

THE ROLE OF EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP IN ENHANCING THE ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE OF EMPLOYEES

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Abstract: The main objective of this research is to explore the effect relationship of two main variables: (empowering leadership and adaptive performance of employees), by surveying the opinions of a number of employees at Al-Iraqia University – Baghdad Governorate. The researcher used the simple random sample method and distributed the questionnaire to a sample of employees amounting to their number is (148) in the various departments and sections of the faculties. After sorting and checking the questionnaires, the number of valid questionnaires for statistical analysis reached (141) out of the number of (143) retrieved questionnaires. Statistical analysis of the collected data was carried out using the program (SPSS v.22). The research reached to accept the main hypothesis, and concluded that the principals at Al-Iraqia University in the study sample are interested and have a great orientation towards empowering leadership, which in turn enhances the adaptive performance of employees. The results of the current research are, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, a first attempt in the context of reducing or bridging the knowledge gap between the variables of empowering leadership and adaptive performance.

1 Introduction

The adaptive performance of employees in the work environment is one of the most important topics that have been addressed in management science because it leads to the employee's adaptation to and understanding of change in the workplace. An employee who adapts to all changes and situations is appreciated and taken care of by the management in any organization and is important to the success of any organization. As a result, employers are looking for highly adaptable employees, due to the positive results that can be obtained through it, such as excellent work performance, positive work behaviour, and ability to deal with stress and pressure. Employees who show high adaptive performance in the organization tend to have more advantages in career opportunities as opposed to employees who are unable to adapt to change.

In order for some employees, like other colleagues, to enjoy the adaptive performance and the ability to work in all changing circumstances, they need a kind of empowerment provided by leaders or managers who supervise them, which is known as (empowering leadership). As a key entry point to leadership, empowering leadership refers to the process of sharing power, allocating more autonomy and responsibilities to employees through a specific set of leader behaviors that entail enhancing business feasibility, enhancing participation in decision-making, expressing confidence in performance, and providing independence from bureaucratic constraints.

As a result of the foregoing, the researcher will try, through the current research, to test the effect of empowering leadership in enhancing the adaptive

performance of a sample of employees at Al-Iraqia University - Baghdad Governorate.

2 Literature review

2.1 Empowering leadership

2.1.1 The concept of empowering leadership

Empowering Leadership emphasizes employee independence, participation, and development by encouraging self-direction by the leader, so empowered leaders are willing to share power with and support their followers. Accordingly, empowering leadership will lead to positive psychological reactions and attitudes from subordinates. As leaders behave in ways that enhance motivation and effectiveness among working individuals, as well as enhance their participation in business processes, these employees may feel more confident and have positive experiences and emotions about their work (Kim & Beehr, 2018: 2022).

In addition to the above, the increased interest in empowering leadership in recent years has been driven by the goal of harnessing the potential of better-educated and more skilled employees. Empowering leadership develops working people, the expression of confidence by leaders in their followers, and providing them with needed advice and resources. As work today becomes more complex and challenging, leaders are likely to benefit from delegating authority to their employees, seeking input from them, and allowing them to plan their work and make decisions for themselves. Therefore, and for these and other reasons, it is not surprising that empowering leadership is positively associated with high and superior performance outcomes at

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the individual, group, and organizational levels (Kearney et al., 2019: 23).

Empowering leadership is defined as “the process of implementing the conditions that allow sharing power with the employee by determining the importance of his job, providing greater independence in decision-making, expressing trust in his abilities, and removing obstacles to his performance” (Kim, 2019: 231).

As for (van Assen, 2020: 442), empowering leadership is defined as a set of leadership behaviors and traits that include expressing trust in subordinates, providing participation in decision-making, providing independence by removing bureaucratic constraints and other obstacles to performance, setting inspirational and purposeful goals, and highlighting the importance of working.

While (Taboli & Askari, 2021: 92) refers to empowering leadership as a leadership style through which leaders can organize and coordinate the distribution and practice of power with subordinates to develop their independence and self-control.

2.1.2 Dimensions of empowering leadership

In order to measure empowering leadership, the scale (Bonavia & Marin-Garcia, 2019) was relied upon because it is the most recent measure, and for its relevance to the Iraqi business environment in general and the organization under consideration in particular. This scale consists of six dimensions, which are as follows:

1. Delegation of authority: The process in which duties are transferred to other individuals to carry out activities aimed at achieving specific goals (Sukini et al., 2021: 1756).

