

Academic Leadership and its Role in Improving University Performance at Imam University College

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ABSTRACT: The study aims to identify academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College, as well as to diagnose the level of academic leadership practices at Imam University College, the research sample. The research problem was how to determine the nature of the relationship between academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College, in line with the vital role played by these variables. The research population and sample consisted of the academic leadership at Imam University College (27) academics. The research sample included a comprehensive inventory of the dean's office and his assistants, as well as all department heads and rapporteurs at the college under study (27), with an accuracy level of 5%. The study found a significant correlation between the average responses of the study sample members regarding academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College. The study recommended the need for academic leaders at Imam University College to take advantage of the positive relationship between the dimensions of academic leadership, represented by (inspiring a shared vision and empowering human resources), by developing and understanding creative skills and abilities, which contributes to raising the level of academic leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing importance of the role of universities in serving and developing society has made the advancement of life in any society dependent on the advancement of university education. It is essential for university leaders to possess leadership skills, It is essential for university leaders to possess leadership skills, as this will help them and motivate them to engage in strong and effective participation in achieving comprehensive development in society, This requires the establishment of specialized centers to train academic leaders, Therefore, professional development and its programs remain essential for academic leaders, as they represent the most important entry points that contribute to changing and adjusting the quality levels of university work as a whole. (Al-Mutairi, 2019)

This was accompanied by international universities' claims of the necessity of implementing quality in their performance, This stems from the diverse desires, capabilities, and goals of higher education institutions, and the fact that the officials of these institutions are best placed to manage the available resources to meet these desires and capabilities. Furthermore, there is a gap between the skills sought by the labor market and the skills acquired by higher education graduates, At the same time, Iraqi public universities in general, and private universities in particular, faced significant pressures due to the increase in unemployment rates among university graduates. Consequently, these universities needed to resort to innovation to provide education that would enable their graduates to become competitive and contribute to the economic and social growth of their countries. This led to the emergence of this phenomenon as a fundamental topic due to its ability to visualize the way knowledge enters an organization, is transformed, modified, and ultimately exploited. Therefore, organizations capable of transforming acquired knowledge through cognitive absorptive capacity are those with high flexibility and outstanding performance, and thus the ability to achieve the highest levels of quality in their performance. (Salah Al-Din, 2019)

This research aims to answer many of the questions raised in this regard, as well as to address this vital issue and minimize the existing shortcomings in the burden of understanding the in-depth issues of academic leadership and university performance. This research utilizes a theoretical framework that covers this concept, as well as a practical framework for analyzing the data obtained from Imam University College.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First: The Research Problem:

Academic leadership occupies great importance for institutions seeking to achieve excellence. It represents a significant knowledge asset for these institutions, in addition to its influential role in developing and advancing human resources. However, despite its importance, it has been observed that there is a lack of awareness or sufficient understanding of the importance of academic leadership and its significant impact on university performance at Imam University College, Iraq. From this perspective, the study problem can be formulated with the following question: How can we determine the nature of the relationship between academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College? In line with the vital role played by these variables, the problem can be formulated as follows:

1. What is the level of academic leadership at Imam University College?
2. What is the level of university performance at Imam University College?
3. Does academic leadership play a role in university performance at Imam University College?

Second, the importance of the research: The importance of the research can be defined as follows:

1. The importance of this research emerges as a scientific endeavor that sheds light on the role academic leaders play in improving university performance. Leadership is considered an essential and effective tool in improving university performance and achieving excellence.
2. This research coincides with the trend of Iraqi universities toward excellence and the important role played by academic leaders. There is no doubt that the academic leader's adoption of effective leadership practices is an important factor in improving university performance.
3. Research coverage of the topic of academic leadership in Iraq still requires more academic efforts
4. The importance of the variables studied in the current research as modern administrative terms in administrative thought, as they were not addressed by the Iraqi studies that attempted to link academic leadership and university performance at Imam University College

Third: Research Objectives:

This modest scientific contribution aligns with the interests demonstrated by researchers in the field of academic leadership and university performance. Thus, the current research seeks to achieve a set of primary objectives:

1. Identify academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College.
2. Diagnose the level of academic leadership practices at Imam University College, the research sample
3. Formulating some recommendations and presenting a number of proposals that can be used based on the results reached by the study
4. Through the results that will be reached, the researcher hopes to provide solutions to academic leaders at Imam University College that will contribute to improving university performance.

