Evaluation of Strategic Leadership Practices and Critical Success Factors for Competitiveness in Iraqi Manufacturing Sector a Descriptive Analysis

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Abstract: The current state of Iraq economy and the manufacturing sector makes it is necessary to search for the successful practices that are appropriate to the success of the companies. This research aims to evaluate strategic leadership practices in Iraqi's cement manufacturing sector with a view of proffering managerial implications to improve competitiveness. A sample of 134 engineers in the two most active cement factories in the middle of Iraq was determined for this study. Descriptive analysis was used to show respondent's views of strategic leadership practices and critical success factors for competitiveness. Findings revealed that employee's responsiveness towards competitiveness low as opposed to strategic leadership. More interestingly and as expected is the fact that employee's strong inclinations, evidenced by high mean scores that refer to strategic leadership practices are exist in Iraqi manufacturing sector. But it need some steps to make it success and it is affected by the Iraqi circumstances.

Key words: Iraq, strategic leadership, critical success factor for competitivenes, manufacturing, cement, competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

The Iraqi cement manufacturing is suffering from deterioration under difficult conditions, therefore, the Iraqi Ministry of Industry has launched a campaign to save it and protect this national product and develop strategies with strategic leadership capable of saving the industry and its factories.

Iraqi national cement companies as primarily responsible for providing a competitive environment for their plants, especially in light of changing economic conditions afflicting Iraqi manufacturing companies, especially, Kufa and Najaf cement companies which belong to the Southern cement company which became rival of many imported products, especially, Iranian products that found a good opportunity in Iraqi markets. This reflected negatively on local products in addition, Iraqi cement companies have been affected during previous years by challenges and global variables including the global economic crisis. The demand for the cement fell in world markets, moreover the circumstances of the Iraqi war against terrorism for long time also affected demand in the domestic market.

Iraq has been an exporting state of this material and it is now an importer due to insufficient production in the local market plus the poor conditions for nearly 30 years. Iraq has gone through difficult circumstances starting from the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980's (Marr, 2018). The first Gulf war and economic blockades in the 1990s and the second Gulf war in 2003 (Chatelard, 2009) and what followed it from the war against terrorism that significantly affected the manufacturing sector in Iraq including cement plants.

Despite all these challenges, Iraqi cement companies primarily Southern cement company continued to succeed in fulfilling its role towards shareholders as a profitable company as it got the quality certificate for most of its products and managed to get partially into global competition market.

All these circumstances call for the need to find successful means contribute to strengthen the competitive advantage and responsiveness and keeping pace with global changes and developments. Because of intense competition in this age, it became necessary for the Southern cement company to adopt competitive strategies and survive in an environment of complexity and the constant and rapid change which makes the attention towards building and developing competitive strategies guarantee sustainability and edging over its competitors. Perhaps among the tools that have proved their success in many countries is adopting strategic leadership (Ireland and Hitt, 1999; Haque et al., 2017). That its importance stems from what awaits business organizations from future competition, building and

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developing competitive advantages that achieve competitive superiority enabling the company to withstand the acute and severe competition. Consequently, it became necessary for the company to adopt strategic leadership practice which able to meet the different requirements and competitive strategies.

The performance and success of the organizations closely linked to the performance and success of the strategic leader (Lennick *et al.*, 2011). Despite the fact that leadership is not the only element that distinguishes it but it is an important element in it (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007) and with increasing pressures and the biggest challenges facing organizations at the moment, we need strategic leadership that have a major role in transforming the cases of degradation and descent into strong organization able to compete and succeed (Nixon *et al.*, 2012).

For that there must be a strategic leader able to transfer the vision to people in middle management and executive levels regarding the process of excellence (Jeston and Nelis, 2014) and this vision can create a climate of participation and put new and creative ideas and help to create conditions conducive to success (Hitt *et al.*, 2001). Many of the ancient and modern literature confirm that many organizations with modest and simple beginnings in terms of possibilities and limited financial resources but although it had achieved marked successes (Mauro, 2011) as other studies confirm that successes in various fields such as economic, political, security and military fields, all due to excel in strategic leadership (Hitt *et al.*, 2001).

Today, the need to a strategic leadership in working in has appeared where it seems more difficult to research (House *et al.*, 2013). Many studies have proven in this area that the effective strategic leadership leads to innovation, creativity, excellence, leadership and promoting competitiveness and it recorded many success stories (Bolman and Deal, 2017; Jeston and Nelis, 2014). Studies have shown that strategic leadership is one of the main and essential pillars to the success of organizations of all types and styles (Schoemaker *et al.*, 2013). This is largely dependent on attracting qualified efficiencies that is capable of dealing with accelerating changes in the research environment and fierce competition at every level. This requires strategic leadership to cope with changes and developments in such environment (House *et al.*, 2013).

