

# **Leadership Styles of Department Chairs at the Hashemite University: Pilot Study**

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the leadership styles of the Hashemite University department chairs as perceived by department chairs (35 department chairs) and faculty members (413 faculty members), measured by the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). The results indicated that there are no differences in perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimension of leadership style among department chairs. Based on the ANOVA analysis, T-test, Means and Standard Deviation differences in leadership styles were not found among department chairs as perceived by gender and length of service of faculty members. Finally implications for practice are provided for higher education institutions and department chairs.

**Key words:** leadership styles, leadership behavior.

## الأنماط القيادية لرؤساء الأقسام العلمية في الجامعة الهاشمية : دراسة استطلاعية

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### الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى التعرف على الأنماط القيادية لرؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية في الجامعة الهاشمية وذلك من وجهة نظر رؤساء الأقسام والبالغ عددهم (٣٥)، وأعضاء هيئة التدريس والبالغ عدده (٤١٣)، مقاس باستبيان وصف السلوك القيادي (LBDQ). من خلال استخدام اختبار (ت)، والمتوسطات الحسابية والانحرافات المعيارية، وتحليل التباين الأحادي، أشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى عدم وجود فروقات ذات دلالة احصائية بين وجهة نظر رؤساء الأقسام وأعضاء عينة التدريس للنمط القيادي لرؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية. ولم تظهر نتائج الدراسة أي فرق في الأنماط القيادية لرؤساء الأقسام يعود إلى جنس أو إلى مدة الخدمة في التعليم العالي لأعضاء هيئة التدريس. وقد تم اقتراح بعض التوصيات والتطبيقات في مجال الأنماط القيادية لرؤساء الأقسام العلمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأنماط القيادية، السلوك القيادي.

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### Introduction

The study of leadership is not a recent phenomenon. However, despite the plethora of literature available there has been no consistent definition of leadership (Mello, 1999). Definitions of leadership offered by the likes of Hernon & Rossiter (2006), Drouillard and Kleiner (1996), and Kotter (1990) have a common theme, indicating that a leader has the ability to influence a group of individuals towards the achievement of a particular goal.

Many studies have been done and some important theories and concepts have been developed on the topic of leadership mainly in areas of business and industry organizations (Yukl, 1989). As many leadership theorists revealed, there are at least two fundamental and distinct categories of leader behavior, one concerned with people and interpersonal relations and the other with production and task achievement (Blake & Mouton, 1985).

If the administrator emphasizes task achievement and neglects human relations with subordinates, his/her leadership style will be described as mainly task-oriented. The conception of "Ohio State Leadership Studies" is consistent with the above duality of leadership. In these studies, an instrument called the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was developed to measure two basic dimensions of leader behavior – initiating structure (IS) and consideration (CN). Initiating structure refers to the establishment of well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure. Consideration refers to the provision of friendship, mutual trust, respect, warmth and interest in the relationship between the leader and members of the group (Halpin, 1966). Effective leader behavior is associated with high performance on both dimensions; and high initiating structure combined with high consideration is associated with favorable group attitudes and with favorable changes in

group attitude (Cheng, 1991).

Academic department chairs were concluded for the first time in Harvard University in 1739. In 1825 the University of Virginia organized into separate and distinct schools each headed by a full professor. In 1826, the University of Vermont was divided into four departments. In 1837, the University of Wisconsin provided for four departments. After that academic department chairs started to have a critical role in building department team climate as Gmelch and Miskin (1993) indicate, including: (1) understanding the characteristics of an effective team, how you know when you have one, and (2) developing the leadership required to encourage team effort, how you influence your faculty in that direction.

In the United States, universities employ approximately 80,000 department chairs (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999), and with the existing numbers of academic department chairs in institutions of higher education, the need to investigate the leadership styles of chairs is warranted. A 1991 national study of university department chairs in USA showed the average chair to be 50 years old, white, male, tenured, and possessing a PhD (Gmelch & Miskin, 1995).

