IMPACT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY DIMENSIONS ON ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE; IN KURDISTAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Purpose: to investigate the relationship and impact of strategic leadership competency dimension (Intellectual IC, Managerial MC and Emotional Competencies EC) on academic staff performance (ASP) in Kurdistan Public Universities (KPUs).

Objectives: The effectiveness of leadership of universities is of a paramount importance for an excellent Academic Staff Performance (ASP). This is achieved by investigating and measuring the impact of each of the three individual leadership competency dimensions in terms of contribution; on ASP. Weaknesses in any of these leadership competency dimensions can then be enhanced through training to insure high standard university graduates.

Methodology: Building on transactional, transformational and competency schools of leadership theories, this study used a quantitative survey and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for analyzing data relating to (649) academic leaders; representing the whole population of KPUs; to whom questionnaires were distributed. Only 50% of that number is returned complete. A regression analysis was used to identify the contribution of each of these three individual leadership competency dimensions, on ASP.

Research Questions: This study attempts to answer two significant questions; (i) what are the dimensions of strategic leadership competency that predict the academic staff performance in Kurdistan public universities? (ii) What are the necessary suggestions to improve staff academic performance in Kurdistan public universities?

Originality/Value: The study is the first empirical study in Kurdistan Region of Iraq that focuses on improving ASP through determining the impact of each dimensional group of competencies, for resolving possible weaknesses and reinforcing the importance of leadership competencies in achieving better ASP.

Findings: The results indicate a significant positive correlation exists between all study variables. In terms of contribution, only two of the leadership competency dimensions; Intellectual and Managerial Competencies are significantly contributing towards ASP, but the third dimension; Emotional Competencies, was insignificant and is not a predictor of academic staff performance.

Conclusion: the findings suggest a need for establishing appropriate training programs to deal with any leadership competency imperfection with extra attention given for enhancing the emotional component to increase academic staff performance effectiveness.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Universities, Competences and Styles, Academic Staff.

[I] Introduction

It is not surprising that extant educational literature considers education generally and higher education in particular the most prominent institutions devoted for mankind development and prosperity. Evidently, recent year's literature has intensively been focusing on educational institutions as the most important humanitarian activities in the development of societies through the discovery, preservation, dissemination and application of scientific knowledge (Drugus & Landoy, 2014). These Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a direct social, economic and political impact on people and nations such that their positive payback can be clearly reflected into ascending generations. There is a need for such institutions to improve their academic quality by incorporating knowledge creation, innovation and provision of variety of services to the society. Characteristics of leadership competencies have a direct impact on Academic Staff Performance (ASP). Literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between leadership competencies and ASP, (Tripathi & Suri, 2010).

Thus, to successfully lead an organisation, a strategic leader must possess an appropriate number of competencies that keeps him/her effective in dealing with a variety of environmental situations with an ability to adapt and flexibility to change. Obviously, lack of profit incentive in non-profit institutions, have made this task even more difficult to implement without being equipped with the relevant competencies (Dimitrios, Sakas & Viachos, 2013). However, enhancing ASP is the dominant objective of HEIs; reflecting wide interest in spreading knowledge and services to local society, economic growth as well as promotion and sustainment of highly qualified university graduates that can become future entrepreneurs; capable of establishing and/or running/managing potentially profitable businesses. Surely, successful ventures naturally lead to increased employment and overall community welfare.

[2] Literature Review

- **Strategic Leadership Competencies (SLC)**

In response to accelerated increase of scholarly research on the topic of 'leadership', diverse leadership theories have been developed especially in the last three decades (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden & Hu, 2014). The evolution of leadership theories goes back to the period before the world war two and went since then across several stages from "great man" notion of heroic leaders, through traits theories, behaviourist theories, situational and contingency leadership theories, transactional and transformational leadership theory, and on to leadership competency theory (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). Kanji and Moura indicated that leadership is a frustrating concept by suggesting that there are "almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are researchers who have attempted to define the concept," (Jarbandhan, 2012:40). Leadership is often seen as a key factor in coordinating and aligning organizational processes (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2011). The significance of the term leadership stems from the fact that the quality of the whole performance of any institutional

setting, with all its underlying criteria and indicators, is contingent upon the effectiveness of the strategy adopted by leadership.

As there is no one comprehensive definition to the Term 'Strategy', Macmillan and Tampoe study (as cited in Mahdi, 2014) retrieved the following two definitions made by earliest authors and explained their implications as follows:

"A strategy knows the business you propose to carry out", and "A strategy is the pattern of major objectives, purposes or goals and essential policies or plans, for achieving those goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be." Thus, the key to being a successful active manager/leader is being strategic, resourceful, establishes priorities in implementing long-range plans and, as Silberman (2003) elaborates; "allocates time and energy in five major arenas that are concerned with:
Assessing and developing own leadership skills, Coaching and managing individual employee performance, Building collaboration and teamwork, Facilitating planning and problem-solving meetings and Leading change".

