

Innovative Leadership and Organizational Excellence: A Study on Jordanian Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: The study aims to identify the degree of innovative leadership practice in relation to the level of organizational excellence in Jordanian higher education institutions. To achieve the study's objective, a random sample, which included (400) academic and administrative workers in Jordanian higher education institutions, was selected to participate in the study. Results of the study showed that the degree of both innovative leadership practice and level of organizational excellence was moderate. The results also indicated that there was a positive statistically significant relationship between the degree of innovative leadership practice and the level of organizational excellence. In light of these results, the study recommends working towards abating obstacles that undermine creative and innovative

work, as well as finding appropriate solutions for such obstacles to enhance level of excellence in organizational performance.

Keywords: innovative leadership; organizational excellence; higher education; educational institutions.

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1. Introduction

Leadership is an essential requirement for organisational success, where innovative leaders bring about change and encourage growth. In higher education, leadership is a key to the development and growth of institutions and society. University leaders need to encourage excellence and foster a culture of innovation (Al-Hyari, 2023). Clear goals and well-defined responsibilities are essential for achieving distinction. In addition, rewarding distinguished performance builds a motivating workplace culture. Exceptional leadership practices allow institutions to surpass their competitors, offering a competitive advantage through creativity, quality, and innovation (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). Leadership, innovation and organisational excellence are crucial to institutional success (Guo et al., 2023). According to Rizki et al. (2019), innovation is “the process by which a new product or idea is transformed into tangible action.” Hamza et al. (2024) argued that innovation includes other essential components such as novelty, utility, social acceptance, problem-solving, and environmental interaction. According to Günzel-Jensen et al. (2018), critical elements in innovation are adaptability, analysis, problem sensitivity, and logical reasoning. Sethibe and Steyn (2018) emphasised the importance of organisational excellence in achieving efficiency and effectiveness, supporting growth, and improving communication within institutions.

Furthermore, organisational excellence enables effective resource management to fulfil the needs of stakeholders, resulting in enhanced performance and loyalty. Employees who feel satisfied tend to offer more effective contributions, which in turn boost organisational success and adaptability to change. Leadership and a strong organisational culture that encourages innovation are critical to sustaining high performance. To remain ahead of competition, successful institutions excel at crisis management, continuing learning, and process improvement. Process reengineering also helps to turn established techniques into creative ones. According to Kuo et al. (2022), school principals in Jordan demonstrated a high level of innovative leadership. Similarly, Putra et al. (2024) reported moderate to high levels of innovative leadership and administrative innovation among Saudi school principals. Herlina et al. (2024) claimed that there is a correlation between students’ inventive tendencies and their job interests. More recent studies such as that of Mutmainnah et al. (2022) highlighted the relevance of organizational culture and its aspects in encouraging creativity. Similarly, Hassi et al. (2022) argued for the beneficial association between organizational culture and innovation among Jordanian school principals. Surucu et al. (2021) stressed the importance of innovative and transformative leadership in improving school performance in Thailand.

According to Rumijati and Hakim (2023), employee behaviour plays an important role in generating organisational innovation. Finally, Amin et al. (2024) recognised knowledge management and transformational leadership as critical variables in promoting organisational innovation. Skudiene et al. (2018) investigated the impact of academic talent management in achieving organisational excellence with an emphasis

on recruiting, incentives, succession, and retention. The study findings revealed a strong impact of talent management on organisational excellence. Similarly, Bahagia et al. (2024) investigated the attainment of excellence in schools and discovered that wages and rewards were important, despite the overall degree of excellence being moderate. Khan et al. (2023) evaluated institutional excellence in educational institutions through scrutinizing faculty perspectives, focusing on leadership and excellence in service delivery. Arijanto et al. (2022) assessed the organisational excellence of female school leaders and discussed that a high degree in achieving organisational excellence. Said and Kamel (2023) investigated strategic management and contended that there was a significant impact of strategic management on staff performance. Mokhber et al. (2018) investigated the impact of knowledge management on institutional excellence and discovered a positive correlation between the two study variables. Aman-Ullah et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between dynamic talents and organisational excellence in private universities and found that both variables were strongly correlated.

