

The Role of Soft Leadership in the Quality of Work life An Applied Study on a Sample of Employees Working in Al Aitihad Food Industries

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Abstract

The concept of "soft leadership" is examined in depth throughout this article as an essential component of effective leadership. The first section of the article is devoted to doing a literature study on the shift in viewpoint that has occurred over the course of the past few years on what aspects of leadership are most important, as well as the substantial adjustments that this shift has triggered in some facets of education and corporate recruitment. The outcomes of the survey that was administered to the workforce at Al-Aitihad company for Food Industries are discussed in the second section of this article. By utilizing a multi-method approach that consisted of a survey model with questions and data analysis in a phenomenological trend, a number of interesting findings emerged, supporting the literature reviewed, that soft leadership skills, such as vision, communication, and emotional intelligence, are steadily on the rise and that greater attention should be apportioned to strengthen these skills in future leaders .

Keywords: Soft Leadership, Soft Leadership Skills, Quality of Work Life

Introduction

Many leaders in business organizations seek to improve their professional and functional level by obtaining the highest degree of competence, experience, effectiveness, and access to advanced job titles that ensure an improvement in the financial, administrative, and social situation. Therefore, a large number of them are competing in competitions and job interviews that fulfill their personal desires, and this in turn needs To the possession by these leaders of the soft skills that support them in achieving their personal goals, which may be reflected in the reality of the performance of those organizations. Leadership skills appear through certain behaviors that are directly related to the level of individual and group performance within the organization. The literature confirms that officials need hard and soft leadership skills in order to achieve organizational goals in light of modern changes. It is no longer possible for officials to rely on their managerial knowledge and skills only in management. Employees face potential changes, and soft skills are of particular importance

to officials as they help to encourage cooperation and participation in the administrative process and develop them continuously. Therefore, soft skills are considered self-management skills or interpersonal relations, and they are applicable and related to the individual's ability to interact with co-workers who benefit from them and have a vital role in achieving administrative success and excellence. While the quality of work life means that it has a fundamental role related to the work environment and satisfactory work, which includes an opportunity for work to exercise its various talents and abilities to meet the challenges and situations that require independent and self-initiative, it is an activity that is believed to be beneficial to the solidarity of individuals in the work group and is a work in which each worker understands a role in order to General goals are achieved, which generates a sense of pride for every worker in his work. Leadership may be defined as the process of exerting influence over the actions of other people in order to motivate them to cooperate in order to achieve a common objective. To put it another way, leadership is the capacity to exert influence over a group so that the group may realize its objectives. It is possible to deduce, from the numerous viewpoints expressed by specialists, that the idea of leadership itself is virtually as numerous as the number of individuals who desire to define it, which suggests that it is primarily an idea that is founded on experience. The phrase "an influencing process" appears in the vast majority of different formulations of the concept of leadership. However, we find that people have quite varied ideas about what leadership is and how it should be exercised. Distinctions can be made with regard to "who exercises influence," "the purpose of the influence," and "ways to use the influence."

Leadership may be described as a person's ability to influence a group towards the accomplishment of their goals, according to Stephen P. Robbins (Badeni, 2004), who says that leadership is best understood as the capacity of an individual to direct the efforts of a group towards the realization of their objectives.

Leadership may be described as the process of exerting influence and direction over a variety of actions and responsibilities that are associated with the members of a group. Leadership may also be described as the capacity to exert influence over a variety of tactics and goals, the ability to exert influence over commitment and adherence to tasks in order to accomplish shared goals, and the ability to exert influence over groups in order to identify, preserve, and build organizational culture.

When it comes to leadership, only a few aspects and characteristics influence whether or not an organization will be successful in achieving its objectives. According to Gibb (Sri Rahmi, 2014; Kanto et al., 2020; Umanailo, 2020), there are four primary elements in leadership that are interrelated with each other. These elements are the leader, who displays the personality of the leader; the group; the followers, who appear with their various needs, attitudes, and problems; and situations that include physical condition and group assignments. Each of these elements is interrelated with the other three. In addition, Blake and Mounton (Sri Rahmi, 2014) provide a list of six components that they think are necessary in order to adequately explain the efficacy of leadership.

