Correlation between Effective Leadership and Organizational Excellence  
(Case Study: Faculty Members of Islamic Azad University-Sari Branch)  
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ABSTRACT: This research aims to study the correlation between effective leadership and organizational excellence. The research methodology is descriptive-correlative and the population includes all of the faculty members of Islamic Azad University-Sari Branch and their number is 219 individuals. The statistical sample is based on the Krejcie and Morgan table and according to the sample size it is 140 individuals. Data collection tools include two questionnaires, standard questionnaire of leadership effectiveness, and Organizational Excellence questionnaire, and their reliability was measured through Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient (through SPSS software) for the effectiveness leadership questionnaire and the organizational excellence and it was respectively α=0.93, and α=0.96. In order to analyze data the frequency tables, column chart, mean, and SD were used in the descriptive statistics part and Pearson correlation coefficient, and regression were used in the inferential statistics part. Achieved results indicate that there is a correlation between effective leadership, participation, and commitment of human resources, education, and development of human resources, continuous quality improvement, customer care, result-orientation, and empowering human resources.  

Keywords: Effective leadership, Organizational excellence, Human resources.  

INTRODUCTION  

During recent decades management science scholars have been relying on the experiences of successful and leading organizations and they have always tried to find solutions for improvement and moving toward excellence. Their research results lead to finding solutions for improving the conditions and moving toward excellence, and it is possible to refer to creation of tools such as Total Quality Management (TQM), and International Standard Organization (ISO) and if each of these tools is used at the proper time and place it could bring about several financial and non-financial benefits for the organizations, but regarding the perpetual wants and expectations of the managers and their attitudes toward these tools that are based on results (result-orienting) usually the achieved output from using these techniques do not live up to the expectations, but parallel to the rise of several techniques, the EFQM organizational excellence models were born since 1950’s. The excellence models used the same patterns of successful companies in the world and they managed to provide an appropriate framework for organizations management in the competitive environment. These models’ clear characteristic is their general attitudes which enable the management to do the evaluation and scrutiny about his/her organization and at the same time compare them with the similar organization. In the framework of paying attention to the TQM, the EFQM organizational excellence model is introduced as a tool for establishing different management systems in organizations and as a tool for measuring their success in establishing these systems. Organizational excellence is reaching a condition which guarantees development activity in three dimensions of quality, innovation and continuous improvement for supplying and promoting interests and internal and external organizational stakeholders such as customers, investors, staff and society (Soltani, 2004).  

Achieving excellence requires management and acceptance of basic concepts that are resulted from the management body, and it consists of result-orientation, customer care, leadership, and objective sustainability, process-
based management, realities, development and participation of staff, and innovation and continuous improvement. One of the features of EFQM excellence models is valuing the staff innovations. The excellence model as a comprehensive tool with a comprehensive approach to all aspects of the organization helps to have a more accurate understanding about organization. Also it is used for measuring and comparing the performance of organizations and it enables the organizations to evaluate their success in implementing programs in different periods of time, also enables them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and to define projects and move them toward excellence. One of the important aspects of excellence model is its practicality. Creating changes and adapting to the changing cultural and social conditions and/or using appropriate standards for evaluation and providing the requirements of qualitative growth for institutions and universities globally reveal the success of this approach. The correlation between excellence model and the organizational behavior is due to the leadership which considers the EFQM organizational excellence model as one of the empowering standards. Excellent organizations are run by leaders who determine clear directions for their organizations. These leaders establish the values and ethics of culture and structure in the organizations and they do it in a way that they create an identical identity and attractiveness in the stakeholders’ minds. They constantly encourage the staff toward excellence and they are known as the distinctive pattern for behavior and performance. These leaders run the organizations by appreciating the stakeholders and cooperating with them in joint improvement activities, and in case of organizational changes they confidently try to assure the stakeholders in favor of the organization purposes.

Organizations which have institutionalized the continuous improvement thought as a principle and value always try to detect and understand their situation and condition. The EFQM excellence model is a non-prescribed framework for self-assessment, and by the help of this tool organizations could assess if they have done the right things and if they achieve favorable results or not. This model was offered in 1992 for evaluating the organizations for Europe Quality Award, but it rapidly spread all over the world and became a basis for creating national and regional quality awards. The EFQM excellence model is a management structure which relies on the basic principles and concepts and paying attention to the main standards of TQM and self-assessment system in order to result in progress and improvement (Azar et al., 2006). The excellence model is a tool for measuring the amount of systems settlement in organizations, self-assessment and instruction which detects and determines the managers’ activity route for performance improvement. Thus the key message of EFQM excellence models is answering two questions, that how this model is recognized as an appropriate and logical management structure and who can have essential roles in this chain of communications and interactions? (Ahmadi, 2007).

