leads to a major strategic challenge and a deficiency in investing in available opportunities, as they are characterized by their continuous development with additional work and represent a continuous achievement of the organization's success factors in a decisive way. One of their most prominent characteristics is that they are difficult to imitate or obtain by other competing organizations.

Human capital development

Human capital is a group of working individuals who possess knowledge and skills that contribute to increasing the value of the economic organization. They represent a crucial and fundamental resource, and the organization needs to invest in their potential and capabilities (Al-Mashhadani, 2019: 40). Muzee et al. (2016: 4) indicated that this element focuses on investing in individuals' knowledge and information to be effective in performing their activities, leading to the development of their capacity to contribute to the organization's success and distinction. Awad et al. (2021: 102) added that these

resources are developed by organizations to raise their performance level through employee education and training processes to enhance their intellectual and cognitive levels, as well as increase their potential to become a resource characterized by effective and efficient performance, thus raising the organization's level in the future.

Enhancing organizational culture

The leader bears the responsibility of shaping an effective and appropriate organizational culture based on sharing the long-term vision and the most important strategic procedures and methods that rely on high-quality production, in addition to the existence of an organizational culture that works to reduce conflicts within the organization (Bilgin et al., 2017: 845). Al-Naji, 2021: 55, described it as a set of core ideas, beliefs, and values that leaders and employees at all levels in organizations can believe in, which directly influence their work performance, and which are taught and transmitted to every new individual who joins them. Changing and restructuring organizational culture is more difficult than maintaining it, but the effective strategic leader realizes when to change the culture in his organization gradually in order to implement the most important strategies. Changing and reshaping this culture requires solving problems, selecting competent and suitable individuals who possess the organization's desired values, evaluating performance by setting the required goals that are compatible with the new values, and a suitable reward system for behaviors that reflect the new values (Hitt et al, 2007: 390).

The Concept of Organizational Innovation

The term Innovation is mentioned in the business dictionary as referring to work that provides a new product, idea, or service. Researchers have described it as a process consisting of several stages through which organizations use their skills and methods to develop services and goods, as well as improve operating and production systems to achieve their goals and provide better services to customers (Hussein and Hussein, 2019: 5). Organizational Innovation practices cover a full range of improvements and changes identified in the organizational structure and include new forms of management such as Total Quality Management to develop new and crucial processes and practices that facilitate the performance of Innovation in the organization and the making of well-informed strategic decisions. There are three types of organizational Innovation in organizations: new methods in organizing procedures, distributing work responsibilities and decision-making, and external relations with public organizations and institutions (Bataineh, et al, 2024: 529). Organizational learning tools, knowledge management, and organizational culture help maintain Innovation processes in organizations by matching Innovation goals with strategic goals to achieve better performance (Grosan & Apaydin, 2010: 1172). Al-Abaidi and Al-Azzawi, 2010: 213-214, defined it as efforts made by any organization that seeks to develop and improve its products and services in a new and different way that achieves social and economic benefits for the individual, society, and the organization. Thus, it is a phenomenon that begins with the generation of ideas and goes through different stages and several processes. It can be influenced by and influence the organization's surrounding environment. It performs tasks related to organizing the organization internally, solving problems, and creating new services and products characterized by originality and

quality through the work of individuals independently or as teams within the organization, which is reflected positively on its performance (Tabishat, 2020: 83). Abbas, et al., 2021: 426 indicate that Innovative behavior is the result of a set of decisions made by individuals in their work, starting with perception, then attention, how to gather information, evaluate available alternatives, and adopt a specific behavior or idea. All of this leads to producing something new, which stimulates the employees' Innovative energy and gives them freedom and independence in all aspects. Amrawi, 2016: 3, agrees with the previous definitions and describes organizational Innovation as the adoption of new ideas or different behaviors in the organization, whether it is a service, product, administrative practices, or technology, in new and innovative ways. This is due to the organization's ability and speed in adopting and balancing more than one type to make improvements that produce something of value. Morelos-Gómez et al. (2023: 75) indicate that organizations differ in how they implement organizational Innovation, and that its embodiment and application follow a four-stage model that requires support and encouragement from management. The first stage begins by identifying the organization's needs through identifying problems and obstacles and working to solve them by developing cognitive capabilities and adopting innovative behaviours that lead to Innovation. The second stage aims to generate a set of new ideas and profound concepts using one of the distinctive techniques, which is brainstorming, in which all individuals in the organization can participate. In the third stage, the ideas obtained by the organization in the previous stage are evaluated and prioritized according to the needs identified in the first stage. In the fourth and final stage, innovative prototypes are designed and then implemented in the organization, which helps the organization to grow and be sustainable in the face of challenges and rapid changes.

