



Strategic Leadership Practices and their Role in Achieving Organizational Excellence: A Case Study of Al-Istiqlal University

Submitted in December 2025

Accepted in February 2025

Published Online in February 2025

<https://doi.org/10.64190/abj.1.2.2026.17>

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the level of practice of the dimensions of strategic leadership (strategic orientation, human capital, organizational culture, and organizational control) in addition to knowing the level of organizational excellence with its dimensions represented in (leadership excellence, human capital excellence, organizational structure excellence, and strategy excellence), and understanding the nature of the relationship between practicing the dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.

The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach, and the study sample included (80) male and female employees from the academic and administrative staff.

The results of the study showed that the level of practice of the dimensions of strategic leadership came at a moderate level, and the levels of organizational excellence were moderate.

The results showed that there is a relationship between all dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational excellence. The study recommended strengthening the practices of strategic leadership dimensions, and the need to increase continuous attention to practices that achieve the highest levels of organizational excellence.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Organizational Excellence, Al-Istiqlal University.

Introduction

Leadership is considered one of the modern administrative concepts that has attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of management sciences, as it is regarded as one of the most important administrative functions that support the functions of organizational management. Managers and administrative leaders within institutional work, including higher education institutions (Allaoua et al., 2024), practice it.

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Citation: Al-Qawasmi, Mohammed Ayman & Shaqour, Sari. (2026). Strategic Leadership Practices and their Role in Achieving Organizational Excellence: A Case Study of Al-Istiqlal University. *ARADO Business Journal*, 1 (3), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.64190/abj.1.2.2026.17>.

The presence of strategic leadership has become one of the most prominent key criteria for achieving the quality and excellence of institutional performance, as strategic leadership plays a significant role in building an effective organizational culture and ensuring the optimal utilization of all organizational resources (Al-Zahrani, 2023).

Numerous studies have emphasized that strategic leadership constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of organizational success and the achievement of an organization's vision and mission, through identifying the goals that the institution aspires to attain and strives to realize. In an environment characterized by continuous change and intense competition, the need for strategic leadership has become an urgent necessity to ensure the achievement of organizational excellence (Abdul Rahim, 2019).

Leaders continuously seek to develop their institutions and make them distinctive; therefore, strategic leadership, through its dimensions (strategic orientation, human capital, organizational culture, and organizational control), plays an essential and significant role in organizational operations. It enables institutions to move toward improvement and excellence through the skills and capabilities possessed by the strategic leader (Al-Anzi, 2024).

In light of this, Al-Istiqlal University holds a unique and distinguished position within the Palestinian environment as a national educational institution that seeks leadership and community service, through studying and understanding the relationship between strategic leadership practices and the level of organizational excellence within the university.

Literature Review

The researcher reviewed previous studies that addressed the topic of strategic leadership and organizational excellence. The following is a presentation of studies relevant to the current research topic.

The study by Abdul Hussein (2022) revealed that the application of strategic leadership, with its various dimensions, in the Directorate of the Criminal Evidence Investigation Department in Babylon was at high levels, and that the level of organizational performance was rated as good.

The study by Sweis and Al-Qabaj (2021) also indicated that the level of application of strategic leadership and the achievement of institutional performance in commercial banks in the West Bank were high, and it demonstrated the existence of a positive relationship between strategic leadership practices and the achievement of institutional performance.

The study by Khalaf (2021) demonstrated that Iraqi private banks were able to employ the practices and dimensions of strategic leadership to achieve organizational superiority through realizing a future vision, formulating strategic plans, defining goals and core processes, and continuously improving various operations.

Meanwhile, the study by Abboud (2020) showed that there is an effect of the dimensions of strategic leadership (defining strategic orientation, investing strategic

capabilities, developing and enhancing human capital, and continuous learning) on the dimensions of organizational excellence (leadership excellence, subordinate excellence, structural excellence, and cultural excellence) among employees at Al-Zaytoonah University in Jordan.