However, building on the behavioural, contingency and visionary, and emotional intelligence of leadership schools [Goleman et al., (2002); and Müller & Turner, (2007)] and the competency schools [(Dulewicz & Higgs (2005); and Sydänmaanlakka, (2003)], have shown in a general management context that leadership styles with the associated competencies are essential for the implementation of a strategy and influencing performance, and that different leadership styles are appropriate in different contexts. Additionally, there are assertions that there is no evidence to substantiate the existence of a single prescription for the effective performance (Higgs and Rowland, 2003). Therefore, how a leader should do or what s/he is expected to do relate to the ability based on behaviour/style, and performs a task by integrating knowledge, skills and attitude. This integration leads to the appropriate behaviour required to complete a task in line with a predetermined and desired performance level, (Dulewicz & Higgs 2005), as shown in Table 1 below. This level in turn requires that the leader applies in an appropriate way or ways these competencies to fully achieve success or exemplary performance in the job at hand (Jarbandhan 2012).

Table 1 History of leadership schools

Leadership School	The Period	Authors (examples)	Description
(1)Traits	1930s -1940	Kirkpatrick & Locke, (1991)	Effective leaders show common traits; leaders born not made.
(2)Behavior or Style	1940s-1950	Blake & Mouton, (1978), Tannenbaum & Schmidt (1958)	Effective leaders adopt certain styles or behaviours; leadership skills can be developed.
(3)Contingency	1960s–1970	Fiedler (1967), House (1971),Robbins (1991).	What makes an effective leader depends on the situation.
(4)Transactional and	1980s–1990	Bass (1990)	Depends on which of the

Transformational Theory (Visionary or Charismatic)			two styles that are connected to this school, i.e. transformational or transactional. For transformational: the concern is for relationships. For transactional; concern is for process.*
(5)Emotional Intelligence	2000s	Goleman et al., (2002)	Emotional intelligence has a greater impact on performance than intellect.
(6)Competency	2000s	Dulewicz & Higgs, (2003) Sydänmaanlakka* (2003)	Effective leaders exhibit a variety of competencies relating to different profiles, styles and schools, used in different situations based on rational, emotional, intellectual and spiritual intelligence competencies.*

[**Source (Adapted*): Muller & Turner, 2007**]

The importance of leadership competencies stems from the need to encounter globalization and modernisation that have created a wide and complex network of interconnected world. Dealing with such complexity and rapid technological inventions of the 21st century has placed great significance on the effectiveness of leadership than ever before. Effective leaders have always been recognized as a success factor for organisations, (Tabassi et al., 2016). But because leadership is a dynamic behaviour, the best role and style it plays varies according to the status-quo of the situation/context. Dulewicz & Higgs (2005) argue that unique opportunity for managers to relate leadership competency dimensions to three different leadership styles – engaging, goal-oriented and involving – and, in turn, to the degree of organisational volatility faced by the leader, thus enabling the identification of the most appropriate style.

Nonetheless, researchers like Seiler & Pfister(as cited in Vaculik, Prochazka & Smutny 2014) argue that knowledge and ability of the leaders not only influence the effectiveness of their followers (subordinates) but their own individual success as well, and that these skills and abilities allow firms to accumulate capabilities which, over a period of time, may be developed into competencies that allow a particular firm to gain competitive advantage due to the inimitable basis upon which competencies are formed (Brown & Squire, 2007).

Interest in employees' competencies is derived from the widespread belief that they are the most valuable asset of the company (Jałocha et al. 2014). As expressed by Lombardo & Eichinger study, (as cited by Kools, 2010) competencies can also be enriched and are often interrelated; nonetheless, they seldom operate in isolation. This means a competency may become of little relevance if a leader possesses the competency of organizational strategy and cannot communicate effectively with constituents the outcome of the efforts (Kools, 2010). According to Caupin et al., (2006) (as cited by Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014) - the competency has been originated from the Latin word 'competentia' which means "authorized to judge", as well as "the right to speak". A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It includes ability to

satisfy variety of demands, utilizing and mobilizing all types of human and capital resources (including skills and attitudes) within a specific context (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014).

David McClelland, the distinguished Harvard's psychologist (as cited in Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006) who was first initiated into the human resource literature clarifies that competency based approaches have proved to be a critical tool in many organizational functions, such as workforce selection and succession planning and performance appraisal that is for identification, aligning, and measurement purposes. In fact, the idea of competency based approach within the corporate environment, referred to during the 1970s, and that its development and use since then, has been overwhelming.