The Importance of Organizational Innovation

For organizations to achieve outstanding performance, they must adopt Innovative behaviours and methods that help them sustain, develop, and succeed. The importance of Innovation is evident in its contribution to developing individuals' abilities to think in innovative and unconventional ways, enabling them to solve problems effectively. It also contributes to a genuine and effective response to available opportunities, overcoming obstacles, adapting to all changes, and thinking outside the box. Furthermore, it fosters the development of skills, talents, and Innovative management, improves services and products, and prepares organizations to be attractive environments for discovering and developing exceptional potential and talents through modern and specialized programs (Abbas, et al., 2021: 427). In addition, Innovation improves the organization's core services, positively impacting both the individual and the organization. It helps create a balance between human resources, their investment, and the utilization of available capabilities, contributing to the development of these mental and intellectual capacities by providing individuals with opportunities to select and develop them (Amrawi, 2016: 3). Organizational Innovation in any organization is a driving force for improving its organizational structure, developing its future vision, and maintaining its leading position compared to other organizations. This, in turn, leads to a change in individuals' behavior towards their organization and increases their sense of belonging and loyalty (Gomez, et al., 2023: 76).

Dimensions of Organizational Innovation

The researcher relied on the study by Goffin & Mitchell (2005: 29) in defining the dimensions of creativity, as most researchers agree on their existence. These dimensions are as follows:

Generating new ideas

The less time an individual has to generate new creative ideas, the more sources of inspiration they need to gather and combine to develop their ideas. Conversely, the opposite is also true. Individuals need to find distinctive and different ideas to increase opportunities and compete with rivals within a short timeframe that cannot tolerate delay (Schnitzler, 2017: 28). These ideas are a primary reason for the greatest and most important inventions in the world. They provide us with invaluable benefits for a long time. Searching for valuable ideas is like continuously prospecting for gold. Among thousands of ideas, individuals can find at least one or two valuable and ingenious ideas that can change the course of the organization and be a reason for its success and progress (Robledo, 2018: 37).

Implementing change

Change is inevitable because it accompanies the increase in knowledge, tools, and technology, leading to a rapid and unprecedented increase. Therefore, the task of all organizations, in order to avoid becoming victims of these rapid changes, is to control the type and degree of change. Without intelligent, successful, and change-capable management, these organizations are exposed to the problems and threats surrounding them. This is achieved by using their capabilities effectively and efficiently to achieve success and advance over competing organizations (Laour, 2014: 24). Zainol et al., 2021: 3-4, state that change means the organization's transition from a known state to a desired and unknown state to increase its effectiveness and determine whether the organization is successful. This will lead to improved organizational performance through employee support for change, their genuine attitudes towards it, and their understanding of how to implement it correctly, thus increasing the organization's strengths.

Problem solving

Organizations pay meticulous attention to every detail of their work to achieve the highest levels of quality. However, this doesn't preclude the existence of obstacles, which can sometimes be difficult to resolve haphazardly or using outdated methods, as this can exacerbate the problem and lead to decreased productivity and quality. To overcome these problems, standardized and unified strategies must be planned. These strategies involve identifying the problem, analyzing it, classifying it, and then evaluating it to arrive at the best solution (Alsuhaime, 2025: 21). Al-Nil (2016: 52) adds that a problem represents an obstacle preventing the organization from achieving its goals. A significant gap exists between the planned level of achievement and the actual level of implementation. This affects the effectiveness of internal processes within the organization and hinders the administrative system from fulfilling its tasks and functions.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents and analyses the study results, the data for which was collected through a questionnaire distributed to a sample representing (senior, middle, and lower management) in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This chapter aims to test hypotheses and analyse the relationship between the dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational creativity. To achieve this objective, a range of statistical tools were used to analyse the data, including the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing.

