

# THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING CAPABILITIES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF JORDAN

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to identify the impact of strategic leadership practices on organizational learning abilities in the public universities in the southern region of Jordan. The study used the quantitative analytical descriptive approach. The study population consisted of academic leaders: (university presidents and their deputies, deans and heads of academic departments), who worked in the universities of southern region of Jordan, including (Mu'tah University, Tafila Technical University and Al-Hussein Bin Talal University). The study performed a comprehensive survey for all the elements of the study population. To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was developed based on some previous studies, and it was sent to all participants through a computer program. (159) questionnaires were returned and were valid for statistical analysis, with a response rate of (73%).*

*The results showed that there is a statistically significant impact of strategic leadership practices on organizational learning capabilities in public universities in the south of Jordan. The level of strategic leadership practicing dimensions and learning capabilities was also moderate, except for the dimension of balanced organizational controls as one of the practices of strategic leadership which had a high degree.*

*The study recommended the necessity of focusing on raising the level of strategic leadership practice in universities, especially the dimensions of the strategic direction, preserving human resources, and preserving an effective organizational culture as well as activating regulations and instructions and developing incentives to encourage academic leaders to adopt and develop the organizational learning capabilities represented by dialogue and the practice of participatory decision-making, in addition to encouraging workers to acquire the skills of listening to different perspectives and the skills of expressing their opinions.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership Practices, Organizational Learning Capabilities, Official Universities

## INTRODUCTION

In the light of the surrounding environmental challenges and the accelerating technological developments, the organization's working in the various sectors face challenges which require that organizations, especially universities, and higher education institutions to increase their organizational learning abilities, and make advantage of the experiences of similar institutions that help them to adapt in performing their tasks, and enable them to maximize their own potentials and learn collectively.

This context entails the existence of strategic leadership practices that promote organizational learning which, in turn, leads organizations towards achieving their targeted

objectives. The strategic leadership practices are considered as the most important element in developing the abilities of organizational learning (Uddin, Khan & Ali, 2017).

The increasing level of stressors and challenges faced by organizations currently, including the phenomenon of globalization and competitiveness urged organizations to look for serious mechanisms and practices to cope with the increased changes in the external environment. The strategic leadership practices with their dimensions were represented by determining the strategic direction, setting the balanced organizational controls and maintaining the human resources, developing the effective organizational culture and confirming the ethical practices. These practices are considered amongst the most important mechanisms that have a great role in developing organizations by focusing on improving the abilities of organizational learning in them (Dusya & Crossan, 2004).

Studies addressed the role of leadership in providing the suitable organizational atmosphere for organizational learning, and confirmed that the main challenge in constructing the learning organization is related to the way of creating an organizational culture that contribute to organizational learning. Strategic leadership has a prominent role in dealing with change and environmental uncertainty; it is an important strategic necessity for the progress and maintenance of organizations which provides opportunities for sustainable competitive advantage (Al-Baghdadi & Alabadi, 2010).

Franco and Almeida, 2011 confirmed the importance of developing several abilities in order to make learning as the basic pillar for the institutions of higher education. In this context, we should refer to the strategic leadership strategies as being an entrance for developing learning abilities, where they are characterized by strategic thinking and organizational innovation that is composed of the ability to learn, adapt with variables and make the right decisions at the critical time (Ussahawanitchakit, 2012).

Some studies emphasized the importance of the role of strategic leader in constructing sustainable learning environments, instilling organizational cultures that are characterized by continuous learning and promoting the abilities of organizational learning to ensure the effectiveness of higher education institutions (Aydin, Guclu & Pisapia, 2015). The need for academic leaderships in the Jordanian Universities is a basic necessity to make a qualitative move in higher education by adopting the application of strategic leadership practices to contribute to the development of organizational learning abilities at those universities, so that they can cope with the surrounding developments and reach a degree of excellence and competitiveness.

## **The Study Problem**

The topic of organizational learning abilities is one of the most important contemporary topics due to its main role in facing the surrounding environmental circumstances and that the availability of the organizational learning abilities facilitates the process of organizational learning and helps organizations to implement their strategic objectives as well as implementing the suitable administrative practices. This context requires the existence of strategic leaders to achieve a qualitative move in the abilities of organizations in order to attain their objectives in the light of the surrounding changes and developments. Universities are considered as the most demanding organizations for developing the organizational learning abilities for the faculty members and administrative staff. Also, universities are considered as organizations that affect and are influenced by the local and international environment, where universities all around the

world compete to achieve an advanced global classification. Universities and higher education institutions try to implement the standards that enable them to compete and win as the best universities at the world's level. We can notice that there are several commissions that perform the classification of universities at the world's level, including QS and Times, where those companies provide annual reports about the global classification of universities. The commissions and companies that classify universities aim to achieve a main objective, represented by promoting the level of universities and higher education institutions; therefore, many universities seek to improve their position between the other universities in the international classification (Zoabi & Salama, 2020).