Fourth: Research Hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis: There is no role for academic leadership represented by (inspiring a shared vision, empowering human resources) in improving university performance at Imam University College at a statistical significance level of (0.05).

Fifth: The hypothetical plan of the research:

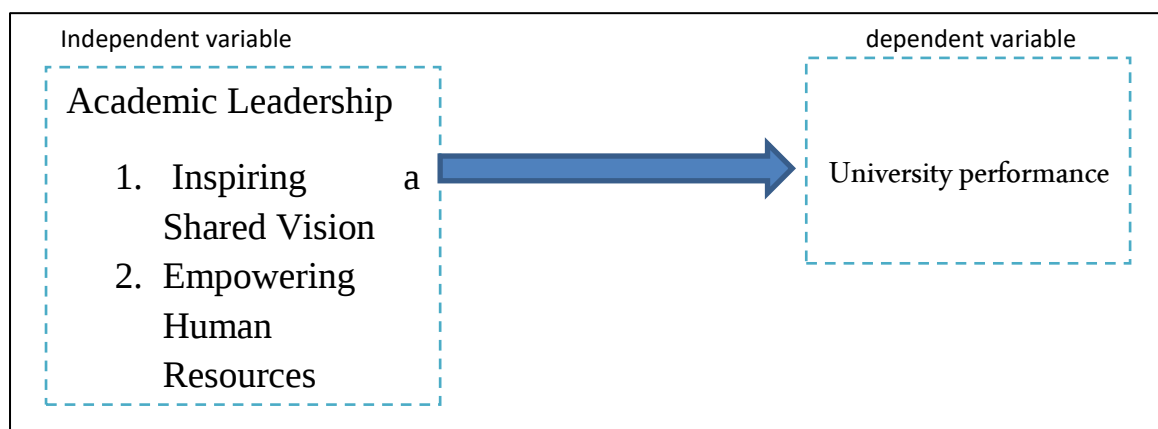


Figure No. (1) Hypothetical research plan

Source: Prepared by the researcher

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Sixth: The research community: A sample of academics working at Imam University College was chosen to implement the practical aspect of the study. The study community consisted of all professors who hold academic leadership positions in the college being studied, the research sample.

Seventh: Research Community and Sample:

Represented by the academic leadership at Imam University College (27) academics, the research sample included a comprehensive survey of the Dean's Office and his assistants, as well as all department heads and rapporteurs at the college under study (27). The accuracy level was 5% and the significance level was 0.05. Therefore, the appropriate sample size in this case was approximately 27. The total number of returned questionnaires for analysis was 25, with a response rate of 92% The research hypotheses were tested using the following statistical methods:

- Descriptive statistics, including the arithmetic mean and standard deviation.
- The arithmetic mean test.
- Questionnaire lists:

Eighth: Research Limits:

Spatial Limits: Imam University College

Human Limits: Academic leadership at Imam University College

Time Limits: November 1, 2024 to February 1, 2025.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY / FIRST REQUIREMENT / ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

First: The concept of academic leadership:

The early twenty-first century witnessed a global trend towards societal and organizational change. From these trends emerged the need for more conscious and comprehensive leadership that includes the three aspects that constitute the essence of man: the body, which includes the physical aspect; the heart, which includes the aspect of expressing feelings and emotions; and the mind, which includes the cognitive and rational aspect) ..Mahmoud ٥ Qadir(2023 ٤

Since leaders are the art of influencing others to motivate them to work enthusiastically and voluntarily to achieve goals, there is a strong positive relationship between administrative leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. Leadership behavior affects employees and their level of performance, and the employee engages in voluntary practices when he loses confidence in a leader or his administrative head, and the opposite happens if he feels a loss of confidence. Academic leaders are meant to be heads of academic departments and deans of colleges who are charged with administrative, scientific and leadership tasks according to the nature of the job they hold.. (Bazadough & Al Sharaya, 2022)

Academic leadership is defined as: person or group of people who direct and control the educational institution at the highest levels.. (Al-Mutairi, 2019)

