

THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE  
ON THE PERFORMANCE OF IRAQI ACADEMIC STAFF

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## ABSTRACT

Performance of academic staff is critical for universities and countries. However, most studies have focused on the performance of employees in business organizations in developed countries. In Iraq, academic staff is migrating to other countries due to injustice and weak leadership as well as weak job satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to investigate the performance of academic staff in Iraqi public universities. The literature as well as the theories that are related to the performance of employees and academic staff were reviewed. Based on the review, this study proposed that leadership style (transformational and transactional) and organizational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional) would have a direct effect on the performance. Further, the study proposed that job satisfaction would mediate the effect of leadership style and organizational justice on the performance of academic staff. The population for this study were nine public universities in Baghdad. A quota sampling technique was employed to collect the data using a questionnaire. A total of 374 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of which 323 questionnaires were collected. The data was analysed using SPSS version 24.0 and Partial Least Square (PLS) version 3.3.2. A total of 297 complete and valid responses were collected. The measurement model and the structural model were conducted. All the criteria for assessing the measurement model were achieved. Using the structural model, the findings showed that the effect of organizational justice and leadership style on the performance of academic staff were significant. Transformational and transactional also had significant effect on the performance of academic staff. Further, the interactional and distributive justice also had significant effects on the performance of academic staff. Job satisfaction mediated the effect of organizational justice and leadership style on the performance of academic staff. Decision makers have to develop the practices of transformational leadership and justice among the academicians as it could increase the job satisfaction which leads to enhancement in the performance of academic staff.

## ABSTRAK

Prestasi staf akademik sangat penting bagi sesebuah universiti dan juga negara. Kebanyakan kajian di negara maju lebih memfokuskan kepada prestasi pekerja dalam kategori perniagaan. Di Iraq, kebanyakan staf akademik berhijrah ke negara lain kerana ketidakadilan berlaku dan akibat gaya kepemimpinan serta tahap kepuasan kerja yang rendah. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji prestasi staf akademik universiti awam di Iraq. Kajian literatur dan teori yang berkaitan dengan prestasi pekerja dan staf akademik telah dibahas dengan teliti. Berdasarkan tinjauan yang dilakukan, kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa gaya kepemimpinan (transformasional dan transaksional) dan keadilan organisasi (distributif, prosedural dan interaksional) mempunyai kesan langsung terhadap prestasi. Populasi untuk kajian ini melibatkan sembilan universiti awam di Baghdad. Teknik pensampelan mudah telah digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data menggunakan borang soal selidik. Sebanyak 374 borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada responden yang mana daripada jumlah tersebut sebanyak 323 borang soal selidik telah dikembalikan. SPSS (24.0) dan Partial Least Square (PLS) versi 3.3.2 telah digunakan dalam analisa data. Sejumlah 297 respons lengkap dan sah telah digunakan dalam analisa akhir. Sementara itu, model pengukuran dan model struktur telah dijalankan dan kesemua kriteria untuk menilai model pengukuran telah mencapai objektif kajian. Dengan menggunakan model struktur, hasil kajian mendapati bahawa pengaruh keadilan dan gaya kepemimpinan terhadap prestasi staf akademik adalah signifikan. Kepimpinan transformasi dan transaksi juga mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap prestasi staf akademik. Begitu juga bagi keadilan interaksional dan distributif juga mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap prestasi staf akademik. Peranan kepuasan kerja dalam memediasi keadilan organisasi dan gaya kepemimpinan turut mempengaruhi prestasi staf akademik. Sehubungan itu, pembuat keputusan perlu menggunakan gaya kepemimpinan transformasi bagi meningkatkan kepuasan kerja dan keadilan kerana ia berupaya meningkatkan prestasi staf akademik.