Even more, especially new academic chairs can assume their new challenges with less frustration if they understand the hierarchical relationships and the essential elements for developing a culture of proactive change. Chairs will be called upon to play many roles, including change leader, operations rather than innovation; and college professional, or mentors guiding faculty through team building and professional development. Studies have shown that chairs are instrumental in implementing change at their institutions, with 80% of decisions at universities made at the departmental level (Hilosky & Watwood, 1997). Kouzes and Posner (1987) clarify five leadership practices common to successful leaders: They challenged the process, inspired a shared vision, enabled others to act, modeled the way, and encouraged the heart. Also, Kouzes and Posner add that the majority of people admire leaders who are honest, competent, forward looking, and inspiring. Teamwork is essential for a productive organization, collaboration is needed to develop the commitment and skills of employees, solve problems, and respond to environmental pressures.

Knight and Holen (1985) conducted a study to ascertain whether there

are significant relationship between departmental leadership (defined as faculty's perceptions of their chairperson's initiating structure and consideration) and faculty's perceptions of the quality of their chairperson's performance of typical responsibilities. The major results of this study were that both initiating structure and consideration were found to be significant for all.

Gmelch and Miskin (1993) defined the three major challenges facing department chairs. The first is to develop an understanding and clarity about the motives and roles of a department chair. The second is to understand the strategic planning process for creating a productive department, creating department vision, and building a mission statement. This statement describes the long term intent and vision of the department and the priorities for daily department effort and decision. The third major challenge is to develop the key leadership skills required for being an effective department chair, which are to manage your time, and creatively resolve your stress.

Al-ashker's (1994) study, found that the field of initiating structure had a mean that was higher than the field of consideration with a difference of 5.44 which indicated that leaders in both universities (Yarmouk University and Jordanian University of Science and Technology) are more concerned about initiating structure than the consideration.

Rather than providing empirical studies that address the leadership of chairs, most authors focus on specific topics such as their transition from research and teaching to academic management (Arter, 1981); their dilemmas in leadership (Cleveland, 1960); their position of conflict (Feltner & Goodsell, 1972); their management skills and mobility (Sagaria, 1988; Sagaria & Krotseng, 1986); and their role in governance and decision making (Baldrige, 1971). Also, the studies that address the leadership styles of department chairs were little. Therefore this study comes to fill the gap in measuring the leadership styles of department chairs at the Hashemite University.

### **Problem of the Study**

The leadership of department chairs are called upon to interact with and influence, as department chairs lead of their faculties, and administrative cabinets. These two groups, faculties and administrative cabinets, with their differing responsibilities, hierarchical relationships, educational background,

attitudes, and personalities present to department chairs differing leadership situations with he or she must deal. Whether a department chair is able to deal with these differing leadership situations in an equally effective manner given a department chair's own individual leadership style and background may determine the amount of satisfaction that a department chair gains from his or her position. The interaction of a department chair's leadership style with the group leadership situations within the faculties and administrative Cabinet can greatly influence the success of the department chair – faculties/ administrative cabinet relationship as well as the quality of the institution.

The efficiency of leadership style of department chairs is a significant factor influencing both the nature and the quality of an institution. The department chair who is able to develop an effective leadership style and maintain a relationship of productive harmony with the other principal leadership centers of the college is better able to devote more energy toward the creative development of the college. Conversely, a department chair who has ineffective leadership style and conflict with either the faculties or Administrative cabinet is not in as good a position to further his or her goals for the institution.

Most of the literature concerning organizational leadership concerns the leadership style and the relationship of principal leader with a single group that the leader is perceived to head. Such a view of organizational leadership admits to only one hierarchical relationship, a leader with a subordinate group. This approach to the understanding of organizational leadership, leadership styles does not adequately replicate the most complex situation in a university where the principal leader, the department chairs, is expected to lead equality well multiple groups, one of which hierarchically superior and another of which subordinate to the department chair. The problem as presented, seeks to explore these leadership styles, to investigate the differing leadership situations with which a department chair must deal, and to relate these situations to perceptions of department chair leadership style.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study came to address the nature of leadership styles of department chairs at the Hashemite University. So, the primary purpose of this study

was to explore the leadership styles of department chairs at the Hashemite University as perceived by department chairs and faculty members.