The use of competencies in human resource management is not something new, although the approach is still characterised by certain confusion related to what competencies are and how they should be identified, measured and implemented. This confusion explains, as Jessup (1989) argues(as cited in Jarbandhan 2012), the high rate of response by the developed countries in setting up their own mandatory training centers and accreditation bodies during the 1970s and 1980s of last century, for the derivation of a statement of competencies that are written in accordance to what has been described as "a new initiative that analyses the functions employees carry out, paying particular attention to purpose and outcome with additional analysis carried out by, or on behalf, of employers and employees in the relevant sector and endorsed by them".

Competencies increase the effectiveness of performance through promoting leadership intelligence where Sydänmaanlakka (2003) defines intelligence as the capability to use different kinds of competencies in various domains of body, mind, emotion and spirituality in order to solve problems or create products in a particular cultural setting.

Vaculik et al. (2014) argue that there are five types of leadership competency groups, such as professional, strategic, personal, social and intercultural, that are among the factors influencing their effectiveness, yet at the same time agree with the study of Anderson et al., 2008 (as cited in Ulrich et al. 2012) on the significance of grouping the competencies into different specific competency models. However, the latest human resource (HR) competency model proposes that HR professionals must master six competencies especially in today's environments that are characterised with volatility and rapid pace of technological progress. These competencies are: Credible Activist; Strategic Positioner; Capability Builder; Change Champion; Human Resource Innovator Integrator; and Technology Proponent. Strebler et al., 1997; and Hoffmann, 1999: (as cited by Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014) stated that the terms 'competent/competence/competences' refer to the state or quality of being able and fit; i. e. expressing criteria for or standards of performance, whereas the terms 'competency/competencies' are used to refer to the behaviours that an individual/leader   needs to demonstrate. Competency has been defined as "Personal characteristics required for enabling an individual to engage in a leadership role in an effective manner, a range of skills, behaviours and styles related to the context in which leadership is exercised" (Dulewicz and Higgs 2005). According to Šiugždinien who argue from a competency approach perspective; in Jalocha et al. (2014), that competency is expected to help to identify the skills, knowledge, behaviors and capabilities needed to meet current and future personnel selection needs and to help eliminate the gap between the competencies required by a project manager, job role, or enterprise strategy etc. and those available.

- **Dimensions of Strategic Leadership Competencies**

Reviewing literature indicates a multi-dimensional frameworks (models) being adopted by most competency-related bodies of the western world. While USA have increasingly been using the functional and cognitive competencies as an added range to their regular behavioural competencies model, UK, is now increasingly using cognitive and behavioural competencies as an added range to their occupational functional competency model. As far as other European countries such as France, Germany and Austria, they have joined the group only recently, but adopting a comprehensive framework, specifying knowledge, skills and behaviours as their competency dimensions (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). Notably, in these contexts, the competencies that individuals need to meet their goals have become more complex, requiring more than the mastery of certain narrowly defined skills. Accordingly, a 'competency model' has been described as a valid, observable, and measurable list of competencies that include key behaviors required for excellent performance in a particular role (Cernusca and Dima, 2007). 'Competency Mapping' on the other hand, refers to the process whereby certain prerequisite competencies are identified, associated with, and are required to be, excellently perform a specific organisation job, task or activity (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014).

However, as far as the process of selecting the appropriate set of leadership competency dimensions for assessing the effectiveness of the academic performance of public universities in Kurdistan regional government in Iraq; the researcher was of the opinion of using the 15 leadership competency clusters classified by Dulewicz & Higgs (2005) regrouped under the three most relevant dimensions, shown in Table 2 below. The opinion was based on the following reasons; first, Dulewicz & Higgs (2005) dimensions have been approved and applied by a number of researchers such as (Cacioppe, 1997; Sosik and Magerian, 1999; Chaudry, 2001; Fineman, 1997; Goffee and Jones, 2000; Higgs and Rowland, 2001; 2003). Second, these leadership competencies have been identified not for organisational change projects only, but can also be used for other types of projects e.g., educational projects as suggested by (Muller &Turner 2010). Third, these dimensions include a cognitive construct that have been realized out of what seems to have been the center of focus in literature dialogues in thinking on organisational behaviour (Fineman, 1997; Goffee and Jones, 2000).