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Jameel, A. S., & Ahmad, A. R. (2019). Leadership and performance of academic staff in developing countries. In Proceedings of the 33rd International Business Information Management Association Conference, IBIMA (pp. 6101-6106).
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PTTA UTHM  
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

## CONTENTS

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	<b>xvi</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Research Objectives	5
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	7
1.6 Scope of the study	7
1.7 Definition of Key Terms	8
1.8 Organization of this thesis	9
1.9 Chapter Summary	11
 <b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Overview of Higher Education in Iraq	12

2.2.1 Historical Background	13
2.2.2 Education Systems in Iraq	16
2.2.2.1 Public HE	16
2.2.2.2 Private HE	19
2.2.3 Current Status of Higher Education and Academic Staff	20
2.3 Performance of Academic Staff	22
2.3.1 Definition of Performance	23
2.3.2 Measurement of Performance	24
2.4 Underpinning Theory	25
2.4.1 Social Exchange Theory	26
2.5 Leadership Style	27
2.5.1 Transformational Leadership	27
2.5.2 Transactional Leadership	31
2.6 Organizational Justice Theory	32
2.6.1 Equity Theory	33
2.6.2 Organizational Justice	33
2.7 Job Satisfaction: Two-Factor Theory	35
2.8 Existing Model of Performance of Academic Staff	37
2.9 Hypotheses Development	50
2.9.1 Leadership Style and Performance of Academic Staff	50
2.9.1.1 Transformational Leadership and Performance of Academic Staff	51
2.9.1.2 Transactional Leadership and Performance of Academic Staff	53
2.9.2 Organizational Justice and Performance of Academic Staff	54
2.9.2.1 Distributive Justice	55
2.9.2.2 Procedural Justice	56
2.9.2.3 Interactional Justice	57
2.9.3 Job Satisfaction as mediator	58
2.10 Conceptual Framework of the Study	60
2.11 Chapter Summary	62

<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>63</b>
3.1	Introduction	63
3.2	Research Paradigms	63
3.3	Research Design	65
3.4	Population	67
3.5	Sampling	68
3.5.1	Sampling Frame	69
3.5.2	Sampling Technique	69
3.5.3	Sample Size	70
3.6	Research Instrument	71
3.6.1	Development of Research Instrument	71
3.7	Validity and Reliability	77
3.7.1	Validity Tests	77
3.7.2	Reliability Test	78
3.8	Data Collection	79
3.9	Data Analysis	80
3.9.1	Preliminary Analysis	80
3.9.2	Main Analysis	82
3.10	Chapter Summary	85
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS</b>	<b>86</b>
4.1	Introduction	86
4.2	Data Examination	86
4.2.1	Missing Value	87
4.2.2	Outliers	87
4.2.3	Normality	87
4.2.4	Multicollinearity	88
4.2.5	Non-Response Bias	89
4.3	Descriptive Information of Respondents	90
4.4	Descriptive Information of Variables	92
4.4.1	Level of Leadership Style	93
4.4.2	Level of Organizational Justice	94
4.4.3	Level of Job Satisfaction	95
4.4.4	Level of performance of academic staff	96



	x
4.5 Structural Equation Modelling	97
4.5.1 Measurement Model	97
4.5.1.1 Internal Consistency	98
4.5.1.2 Convergent Validity	100
4.5.1.3 Discriminant validity	102
4.5.1.4 Assessment of Second Order	104
4.5.2 Structural Model	105
4.5.2.1 R-square	105
4.5.2.2 Predictive Relevance	105
4.5.2.3 Effect Size	105
4.6 Hypotheses Testing	106
4.6.1 Leadership Style and Performance of Academic Staff	109
4.6.1.1 Transformational leadership and performance of academic staff	109
4.6.1.2 Transactional leadership and performance of academic staff	110
4.6.2 Organizational Justice and performance of academic staff	110
4.6.2.1 Distributive Justice	110
4.6.2.2 Procedural Justice	111
4.6.2.3 Interactional Justice	111
4.6.3 Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction	112
4.6.3.1 Mediating of JS between LS and PAS	112
4.6.3.2 Mediating of JS between OJ and PAS	113
4.7 Chapter Summary	113
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>
	<b>114</b>
5.1 Introduction	114
5.2 Discussion	114
5.2.1 First Objective: Leadership style and Performance of academic Staff	115
5.2.1.1 Transformational leadership and Performance of academic staff	116
5.2.1.2 Transactional Leadership and Performance of Academic Staff	117