Generally, the Jordanian Universities aim to reach advanced positions in these international classifications for universities. This requires the availability of strategic leaderships that develop the abilities of organizational learning as one of the most important elements of competitiveness to achieve advanced levels in the international classifications. As faculty members in the official universities, the researchers have a feeling that there is an ambiguity and little information about the level of practicing strategic leadership and its impact on practicing organizational learning in the Jordanian Universities in general and in the universities of the South of Jordan, in particular. By reviewing the previous studies, the results revealed the extent of need to strategic leadership in universities and its importance in developing the abilities of organizational learning (Al-Zahrani, 2018; Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019, Alsabbagh & AKhalil, 2016; Uddin et al., 2009).

The study aims to answer the following questions: what is the impact of the practices of strategic leadership in the abilities of organizational learning and what is the availability level of organizational learning abilities and the level of strategic leadership practices in the public universities in the South of Jordan?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The Concept of Strategic Leadership**

The concept of strategic leadership was derived from strategic management. Strategic leadership refers to the ability to affect others to make the daily decisions and improve the organization's stability in the long run as well as maintaining the financial stability of the organization (Wanasika, 2009). In this definition, we can see three factors, including that the strategic leader affects others, has a vision towards the future and achieves adjustment between the short term and long term objectives. The strategic leaders set the strategic objectives, vision, strategic procedures and implement them in order to achieve competitiveness.

Strategic leadership was defined in different ways, and usually two dimensions are emphasized: the senior management managers' ability to push the organization towards success and their ability to make strategic decisions.

Strategic leadership is a process that is used by the leader to achieve the desired objectives and the clear understanding of vision by affecting the organizational culture and, assigning resources and directing them through policies and regulations, and making a consensus in the light of a fluctuating surrounding (Kitonga, 2016). (Serfontine, 2010) defined it as the ability of specialists and experts who have wisdom and vision to set and implement plans and decisions in the light of an environment that is characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty.

The activity of strategic leadership is limited to five issues: determining direction, setting the strategy in application, empowering employees, determining the effective points, and developing the strategic ability. The strategic leadership refers to establishing a total meaning for objectives and the direction that governs the citation of strategy (Grras, 2001). Strategic leadership has an important role in making the strategic decisions, developing organizational structures and facing the environmental complexities surrounding the organization. Without effective strategic leadership organizations will find it difficult to face the economic challenges that hinder their development and the improvement of their performance (Davids & Davids, 2010). The highly effective organizations in the new business environments are always characterized by a certain policy that makes it distinctive from others- the existence of an effective strategic leadership. Those strategic leaders have become a unique source in the current era, especially when preparing them doesn't take place easily and requires more time, effort and investment in resources. If we trace the success of business in the United States of America, we can notice that the achieved success is attributed to the existence of strategic leaders, such as Bill Gates, Lee Lcocca & Henry Ford (Abed, 2016).

### **The Practices of the Strategic Leader**

The practices of strategic leadership include several roles, tasks and practices, in addition to developing a vision and communicating it to the members of the organization. These practices lead to citing and implementing the strategies in order to achieve vision and develop competencies in the organization to maintain the competitive advantage. Due to the importance of the practices of strategic leadership of organizations, the researchers introduced a number of models to explain these practices that are interrelated with each other. Managing the human resources effectively includes developing the human capital, the contribution in establishing the strategic direction, adopting an effective culture and making use of the core capabilities as well as using the balanced surveillance systems (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019).

There are several models for the practices of strategic leadership, Including the model of (Thompson et al., 2008) related to strategic vision, and the practical oversight of problems, policies, communication network, management, culture and change management, as well as the model of (Hitt et al., 2007), which determined six dimensions for the practices of strategic leadership: managing the basic resources of the company effectively and determining the strategic conceptualization of the organization, discovering the basic capabilities and maintaining them, developing the human capital, keeping an effective organizational culture, emphasizing the ethical practices and establishing bases for a balanced system of organizational surveillance. The practice of strategic leadership consists of the following dimensions adopted by (Kitonga, 2016) and (Hitt et al., 2007):

1. **Determining the Strategic Direction:** This practice is the basic task of strategic leadership in the organization, in that the effectiveness of the future attitude is a basic component upon which the other various activities in the organization are based, starting from determining the different objectives of the organization, selecting the strategy, setting the practical plans and allocating resources (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019). The concept of strategic direction is considered as one of the relatively new administrative concepts, where a number of definitions were cited for this concept. (Heinz & Stephen, 2007) defined it as acquiring experience and knowledge through exchanging information between the members of the organization concerning the successful experiences achieved by organization in the past and should be achieved in the future, making advantage of the experiences of successful and competing facilities as well as identifying the best administrative practices in them and conveying them to all the workers in

the organization to utilize them. (Hitt et al., 2001) defined it as developing a long-term strategic vision that reflects the personal perspectives of the inspiring leader. If the strategic leader was able to explain his personal perspective and involve the subordinates in it, he will gain their advocate to their strategic vision; this context makes the strategic intention as one of the leader's traits and a common term among all the working individuals.