In addition, the results are interpreted within the context of the established hypotheses, and tables are presented to explain the meaning of the obtained statistical values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will present and analyse the study results, which were collected through a questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of senior, middle, and lower management at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This chapter aims to test the hypotheses and analyse the relationship between the dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational Innovation. To achieve this objective, a set of statistical tools was used to analyse the data, including the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing. In addition, the results will be interpreted within the context of the established hypotheses, and the tables will be presented, along with an explanation of the meanings of the obtained statistical values.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the study sample

Percentage	Frequency	Group	Variant
67.70	65	Gender	Male
32.29	31	Gender	Female
9.37	9	Organisational Level	Diploma or less
47.91	46	Organisational Level	Bachelor's degree
29.16	28	Organisational Level	Master's degree
13.54	13	Organisational Level	PhD
20.83	20	Job Title	Department Manager
36.45	35	Job Title	Section/Unit Head
42.70	41	Job Title	Administrative Employee
21.87	21	Years of Experience	Less than 5 years
33.33	32	Years of Experience	5–10 years
26.04	25	Years of Experience	11–20 years
18.75	18	Years of Experience	More than 20 years

Table 2. Reliability and normality tests

Consistency	Alpha Cronbach	P-Value	Kol-Smi Test	Dimension	
High	0.088	>0.05	0.85	Strategic Direction X1	Strategic Leadership
High	0.091	>0.05	0.86	Core Competencies	
High	0.099	>0.05	0.83	X2	
High	0.087	>0.05	0.84	Human Capital	
High	0.097	>0.05	0.79	X3	Organizational Innovation
High	0.098	>0.05	0.82	Organizational Culture	
High	0.094	>0.05	0.81	X4	

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results show that all p-values for the studied variables are greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data follow a normal distribution, and therefore, parametric statistical tests can be used in the statistical analysis. We also note that all Cronbach's alpha values are high, indicating that the questionnaire used to collect the data has high reliability, meaning that the measured dimensions are interconnected and consistent with each other.

Table 3. The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative importance of the study variables' dimensions

Relative Weight	Standard Deviation	mean	Dimension
81	0.78	4.00	Q1
77	0.72	3.80	Q2
82	0.76	4.12	Q3
83	0.77	3.97	X1
83	0.75	4.12	Q1
84	0.80	3.76	Q2
80	0.74	4.28	Q3
81	0.72	4.05	X2
83	0.75	4.14	Q1
82	0.79	3.90	Q2
78	0.73	4.20	Q3
82	0.81	4.08	X3
79	0.83	3.86	Q1
80	0.76	4.17	Q2
78	0.72	4.09	Q3
79	0.82	4.04	X4
81	0.72	4.04	X
80	0.75	4.22	Q1
86	0.76	4.50	Q2

87	0.77	4.31	Q3
85	0.62	4.34	Y1
85	0.75	4.01	Q1
87	0.69	4.08	Q2
86	0.77	3.59	Q3
79	0.74	3.89	Y2
72	0.70	3.85	Q1
87	0.77	4.67	Q2
83	0.70	4.29	Q3
79	0.74	4.27	Y3
83	0.68	4.17	Y

