Exploring the Factors Impacting the Leadership Styles within the Public Sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain

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Leadership is the action of leading a group or an organization. The purpose of this study is to explore factors that impact the Leadership style in the Public Sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Leadership is considered to be one of the most powerful and effective sources of empowerment to people and organizations alike. To be able to achieve this objective, 18 interviews and 2 focused group discussions were conducted with Managers, Directors and people of experience in this field, an abundance of information was collected and analyzed therefore, yield our findings. Our study has revealed that characteristics like creativity, motivation, innovation and improvement along with skills like influencing and inspiration in leaders have a great impact in shaping the leadership style in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Key words: *leadership styles, public sector, Kingdom of Bahrain.*

Research Background

The historical view of the conservative view is that an exemplary leader is capable of commanding, controlling, and directing people within the organization. Understanding the Leader's behavior and performance is an appropriate indicator for assessing styles of leadership (Metcalf & Benn, 2013). There is a strong connection between cultural backgrounds and perceptions of leadership. The general understanding of differences in the workplace and the effect of culture on leader perceptions was improved through this study.

(Holt et al., 2009) was the only study that involves the use of qualitative inquiry in its approach. Combining various elements from other studies by broadening focus on some

aspects of and narrowing them on others, it enables qualitative research into Leadership in organizations related to cultural factors.

The research aims to explore and identify the various factors that affect and shape the leadership style within the public sector of Bahrain.

Research problem*:* As researchers explore the skills and characteristics of a particular leadership style based on written theories, we have little information regarding leadership styles in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Therefore, we will explore Leadership specific to the Public Sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain, based on open-ended questions and qualitative research.

Research Questions

1)   What are the factors that may influence organizational performance and leadership styles within the public sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain?
2)   How similar are the factors revealed through research to the factors addressed in literature?

Review of Literature

Among all leadership theories that discuss motivating employees to perform at their highest levels and affect organizational change, perhaps the most prominent and effective leadership theory is the Ttransformationnel-Transactional leadership theory. Transactional leadership style between superiors and subordinates is based on exchange, loyalty, productivity and high performance in exchange for expected reward. As opposed to those who fall under the transformational leadership style umbrella. Those leaders operate and rely more on instilling and building a family culture within their organizations, where their followers have a sense of belonging and ownership to the workplace to a level that their self-interest becomes secondary next to their duties within the organization.

They are creative, motivated and driven to perform beyond what their jobs entail them to do in order to meet the goals of their organizations. Those leaders are creative, proactive, motivating and capable of influencing change (Lado & Wright, 2012). As such, deep engagements such as emotional, moral and intellectual engagements encourage followers to be more driven and to perform beyond what is normally expected of them (Yukl, 2012, Yammarino & Spangler, 2013, Zhu & Spangler, 2015). "However, transformational channels its powers and tools to influence organizational attitude, with the aim to achieve the goals of the organization" (Australian Journal of Business and Management Research Vol.1 No.7 and strategies).

Saowalux & Peng & Bass (2007) observed that leaders who are considered transactional leaders rarely operate outside the rules, norms and procedures stipulated within their organizations. On the other hand, transformational leaders influence change in their environment by setting new visions, values and re-evaluating shared assumptions and norms (Boehnke & Bontis, 2013).

Summary of Characteristics & Skills found in the literature Review

Table 1: Summary of Characteristics & Skills found in the literature Review

Leadership style	Characteristics	Skills
Transactional leadership	Responsive	Directive
	Punisher	Reward achievement
	Challenger	Track performance
	Intellectual	Restrict to rules
Transformational leadership	Proactive	Affect guiding
	Charisma	Influencer
	Motivator	Develop inspiration
	Moral	Give delegation

Research Theoretical Framework: As stated by (William G. Zikmund; Barry J. Babin; Jon C. Carr; Mitch Griffin, 2013) that "scientific method set of prescribed procedures for establishing and connecting theoretical statement about events, for analyzing empirical evidence, and for predicting events yet unknowns". Furthermore, they also state that "theories provide a framework that can guide managerial strategies by providing insights into the general rules of behavior".

Figure 1. Research Theoretical Framework
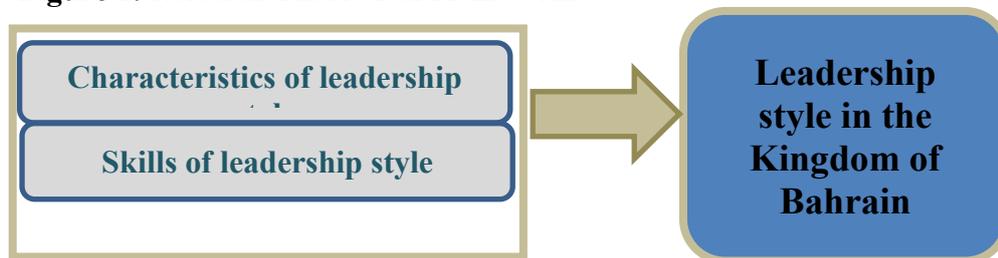
According to Richard L. Hughes; Robert C. Ginnett; Gordon J. Curphy (2006), "the definition of leadership differs in many ways, and these differences have resulted in various researchers exploring very different aspects of leadership". Based on the previous scholar studies, we found that leadership styles differs by characteristics and skill, as Figure 2.3 shows.