Academic leadership also knows that leaders must take into account the overall responsibility for budget adherence, making education attractive to students and finding forms of cooperation with other actors).. (Puaca, 2021)

Academic leadership is the process of participating with others in creating agreement on a vision for projects, groups, or organizational units. It ensures facilitating individual and collective efforts and creativity to achieve common goals and objectives. The academic leader, when a faculty member is part of the educational environment, works as an administrative manager in the educational organization)..(Hadi, 2022)

Second: Roles and responsibilities of academic leaders:

The academic leader performs multiple functions and roles, including making recommendations regarding hiring decisions, evaluating faculty members, providing them with the necessary resources they need to succeed, and managing financial resources. Successfully managing an academic department requires the academic leader to have a broader range of roles and responsibilities that can be classified under four categories: a developer of the teaching environment. As a faculty developer, he is responsible for attracting, selecting, and evaluating faculty members and providing support that enhances their professional development and advancement and motivates them. As a director, the head of the department (the academic leader) must perform administrative functions in managing budgets, maintaining department records, allocating tasks to faculty members, supervising non-academic (administrative) staff, and maintaining financial resources, infrastructure, and equipment ..(Al-Kubaisi & Al-Kaoud, 2016)

Third: Dimensions of Academic Leadership: The basic dimensions of academic leadership can be identified, namely (creativity and human resource empowerment). These are the dimensions that will be adopted in the research as basic dimensions of academic leadership. .) Alwan ٥ Hashem ,(2019 ٤(Al-Kubaisi & Al-Kaoud, 2016)

1. Inspiration for a shared vision: An effective leader, according to this practice, acts in ways that motivate and excite those around them by fostering a team spirit, demonstrating enthusiasm and optimism, and encouraging subordinates to focus and consider future scenarios, plan for attractive and diverse scenarios, and explore highly desirable alternatives.

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2. Empowering Human Resources: Empowering human resources refers to a management strategy for motivating and encouraging employees, including managers, to better leverage their own skills and expertise by giving them greater power and freedom to perform their work, along with other resources and benefits, enabling them to work effectively in service of the organization's goals and objectives.

Second Requirement: University Performance

First: The Concept of University Performance:

In order for a university to succeed in its work and be able to adapt to its environment, its performance must be distinguished compared to competing universities. Distinguished performance is no longer an option, but rather an inevitable necessity imposed by the conditions of the variables surrounding universities.. (ELtalla & farajallah, 2018)

University performance relates to all the characteristics and features associated with the educational aspect, which highlight the extent of excellence and the ability to demonstrate the desired results by translating students' needs into specific features that form the basis for providing educational services and offering them to students in a manner consistent with their future aspirations) ..Salah El-Din(2019 ,

University performance is an integrated approach to managing organizational performance to ensure the attainment of good values that guarantee the continuity of the quality of educational science and improve the effectiveness of educational institutions) ..Al-Obaidi ,Al-Hadrawi , Al-Janabi(2021 ,

Second: University performance objectives:

The university performance objectives are as follows) ::Ali , Jailo(2020 ,

1. Analyze the current status of academic performance at the university's colleges.
2. Identify various deviations and shortcomings that could impact academic and institutional performance at each college or institute.
3. Submit the results, along with recommendations, to the university administration for necessary action.
4. Continuously diagnose operational problems that could negatively impact educational performance at each college or institute.
5. Provide a database about the university and its educational programs as a basis for judging its performance.

Third: Factors affecting university performance:

There are many factors that affect university performance, whether at the individual level, at the organizational unit level, or at the organization level as a whole, including)Khalil , Sayyah(2020 ,

1. Internal factors: These refer to the variables resulting from the internal interaction of organizational components and their impact on performance. These variables are controllable and subject to oversight, most notably (technical factors, organizational structure, and human resources.)
2. External factors: These refer to a group of variables that directly impact the organization's activities and decisions and are beyond its control. These include (customers, competitors, economic factors, political factors, and social and cultural factors.