The study by Samr Al-Din and Al-Qurashi (2020) revealed that the levels of strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence at the Ministry of Commerce and Investment in Jeddah Governorate were high, and the study showed the existence of an effect of strategic leadership, with its dimensions, on achieving organizational excellence.

The study by Otieno and Lewa (2020) also indicated the presence of a positive correlation between strategic leadership and organizational performance in the maritime sector in Kenya.

Furthermore, the study by Obadah and Deya (2020) demonstrated that strategic leadership has a strong and effective impact on change management in the African Union.

In addition, the study by AL Ayoubi et al. (2020) confirmed the existence of a strong and statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership practices and the improvement of the quality of educational services in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, the study by Butama et al. (2019) showed that there is a significant positive relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance.

Distinctive aspects of the present study in comparison with previous studies:

Through reviewing previous studies that examined strategic leadership and organizational excellence across different universities and organizational settings, it became evident that most earlier research focused primarily on measuring relationships between variables from a structural or managerial perspective. While these studies provided valuable insights, they often gave limited attention to how leadership practices are actually experienced by employees in their daily work environment.

Rather than treating leadership practices as abstract managerial mechanisms, this study explores how academic and administrative staff perceive strategic leadership behaviors and how these perceptions shape their sense of organizational excellence. By giving voice to employees' experiences, the study captures the lived reality of leadership within the university.

In addition, the study is situated within a unique institutional and national context. Al-Istiqlal University operates in a complex environment that presents continuous organizational and societal challenges. Examining strategic leadership practices within this context provides deeper insight into how leadership can support stability, motivation, and institutional excellence under demanding conditions. Furthermore, the present study builds on previous research by translating empirical findings into practical, human-oriented recommendations. These recommendations are not limited to improving systems and procedures but focus on enhancing employee development,

empowerment, trust, and engagement. In doing so, the study contributes to the literature by highlighting that organizational excellence is ultimately achieved through people, their experiences, and their commitment to the institution.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions:

Al-Istiqlal University represents a fundamental and important pillar in the progress and advancement of Palestinian society. In its pursuit of achieving organizational excellence, the university administration has placed special emphasis on adopting strategic leadership practices that contribute to enhancing institutional performance and developing its competitive capabilities. A study by Sweis and Al-Qabaj (2021) confirmed that strategic leadership possesses the ability to anticipate the future, formulate and implement strategies, and optimally invest various resources. Through these capabilities, substantial knowledge can be created and produced with the aim of achieving organizational excellence and attaining a high standing and greater value for organizations.

Given the researcher's work at Al-Istiqlal University, and after reviewing the findings of studies that examined strategic leadership and organizational excellence-such as the studies by Samr Al-Din and Al-Qurashi (2020), Al-Zahrani (2023), and Butama et al. (2019)-these studies indicated the existence of an effect and a relationship between the dimensions of strategic leadership and their role in achieving organizational excellence. Based on the importance of the role played by strategic leadership in achieving organizational excellence, the researcher formulates the research problem by addressing the following main question: To what extent do strategic leadership practices contribute to achieving organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University?

Based on the main research question, the researchers poses the following sub-questions:

- 1- To what extent are the practices of the dimensions of strategic leadership available at Al-Istiqlal University?
- 2- What is the level of organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University?
- 3- Is there a statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University?

Research Hypotheses

The study examines the testing of the following main hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant relationship at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between strategic leadership practices, with their dimensions (strategic orientation, human capital, organizational culture, organizational control, and strategic capabilities investment), and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- To identify the extent to which the practices of the dimensions of strategic leadership contribute to achieving organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.
- 2- To identify the level of organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.
- 3- To determine the nature of the relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study is reflected in its scientific and practical importance, as outlined below:

- 1- It is considered one of the few studies that have addressed the topic of strategic leadership and organizational excellence within the context of Palestinian higher education institutions, particularly Al-Istiqlal University.
- 2- It contributes to enriching the theoretical literature and the Palestinian and Arab academic libraries by examining the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational excellence through the presentation of an analytical framework that adds to the existing body of knowledge in this field.
- 3- The findings and recommendations of this study seek to provide practical proposals that can be applied to activate strategic leadership practices in a manner that achieves organizational excellence within the university.