5.2.2 Second Objective: Organizational Justice and Performance of Academic Staff	118
5.2.2.1 Distributive Justice and Performance of Academic Staff	119
5.2.2.2 Procedural Justice and performance of academic staff	120
5.2.2.3 Interactional Justice and performance of academic staff	121
5.2.3 Third and Fourth Objective: Job Satisfaction as mediator	121
5.3 Implications	123
5.3.1 Theoretical implication	123
5.3.2 Practical Implication	124
5.4 Limitation and direction for future work	126
5.5 Conclusion	127
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Appendix A: Questionnaire before Validation</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix B: Boxplot of outliers</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Appendix C: Histograms of Normality</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Appendix D: Cross Loading</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>VITA</b>	<b>182</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Comparison between Ranking of Iraqi universities and other regional universities	21
2.2	Comparison between Iraq and other countries	22
2.3	Summary of Reviewed Articles that Represents the Existing Model in the Literature	42
2.4	Summary of Studies of Job Satisfaction	59
3.1	Population of the Study	67
3.2	Sample Size	71
3.3	Source of Measurement	72
3.4	Measurement of Organizational Justice	73
3.5	Measurement of Leadership Style	74
3.6	Measurement of Job Satisfaction	75
3.7	Measurement of Performance of academic staff	76
3.8	Result of Validation	78
3.9	Reliability of the Measurement	79
3.10	Data analysis process and clarification	82
4.1	Normality Analysis	88
4.2	Result of Multicollinearity Analysis	89
4.3	Results of Non-Response Bias	90
4.4	Descriptive Information of Respondents	91
4.5	Questionnaire Criterion	93
4.6	Level of Leadership Style	94
4.7	Level of organizational Justice	95
4.8	Level of Job Satisfaction	96
4.9	Level of Performance of Academic Staff	97
4.10	Results of Measurement Model	101
4.11	Discriminant Validity For First Order	103

4.12	Assessment of Discriminant Validity Using HTMT	103
4.13	Convergent and Discriminant Validity of Second Order	104
4.14	Assessment of Discriminant Validity Using HTMT for Second Order	104
4.15	Effect Size	106
4.16	Results of Direct Effect Hypotheses	109
4.17	Results of Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction	112



## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Two-Factor Theory Model	36
2.2	Process of selecting the articles	38
2.3	Conceptual Framework of the Study	61
3.1	Research Process and Phases	66
3.2	Sampling Process	69
3.3	Process of Data analysis using SPSS	81
4.1	Modified Measurement Model	99
4.2	Direct effect of the Sub-Variables on PAS	107
4.3	Mediating effect of Job Satisfaction	108



## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Cronbach's Alpha
C.R	Critical Ratio
CFI	Comparative fit index
CR	Composite Reliability
CUS	Community and university service
DJ	Distributive Justice
FL	Factor Loading
GFI	Goodness fit index
HE	Higher education
IFI	Incremental fit index
IJ	Interactional Justice
JS	Job Satisfaction
LS	Leadership Style
MHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
NFI	Normed fit index
OJ	Organizational Justice
P	P-value
PAS	Performance of Academic Staff
PJ	Procedural Justice
PLS	Partial Least Square
RMSEA	Mean square error of approximation
RP	Research Performance
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
Sig	Significance
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
Std	Standard deviation
T	T-value
TFL	Transformational Leadership
TP	Teaching Performance
TSL	Transactional Leadership
VIF	Variation Inflation Factor

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
A	Questionnaire before Validation	146
B	Boxplot of outliers	160
C	Histograms of Normality	169
D	Cross Loading	178



PT TA UTHM  
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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Performance of academic staff is one of the important topics that has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners. It has been the focus of countries and policy makers due to its importance for the country and the upbringing of society. The first chapter presents the background of the study and highlights the issues as well as the purpose of this study. Next, the chapter discusses the problem statement followed by the research questions and objectives. Significance of this study is discussed in this chapter as well as the scope of this study. The organization of the thesis is presented in this chapter and a summary of the chapter is given.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The importance of education is increasing. An important stage of the education is the higher learning education in which the role of academic staff is critical for the success and prosperity of the nation and the university. For this reason, governments, around the world, have given their utmost importance to the subject of education at all levels, especially at the university level (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). Universities are among the most important institutions that provide knowledge and upbringing of societies. Universities also play an active and important role in the development process as a scientific and academic organization that will bring about more processes of social and economic aspects into society, by supplementing its various sectors with efficient and trained graduates and providing the society with the most



up-to-date knowledge (Hanssen & Solvoll, 2015; Reed & Kennett, 2017; Taylor, 2018).

