



Ambidexterity Leadership Behaviors and Their Impact on Organizational Immunity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education

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Abstract:

This study investigates the effect of ambidextrous leadership behaviors on organizational immunity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education. Based on ambidextrous leadership theory which is a balance between open and closed leadership behaviors, the study investigates how these two dimensions impact organizational learning, memory, and DNA. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, data was collected through questionnaires and interviews from 183 administrative leaders. The results indicate that organizational immunity is significantly affected by open leadership behaviors as well as closed leadership behaviors. Open behaviors foster innovation, knowledge sharing, and collaborative problem solving, whereas closed behaviors maintain structure, consistency, and focus on goal achievement. Further, ambidextrous leadership allows the ministry to strengthen its resilience and perform proactive decision-making in the face of internal and external challenges. Reliable information, employee engagement, and strategic planning have been highlighted as some of the key factors by the study in building a strong organizational immune system. The results suggest that investing in leadership development can enhance adaptability and long-term stability in public institutions.

Keywords: Ambidexterity leadership behaviors, organizational immunity, open leadership, closed leadership, Iraqi Ministry of Education

1. Introduction:

There is a great interest in the term in ambidexterity and its ways to use it in many fields, as the term "ambidexterity" goes back to Latin origins, and refers to a person's ability to use both hands simultaneously (Duwe, 2021). The roots of ambidexterity as an organizational concept were identified in Robert Duncan's book "Dual Structure" in 1976, Duncan (Tu & Wu, 2021). The concept of ambidexterity in the field of business administration has been linked to the balance of organizational strategies between exploration and exploitation, i.e., the ability to engage efficiently in both exploration and exploitation (Al-Agry, 2021). Ambidextrous leadership includes achieving an emotional balance between stability and change, which reduces (Shon, 2019) employees' anxiety about their performance and enhances self-confidence, which encourages them to excel and innovate (Mueller et al., 2020). It applies to individuals and teams alike, encouraging the enhancement of exploration, exploitation, and benefit behaviors in the team of followers by increasing or working to reduce the difference in their behavior, and enhancing the ability to flexibly switch between these behaviors (Al-Eida, 2021), as ambidexterity leaders have the characteristics of a clear vision for future threats and the strategies necessary overcoming threats in the external environment and transforming those threats into opportunities (Mascareño et al., 2021), in addition to having competencies such as influence, vision, creativity, risk-taking and, resource location diagnosis and the importance of be ambidexterity leadership behaviors stems from their ability to exploit existing skills as well as explore new expectations with the same skill (Akıncı et al., 2022). Brilliant leaders explore and exploit incentivize their subordinates to proactively identify creative ideas and solutions in the organization and enhance the qualities of initiative, creativity, risk-taking, and motivate the ingenuity of subordinates (Jia et al., 2022). The real beginning of using the concept of organizational immunity in the literature of business administration dates back to the late nineties, i.e., in the year (1997) by Degus when he conducted a study entitled 'Corporate Immunity Systems' (Mahmood & Adel-Al-Jader, 2021). This concept was discussed in a narrow framework within the organizational culture of companies and called for the necessity of dealing with them as a living organism that can responds and interrelate with the environment to be able to survive and continue (Zakaria Ali et al., 2024). The origin of organizational immunity goes back to the theory of organizational adaptation, where organizations seek to find a way to confront external and internal challenges. The deterioration losses and bankruptcy of many organizations and the development, growth and maturity of I became other organizations in the which compete with each other have led to interest in the "organization's internal systems" (Al-Samman & Zahraa, 2020), environmental monitoring and the creation of treatment methods (solutions) for the external environmental threats that threatens the organization (Barham, 2022). Organizational immunity consists of four functions: immune perception, immune defense, immune memory, immune balance or stability, and immune control function. It sells its importance in the organization. (Al-Thabit, 2020) indicated the importance of organizational immunity as it works to consolidate quality in the organization by monitoring quality risks and external threats, diagnosing the virus and identifying it (Hassan, 2021) extracting relevant information from the organization's current database and removing the source of the difference that threatens quality safety promptly. After completing the initial immune response, the process and results of the experiment are recorded (Saeed, 2025). The last step is learning and summarizing according to the results obtained. New information and data are formed the research aims to reveal the nature of the impact between ambidexterity leadership behaviors and organizational immunity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