Determining the strategic direction implies developing a long-term vision for the organization, explaining the mission and vision as well as developing its strategic objectives. The mission of determining the direction of the organization is the direct responsibility of the strategic leader (Kitonga, 2016). The strategic direction is measured through a number of elements, including the strategic intention and the efforts done to perform the organization's vision, message and objectives, where these dimensions determine the strategic direction.

2. **Establishing Balanced Organizational Controls:** The effective strategic leader establishes a strategic surveillance that facilitates flexibility and encourage the innovative behaviors to help the organization to achieve the competitive advantage. These practices are important in both public and private organizations. Strategic surveillance is considered as an important element in implementing the organization's strategy and achieving the targeted objectives.(Chikwe, Anyanwu & Edeja, 2016) suggested that strategic surveillance is a tool for implementing the strategy, evaluating the internal and external environment and evaluating feedback in the process of strategic management. They also suggested that the strategic control ensures the determination of the official goal, measurement, and the systems of feedback used in evaluating the processes of implementing the strategic plan of the organizations.

(Ndegwa, 2013) suggested that the strategic controls determine a criterion for the official goal and that the feedback systems are used by the strategic leaders to evaluate whether the organization achieve the desired behavior and implement its strategy. (Jooste & Fourie, 2009) suggested that strategic surveillance includes tracing the process of implementing the strategic plan.

3. **Developing the Human Capital:** This is another important variable for practicing strategic leadership. Any company or organization, either for-profit or non-profit, cannot perform its activities successfully without employing gifted and skillful employees (Mutia, 2019). Human capital is considered as the main element for improving the company's productivity and achieve its competitive advantage. (Kelly, 2006) suggested that the human capital includes the knowledge and abilities among employees which, in turn, leads to achieving the competitive advantage. He viewed it as the most important resource in the organization which determines its nature, affects its ability to perform and compete and advocates its cognitive base.
4. **Maintaining an Effective Organizational Culture:** Organizational culture was described as a set of values and behavior rules that direct the beliefs and concepts in which the members of the organization and are transmitted to the new members. Strategic leaders have a main role in developing and promoting the culture of the organization in the senior management, where they are the first individuals who establish the first pillars to construct an organizational culture. The slogans set by those leaders are supposed to adopt the values of success, transparency, initiative and participation in making decisions. (Abed, 2016) suggested that the most successful companies in the United States of America are those characterized by the dominance and cohesion of culture among them, where the element of culture proved to be the main quality element that leads to success (Waterman & Peters, 1980). (Barney, 2014) suggested that the values of organizational culture create vision, objectives, productivity and responsibility among organizations as well as adjustment between the organization's culture and the employees' objectives. Also, the organizational culture adopted by individuals in the organizations has a direct and strong effect on their behavior, and performance of their work and their relationship with their work staff and customers; these beliefs and values reflect the degree of cohesion and integration between the members of the organization (Al-Awawdeh & Al-Zeyoudy, 2015).
5. **Emphasizing Ethical Leadership Practices:** It is another important element for practicing strategic leadership which refers to practicing ethical leadership in organizations. Strategic leaders do more efforts in instilling good manners among their subordinates (Kitonga, 2016). Manners are a set of rules, principles and values that control the group or the individual's behavior. Work ethics represents an integration of main values in treatment between managers and employees, such as honesty, trust, respect and justice, as well as the administrative practices in order to reach the ethical decision inside

the organization (Abed, 2016; Hellriegel et al., 2008). (Mihelic, Lipicnik & Tekavcic, 2010) suggested that the ability of strategic leaders to behave in a humble way, be interested in the public interest of the organization, the effort towards achieving success and affording responsibility as well as showing respect for each individual are considered amongst the strategic practices of leaders in organizations. (Hale, 2013) conformed that the ethical practices in non-profit organizations were more related to the organization's reputation, its trust and organizational performance. Ethical leadership practices are gaining more interest due to the major scandals witnessed by some organizations in the form of fraud, corruption and bad management of the company's resources (Hsin-Kuang, Chun-Hsiung & Dorjgotov, 2012). In this context, we should point out that the ethical blogs in organizations should not only be limited to abstract texts and slogans, but they should also be adopted as an application in order to reach customers' confidence through the right supervision, accountability and transparency.

