THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT AN APPLIED STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF TRAINERS IN THE DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION OF DHI QAR

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the mechanisms and practices of strategic leadership and its role in crisis management in government institutions in Iraq. So, the existence of a strategic leadership that is one of the most important constituents of the organizations in the course of development, which allows them to face the various problems, unrest and crises that may be exposed to them, and in light of the circumstances that Iraq is going through, the presence of such strategic leaders signs that it has a prominent role in facing the crises that Government institutions are exposed to it at the present time. The conceptual framework for the current study is built on these two main variables. This study was applied in the government education sector in Iraq. A questionnaire will be developed to make sure that there is a relationship between the main variables of the study (strategic leadership, crisis management) as a tool for collecting data in eight sections of the General Education Directorate in Dhi Qar for a sample (201) of the directors in the Directorate of Education and its departments, who were chosen randomly and using a group One of the statistical tools included in the programs (SPSS. V.22 - AMOS V.22).

Keywords: strategic leadership, government institutions, crisis management.

Introduction

Major crises, whether caused by a hurricane, tsunami, or terrorist attack, have implications for and constrain public administration. Crisis management is a basic government responsibility that is difficult to fulfill. What is more, major crises strike at the very core of democracy and governance, and thus also pose challenges for accountability, legitimacy, and representation. and the ability of citizens to meet their demands effectively Interestingly, the ability of government to deal with major crises is a topic that has not been explored extensively by scholars of public administration (Christensen et al., 2016). Among the important reasons for crisis management,

economic hardship is considered the fuel for popular movements, or the emergence of forces claiming to represent the people against the political authority (Győrffy, 2018). Taking a political-administrative perspective on crises and crisis response, the mix of ideas about how to manage exceptional events becomes somewhat clearer, and perhaps even more urgent. From the point of view of decision-makers and government agencies dealing with crisis situations, there are many similarities between indicators of some seemingly unique risks and crisis events (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 2015). During a crisis the organization must first take note of a problem and obtain all the information required to guide it properly in making accurate decisions. Crisis situations usually come with many indicators. There is tension and decision-makers are under great pressure to get the job done. After the crisis is over, the learning points should be integrated into the crisis communication plan to improve crisis management in the future (Tonga, 2019).

With the increasing competition and challenges organizations face at the present time, organizations face many opportunities and threats and try to deal with them. This prompted management scholars and practitioners to work hard to develop different theories and methods to help organizations adapt. Research has shown that strategic leadership practices can help organizations enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. and thus their ability to compete in the most complex and uncertain dynamic environments (Wang et al., 2012). In this aspect, the role of strategic leadership appears through the proposal of the strategic leadership theory that senior management and leadership play an important role in formulating the work strategy of the organization, which is an important precedent for organizational success and a major challenge for senior executives at the same time, and that the effective implementation of the strategy requires knowledge, skills and leadership styles. Specific to decision makers (Shao, 2019). These requirements are in addition to the role of knowing the indicators that we mentioned earlier to know the crisis in order to take corrective measures for the course of the organization and solve the crisis.

The Study Problem

Major crises lead to great immediate damage that can be caused to the reputation of the organization as well as its infrastructure, and both of them may take many years to rebuild, because these crises lead to completely disrupting the organization's work and threaten its survival, so the organization's crisis management capabilities must be of high quality so that it can Resolving the rapidly evolving crisis and preventing its spread to the maximum extent possible. When crises increase in complexity, their management requires a complex and coherent set of natural and human systems. Such an increase in complexity accompanies greater levels of focus, resources, coordination and administrative accountability (Racherla and Hu, 2009). The role of strategic leadership that involves the organization as a whole and its relationship with its environment comes to be the responsibility of the top-level executives to practice it. Strategic leadership is linked to the organization's ideologies, identity, mission and vision of the overall environmental system with its various core competencies (Worden, 2003).