The research also aims to present the most important results related to the research variables, as the results revealed the ambidexterity at leadership behaviors have an effective and real impact on organizational immunity by enabling them to obtain proactive information to make vital decisions (Hamed, 2025), and helping decision-makers understand and diagnosis the internal and external environment and the ability to know its scenarios early and translate them for the benefit of the organization (Abdullrada & Waheeb, 2023), as the Ministry of Education's adoption of ambidexterity leadership behaviors can explore opportunities early and invest them to enable it to avoid the threats surrounding it and then strengthen its systems (Wang et al., 2021).

2. Reviewing the literature and developing the hypotheses:

The difficult leadership style seeks to keep the organization in a state of permanent constant despite the rapid and upcoming changes that occur in the internal and external environment in an organization. This paper addresses the critical issue of the effectiveness of leadership styles used to confront this change (Shon, 2019), also defines it as a leadership approach that motivates and encourages employees and makes the difficulty of them feel important. Ambidexterity leadership is one of the main factors that influence subordinates' behavior by motivating subordinates' ingenuity, helping them achieve organizational goals, and creating a supportive environment that enhances trust and encourages the effective and efficient utilization of capabilities (Mohiya & Sulphay, 2021). Leaders contribute to the growth of the organization and create favorable work environments for their colleagues, while (Addai, 2025) defines it as enhancing leadership behaviors by supporting exploratory and exploitative behaviors, allowing organizations to achieve a dynamic balance between the two. The dimensions of the ambidexterity behaviors are the open leadership behaviors as a set of competencies that the leader uses to encourage employees to work and try new and allow them to think independently (Al-Sammaraie & Hameed, 2024), and support them to challenge the stressful methods and procedures at work" and open leadership behaviors work to enhance exploratory behavior (Ahsan et al., 2020) which supports innovation, risk-taking, experimentation and flexibility that enhances diversity and enables the organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes in the long term (Ahsan et al., 2020). As for the closed leadership behaviors, leaders adhere in achieving the goals of specific organizations, as closed leadership behaviors seek to set routines and rules, and closely monitor them to achieve the goals of the organization to the leadership behavior. Closed leaders also allow their followers to accomplish tasks in specific ways only and under his close oversight. These behaviors include promoting exploitative behavior among followers, in contrast, (Klonek et al., 2023), closed leadership behaviors encourage exploitative behavior and exploitative behavior is defined as: "improving and expanding existing efficiency, technologies and models. Its returns are positive, close, and predictable. Organizational immunity is a protective barrier that protects the organization's external environment threats that affect decision-makers and raise their sense of responsibility and enhance the organization's balance in the long term (Barham, 2022), and defines it as a set of procedures and; policies that work to form modern and periodically developed work systems and mechanisms to confront external threats and address weaknesses within the organization; and generate an organizational immune memory within the organization resulting from the organization's learning, from previous events and benefiting from them in the future to reduce the occurrence of crises and maintain the health and stability of the organization (Abunaser et al., 2023). It also serves as a pulsating sensor that works to confront the threats and risks that the organization is exposed to internally and externally (Alshawabkeha, 2021) and works to develop scenarios to maintain the integrity of the organizational entity (Hassan, 2021). The dimensions of organizational immunity, which is organizational learning, are: organizational learning is the process by which the organization builds the knowledge acquired by individuals and then translates this learning and awareness into part of the company's knowledge, system.