Leadership is a common practice of management, the ability to be an effective leader is one of the keys to be an efficient manager. A manager who plays the role of leadership is someone who is capable of being incisive and efficient for employees who are under his/her supervision, in other words the employees accept his/her influence (Alaghehband, 1999). Leadership is the main responsibility of management but that is not all, managers have to design and organize, and the leader’s main role is influencing others. Leadership is the power to influence others. Having this power could increase the managers’ effectiveness in order to successfully implement their programs without relying on formal managerial authority (Ahmadi, 2007). When a leader is able to help his/her subordinates to reach their goals, and provide useful and constructive changes in favor of his/her and others’ interests without violating others’ rights now this leader is called an effective leader. Effective leadership usually emphasizes on directing, mobilizing, motivating, inspiring, effectiveness and values appraisal, norms and human emotions.

Effective leaders empower their staff and increase their enthusiasm toward performing tasks in support of aims of organizational performance. Quality of leadership in management distinguishes between effective and ineffective organizations (Rezaeian, 2001). Effective leaders are valuable. These leaders set the agenda and they provide a culture for todays (Solitani, 2004). Since the last two decades the higher education has faced several challenges and problems. Quantitative development of universities, multiplicity of several educational institutes, increasing number of university students and the large number of unemployed graduates are some of the challenges that deteriorate Iran's higher education system. Quantitative development of universities regardless of existing capabilities brings about the quality reduction of higher education system. In fact, it is impossible to think that the quantitative development and increasing number of graduates is a reason for existence of quality. These challenges require the responsibility and accountability of Iran’s higher education system, and make the university system to rethink about its structure, aim, mission and procedures. Since universities are one of the most important institutions, and societies need them for their development thus it is necessary for them to have transparency, accountability and quality improvement (Akbari Yzadi, 2008).

In a research Mavroidis et al (2007) concluded that in appropriate condition of leadership the correlation between effectiveness and leadership style is insignificant. Also in the average condition the correlation between effectiveness and leadership style is insignificant as well. In a research Busch et al (2008) reached these conclusions: Consciousness,
intelligence, insight and innovation have a direct correlation with higher level of management, and also they concluded that the most important factor relying on the managers’ effective leadership is the managers’ ability to supervise, which means his/her skills in using the leadership methods or that effective leadership which is appropriate to the particular circumstances. In their research Zaho et al (2004) concluded that: knowledge, influence, quality of communication, and involvement in administrative tasks are credible signs of effective leaders.

Paying attention to the leadership role in institutions of higher education is considered as the most important and the main standard in quality management of universities. Leadership shows how the senior managers at the universities realize the values, performance directions, concentration on university students and stakeholders, employment, innovation and organizational education. These indicators also show how the institutions of higher education do their responsibilities toward people and create key communications with them. Quality, expense, and fruition are the three main factors at the center of attention of universities and institutions of higher education, but quality has received more attention than the two other factors, because it is believed that expense and fruition are somehow affected by the quality, and if the quality improves expenses will decrease and fruition will increase (Ahmadi, 2007). Since quoted by Akbari Yazdi (2008) believes that 4 professional, competitive, ethical and responsibility requirements have revealed the necessity of quality guarantee in higher educations, and also Tutunecu et al (2007) state that the world is changing and day by day its uncertainty and non-designation is increasing, thus all of the institutions of higher education are under pressure in order to provide appropriate answers to the social needs. The universities position in relation to the quality is very complicated; experiences have proved that universities will be able to offer the best services to the society if they are always engaged in improving the quality of their services.

However if the training centers do not have desirable quality then the scientific and technical future of the country will not be so safe. Low educational quality also leads to lack of expert and skilled human power, and ultimately the economic, social, and cultural aims and developmental programs of the counter will face several problems, and this issue will call the universities, and institutions of higher education into questions. Thus the higher education system as a dynamic and targeted system needs attention and propagation in two quantitative and qualitative aspects, and paying attention to each of them without paying attention to the other one results in creation of problems for the higher education system. Regarding the fact that faculty members as the university human resources have a more effective role in realizing the organizational excellence thus in the current research the researcher seeks to find the correlation between leadership effectiveness and organizational excellence among the faculty members of Islamic Azad University-Sari branch.