Therefore, the two major variables in the theoretical framework of the study are innovative leadership and organisational excellence. For educational institutions to succeed, leadership is essential. Jordan, a pioneer in the field of educational reform, has highlighted leadership creativity and innovation with programs like the 'Institutional Efficiency Enhancement Project.' Traditional leadership techniques do, however, continue to restrain the innovative atmosphere which is necessary for organizational distinction. According to recent studies, we need creative leaders and more extensive training programs to promote creativity. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between innovative leadership and organizational excellence in Jordanian higher education institutions. The study is designed to answer the following questions.

RQ1: From the perspective of staff, how innovative are the leadership practices of Jordanian higher education institution leaders?

RQ2: To what extent does staff regard Jordanian higher education institutions as 'excellent'?

RQ3: Does the degree of innovative leadership practice in Jordanian higher education institutions correlate with organisational excellence at a statistically significant level?

2. Literature Review

The role of leadership is considered important for taking the organisation towards success (Al-Abrow et al., 2020). It is always the quality of leaders who are providing equal resources and opportunities to other employees to work in a free space. However, the leaders are required to support the employees for the productivity which is necessary to improve their overall performance (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). The leaders are important for any organisation because they can provide the resources which can help the management of organisation to work effectively. Every organisation has a specific kind of goal which can be accomplished with the help of leadership and structural development (Guo et al., 2023). The role of leadership is considered significant which provides significant resources to the management to help them for effectiveness in the working performance. Being a leader, the role of individual is to provide significant training to other employees that can help them to improve their productivity and performance in the workspace (Vermeulen et al., 2022). Furthermore, the leaders are required to

provide necessary information about the soft skills and hard skills to the employees that are necessary to improve their performance and productivity in a better way (Hadi et al., 2024). Similarly, when the leaders are highly motivated, they can improve the productivity and performance of the employees in a better condition. It is not only the responsibility of leaders to provide resources and opportunities, but they must motivate their employees for their better working performance (Sethibe & Steyn, 2018). It is a way forward for organisational success in the competitive market.

The brain of a leader is important for dealing with the competitive market and organisational success (Hassi et al., 2022). A leader should have key features such as patience and innovative approach which can help him to achieve the targets of organisational excellence. Similarly, when the leaders are motivated to improve their productivity (Fonseca et al., 2021), it is necessary for them to cooperate with the teams and provide opportunities to the junior staff (Rizki et al., 2019). This kind of productive approach of the leadership is important for improving their overall working performance in the market. Furthermore, the organisational excellence is achieved when the leaders are supportive, and they are providing good piece of knowledge to the employees (Bauwens et al., 2024). Apart from it, sharing the knowledge with employees and improving their competences for organisational leadership improve the productivity and performance of the employees (Cavaletti & Bizarrias, 2023). Therefore, the employees should be responsible to their assigned work by their leadership which can help them to improve their productivity and better performance. The leadership is also responsible to motivate the employees at the individual level which can improve the performance of the employees (Jie et al., 2024). Every employee has a different set of practices, and it is the role of leaders to improve the productivity of the employees by identifying their potential to work in the market scenario. A good leader is an innovator which provide significant opportunities to the employees for their organisational excellence and management practises (Bahagia et al., 2024). Therefore, the role of leader is important to motivate the employees to improve their overall productivity and performance.

A leader is also responsible for sharing the case studies with the employees and hiring some external trainers that can provide better knowledge and training to the employees (Grošelj et al., 2020). Furthermore, a leader has a sense of acceptability which improves his practises for working and improving the overall strategies for replies that are necessary to get success in the work. However, the leaders are also recommended to participate with the employees for their productivity and performance (Khan et al., 2023). On the other hand, the concept of organisational excellence is based on the performance of organisation in the competitive market where there is a challenging role of leader to work in effective way for managing things perfectly (Yaqub et al., 2024). It is necessary for the leadership to improve their productivity and performance, which helps them to achieve the organisational excellence. This excellence can be based on the efficiency and effectiveness which is based on the productivity of organisation (Messmann et al., 2022). In the social sector, the organisation is recommended to contribute to the society by working on environmental social and governance related issues. In this way, the role of leadership emerged as a significant where significant assigned responsibilities to all leaders are used to improve their productivity and performance (Rumijati & Hakim, 2023). When the leaders are motivated to work in the competitive environment, they provide better opportunities to the employers to deal with significant challenges associated with their work (Herlina et al., 2024). It helps the employers to understand the leadership