Therefore, crisis management is an inevitability of strategic and tactical leadership that can positively or negatively affect the competitiveness of the organization and its ability to succeed, survive, and be sustainable in the long term (Taneja and Pryor, 2010).

Therefore, this study will attempt to address this aspect by offering an integrated model to be applied in the Directorate of Education of Dhi Qar and a number of its affiliated departments to try to know the impact of strategic leadership and its role in crisis management and contribute to better crisis management and reduce the occurrence of crises as much as possible in the future by knowing indicators Therefore, this study comes to integrate the two variables into one model and test the relationships between them and apply them in the education sector. The education sector in Iraq, and in particular in Dhi Qar, has suffered in the recent period due to political events, a major problem that caused the system to stop completely. The annual curricula without deficiency, and based on the foregoing, the study problem was summarized by the following question:

What is the role of the strategic leadership in crisis management in the Iraqi education sector, the study sample?

Study objectives

The current study aims to build a conceptual model for the variables of the study represented by the independent variable (strategic leadership: empowering employees, disseminating organizational learning) and the dependent variable (crisis management), for the purpose of conclusions that represent the actual reality of the importance of strategic leadership and its role in managing crises that the sector may be exposed to. Government education and providing recommendations that contribute to better managing crises and reducing the occurrence of crises as much as possible in the future by knowing the indicators of the crisis and developing appropriate solutions before it escalates by testing the following relationship:

• Testing the direct influence relationship between the independent variable (strategic leadership) and the dependent variable (crisis management).

The Importance of Study

• Through a modest review of previous studies with study variables, the researchers found studies that directly tested the relationships between the independent and the dependent variable (Taneja and Pryor, 2010) in one model in different organizational environments, which the current study will apply. In the governmental education sector to help in an attempt to demonstrate the impact and importance of strategic leadership in managing crises in that sector and reducing them to advance the reality of Iraqi governmental education.

Theoretical framework
Crisis Management

Crises routinely shatter peace and order in societies. Their danger lies in the fact that they arrive as "bad surprises" and "inconvenient facts" that cause chaos and destroy the

legitimacy of public institutions. Natural disasters, collective revolutions such as the Arab Spring that took place in the Arab world, new epidemics, and others represent a list of potential crises that disrupt the prevailing system (Boin et al., 2017). In the field of crisis and emergency management, there is an idea that proves its realism strongly, which is that crises are variable in their forms, as crises have become at the present time more complex in nature, so that crises have become with them one of the inherent features of modern society, and this changing nature of the crisis is a logical development, for several reasons Various issues such as globalization, increased mass communication, social fragmentation, and the weakening of state power are highly contested (Boin and Lagadec, 2000).

Regardless of the type of crisis, it causes a restriction to the management of the organization and different types of challenges, depending on the nature of the crisis (Christensen et al., 2016). One of the most widely accepted and useful definitions of crisis comes from Rosentha et al who define crisis as "a situation in which there is a perceived threat against the basic values or life-sustaining functions of a social system and urgent corrective action is required under uncertain circumstances" (Rosentha et al. ., 1989). This definition confirms that crises often occur irregularly. It differs from other routine emergencies such as fires or accidents, as well as from "disasters" and that the defining feature is that a crisis is a matter of perception and therefore includes an addressable personal component. When it threatens the basic values and pillars of society, government must respond decisively, signal leadership and It also operates quickly, which limits the options available to it, which adds to the complexity of the matter, as the causes of the crisis and the course of action chosen to deal with it are uncertain (Christensen et al., 2016). Despite this, there are some indicators through which it is possible to somewhat predict the occurrence of crises. For example, the prevalence of risks and their importance in a wide range of organizational contexts has been identified as an important mechanism behind organizational crises. Risks and uncertainty disrupt rational management planning and daily organizational performance, and often lead organizations to undertake unique, uncommon, or even risky activities to prevent or mitigate risks. The field of organizational studies has a rich and vibrant history of research in the field of accidents, disasters, and crises that It drives organizations to pursue legal and morally acceptable goals (Kingma, 2008). On this basis, in the pre-crisis phase, it is necessary to scan and monitor the environment to detect signs of expected crises, because many crisis situations bear warning signs. If the organization can catch such early indicators of a crisis then it can set a better standard for crisis prevention or solutions and better manage it and it is the responsibility of line managers to identify these signs and deal with them accordingly (Tonga, 2019).