2. Accountability: It is defined as the individual's perception that the leader and that will evaluate his decisions or actions, later; he will be awarded penalties or rewards because of those evaluations (Josephine & Riantoputra, 2021: 68).

3. Self-directed decision-making: Is the process in which subordinates are allowed to involve themselves in the problem-solving and decision-making processes related to their work, making them feel more empowered (Sonal et al., 2019: 55).

4. Information sharing: It is a process of sharing information between the leader and the employees under his supervision regarding joint work strategies (Kusmantini et al., 2020: 59).

5. Skill development: The process of identifying and bridging the gaps through the development, improvement and renewal of relevant skills required to excel and improve the quality of outcomes in a particular job (Anjaneya & Pujar, 2021: 121).

6. Coaching for innovative performance: The behavior of a leader that encourages calculated risk-taking and new ideas, provides performance feedback to employees, and treats their mistakes and setbacks as learning opportunities (Bonavia & Marin-Garcia, 2019: 3).

2.2 Adaptive performance of employees**2.2.1 The concept of adaptive performance of employees**

Historically, employee performance focused on two or more factors: (a) task performance and (b) contextual performance. Task performance refers to employee behaviors that are contained within job descriptions (i.e. related to the duties of assigned tasks). On the other hand, contextual performance refers to employee behaviors that are outside job descriptions but contribute to the achievement of organizational goals (such as helping co-workers to voluntarily complete a particular job). Nevertheless, at present, the need for changes in organizations, particularly in the nature of work, has required the employee to demonstrate adaptive performance. These changes in business processes in organizations have led to the extension of the theoretical model of employee performance to include another dimension called adaptive performance. Since work settings now require employees to adapt to changing organizational requirements and opportunities in order to work effectively, scholars have identified adaptability as another critical component of performance that needs to be further understood (Tabiu et al., 2020: 714).

In continuation to the above, the previous literature has inconsistently described adaptive performance. Apart from also calling it adaptive performance and experience conditioning, some articles refer to adaptive performance as a behavior, while others define it as the willingness/ability to adapt. Many researchers prefer to define adaptive performance as the ability of individuals or groups to change cognitions and behaviors to adapt to changing environments. However, others define adaptive performance as employees “modifying their behavior to meet the demands of a new situation, event, or changing environment” (Park et al., 2020: 4).

According to (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020: 2076), adaptive performance refers to the ability of employees to adjust their behavior in different personal situations.

As for (Tabiu et al., 2020: 714), they explain that adaptive performance in an organizational context means the level or degree to which an individual employee adapts to various changes in his role or work environment in order to meet the requirements of his organization or environment, or new events or situations in the workplace.

2.2.2 Dimensions of adaptive performance of employees

The scale (Park et al., 2020) was used for measuring adaptive performance, which consists of the following dimensions:

1. Handling emergencies and crises: It is the employee's ability to find appropriate and rapid solutions to avoid threats and risks that affect the work (Marques et al., 2020: 103).

2. Managing work-stress: It is the employee's ability to remain calm and cool when faced with difficult

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circumstances, workload, or a highly demanding schedule (Thukral, 2017: 455).

3. Solving problems creatively: It is the development of creative solutions to new or difficult problems (Davis, 2020: 4).

4. Training and learning effort: It is the efforts made in the process of analyzing the employee's needs and goals and developing a training system to meet those needs (Calopăreanu, 2012: 441).

5. Interpersonal Adaptability: The ability for individuals to be flexible and open when working with a variety of other people, and also to be open to receiving feedback from others and developing good working relationships (Johnstone & Wilson-Prangle, 2020: 6).

3 Research methodology

The current research seeks to answer the following questions:

a. Is there a tendency on the part of the principals towards empowering leadership in the university, the sample of the research?

b. Does the university in question seek to support the adaptive performance of its employees?

c. Is there an effect of empowering leadership in enhancing the adaptive performance of employees at Al-Iraqia University, the research sample?

In light of the aforementioned research questions, the hypothetical model of the research was reached. Which shows the nature of the effect relationship between the research variables, as shown in Figure (1).