Each leader has different characteristics and skills; those differences play an important role in differentiating leadership styles.

Research Methodology

***Research* Approach:** Qualitative Research is the most exploratory research method. It is used to put on a latitude of core reasons, opinions, and motivations. It helps to build up ideas or suppositions for impending quantitative research. Qualitative research can also be used to come across: trends and attitudes in consideration, and dive deeper into the phenomenon (Hunter, & Erin, 2008). Qualitative data collection methods can be unique when using formless or semi-structured techniques. Some methods embrace focus groups (group discussions) and/or individual interviews. The sample size is characteristically diminutive, and candidates are chosen to accomplish a prearranged quota. Quantitative research however, is used to itemize the predicament by way of engendering numerical data or data that may be converted into useable figures and statistics. It is used to put a number on attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and other distinct variables, and takes broad view results from a bigger population sample. Quantitative research uses quantifiable data to originate facts and find out patterns in research. Quantitative data collection methods are much more prearranged than qualitative data collection methods (Kasim & Alexander, 2010).

Researches that are built based on qualitative analysis are powerful. When future researchers conduct qualitative researches, they will be able to summarize the themes of their data and the methods used. Qualitative inquiry produces a large pool of information to dive into. when presenting interview transcripts, the researcher is able to see the comments of one person, unlike focused groups; the data collected from the participating members of the group interview. The range or size of the group discussions also vary. The researcher chose to conduct interviews. The researcher can generalize the data if the study of the research integrated suitable precision with the right sample size. Furthermore, data collected from focus groups can be quantified over group types that have been discussed and collected, based on common characteristics between them. As for the Researchers they will never be able to generalize the data collected from the focus group to the wild population. (Krueger et al., 2000).

Research Instruments: Research data is collected by using open ended questions interviews and focus group discussions from employees working within the public sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Based on (Singer, E. & Bossarte, R., 2006) since these organizations have branches in various areas of the country, employees from selected branches of the various organizations were used for data collection.

Collecting as much data as possible is important in qualitative research, and because of the limiting factor of time, one on one in-depth interviews were mixed with focus group discussions in order to pool in more data in less time.

Target population & samples method*:* Sample selection is very important when conducting qualitative research. The objective of sample selection is to accomplish the research goals, by gathering effective and efficient data from the participants, and trying to benefit from them as much as possible. This may be achieved by selecting educated and experienced participants with sufficient knowledge that will enrich the researcher's outputs when analyzing the feedback (Charmaz, 2006).

In order to reap the most benefit from this research, population sampling plays a vital role in the information collection process, candidates chosen to participate in the one-to-one interviews, and the focused groups discussions were carefully selected based on their reputable resumes. Hence having adequate academic qualifications, sufficient work experience, relevant training and well documented accomplishments in their respective fields. Donald R. Cooper; Pamela S. schindler (2006) states that "the general sampling guideline for qualitative research are: "keep sampling as long as your breadth and depth of knowledge of the issue under study are expanding; stop when you gain no further knowledge or insights". Interviews and focus group will stop when no more themes are yielded.

Research participant & interview process: Interviews and focus groups discussions have stopped after collecting (18) interviews and (2) focused group discussions, as all participants shared similar information and opinions.

 "Thematic analysis is the process of identifying, recording and recognizing of patterns or theme existing within a dataset" (Braun and Clarke, 2006), that are important to describe a specific research phenomenon or answers a particular research question, this method is considered to be crucial in any qualitative inquiry. The same is perform in six phases.