Strategic leadership

Since power may arise from the leadership of senior managers, it is necessary to understand the role that senior leadership behaviors play in strategy formulation and strategic alignment. Strategic leadership has been a focus of research in strategic

management studies over the past century. Elenkov et al. that shape a vision of the future, communicate it to subordinates, motivate followers and engage in supportive strategic exchanges with peers and subordinates" (Elenkov et al., 2005). Different from the traditional personality theory and the theory of exchange between the member and the leader, the theory of strategic leadership focuses on executive action as a strategic activity and emphasizes the symbolism and social structure of high-level executives, representing a dominant coalition of the company. In the past decade, a large number of empirical studies have been conducted to study behavioral characteristics For strategic leadership, influence ideal and inspiring motivation were identified as two leading leadership behaviors that focus on organizational strategic issues. Previous studies also indicate that both influence ideal and inspirational motivation behaviors are displayed when the leader sees a desirable opportunity, and clearly demonstrates how to reach the desired goal and inspire others. To see the future of the organization (Shao, 2019).

From the perspective of the possibility of strategic leadership to make an important impact on organizational performance, Ireland and Hitt presented a concept of strategic leadership as formulating and clarifying a vision that depicts a social reality and includes strategic objectives that can enhance the sustainable competitive advantage of the company (Ireland and Hitt, 1999). Or that strategic leadership is an intangible core competency that can lead to a discrepancy in the organization's core ability, including even its reputation (Petrick et al., 1999). Although the difficulty of understanding that strategic leadership and thus the difficulty of imitating it contributes to its value to a large extent, the application of strategic leadership may be directly frustrated because of the tension within it. In particular, the principles behind the vision of permanent leadership can conflict with urgent strategic interests, especially since These interests change amid the steadiness of the vision (Worden, 2003).

The Dimensions of Strategic Leadership
• Empowerment of Employees

The issue of empowering leadership behaviors has gained great importance for researchers and organizations alike, as empowerment is a relational construct that certainly involves the sharing of organizational resources, the participation of workers in decision-making processes, and the delegation of powers to them. On this basis, the concept of empowerment can be presented as involving increasing individual enthusiasm in work By delegating autonomy to other levels in the organization, a decision can be made and implemented by employees (Elsetouhi et al., 2018). Empowering leadership is part of the broader structure of empowering workers. Studies have shown two separate approaches to the concept of empowerment during the past two decades. The first approach portrays empowerment as a relational construct, while the second approach treats it as a motivational construct. Many studies adopt the relational perspective of empowerment because it has roots in the theory of social exchange, as the relational perspective refers to That power is achieved when the results of an individual's performance depend on the actions and resources of others. All

organizational members have some power, but it varies according to the individual's dependence on others. Empowerment, according to this perspective, is a process in which people who retain power in an organization participate with those who are powerless. Relativity (Hassan et al., 2018: 118).