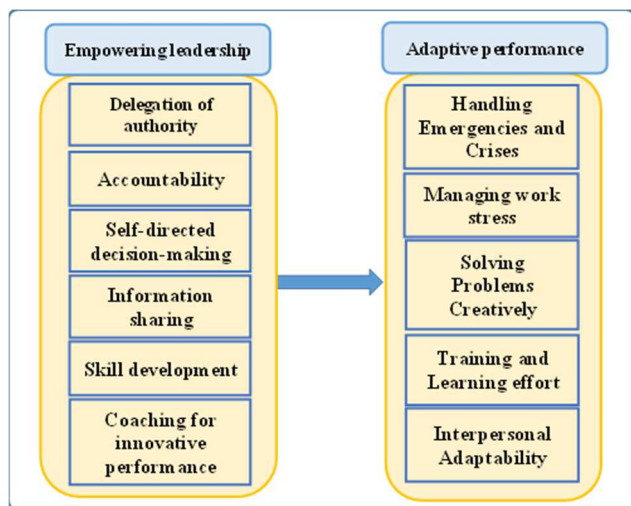


Figure 1 The hypothetical model of the research
Source: prepared by the researcher

In order to develop an accurate answer to the existing research questions, and according to the hypothetical model of the research, the research hypothesis was formulated as follows:

“There is a statistically significant effect of empowering leadership in enhancing the adaptive performance of employees”.

As for the research sample, it included a sample of employees at Al-Iraqia University - Baghdad Governorate, and their number was (141) employees from various departments and sections.

4 Results

This section of the research deals with the procedures adopted by the researcher in order to test the answer to the questions raised in the current research and to achieve its objectives. As these procedures include a description of the research sample, and appropriate statistical methods for data analysis, and the following is a review of those procedures used.

4.1 Descriptive analysis of research data

The descriptive analysis of the data focuses on providing a summary of the response of the researched sample to the research variables and its diagnosis by adopting a number of statistical indicators that give sufficient significance for this description. Which helps researchers to understand the detailed meaning of the data to be analyzed by adopting tables or graphs and discussing them in detail.

In this case, it is necessary to rely on a set of descriptive statistical indicators represented by the arithmetic mean, which shows the extent of the sample's response to the variables investigated, and the standard deviation, which shows the extent to which the values deviate from their arithmetic mean. As well as diagnosing the relative importance of each of the paragraphs and one of the dimensions through which the variables were measured, so the hypothetical mean value was adopted at a rate of (3) meaning that the achieved value of the arithmetic mean indicator that is less than the hypothetical mean is considered an unacceptable value, otherwise it is considered an acceptable value. On this basis, a five-point Likert scale (completely agree, agree, neutral, do not agree, do not completely agree) was used. As indicated in the paragraphs below:

4.1.1 Analyzing the sample answers about the empowering leadership variable

Table (1) below shows the descriptive analysis of the empowering leadership variable, which includes arithmetic means, standard deviations, and the relative importance of the dimensions of empowering leadership.

By analyzing the data on the answers of the research sample, on the questionnaire that included the paragraphs of the empowering leadership variable in the research and shown in Table (1), the following appeared:

1. The arithmetic mean of the total empowering leadership variable was (3.94), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of (3), which is used to test the response

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levels of the respondents, and the standard deviation reached (.835) with a relative importance of (79%).

2. The dimension of delegation of authority ranked first in terms of relative importance, which amounted to (87%), with a mean of (4.34) and a standard deviation of (.629).

3. The dimension of accountability ranked second with a relative importance of (81%) and an arithmetic mean of (4.05) and a standard deviation of (.743).

4. The dimension of skill development ranked third in terms of relative importance, which amounted to (80%), with a mean of (3.98) and a standard deviation of (.803).

5. The dimension of information sharing ranked fourth with a relative importance of (77%) and a mean of (3.83) and a standard deviation of (.845).

6. The dimension of self-directed decision making ranked fifth in terms of relative importance, which amounted to (76%), with a mean of (3.79) and a standard deviation of (.901).

7. As for the dimension of coaching for innovative performance, it ranked sixth and last with a relative importance of (73%) and an arithmetic mean of (3.64) and a standard deviation of (.948).

Table 1 Descriptive analysis of the empowering leadership variable

Dimensions	Sample	Mean	Std.	R. Imp.	Sequence
Delegation of authority	141	4.34	.629	87%	1
Accountability	141	4.05	.743	81%	2
Self-directed decision making	141	3.79	.901	%76	5
Information sharing	141	3.83	.845	%77	4
Skill development	141	3.98	.803	%80	3
Coaching for innovative performance	141	3.64	.948	%73	6
Total empowering leadership	141	3.94	835.	79%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of Spss v.22

The above results indicate that the employees at Al-Iraqia University, are aware of the nature of the empowering leadership variable in its dimensions, and the effect of the availability or lack of this type of empowerment on how they work, through the extent of their response and agreement on the paragraphs contained in the contents of the questionnaire related to the measurement of the empowering leadership variable. As a result, of what was mentioned, there is a tendency by managers in all departments and sections towards empowering leadership in the university sample of the research.