In sum, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the level of strategic leadership and critical success factors for competitiveness in Iraqi manufacturing sector.

Literature review
Strategic leadership: Leadership is an important hub on which the activities of various organizations rely, especially, in the modern world where there is a big change in different areas of business world, especially in

the last decade of the last century when there is an increase in the need to a wise leadership with the skills and abilities that embrace the successful visions in order to keep pace with rapid change, age requirements, survival and growth (Bolman and Deal, 2017). In general, strategic leadership is defined as the ability and wisdom to make decisions about goals, strategies and tactics, through the combination of leadership and management on the one hand and strategic intent with tactical events on the other (Pisapia, 2009), this strengthens the ability to shape the future of organizations with a vision of a mechanism to achieve goals and aspirations in the fastest way (Oetinger, 2004). Accordingly, strategic leadership has become a process of organizations transition from being to the place where their leader wants to be (Eisner *et al.*, 2014). As many literatures mention strategic leadership involves creating visions, cognitive activity ,strategic thinking, information technology and change to the future (Kapferer, 2012; Pugh, 2016).

Creating vision: Having a vision and being able to communicate is clearly important aspects of leadership, it is a clear picture of what the organization will be like in the future (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Develop a long-term strategic vision reflects the personal views of the inspiring leadership (Hitt *et al.*, 2001). If the strategic leader can clarify his own point of view and involve his subordinates, they will support his strategic vision, this will representing privacy of the leader and at the same time representing a concept for everyone in the organization (Macmillan and Tampoe, 2000).

Cognitive activity: Cognitive thinking demands cognitive skills elucidates this as applying thorough thoughts and experiences in order to attain knowledge and understand a particular event. At any instant, the act of cognition should be very competent, allowing one to take advantage of personal experiences, accommodate the thoughts and develop a guided behavior (Sun and Hui, 2012).

Strategic thinking: Strategic thinking is closely related to both the formulation and implementation of strategies by the leader as well as to the strategic performance of the organizations. It includes strategic planning, strategic analysis, controlling and strategic leadership. Accordingly, it includes all the features that can be classified as "strategic" (Liedtka, 1998). The importance of strategic thinking is that it is a competitive tool suited to the global competitive environment and that the organization's strategies and limits are to achieve the highest profits (Baloch and Inam, 2009).

Information technology: Information technology has redefined the world economic concepts through the

introduction of digital economy (Ukwandu and Nnamocha, 2013), information technology defined as computers and related digital communication technology has the border power to reduce the cost of coordination, communication and information processing (Buckley and Casson, 2010), information technology has redefined productivity, education, social and political landscape of the world.

Change to the future: Predicting the future and change are difficult. Therefore, the organizations resort to adopting mechanisms and various means to explore the unknown future in order to cope with the changes that are expected to occur (Argote, 2011). Change to the future is new ways for organizations to change reality for the better. It is a tool of changing the situation to increase effectiveness and achieve goals through positive future change. It is done by developing a future scenario for the change process it specializes in creating a series of possible events that are likely to happen in future (Oetinger, 2004).

Critical success factors for competitiveness: A broad range of factors that can influence the success of a project has been mentioned in the literature. For example, much has been stated about project success. However, no systematic research exist in characterizing a collective set of critical success factors to implementing competitiveness in Iraqi manufacturing sector. Critical success factors can be define as areas in which results, if they are satisfactory will ensure successful competitive performance for organization (Rockart, 1979; Wong, 2005) viewed them as those critical areas of planning and actions that must be practiced in order to achieve effectiveness. In terms of competitiveness, they can be viewed as those activities and practices that should be addressed in order to ensure its successful implementation (Turner and Muller, 2005). That focuses on critical success factors a competition that adds value to the customer and all stakeholders (Trkman, 2010).

Based on insights gleaned from the study of practices and experience of leading companies in the leadership field, Iraqi Ministry of Industry report highlighted four common key success factors for competitiveness in Iraqi companies. These include manager concern for employees which is essential element for success (Alexandrov *et al.*, 2007) working environment that affect the process of decision making within the organization (Daft, 2010), appreciation and rewards that motivates employees and achieves values of loyalty and dedication the organization's objectives (Yadav, 2016) and social relationships which is positively reflected on the performance of the employees (Bain *et al.*, 2001).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sampling: To evaluate the level of strategic leadership practices and critical success factors for competitiveness, we select a group of engineers in two of the big Iraqi cement factories (Najaf and Kufa) as the population of this study. It included 134 respondents as a sample and it is randomly.