- **dissemination of organizational learning**

Deliberate withholding of critical work-related information can have serious negative consequences in public organizations (Hassan et al., 2018: 116). The exchange of information is seen as a practice of human resource management linked to the creative work behavior of the employee, and learning is viewed as an intermediate link between the exchange of information and the creative behavior of employees in the organization In addition to the direct relationship with the level of their confidence in that information and its security (Mohammad & Thajil, 2023), whether in commercial transactions via the Internet or services such as education (Battistelli et al., 2019: 1; Abdullah et al., 2022; Thajil et al., 2022; Muhammad et al., 2022; Thajil, & AL-Abrrow, 2023). Therefore, organizations often need employees with knowledge, skills, and capabilities, and learning is encouraged to obtain knowledge and skills through training and development activities, as training and development activities seek to achieve new goals and skills, and transform existing knowledge into new formations capable of meeting emerging needs (Battistelli et al., 2019). The goal of learning for the organization is to provide a better way to achieve overall organizational goals at the individual, team, departmental, and organizational levels. Learning feedback systems are a very important way to achieve organizational and bulletin learning, as the unsatisfactory results provided by the employee can provide an opportunity for the supervisor to help his subordinates improve their performance. When the organization discovers unsatisfactory results from employees, learning becomes the first way for the supervisor to provide suggestions to employees to improve their performance Without reprimanding them in a way that affects their positive feelings, which often give positive performance to the organization (Yuliansyah and Jermias, 2018; AL-Abrrow et al., 2020).

Study plan and building and developing hypotheses

The chart shows the hypothetical study of the main variables and their dimensions on the basis of which the study problem was formulated, and the clarification of the relationships between the independent and dependent variable, on the basis of which the study hypotheses were formulated, as shown in Figure (1). The construction of the hypothetical scheme of the study was based on a main hypothesis, from which a group of sub-assumptions branch out, namely:

- Strategic leadership (empowerment of employees, dissemination of organizational learning) increases the possibility of effective crisis management.
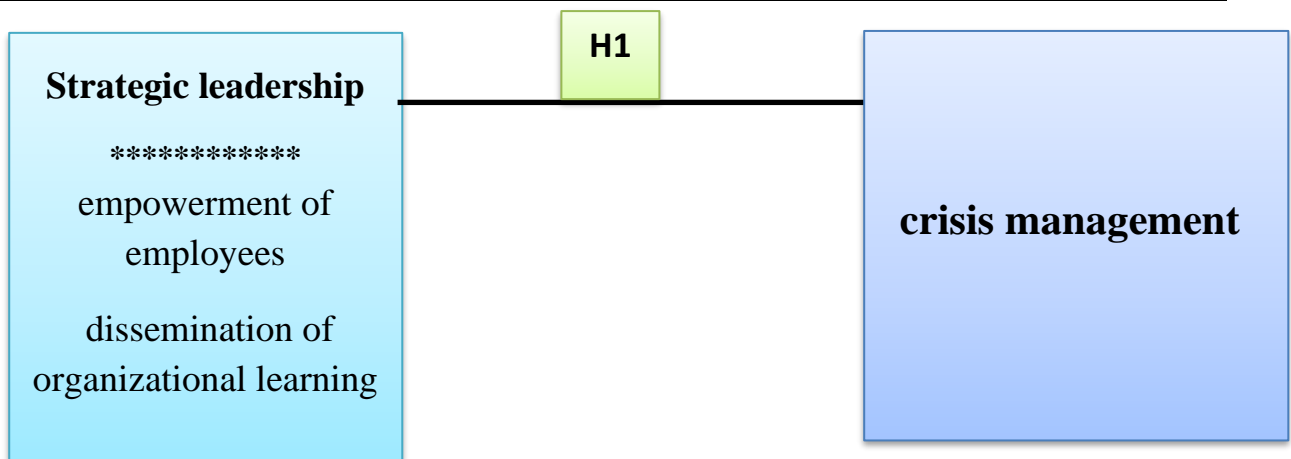
Strategic leadership