The first three components, known as initiative, inquiry, and advocacy, are all concerned with the manner in which a leader extends his or her sphere of influence into the wider world. The remaining three components are known as conflict resolution, decision-making, and critical analysis. It discusses how to make the most of the resources that are already available inside the organization in order to attain the desired outcomes.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The Concept of Soft Leadership

"Joseph Nye is considered to be the one who used the term soft power, as he defined it as is the ability to reach the desired goal by attracting others and not by resorting to threats or penalties"(Nye, 2007). These powers depend on culture, political principles and policies, Moreover, if you are able to convince other people to do what you want, you will not have to spend a lot of money to do so since you will be able to save money by using the carrot-and-stick approach to move other people in a direction that serves your interests. Soft leadership is a new and specialized set of skills that are based on the right mindset through caring and communicating with others to achieve the desired goals, focusing on individuals rather than on tasks, empathizing with others and looking at things from a human perspective, and practicing Soft leadership through soft skills and people skills, as well as combining soft skills, hard skills, and leadership. Soft leadership is a new and specialized set of skills that are based on the right mindset through caring and communicating with others to achieve the desired goals. It emphasizes the importance of precious human resources. It helps to successfully manage the emotions, egos, and feelings of individuals, and focuses on the personality of the thousands, their attitudes, and their behavior, and advocates making others feel more important) Roa (2012:28) Soft leadership is also defined as the exercise of influence through a set of soft leadership skills to accomplish tasks efficiently and effectively (Reevy et al, 2015:33). Soft leadership was defined as exemplary leadership, the application of which leads to the acquisition of more skills and experience, and a mixture of technical and leadership skills, and stresses the importance of human resources (Fernando & Klaus, 2016). The style of communication between them and cooperation to carry out tasks. Thus, soft leadership is a combination of courageous leadership, thought leadership, appropriate leadership, and mission leadership. A win-win endowment, as well as respect for their failures, and thus lead to their cohesion and motivate them constantly by aligning their energies and united efforts, recognizing and appreciating their contributions to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives with an emphasis on skills. Because it is based on the right to think through the set of skills they provide and the set of tools they rely on in performing (Noel & Katherine ; 2016) The researcher believes that soft leadership has become one of the most vital and effective topics in institutions in light of global competitiveness, because it works to achieve proper communication with everyone, and goes in accordance with the interest of the institution in conducting negotiations, and is keen to influence and persuade by all available means, and strives to Cooperation and teamwork, with professional ethics and high and lofty values.

Dimension of Soft Leadership

As for the dimensions of soft leadership, it is:

i. **the vision: Leadership** is related to the concepts of (guidance, guidance, and influence) with others in order to achieve common goals. And the vision is the ideal future that can be reached (Daft & Noe 2001: 404) and carries a clear and convincing imagination that facilitates the way for the development that it defines, draws according to traditions and is linked to the actions that individuals adopt to achieve change. (Robbins, 2008: 344) and that the vision works to activate the feelings and capabilities of individuals, if it is drawn correctly, it works to find the spirit of the group within the souls in spare time, and the development of both energy and commitment within the work means that the concept of leadership and the meanings of the future image of the organization have been Mixing it through two theories:

- ii. **Communication:** Communication is one of the oldest aspects of human activities, as it represents an important human activity that originated, developed, and reached its contemporary form through the stages of human history. At the same time, methods and means of collecting intellectual and human production, organizing it, storing it, and disseminating it to the largest possible number of beneficiaries, in a manner that transcends narrow geographical boundaries, have evolved. And culture forward, as well as its main role in facilitating access to information to all beneficiaries
- iii. **Emotional intelligence:** It is self-mastery, discipline, and the ability to empathize that allows the leader to direct personal emotions and attract others. mature and more effective in achieving success throughout the organization (Casimir, et al.2016) (Crosbie; 2012:2) indicates that leadership is one of the smart leadership practices provided or used by leaders of organizations to motivate employees. Some researchers go that emotional or emotional intelligence consists group of mental abilities.

the concept of quality of work life

In any event, The physical, social, psychological, and environmental facets of an employee's life are encompassed under the umbrella term "quality of life," which is a multifaceted concept. It is the consequence of an investigation that each individual performs on himself by contrasting their own wants, goals, and expectations with the world around them as they see it. (Argentero, Miglioretti & Angilletta, 2007). Saraji and Dargahi (2006) described QWL for workers as an all-encompassing, department-wide programme with the goals of increasing employee happiness, enhancing workplace learning, and assisting employees in better coping with change and transition. In a similar vein, Brooks and Anderson (2005) defined quality of work life (QWL) as the extent to which individuals are able to fulfil significant personal needs via their experience at work while also contributing to the accomplishment of organizational goals..

Dimension of Quality of Work Life

Several dimensions have been proposed by researchers to measure QWL. We take the following dimensions for the study.

