

MidOcean University
College of Management
Project Management Department



The Impact of Leadership Skills on the Efficiency of Industrial Project Management in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq.

Prepared by

Hasan Mohammed Al-Jabari

University Number / 252001268

Supervised by

Dr.Fisal Abdul Hamed

Dr.Fayaz Jarad

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Introduction:

Leadership is one of the most important organizational elements that contemporary organizations need to survive and continue in light of the current developments and dynamic changes accelerated. These conditions have increased the need for leadership styles with personal skills in addition to the capacity to employ its potential for action in order to build positive relationships among the employees to face contemporary challenges and converting from a hierarchical leadership model to a soft leadership model that focuses on collaborative work and positive interaction with subordinates.

The soft skills are vital skills for effective performance in the 21st century. Soft skills have become a new area of leadership now and in the future and it is a priority for high performance since it considers being an important and effective element in the success of any organization. It also has a significant impact on the behavior of followers towards discipline, commitment and belonging to the organization in which they work in addition to achieve its desired goals. (Sadq,2019)

Leadership skills play a crucial role in determining the success of project management, especially in industrial environments where projects are often complex, time-sensitive, and resource-intensive. Effective leadership contributes not only to improved coordination and communication but also to achieving project goals within the constraints of time, cost, and quality.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the industrial sector has been growing rapidly over the past decade. However, many industrial projects still face challenges related to delays, cost overruns, and inefficiencies. This situation raises the question of how leadership competencies influence the efficiency of industrial project management in this unique regional and economic context.

Research Problem

1. Industrial development in the Kurdistan Region is increasing in importance, yet many projects are not progressing as expected.
2. A number of industrial projects suffer from unhealthy or toxic work environments, which negatively affect project outcomes.
3. Project leaders and heads of management often lack strong leadership competencies, which contributes to poor project performance.
4. Several projects fail to meet their intended performance standards, partly due to ineffective leadership practices.
5. There is insufficient understanding of how leadership competencies affect project efficiency and performance in industrial projects in the Kurdistan Region.
6. This knowledge gap creates challenges in improving management practices and project success within the industrial sector.

Research Importance:

This research is important for several academic, practical, and regional reasons.

First, it fills a knowledge gap in the Kurdistan Region, where limited empirical studies have explored how leadership competencies influence the efficiency of industrial project management.

By focusing on the relationship between leadership skills and project outcomes, this study provides valuable evidence that can strengthen the theoretical understanding of leadership's role in project success.

From a practical perspective, the findings will benefit project managers, industrial firms, and policymakers by identifying the specific leadership skills that drive higher project efficiency.

These insights can inform the design of targeted leadership development programs, improve recruitment criteria for project managers, and enhance strategic decision-making processes across the industrial sector.

Moreover, the Kurdistan Region's growing industrial economy faces persistent challenges—such as delays, budget overruns, and resource inefficiencies that often result from weak leadership and poor communication.

Therefore, the results of this study can contribute to improving project performance, resource utilization, and overall competitiveness of industrial projects in the region.

Finally, the study's outcomes can serve as a foundation for further academic research in leadership and project management within emerging markets, helping to bridge global theories with local practices.

3. Research Objectives

1-To identify the key leadership skills that are necessary and should be possessed by industrial head management

2-To analyze the relationship between leadership skills and project management efficiency within industrial projects.

3-To develop recommendations or propose a conceptual model aimed at enhancing leadership skill practices to improve project performance in the region.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following key questions:

- 1.What is the current level of efficiency in industrial project management in this region?
- 2.How do leadership skills influence project management efficiency?
- 3.Which leadership skills have the greatest impact on improving project performance?
- 4.How do leadership skills influence the overall efficiency and performance of industrial project management?
- 5.Which specific leadership Skills (e.g., communication, decision-making, motivation, or strategic vision) have the greatest impact on improving project outcomes?
- 6.What strategies or frameworks can be developed to enhance leadership effectiveness and project management performance in the Kurdistan Region?

Study Hypotheses:

Based on the research problem and objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between leadership skills and the efficiency of industrial project management in the Kurdistan Region.

H2: Project managers with higher levels of communication and interpersonal skills achieve greater project efficiency in terms of time, cost, and quality performance.

H3: Decision-making and problem-solving competencies of project leaders have a significant impact on project coordination and goal achievement.

H4: Motivation and team-building skills of project managers positively influence employee productivity and overall project performance.

H5: Strategic leadership competencies, such as vision and planning, significantly enhance the sustainability and long-term success of industrial projects in the Kurdistan Region.

Previous Studies:

Leadership has long been recognized as a critical determinant of project success. Numerous studies worldwide have examined how leadership styles, competencies, and behaviors affect project performance and efficiency.

Globally, Müller and Turner (2010) emphasized that project managers' leadership competencies—particularly communication, decision-making, and emotional intelligence—are key predictors of successful project outcomes.

In the industrial context, Toor and Ofori (2008) highlighted that effective leadership improves collaboration and reduces project delays and cost overruns, especially in complex construction and engineering projects.

Ahmed et al. (2017) also found that leadership skills directly influence project performance metrics such as timeliness, budget control, and quality assurance.

In the context of the Kurdistan Region, empirical research on leadership and project performance is relatively scarce. However, some studies provide relevant insights: for example:

Neamat (2021) identifies weak managerial leadership as a key delay factor in building projects.

Neamat (2017) also highlights leadership skills and poor project management as contributors to cost and schedule inefficiencies.

On the enterprise side, Ali (2020) shows that leadership positively impacts SME performance in Kurdistan.

while a study by Jwmaa et al. (2022) finds that charismatic leadership correlates with team efficiency in Erbil construction companies.