According to (Majeed & Lafta, 2022), organizational learning helps to confront the changes facing the organization and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and transform the organization into a learning unit that has a different shared vision of the effects of branches of knowledge. As the key to preserving or improving performance through previous practice, this element expedited the development of organizational capabilities that customers value or are difficult to imitate (Abdullah & Musahib, 2024), thus contributing to the organization's competitive advantage (Jia et al., 2022). As for organizational memory, it is represented and consists of decisions and solved problems, and it is the means by which organizations store knowledge for future use organizational memory consists of two types: intentional internal memory, which includes reports, policies, basic operations, and advanced systems (Ameen & Mhaibes, 2024) & (Ibrahim & Al-kubaisy, 2022). The second one is unintended internal memory which includes the organizations organizational structures, organizational culture, and business environment (Assayah, 2020) Organizational DNA is a metaphorical term that refers to the basic factors that determine the personality of the organization and help explain its performance by identifying its strengths and weaknesses (Alshawabkeha, 2021). Organizational DNA means that each organization has genetic characteristics that distinguish it from others, like other living organisms (Xue et al., 2020) describe organizations as having a genetic aspect to reach the discovery of new and effective ways to adapt to continuous environmental changes. It is defined as a manner that is concerned, with ensuring the quality of the four elements that are exclusively current in each organization, as the identity of each organization is particulate organization's external environmental by analyzing its organizational DNA, by diagnosis the nature of its organizational structure, (Abbas, 2019), the motivations it embrace, the quality of the information available to it, as well as the clarity of its rights in decision-making (Xue et al., 2020). It is also known as the use of simple rules to create fruitful relationships and set expectations for employee behavior (Majeed & Lafta, 2022). In order to remain organizations can survive, skillful leadership has emerged as a framework for managing these competing demands, which require them to constantly adapt to the conditions of their complex environment (Palm, 2021) by exploring new markets and exploiting existing ones, leaders are adept at balancing the conflicting needs of exploration and exploitation through distinct cognitive patterns, and exhibit either open or closed behaviors help leaders provide insights into how they deal with ambiguity, tensions, complex and often contradictory requirements, and must make smart and quick decisions and balance the long-term strategic vision and the ability to embrace risks, experiment with new ideas and encourage exploration, while simultaneously monitoring the achievement of goals and establishing routines that strengthen their immune systems and detect viruses that surround the organization and affect its performance levels (Vergossen, 2024). There is no doubt that leadership has a fundamental role in performing this task in the lives of organizations of all sizes or the nature of their activities, as it is the best way to confront risks, by enabling them to obtain proactive information to make vital decisions (Jia et al., 2022), and helping decision makers understand and diagnosis the internal and external environment in organization and the ability to know its scenarios early and translate them for the benefit of the organization (Hammoud & Sahib, 2022).

2.2 Based on the literature contributions, we propose the following hypotheses:

Main hypothesis: Ambidexterity Leadership Behaviors have a statistically significant impact on organizational immunity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

H1: The first sub-hypothesis: open leadership behaviors, as one of the dimensions of ambidexterity leadership behaviors, has a statistical impact at a significant level on organizational immunity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

H2: The second sub-hypothesis: closed leadership behaviors, as one of the dimensions of Ambidexterity Leadership Behaviors, has a statistical impact at a significant level on organizational immunity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

3. Methodology:

The descriptive analytical approach was chosen for several justifications, the most important of which is that this approach attempts to study the researched phenomenon from all its aspects, and as is currently the case, the researchers seek to study the relationship between ambidexterity leadership behaviors and organizational immunity from a theoretical and applied perspective. This approach also attempts to help the researchers in obtaining descriptive data by using a questionnaire to survey the opinions of the research sample and then converting this descriptive data into quantitative data that can be analyzed statistically, to come up with a set of results that help the researchers to achieve the goals.