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empowerment of
employees

dissemination of
organizational learning

H1

crisis management

Figure No. (1) Study plan

The relationship between strategic leadership and crisis management

The ability to manage crises is an inevitability of strategic and tactical leadership that can positively or negatively affect the competitiveness of the organization and its ability to succeed, survive and be sustainable in the long term. Therefore, crisis management must be integrated into the comprehensive strategic and tactical plans of organizations and countries alike. Strategic leaders must To be prepared strategically and tactically not only to manage crises, but also to prevent them and chart the future for the organizations they lead (Taneja and Pryor, 2010; Thaji et al., 2022). As the business community becomes more complex, crisis events are likely to increase both in terms of their prevalence and severity. Therefore, much of the current crisis research has linked crisis events to relevant management strategies in the organization given the important role that leadership can play in dealing with crises (James et al., 2011). At a time when management is described as the ability to achieve a specific goal through the optimal use of staff resources and materials, crisis management in the strict sense of the word includes management at the staff level in a situation characterized by a critical period of time in which leadership decisions determine the future of the organization for either better or worse (Weisaeth et al., 2002). The importance of leadership in organizational performance is the subject of ongoing debate among researchers. Conventional wisdom indicates that leadership is crucial to creating high-performing organizations in the academic field, and in particular the importance of leadership in times of organizational crisis (James et al., 2011).

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership and crisis management.

H1a: There is a statistically significant relationship between employee empowerment and crisis management.

H1b: There is a statistically and significant relationship between the dissemination of organizational learning and crisis management.

Study Methodology

Study Design and Methodology

The design of the current study will be according to the quantitative design, due to the advantages that these designs have in terms of the ability to transfer images of what has been reached theoretically to the reality of work in the form of (digital) results, which in turn give accurate scientific evidence on the nature of the relationships between variables. Other studies can be based on it. The descriptive design will be adopted (the design that attempts to describe the problem and its causes by testing hypotheses that explain the nature of the relationship between the variables) to deal with the problem of the study and better understand the phenomena (Sekaran, 2003:122; Adams et al., 2007: 20). In addition, in order for the researchers to be able to study the causal links between the main and dependent variables, so that the researcher can directly indicate the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Saunders et.al, 2009). The appropriate method is chosen to collect the required data and the information used through the questionnaire tool and analyze it to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses through the use of a number of statistical tests to be able to reach a solution to this problem, which represented the impetus for the launch of the research project (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

Data Collection Methods

In covering the field aspect of the study, the researchers relied on the questionnaire tool for the purpose of collecting data from the study sample, as the questionnaire is one of the most important sources for data collection, which is in the form of a set of questions and a set of alternatives available to the respondent to choose. The final questionnaire consisted of (45) items, which in turn covered two main variables, including two sub-dimensions. The five-point Likert scale was used, which included the following responses (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

Study Population and Sample

The Dhi Qar General Education Directorate and its affiliated departments will be selected as a community for the current study, due to the exposure of this important department to a problem that led to a complete stoppage of work, and the need for such a department to know the causes and indicators that could lead to the occurrence of the crisis and how to manage and treat it, although this The problem was exposed to most of the Iraqi government departments, and it is not limited to the Directorate of Public Education in Dhi Qar exclusively. Nine departments belonging to Dhi Qar Governorate were selected as a community for the current study. A number of principals were selected in the Dhi Qar Education Directorate and its affiliated departments and their opinions were surveyed, as the study sample

consisted of 103 principals from a community of 140 based on the table provided by Sekaran (Sekaran, 2003) in which he indicated the appropriate sample size for each community.

Results

Correlation and Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics (the mean and the standard deviation) and the correlation coefficient between the variables. The results showed that the average of the variables and dimensions ranged between (3.506-3.540), i.e. the average response level, and that the standard deviation was small to indicate a slight dispersion in the data. Table 1 shows correlation statistics and does not indicate multilinear problems as correlation coefficients are comfortably less than 0.60 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Table: No. (2) The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient between variables

crisis management	strategic leadership	Std. Deviation	Mean	Variables
	1	.610	3.430	strategic leadership
1	.366**	.832	3.330	crisis management

Testing the main and sub-hypotheses

The major and minor hypotheses were tested using the pathway analysis available in AMOS software. V. 23 For the purpose of testing the main and sub-hypotheses, the table shows that the first main hypothesis was accepted, and this indicates that there is a positive effect between strategic leadership in crisis management (H1: p < .01). Table 2 shows the results of the sub-hypothesis test, and for the hypothesis to be accepted, the C.R values should be greater than 1.96, at a significant level of 0.05 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). The following table shows the results that were reached.