## **Organizational Learning**

First, we should define the concept of organizational learning and then move to the abilities of organizational learning. Organizational learning can be defined as a combination between individual learning and the organizational ability to the continuous enforcement of the group abilities of thought (Azharuddin, 2013). (Boliver et al., 2013) suggested that organizational learning takes place due to the continuous interaction between the organization's staff which, in turn, results in the acquisition of cognitive experiences and skills. Organizational learning is viewed as a main entrance for organizational renewal and change, in addition to being a continuous process for acquiring the experiences relevant to the organization's objectives (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019). (Sun & Scott, 2003) suggested that organizational learning refers to the learning process employed in the organization and addressing the question relating to the way through which the individuals act inside the organization. These definitions demonstrate that organizational learning refers to certain components and mechanisms, where it is a continuous process and requires interaction in order to improve the abilities of all the individuals in the organization. The process of learning entails new and useful thinking methods of learning through which individuals learn how to work with each other. Based on organizational learning, the organization reaches what is known as "learning organization". The organization is described as a learning one if it included a number of characteristics represented by solving problems regularly, learning through experimenting as well as conveying knowledge (Al-Khashali & Al-Tamimi, 2008). (Gavin & Edmonson, 2008) suggested that the domain of organizational learning includes three basic pillars, these are, a supportive educational environment, tangible learning practices by conveying new experiences and skills to the organization's employees, in addition to a leadership that can integrate innovation and practices in the daily work, facilitate dialogue and convey a common vision.

## **Organizational Learning Capabilities**

Constructing organizational learning capabilities includes developing the organizational group and individual capabilities and skills constantly, where these capabilities improve the processes of creating, acquiring and sharing knowledge in the organization. The capabilities of organizational learning are defined as the organization's ability to manage, establish, acquire, convey and integrate knowledge to modify behavior and reflect the new cognitive situation in order to improve the organizational performance. (Jerez-Gomez; Cespedes-Lorente & Valle-Cabrera, 2003). (Bahrami et al., 2016) defined them as creating, conveying and applying

knowledge inside the organization. Currently, most organizations focus on the competitive situation which is mainly based on learning abilities which results in providing services more accurately and flexibly (Panayides, 2007). Learning capabilities are characterized by their main role in facilitating the process of learning among the organization's staff, and developing models and methods for practicing learning capabilities in order to reach the "learning organization". The effect of learning is not limited to the success of organizations, but it also creates constant dynamic innovative ideas (Imamoglu et al., 2015).

The dimensions of organizational learning capabilities:

By reviewing the literature relevant to organizational learning capabilities, we noticed that there are several perspectives in determining the dimensions of organizational learning capabilities. (Chiva, Alegria & Lapiedra, 2007) suggested that there are five dimensions for the capabilities of organizational learning, these are: experimentation, taking risks, interaction with the external environment, dialogue and participative decision-making. (Chang et al., 2012) confirmed that there are four dimensions for the dimensions of organizational learning capabilities, these are: experimentation, dialogue, interaction with the external environment and joint decision-making; these are the most determined ones in literature. Despite their importance that was prominent in the latest years, there is still paucity in the researches that addressed the factors relevant to organizational learning capabilities.

There are some studies that focused on the dimensions of organizational learning capabilities which include (team direction, system direction, educational direction and memory direction) (Jerez-Gomez; Cespedes-Lorente & Valle-Cabrera, 2003).

March (1991) referred to two dimensions of organizational learning capabilities; the first one is adaptive learning capabilities (exploration) that include the abilities that qualify the organization's members to look for new knowledge. The second dimension is the generative learning capabilities (exploitation) that includes the abilities that qualify the organization's members to improve and modify the organizational procedures.

The current study focused on four dimensions to measure the capabilities of organizational learning:

1. **Experimentation:** it is the point at which the organization's management deal with interest and empathy with the new ideas and suggestions that develop work procedures (Khan et al., 2020). The experiment results in developing the organization's learning capabilities and promoting the base of organizational knowledge (Lins, Servaes & Tamayo, 2017). Experimentation increases the extent of the organization's ability to adopt the continuous changes to ensure the organizational development (Huang & Li, 2017).
2. **The Ability to interact with the External Environment:** The organization's external environment includes factors that are beyond the direct control of the organization. It consists of several powers, such as competitors, as well as legal, political, financial, social and economic systems. The environmental characteristics play an important role in organizational learning. Many researchers investigated the impact of external environment on organizational learning, where they considered that the relationships with the external environment as very important. It is the major motive behind the organizational learning. These studies emphasized openness and interaction with the environment, where the organizations that seek learning attempt to cope with the development in the external environment (Bapuji & Crossan, 2004).
3. **Dialogue Capability:** Dialogue is considered as one of the capabilities of organizational learning, where it refers to the employees' acquisition of listening skills to the different perspectives and the skills of expressing opinions through the open communication between the working staff and their leaders (Leufvén et al., 2015). (Tambosi, Gomes & Amal, 2019; Brown & Duguid, 1991) suggested that dialogue is a collective research supported by the processes and hypotheses that take place daily in the

organization. This dialogue is considered as a basic one in constructing a collective understanding, since it allows for capturing the hidden meanings of words and ideas during communication. They considered organizational learning is a social construction that is common among the individuals participating in social relationships.

4. **Participative Decision Making:** Participative decision making depends on the size and intensity of the authority enjoyed by the organization's employees concerning the process of making decisions via participation. Participative decision making is related to the impact level of employees in the processes of organizational decision-making. (Cozzarin, 2017) suggested that participation provides the employees with more empowerment and control in the organization's processes. This implies training employees to enable them to afford responsibility. Participative decision-making enables individuals to reach information and improves the quality of the decision results.