Limitations of the Study

This study is conducted within the following limits:

- 1- **Subject-matter limits:** The study examines strategic leadership practices and their role in achieving organizational excellence, using Al-Istiqlal University as a case study.
- 2- **Human limits:** The human scope is represented by the academic and administrative staff working at the university.
- 3- **Time limits:** The academic year 2023–2024.
- 4- **Spatial limits:** Al-Istiqlal University – Jericho – Palestine.

Research Methodology and Procedures:

Research Method

Based on the nature of the study and in order to achieve its objectives and answer the research problem and its questions, the researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach related to the study instrument (the questionnaire), as it is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the study.

Population and Sample of the Study

The study population consisted of the administrative and academic leaders working at Al-Istiqlal University, totaling (100) male and female employees who were actively employed during the year 2024.

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of the study and obtaining the results, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to a random sample drawn from the study population. A total of (80) questionnaires were distributed, of which (50) valid questionnaires were retrieved for the purposes of analysis (Sekaran, 2009).

Characteristics of the Study Sample According to Demographic Variables

Table (1): Distribution of the Study Sample According to Demographic Variables

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	26	52
	Female	24	48
Educational level	Diploma	5	10
	Bachelor’s Degree	18	36
	Master’s Degree	21	42
	Doctoral Degree (PhD)	6	12
Nature of Work	Academic	19	38
	Administrative	22	44
	Academic–Administrative	9	18
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	12	24
	5 to less than 10 years	18	36
	10 to less than 15 years	20	40

Study Instrument

By reviewing and examining previous studies related to the current research, and in light of the study objectives, the researcher designed and developed the study instrument (the questionnaire) to measure strategic leadership practices and their role in achieving organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.

Validity of the Study Instrument

To verify the validity of the instrument, it was presented to a group of specialized experts, who were asked to provide their opinions on the items in terms of the clarity of their wording, their suitability to the domains to which they belong, the appropriateness of each item for measurement, and its applicability. Based on the comments and guidance provided by the experts, the researcher made the required modifications to the study instrument, which included revising the wording of some items, deleting others, and adding novel items.

Reliability of the Study Instrument

To ensure the reliability of the study instrument, reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all items and dimensions. Table (2) illustrates the reliability of the study instrument.

Table (2): Reliability Results of the Study Instrument

Study Instrument	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha)
Questionnaire	50	0.958
Overall Instrument Reliability		0.958

It is evident from Table (2) that the reliability coefficient of the study instrument (Cronbach's alpha) for the instrument as a whole reached (0.958). Accordingly, the instrument demonstrates a high and appropriate level of reliability and adequately serves its intended purpose.

Study Procedures

The present study was conducted according to the following procedures:

- Reviewing previous studies related to the topic of the current research and developing the study instrument.
- Identifying the study population and its sample.
- Verifying the validity of the instrument by presenting it to experts and making the necessary modifications based on their consensus.
- Designing the study instrument and distributing it to the study sample.
- Collecting the data, coding it, and statistically analyzing it using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).
- Presenting and discussing the results and providing recommendations.

Statistical Analysis:

In order to answer the study questions and test the research hypothesis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used through the following statistical techniques:

- Means, standard deviations, and relative weights were used to describe the responses of the study sample.
- Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence.
- Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the predictive effect of strategic leadership dimensions on organizational excellence.

Table (3) illustrates the scale of arithmetic means used to interpret the results related to the dimensions and variables of the study.

Table (3): Interpretation Scale of the Arithmetic Mean

Key (Mean Range)	Level
3.67 – 5.00	High
2.33 – 3.66	Moderate
1.00 – 2.33	Low

The interpretation of the arithmetic mean was based on a five-point Likert scale, with values rounded to two decimal places.