Table No. (2)
Testing the main hypotheses

Label	P	C.R.	S.E.	Estimate	Path			
Accept	.021	2.308	.091	.167	crisis management	<---	strategic leadership	H1
Accept	***	6.312	.080	.506	crisis management	<---	strategic leadership	Total Effect

Through Table No. (2), we conclude that the main hypothesis of the study is acceptable. As shown in the table above, there is a direct, positive, and statistically significant effect of the strategic leadership in crisis management, as the path

coefficient was (0.16) and the critical ratio was (2.30), i.e. accepting the main hypothesis of the study (H1). Table No. (3) shows The direct sub-hypotheses of the study are as follows:

Table No. (3) Direct sub-hypothesis testing

Label	P	C.R.	S.E.	Estimate	The course of direct sub-hypotheses			
Accept	.004	2.903	.059	.192	Crisis management	<---	Empowering workers	H1a
Accept	.008	2.115	.063	.207	Crisis management	<---	Dissemination of Organizational Learning	H1b

It is clear from Table No. (3) the acceptance of all direct sub-hypotheses between the dimensions of strategic leadership and crisis management, which were accepted on the basis of the C.R. Critical Ratio Criterion. Which exceeded 1.96.

Conclusions

• The existence of the strategic leadership is not sufficient or effective in the education sector and in any other sector or organizations unless those leaders adopt the development of strategic plans to manage crises and thus prevent or reduce their negative effects if they occur. The education sector's neglect of that aspect made the Directorate of Education an unprepared department for the crisis it was exposed to, which made the crisis exacerbate until the entire system stopped for a significant period of time for this vital sector. This was shown by the results of the great lack of the education sector for the most important point that could work in an integrated manner with the strategic leadership in crisis management, which is the strategic plans, which made the strategic leadership work in the shadow of the crisis, that is, after it was too late.

• The results that were reached showed that there is a direct, positive impact relationship between strategic leadership and crisis management, and this is consistent with what was reached by (Aslim, 2017). The positive effects of strategic leadership appear in terms of having great experience in the field of crisis management in the best way. By the managers and their ability to exploit all their capabilities to develop the best solutions to address the crises that organizations are exposed to and manage them through the preparation of plans and many programs that work to create readiness for crisis management at all times to provide a state of safety for organizations to prevent as much as possible from falling into a crisis. As for the dimensions of strategic leadership, the two sub-hypotheses were accepted, which indicate the existence of a direct, positive impact relationship between the

dimension (empowerment of workers and dissemination of organizational learning) and crisis management.

Recommendations

• The study recommended serious interest in monitoring indicators of crises occurring in the internal and external work environment alike, especially changes in the political environment, being one of the most important causes of crises that most organizations are exposed to, and working on developing strategic plans for crisis management and reviewing those plans based on monitoring changes. What happens in the internal and external environment in particular, due to the instability of that environment, which may carry with it indicators of future crises.

• Interest in promoting the concept of strategic leadership through holding conferences and seminars by specialists and researchers to train managers and employees alike to spread the organizational learning culture and apply its practices so that managers can manage crises in the best possible way and reduce the occurrence of crises in the future as much as possible.

Limitations and The Future Research

The current study is not devoid of some limitations, like any other study, as the current study faced a set of limitations represented by the factor of cost and time, which logically have a natural impact on the study, with the complexity that the researchers faced due to the suspension of the work of the General Directorate of Dhi Qar Education and the departments affiliated with it, which represented difficulty in reaching their constituencies upon their return due to the security situation in Iraq. Within the framework of the determinants that were dealt with above, and in light of this, the future horizons that can be worked on can be clarified by conducting the same study in other sectors that have been subjected to crises (industrial, agricultural, etc.), allowing the results to be generalized more widely. Developing the current model of the study by the researchers to allow the inclusion of more variables that were not addressed in the current study (strategic planning and decision-making), which would add to the future study more feasible results.

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