3.1 The research community and sample:

The headquarters of the Iraqi Ministry of Education in Baghdad Governorate was chosen as the study community, where namely the general director and his/ her assistants. In Table1, the head of the department, and the head of the division, according to the intentional sample method in both the ministry's centre in Baghdad. The researchers distributed 195 questionnaires, then collected data from 183 respondents (Table).2 The researchers relied on the SPSSV.23 Amos program as auxiliary tools, in addition to descriptive and inferential statistics methods, the normal distribution test, confirmatory factor analysis, and building models of variables, arithmetic mean, percentages, standard deviation, relative importance, the coefficient of variation, Pearson's correlation coefficient, simple regression coefficient, path analysis, and the Sobel test to test its hypotheses. The questionnaire was used as a primary means of collecting data, in addition to semi-structured interviews with a number of the ministry's leaders. The research community represents the administrative leaders in the ministry's centre.

Table (1): Frequency distribution according to the job title of the research sample members

Job title	The repetition	The percentage (%)
General Manager	6	3.3
Assistant General Manager	9	4.9
Department Manager	16	8.7
Assistant Department Manager	37	20.2
Division Head	115	62.8
The Total	183	100.0

The source: Prepared by the researchers.

Table (2): Response of the sample members studied

The Status	The Number	The percentage (%)
Number of questionnaires distributed	195	100%
Not returned	7	6.2%
Returned	183	93.8%

The source: Prepared by the researchers.

3.2 The hypothetical research plan:

The hypothetical outline of the research embodies the idea that it seeks to prove, which is to enhance organizational immunity (the dependent variable), using the independent variable (ambidexterity leadership behaviors). This can be achieved within the framework of the correlation and influence relationships that combine these two variables, which can be determined in a manner that is clear from Figure 1:

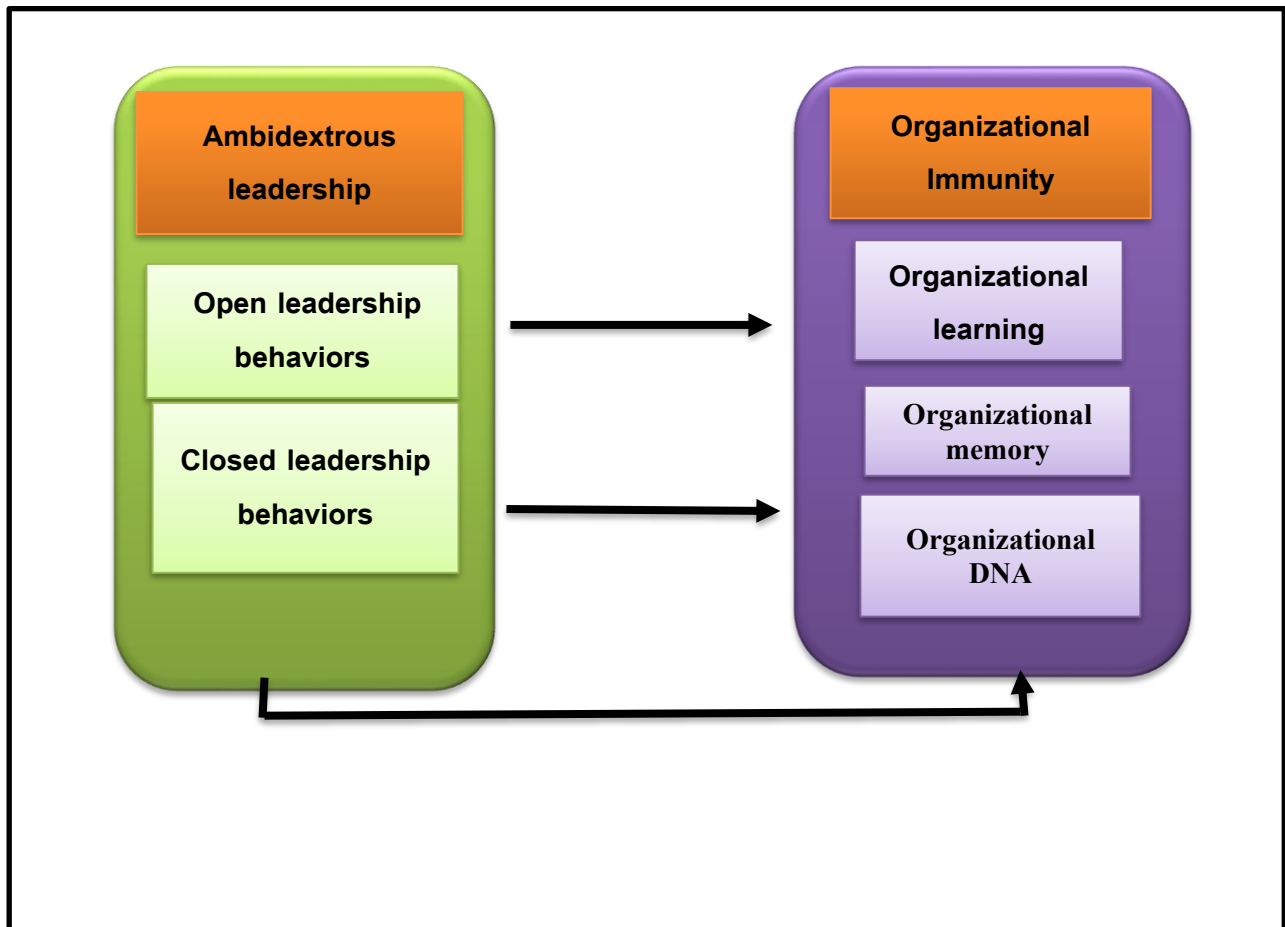


Figure1: The hypothetical diagram of the research

The source: Prepared by the researchers.

4. Results.

4.1. Main Hypothesis

There is a significant effect of ambidexterity leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis of the effect of ambidexterity leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. The extracted (F) value reached (152.051), indicating the presence of an effect of the variable skillful leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. In light of this result, the first hypothesis is confirmed, and we reject the null hypothesis, i.e., there is a significant effect of skillful leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. It is also noted from the extracted (1) value of 12.331 that the effect of parameter (B) is real, as increasing the effect by one unit will lead to an increase in organizational immunity by 63%. The skillful leadership behaviors variable was able to explain 45% of the changes occurring in organizational immunity. This means that developing and improving leadership behaviors in the ministry will contribute to building strong organizational immunity, which makes the ministry more flexible and prepared to face challenges. This result calls for the importance of investing in effective leadership because it has a real positive impact on the ministry's ability to adapt and survive in the face of changing circumstances and crises.

4.1.1. Testing the first sub-hypothesis

There is a significant effect of open leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis of the effect of open leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. The extracted F-value is 96.971, which shows a significant effect of open leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. Based on this result, we accept the first sub-hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant effect of open leadership behaviors on organizational immunity. The extracted value (1) is 19.847, also shows that the effect of parameter (B) is a substantial effect, as increasing the effect of the dimension of open leadership behaviors by one unit leads to an increase in organizational immunity by 55%. In addition, it was shown that the dimension of open leadership behaviors explains 34% of the changes that occur in organizational immunity. The results indicate that adopting policies that encourage experimentation and creativity, and provide space for free thinking and decision-making, in addition to supporting the challenge of traditional methods, clearly contributes to enhancing the ministry's ability to adapt and be flexible in facing challenges. It also works to build a protective barrier that protects the ministry from internal and external threats and raises the sense of responsibility among decision-makers, which enhances the stability of the ministry in the long term.

4.1.2. Testing the second sub-hypothesis

There is a significant effect of the closed leadership behaviors dimension on organizational immunity. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis of the effect of the closed leadership behaviors dimension on organizational resilience. The extracted F value, amounting to 155.300, showed a significant effect on the closed leadership behaviors dimension and organizational immunity. Based on this result, the second sub-hypothesis is confirmed, rejecting the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant effect of the closed leadership behaviors dimension on organizational immunity. The extracted value (1) is 12.462, also shows that the effect of parameter (B) is substantial, as increasing the effect of the closed leadership behavior dimension by one-unit leads to a 58% increase in organizational resilience. Furthermore, it was found that the closed leadership behavior dimension explains 45% of the changes in organizational immunity. The results showed that closed leadership behaviors, which focus on directing employee behavior through corrective actions and specific guidelines, have a positive impact on organizational immunity. This impact is attributed to the ability of these behaviors to enhance organizational stability, ensure the achievement of goals, and reduce performance deviations. It can be said that implementing closed leadership behaviors contributes to enhancing organizational resilience by providing a clear structure and specific guidelines, which help the ministry adapt to challenges and maintain its internal stability.