### **Study Questions and Hypothesis**

The study questions will be designed to explore the leadership styles of department chairs at the Hashemite University as perceived by department chairs and faculty members. The major questions of the study are:

**Q1:** What are the perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs at Hashemite University?

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between the perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs.

**Q2:** What are the perceptions of faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs at Hashemite University for each of the following variables: gender of faculty member, and length of service of faculty member?

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference between the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs as perceived by faculty members for each of the following variables: gender of faculty member, and length of service of faculty member.

### **Significance of the Study**

Prior to this study, no studies could be found in higher education institutions in Jordan to describe the relationship between learning style and leadership adaptability. Results of this study have important implications for department chairs and faculty members. By understanding their leadership styles, department chairs and faculty members can use such information to design effective communicating strategies. They will be better prepared to help others achieve success. Therefore, this study may help in seeking feasible approaches to help department chairs and faculty members find the most effective ways of communicating and dealing. The result of this study will also help fill in the gap in the literature related to the lack of research in leadership styles of department chairs and faculty members at the Hashemite University.



## Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations of the current study:

1. The study is limited to department chairs and faculty members at the Hashemite University during the first semester 2005/2006 in Jordan.
2. This inquiry into leadership styles of department chairs and faculty members at public institution of higher education in Jordan. Therefore, the study findings cannot be generalized to other areas of institutions of higher education within or outside of the university studied.
3. The data collection and intent of the study were limited to the Hashemite University. Therefore, the findings of this study should not be interpreted representative of the views of other department chairs and faculty members at other academic institutions.

## Operational Definitions

**Leadership:** The process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation.

**Leadership Style:** The manifestation of the leader's needs structure and personality, which motives his or her behavior in various leadership situations.

**Human Relations-oriented style:** A leadership style, the principal manifestation of which is the leader's attempt to define the relationship between the leader and the members of his or her groups, in terms of patterns of organization, channels of communication, methods of procedures, and specific job related tasks.

**Task-Oriented Style:** A leadership style where the principal manifestation of leader behavior is indicative of friendship, mutual, trust, respect, and warmth in the relationship between the leader and the members of his or her group.

**Academic department:** Is defined as a teaching unit with a faculty, which performs the regular duties of instruction, research, and service of the unit in all matters relating to curricular and educational policies of the unit, subject to approval of the faculty senate.

## Methodology and Procedures:

### Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study was all department chairs and faculty

members at the Hashemite University in Jordan for the first academic term 2005-2006, number of department chairs was (35) and faculty members was (413), at the same time, the population of department chairs was taken as a purposive sample of the study. A random sample of 200 faculty members was chosen for the study. A total of 32 academic department chairs and 101 faculty members responded to the survey with a response rate of 57%.

### **Instrumentation**

The variable department chair leadership style was measured through the use of items shown by Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) to identify two principal elements, which determine the nature of leadership style; Leader Consideration (Human Relations-Oriented) and Leader initiating Structure (Task Oriented). The instrument was originally developed by Halpin (1956) to measure the two dimensions of leadership style, initiating structure and consideration. The instrument contains 30 likert-type items; 15 items to measure Initiating Structure, and 15 items to measure Consideration dimensions. Each item is scored on a scale of 4 to 0, with assigning a score of 4 to Always, 3 to Often, 2 to occasionally, 1 to Seldom, and 0 to Never.

Using a split-half coefficient, Halpin (1956) presented the reliability for the LBDQ: Initiating Structure, .83; Consideration, .92. As for the validity of the instrument, Dipboye (1978) pointed out that the items were straightforward and seem to match commonsense descriptions of leader behavior in a variety of settings.