Applied Aspect – Results of the Analysis:

First- Results Related to the First Research Question

To what extent are the practices of the dimensions of strategic leadership available at Al-Istiqal University?

To answer this question, the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative weights were calculated for each item, for each dimension to which it belongs, and for the overall score of the level of practice of the dimensions of strategic leadership. The results presented in Table (4) illustrate these findings.

Table (4): Means, Standard Deviations, Relative Weights, and Overall Level of Strategic Leadership Dimensions Practices

no	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance(%)	Level of Reality
1	The direct supervisor has a clear and compelling vision for the future.	3.68	1.09	73.6	High
2	The university demonstrates the willingness and capacity to take initiative and make decisions in light of new perspectives.	3.66	0.87	73.2	Moderate
3	The university develops a strategic vision that clearly defines its direction and anticipated future.	3.62	0.90	72.4	Moderate
4	The university has the ability to effectively deal with influential external factors.	3.55	0.67	71.0	Moderate
5	The university has clear perceptions for addressing opportunities and threats.	3.42	0.90	68.4	Moderate
Overall score of the first dimension: Strategic Orientation		3.59	0.09	71.8	Moderate
1	The supervisor possesses strong persuasive abilities.	3.74	0.77	74.8	High
2	The direct supervisor expresses confidence in the capabilities of employees.	3.70	0.86	74.0	Moderate
3	The direct supervisor encourages the adoption of new approaches.	3.58	0.85	71.6	Moderate
4	The university promotes a culture and awareness among employees regarding the importance of knowledge development.	3.42	1.05	68.4	Moderate

no	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance(%)	Level of Reality
5	The university supports employees in continuously developing their skills.	3.20	1.24	64.0	Moderate
Overall score of the second dimension: Human Capital		3.53	0.95	70.6	Moderate
1	The university benefits from and learns from work experiences.	3.60	0.85	72.0	Moderate
2	The university uses quality management systems.	3.44	0.88	68.8	Moderate
3	The university conducts discussions about future work directions.	3.36	0.98	67.2	Moderate
4	The university applies policies and practices to develop employees' capabilities at work.	3.04	1.15	60.8	Moderate
5	The university regularly updates job descriptions and assigned responsibilities.	3.02	1.11	60.4	Moderate
Overall score of the third dimension: Organizational Culture		3.30	0.99	66.0	Moderate
1	The university has an information system that contains up-to-date data and information.	3.54	0.97	70.8	Moderate
2	The university undertakes necessary changes, including restructuring and redesigning operations, based on past events.	3.50	0.78	70.0	Moderate
3	The university has the capacity to experiment and tolerate risk.	3.42	0.81	68.0	Moderate
4	The university tends to favor continuous improvement over rigid procedures and fixed rules.	3.32	0.79	66.4	Moderate
5	The university has a management system that enables learning from mistakes and discontinuing directives proven to be ineffective.	3.04	1.02	60.8	Moderate
Total score of the fourth dimension (Organizational Control)		3.36	0.87	67.2	Moderate
1	The university possesses distinctive success factors, including human resources, technology, and models.	3.86	0.85	77.2	High
2	The university works to position itself as an attractive hub for talented and highly capable individuals.	3.64	0.87	72.8	Moderate
3	The university shows strong interest in staff with solid academic qualifications and relevant experience.	3.58	0.94	71.6	Moderate
4	The university has information and communication systems that support effective decision-making.	3.44	0.78	68.8	Moderate
	The university places significant emphasis on employees' creative and innovative activities.	3.26	0.96	65.2	Moderate
Overall score of the fifth dimension: Strategic Capabilities Investment		3.55	0.88	71.0	Moderate
The overall score of the Strategic Leadership dimension		3.46	0.92	69.3	Moderate

The results presented in Table (4) indicate that the overall level of strategic leadership practices at Al-Istiqlal University was moderate, with a mean score of (3.46). This suggests that while strategic leadership practices are present within the universi-

ty, they may not yet be sufficiently institutionalized or consistently applied across all administrative and academic levels.