- i. **Work environment (WE)** is referred to be healthy if the work setting adopts a planned and comprehensive approach to providing the physical, cultural, and psychological work circumstances that maximize the health, safety, and well-being of employees. In other words, a healthy work environment (WE) is one that meets all of these criteria. (Grimes & Robert, 2010). They contribute to increased motivation, productivity, and performance in people as well as organizations, and they offer support for the most effective practices and procedures regarding quality in the workplace. Lee and Harrison (2000) suggests taking the opinions of employees regarding their satisfaction with WE to measure their perceived QWL. Previous research on WE and QWL is indicative of a significant and positive relationship between a healthy WE and QWL (Sirgy et al., 2001).
- ii. **Occupational stress (OS)** refers to a situation in which there is a disequilibrium in the system of variables that connect individuals to their environments, which has an effect on the usual levels of well-being. The personnel have received training to deal with physically and psychologically hard working duties, but stress still takes a toll on them when there are other stressors, such as a lack of family support, conflict at work, inadequate staffing, poor collaboration, lack of training, and bad supervision (Kane, 2009; Saha, Sinha & Bhavsar, 2011).

According to Shirey (2006), stress is known to produce emotional turbulence, which in turn has negative effects on the health of staff, the attrition rate, injury rates, and infection rates, and prevents them from providing holistic treatment to patients. According to the findings, there is a connection that runs in the other direction between QWL and job stress. Employees who have a high quality of work life (QWL) score typically report less stress on the job, whereas a low QWL score can contribute to stressful working circumstances as well as adverse health effects. (Mosadeghrad et al., 2011).

iii. Opportunities for development (OD) Include the many job responsibilities and possibilities that are accessible to employees in the organization to grow their skills, knowledge, credentials, experience, and so on. Employees expect their companies to give them with adequate opportunity and direction to experience career growth and professional development as educational levels and occupational aspirations continue to rise. This is because employees want their organizations to help them achieve their goals of becoming more professionally proficient. Organizations are increasingly turning to employee assistance programmers, career counseling, cross-functional training, behavioral training, career development, and personal development in order to support their staff members in making the most use of their talents and capabilities in order to achieve maximum productivity. (Srivastava et al., 2010). In return, it provides employee retention, staff morale, practice efficiency, job competency and better QWL (Farjad & Varnous, 2013; Gesme, Towle & Wiseman, 2010). The commitment of an organization to invest in employee development can improve

The effect of soft leadership on the quality of work life

Soft leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes empathy, collaboration, and relationship-building. It is characterized by a leader's ability to connect with their team members on a personal level, understand their needs and concerns, and create a supportive and inclusive work environment. This leadership approach has been found to have a significant impact on the quality of work produced by individuals and teams. One of the key effects of soft leadership on the quality of work is increased employee engagement. When leaders adopt a soft leadership style, they prioritize building strong relationships with their team members. This fosters trust and open communication, which in turn leads to higher levels of employee engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to be motivated, committed, and invested in their work. They are also more likely to go above and beyond to deliver high-quality results. Soft leadership also promotes a positive work culture that encourages creativity and innovation. By creating an environment where team members feel safe to express their ideas and take risks, soft leaders inspire creativity and foster innovation. When employees are encouraged to think outside the box and explore new approaches, they are more likely to produce high-quality work that is innovative and impactful. Furthermore, soft leadership enhances teamwork and collaboration within organizations. Soft leaders prioritize building strong relationships among team members and promote a sense of unity and shared purpose. This creates a collaborative work environment where individuals feel supported and valued. When employees collaborate effectively, they can leverage each other's strengths, share knowledge and expertise, and collectively produce high-quality work. In addition, soft leadership contributes to employee well-being and job satisfaction. Soft leaders prioritize the holistic well-being of their team members by considering their emotional needs, providing support, and promoting work-life balance. When employees feel valued, supported, and

satisfied in their roles, they are more likely to be motivated and produce high-quality work. Overall, the effect of soft leadership on the quality of work is profound. By fostering employee engagement, promoting a positive work culture, enhancing teamwork and collaboration, and prioritizing employee well-being, soft leaders create an environment that nurtures high-quality work. Organizations that embrace soft leadership. Through the foregoing, research hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H1: *the vision will mediate the relationship between soft leadership and QWL.*

H2: *communication will mediate the relationship between soft leadership and QWL.*

H3: *Emotional intelligence will mediate the relationship between soft leadership and QWL.*

Reserch Methodology

type of investigation: The purpose of this study, which is a cross sectional one, is to investigate the influence that "soft leadership" qualities like vision, communication, and emotional intelligence have on the quality of one's work life.