Interestingly, much of the literature on transformational leadership implies that leaders require emotional intelligence when dealing with followers (Higgs and Rowland, 2001), beside the strongly proven linkage between the two (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005). Fourth, these three Dulewicz and Higgs, (2005) competency dimensions (intellectual competencies IC, managerial competencies MC and emotional competencies EC) is applied for the first time on the whole region of Kurdistan's HEIs. They should constitute a fundamental measure for assessing the reality of the regions' leadership effectiveness. Additionally, these leadership competency dimensions should have positive implications for the selection and training of any of the four related levels of academic leaders that have been chosen as leaders' population, with the aim of finding a match between the psychological and emotional profiles of the individual leaders and the requirements of the related task (Turner and Muller, 2007). For this study, Strategic Leadership Competency (SLC) Dimensions of Dulewicz & Higgs (2005) were adopted after being validated, reliability tested, and proposed by other researchers. However, each of these three SLC dimensions (IC, MC and EC) encompasses 3, 5 and 7 clusters of competencies respectively; as in Table 2 below.

Table2. Leadership Competencies and their dimensions

Categories/Dimensions:	Intellectual Competencies	Managerial Competencies	Emotional Competencies
Sub-dimensions:	*Critical analysis and judgement. *Vision & Imagination *Strategic Perspective.	*Resource management *Engaging communication. *Empowering *Developing *Achieving.	*Self-awareness *Intuitiveness *Emotional resilience *Interpersonal sensitivity. *Influence *Motivation *Conscientiousness

(Source: Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005)

- **Academic Staff Performance (ASP)**

College and university rankings have always been the central concern of educational institutions and the focus of attention whenever ASP is considered. There is no one comprehensive or unanimous definition to ASP due to the existence of a variety of related fields of industries, contexts and situations. Wang, (2010) argues that organizational performance can be defined as "the extent to which organizational goals are achieved". Another definition set by Lockett (as cited by Masron et al., 2012), describes performance as "a multidimensional construct of common factors that are frequently associated with organizational performance such as efficiency, quality, responsiveness, cost and overall effectiveness." This definition was expanded in 1994 by Armstrong under the notion 'Performance Management' to become the "means of getting better results from the organisation, teams and individuals by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, objectives and standards of achievement and competence" (Masron et al., 2012).

As far as the ASP is concerned, the dependent variable of this paper, Gaither, Nedwek & Neal, 1994 (as cited by Kong and Fu, 2012), define the term as "a quantity that measures some elements of an institution or its activity". For the purpose of this study, the term ASP include the efficiency of academics' performance in terms of teaching, research productivity and publications, services provided and academicians' satisfaction (Al-mayali, 2014). ASP is seen as the core product of HEIs that requires feedback information through measures of evaluation over their academicians' performance for accountability, quality assurance assessment, and competition and growth sustainability (Tangen, 2005). ASP is thus composed of four dimensions as follows:

- **Teaching** is at the heart of any call for change or innovation, and ultimately it is what the teaching staff delivers in the classroom that makes the difference in the learning outcomes of students (Medina & Encomienda, 2013). Teaching ranges from face-to-face to distance teaching where both are regarded as the normal methods of teaching and is reflected in the students learning output, enabling the student to achieve high-quality learning as literature confirms that students who follow deep or student-centered approaches to learning were more

likely to have a higher quality achievement in learning than those adopting surface or learning-oriented approaches. However, it was also found there is a positive relationship between teachers' approaches to teaching and their conceptions of good teaching, and that approaches to teaching were strongly influenced by teachers' conception of teaching (Parpala & Ylänne, 2007).

- **Research Productivity:** Research, in particular, is so important that it was described as being one of pillars that underpin a university's academic reputation. It is also considered as a major contributor in the accumulation of new knowledge to the extent that it started to become a favorable part of the university's mission statement for attracting readers' attention (Wang, 2010). Research has been defined as "any intellectually directed and disciplined investigation into the phenomena of human experience leading to a conclusion that increases the sum of human knowledge" Wilson & Wilson, 1972: (as cited by Almayali, 2014). Research dimension may take more credits in the overall measurement of academic staff performance (Wang, 2010), hence, many countries have been expanding in teaching and research functions in recent years. In China, for instance, the rate of spending on teaching and research has increased during 2000-2004 by 133%, (Johnes & YU, 2008). Research universities may place more resources on research activities than educational activities to the extent that the current spending amounts on scientific researches alone, in some developed countries as a ratio of their gross domestic product (GDP), has been ranging around 4% in Japan, 3% in the United States of America, and 2% in Europe (Almayali, 2014). Additionally, research generates positive publicity and reputation to the university/college concerned (Markom et al., 2012).