Instrument: For obtaining information on satisfaction, we collected primary data via. a 5-point labeled Likert type scale questionnaires which anchored from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The questions about strategic leadership were divided into five subgroups, Creating a Vision (CV), Cognitive Activity (CA), Strategic Thinking (ST), Information Technology (IT) and Creating Future (CF). Moreover, the question about critical success factors for competitiveness comprised four different groups, Manager Concern for his Employees (MCE), Working Environment (WE), Appreciation and Rewards (AR) and Social Relationship (Rel). Each subgroup contained five questions. All analysis were performed in R environment and (SPSS V.23).

In respect to measure the reliability of the instrument, the reliability coefficients cronbach's alpha shows that all variables presented values bigger that 0.7, thus, indicating a reliable questionnaire.

Demographic profile: We investigate the influence of three main demographic factors in the responses, namely, gender (men and women), age, divided into four categories (<30, 30-39, 40-49, >50 years old) and years of experience (<10, 10-19, >20 years).

A total of 134 people answered the questionnaire (90.3%) male and (9.7%) female and most of the employees from 40-49 years old (56.7%), followed by the group aging between 30-39 (19.4%) those younger than 30 years old (10.4%) and lastly by a group older than 50 years old (13.4%). Regarding experience, the majority of responders (55.2%) with 10-19 years of experience after that the group <10 years of experience with 29.1%, followed by the group had more than 20 years of experience with 15.7%. Table 1 describes the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency (N =134)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	121	90.3
Female	13	9.7
Age		
<30	14	10.4
30-39	26	19.4
40-49	76	56.7
50-above	18	13.6
Years of experience	39	74.0
<10	21	29.1
10-19 20-above	55.2	15.7

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis for strategic leadership and critical success factors of competitiveness described in Table 2 and 3.

The first set of question corresponded to the capacity of strategic leadership create a vision in the employees (Fig. 1a). The question L1 asks how the vision reflects the expectation for a distinct system. Overall, the most likely answers are agreeing (42.4%) or strongly agreeing (34.6%). We also observed the same for the question L2 which evaluate how the vision and goals are essential to the personal goals of an employee (47.6% agree and 31.6% strongly agree). The question L3 ask if the vision articulates what the respondent aspire to be a working system, here, again there a high probability of they agree (43.1%) or strongly agree (26.4%) with this

shared view. Question L4 review that the majority of respondents are likely to agree (40.5%) or strongly agree (32.7%). Finally, the last question on the vision (L5) asked whether or not the employees participate in crafting the vision of their organization and the results showed that the majority actively participate on that process, since, the majority strongly agree (40.5%) or strongly agree (38.9%).

The next set of question evaluates the level of cognitive activity to question whether or not the respondents agree with how the knowledge is transmitted, shared or required within the organization (Fig. 1b). Question L6 ask if the organization provide a high level of knowledge and the results showed that the employees are highly likely to agree with that provisioning (48.7% probability of agreeing and 31.0 of strongly agreeing). Question L7 also showed a similar pattern when asking for the participation on a team that allows knowledge exchange for our