**METHODOLOGY**

The current research methodology is descriptive-correlate, and from the point of aim and educational subject it is an applied research. The current research population includes all of the faculty members of Islamic Azad University-Sari branch and their number is 170 individuals. In order to estimate the sample size the Krejcie and Morgan table was used and according to the population size the sample size of 170 individuals was chosen. The simple random sampling has been used in this research, and in random sampling it is also called probability sampling. The probability of being chosen for each of the members of the population is equal, and no factor except chance and coincidence exists in choosing the individuals from the population for the sample. This research uses two standard questionnaires of: leadership effectiveness, including 28 questions and EFQM Organizational Excellence including 50 questions. In the current research Likert scale has been used with 4 different levels of very low, low, very high, and high, and the evaluation was 1-4 from minimum to maximum and each question has 4 items for categorizing and evaluating these indicators, and items are categorized by very high, high, low, very low.

Since the mentioned questionnaires are standard questionnaires then they have adequate validity and reliability, but for more certainty about the mentioned population the researcher recalculated their validity and reliability. In order to determine the validity of questions of the questionnaire they were observed by the supervisor, advisor and education experts. For determining its reliability a preliminary plan was implemented and 28 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents as a test and they were collected and by the use of SPSS software the reliability of leadership effectiveness was calculated $\alpha=93\%$ and EFQM Organizational Excellence was calculated $\alpha=96\%$, which indicates the high reliability of the tools. For data analysis in 2 parts of descriptive statistics the frequency tables and its percentage, charting, mean, and SD and in inferential statistics part the Pearson correlation coefficient and regression were used. All different levels of statistical calculation in this research were conducted by the use of a computer and through SPSS20 statistical analysis software.
RESULTS

Surveying the research descriptive results showed that from 140 individuals 59% of the examinees were females, and 41% of them were males. 130 individuals had master degree. 30% of them had career history of 5-10 years. Also description of scores of leadership effectiveness and components of EFQM organizational excellence are shown in figure 1.

![Bar chart showing mean scores of leadership effectiveness and components of excellence of human resources](chart.png)

**Figure 1.** Descriptive survey of scores of leadership effectiveness and components of excellence of human resources.

The research main question was that is there any significant correlation between effective leadership and components of excellence of human resources?

**Table 1.** Surveying the correlation between organizational leadership and components of excellence of human resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>Observed F</th>
<th>Critical F</th>
<th>Test level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>4.341</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.171</td>
<td>14.272</td>
<td>3.065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at level 0.05.

In the above mentioned regression analysis table the achieved probability amount at all levels of running the test is less than the significant level 0.05, on the other hand the amount of observed F is more than critical F, thus with 95% confidence the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that a significant linear correlation exists between the effective leadership and components of excellence of human resources, and it is possible to achieve an appropriate model based on these components variables.

**Table 2.** Estimating the regression coefficients of final model based on the effective leadership and components of excellence of human resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Regression coefficient</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Non-standard</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Observing the information in regression coefficient estimation table at significance level 0.05 and confidence level 95% the corresponding probability with fixed coefficient in final regression model equals 0.000, and it shows that the effective leadership is not only influenced by components of excellence, and the roles of other factors are significant as well. In standard and non-standard coefficient columns also respectively by considering the fixed coefficient and without considering it, the corresponding coefficient with each component is estimated. As it is observable in table 2, the coefficient of variable of participation and commitment of human resources and customer care is positive, which means that they have direct correlation with effective leadership, and by the increase of one of them the other one increase too. Thus after 2 levels of implementing regression analysis it is concluded that a linear significant correlation exists between effective leadership and two above mentioned components. Based on this the final model as the most appropriate model is fitted to the data based on the standard linear correlation:

\[ y = 0.283x_{1} + 0.191x_{4} \]

Effective leadership = 0.283 \times \text{(participation and commitment of resources)} + 0.211 \times \text{(customer care)}

Considering the fixed coefficient the linear equation is written as followed:

\[ y = 0.948 + 0.211x_{1} + 0.171x_{4} \]

Effective leadership = 0.948 + 0.283 \times \text{(participation and commitment of resources)} + 0.211 \times \text{(customer care)}

Also another part of the research results showed that 15.7% of changes in effective leadership could be explained through participation and commitment of human resources. These figures were: the components of education and development of human resources 14.9%, continuous quality improvement 14.9%, and customer care 12.5%, result-orientation 13.1%, and empowerment 10.5%.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current research main aim was surveying the correlation between effective leadership and organizational excellence. The research methodology was descriptive-correlative, and the population included all the faculty members of Islamic Azad University-Sari branch, and their number was 210 individuals. The data collection tools consisted of two standard questionnaires of EFQM organizational excellence, and leadership effectiveness. Results showed that there is a correlation between effective leadership, participation and commitment of human resources, education and development of human resources, continuous quality improvement, customer care, result-orientation, and empowerment of human resources. Managers as the leaders try to coordinate the staff efforts, and to guide the organization direction. Effectiveness is the sign of internal state and the individual’s and group initial readiness for performing tasks. Thus it has a motivational nature. Position power in an organization is delegated within the hierarchical framework and a top-bottom vertical separation (Rezaeian, 2001).