In this study the researcher employed the Arabic version of the LBDQ that was used by Al-Ashker (1994). Al-Ashker (1994) presented the reliability for the LBDQ by redistributing the questionnaire to a sample of 24 members, two weeks after the first time: Initiating structure 0.81; Consideration 0.83. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed by 10 people specialist in the field of educational administration in Yarmouk University and the Ministry of Education.

The researcher in this study tested the reliability of the LBDQ with a sample of 24 faculty members at Hashemite University different than that of the study but withdrawn from the same population (the Hashemite University faculty members). Cronbach's alpha for the two dimensions was calculated to

be as follows: Initiating Structure (.78), Consideration (.85). These reliability estimates seemed consistent with previous research (Al-Ashker, 1994). The validity of the questionnaire was assessed by 12 people specialist in the field of educational administration in the Hashemite University.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The LBDQ instrument was administered by the researcher and hand scored following the administration and scoring guidelines set forth by instrument. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) computer program was used to analyze the collected data; Means and Standard deviations, t-Test, and ANOVA. In all tests of the hypotheses, the 0.05 confidence level was used for determining statistical significance.

### **Results of the Study**

**Q1:** What are the perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs at Hashemite University?

**H01:** There is no significant difference between the perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs.

A t-test analysis was used to compare if there were differences in perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership style among department chairs. The t-value statistic was -1.750 with a significance level of .082. Thus, we failed to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there were no significant differences in perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the task-oriented dimension of leadership style among department chairs. Also, The t-value statistic was -1.593 with a significance level of .114. Thus, we failed to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there were no significant differences in perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the human relation-oriented dimension of leadership style among department chairs.

**Table 1**  
**T-test Scores of Department Chairs and Faculty Members Regarding Leadership Behavior of Department Chairs**

Dimensions	Count	Mean	SD	t-value	p
Task-Oriented					
Department chairs	32	77.53	13.99	-1.750	.082
Faculty members	101	81.24	9.10		
Human relations-oriented					
Department chairs	32	78.18	16.62	-1.593	.114
Faculty members	101	81.72	8.43		

**Q2:** What are the perceptions of faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs at Hashemite University for each of the following variables: gender of faculty member, and length of service of faculty member?

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference between the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs as perceived by faculty members for each of the following variables: gender of faculty member, and length of service of faculty member.

A one way analysis of variance was used to test these factors. Means and standard deviations males and females are presented in Table 2 and the ANOVA Summary table is presented in Table 3. There is insufficient evidence to show that a significant relationship exists between the leadership behaviors among department chairs as perceived by male and female faculty members.

**Table 2**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for Male and Female Faculty Members' Perceptions Concerning Department Chairs leadership Behavior**

Dimensions	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Task-oriented			
Male	84	81.35	9.60
Female	17	80.70	6.24
Human relations-oriented			
Male	84	81.19	8.68
Female	17	84.35	6.64

**Table 3**  
**ANOVA for the Perceptions of Male and Female Faculty Members**  
**Concerning two Dimensions of Leadership Behavior of Department Chairs**

Dimensions	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Task-Oriented					
Between Groups	5.997	1	5.997	.072	.789
Within Groups	8284.815	99	83.685		
Total	8290.812	100			
Human relations-oriented					
Between Groups	141.403	1	141.403	2.009	.159
Within Groups	6966.835	99	70.372		
Total	7108.238	100			

In terms of length of service of the faculty member, means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4 and the ANOVA Summary Table is presented in Table 5. Forty-one of the respondents had served three years and under. The mean for this group on task-oriented was 80.34 with a standard deviation of 8.52, and the mean for this group on human relations-oriented was 81.21 with a standard deviation of 8.01.

There is insufficient evidence to show that a significant relationship exists between the leadership behaviors (task-oriented, Human relations-oriented) among department chairs as perceived by length of service of faculty members.