- **Academics' Services:** There is a believe that while quality leadership in HEIs has become the focus of research, there is an apparent literature shortage in relation to academic services activity, as distinct from those of teaching and researching, (Hashim & Mahmood, 2011). Considering the prevalent sense of concern by HEIs in today's competitive environment for growth sustainment, a creative and effective relationship of student centric philosophy for attraction, retention and quality service provision have become so imperative that steps have seriously been undertaken (Hasan, Llias, Rahman & Razak, 2009). As an attempt to remain competitive, Sahney & Benton, (2008) emphasize that the employees' strong commitment to good quality service has a strong link to the organisational benefits such as increase in revenue potentials, low cost effectiveness, and/or producing excellent graduates. Hashim, (2009) provides a number of such possible services that are primarily measured by means of administrative duties and consultation, faculty member service, department committee, volunteer or officer in a national, regional, and local counseling. Unlike key 'tangible' performance indicators (KPIs), Masron et al., (2012) argued that what was ignored is the 'key intangible performance' (KIP) which consists of ten kinds of academic staff services contributions. Eight of these ten represent contributions made to the HEIs and the other two are contributions made to the society or community that need to be considered by HEIs, (Masron et al., 2012).

- **Academic Staff Satisfaction:** Academic staff satisfaction in public universities has been regarded as a main factor in determining the strength of relationship between staff commitment and motivation, in one hand, and the quality and level of performance; in the other. According to Crossman & Abou-Zaki (2003) if we want to know the organizational health and quality of work, academic staff satisfaction becomes a key factor and largely depends upon human resources (Sohail & Delin, 2013). The commitment and retention of academic staff are crucial to effective academics' performance; leading to healthy HEIs' climate that leads to further increase in academic staff satisfaction and consequently enhancing learning environment

with overall improvements in the overall productivity (Noordin & Jusoff, 2009). Academic staff satisfaction is an individual's feeling toward his or her job, i. e. whether or not satisfied with his or her job,. This inner feeling, according to Worrell, (2004) stems from a combination of psychological, physiological and environmental conditions, influenced by internal and external factors existing at the workplace and reflected on the individual (Mehrad et al., 2015). Furthermore, Al-Hinai & Bajracharya (2014) believe that there are six major factors that could affect satisfaction of academicians, enumerating them as; remuneration and development; management support; students; colleagues; workload; and status of job. Ssesanga (2003), on the other hand, sets seven factors listed under two main categories; (1) co-worker behavioural factors: supervision and intrinsic, facets of teaching, (2) contextual (extrinsic) factors relating to: remuneration, governance, research, promotion, and working environment.
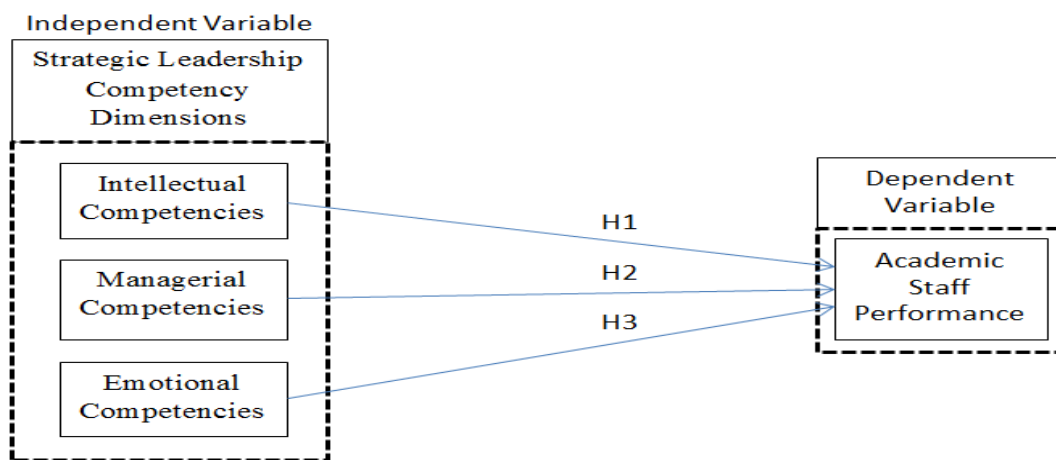
[3] Research Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1- Theoretical Framework of the Impact of Strategic Leadership Competency Dimensions on Academic Staff Performance in Kurdistan Public Universities

The following hypotheses derived from the literature are as follows:

H1: Intellectual leadership competency dimension significantly contributes to academic staff performance.

H2: Managerial leadership competency dimension significantly contributes to academic staff performance.

H3: Emotional leadership competency dimension significantly contributes to academic staff performance.