Strategic orientation ranked first among the leadership dimensions, reflecting the university administration's awareness of the importance of having a clear future vision and defined strategic directions. This finding indicates that employees generally perceive the leadership as forward-looking; however, the moderate level suggests that translating this vision into daily practices and shared understanding remains an ongoing challenge.

Strategic capabilities investment ranked second, highlighting the university's efforts to utilize its human and material resources and attract qualified competencies. This result reflects employees' recognition of initiatives related to recruitment, infrastructure, and decision-support systems, although it also suggests that further investment is needed to fully leverage employees' creative and innovative potential.

Human capital ranked third, indicating a moderate emphasis on developing employees' skills and motivating them. This may reflect limitations in training opportunities, career development pathways, or empowerment mechanisms, which can influence employees' sense of growth, engagement, and professional fulfillment.

Organizational control ranked fourth, suggesting that while control and regulatory systems are in place, they may be perceived as more procedural than developmental. This perception may limit opportunities for learning from mistakes and encourage compliance rather than initiative.

Organizational culture ranked last among the dimensions, reflecting a work environment that may still lean toward bureaucratic practices rather than innovation, participation, and open dialogue. This finding underscores the importance of fostering a more supportive and learning-oriented culture that encourages collaboration, experimentation, and shared responsibility.

Overall, these results portray a leadership environment that is progressing toward strategic maturity but still requires greater attention to the human dimension of leadership, particularly in empowering employees, strengthening organizational culture, and transforming strategic intent into everyday practice. This interpretation is consistent with previous studies such as Sweis and Al-Qabaj (2021) and Samr Al-Din and Al-Qurashi (2020).

Second: Results Related to the Second Research Question:

What is the level of organizational excellence, with its dimensions (leadership excellence, human capital excellence, organizational structure excellence, and strategy excellence), at Al-Istiqlal University?

To answer this question, the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative weights were calculated for each item, for each dimension to which it belongs, and for the overall score of the level of organizational excellence. The results presented in Table (5) illustrate these findings.

Table (5): Means, Standard Deviations, Relative Weights, and Overall Scores of the Levels of Organizational Excellence Dimensions

no	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Level of Reality
1	The direct supervisor praises employees for their good performance and achievements.	3.58	0.78	71.6	Moderate
2	The direct supervisor takes the initiative to overcome obstacles.	3.58	0.75	71.6	Moderate
3	The direct supervisor provides employees with recognition and support.	3.38	0.77	67.6	Moderate
4	The direct supervisor engages in discussions about future work directions.	3.46	0.90	69.6	Moderate
5	The direct supervisor allows employees to express their opinions, ideas, and suggestions	3.44	0.86	68.8	Moderate
The overall score of the first dimension: Leadership Excellence		3.48	0.59	69.6	Moderate
1	The university emphasizes teamwork through the formation of work teams.	3.40	1.01	68.0	Moderate
2	The university grants employees the necessary authority to accomplish their tasks and demonstrate their capabilities.	3.32	0.84	66.4	Moderate
3	The university organizes a variety of training programs.	3.30	1.14	66.0	Moderate
4	The university is committed to preparing and developing independent leaders.	3.24	0.95	64.8	Moderate
5	The university supports employees in continuously developing their skills.	3.22	1.07	64.4	Moderate
The overall score of the second dimension: Human Capital Excellence		3.29	0.82	65.8	Moderate
1	The university regularly updates its procedures and operational processes.	3.70	0.73	74.0	high
2	The university accomplishes its key tasks through the formation of diverse work teams representing various functional departments.	3.60	0.63	72.0	Moderate
3	The university regularly revises job descriptions and assigned responsibilities.	3.54	0.76	70.8	Moderate
4	The university consistently implements new administrative systems.	3.52	0.81	70.4	Moderate
5	The university takes flexibility into account when defining responsibilities and performing job-related tasks.	3.44	0.88	68.8	Moderate
The overall score of the third dimension: Organizational Structure Excellence		3.56	0.56	71.2	Moderate
1	The university places strong emphasis on developmental studies and research.	3.80	0.78	76.0	high