Study Setting. This study was done on chosen organizations in specified places where simple access to data collection was accessible since there was a scarcity of resources and the requirement to acquire a quick response. In other words, the study was limited to these organizations and these areas. The Al Aitihad firm for food industries has been chosen to act as the community representative for the purpose of carrying out the research. During the process of carrying out this research, they were chosen at random, and the scope of the project played no role in the decision-making process.

Unit of Analysis The units of analysis for this research are the personnel (senior managers and corporate team members) of the chosen firm that are associated with management.

Sampling Technique. Non-probability convenience sampling technique has been used for drawing samples from population.

Data Collection In this particular piece of research, a descriptive research approach was utilized. The Al AITIHAD firm was responsible for carrying out the study for the catering sector. The majority of these workers are administrative, technical, or support staff, and their primary responsibilities include administrative tasks, technical tasks, and support responsibilities. Only 205 replies that were considered to be legitimate were received in total, which results in a response rate of 68 percent for the survey. There were a total of 185 people that participated in the survey, with 120 (58.5%) females and 85 (41.5%) men. The majority of the respondents, 48.8 percent, fell into the age bracket of 20–30 years old, which was followed by the age bracket of 31–40 years old (34.1 percent), 41–50 years old (14.6 percent), and 51–60 years old (2.4 percent). Sixty-one percent of the people who filled out the survey were married, whereas just 39 percent of the people who filled out the survey were single. The majority of the responses were made up of administrative personnel (51.2%), which was followed by engineers (26.8%), technicians (14.6%), and managers (7.3%). The respondents' average years of experience in the workforce ranged from 5 to 10 years (36.6 percent), followed by 0 to 5 years (34.1 percent), 11 to 15 years (22 percent), 16 to 20 years (4.9 percent), and 21 and above (2.4 percent).

Data analysis : A self-designed questionnaire was used for the survey of health care employees. The initial selection of items included in the instrument was made after an extensive review of the literature. The researcher then refined these items to consider issues of accuracy, relevance, readability, grammar and meet the local context and the multicultural environment of the company employees in Iraq. All the scales used in the present study displayed adequate levels of reliability (ranging from 0.72 to 0.83). Employees were asked to respond in a way that best described their feelings using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree.

Results And Discussion

Reliability: . Professionals from the industry reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that its content is accurate. On the basis of the feedback that was gathered, the questionnaire was revised as appropriately as was required. In addition, Cronbach's alpha, the reliability coefficient that determines how accurate an instrument is, was applied to the questionnaire in order to test its correctness and reliability.

Table No (1)

Results of reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's	No. of items
Vision	0.86	4
Communication	0.88	4
Emotional intelligence	0.85	4
Work environment	0.78	4
Occupational stress	0.83	4
Opportunities for development	0.84	4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

i. Level of response for soft leadership

The following table provides descriptive statistics of the factors that are being studied. The mean value and standard deviation of the independent variables (vision, communication, and emotional intelligence) were found to be larger than 3, whilst the mean value and standard deviation of the remaining variables were found to be greater than 2.5.

Table No (2)

Arithmetic means and standard deviations for vision dimension

	Item	questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Vision	Q1	3.76	1.04
2		Q2	3.58	0.99
3		Q3	3.50	1.16
4		Q4	3.60	1.19
	Sum.		3.61	1.095

It was discovered that the arithmetic mean on the vision dimension reached 3.61, which is a high arithmetic mean. This shows that the Al Aithaid Food Industries Company has a high level of interest in the vision dimension, as shown by the fact that the arithmetic mean achieved such a high value. This is shown in Table No. 2. The fact that the sample members have such a low standard deviation of 1.95 suggests that they are very in sync with one another..

Table No (3)

Arithmetic means and standard deviations for communication dimension

	Item	questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	<i>communication</i>	Q5	3.90	1.86
2		Q6	3.58	0.99
3		Q7	3.72	1.99
4		Q8	3.06	1.17
	Sum.		3.56	1.50

It is noted in Table No. 3 on communications that the arithmetic mean has reached 3.56, which is a high arithmetic mean, and this indicates the interest of the research sample in communications, but the standard deviation of 1.50 indicates that there is high harmony among the sample members.