We note from Table (3) that after developing human capital (X3), it achieved an arithmetic mean of (4.08) and a relative importance of (78%), which confirms the positive role of the Ministry in qualifying and developing employees through training courses and workshops that support their performance. As for after investing in core competencies (X2), its arithmetic mean value reached (4.05) and a relative importance of (81%), which is a good and acceptable percentage that indicates the Ministry's keenness to invest in distinguished and unique competencies in their performance and high Organisational levels. After strengthening organizational culture (X4), its arithmetic mean was similar to the previous dimension, reaching (4.04) with a relative importance of (79%). This indicates the ministry's genuine contribution to developing and improving organizational culture in a way that aligns with changes in the external environment. The strategic direction dimension (X1) achieved the lowest value among the strategic leadership dimensions, at (3.97) with a relative importance of (83%). This does not mean it is a weak or unacceptable percentage, but rather that the ministry needs to pay more attention to defining its strategic future more clearly and effectively than it currently does to achieve its goals. Overall, the strategic leadership variable (X) achieved an arithmetic mean of (4.04) and a relative importance of (81%), demonstrating the active and important role of leadership that implements its work in a truly long-term strategic manner. The "Generating New Ideas" dimension (Y1) achieved the highest score with a mean of 44.3 and a relative importance of 85%. This indicates that the ministry under study prioritizes generating new ideas for its employees through both material and moral support, thereby boosting their confidence in contributing ideas for continuous development and improvement. The "Problem Solving" dimension (Y3) followed with a mean of 27.4 and a relative importance of 79%. This suggests that the ministry's performance in this dimension is evident in the senior management's commitment to resolving all problems, or at least minimizing them, to provide employees with a clear vision of their professional and career futures. This, in turn, enhances their role and dedication to performance. The "Implementing Change" dimension (Y2) achieved the lowest mean score among the dimensions of organizational Innovation, at 3.89. This confirms that the ministry is somewhat hesitant to implement continuous changes in internal processes, and undoubtedly has its reasons for taking such a step, as it is essential for success and excellence. Thus, the organizational Innovation dimension (Y) achieved an arithmetic mean of (4.17) and a

relative importance of (83%), and its value is evident in improving the ministry's methods and approaches in accomplishing its work and goals in a more developed and Innovative way.

Table 4. Correlation between strategic leadership and organizational Innovation dimensions

Strategic Leadership Dimensions	Organizational Innovation (Y)	Sig.	Problem Solving (Y3)	Sig.	Change Implementation (Y2)	Sig.	Idea Generation (Y1)
Strategic Orientation (X1)	0.64	0.000	0.62	0.000	0.60	0.000	0.70
Core Competencies (X2)	0.64	0.000	0.67	0.000	0.64	0.000	0.62
Human Capital (X3)	0.67	0.000	0.70	0.000	0.68	0.000	0.64
Organizational Culture (X4)	0.65	0.000	0.66	0.000	0.64	0.000	0.65
Strategic Leadership (X)	0.65	0.000	0.66	0.000	0.64	0.000	0.65

Through Pearson's correlation analysis in Table (4) to test the first hypothesis (that there is a statistically significant correlation between strategic leadership and organizational Innovation), we observe that orientation is positively correlated with all dimensions of organizational Innovation with a value of (0.64). The correlation between strategic orientation and idea generation is (0.70), between strategic orientation and change implementation is (0.60), and between strategic orientation and problem-solving is (0.62). This reflects the importance of defining the correct direction for the ministry in a well-considered strategic manner to contribute to the implementation of required changes. A moderate correlation is also shown between the core competencies dimension and the dimensions of organizational Innovation, with a correlation value of (0.64). The correlation between core competencies and idea generation is (0.62),

between core competencies and change implementation is (0.64), and between core competencies and problem-solving is (0.67). This indicates the need for the ministry to increase its investment in distinctive and core competencies that support administrative processes and continuous innovation for the future. Human capital demonstrates a strong correlation with the dimensions of organizational Innovation, with a value of (0.67). Specifically, human capital is correlated with idea generation (0.64), change implementation (0.68), and problem-solving (0.70). This underscores the importance of human capital as a fundamental element in achieving organizational Innovation through its proper investment and development. The organizational culture dimension shows a moderate correlation with the dimensions of organizational Innovation, with a value of (0.65). Specifically, organizational culture is correlated with idea generation (0.65), change implementation (0.64), and problem-solving (0.66). This indicates that organizational culture promotes strategic decision-making to achieve goals. Overall, the correlation between the independent variable of strategic leadership and the dependent variable of organizational Innovation was strong and acceptable, reaching (0.65). This confirms the interconnectedness of the variables and how they complement each other. This is achieved through strategic leadership based on thorough study and planning, leading to advanced levels of Innovation and excellence in the ministry's work and the achievement of its objectives.