Table 2: Descriptive analysis for strategic leadership practices

Items	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	L11	L12	L13
Mean	4.07	4.06	3.87	3.96	4.14	4.02	3.88	3.81	3.62	4.05	3.97	3.73	3.89
SE	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
SD	0.86	0.82	0.91	0.95	0.84	0.83	0.77	0.89	0.92	0.76	0.83	0.85	0.89
1%	0.70	-	0.40	-	-	0.40	0.40	0.70	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40
2%	3.30	5.20	8.20	10.40	3.70	4.80	4.80	7.80	13.80	3.00	4.80	7.10	6.70
3%	19.00	15.60	21.90	16.40	18.20	16.70	19.30	23.40	24.20	15.20	19.30	29.40	23.00
4%	42.40	47.60	43.10	40.50	40.50	48.70	58.50	46.10	46.50	54.30	48.70	45.40	43.50
5%	34.57	31.60	26.39	32.71	38.90	31.00	17.84	21.93	15.24	27.10	26.77	17.84	26.39
SKEW	0.74	0.67	0.52	0.64	0.65	0.70	0.64	0.53	0.39	0.70	0.61	0.31	0.49
KUR	0.35	0.02	0.34	0.49	0.38	0.34	0.72	0.07	0.52	0.84	0.18	0.27	0.28
Item	L14	L15	L16	L17	L18	L19	L20	L21	L22	L23	L24	L25	-
Mean	3.51	3.95	3.56	3.30	3.39	3.56	3.60	3.34	3.30	3.21	3.01	2.86	-
SE	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.07	-
SD	0.92	0.81	1.08	1.02	1.05	1.08	1.07	1.07	0.87	1.20	1.18	1.23	-
1%	0.40	-	7.10	5.90	6.70	6.70	5.90	1.10	1.50	8.60	10.40	15.20	-
2%	16.00	2.60	7.80	14.10	9.70	9.30	10.00	27.10	14.10	24.20	26.00	25.30	-
3%	29.40	27.50	23.40	33.50	34.90	21.90	19.00	23.80	45.40	19.00	27.90	30.10	-
4%	41.30	42.00	45.40	36.80	35.30	45.70	48.30	32.30	30.50	34.20	23.80	17.10	-
5%	13.00	27.90	16.40	9.70	13.40	16.40	16.70	15.60	8.60	14.10	11.90	12.30	-
SKEW	0.20	0.21	0.81	0.42	0.49	0.79	0.84	0.00	0.02	0.22	0.04	0.18	-
KUR	0.70	0.81	0.22	0.26	0.09	0.11	0.18	1.13	0.15	1.01	0.89	0.86	-