However, to a large degree, the performance of a university is dependent on the performance of its academic staff. Accordingly, academic staff plays an important role in the progress of universities and the prosperity of societies (Abba & Mugizi, 2018; Ofuyatan & Edeki, 2018). Academic staff are disseminating knowledge and developing the skills of students and have important role in advancing scientific research and contributing to the development of their communities in particular, and the humanity in general (Ishak & Mansor, 2020). Given the importance of job performance, researchers and business community have been constantly examining the factors that lead to better job performance. A better performance of employees will lead to a better organizational performance. However, most of previous studies focused on the performance of employees in business organizations and few have investigated the performance of academic staff at universities (Ghabban *et al.*, 2018; Muda *et al.*, 2017).

The higher education in Iraq consists of public, private, and technical institutes under the ministry of higher education and scientific research (MHESR). In Iraq, there are 35 public universities, 10 private universities, and 47 technical institutes. These institutions offer various type of education ranged from technical and undergraduate education to PhD level (Al-Azawei *et al.*, 2016). The fields of the universities include all the area such as business administration, medical studies, engineering, science, and literatures. The higher education in the country is confronting several challenges such as the quality of education, old and outdated textbooks, weak performance of academic staff, high rate of migration of students and academic staff, and lack of scientific research and publication as well as the mismatch between graduates and market demand (Mahmud, 2013b).

Given the different nature of the work in organizations, it was noted that business organizations linked the job performance of employees to factors such as gender (Beck *et al.*, 2013), age (Ng & Feldman, 2010), salary (Ittner *et al.*, 2007), and training and development (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Khan, Khan, & Khan, 2011). Accordingly, factors influencing performance vary and cannot be generalized to the performance of academic staff at universities. In the context of university and in regard to performance of academic staff, the leadership style is critical to improve the performance of academic staff (Hussain *et al.*, 2014; LiLin, 2018; Vatankhah *et*

*al.*, 2017). In addition, the organizational justice in the university can help in increasing the staff satisfaction and performance in the universities in term of publication and teaching (Mehmood & Ahmad, 2016; Arabs & Atan, 2018).

However, most of previous studies focused on the performance of academic staff in developed countries such as in United Kingdom (UK), US, and western countries (Graham, 2015, 2016; Papadopoulos, 2017; Türk, 2016) and few studies were conducted in developing countries such as Iraq (Zwain *et al.*, 2012, 2017). Studies in developing countries focused on describing the population and conducted simple statistical analysis to identify the mean score value. In addition, the sample size of previous studies is limited and small (Türk, 2008; Victor & Babatunde, 2014; Dhillon *et al.*, 2015; Yousif & Shaout, 2018).

Since the factors of business organizations differ from those of academic staff at universities (Fullwood *et al.*, 2013; Jameel & Ahmad, 2020, 2019; Lytovchenko, 2016), previous studies indicated that the leadership is an essential factors that affect the performance of employee in general (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015; Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). However, the leadership was examined in business organization and few examined this variable in the context of educational institutions. Thus, there is a need to examine the effect of new styles of leadership such as the transformational and transactional leadership on the performance of Iraqi academic staff.

In addition to leadership, organizational justice is one of the important yet neglected variable especially in educational institutions (Arab & Atan, 2018). Finding of previous studies are inconclusive regarding the effect of the organizational justice and its dimensions such as distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice on the performance of employees.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Iraq has the lowest ranking in term of number of publication compared to regional countries such as Turkey (20<sup>th</sup>), Iran (22<sup>nd</sup>), Egypt (39<sup>th</sup>), Saudi Arabia (43<sup>rd</sup>), United Arab Emirates (58), Jordan (62) and Lebanon (69) (SCImago, 2021). Publication of reliable articles in Iraq is the lowest among regional countries. Until 2019, number of reliable articles in Iraq accounted to 28,091 making the country in the rank of 70<sup>th</sup> in

term of publication. While countries such as Saudi Arabia published 182,753 articles and this has placed the country in 43<sup>rd</sup> rank (SCImago, 2020). Despite the similarities between Saudi and Iraq in terms of oil production and population, Iraq is lacking in term of publications in scientific journals.