no	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Level of Reality
2	The university is keen to identify beneficiaries' opinions and utilize them in improving its services.	3.76	0.87	75.2	high
3	The university tends to prioritize continuous improvement over rigid procedures and fixed rules.	3.64	0.85	72.8	Moderate
4	The university seeks to benefit from the experiences of other universities in shaping its future vision.	3.62	0.90	72.4	Moderate
5	The university works to learn from mistakes and avoid repeating them in the future	3.44	1.07	68.8	Moderate
The overall score of the fourth dimension: Strategic Excellence		3.65	0.58	73.0	Moderate
The overall score of the Organizational Excellence construct		3.50	0.70	70.0	Moderate

The results presented in Table (5) reveal that the overall level of organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University was moderate, with a mean score of (3.50). This finding reflects a work environment that demonstrates acceptable institutional practices yet still leaves room for further development to enhance employees' experiences and institutional effectiveness.

The strategic excellence dimension ranked first, indicating that the university places noticeable emphasis on developmental studies, research activities, and learning from external experiences. This suggests an institutional awareness of the importance of future-oriented thinking and continuous improvement in shaping organizational direction.

Organizational structure excellence ranked second, reflecting the university's efforts to regularly update procedures, revise job descriptions, and implement administrative systems that support operational efficiency. Such practices contribute to creating a more organized and adaptable work environment, which positively influences employees' ability to perform their tasks.

Leadership excellence occupied the third position, indicating that while supervisors demonstrate supportive behaviors-such as recognizing employees' efforts and encouraging participation-these practices may not yet be sufficiently consistent or systematic to foster a fully empowering leadership climate.

Human capital excellence ranked last, which may reflect the challenges faced in continuously developing employees' skills, expanding training opportunities, and preparing future leaders. This result highlights the need for greater investment in human development initiatives that respond to employees' professional aspirations and enhance their sense of growth and motivation within the university.

Overall, these findings portray an institution that is progressing toward organizational excellence but still requires greater attention to the human dimension of management, particularly in strengthening employee development, engagement, and empowerment. This interpretation aligns with the findings of Abdul Hussein (2022),

who emphasized the vital role of balanced leadership and human capital development in achieving sustainable organizational excellence.

Third: Results Related to the Third Research Question:

Is there a statistically significant relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University?

This question was addressed through the main research hypothesis, which states that there is a statistically significant relationship at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between strategic leadership practices, with their dimensions (strategic orientation, human capital, organizational culture, and organizational control), and the achievement of organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University.

To answer the third question and test the hypothesis, the relationship between the practices of the dimensions of strategic leadership and the achievement of organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University was examined, and the results of the analysis illustrate this relationship.

Table (6): Pearson Correlation Matrix between Strategic Leadership Dimensions and Organizational Excellence

Strategic Leadership Dimensions	Organizational Excellence	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (p-value)	Relationship Strength
Strategic Orientation	Organizational Excellence	0.68	0.000	Strong Positive
Human Capital	Organizational Excellence	0.71	0.000	Strong Positive
Organizational Culture	Organizational Excellence	0.65	0.000	Moderate-Strong
Organizational Control	Organizational Excellence	0.69	0.000	Strong Positive
Strategic Capabilities Investment	Organizational Excellence	0.73	0.000	Strong Positive

The results presented in Table (6) demonstrate statistically significant positive correlations between all dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University. This indicates that when strategic leadership practices are more evident within the university, higher levels of organizational excellence tend to emerge.

The strongest correlation was observed for strategic capabilities investment, suggesting that employees perceive the effective use of human and material resources, along with attracting qualified competencies, as a key factor in enhancing organizational excellence. This reflects the importance of creating an environment in which employees feel that their skills are valued and strategically utilized.