(Table 2): Phases in thematic-analysis. Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

Phase	Description
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Revisiting the data multiple times, rereading and rephrasing data to help to generally sort general themes coming up and enhance initial ideas. the most important aspect of this phase is for the researcher to be extremely familiar with the dataset at hand.
2. Generating initial codes	As the title suggests, this phase of analysis pertains to producing an initial list of items from the data that presents an identifiable pattern(s), at this phase, the researcher is to

	go back and forth on the until they are satisfied with the extracted patterns.
3. Keep Looking for themes.	This phase is considered an extension of the previous phase, however, at this point of the analysis, the researcher strives to find broader meanings and connections to already identified themes within a dataset.
4. Compare the theme & check for data saturation	This phase requires the researchers to search for data that supports or debunk the proposed theory. This process allows for further expansion on and revision of themes developed. At this point, researchers should have a set of potential themes, this is the phase is where the revisiting of initial themes takes place.
5. determining & name the themes	Refining existing themes that will be presented in the final analysis helps the researcher in analyzing the data within each theme. At this phase, identification of the themes' essences relate to how each specific theme holistically affects the final picture of the data. Analysis at this stage is characterized by identifying which aspects of data are being captured, highlighting the significance of the data and why it is viewed as such
6. Produce report	The final stage is to carefully select clear, convincing and vivid examples from selected extracts, answering the research questions with backed up data to produce a scholarly documented research.

Coding used in thematic analysis: In this study, manual coding methods (Refer to Appendix 1) were followed. All interviews and focus group discussions transcripts were read line by line and portions of transcribed data were coded to their corresponding themes. Once transcripts were coded, the codes were moved to a table which later will contain all extracted themes and codes compiled and used to develop the theoretical model.

Semi-Structured interviews: (William G. Zikmund; Barry J. Babin; Jon C. Carr; Mitch Griffin, 2013) state in their business research method book, that "semi structured interviews usually come in written form and ask the respondent for short essay responses to specific open-ended questions". As for the focus group interviews "it is an unstructured, free-flowing form of interviews with a small group of people, usually between six and ten".
Therefore, the table (3.3) shows the semi structured interviews questions, and also there are unstructured questions that came up within the focus group interview.

Table 3: The interviews questions

No.	Questions
1	What do you think the characteristics of a good leader?
2	What skills do you believe leaders need?
3	How can empowering employees help enhance performance?
4	How do you usually deal with your escalated issues?
5	How do you motivate your employees?
6	How would you track the performance of your employees?
7	How have you encouraged the development of your staff members?

Findings and Analysis

Study analysis had indicated several findings throughout the editing and coding processes to demonstrate principle outcomes generated from exploring the concepts that influence leadership styles within the public sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Research findings will facilitate communicating research results based on the summarized concepts and categorized themes as illustrated below.

Figure 2. the leadership styles emerged theoretical framework based on Kingdom of Bahrain findings
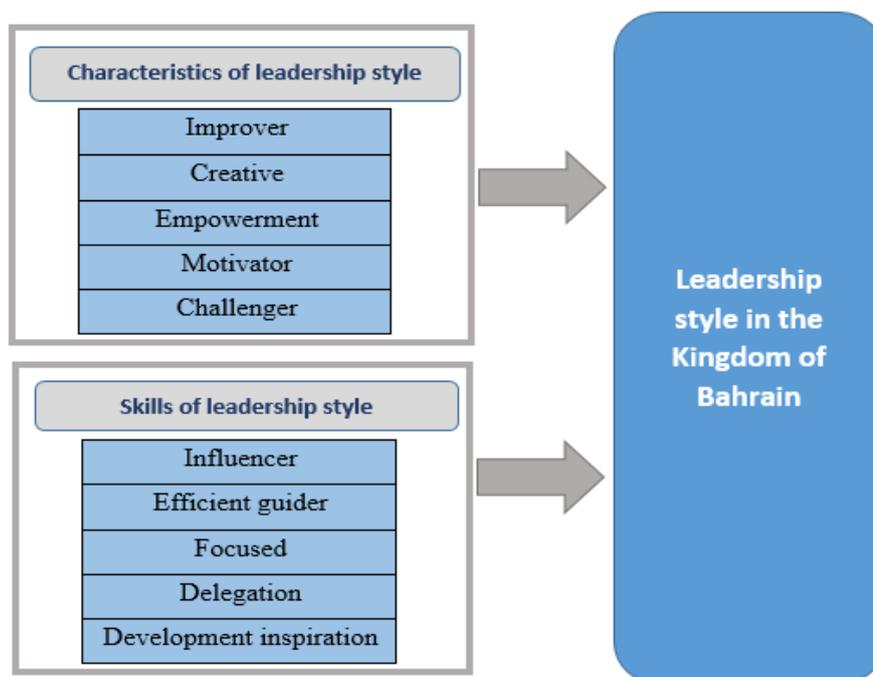
Emerged Theoretical Framework based on the Thematic Data Analysis

Based on the theoretical framework, figure 2 illustrates the major characteristics and skills of a good leader in an organization. It is based on the emerged themes that were found in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

According to the findings, a leader is a person who is smart enough to empower the employees and influence them to take challenges and calculates risks to achieve the organization's goals. However, the findings also indicate that the leader should be creative to come up with solutions to overcome obstacles at work.

Conclusion

Research Question no.1: what are the factors that may influence organizational performance and Leadership styles within the Public Sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain?