qualities and share their thoughts and innovative ideas with the leadership (Kuo et al., 2022). Consequently, the productivity and performance of the organisation is improved with the significant intervention of leadership and productive performance.

The leadership is also responsible for providing different opportunities to the employees for their work (Surucu et al., 2021). A leader is a strategist that can help the organisation to work in a battle way by making significant decisions. Similarly, the organisational excellence is also achieved when the leader is a change agent, and he is adopting to you the develop technologies in the organisation that can help to improve the productivity and performance (Santoso et al., 2019). In the meantime, the leader is also responsible to self-awareness which improve his decision-making capabilities that can help to better contribute into the organisational management (Skudiene et al., 2018). In addition, a leader is like a role model for the organisation that is helpful for the employees to work in unity. The productive and innovative approach of a leader helps him to become a good coach for the employees and use his innovative thought with the help of good strategies and vision (Said & Kamel, 2023). It helps the organisation to work on a significant innovative idea consistently that can help to build a good relationship with the customers and market. An innovative leader is always looking for the opportunities that can help them to achieve the organisational excellence which is based on his key strategic development (Mutmainnah et al., 2022). Therefore, the support to these kind of leadership by the organisational management and managerial level employees is important that can help to achieve the objective of organisation. For from the innovative perspective, a leader should provide better understanding and opportunity to the employees for their productivity (Nasir et al., 2022). In addition to it, a leader has a significant role to work in innovative way we can enhance the performance in the market.

3. Methodology

This section describes the study's design, demographics, sample size, data collection tool, and processes for ensuring the tool's validity and reliability. The study used a correlational descriptive survey to obtain data from the sample, which was appropriate for the research topic. The study population included 6,616 personnel from public universities in northern Jordan, including 2,493 academics and 4,123 administrative staff. A stratified random sample of 400 persons was chosen to represent 17% of the study population for the school year 2023/2024. The study data collection tool included two questionnaires: the first survey examined innovative leadership with 20 items across three categories (leadership innovation, knowledge innovation, and work environment innovation). The second one investigated organisational excellence using 20 items from four categories (leadership excellence, organisational culture, structural excellence, and human resource excellence). The questionnaire's validity was confirmed by 10 school administration specialists who assessed survey item clarity and relevance. Feedback on questionnaire items was incorporated, and minor modifications were integrated based on an 80% agreement among the experts. Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the tool's internal consistency, resulting in acceptable reliability values of 0.88 to 0.93 for this study.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Results of the First Question

The first question and discussion focused on the level of innovative leadership

practice among Jordanian higher education leaders from the perspective of their staff. To answer this question, mean and standard deviations were determined, as shown in Table 1. Table 1 demonstrates that leaders in Jordanian higher education institutions have a moderate level of innovative leadership practice, according to their employees, with a mean score of 2.22 and a standard deviation of 0.65. The means for the various factors were between 2.18 and 2.25. Knowledge innovation had the greatest mean of 2.25 and a standard deviation of 0.88, followed by leadership innovation with a mean of 2.23 and a standard deviation of 0.83, and finally, innovation in the workplace with a mean of 2.18 and a standard deviation of 0.89.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for Innovative Leadership Practice among Leaders in Jordanian Higher Education Institutions from Employee Perspectives (ranked in descending order)

No.	Areas	Mean	Standard Deviations	Rank	Evaluation level
1	Knowledge Innovation	2.25	0.88	1	Moderate
2	Leadership Innovation	2.23	0.83	2	Moderate
3	Innovation in Work Environment	2.18	0.89	3	Moderate
Overall Score		2.22	0.65	-	Moderate