Table 3: Descriptive analysis for critical success factors for competitiveness

| Items	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Mean	4.07	4.19	3.96	4.00	4.03	3.93	3.74	3.68	4.01	3.93
SE	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
SD	0.73	0.60	0.73	0.74	0.79	0.78	0.81	0.82	0.82	0.85
1%	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.00	1.10	0.40	1.10	0.00	0.70	2.20
2%	1.50	-	2.60	4.50	2.20	4.80	5.20	8.60	4.50	3.00
3	16.70	7.80	18.20	14.10	16.40	17.10	26.40	28.30	15.20	17.50
4%	53.53	63.90	57.99	58.36	53.16	56.88	53.16	49.40	51.67	54.30
5%	27.88	27.90	20.82	23.05	27.14	20.82	14.13	13.80	27.88	23.00
SKEW	0.57	0.52	0.59	0.66	0.87	0.70	0.62	0.32	0.83	1.04
KUR	0.65	2.34	0.90	0.62	1.53	0.76	0.73	0.32	0.92	1.86
Item	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20
Mean	3.97	4.10	3.90	4.06	4.10	3.99	3.91	3.80	3.67	4.01
SE	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
SD	0.89	0.90	0.88	0.89	0.88	0.85	0.84	0.87	0.86	0.81
1%	0.70	0.70	1.10	-	-	0.70	0.70	1.10	0.40	0.70
2%	6.30	6.30	5.90	5.90	4.80	6.70	6.70	6.30	10.00	4.10
3%	17.50	11.90	19.70	18.20	19.30	11.50	15.60	23.80	27.10	15.60
4%	46.10	43.90	48.00	39.40	36.80	54.60	54.60	48.70	47.60	52.40
5%	29.40	37.20	25.30	36.40	39.00	26.40	22.30	20.10	14.90	27.10
SKEW	0.74	0.99	0.72	0.65	0.63	0.95	0.81	0.60	0.38	0.82
KUR	0.28	0.70	0.44	0.37	0.47	1.04	0.74	0.32	0.28	0.98
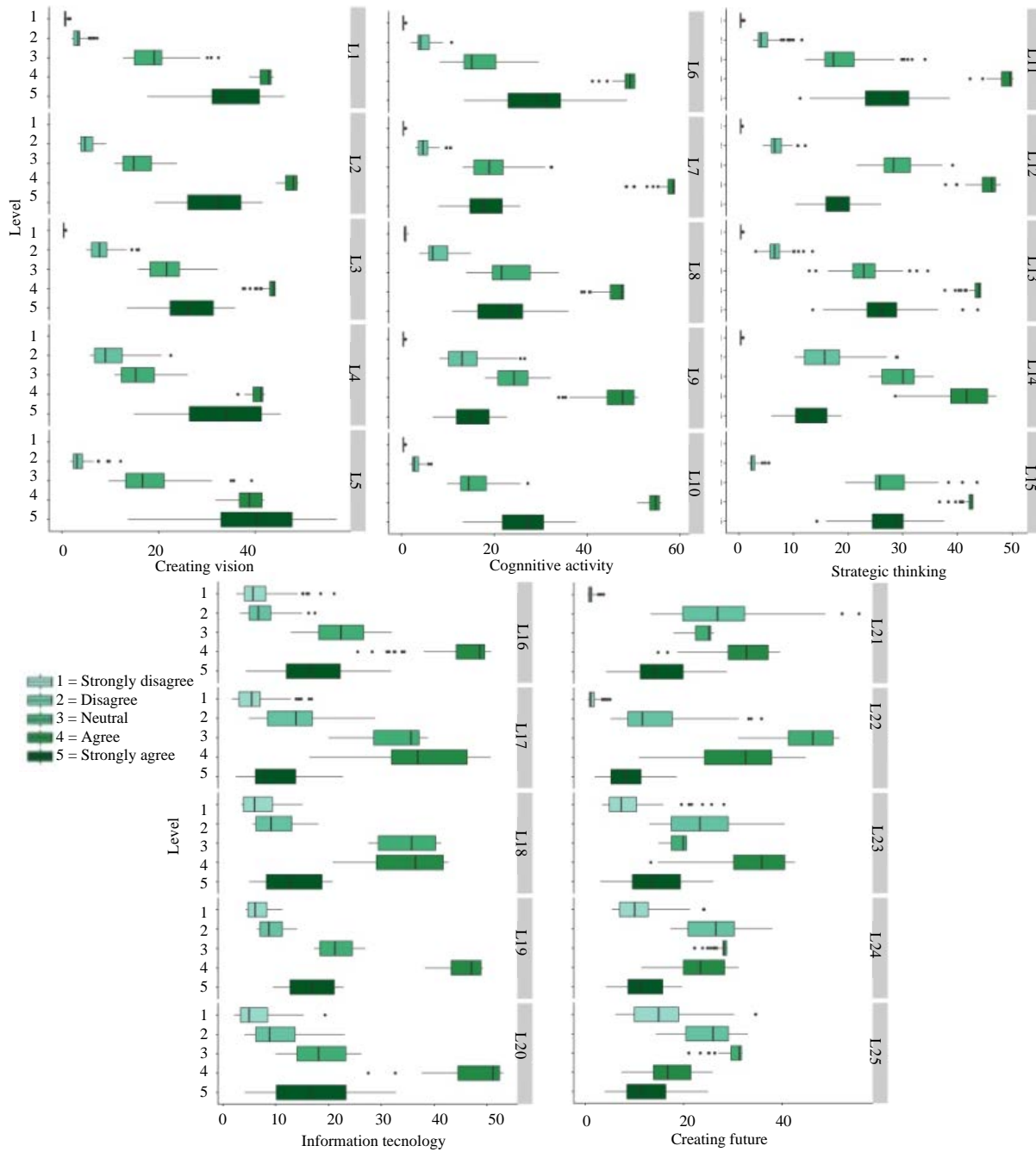
Fig. 1: Probability, according to a logistic regression model of respondents choosing one of the five possible answers
for each one of the statements regarding the strategic leadership practices

sampling group it is highly likely that they participate in such a group (58.5% agree and 17.8% strongly agree). Question L8 reveal how the employees see the leadership as an encourager of sharing knowledge, according to the interviewed answers this is highly likely to occur with a total probability of 68% of respondents agreeing or

strongly agreeing with that. This is important, since, the question L9 ask whether or not the respondents possess enough knowledge to perform their research our results show that although, it is highly likely the employee agree with possessing enough knowledge (46.5%), the second most common result is a neutral answer (24.2%).

Then, the last question for this subgroup evaluate the working environment regarding the group interest in self-development here again we observe a high probability of a positive answer (54.3% agree and 27.1% strongly agree), thus, demonstrating the common interest in developing cognitive skills.

The questionnaire also evaluated the perceptions on strategic thinking with five questions (Fig. 1c). Question L11 evaluated how likely a respondent is in not spending time rethinking things that are done, according to our results, the likelihood of the employee wasting time is smaller than 4.8% (disagreeing and strongly disagreeing). However when questioned about re-evaluating the past activities (L12) we found an increasing likelihood of our respondents doing that with 46.2% chance of agreeing and 18.6% chance of strongly agreeing. Interestingly, it is also high the likelihood of the employees to get rid of unwanted thoughts as suggests by the answers given in the question L13 (43.5% agreeing, 26.4% strongly agreeing). In turn, question L14 investigated how much time usually spent thinking back over embarrassing or disappointing moments and our results showed that it is highly likely that the employees spend time on that (41.3% probability of agreeing). However, the second most probable answer is a neutral option (29.4%) and disagree presented only 16% chance of occurring. Our results also, showed that if the employee rethinks in a situation it usually will do that from another point of view (L15) with a 42.0% of agreeing with this approach and 27.9% chance of strongly agreeing.