There are several challenges facing academicians at higher educational institutions in Iraq such as the job satisfaction of the academic staff as well as the brain drain that bring an effect to the university performance (Hussain *et al.*, 2014). Job satisfaction is important variable in the context of teaching and publication. Several studies indicates that the job satisfaction can mediate the effect of organizational justice and leadership on employee outcome (Mashi, 2017; Wulandari, Mangundjaya & Utoyo, 2015).

Academic staff is migrating to other countries seeking better job opportunities. Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education estimated the number of professors who left the country only between February and August in 2006 to account to 3250 professors. Recent publication also showed that the rate of academic staff migration is in increasing trend (Adriaenssens, 2017; Tarzi, 2019). Similarly, the outbound Iraqi degree students increased by 428% between 2005 and 2016, from 5,493 to 28,993-degree students indicating that the quality of education is low (UNESCO, 2018). Reports indicate that several Iraqi academics, professionals and students emphasize the education in Iraq urgently need to modernize and update the materials and teaching methods (The Guardian, 2018).

In addition, administrative authority is over centralized, new students are poorly prepared, and the teaching staff is inadequately trained, which affected the job performance of academic staff (Harb, 2009). Furthermore, other issues that have potential effect on the academic staff performance is the absence of organizational justice and the weak leadership of the educational institutions (Arab & Atan, 2018). The weak and ineffective leadership are causing low performance of academic staff in the Iraqi university (Arab & Atan, 2018). Further, previous studies showed that the studies that investigated the leadership as well as the satisfaction of academic staff in higher educational institutions and particularly in the context of Arab world and Iraq are limited (Hussain *et al.*, 2014). Despite all these issues, there is a lack of studies that examine the performance of Iraqi academic staff (Siron, Muttar, & Ahmad, 2015).

For this reason, Iraq is in need for an effective and satisfied academic staff that is able to improve the performance of universities and contribute to the prosperity of the country. Academic staff are also contributors to the community and university services (Boles *et al.*, 2020; Hoxmeier & Lenk, 2020; Niendam *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to improve the ranks of the Iraqi universities and reduce the migration of students and academic staff to overseas universities.

In addition, previous studies have focused on factors that are related to appraisal of the performance of academic staff (Hassna *et al.*, 2009; Turk, 2008; Turk, 2010; Masron, Ahmad, & Rahim, 2012; Yousif & Shaout, 2018; Abba & Mugizi, 2018) while the studies that investigate the causal effect of certain variables on the performance of academic staff are limited. Most of the study conducted either in Malaysia (Ali & Musah, 2012; Ali, 2012; Nadarajah, Kadiresan, Kumar, Kamil, & Yusoff, 2012; Masron *et al.*, 2012; Dhillon *et al.*, 2015; Alfagira *et al.*, 2017) or in Nigeria (Abba & Mugizi, 2018; Igbinoba *et al.*, 2018; Ologunde *et al.*, 2013; Salau *et al.*, 2018a; Victor & Babatunde, 2014). On the other hand, few studies examined the mediating role of job satisfaction of academic staff in general and in Iraq in particular (Hussain *et al.*, 2014).

Most of previous studies were descriptive in nature and aimed at identify the level of performance of academic staff without looking into the causality among the variable (e.g. Mehmood & Ahmad, 2016; Salau *et al.*, 2018; Turk, 2010, 2008; Ali, 2012; Masron *et al.*, 2012; Kiruja, 2013; Ologunde *et al.*, 2013; Victor & Babatunde, 2014; Hussain *et al.*, 2014; Abba & Mugizi, 2018). The previous studies are also correlational and aimed at identifying the correlation rather than the regression between the variables (Abba & Mugizi, 2018).

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to identify the factors that affect the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities. Particularly, this study aims to fulfil the following objectives:

- 1- To examine the effect of leadership style (transformational and transactional leadership) on performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities.