[4]   Research Methodology

This study proposes that the three dimensions of Strategic Leadership Competencies (IC, MC and EC) are essential instruments for measuring leadership effectiveness in performing their duties and responsibilities; translated in terms of academic staff performance. They provide indicators or criteria against which plans and targets are compared. The Structural Equation Model was used to determine the predictive ability of intellectual competencies, managerial competencies and emotional competencies, on academic staff performance. For the purpose of data collection, survey questionnaires were distributed among academic leaders of Kurdistan Public Universities, whose hierarchical levels are stated in next section. Likert Scale of five

ordinal measures from one (1) to five (5), are set low to high according to the level of importance respectively.

[5] Population and Sampling

In this study the population is confined into 14 universities/polytechnics of Kurdistan public universities, dispersed over three major provinces; Erbil, Sulaimania and Duhok (MHESR-KRG, 2014/2015). The term 'strategic leader' means any faculty designated in one of the following positions: 'University Vice President, Dean, Dean's Assistant, or Head of Department. These have been chosen because they are actually involved in the hierarchical decision making or in the implementation process, and are trusted to manage, lead, and perform their assigned individual tasks to achieve the targets set by the 'CEO or President' of their universities. The sampling frame represents whole population of strategic leaders in all of the (14) public universities in Kurdistan; see Table 3 below. However, all university presidents were excluded from the survey due to the obvious expectation that their self-evaluation might be biased or opinionated and thus it is best to be left to their followers' opinions. Table 3 below shows the total number of academic university leadership population is (649) to whom questionnaires were sent and a response rate of 50%.

Table 3   Total Number of leaders in each university

Universities/polytechnics	No. of Vice Presidents	No. of Deans	No. of Deputy Deans	No. of H.O.Ds	Total of leaders per University
1. University of Sulaimani	2	20	20	70	112
2. Salahaddin University-Erbil	2	14	14	83	113
3. University of Duhok	2	18	18	71	109
4. Koya University	2	4	4	30	40
5. Soran University	2	5	5	24	36
6. Hawler Medical University	2	5	5	12	24
7. University of Zakho	2	5	5	24	36
8. University of Raparin	2	5	5	23	35
9. University of Halabja	2	3	3	13	21
10. University of Garmian	2	6	6	29	43
11. Charmo University	2	3	3	9	17
12. Sulaimani Polytech/Univer.	2	5	5	14	26
13. Erbil Polytechnic/Univer.	2	3	3	9	17
14. Duhok Polytechnic/Univer.	2	4	4	10	20
Grand Total	**28**	**100**	**100**	**421**	**649**

(Source: MHESR-KRG, 2015)

[6] Findings:

The SPSS software version 22 was used to determine the correlation among all study variables, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Inter-Correlation Coefficient

Variables		MC	IC	EC	ASP
	MC	1			
Strategic leadership Comp. (SLC)	IC	.76**	1		
	EC	.80**	.71**	1	
Perceived Academics Performn.	ASP	.75**	.76**	.74**	1

The correlation results indicate that the components of exogenous variable; Strategic leadership Competencies (MC, IC and EC), have the highest strength of positive inter-relationships among each other ranged (r = .80, .76 and .71, $p < .01$). Furthermore, the second highest positive relationships are between the same SLC components and the endogenous variable; ASP which was in the range (r = .76, .75 and .74, $p < .01$).