The next set of questions covered questions regarding information technology (Fig. 1d). The question L16 showed that the majority of respondents agree (45.4%) or strongly agree (16.4%) that in their organization technology is widely used in developing new systems but we also observed a high chance of neutral responses (23.4%). Next question, L17 investigated how the organization is concerned about the quality of technology and the results showed that both agree and neutral responses presented nearly the same probability (36.8% and 33.5%, respectively). The same phenomena occurred when we asked whether or not the organization possess appropriate information technology (L18) with 35.3% chance of agreeing and 34.9% chance of a neutral response. However, there is a slight change when in L19 we inquire the respondents about the experience of employees in information technology, the results reveal that the majority of respondents agree (45.7%) or strongly agree (16.4%) that they have enough experience on information technology. We also observed a major consensus that the organization possesses the information technology that allows strategic changes (L20). In total, there is a 67.3% chance of employees agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement.

The last set of question regarding leadership evaluates the organization capacity showing a long-term perspective (creating future, Fig. 1e). According to the responses to the question L21, there is no consensus of employees in a long-term future. The chance of agreeing is 32.3%, followed by disagreeing with 27.1 and a 23.8% chance of a neutral answer. Next question L22 investigates how the perception regarding the achievement of future goals here the respondents possess a more neutral opinion (45.4%) followed by a chance of agreeing (30.5%) that all the employees are confident about the achievement of future goals. When we investigate whether or not the respondent agrees that their working environment helps to create strategic opportunities (L23), the results showed divided opinions with a 34.2% chance of agreeing followed by 24.2% chance of disagreeing with this statement. Opinions also remained divided when we evaluate how the respondents agree that the employees offer new ideas (L24), the changes of a neutral answer (27.9%) slightly surpass the chances of disagreeing (26%) and agreeing (23.8). Lastly when we checked the degree of confidence, the respondents possess in the strategic objectives of the organization we observe a high level of discordance. Although, the most was a neutral opinion (31.1%) the disagree and strongly disagree options together presented higher values (25.3 and 15.2%, respectively) than the counterparts (agreeing with 17.1% and strongly agreeing with 12.3%).