4.2 Results to the Second Question

According to Table 2, Jordanian higher education institutions' staff have a moderate level of organisational excellence, with a mean score of (2.17) and a standard deviation of (0.61). The mean scores for organisational excellence ranged from 2.00 to 2.31, with all sectors obtaining a moderate rating. Human resources excellence scored first, with a mean score of (2.31) and a standard deviation of 0.89. The organisational culture area ranked second, with a mean score of (2.24) and a standard deviation of (0.91). The organisational structure category was found to rank third, with a mean score of 2.11 and a standard deviation of 0.83. At last, the leadership excellence area occupied fourth rank, with a mean score of 2.00 and a standard deviation of 0.87. This result can be explained in the light of the absence of administrative and environmental conditions that are essential for organisational excellence. These conditions also have an impact on the institution's organisational culture and low standard of excellence in human resources. Universities also retain old hierarchical organisational structures, which are signs of bureaucratic behaviour that impede exceptional performance from staff members. Furthermore, staff members believe their managers do not exhibit exceptional leadership traits in their day-to-day managerial choices.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Levels, and Ranks for Organisational Excellence in Jordanian Higher Education Institutions as Perceived by Employees (ranked in descending order).

No.	Areas	Mean	Standard Deviations	Rank	Evaluation Level
4	Human Rescores Excellence	2.31	0.89	1	Moderate
3	Organizational Culture Excellence	2.24	0.91	2	Moderate
2	Organizational Structure Excellence	2.11	0.83	3	Moderate
1	Leadership Excellence	2	0.87	4	Moderate
Overall Score		2.17	0.61	-	Moderate

4.3 Results to the Third Question and Discussion

To determine the relationship between the degree of innovative leadership practice and the degree of organisational excellence in these institutions, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. As Table (3) shows, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the dimensions of innovative leadership and organisational excellence at the 0.01 level. This finding implies that organisational excellence rises in tandem with the use of innovative leadership techniques by academic and administrative leaders in Jordanian universities and colleges. Knowledge and its applications in a variety of domains exhibit this brilliance. The reason behind this finding is that leaders in Jordanian higher education institutions continue to place a minimal focus on creative leadership practices and their significance.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients in Jordanian Higher Education Institutions between the Degree of Innovative Leadership Practice and the Level of Organisational Excellence

Relationship Between Variables		Leadership Excellence	Organizational Culture Excellence	Organizational Structure Excellence	Human Rescores Excellence	Overall
Innovative Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	410.**	469.**	453.**	476.**	543.**
Innovative Knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	456.**	482.**	465.**	482.**	562.**
Innovation in Work Environment	Correlation Coefficient	425.**	427.**	442.**	491.**	584.**
Overall Score		587.**	573.**	586.**	582.**	590.**

* Statistically Significant at the 0.05 level. ** Statistically Significant at the 0.01 level.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study significantly highlighted that innovative leadership have a significant influence on organisational excellence. This relationship is supported by the previous studies in literature. According to the study Amin et al. (2024), there is a significant role of innovative leadership to improve the organisational excellence of the employees. Another study Rumijati and Hakim (2023) reports that when the employees are motivated and they have leadership capabilities, the performance of organisation is improved at the higher level. The findings of study Santoso et al. (2019) are also supported to this research as it is concluded that innovative rule of leadership is necessary to deal with modern challenges in the business environment. However, Hamza et al. (2024) discussed that the leadership qualities are unique, and the employees should have these qualities that can help to improve their performance in a productive way. The findings of Grošelj et al. (2020) also support this research while highlighted that the extraordinary performance of any business in the competitive environment is achieved by innovative leadership. The study Putra et al. (2024) also stressed on the role of innovative leadership because it helps to work for the new product in the firms that are appropriate to deal in the competitive market. Therefore, the innovative leadership is required in the competitive firms to improve their performance in the better way with innovative capabilities.