As far as the predictive ability of the strategic leadership competency dimensions of intellectual, managerial and emotional competencies on academic staff performance, structural equation model (SEM) was used and the result on the indicates a good Model Fit Indices as shown in Figure 2 below.
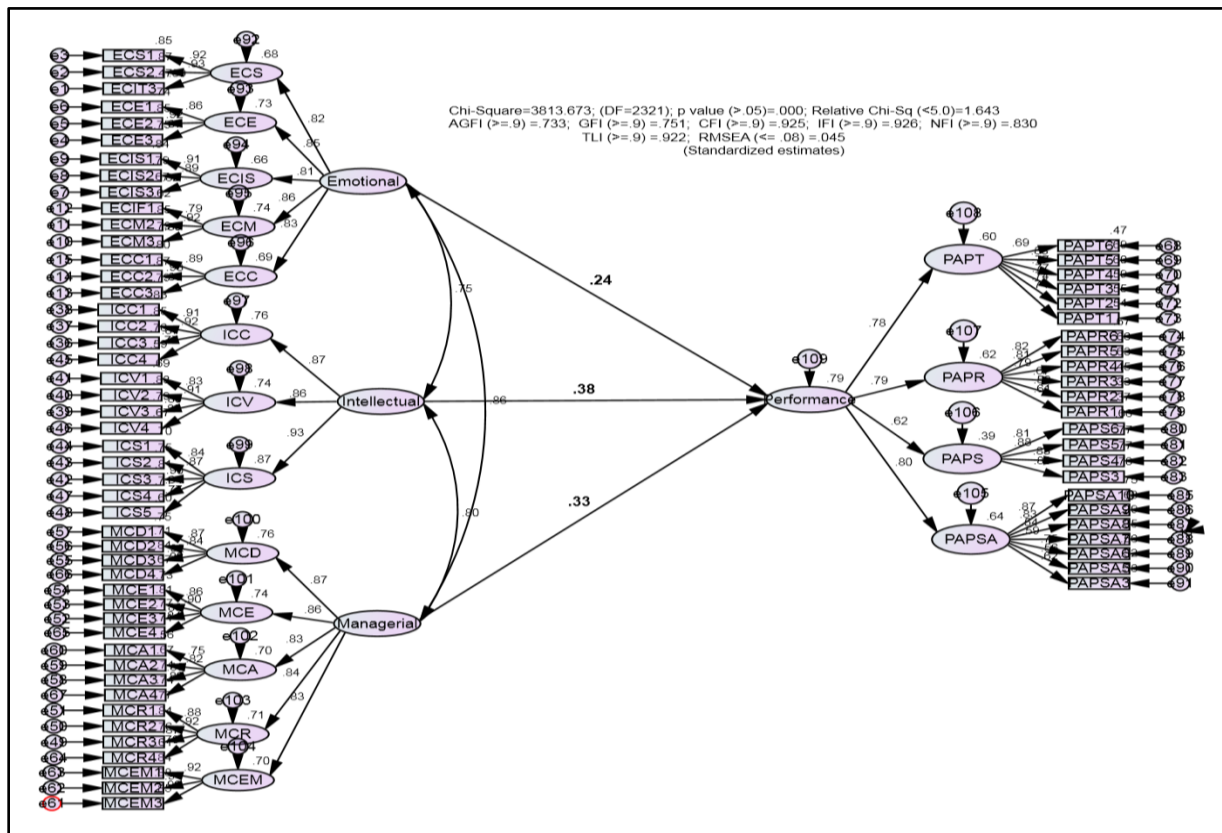

Figure 2: Structural Model indicating the prediction of Perceived Academic Staff Performance by Emotional Competencies, Intellectual Competencies and Managerial Competencies.

As shown above, the Structural Model consists of three predicting constructs relating to the three criteria dimensions of IC, MC and EC. Hence, the proposed hypotheses that examines the validity of the model are expressed as follows:

H1: Intellectual competencies significantly contribute to academic Staff performance.

Likewise, the Structural Model indicated that intellectual competencies are a significant predictor of perceived academic staff performance. The result as presented in Table 5 below indicated that, there is a significant relationship between intellectual competencies and perceived academic staff performance (β = .381, *CR* = 4.425, *p* < .05), therefore, H1 is supported. This also means, intellectual competencies significantly contributes to perceived academics' performance.

H2: Managerial competencies significantly contribute to academic staff performance.

The result of the Structural Model as illustrated in Table 5 supports the hypothesized significant relationship of managerial competencies and perceived academics' performance. The standardized regression weight indicated that managerial competencies is a significant predictor of perceived academics' performance (β = .332, *CR* = 2.894, *p* < .05). Therefore, *H2* is supported.

H3: Emotional competencies significantly contribute to academic staff performance.

Lastly, the Structural Model revealed that there is no significant relationship between emotional competencies and perceived academics' performance, (β = .147, *CR* = 1.426, *p* > .05). Thus, the hypothesized relationship of emotional competencies and perceived academic staff performance (*H3)* is not supported. This also means that emotional competencies are not a significant predictor of perceived academics' performance.

Table 5. Unstandardized and standardized regression weight in the hypothesized path model

Hypothesized relationships			B	S.E	β	*CR*	*P*
Performance	<---	Emotional	.202	.083	.243	2.428	.015
Performance	<---	Intellectual	.292	.066	.381	4.425	.000
Performance	<---	Managerial	.244	.084	.332	2.894	.004

B:- Unstandardized Regression Weight; S.E:- Standard Error; β:- Standardized Regression Weight; CR:- Critical Ratio; p:- Significant − *p*