Table (3): The analysis of the impact of the variable of ambidexterity leadership and its dimensions on the organizational immunity variable

The organizational immunity variable			T	(R)	R ²	Adj(R ²)	(F)	Sig.
open leadership behaviors	(α)	1.685	7.795	0.591	0.349	0.345	96.971	0.000
	(β)	0.550	9.847					
Closed leadership behaviors	(α)	1.597	8.944	0.680	0.462	0.459	155.300	0.000
	(β)	0.582	12.462					
Ambidexterity leadership behaviors	(α)	1.363	6.847	0.676	0.457	0.457	152.051	0.000
	(β)	0.639	12.231					

The source: SPSS V 28.28 Program Outputs

5. The discussion of the results:

The variable of ambidexterity leadership behaviors Achieved an arithmetic mean of 3.777 at a relatively good level and a Standard deviation of 0.693 and a coefficient of variation of 18.34, as the results showed that after open leadership behaviors in general, the dimension achieved a general mean of, 3.803 at a good level and a deviation of 0.703. It is also clear that the means for all paragraphs ranged between 3.934-3.634 and at a good level in general. The results showed that the level of management's interest in open leadership behaviors was generally good. The results showed that senior management encourages the exchange of ideas among employees, as it adopts a flexible approach in dealing with unintended errors. The results showed that the highest value achieved was for the paragraph "Encourages the adoption of new ideas and creative work", as its mean reached (3.934) at a good level and a deviation of 0.768, as its coefficient of variation reached (19.51) as it was at level 1 in terms of ranking. As for the lowest value, it was for the paragraph "senior management allows the adoption of various procedures and methods to accomplish work", as its mean reached 3.634 at a good level and a deviation of 0.897, as its coefficient of variation reached (24.69) as it was at level 3 in terms of ranking. While the results showed for the dimension of closed leadership behaviors in general, it achieved a mean of 3.750 at a relatively good level and a deviation of 0.766.

It is also clear that the means for all paragraphs ranged between 3.869-3.656 and at a good level, as the results showed that the highest achieved value was for the paragraph "Senior management is keen to accurately distribute tasks and responsibilities to employees" as its mean reached 3.869 and at a good level and with a deviation of 0.952, as its coefficient of variation reached 24.60 as it was at level 1) in terms of ranking, while the lowest value was for the paragraph "Senior management pays attention to the regular completion of the studied plans and tasks" as its mean reached 3.656 and at a good level and with a deviation of 0.959, as its coefficient of variation reached 26.23 as it was at level 3 in terms of ranking. The organizational immunity variable achieved an arithmetic mean of 3.778 at a good level and with a standard deviation of, (0.655) and a coefficient of variation of, (17.35), as the results showed in general for the organizational learning dimension that it achieved a mean of, (3.802) at a good level and with a deviation of 0.700. It is also clear that the means for all paragraphs ranged between, (3.802-3.732) at a good level, as its mean reached (3.85) at a good level and with a deviation of 0.846, as its coefficient of variation reached (21.93) as it was at level 1 in terms of ranking, while the lowest value was for the paragraph "senior management supports the collective learning process among employees" as its mean reached (3.732) at a good level and with a deviation of 0.895, as its coefficient of variation reached (23.99) as it was at level 3 in terms of ranking. It also appears around the dimension of organizational memory, which consists of four paragraphs, as the results showed that it achieved a mean of 3.787 at a relatively good level and a deviation of 0.771. It also appears that the means of all paragraphs ranged between 3.700-3.891 at a good level, as the results showed that the highest value achieved was in the paragraph "Senior management relies on its organizational memory to avoid errors and deviations" as its mean reached (3.891) at a good level and a deviation of 0.955, as its coefficient of variation reached (24.53), as it was at level 2 in terms of ranking, while the lowest value was in the paragraph "Senior management seeks the help of experts to help it analyze and evaluate events" as its mean reached (3.700) at a good level and a deviation of 1.034, as its coefficient of variation reached (27.94) as it was at level 4 in terms of ranking. The organizational DNA dimension achieved a mean of 3.746 at a relatively good level and a deviation of 0.718. It is also clear that the means for all paragraphs ranged between 3.825-3.590 at a good level, as the results showed in general that the level of management's interest in the organizational DNA dimension was good. Its mean was, 3.825 at a good level and a deviation of 0.866, as its coefficient of variation was 22.63 as it was at level 2 in terms of ranking, while the lowest value was for the paragraph "Senior management confirms the reliability and validity of information" as its mean was 3.590 at a good level and a deviation of 0.896, as its coefficient of variation was 24.97 as it was at level 4 in terms of ranking.