Fourth: Elements of university performance: mentioned in the study) Al-Harhi , Family(2022 ,

1. **Strategy:** This refers to the vision that governs the goals, ideas, and actions of work groups within the university framework.
2. **Structure:** The method of using appropriate and specific administrative structures to achieve a strategy, including changes in prevailing patterns of work relationships.
3. **Employees** are one of the most important elements in achieving excellence by emphasizing self-control. This is achieved through job enrichment, management, and objectives.
4. **Skills:** Developing individual skills and encouraging creativity and innovation to continuously improve.
5. **Shared Values:** The prevailing values that believe in excellence in performance and serve as preventative standards against any deviation from objectives..

Section Three

Practical Aspect

Introduction:

This section includes a presentation of data analysis and testing of the study's hypotheses. This is accomplished by answering the study's questions, reviewing the most prominent results from the questionnaire form obtained through analyzing its paragraphs, and examining the study's variables, therefore, statistical processing was performed on the data collected in the study

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questionnaire, followed by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to obtain the study's results, which will be presented and analyzed in this section.

First: Results of the descriptive analysis of the independent variable, academic leadership:

From the analysis of the data in Table (1), it is clear that the opinions of the study sample members regarding academic leadership, represented by (inspiring a shared vision, empowering human resources), were arranged according to relative weight, from the most powerful to the least powerful, as follows:

Table (1). Statistical analysis of the opinions of the study sample members regarding academic leadership

n	phrases	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	coefficient of variation	relative weight	rank
1	Talks about future trends that will influence how work is done	4.0	0.91	0.83	81	1
2	Describes compelling images of what our future might be	3.7	0.89	0.78	78	2
3	Speaks with absolute certainty about the ultimate meaning and purpose of our work	3.5	1.01	1.04	69	3
4	Paints a big picture of what we aspire to achieve in the future	3.5	0.90	0.83	68	3
5	Shows others that their interests can be realized through a common vision	2.7	1.13	1.33	47	5
The total arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the shared vision dimension		3.48	0.97			
1	Creates collaborative relationships among the people he works with	4.1	0.88	0.79	79	1
2	Listens well to diverse points of view	3.9	0.88	0.77	77	3
3	Treats others with dignity and respect	3.3	0.89	0.80	68	4
4	Supports people's own decisions	3.3	0.88	0.78	68	4
5	Gives people ample freedom and choice in determining how they do their work.	4.0	0.86	0.74	80	2
Total mean and standard deviation for the Human Resources Empowerment dimension		0.88	3.72			

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of the statistical analysis of the study data.

From the statistical data shown in Table (1), we extrapolate the opinions of the study sample on the (10) items related to the dimensions of academic leadership. However, we can diagnose the level of importance of this dimension as follows:

1. From the results above for the items related to the shared vision (5), it is evident that there is a low level of agreement among sample members regarding "It appears to others that their interests can be realized through establishing a general vision." (2) indicates that there is little agreement among the sample regarding "Speaks with complete certainty about the nominal meaning

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and purpose of our work." As for item (3), the results revealed a limited level of agreement among sample members regarding "Paints a broad picture of what we aspire to achieve in the future.

2. The overall mean and standard deviation for the shared vision dimension were 3.48, and the standard deviation was 0.97.

Second: Results of the descriptive analysis of the dependent variable, university performance:

An analysis of the data in Table (2) reveals the opinions of the study sample members regarding university performance. The statements were arranged according to relative weight, from the most powerful to the least powerful, as follows:

Table (2). Statistical analysis of the opinions of the study sample members regarding university performance

n	phrases	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	coefficient of variation	relative weight	rank
1	The college is committed to holding academic activities to ensure the strengthening of relationships within the university environment.	4.3	0.94	0.85	83	1
2	The college is committed to building and strengthening friendly relationships with faculty members.	3.3	1.00	1.01	68	5
3	The college maintains an updated website that provides its services to beneficiaries and strengthens its relationships with them.	4.2	0.89	0.80	83	2
4	The college is committed to appointing individuals according to specific criteria that match the nature of the jobs for which they are nominated.	2.9	0.97	0.93	54	6
5	The college uses specific criteria to evaluate faculty members and staff.	2.7	1.00	1.01	48	7
6	The college is committed to scholarships and holding seminars and conferences to keep pace with developments in the university environment.	4.0	0.93	0.87	80	4
7	The College Deanship encourages scientific research of a theoretical and applied nature.	4.0	0.89	0.77	83	4
8	. The College Deanship provides financial and moral support to researchers for internal and external training.	3.3	0.94	0.89	67	5
The total arithmetic mean and standard deviation of university performance		3.27	0.95			

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of the statistical analysis of the study data.