The studies that addressed the topic of strategic leadership and organizational learning capabilities:

(Uddin, Khan & Ali, 2017) suggested that transformational leadership with its dimensions represented by ideal impact and individual consideration played an important role in promoting organizational learning in three private universities in Bangladesh. (Alsabbagh & Khalil, 2017) suggested that transactional leadership with its dimensions has a considerable effect on the organizational learning in the public and private universities in Damascus, Syria. They also suggested that there is an important impact for the dimension of individual consideration as one of the dimensions of transformational leadership on organizational learning in these universities. (Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015) conducted a study in three Syrian universities suggested that there is an obvious impact for rewards, as one of the dimensions of transactional leadership as well as an impact for inspiring motivation as one of the dimensions of transformational leadership on organizational learning.

(Gomes & Wojahn, 2017) suggested that the capability of organizational learning affects performance in the small and medium sized organizations. (Vera & Crossan, 2004) suggested that there is an impact for strategic leaders on each element in organizational learning; where the study introduced a situational model for the way through which strategic leadership contribute to the process of organizational learning. The model included two patterns of leadership: the pattern of transformational leadership which has a positive impact on the generative organizational learning, and the pattern of procedural leadership which has a positive impact on adaptive learning. This finding agreed with (Al-Khashali & Al-Tamimi, 2008) which revealed that there is an important role for the patterns of procedural leadership and transformational leadership in organizational learning with its two types; adaptive and generative. (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019) suggested that there is a strong effect for the practices of strategic leadership on developing the capabilities of organizational learning in Dijla College in Iraq.

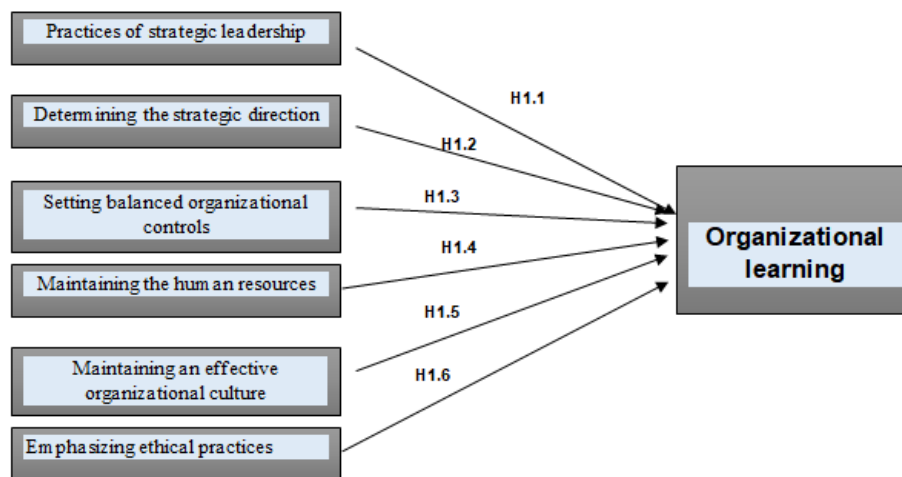
(Abed, 2016) suggested that there is an important impact for practicing strategic leadership with its various dimensions: organizational culture, human capital, strategic direction, and organizational surveillance on achieving entrepreneurship in the commercial banks in Al-Najaf in Iraq.

(Kitonga et al., 2016) suggested that there is a positive relationship between the dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational performance in the non-profit organizations in Kenya. (Amitay et al., 2005) revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between the method of transformational leadership and all the elements comprising organizational learning, represented by disseminating knowledge, training employees, collecting data and retaining strategic information. (Migdadi, 2019) suggested that there is an important impact for the



capabilities of organizational learning on innovation as well as an indirect impact on the organizational performance with innovation as a mediating variable.

(Tambosi, Gomes & Amal, 2020) suggested that the ability to learn with its dimensions represented by experimentation, taking risk, interaction with the external environment and participative decision making had a positive effect on innovation performance in the investigated companies in Brazil. (Iqti & Bin Obaid, 2017) suggested that the practices of strategic leadership related to human capital, strategic conceptualization, balanced surveillance and organizational culture had a positive impact on the behavior of participative knowledge in a number of Algerian hotels. In this vein, (Al-Zahrani, 2018) suggested that there is an important role for strategic leadership in developing the capabilities of organizational learning (adaptive and generative) among the faculty members and academic leaderships in the university of Um Al-Qura in Saudi Arabia.