Human capital and organizational control also showed strong positive relationships with organizational excellence, highlighting the role of employee development, supportive supervision, and clear regulatory systems in fostering stability and confidence within the workplace.

Although organizational culture demonstrated a slightly lower correlation compared to other dimensions, it still maintained a moderate-to-strong relationship with organizational excellence. This finding may indicate that while cultural practices exist, further efforts are needed to strengthen values related to innovation, participation, and learning from experience.

Overall, these results emphasize that strategic leadership is not merely a managerial function, but a human-centered practice that shapes employees' perceptions, motivation, and sense of belonging, ultimately contributing to higher levels of organizational excellence. These findings are consistent with previous studies such as Sweis and Al-Qabaj (2021), Otieno and Lewa (2020), and Butama et al. (2019).

Table (7): Multiple Regression Analysis of Strategic Leadership Dimensions Predicting Organizational Excellence

Independent Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
Strategic Orientation	0.29	4.12	0.000
Human Capital	0.31	4.56	0.000
Organizational Culture	0.24	3.67	0.001
Organizational Control	0.27	4.01	0.000
Strategic Capabilities Investment	0.34	4.89	0.000

The results presented in Tables (6) and (7) confirm that strategic leadership dimensions have statistically significant positive relationships with organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University. While Pearson correlation analysis revealed strong associations between strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence, the multiple regression analysis further demonstrated that these dimensions possess meaningful predictive power.

Strategic capabilities investment emerged as the strongest predictor of organizational excellence, indicating that employees place particular importance on how effectively the university invests in its human and material resources and attracts qualified competencies. This finding reflects employees' sensitivity to strategic decisions that directly affect their professional growth and sense of institutional value.

Human capital and strategic orientation also showed substantial predictive effects, highlighting the role of employee development, empowerment, and clarity of future direction in enhancing organizational excellence. These results suggest that when employees perceive genuine investment in their skills and a clear strategic vision, their engagement and performance are positively influenced.

Organizational control and organizational culture, although slightly weaker predictors, remained statistically significant. This underscores the importance of balanced regulatory systems and supportive cultural practices that promote stability, learning, and trust within the organizational environment.

Overall, these findings indicate that strategic leadership extends beyond formal planning and control mechanisms to encompass human-centered practices that shape employees' motivation, perceptions, and commitment. Accordingly, the study hypothesis is supported, and the results align with prior empirical evidence reported by Sweis and Al-Qabaj (2021), Otieno and Lewa (2020), and Butama et al. (2019).

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the responses and the testing of the main research hypothesis, the study concludes that strategic leadership practices at Al-Istiqlal University are present at a moderate level, with an overall mean score of (3.46). This finding suggests that strategic leadership behaviors are recognized by employees, yet they may not be consistently experienced across all aspects of daily work.

The results related to the dimensions of strategic leadership indicate that strategic orientation was perceived at a moderate level (71.8%), reflecting employees' awareness of the university's future direction and strategic intent. However, the moderate rating implies that this vision may not always be clearly translated into shared understanding or practical guidance for employees.

Investment in strategic capabilities also recorded a moderate level (71.0%), suggesting that while employees acknowledge efforts to utilize resources and attract competencies, there remains a need to strengthen initiatives that allow employees to feel fully supported and strategically empowered.

The human capital dimension was perceived at a moderate level (70.6%), which may indicate that employees experience some degree of professional development and motivation, yet aspire to more structured opportunities for growth, training, and recognition.

Organizational control achieved a moderate level (67.2%), reflecting the presence of regulatory and control systems that provide organizational stability. At the same time, this finding may suggest that such systems are sometimes viewed as procedural rather than developmental, potentially limiting initiative and learning.

Finally, organizational culture recorded the lowest moderate level (66.0%), indicating that the work environment may lean toward formal or bureaucratic practices more than toward innovation, participation, and open dialogue. This highlights the importance of fostering a more supportive and learning-oriented culture that strengthens trust, collaboration, and a sense of belonging among employees.