- 2- To examine the effect of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) on performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities.
- 3- To investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction on the relationship between leadership style and performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities.
- 4- To investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction on the relationship between organizational justice and performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect of leadership style on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
  - a. What is the effect of transformational leadership on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
  - b. What is the effect of transactional leadership on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
2. What is the effect of organizational justice on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
  - a. What is the effect of distributive justice on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
  - b. What is the effect of procedural justice on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
  - c. What is the effect of interactional justice on the performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
3. Does job satisfaction mediate the effects of leadership style on performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?
4. Does job satisfaction mediate the effects of organizational justice on performance of academic staff at Iraqi public universities?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it enriches the body of knowledge regarding the performance of academic staff in Iraq and developing countries. The study contributes to the literature by investigating the effect of leadership style and organizational justice as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating effect of training among the variables. Most of previous studies focused on the job performance of employees in private sector while this study focusses on performance of academic staff at public universities in Iraq.

The study contributes to the country as it aims to find the factors that improve the performance of academic staff and by doing so, the rank of the country in term of publication will improve. The study also contributes to the country in the sense that improving academic staff performance reduces the reliability on foreign academic staff and reduces the migration of students overseas. Achieving this objective reduces the burden of the government expenditure on scholarship abroad.

The study is also important for academic staff as it helps the management to understand their needs and make them understand the effect of these factors on the academic staff performance. So that the satisfaction of these needs leads them to have better job satisfaction and accordingly better quality of working life as well as better performance. The study is also important for students. A better performance of academic staff leads to better students' performance. Lastly, better performance of academic staff can result in an effective students who can contribute to the service and production of the country and the quality of services provided.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

The focus of this study is the performance of academic staff at public universities in Iraq. Thus, the academic staff at private universities are not included due to the differences of the nature as well as the regulation between these two types of universities. In addition, the study will focus only on the public universities in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq and more than 43 percent of academic staff in the country working in the nine universities of Baghdad (MOHERS, 2020). Further, the performance in this study is limited only for academic staff. Thus, business



organizations and employees' performance in these organizations are not part of this study.

The study examines only the academic staff. Thus, students and non-academic staff are not in the scope of this study. The study uses theory of leadership, job satisfaction theory, as well as the organizational justice theory; therefore, other theories are not included in this study. The study uses a quantitative approach by deploying a questionnaire that is distributed to the academic staff in Iraqi public universities. The qualitative approach is not used in this study.

### **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

The following definitions are provided to clarify the meaning of the variables that are used in this study.

#### **Performance of Academic Staff**

Performance of academic staff is defined as “a function that an individual can successfully perform within framework of normal constraints and available resources” Jamal (2007). In this study, it is defined as the productivity in term of teaching, research, as well as the services that are provided by the academic staff in a specific timeframe.

#### **Leadership**

Leadership style is defined as “the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating followers and it is seen by the employees as total pattern of explicit and implicit actions performed by their leader” (Newstorm & Davis, 1993). In this study, it is defined as the ability of head of department and dean to lead the academic staff in way that can increase their productivity and lead them to achieve their goals and the university's goals.

## **Organizational Justice**

Organizational justice is defined as “an employee’s perception of their organization’s behaviours, decisions and actions and how these influences the employee’s own attitudes and behaviours at work” (Greenberg, 1987). It is defined in this study as the process and procedures of dealing with academic staff in fair and satisfactory way in term of salaries, promotion, leave, and rewards as well as access to information.

## **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is defined as “how people feel about their jobs and their different aspects” (Spector, 1997). It is defined as the degree to which academic staff feel that they work brings joy and happiness to their lives.

### **1.8 Organization of this thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Details of each chapter are discussed as follows:

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter presents the background of the study and discuss the issues, and the purpose of this study. The chapter also discusses the problem statement related to the performance of academic staff in Iraqi public universities. Research questions and objectives are stated in this chapter as well as the significance and the scope of this study. Further, the organization of the thesis is briefly highlighted in this chapter.

#### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter reviews and discuss the studies related to performance of academic staff. The chapter first reviews the theoretical underpinning theories such as the theory of leadership and the organizational justice theory as well as the job



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