Table No (4)

Arithmetic means and standard deviations for emotional intelligence dimension

	Item	questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	<i>emotional intelligence</i>	Q5	3.60	1.30
2		Q6	3.50	0.24
3		Q7	3.76	1.27
4		Q8	3.14	1.35
	Sum.		3.5	1.04

It is noted through Table No. 4 on the dimension of emotional intelligence, it was found that the arithmetic mean was 3.5, and it is a high arithmetic mean, and this indicates the high interest of the research sample in emotional intelligence, while the standard deviation of 1.04 indicates that there is high harmony among the sample members.

ii. Level of response for quality of work life

	Item	Questions	mean	Std. Deviation	
1	<i>Quality of work life</i>	<i>WE</i>	Q1	4.08	0.98
2			Q2	3.92	0.94
3			Q3	3.88	1.08
4		<i>OD</i>	Q4	3.64	1.24
5			Q5	3.08	0.87
6			Q6	3.60	1.12
7		<i>SS</i>	Q7	3.63	1.01
8			Q8	3.64	1.08
9			Q9	3.50	1.12
		SUM.	3.66	1.04	

It is noted from Table No. 5 on the quality of work life that the arithmetic mean has reached 3.66, which is a high arithmetic mean, and this indicates the high interest of the sample in the

quality of work life, while the standard deviation of 1.04 indicates that there is a high harmony among the sample.

Analysis of the correlation and Regression between the research variables

This part deals with analyzing and determining the type and strength of correlations between the research variables through the use of the correlation coefficient in order to choose the validity of the first hypothesis and the sub-hypotheses that emerge from it, which state that there is a statistically significant correlation between the research variables (soft leadership and quality of work life) on an organizational level. In order to achieve this axis, the statistical analysis of the correlations between the aforementioned research variables and their components was adopted at the organization level.

The correlation between soft leadership and quality of work life.

It appears in Table 6 that the relationship between the soft leadership variable in general and the quality of the workplace variable is a strong significant relationship at the significance level of 0.01, as the correlation coefficient reached 0.519, and this reinforces the acceptance of the first main hypothesis.

QWL	Correlation value	significance level
Soft leadership		
Vision	0.388**	0.01
Communication	0.413**	0.01
Emotional intelligence	0.519**	0.01
General Average	0.519	0.01

* Significant correlation at the level 0.05

* Significant correlation at the level 0.01

The sub-hypotheses will be as follows

1. There is a statistically significant correlation with a value of 0.388 and a value of 0.01 between vision and quality of work life.
2. There is a correlation with a value of 0.413 and a statistical significance of 0.01 between communication and the quality of work life.
3. There is a correlation with a value of 0.519 and a statistical significance of 0.01 between emotional intelligence and the quality of work life.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to identify the relationship between soft leadership and quality of work life it as follows

1. By testing the correlation relationship, it was found that the emotional intelligence dimension is the most influential dimension on the quality of work life in the researched company, followed by the communication dimension, and finally the vision dimension. This forces the company to pay attention to the emotional intelligence of the employees.
2. Al-Ittihad Company for Food Industries relies on males in the work force in carrying out its tasks and activities in light of its enjoyment of scientific qualifications and experience in a manner commensurate with scientific efforts.

3. It turned out that there is an interest on the part of the company's management in soft skills, so it allocated to improve it the skill of communication well commensurate with its current and future orientation, so it sought to clarify the problems it faces in the communication process and concerned itself with dialogue, discussion, and exchange of views on various issues in a way that ensures that it reaches comfortable and convincing solutions for all parties.

4. It has been demonstrated that the Al-Ittihad Food Industries Company may increase its degree of soft leadership abilities by embracing the idea of vision. This allows the company to create the fundamental environment for decision-making, while also adopting objective factors and avoiding personal concerns..

5. Al-Ittihad Food Industries Company has shown its direction towards improving soft leadership skills by directing emotional intelligence skills by relying on developing the capabilities of its subordinates and evaluating them objectively, fairly, accurately, and continuously.

Suggestions

1- The senior management of the company should enhance its interest in soft leadership by adopting the skills and mechanisms of soft leadership, by creating a personal example that serves as an example for others, and by giving some powers.

2- The need to work on improving communication skills in a way that contributes to raising the level of soft leadership skills by adopting dialogue and discussion aimed at converging views on various issues and in a manner that ensures reaching solutions that satisfy all parties.

3- The company's senior management should attract qualified academic staff without regard to gender as well as facilitate the current promotion procedures.

4- The senior management at Al-Ittihad Company should increase attention to training skills in a way that improves the level of soft leadership skills.

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