Innovative Leadership Practices in Higher Education Settings

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Abstract

The study aims to pinpoint the extent of innovative leadership practice among academicleaders at Taif University from the faculty members' perspectives, in terms of dealing with the staff, creating the work environment for innovation, innovative behavior, anddetecting whether there are statistically significant differences in the degree of innovative leadership practice based on staff gender, academic rank, years of experience). A descriptive survey method was used to achieve the objectives of the study plus a questionnaire that was applied to a research sample of 336 faculty membersat Taif University. The findings revealed that the level of innovative leadership practice among academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' point of view was (high), and the order of dimensions was respectively as follows: (dealing with thestaff, creating a work environment for innovation, innovative behavior). Based on the results recommendations and conclusion were formulated.

Keywords: Innovative leadership, academic leaders, faculty members, Taif University.

Introduction

Recently, educational systems in general and universities in particular have begun to pay attention to innovation as it is one of the sources of providing society with distinguished competencies that serve society and achieve sustainable development. Universities are complex educational organizations, and this complexity lies in the difficulty of defining their strategic goals and objectives, methods of distributing tasks, and the difficulty of making a joint decision among all parties of the educational process, in addition to problems of interaction between universities and their internal and external environment. Accordingly, innovation in higher education institutions is more difficult than innovation in business organizations, but universities must strive to achieve levels of distinction like business organizations, to achieve institutional excellence. Innovative leadership refers to influencing individuals to design a new product, a new process, a new organizational method, motivating individuals to do so, and applying it on the ground. It is a multiple concept that includes knowledge, technology, employees, and organizational structure. Because of the importance of innovative leadership, Abdullah's study (2019) also recommended the need to

establish innovation management centers in universities to lead innovations, and to be pioneeringand distinguished universities at the local, regional and national levels.

Several studies emphasized the necessity of linking leadership to innovative work in higher education, such as the studies of (Khan et al, 2020), whose results indicated the impact of leadership styles on the manner of innovative work among higher education employees. Because of the importance of developing the creative and innovative capabilities of faculty members in Saudi universities, Al-Nubi (2018) proposed an applied development project represented in a diploma program to develop the creative and innovative capabilities of faculty members aimed at developing their creative and innovative skills in the field of scientific, administrative and personal skills, educational research, and teaching capabilities necessary for excellence and competition. Through the above and based on the researcher's work as a faculty member, innovativeleadership is important for academic leaders; to introduce new methods of academic culture in traditional universities to maximize what they can offer, not only to private institutions, but to the community surrounding the university as a whole. The expansion of knowledge and technology in the

current era has brought about a change in the requirements of the academic leaders at Taif University, and therefore it is imperative for them to lead innovative attitudes with a clear vision, as manyleadership tasks are related to the innovation process, such as planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and controlling, and that many of the research regardinginnovation, focused on the innovators themselves, and there was little interest in innovation leadership, which is the task of academic leaders who manage the innovation process and motivate innovative individuals in universities. Universities are one of the most important institutions that need to determine the degree of innovative leadership to identify and strengthen the strengths of their employees and explore weaknesses to develop them to reach innovative methods that achieve excellence in decision-making in more innovative and unfamiliar ways of thinking.

Faculty members in particular need to pay attention to innovation in work that requires more support and motivation, and this is a factor to ensure the quality of services provided by universities in the era of continuous change and global competition as results in the previous studies reported moderate levels. This was confirmed by the results of Al-Shammari study (2006) that innovative-leadership in the Saudi Ministry of Education is practiced in the administrative and technical fields to a moderate degree, with no statistically significant differences regarding the degree of innovative leadership practice due to gender and experience. Al-Mutairi's study (2020) also indicated that the practice of innovation management skills by the heads of academic departments at Majmaah University was at a low degree.Likewise the results of Al-Shahrani study (2018) indicated that the degree of innovative leadership practice among academic leaders at the University of Bisha from the faculty members' point of view was rated as moderate, and the dimensions were, respectively as follows: towards perseverance and persistence, personal initiatives, new ideas, problems, and the absence of statistically significant differences about innovative leadership from the viewpoint of the study sample members, attributable to: gender, academic degree, experience, specialization, and place of work. The results of Al- Khelaiwi's study (2021) in the faculties of education of the following

universities: KingSaud University, University of Jeddah, and King Faisal University, indicated that the degree of availability of innovative leadership was moderate. Therefore, the current research dealt with the innovative leadership of the academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' point of view and how to activate it. The present study aimed at identifying the extent of innovative leadership among academic leaders at Taif University from thefaculty members' perspectives. Based on the foregoing, the research problem materializes in the following main question: What is the degree of innovative leadership among the academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' point of view and how to activate it. The following questions are derived from the main question:

1.   What is the extent of innovative leadership among the academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' point of view in terms of the following dimensions: dealing with the staff, innovative behavior, creating a work environment for innovation?