While the personal power is created bottom-top and it is created based on the subordinates taking effect and in the field of combination of strategies for reaching a common goal. An effective leader could have intellectual, professional and motivational influence on the manpower in order to increase the fruition of the organization. Regarding the fact that individuals’ motivation results in their commitment toward organization goals, this results in their participation for realizing goals. In today’s world most of the organizations are shocked due to the low attention to the environment and lack of having a program for detecting changes and the role of environment in organization. For coping with these changes it is necessary to pay attention to the education and development of human resources, and one of the issues preparing the organization for participating in the competition is the updated knowledge of staff of that organization (Busch et al., 2008). Staff are considered as the driving force of the organization and based on the fact that today’s organizations have an open system and they interact with their surrounding environment then in order to participate in the competition they have to pay attention to their staff learning as a permanent need and the information should flow at
all levels. Continuous quality improvement is an unstoppable concept, and in other words it could always improve. The organization improvement should not take place only in the quality of goods and services, because experiences have shown that if you do not pay attention to the all aspects of the organization then this continuous quality improvement won’t be sustained, and you did not achieve the real concept of quality. The continuous quality improvement consists of a system in which efforts are made in order to meet everyone’s expectations to the fullest. Generally, the quality means the product and services compatibility with customers’ needs and expectations, and it happens when the products or services meet the customers’ (internal and external) expectations (Azar et al., 2006). One of the features of effective leadership is giving responsibilities to the subordinates and delegating them, in this way the manpower will have motivation and commitment and they are committed to the organization and this results in flourishing their abilities and their effectiveness and efficiency will increase, and ultimately the increase of fruition is one of its results.

According to the current research results it is suggested to the organizational staff and the faculty members to have a tangible contribution in developing a strategic statement for the overall objectives. They should have an organizational direction and culture. Directors must be available for the staff and members and these directors should personally participate in serious acknowledgement of individuals who cause improvement, and the organization should have a procedure for participation of all of the staff and faculty members in order to create improvement, and the staff authorities should regularly increase, and they should acquire the authority to make decisions and make changes without putting the organization into any possible risks. There must be an effective two-way communication between the staff and it is necessary to appreciate the staff efforts for making progress and success in the organization, and they must be considered valuable, and they should be rewarded based on their actions. The organization should be sensitive toward staff and members’ perspectives and views about different organizational subjects such as mental health of the working environment, and the salaries, and it should receive data through questionnaires for accurate evaluation of staff job satisfaction, also the organization should be sensitive toward the conformity of employees with the organizational values and needs, and it should provide an assessment process for alignment of individual goals and needs and organizational needs. Also it is recommended to constantly improve the physical assets such as buildings, and equipment along with the interests of staff and stakeholders and maintaining the resources, and the organization should make sure that analyzing and using the financial interests are along with the strategic objectives and the organizational values and they guarantee the organization stable position, and the data for doing necessary actions about the similar organizations performance are updated and they are available for the appropriate individuals (Zaho et al., 2004).

The scientific communications and cooperation should develop through a prospective and structured approach and these communications should result in detecting and reaching more opportunities for the organizational excellence of higher education. Also there must be a based system for continuous processes based on detecting opportunities through analyzing the condition of other organizations that reached excellence. It seems that leadership acts as a barrier between the conflicting parties, and it is necessary to recognize the nature of human beings membership in organizations. If we consider a rational model for the organization then we can define the effectiveness as the ability of organization for reaching its goals, and if we consider the organization as a social team then we can define the effectiveness based on the compatibility of organization with changing conditions of the environment. The organizational goal is an optimum which the organization tries to reach. Each organization has its goals and effective leadership could encourage the staff to reach these goals, and to encourage them to have unity of goal. Effective leaders empower their staff, which means that they let others make decisions about their careers and make plans about the activities related to their tasks. In fact capable managers and leaders use the capable staff, and the effective leaders use influencing others in order to encourage them for doing tasks in support of increasing organizational performance goals.

REFERENCES