The second part of the questionnaire allows us to obtain the perception regarding the critical success factors. In that, the first set of five questions evaluated the manager concern for employees (Fig. 2a). The first question (S1), the respondents, inform whether or not they believe to be necessary for the research team. Our results showed that they are highly likely to perceive themselves as an essential part of the research team (53.5 agreed and 27.9% strongly agreed). The question S2 evaluated how the respondents consider that their jobs allow them to use a variety of skills and abilities here again, positive answer occurred more often (63.9% chance of agreeing and 27.9% of strongly agreeing). Moreover when the respondents faced a question regarding the recognition of their accomplishments (S3) our results showed that this is highly likely to occur (78.8% chance of agreeing or strongly agreeing in receiving some recognition). Interestingly, the results also showed a high chance of the respondents research with someone who encourages their development (S4) with an overall 58.4% probability of agreeing and 23.0% chance of strongly agreeing with that statement. Then, question S5 evaluated how the leadership followed its commitments. According to the respondent's opinion this is a common phenomenon, since, it is highly likely that they either agree (53.2%) or strongly agree (27.1%).
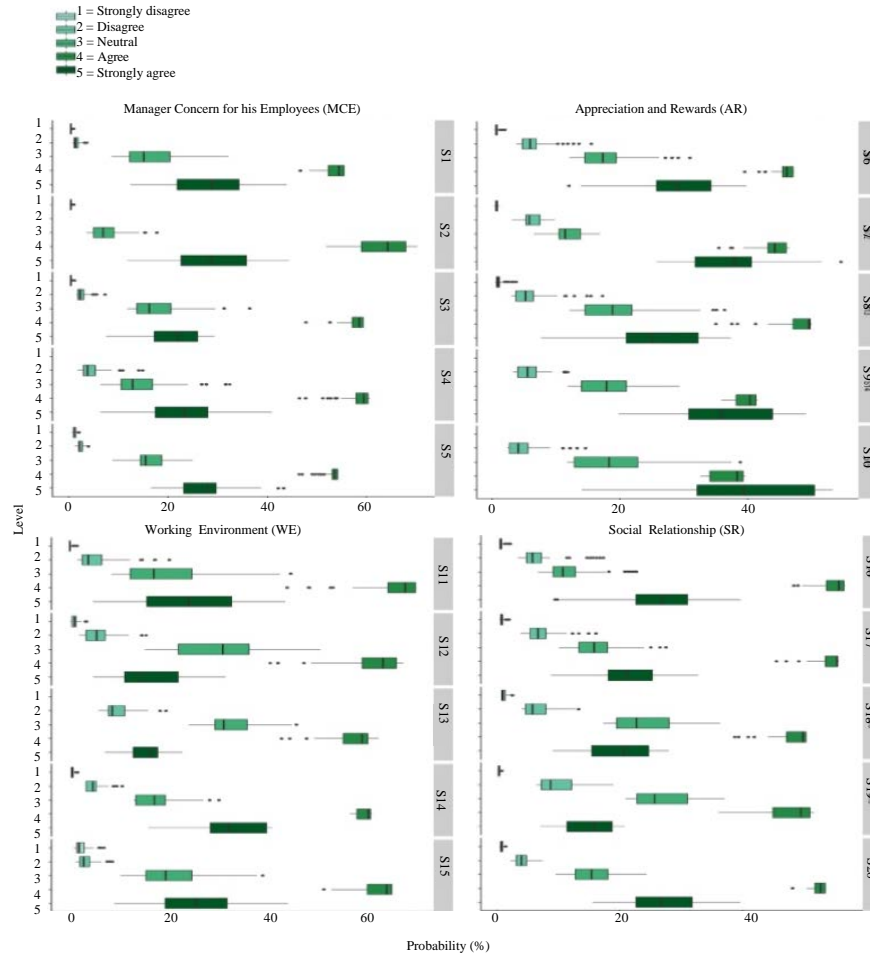
Fig. 2: Probability, according to a logistic regression model of respondents choosing one of the 5 possible answers for each one of the statements regarding the critical success factors of competitiveness

The next set of question allows the respondents to evaluate their working environment (Fig. 2b). First, the question S6 checks whether or not the working environment is open and accepts individual differences. findings reveal that the majority of respondents are highly likely to agree with that statement (56.9% agreeing and 20.1% for strongly agreeing). However when the question S7 inquires about the tools and resources available for a good performance, results showed that despite the high chance of the respondents agree they have the proper tools and resources (53.2%) the chance of a neutral response (26.4%) is 2.1 times bigger than the probability of strongly agreeing with that (14.1%). The results also reveal the same trend for S8 that deals with the balance work and personal life, so, although, the results showed a high chance of the respondents find good ways to mention the research/life balance (49.4% of agreeing and 13.8% of strongly agreeing) we observe a 28.3% chance

of a neutral answer. We also evaluated the respondent's perception regarding the decision-making. Specifically, we assessed whether or not the decisions depend on environmental analysis (S9). In general, this seems to occur highly often, since, both positive answers presented a high likelihood (52.7% chance of agreeing and 27.9% of strongly agreeing). Lastly, S10 evaluated if the employee has the opportunities to learn and grow in the organization which seems to occur highly often, since, there is a high likelihood of a respondent agree (54.3%) or strongly agreeing (23%).

We also evaluated the organization success by investigating the employee's perceptions of appreciation and rewards (Fig. 2c). The first question (S11) evaluates the respondent's perception in whether or not they receive a deserved recognition for their research. We observed a high chance of occurring a recognition, since, a total probability of 75.5% of a respondent agrees or

strongly agree with that happening. We also noted a high likelihood of they received satisfying benefits for good research (S12) with a total 81.1% (agreeing or strongly agreeing).

Interestingly, the vast majority of respondents seem to agree (48%) or strongly agree (25.3%) that their promotion depends on their effectiveness (S13). This combined with statement S14 that evaluates whether or not the respondents received adequate promotion and opportunities (39.4% chance of agreeing and 36.4% of strongly agreeing) suggests that rewards occurred following employee's expectations. This becomes particularly important when we observe that according to the answers for question S15 there is a high probability (75.8%) of a respondent receive a verbal or written recognition for their research.