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From the statistical data shown in Table (2), we extrapolate the opinions of the study sample on the (8) items related to the university performance dimension. However, we can diagnose the level of importance of this dimension as follows:

From the above results for item (5), it is clear that there is a decline in agreement among sample members regarding the college's use of specific criteria for evaluating faculty and staff, with an arithmetic mean of 2.7 and a standard deviation of 1.00. In item (6), it is clear that there is a decline in agreement among sample members regarding the college's commitment to appointing individuals according to specific criteria that are consistent with the nature of the jobs for which they are nominated, with an arithmetic mean of 2.9 and a standard deviation of 0.97.

The items related to the university performance dimension achieved an arithmetic mean of (4.3) and a standard deviation of (0.94), which is higher than the standard mean. The college is keen to hold academic activities to ensure the strengthening of relationships within the university environment. The college has an updated website that provides its services to beneficiaries and strengthens its relationships with them, with an arithmetic mean of (4.2) With a standard deviation of (0.89).

Fourth: Results of the Study Hypothesis Test:

Hypothesis testing is a useful tool for data analysis, planning, prediction, and decision-making.

A single-sample t-test was used using SPSS, which helps detect a significant difference in the mean of the study population from which the sample was drawn from a fixed value. It also enables estimating the confidence interval for the study population mean. Results of the Main Hypothesis Test:

"There is no role for academic leadership, represented by (shared vision inspiration and human resource empowerment), in improving university performance at Imam University College at a statistical significance level of (0.05.)

The validity of this hypothesis was tested using the correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between the independent variable (academic leadership) and the dependent variable (university performance), as shown in Table (3).

Table No. (3) Results of the t-test for the hypothesis between academic leadership and university performance

Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean	t-test	Confidence interval for the difference between the two means% 95		Probability of significance p
				Minimum	Maximum	
4.22	0.91	0.058	0.407	0.13	0.85-	0.68

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of the statistical analysis .

It is clear from Table (3) that the probability of significance 0.68p is greater than the significance level (0.05) and the t value is greater than the test value. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis "There is no significant correlation between the averages of the answers of the study sample items regarding academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College", and we accept the alternative hypothesis that "There is a significant correlation between the averages of the answers of the study sample items regarding academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College" at a significance level (0.05).

Third: Results

1. The study found a significant correlation between the average responses of the study sample regarding academic leadership and its role in improving university performance at Imam University College.
2. The study found a direct relationship between academic leadership and its dimensions on university performance and its dimensions in all study samples. The percentages were high for all samples, indicating that academic leadership has a significant and direct role in improving university performance at Imam University College.
3. Based on the results in the paragraphs related to empowering human resources, there was clear agreement among the sample members regarding the need for cooperative relationships among the people they work with. The arithmetic mean was 3.72 and the standard deviation was 0.88, indicating the presence of empowering human resources and cooperation among the individuals working at Imam University College.
4. Through the results in the paragraphs related to university performance, it achieved an arithmetic mean of (4.3) and a standard deviation of (0.94), which is the highest. The college is keen to hold scientific activities to ensure strengthening relations within the university environment.

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5. The college has an updated electronic page that provides its services to beneficiaries with an arithmetic mean of (4.2) and a standard deviation of (0.89), which indicates the existence of communication between the college administration and the university community through holding student activities as well as communicating with the community through social networking sites and answering inquiries related to the college departments.

Fourth: Recommendations:

1. Academic leaders at Imam University College should seize the positive relationship between the dimensions of academic leadership (inspire a shared vision, empower human resources) by developing and acquiring creative skills and abilities, which contributes to enhancing their readiness for educational tasks and, consequently, improving their performance.
2. Imam University College should hold seminars, discussion groups, and conferences that inform academic leaders of the importance of these dimensions and enhance their academic performance, given their importance in increasing their readiness for educational and training tasks.
3. Work to develop university performance by seeking excellence, which requires identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each element of university performance, while working to enhance strengths and address and correct weaknesses.
4. Provide a positive climate characterized by cooperation, love, and participation in decision-making, and the commitment of the teaching staff to serve the college's goals.

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