There are two main factors that may influence the leadership style in any organization in the public sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. These factors would be the characteristics and skills attributed to the leader in question. Characteristics may include but are not limited to the leader being an individual that seeks continuous improvement, who is creative, tends to empower and motivate his team and department.

Skills that such individuals typically possess are that they are influencers, they are usually very effect in providing a direction and guidance to their peers, they are focused and embrace effective delegation to their respective teams, they always chase opportunities to develop work processes and as such and are natural inspirers.

Research has revealed that leaders in Bahrain possess excellent leadership qualities, such as being influencers, are leaders who monitor, correct and provide a sense of direction to their respective teams to meet the overall organizational goals. They are leaders who are capable of inspiring and delegating responsibilities to their teams as a way of empowering them. Those individuals are noticeably charismatic, creative, focused and goal oriented.

Research Question no.2: How similar are the factors revealed through research to the factors addressed in literature?

The workforce in the Kingdom of Bahrain has the academic qualifications, knowledge, talent and the experience that commensurate with today's market demands. This gives any Bahraini a competitive advantage entering the market. However, there are factors that could have a negative impact on the individuals assuming leadership roles within their organizations, along

with their subordinates in the public sector. Most of which are geographical, cultural, traditional and religious factors.

Data compiled through focused group discussions and individual one-to-one interviews have shown that most challenges that face the Bahraini workforce, especially the youth, is that they are being governed by a conservative religious culture, which may impose limitations on things such as: dress codes, interactions between both genders, even in cases of forming and working within a mixed team. In addition to freedom for females to be in a male dominant environment or to seek opportunities to train or participate in summits and conferences, for example without a male companion.

As we look closer into the above-mentioned case, we find that such factors may influence the leadership style in any given organization, especially the female workforce. This is due to the fact that women are collectively viewed in a more conservative fashion in terms of behaviors and interactions in our society

Furthermore, one of the factors that may influence better and a more productive leadership in organizations is for the government, in coordination with all institutions that fall under the public sector's umbrella, is to enforce all managerial and leadership position candidates to undergo and pass extensive programs and courses that will facilitate their promotion and to qualify candidates to fulfil their responsibilities as leaders in their organizations.

On another note, we should also highlight the differences between the public and the private sectors. Such differences may be addressed in many areas such as; the public sector is more systematically flexible whereas the public sector is more restrictive. Another distinctive good area in the public sector is the availability of centralized systems that enable all employees to work and upload their work into the same system, where it can constantly be accessed and reviewed by their superiors as and whenever required. The aim of this is to give the leaders of the organization the opportunity to continuously monitor the progress of their subordinates and place corrective actions and directions as the organization moves forward.

Limitations: Due to the nature of this research being a qualitative research project, a lot of time was invested in conducting group focused discussions and interviews. Another challenge was to arrange appointments with managers and leaders of different institutions and ministries and due to their busy schedules, those attempts were rather less successful than what was originally anticipated.

Another challenge was to manage and allocate time between my studies, conducting the research and working OT all in the same time.

Recommendations: This extensive research can be beneficial to those who wish to pursue further research on leadership, this document has an abundance of information on leadership, its characteristics and how it can influence individuals and organizations holistically.

Furthermore, this research may also benefit those who wish to conduct quantitative research on the same subject and bring about further findings that will be of great benefit.

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Appendix 1

Coding table of the thematic analysis

Interview's transcript	codes
"We work as a group instead of a leader and his employees. We try to distribute the work between ourselves in an equal manner disregarding any hierarchical positions. That's the way I do it" (M A)	Teamwork moral (Characteristics)
"I used to train them by practically doing the job with them, so they learn how to do it" (F M)	Monitoring Teamwork (Characteristics) Guider (skills)
"Leaders must listen to their employees to insure that the group currently working together, a good leader needs to have even a creative mind in terms to know how to lead." (M M)	Creative Teamwork (Characteristics)
"A leader can be any talented member on the team, a person who thinks creatively and has great ideas, any team member who has experience in a certain aspect of the business or a project that can prove useful to the manager and the team. A leader leads based on strengths, not titles." (Focus Group Member)	Talented Creative Teamwork Strengths (Characteristics)
"By cheering up the employees and ask them about themselves, such gestures mean a lot to them, things like sending them a personal thank you email in morning, a small surprise at the office such as gathering for breakfast motivates them and make them love to work and feel fresh" (Focus group member)	Motivating Appreciate (Characteristics) Influencer Inspiration (skills)
"The main aspects of leadership behavior are to inspire and motivate others, collaboration and create a positive and productive atmosphere, trust, encouragement, innovative thinking, rewarding achievements, and an open door policy." (A N)	Motivate Improver Correcting (characteristics) Inspire (skills)