Despite these insights, there is still a lack of empirical research focusing specifically on how leadership skills influence project management efficiency in the Kurdistan Region's industrial sector. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the relationship between leadership competencies and project performance using quantitative methods.

Theoretical Framework of the study

This study is grounded in several leadership and project management theories that explain how leadership competencies influence project efficiency and performance outcomes.

1. Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994)

This meta-analysis of 31 independent studies ($N = 6,475$) found a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and project success. The study highlights that TL enhances important project outcomes such as team communication, coordination, and quality, which align closely with your focus on improving efficiency in terms of time, cost, and quality. (Zhao, et al.,2021)

2. Situational Leadership Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988)

According to the situational leadership model, effective leaders adapt their leadership style based on the maturity, competence, and motivation levels of their team members. For industrial project managers in the Kurdistan Region, this adaptability is essential because projects often involve multidisciplinary teams working under changing conditions. Flexibility in leadership style can therefore lead to better decision-making and improved project efficiency.

3. Project Management Efficiency Model

The concept of project management efficiency is derived from the traditional “Iron Triangle” (Atkinson, 1999), which measures project success in terms of time, cost, and quality. In this study, project efficiency is conceptualized as the ability to deliver industrial projects within schedule, within budget, and at the desired quality standards while maintaining effective communication and coordination among project stakeholders.

Integration of Theories

This study integrates these theories into a unified conceptual understanding: leadership skills (derived from transformational and situational theories) are expected to positively affect project efficiency (measured through the project management efficiency model). The conceptual framework therefore links leadership competencies such as communication, decision-making, motivation, and strategic vision to project performance indicators such as timeliness, cost control, quality, and coordination.

Methodology and research methods:

1. Research Design

This study will employ a quantitative, descriptive analytical research design to examine the relationship between leadership skills and the efficiency of industrial project management. The quantitative approach allows for the collection of measurable data that can be statistically analyzed to identify patterns, correlations, and the strength of relationships between leadership competencies and project outcomes.

2. Population and Sample

The study population will consist of industrial project managers, engineers, and supervisors working in the industrial sector of the Kurdistan Region. A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure representation across different types of industrial projects (e.g., construction, manufacturing, and energy). The expected sample size will range from 25 to 50 participants, depending on data accessibility and response rates.

3. Data Collection Tools

Primary data will be gathered through a structured questionnaire designed to measure two main dimensions:

1-Leadership Skills: including communication, decision-making, motivation, problem-solving, and strategic vision.

2-Project Management Efficiency: measured in terms of time, cost, quality, and coordination.

The questionnaire will use a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (5).

4. Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires will be distributed electronically (via Google Forms) and, where possible, in printed form to industrial organizations in Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah. Participation will be voluntary, and ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity will be strictly maintained.

5. Research Scope and Limitations

This study will focus on industrial projects within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, emphasizing managerial and leadership aspects. Limitations may include restricted access to project data, limited sample size, and self-reported responses, which may introduce bias. Nevertheless, triangulation through literature and data validation will be used to strengthen the reliability of results.

Study tools:

To achieve the objectives of this study, structured and validated research tools will be used to collect accurate and reliable data from industrial project managers and engineers in the Kurdistan Region.

1. Structured Questionnaire

The main tool for data collection will be a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this research. It will consist of three main parts:

- **Part I: Demographic Information**

This section will collect background information such as age, gender, educational level, years of experience, job title, and type of industry (e.g., construction, manufacturing, or energy). These variables help in understanding the characteristics of respondents and in conducting subgroup analyses.

- **Part II: Leadership Skills Scale**

This section will assess the leadership competencies of project managers. Items will be developed based on established leadership models—primarily Bass and Avolio's (1994) Transformational Leadership Model and Hersey and Blanchard's (1988) Situational Leadership Theory.

The dimensions to be measured include:

- o Communication and interpersonal skills
- o Decision-making and problem-solving abilities
- o Motivation and team-building
- o Strategic vision and planning
- o Adaptability and conflict resolution

Each item will be rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

- **Part III: Project Management Efficiency Scale**

This section will measure the efficiency of industrial project management based on Atkinson's (1999) "Iron Triangle" model, focusing on:

- o Time (meeting deadlines)
- o Cost (budget performance)
- o Quality (output standards and client satisfaction)
- o Coordination and communication efficiency

Items will also use a five-point Likert scale to ensure consistency in measurement.

2. Validity and Reliability

- Content Validity: Experts in project management and leadership studies will review the questionnaire to ensure it adequately measures the intended variables.
- Construct Validity: Factor analysis may be conducted to confirm the theoretical structure of leadership skills and project efficiency dimensions.
- Reliability: The reliability of each construct will be measured using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure consistency across items.

Scope of the study:

This study focuses on examining the relationship between leadership skills and project management efficiency within the industrial sector of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The research is delimited to analyzing how the leadership competencies of project managers—such as communication, decision-making, motivation, and strategic vision—affect the efficiency of project execution in terms of time, cost, quality, and coordination.

The study will primarily target industrial project managers, engineers, and supervisors working in both public and private industrial organizations across the main governorates of Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah. Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire administered to professionals actively involved in industrial project management.

The time frame of the research will focus on projects implemented between 2020 and 2025, representing a period of significant industrial development and economic transformation in the region. This timeframe allows for the assessment of recent leadership trends and their influence on project efficiency during a period of modernization and investment growth.

While the study seeks to provide generalizable insights into industrial project management across the region, its scope does not include small-scale non-industrial projects or sectors such as education, healthcare, or IT. Furthermore, the research will concentrate on the managerial and leadership dimensions of project performance, rather than technical or operational aspects.

By defining this scope, the study ensures a focused and contextually relevant investigation of leadership effectiveness and project efficiency within the industrial development landscape of the Kurdistan Region.

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