**FIGURE 1**  
**THE STUDY MODEL**

## The Study Hypotheses

Based on the study model and objectives, the following hypotheses were cited:

- H1* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the practices of strategic leadership on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.
- H2* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for strategic direction on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.
- H3* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for balanced organizational controls on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.
- H4* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for balanced organizational controls on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.
- H5* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for maintaining an effective organizational culture on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

*H6 there is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the ethical practices on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.*

## METHODOLOGY

The study used the quantitative analytical descriptive approach which is based on describing the targeted phenomenon and analyzes it statistically. The study addressed the practices of strategic leadership and its impact on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the South of Jordan. The researchers used the questionnaire as the study instrument for data collection, and the data were analyzed statistically using the suitable statistical methods. The theoretical basis was cited by reviewing the relevant literature and previous studies.

### Population

The study population consisted of all the academic leaders in three official Jordanian Universities in the southern region of Jordan (Mu'tah university, Tafila technical university, Al-Hussein Ibn Talal University), where all the study population was selected and consisted of (Universities' presidents, their deputies and the heads of the academic departments) with a total of (217) participants. The questionnaire was distributed via the websites of the universities participating in this study and the e-mail of participants was obtained. Then, they were sent to all the targeted study population. The completed questionnaires were returned on the website (Google form), where (159) returned questionnaires were valid for statistical analysis with a percentage of (73.2%). As for the characteristics of the study participants, the University presidents and their deputies represented about (5%), faculty deans and their deputies represented about (44%), and the heads of departments (51%). The percentage of these between (40-49) years old was (47%), while the percentage of females was only (5%) as compared to (95%) of males. The academic rank of associate professor was the highest with a percentage of (41%).

### The Study Instrument

The study instrument was developed to measure the practices of strategic leadership and the capabilities of organizational learning based on the previous studies (Chiva, Alegria & Kitonga et al., 2016), (Lapiedra, 2007) and (Chang et al., 2012). The study consisted of three parts. The first part included the personal and vocational data of the participants, the second part included the scale of the practices of strategic leadership, and the third part included the scale of organizational learning capabilities. Likert 5-point scale was used to rate the questions; (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree.

The following formula was applied concerning the analysis scale for the means of the study sample responses:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{The application extent} &= \frac{\text{The highest score} - \text{The lowest score}}{3} \\ &= (5-1) \div 3 = 1.33 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the values of means will be as follows:

(1-2.33)...low degree.

The (2.34-3.66)...medium degree.

The (3.67-5) ...high degree.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire:

The tests of the questionnaire's validity and reliability were performed.

-The test of test validity for the study instrument:

The questionnaire was introduced to a number of academic professors in the Jordanian Universities in order to verify the clarity of items and that they are valid to measure the study variables and dimensions. In the light of the arbitrators' notices, the appropriate modifications were made to some items to become more obvious and comprehensive.

### The Instrument's Reliability

Cronbach alpha was used to verify the internal consistency of the study instrument, where alpha value is acceptable if it is more than (60%) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Number of questions</b>	<b>Cronbach alpha</b>
Determining the strategic dimension	4	0.896
Setting balanced organizational controls	4	0.908
Maintaining human resources	4	0.891
Maintaining the effective organizational culture	4	0.9
Emphasizing the ethical practices	4	0.877
Experimentation	4	20.78
Interaction with external environment	3	0.917
Dialogue	4	0.944
Participative decision making	3	0.857
Total dimensions	34	0.979

Table (1) shows the reliability of the study instrument, where all the values were higher than the acceptable limit which is (60.0). The values of internal consistency ranged between (0.782–0.979), where the coefficient of the instrument as a whole was (0.979) which is higher than (0.60). This is an indicator that the items of the questionnaire as a whole has an internal consistency between them, indicating that we can depend on the questionnaire in testing the hypotheses.

Analyzing data for the study questions and hypotheses:

- Answering the descriptive questions of the study
- The level of the practices of strategic leadership in the official universities in the South of Jordan.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Determining the strategic dimension	3.48	0.87
Setting balanced organizational controls	3.7	0.91
Maintaining human resources	3.1	0.9
Maintaining the effective organizational culture	3.44	0.92

Emphasizing the ethical practices	3.6	0.86
Average mean for the dimensions of strategic leadership practices	3.41	--

Table (2) showed that the mean for the responses of the study respondents concerning the level of the practices of strategic leadership dimensions was (3.41), which is medium according to the scale of values adopted by the study. The results revealed that the dimensions of strategic direction, maintaining human resources as well as maintaining organizational culture and ethical practices were (3.48), (3.1), (3.44), and (3.6) respectively. This demonstrates that the three universities are serious about attempting to practice and apply the dimensions of strategic leadership, even when these practices did not reach a high level. The dimension of setting the balanced organizational controls was also high with a mean of (3.7). The high mean for the organizational controls and surveillance to the case that academic leaderships pay more attention to applying organizational controls and surveillance to the behaviors of the employees in Universities due to the nature of their academic work.