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis to measure the impact of strategic intelligence on strategic performance

Sig (p-value)	t-value	Beta	Independent Variables
0.001	2.83	0.46	Strategic Direction
0.000	3.77	0.51	Core competencies
0.003	4.82	0.59	Human capital
0.007	2.35	0.43	Organizational culture
0.002	4.87	0.61	Organizational innovation
$R^2 = 0.37$			

Table (5) shows that the dimensions of strategic leadership significantly influence the dimensions of organizational Innovation. Human capital has the highest impact (0.59), indicating it is the most influential dimension on organizational Innovation. Organizational culture has the lowest impact (0.43), but its effect is still statistically significant. The results show that all dimensions have a statistically significant impact, with p-values less than (0.05). The overall R^2 model indicates that (37%) of the changes in organizational Innovation are explained by the dimensions of strategic leadership, suggesting the model's validity. This supports the second hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The research findings indicate that strategic leadership, in all its dimensions, plays a fundamental role in fostering Innovative work within the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This is demonstrated by a statistically significant relationship between the two variables, clearly showing that strategic leadership and its active role within the Ministry create an innovative environment that supports new ideas and minimizes problems.
2. Through theoretical and practical research findings, the researcher concluded that strategic leaders make a crucial contribution to formulating clear strategic visions and enhancing organizational culture by encouraging and training individuals to stay abreast of the latest developments, enabling them to reach levels of organizational Innovation.
3. The results revealed that developing human capital and investing in it through continuous training and education is a key method for supporting Innovation. This enhances their capacity for purposeful thinking and problem-solving in a timely and innovative manner, all supported by successful strategic leaders within the Ministry.
- 4- After implementing the change, its results were lower compared to other dimensions of organizational Innovation, but this is not necessarily negative. This is due to the nature of the ministry's internal environment, which was characterized by increasing bureaucratic procedures and centralized performance. This reduces the role of employees in contributing to planning processes and significantly hinders the utilization of their Innovative potential. This characteristic is consistently present in our governmental organizations.
- 5- The results of the sample responses in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research confirmed an acceptable level of strategic leadership in general and across most of its dimensions, as well as a good level of organizational Innovation across most of its dimensions. This indicates that the ministry is trying to support the efforts of leaders and senior management who are characterized by deep, long-term strategic thinking, enabling them to play their roles in creating a healthy environment that supports Innovation. Each strategic leader seeks Innovative and innovative actions that will elevate the ministry to the ranks of successful and stable governmental organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This research recommends that leaders at the highest administrative levels adopt a modern strategic leadership approach capable of stimulating organizational Innovation through unconventional strategic thinking and providing employees with ample space to contribute new ideas and solve problems promptly.
2. It is essential to create a Innovative environment characterized by openness, trust, and cooperation among all members of the ministry. Effective and efficient leadership cannot fully achieve its goals without a climate that encourages learning, experimentation, and the implementation of necessary changes.
3. Since Innovation is a distinctive strength of organizations, this research recommends adopting authentic metrics and indicators for organizational Innovation. These should

be part of the performance evaluation of senior management within the ministry, in addition to assessing past and routine achievements. The evaluation should also include the leaders' ability to encourage new ideas, monitor their implementation, and support Innovative initiatives and plans.

4. Optimizing the investment in core competencies and distinctive capabilities within the ministry, recognizing their significant role as a source of organizational Innovation, by employing them in fields that enhance their expertise and Innovative thinking, thus enabling them to innovate and renew without fear of failure.

5. It is essential for researchers to expand their studies in the future by incorporating mediating variables such as organizational learning, organizational training, organizational culture, knowledge sharing, and others to deepen the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational Innovation.

6. Although the current research findings demonstrated a good and acceptable level of effectiveness of strategic leadership in activating organizational Innovation within the ministry, Innovation remains closely linked to leadership-level initiatives that may be more individual than strategic orientations supported by long-term future plans. Therefore, the research recommends adopting Innovation mechanisms and integrating them into modern planning systems, transforming them into practical and established practices within administrative work and a comprehensive organizational culture to ensure their continued success.

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