Finally, our last set of questions evaluated the aspects of social relationships (Fig. 2d). Statement S16 evaluated whether or not the respondents know someone to ask for any suggestion. results showed that the chances of that occurring are high with a total of 81%. Another relevant point of our investigation is if the respondent perceives himself as an equal among others (S17). According to our responses, they indeed perceive equality among each other (54.6% agreeing and 22.3% strongly agreeing). Moreover, in case of need for advice, the responded revealed a high chance of knowing someone (48.7% agreeing and 20.1% strongly agreeing). However, when evaluated their perception regarding someone take the pride from their accomplishments, we observed that a neutral response occurred more often (27.1%) than a strongly agree (14.9%). However, the principal outcome remains the agree (47.6%). The respondents also revealed that they are highly likely to quickly become close to their colleagues with a total of 79.5% chance of agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement S20.

The greatest GDP producer in Iraq, since, its independence has been oil-derived products from the oil sources, Iraq can generate sulphur, natural gas as well as phosphates (OPEC, 2018). This is so devastating to the economy as well as governance of the state. In essence, there is a cognate link between a country depending on one export (especially, natural resources) to both internal and external conflict, abuse of democracy and corruption.

For a better future, the economic stability should focus on manufacturing (Sebastian and Muhammed, 2017). In the entire governance, the leaders have a degree of influence to be drivers of change of such magnitude (Goleman *et al.*, 2013). This is possible when the government itself creates a link between strategic leadership and competitiveness. The nature of the

product and consumer satisfaction in order to cause diversity in the Iraqi manufacturing sector (Chang *et al.*, 2016).

This study has evaluated the level of strategic leadership practices as (creating vision, cognitive activity, strategic thinking, information technology, change to the future) and critical success factor for competitiveness as (manager concern for employees, working environment, appreciation and rewards, social relationships).

As it was discovered by the findings that strategic leadership had the capacity to create a vision and the vision reflects employees expectations and it is essential to the goals.

The results illustrate that employees needs more knowledge to improve their ability and skills to perform research, so, the leadership has to encourage individuals to share their knowledge with each other. Moreover, the employees are wasting time and not exploit it in strategic thinking. The results also show that although employees are highly efficient in dealing with technology, there is a gap in the use of modern and high quality technology in the implementation of business. That emphasizes the need to implement strategic change in technology.

The company has no consensus of employees in a long-term future and confident about the achievement of future goals. The formulation of new ideas is limited in light of the difficult conditions experienced by various manufacturing sectors in the country. According by Boga and Ensari (2009), leadership strongly defines the concept of success in organizations, playing a major and pivotal role in determining the key factors and requirements for future success. Our results showed that in general that strategic leadership practices are exist in Iraqi manufacturing companies. But it need some steps to make it success and it is affected by the Iraqi circumstances.

The results shows that the strategy requires attention to the sharing of knowledge for workers as this contributes to the improvement of their competence in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them. Several studies have confirmed that knowledge sharing contributes to improving the success and innovation of the organization (Ritala *et al.*, 2015), it is also reflected in the social relationship, especially with regard to shared skills and knowledge within the working group (Widen-Wulff and Ginman, 2004). On the social relationship, especially with regard to shared skills and knowledge within the working group.

The results showed that there is a wasted time in this company and the employees does not care much about the time, especially for strategic thinking that not widely adopted within the company. The importance of strategic thinking is great for improving leadership abilities and

achieving competitiveness (Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, there is a need for the other factors , first the adoption of modern technology in the company, especially, production technology, secondly, leaders need to stimulate organizational components through an effort-based reward system and working environment, thirdly, leadership must ensure effective resource allocation (information technology and skills exchange) to enhance competitiveness.

CONCLUSSION

The objective of this study is to study strategic leadership practices and critical success factors for competitiveness in the Iraqi manufacturing sector. The present study supports previous studies that linked transformational leadership and perceived organizational success (Lowe *et al.*, 1996). We expand previous research by demonstrating the relationship between different subjects in strategic leadership and competitiveness (Ireland and Hitt, 1999; Haque *et al.*, 2017).

LIMITATIONS

Despite its advantages our current study faces some limitations. First, the size and location of the sample reduces the generalization of the results. Secondly, the sample should include a larger number of staff from different organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moreover, since, concepts create facts (Jussim, 1991), we emphasize that in order to ensure a clear understanding of the vision and purpose of the company, leadership must establish a reasonable and equitable system of benefits and rewards. Once an employee understands that looking for the company's vision and purpose will bring benefits, the company intensifies the path towards competitiveness. In addition, the evaluation of performance perceptions must become a focal point for ensuring that everyone has an accurate assessment of their efforts.

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