Literature Review

The concept of innovative leadership: The innovative leader possesses an innovative vision by motivating and influencing the work team to give more according to this vision without pre-determining the details of how individuals perform their work to achieve a competitive advantage for the organization (Najm, 2015, pp. 112 - 211). This wassupported by Khuraisat's study results (2020) regarding the role of innovation in developing the performance of university employees, indicating the presence of an impact of administrative and technological innovation in developing the performance of employees of Al-Balqa Applied University. It was also pointed out that there is a difference between invention, creativity, and innovation, as invention is a researcher's reaching of a new idea related to technology and affecting organizations in society, and creativity is just coming up with a new idea, while innovation is the reshaping of ideas and their practical application to obtain something new (Najm, 2015, pp. 137-140). As indicated in (Alssuern, 2020, pp. 115-120) the following characteristics are among the features of the innovative leader to deal with the work team:

- The ability to imagine multiple alternatives as solutions to problems, spending more time analyzing information compared to collecting it, being patient and self-confident, being able to deal with the demands of change, being able to adapt, experimenting, and renewing, and being bold; and can discuss the decisions issued by the higher authorities, and does not impose authority on the work team.

Study Methodology

The research adopted the descriptive survey method due to its relevance to the nature of the research. The current research population combines all male and female faculty members at Taif University, totaling (2688) faculty members, (1438) males and (1250) females, according to the statistics issued by the General Administration of Staff Affairs in the second semester of 2020/2021.

Research Sample

A stratified random sample of (336) faculty members. The researcher adopted Stephen Thompson's equation to determine the size of the research sample, then the sample size was divided between males and females according to the ratio of each of them to the total number of the research population.

Table 1. *Research population and sample*

Category	Population size	Percentage	Sample According to equation	Sample according to percentage
Male	1438	53.5%	336	180
Female	1250	46.5%		156
Total	2688	100%		336

Study Scale and its Validity

Based on the nature of the data, and on the approach used in the research, the researcher found that the most appropriate tool to achieve the objectives of this research is the questionnaire. The research instrument was built with reference to the literature and previous studies related to the subject of the research. In its final form the questionnaire consisted of two parts: The first of the instrument's deals with the initial data of the research sample's members such as: gender, academic rank, and years of experience at Taif University. The second part it consists of (38) items dealing with the degree of innovative leadership practice among academic leaders at Taif University, and it is distributed among three main points as follows (dealing with the staff (10) items, innovative behavior (18) items, creating work environment for innovation (10) items),

and the researcher asked the research sample members to answer each item by placing a tick

($\sqrt{}$) in front of one of the following options (Strongly agree, agree, to some extent, disagree, strongly disagree), and the categories of the five-step graded scale have been defined as in table (2). The researcher verified the validity of the questionnaire through the following: The face validity of the research tool (validity of arbitrators): After building the research tool, which aimed to measure the "degree of innovative leadership among academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' point of view", it was presented to a number of arbitrators in order to be guided by their opinions, and based on amendments and suggestions that have been made, the researcher made the necessary modifications agreed upon by the majority, such as modifying some items, until the questionnaire was approved in its final form. After confirming the face validity of the research tool, the researcher applied it on the ground to a survey sample of (40) faculty members, and on the sample data, she calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient to find out the

internal validity of the questionnaire, where the correlation coefficient was calculated between the degree of each item of the questionnaire with the total score of the topic to which the item belongs and the results confirmed its reliability.

Table 3. *Specifying the categories of the five-graded Scale*

Response	Strongly agree	Agree	to some extent	disagree	strongly disagree
Practice degree	very high	high	2.61-3.40	1.8102.60	1.0-1.8
	4.21-5.0	3.4-4.2	2.6-3.40	1.81-2.60	1.0-1.8

Data Analysis

To achieve the objectives of the research and analyze the collected data, many appropriate statistical methods were used involving the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and then the following statistical measures were calculated: Frequencies and percentages to identify job characteristics of the research variables.