The level of availability of organizational learning capabilities in the official universities in the South of Jordan from the perspective of the academic leaderships in them.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Experimentation	3.37	0.9
Interaction with external environment	3.2	1.05
Dialogue	3.56	1.04
Participative decision making	3.3	0.94
Average mean for the dimensions of organizational learning capabilities	3.35	

Table (3) shows the means for the responses of the participants in the study, where the average mean for the variable of organizational learning capabilities was (3.35), which is a medium level for practicing the organizational learning capabilities in the targeted universities. Table (3) shows that the dimension of practicing dialogue between the employees and their administration was medium and higher than the other dimensions of organizational learning capabilities with about (3.56) according to the scale of 9 adopted values in this study. This could be attributed to the nature of academic work in universities which employs dialogue in the meetings of departments councils, faculties councils and deans councils. As for the dimensions of other organizational learning capabilities represented by experimentation, interaction with the external environment and participative decision-making, their means were medium with about (3.37), (3.2), and (3.3) respectively.

### Analyzing the Study Hypotheses

*H1* there is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the practices of strategic leadership on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

	<b>R</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Determination coefficient</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Calculated t-value</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>
strategic leadership practices	0.713	65	0.505	0.42	12.739	*0.000
162.28F =						

\*statistically significant at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

The results of table (4) revealed the validity of the model of testing the study hypothesis due to the high f value ( $f=162.28$ ) at (0.001). Simple linear regression analysis was used to measure the impact of the practices of strategic leadership in the capabilities of organizational learning. The results of statistical analysis in table (4) showed that there is a statistically significant impact for the practices of strategic leadership in organizational learning capabilities in the official universities in the South of Jordan, where g value was ( $f=162.28$ ) and ( $t=12.739$ ) at a statistical significance of (0.000) which is statistically significant at (0.05). The determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) revealed that the change in the practices of strategic leadership is interpreted by the capabilities of organizational learning. This value demonstrates that the practices of strategic leadership affect about (50%) of organizational learning capabilities, which means that when the practices of strategic leadership increase, the level of organizational learning capabilities will also gets higher in the universities under study. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis which states that there is a statistically significant impact for practicing strategic leadership in the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the South of Jordan.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
Constant	-0.256	0.173		-1.475	0.142
Determining the strategic dimension	0.019	0.051	0.021	0.36	0.719
Setting balanced organizational controls	0.155	0.076	0.155	2.027	044.*
Maintaining human resources	0.264	0.091	0.263	2.906	004.*
Maintaining the effective organizational culture	0.01	0.055	0.011	0.177	0.86
Emphasizing the ethical practices	0.532	0.074	0.505	7.239	0.000*

Sig.=0.000 F=112.425 R<sup>2</sup>=78.6%

\*Statistically significant at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).

Table (5) shows the results of multiple regression test for the dimensions of the practices of strategic leadership in organizational learning, which confirms the validity of the test model for the study hypotheses due to the high value of  $f$ , where ( $F=112.425$ ) at the significance level (0.001) and the degrees of freedom (152.5). Also, the value of determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) demonstrates that the dimensions of practicing the strategic leadership (the impact of strategic direction, setting balanced organizational controls, maintaining human resources, maintaining the effective organizational culture and the ethical practices) explain about (78.6%) of change in the dependent variable (capabilities of organizational learning). This confirms the impact of the dimensions of practicing strategic leadership in explaining the changes in the dependent variable (the capabilities of organizational learning). Accordingly, we can test the hypotheses.

*H2* there is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for strategic direction on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

The results multiple regression analysis in table (5) revealed that ( $t\text{-value}= 0.360$ ) at a significance level (0.719), which shows that there is no statistically significant impact for strategic direction on the capabilities of organizational learning at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ). Therefore, we reject the proof hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis, in that there is no statistically significant impact for strategic direction on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the south of Jordan.

*H3* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for balanced organizational controls on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

The results multiple regression analysis in table (5) revealed that ( $t\text{-value}= 0.027$ ) at a significance level (0.044), which shows that there is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ). Therefore, we accept the proof hypothesis, which implies that there is a statistically significant impact for balanced organizational controls on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

*H4* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for balanced organizational controls on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

The results multiple regression analysis in table (5) for the impact of maintaining human resources revealed that ( $t\text{-value}=2.906$ ) at a significance level (0.004), which shows that there is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ). Therefore, we accept the proof hypothesis, which implies that there is a statistically significant impact for maintaining human resources on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

*H5* There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for maintaining an effective organizational culture on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

The results multiple regression analysis in table (5) about the impact of maintaining an effective organizational culture revealed that ( $t\text{-value}=0.177$ ) at a significance level (0.860), which shows that there is no statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ). Therefore, we reject the

proof hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis, implying that there is no statistically significant impact for organizational culture on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the south of Jordan.

*H6 There is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the ethical practices on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.*

The results multiple regression analysis in table (5) for the impact of ethical practices revealed that (t-value=7.239) at a significance level (0.000), which shows that there is a statistically significant impact at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ). Therefore, we accept the proof hypothesis, which implies that there is a statistically significant impact for ethical practices on the capabilities of organizational learning in the official universities in the Southern region of Jordan.