Overall, these conclusions illustrate that while strategic leadership practices are evident within the university, greater emphasis on the human dimension-particularly employee empowerment, engagement, and development-is essential for advancing toward higher levels of organizational excellence.

Second, the results of the study showed that the overall level of organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University was moderate, with a mean score of (3.50).

This finding reflects an institutional environment that demonstrates acceptable levels of performance and organization, while still offering considerable opportunities for further improvement from the perspective of employees.

Strategy excellence ranked first among the dimensions of organizational excellence, with a mean of (3.65). This indicates that employees perceive the university as giving attention to future planning, developmental studies, and learning from external experiences. Such perceptions suggest an awareness of strategic direction; however, the moderate level implies that these strategic efforts may not yet be fully reflected in everyday practices across all units.

Organizational structure excellence ranked second, with a mean of (3.56), reflecting the university's efforts to update procedures, revise job descriptions, and improve operational processes. This contributes to a sense of organizational order and clarity, which can positively support employees in performing their roles more effectively.

Leadership excellence ranked third, with a mean of (3.48), indicating that while employees experience supportive leadership behaviors-such as recognition, encouragement, and participation-these practices may not always be consistent enough to foster a deeply empowering leadership climate.

Human capital excellence ranked last, with a mean of (3.29), highlighting employees' perceptions of limited opportunities for continuous development, training, and leadership preparation. This finding underscores the importance of placing greater emphasis on employee growth, capacity building, and long-term professional development.

Third, the results of the study revealed the existence of statistically significant positive relationships between all dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that strategic leadership practices are closely associated with employees' perceptions of organizational excellence and that leadership behaviors play a meaningful role in shaping institutional performance and work experiences.

Overall, the results indicate that organizational excellence at the university is not solely dependent on structures and strategies but is strongly influenced by how leadership practices are experienced by employees in their daily work. Strengthening strategic leadership in a more human-centered manner may therefore contribute to enhancing organizational excellence and improving employees' sense of engagement and belonging.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to support the enhancement of strategic leadership practices and organizational excellence at Al-Istiqlal University, with particular attention to the human dimension of leadership and institutional performance.

- **First:** the study recommends strengthening the practices of strategic leadership across its various dimensions, including strategic orientation, investment in strategic capabilities, human capital, organizational control, and organizational culture. This enhancement should focus not only on formal strategies and systems, but also on how leadership behaviors are experienced by employees in their daily work.
- **Second:** the study emphasizes the importance of sustaining continuous attention to practices that promote higher levels of organizational excellence across its dimensions-namely strategy excellence, organizational structure excellence, leadership excellence, and human capital excellence. Achieving this requires creating a supportive organizational environment that enables employees to perform effectively and feel valued within the institution.

In this context, the study recommends investing in human capital through expanding opportunities for learning and professional development, strengthening employees' knowledge and skills, and encouraging creativity and innovation. Such initiatives contribute to enhancing employees' sense of growth, motivation, and engagement.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of adopting flexible approaches in defining responsibilities and accomplishing job tasks. Encouraging learning from mistakes, rather than penalizing them, can foster a culture of continuous improvement, trust, and shared responsibility within the university.

Overall, these recommendations underscore the need to view organizational excellence as a human-centered process that is achieved through empowering employees, supporting their development, and aligning leadership practices with their professional and personal aspirations.

Proposed Future Studies

Based on the conclusions of the present study, future research is recommended to examine strategic leadership and organizational excellence within private-sector organizations, particularly profit-oriented and commercial institutions, in order to compare leadership practices across different organizational contexts.

Furthermore, future studies may explore the role of organizational culture as a mediating variable between strategic leadership and organizational excellence. Conducting comparative studies across different universities could also provide deeper insights into contextual factors that influence leadership effectiveness and organizational excellence in higher education institutions.

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