6. Conclusion:

The results showed that the level of interest of administrative leaders in the Iraqi Ministry of Education in open leadership behaviors was generally good. The results showed that senior management encourages the exchange of ideas among employees, as it adopts a flexible approach in dealing with unintended errors, as the results showed that it encourages the adoption of new ideas and working creatively. In addition, its interest in closed leadership behaviors was good through senior management's keenness to accurately distribute tasks and responsibilities to employees, while monitoring their commitment to rules and procedures. It also sets periods for completing tasks and focuses on the regular implementation of well-studied plans and tasks. The results also showed that the level of management's interest in the organizational learning dimension was good, as management relies on a set of behaviors and procedures that contribute to enhancing learning and adapting to internal and external environmental changes, as this helps maintain a sustainable competitive advantage through the effective use of current knowledge resources and enriching them.

Senior management is also keen to train employees and develop their skills, benefiting from previous experience and expertise in dealing with emerging challenges and threats, as it has an integrated database that is constantly developed and updated, making it a storage vessel for all events and experiences that the ministry has gone to benefit from them in the future. The environment surrounding the organization the management also relies on modern technology to store and employ information to support the decision-making process effectively and efficiently. The results indicate that senior management relies primarily on reliable information in making its decisions and encourages the participation of all administrative levels in the decision-making process, as senior management seeks to enhance the culture of cooperation and consultation between different administrative levels, which contributes to making more comprehensive and effective decisions. It is also keen to enable employees to participate in making strategic and operational decisions, which contributes to enhancing institutional belonging and achieving positive results at the level of overall performance.

In conclusion, the results were shown it was found that senior leaders in the Ministry of Education encourage open leadership behaviors by embracing new ideas, which allows employees to work in innovative and diverse ways. This allows employees to think and come up with creative proposals, enabling them to participate in information and knowledge exchanges with colleagues and exchange new ideas to address work-related problems. The senior leaders in the Ministry of Education are keen to distribute tasks and define responsibilities among their employees so that everyone is aware of their role in achieving the overall goals of their ministry. It was found that the Iraqi Ministry of Education is working to develop alternative plans and scenarios to address any emergencies it may encounter. Therefore we recommend we recommend that the ministry provide courses that promote creative thinking and encourage diverse work procedures and methods to arrive at innovative solutions to potential problems. In addition, activating oversight systems and monitoring employees' commitment to the regular implementation of planned plans and tasks.

Authors Declaration:

Conflicts of Interest: None

-We Hereby Confirm That All The Figures and Tables In The Manuscript Are Mine and Ours. Besides, The Figures and Images, which are Not Mine, Have Been Permitted Republication and Attached to The Manuscript.

- Ethical Clearance: The Research Was Approved by The Local Ethical Committee in The University.

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