## DISCUSSING THE STUDY RESULTS

- 1- The results showed that the level of the practices of strategic leadership dimensions from the perspective of the academic leaderships in the Jordanian Universities in the Southern region of Jordan was medium based on the scale used in the study. Even though the practices have a medium degree, they revealed that these universities pay more attention to practicing the dimensions of strategic leadership. This finding agrees with (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019) which showed that the practices of strategic leadership in the faculty of Dijla in Iraq was high. The results also agree with (Al-Zahrani, 2018) in Um Al-Qura university in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and agree with (Zagorsek, Dimovski & Skerlavaj, 2009) that was conducted in one of Slovenian Universities. The results also revealed that the practices of strategic leadership in the domain of strategic direction, maintaining the human resources, organizational culture and ethical practices have a medium level, whereas the dimension of balanced organizational controls was with a high level. This indicates that the academic leaderships are interested in practicing the organizational controls which is considered as a basic element in the academic work. The academic leaderships are important in implementing the organization's strategy in order to achieve the targeted results. This finding can be also considered as a positive indicator in the targeted universities, where many studies demonstrated the importance of practicing strategic leadership in the organizations (Vera & Crawford, 2005; Crossan, 2004; Kitonga, 2016).
- 2- The results showed that developing the capabilities of organizational learning was with a medium degree. The results revealed dimension of practicing dialogue between employees and their management was medium, but with a higher mean as compared to the other dimensions of organizational learning capabilities. This could be attributed to the nature of academic work at universities, which adopt participation and dialogue in the council of deans and the councils of departments and faculties. As for the dimensions of other organizational learning capabilities (experimentation, interaction with the external environment, and participative decision-making), the mean was medium. Indeed, this is logical, since the results confirmed that the academic leaderships in the universities pay attention to adaptation with reality and developing the current situation by adopting and developing the capabilities of learning in the targeted universities. This finding agreed with (Tambosi, Gomes & Amal, 2020), (Crossan & Vera, 2004) and (Al-Zahrani, 2018), where the level of capabilities in the university of Um Al-Qura was medium. However, the results contradicted with (Al-Tamimi & Al-Khashali, 2008) which revealed that the capabilities of organizational learning in the Jordanian industrial sector were high.
- 3- The results showed that there is a statistically significant impact for the practices of strategic leadership with its dimensions concerning the capabilities of organizational learning in the Jordanian Universities in the South of Jordan (Mu'tah university, Tafila technical university, Al-Hussein Ibn Talal University). This finding agrees with (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019), which revealed that there is an important impact for practicing strategic leadership in the capabilities of organizational learning in the faculty of Dijla in Iraq. The results also agreed with (Al-Zahrani, 2018), (Al-Khashali & Al-Tamimi, 2008), which revealed that there is an important impact for practicing strategic leadership in the capabilities of

organizational learning. That could be attributed to the existence of approximate political and organizational cultures in higher education in the Arabic communities. This finding also agreed with (Zagoršek, Dimovski & Škerlavaj, 2009, Khan, et al., 2020 Uddinm Khan & Ali, 2017; AL Khalil, 2017, Alsabbagh, 2016 & Amitay, et al., 2005). The results showed that the practices of strategic leadership contribute to affecting the capabilities of organizational learning with about (50%), and confirm the role of the practices of strategic leadership in developing organizational learning capabilities among the employees in these universities.

- 4- The results showed that there is a statistically significant impact for three dimensions in the practices of strategic leadership (balanced organizational controls, maintaining human resources, emphasizing ethical practices) on the capabilities of organizational learning, where these dimensions have a considerable role in promoting the capabilities of organizational learning. The results revealed that the dimension of strategic direction has no statistically significant impact on the capabilities of organizational learning in the targeted Jordanian Universities. This finding contradicted with (Shantir & Al-Waili, 2019), which revealed that there is an impact for the dimension of strategic direction on the capabilities of organizational learning in the faculty of Dijla in Iraq.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- Urging the official universities in the South of Jordan to continue adopting the practice of the dimensions of balanced organizational controls and ethical practices, which were practiced with a high degree by the academic leaderships?
- 2- Emphasizing the necessity of promoting the level of the Universities' strategic leaderships practice to the dimensions of strategic direction, maintaining human resources, and maintaining effective organizational culture through partnership with elite universities to make advantage of their experience in practicing strategic leadership with its different dimensions.
- 3- Developing training programs for academic leaderships to promote their skills in the domain of practicing the dimensions of strategic leadership.
- 4- Activating systems and regulations, assigning incentives to encourage the academic leaderships to adopt and develop organizational learning capabilities represented by dialogue and participative decision-making as well as encouraging the employees to acquire the skills of listening to different perspectives and acquire the skills of expressing opinions.
- 5- Adopting and encouraging the values of success, transparency, initiative and participative decision-making.
- 6- Promoting relationships with the external environment which is the main motive behind organizational learning and emphasizing openness and interaction with it as well as coping with the development in the external environment.
- 7- Conducting further studies in public and private universities and including other dimensions, especially in the domain of developing learning capabilities in public and private universities.

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