Günzel-Jensen et al. (2018) also discussed that innovative leadership helps to manage the organisation working in a strategic way while competing with other businesses with the same product line. Similarly, Arijanto et al. (2022) discussed that innovative leadership helps

to manage innovative portfolios by the corporate sector companies which is necessary for achieving the organisational excellence. The study Messmann et al. (2022) pointed out that innovative leadership helps to manage the working performance of business in the market in a strategic way that can help to compete with other businesses. Therefore, Mokhber et al. (2018) focused on the trading of employees and the top management which can help to improve the business performance in a competitive environment. On the other hand, Nasir et al. (2022) discussed that the leadership qualities with innovative approach are useful to manage business performance in the competitive market. According to Bauwens et al. (2024), when the leadership is competitive, it becomes easy for the businesses to achieve the organisational excellence that helps to achieve the quality business. Consequently, the productivity in business is achieved with the help of innovative approach where the innovation in manufacturing, supply chain, management and customer services are provided. According to Al-Hyari (2023), the innovative approach of the employees helps the firm to work in a productive way which can contribute to organisational excellence. Moreover, the innovative capability of the employees al to work with the vision of the organisation to achieve sustainability in the long term.

The study Hadi et al. (2024) discussed that innovative leadership approach is significant to improve the productivity and performance of the organisation in market. The leader should be skilled with a vision to improve the productivity that can benefit the firms in a long-term goal. However, Cavaletti and Bizarrias (2023) discussed that not only leadership but the management is required to work effectively that can help the employees to contribute to the productivity of the organisation. Another study Aman-Ullah et al. (2022) revealed that when the top management have no innovative skills, it is problematic for the businesses to compete in the market with limited availability of the skills. To sum up, but innovative leadership is necessary for business performance based on about capability that resources. Similarly, the contribution of innovative leadership in the form of resources and skills help the organisation to achieve its goal. Therefore, the corporate sector businesses, particularly the struggling ones I recommended to focus on innovative leadership to achieve organisational excellence.

6. Conclusion and Implications

To conclude, this study has significant addition to the body of knowledge and recommendations for practice. The study contributes a significant additional structural relationship between two variables. The study contributes to the knowledge that innovative leadership is a significant antecedent of organizational excellence. Prior to this research, there was a contradiction between scholars regarding this relationship. To contribute to scientific knowledge, this research used rigorous method employing significant methodology to reach on the findings. The study added to our understanding that innovative leadership and knowledge is a significant contributor to improve leadership excellence, organizational culture excellence, organizational structure excellence and human resources excellence. This newly contributed relationships open the scholarly discussion where scholars are recommended to work on different strategies to achieve organizational excellence. This study has some practical implications. Firstly, the study recommends that to reduce errors in administrative procedures, university management should implement clear and accurate policies. Secondly, this study points out that aims for organisational excellence should include attracting talented individuals. Thirdly, this

study recommends that it is important to support employees as concerns developing their skills and attaining continuing professional development. Fourthly, the study highlights that to support wise decision-making, managers must concentrate on using creative leadership techniques. Fifthly, the study discusses that educating academic leaders about the value of creative leadership as a source of academic authority is important. In addition, the study recommends that adopting strategies for organisational excellence can help institutions compete more successfully by achieving distinct performance. While the study concludes that among other resources and facilities that encourage innovation and creativity, communication networks should be made more accessible. Similarly, the study concludes that for individuals in positions of leadership or their representatives, training programs with an emphasis on creative leadership, strategic thinking and planning, as well as managing real-world circumstances, should be implemented. Finally, the study discussed that it would be beneficial to conduct similar research studies relating them to other dependent variables like overall quality management and administrative innovation.

7. Future Directions

This study focuses on innovative leadership and organisational excellence in Jordanian higher education institutions, with a sample of employees from several universities throughout the academic year 2023/2024. Generalisability of the study results is dependent on the study tool's validity and reliability. Therefore, the future studies are required to collect data from the institutions outside Jordan that would be helpful to contribute to knowledge and understand the findings in better way. In addition, the scholars are recommended to conduct a longitudinal study which can be helpful to discuss the findings in better spectrum as compared to this study. Similarly, this theory has paid little attention to any theory, the future studies are recommended to work on theory testing approach.

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