**Table 4**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for Faculty Members' Perceptions**  
**Concerning Department Chairs Leadership Behavior- Length of Service**

Dimensions	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Task-oriented			
1-3	41	80.34	8.52
4-6	39	82.58	9.67
7 and over	21	80.52	9.24
Human relations-oriented			
1-3	41	81.21	8.01
4-6	39	83.00	8.26
7 and over	21	80.33	9.55

**Table 5**  
**ANOVA for the Perceptions of Faculty Members Concerning two Dimensions of Leadership Behavior of Department Chairs- Length of Service**

Dimensions	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Task-Oriented					
Between Groups	114.918	2	57.45	.689	.505
Within Groups	8175.894	98	83.42		
Total	8290.812	100			
Human relations-oriented					
Between Groups	114.547	2	57.27	.803	.451
Within Groups	6993.691	98	71.364		
Total	7108.238	100			

### Discussion and Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership behavior of department chairs at Hashemite University. The study also investigated differences in leadership styles based on in gender and length of service of faculty members. Overall results indicated that the department chairs were balanced between two dimensions of leadership style (task-oriented, and human relation-oriented), this finding is consistent with some literature (Halpin, 1966; Cheng, 1991). Also, the study showed that there were no significant differences in perceptions of department chairs and faculty members regarding the two dimensions of leadership styles (task-oriented, and human relation-oriented) among department chairs, this finding is not consistent with results of (Knight and Holen, 1985).

This study showed that no significant differences between male and female faculty members' perceptions of department chairs leadership's styles on both dimensions (task-oriented and human relation-oriented), this finding not consistent with Al-Ashker's (1994) research findings. In view of the above, it seems that any conclusions on whether female are better than male in leadership roles, or vice versa, may be missing the point. Arguably, a hostile, rapidly changing environment, replete with conflicting and competing pressures, confronts most higher education institutions. This situation demands leaders that have the flexibility to range over an array of leadership qualities and styles that have been labeled masculine

and feminine. This fact has not gone unnoticed in the literature on gender and leadership, with emphasis often given to the need for modern leadership to be androgynous, a term that is used to describe a leader, regardless of biological gender, able to combine the best of male and female leadership traits and styles.

Moreover, there is insufficient evidence to show that a significant relationship exists between the leadership styles (task-oriented, Human relations-oriented) among department chairs as perceived by length of service of faculty members. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to create equitable, accessible work environments, but department chairs also have a responsibility to manage and lead their own department development. Awareness is the first step toward suitable style of leadership. Department chairs would also benefit by sharing their responsibility and duties with each faculty member in their department to establish that they are not alone in the struggles of managing and leading their academic department.

Adopting suitable leadership style perspective arguably more closely to the real leadership challenges faced in academic departments. Then attempts to influence or persuade others of the merit of such ideas, and accordingly processes of communication, bargaining, negotiating and conflict resolution for example become important if department chair adopt one of the leadership styles; task-oriented or Human relations-oriented. The department chair may be seen to have a more or less prominent role in choosing leadership style as their status allows for a greater contribution to influence. It is suggested that leadership may be more helpfully seen as a particular task-oriented, one that perhaps shows an overt concern with attempts to influence others to accept ideas and develop human relation-oriented. Thus leadership styles are more helpfully seen as integral to managing and leading rather than a separate activity.

### **Recommendations**

This study adds up to the growing field of literature on the administrators' leadership styles in higher education institutions and the following theoretical and practical recommendations can be suggested:

### Theoretical Recommendations:

- More research is needed with a larger sample from higher education institutions.
- There is a need to explore the leadership styles between private and public institutions of higher education with different academic positions like deans and faculty members.
- A mixed method research design of both quantitative and qualitative research should be used to gain a deeper understanding of individual, institutional, and environmental factors that may influence leaders' orientation toward a particular leadership style.

### Practical Recommendations:

- Doing workshops regarding styles of leadership for department chairs clarifying the importance of both dimensions of styles of leadership.
- Leaders of higher education institutions should establish a university-based center for the study of department chairs, with emphasize on their leadership styles and the weakness and strengths associated with their styles.

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