[7] Discussions and Conclusions: As shown in the findings, the only competency dimension that has been insignificantly contributing to academic staff performance is emotional leadership competencies. This result was unsurprising because, being involved in the educational system as a lecturer; the author is convinced that all academicians, both leaders and otherwise, should share the blame for the overall performance, nonetheless, middle level leaders, (i.e. the deans and their assistants and may include heads of departments), are directly responsible for the insignificance

of their emotional competencies for being the mechanism or link that transmit top leadership thoughts and plans to the academicians, i.e. presidents and vice presidents in one hand and the members of the faculties responsible for the implementation of the plans in terms of teaching activities, on the other hand. This weakness may indicate lack of appropriate leadership talents and knowledge in dealing with their followers (subordinates). Looking back at the research problems above and the size of challenges facing the regional government of Kurdistan and its HEIs; one would realize that more issues are involves. On the one hand, leaders' competency may become of little relevance if a leader possesses the competency; e.g. emotional and cannot communicate effectively with his constituents (Kools, 2010). Furthermore, beside the strongly proven linkage between the two (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005); literature on transformational leadership implies that leaders require emotional intelligence when dealing with followers (Higgs and Rowland, 2001). On the other hand, as an alternative or complimentary to above, HR people are asked for establishing training programs that include the operationalization and enhancement of university management rewards systems as a means to inspire interconnection between superiors and followers to improve emotional side of their leadership competencies which can surely be enriched (Vakola et al. 2007). Finally, the effectiveness and success of leadership are highly dependent on leadership style, context and the pertinent competencies.

[7-1] Recommendations for competencies and ASP improvements

Literature discloses general agreement among scholars that a competent, effective strategic university leadership is one having distinct capabilities of creating a proper and solid infrastructure to incorporate its activities of policy planning, systems, structural development, operating plans, resource investment, and improving human and physical resources to the extent that the objectives of educational institutions are achieved. Such a leadership can systematically undertake and update institutional analyses to realize the comprehensive institutional development within a framework of flexible integrated performance that achieves sustainable improvements. Such leadership requires a dynamic process of lifelong learning, the movement of which is influenced by personal and career maturity like other developmental processes, and therefore, any leadership gap can be addressed through a variety of strategies such as colleges and grow-your-own programs, and a host of other local or international programs," including university programs. All provide a way to meet the challenges facing the development of future community college presidents.

Much of the leadership is seen as an interpersonal process for influencing individuals and groups to achieve organisational goals, a strategic leadership must possess distinct set of leadership competency styles congruent with the context in which the leader works. These competencies help strategic leaders rationalize and improve their job activities and overall performance, become more efficient and effective in what they do enabling him/her anticipate, envision, and maintain flexibility and to empower others to achieve continuous personal and professional development. They also have significant implications on the selection of managers for the relevant training programs with the aim of finding a match between the psychological and emotional and other profiles of the manager and the requirements of the related task (Turner and Muller, 2006). Many of world leading institutions have established leadership training centers as well as individually owned or corporate consultancy services. According to Professor Buchen (2005) many American universities; such as Walden, Capella, and Phoenix universities are distinguished for being involved in distance education, employing contractor agents working part time for many online universities, and all were regionally or nationally accredited.

[7-2] Limitations:

Leadership limitation: The hierarchy of strategic leadership population that have been adopted in this study consists of three leadership levels (1- Vice Presidents, 2- Deans and Dean Assistants and 3- Heads of Departments). Heads of departments have been included and regarded as part of the strategic leadership due to their essential and indispensible linking role between university top leadership and faculty staff members in the implementation of university strategy. However, despite the differing tasks and duties of HoD in terms of context and competency styles, the researcher had no choice but to include them as strategic leaders because; first, they are the only direct link between the CEOs of the university or college and the rest of the academic teaching staff in terms of executing strategies, policies and regulations; and second, the ratio of HoD responses alone compared to both first and second level leaders is 4 to 1; which means four times the number of Vice Presidents, Deans and Deans' Assistants altogether. Such overwhelming number of HoDs in terms of using their opinion in the evaluation of leadership competencies might have negatively affected the authenticity of results. In other words, had there been greater first and second levels leadership ratio; results might have been different.

[7-3] **Recommendation for future studies**

The suggestion for future studies is an extension to this research by exploring the impact of each of the same three independent dimensions of leadership competencies IC, MC and EC; on the four individual dimensions of academic staff performance; i.e. on teaching, research productivity, academic services and academic staff satisfaction. This shall have a major positive impact on future academic performance in terms of greater information feedback indicators for evaluating strengthens and weaknesses of each dimension in relation to each of the four dimensions of ASP just mentioned.

Furthermore, academic leaders training programs should expand beyond the traditional methods, tools and techniques, and include more social and psychological training to foster the development of beneficial attitudes and the growing tendency of emotional competences (Muller &Turner, 2010). Specifically, top level leadership of HEIs needs special training programs on how to improve their emotional competencies and successfully deal with their subordinates. It also needs to understand the related details of transactional and transformational leadership theory and its underlying impact on the relationships between leaders and followers for achieving the ultimate goals of their organisation.

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