4.1.2 Analysis of sample answers about the adaptive performance variable of employees

Table (2) below shows the descriptive analysis of the adaptive performance variable, which includes arithmetic means, standard deviations, and the relative importance of the adaptive performance dimensions.

Table 2 Descriptive analysis of the adaptive performance variable

Dimensions	Sample	Mean	Std.	R. Imp.	Sequence
Handling Emergencies and Crises	141	3.73	.967	75%	4
Managing work stress	141	4.16	.874	83%	2
Solving Problems Creatively	141	3.81	.935	76%	3
Training and Learning effort	141	3.65	.984	%73	5
Interpersonal Adaptability	141	4.38	.823	88%	1
Total adaptive performance	141	3.95	818.	79%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of Spss v.22

By analyzing the data on the answers of the research sample, on the questionnaire that included the paragraphs of the adaptive performance variable in the research and shown in Table (2), the following appeared:

1. The arithmetic mean of the total adaptive performance variable was (3.95), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of (3), which is used to test the response levels of the respondents, with a standard deviation of (.818) and a relative importance of (79%).

2. The dimension of interpersonal adaptability ranked first in terms of relative importance, which amounted to (88%), with a mean of (4.38) and a standard deviation of (.823).

4. The dimension of solving problems creatively ranked third in terms of relative importance, which amounted to (76%) and with a mean of (3.81) and a standard deviation of (.935).

5. The dimension of handling emergencies and crises ranked fourth with relative importance (75%) and an arithmetic mean of (3.73) and a standard deviation of (.967).

6. As for the dimension of training and learning effort, it ranked fifth and last with a relative importance of (73%) and an arithmetic mean of (3.65) and a standard deviation of (.984).

The above results indicate that employees at Al-Iraqia University, are aware of the nature of the adaptive performance variable in its dimensions, and the extent to

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which this performance affects the university’s reputation and development and the incentives and rewards that they may obtain as a result of it, through the extent of their response and agreement on the paragraphs contained in the contents of the questionnaire related to measuring the performance variable Adaptive. As a result of the above, the university under consideration seeks to support the adaptive performance of its employees.

4.2 Test of effect hypothesis

The amount and nature of the effect between the main research variables will be identified by testing one main hypothesis. A simple regression analysis will be performed between the main variables, and the slope coefficient, regression coefficient and other data will be extracted using the statistical program (SPSS v.22). Acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis will depend on the level of significance, as the researcher assumes a level of significance (0.05), and these results are as follows:

The main hypothesis of the research states: (there is a statistically significant effect of empowering leadership in enhancing the adaptive performance of employees). After measuring the effect, the following results were shown in Table (3), as follows:

Table 3 Test of the effect of empowering leadership in enhancing adaptive performance

Dependent variable	Adaptive performance					
	β	T. Value	R ²	F. Value	Sig.	Result
Empowering leadership	.820	7.594	.706	9.842	.000	Acceptance

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of Spss v.22

Table (3) above shows that there is an effect of empowering leadership in enhancing the adaptive performance of employees, as the regression slope coefficient reached (.820), which is significant because the level of achieved significance reached (.000), which is less than the level of significance that the researcher assumed, which is (0.05). In addition, the coefficient of determination (R2) has reached (.706), which means that empowering leadership explains (.706) the variation in the dependent variable adaptive performance of employees, which is acceptable based on the calculated (F) value of (9.842) which is greater than its tabular value (4.00). Moreover, according to these results, this hypothesis is accepted at the level of this research.

5 Conclusions

To survive in the ever-changing global business world, adaptive employee performance and sustainable work cultures become key features of organizational success. The adaptive performance of employees in the work

environment is seen as referring to the employee's adaptation to changes, problems or crises that occur in the workplace. As today's business organizations are undergoing a rapid pace of change, they need these highly adaptive employees. In order for organizations to enhance this performance, its need a type of empowerment provided by leaders or managers, which is known as empowering leadership, which refers to the extent to which supervisors express their trust in the capabilities of their employees, emphasize the importance of their work, involve them in decision-making, and reduce or remove bureaucratic constraints. The ability of empowering leadership in its dimensions to enhance the adaptive performance of employees has been proven through the results of the research. It was found that these dimensions, if followed and applied by the leader, will lead to enhancing the adaptive performance of employees and increasing their ability to deal with problems and crises in an appropriate manner. As a result, the objectives that the current research sought to test have been achieved.

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