Results and Discussion

The research questions were answered as follows: First question: What is the degree of innovative leadership among the academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' point of view in terms of the following dimensions: dealing with the staff, innovative behavior, creating a work environment for innovation? The results revealed that the topic of the innovative leadership degree with regard to dealing-with the staff of the academic leaders at Taif University fall into the fourth category of the five-graded scale categories. The previous result indicates that the responses of the research sample members on the topic items gained a high degree, the general arithmetic mean was (3.86) with a standard deviation of (0.47), and this indicates that the innovative leadership degree with regard to dealing with the staff of the academic leaders at Taif University notched a high degree of practice, and this may be due to thefact that academic leaders deal with the staff in a flexible manner to take advantage oftheir new ideas in the challenges they face in areas of work.

Study Discussion

The results reported that the level of innovative leadership fall at the fourth category ofthe five-graded scale categories. This may be attributed to the fact that the administration of Taif University when nominating academic leaders, focuses on the leader's positivity that leads to the university's progress and advancement. The results indicated that the topic of the degree of innovative leadership with regard to the innovative behavior of academic leaders at Taif University, the mentioned result indicates that the responses of the research sample members about the topic's items notched a high degree, and the general arithmetic mean was (3.72) with a standard deviation of (0.58). This indicates that the degree of innovative leadership with regard to the innovative behavior of academic leaders at Taif University scored a high degree of practice. This may be due to the desire of the academic leaders to continuously know the opinions and suggestions of the staff and to benefit from them to develop the work environment in an innovative way, as well as and this may be due to the fact that evaluation amongst the alternatives during meetings, scientific councils and selection of the best alternative, is clear to the faculty members.

Results also shows that the topic of the degree of innovative leadership with regard to creating the work environment for innovation among academic leaders at Taif University fall into the fourth category of the five-graded scale categories. The said result indicates that the responses of the research sample members about the topics items scored a high degree, where the

general arithmetic mean was (3.82) with a standard deviation of (0.64). This indicates that the degree of innovative leadership with regard to creating a work environment for innovation among academic leaders at Taif University was rated as a high degree of practice, and this may be a good indication of the interest of academic leaders at Taif University to create a work environment for innovation, but it requires more effort to notch a very high degree. Through the previous presentation of the degree of innovative leadership among academic leaders at Taif University from the faculty members' perspectives. However, the results were confirmed by the results of Nadolna's study (2020) which indicated that leaders in organizations need to be motivated and rewarded for innovative behavior. The current result is consistent with the results of the studies of: Assaf (2018), Jabrini (2016), and Nadolna (2020), which indicated that the degree of innovative leadership practice was high. On the other hand, the current result differs with the results of Al-Shammari study (2006), Al-Shahrani study (2018), and Al-Khelaiwi study (2021), where the degree of innovative leadership practice was medium, while Al-Mutairi's study (2020) and Katasanovas et al, study (2017) showed that the degree of innovative leadership practice was low.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has some limitations. The study limited to sample size; therefore, future studies should increase the sample size and extend to universities in Saudi Arabia. Another limitation related to data collection method where quantitative method was used, and the result could be extended by implementing mix and qualitative methods. In light of the results that have been obtained, the researcher recommends the following: scrutinizing the nomination of academic leaders and focusing on selecting innovative leaders who are able to lead the staff and raise the level of performance in an innovative manner that helps achieve the competitive advantage of Taif University, linking the performance assessment of academic leaders at the university to distinguished innovative practices. The university administration has to follow-up the innovative behavior of academic leaders and promote it and provide continuous feedback to avoid practices

that do not support the innovation process at the university, as this matter came as the least dimension of innovative leadership among academic leaders. Financial and moral encouragement for academic leaders to practice innovative leadership, which enhances the achievement of the academic and administrative goals of the university. Finally, ensuring the participation of faculty members in the innovation process, benefiting from their ideas and endeavor to motivate them and providing training programs for academic leaders at the university in cooperation with experts and specialists in the field of innovative leadership to create opportunities for the emergence of innovative ideas, their acceptance, coordination, discussion, and the adoption at the university.

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