

A Theoretical Study of Digital Leadership and its Role in Enhancing Job Performance at the Islamic University in Najaf Governorate

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ABSTRACT: The current research deals with one of the important and contemporary topics in the organizational field. The concept of digital leadership is one of the modern leadership styles adopted by contemporary organizations that leave a positive impact on job performance. The main idea of this research is to know the essential role played by digital leadership in enhancing job performance. The aim of the research is to study the theoretical relationship between digital leadership in its fourth dimensions (digital vision, professional development of individuals, digital capabilities, generation of digital networks) and job performance in its three dimensions (task performance, contextual performance, opposite performance). The research was applied to a random sample of heads of departments and rapporteurs in the scientific departments at the Islamic University in Najaf Governorate, which included (63) individuals. The analytical theoretical approach was used and the data was collected by sources and references and was analyzed critically. Research has found that digital leadership contributes to better relationships with others because it encourages more positive interactions. One of the most important theoretical conclusions reached by the research is that digital leadership improves functional performance by following modern and advanced technology methods and tools that contribute to enhancing performance, and are critical factors for the organization researched in the digital environment, as they contribute to enhancing learning and achieving success and excellence.

KEYWORDS: Digital Leadership, Job Performance, Islamic University in Najaf Governorate.

SECTION I

Procedural structure of the research

This topic deals with identifying the problem of research, its importance and purpose, the hypothesis outline, the method followed, the research community and sample, information collection tools, its structure and procedural definitions, which are:

First: The research problem: Some heads of departments and rapporteurs in the scientific departments of a number of faculties at the Islamic University in Najaf Governorate face difficulty in understanding and using digital technology effectively, and they may have difficulty in making decisions related to investing in technology or determining appropriate technical priorities. The heads of departments and rapporteurs in the scientific departments face resistance from some faculty members and employees who are concerned about technical changes and their effects on their traditional roles and responsibilities. When the university aspires to digital technology, it faces challenges in terms of security and privacy because it contains sensitive information such as student records and academic research, so this information must be protected from cyber threats and ensure compliance with legislation and policies related to privacy. Leaders also face difficulty in providing appropriate training courses and technical support for individuals to learn and use digital tools and applications. Digital transformation may require a change in the culture and organizational structure of the university, as leaders can face difficulty in achieving compatibility between traditional culture and digital transformation, and in changing the structure of the organization and the distribution of authority and responsibilities. Verifying the results of digital transformation and measuring technical and academic performance can be a challenge. It is difficult to identify key indicators of job performance and assess the impact of digital technology on the educational and research process and university administration in general. The main question is: **Does digital leadership contribute to enhancing job performance? The following sub-questions emerge from this question:**

1. What are the levels of digital leadership practices in the organization being researched?
2. How is the level of job performance in the scientific departments of the research organization?
3. Does digital leadership affect the enhancement of job performance?

The Significance of The Research: The importance of the research comes from the importance of the variables discussed in our current research. The importance of the research is that organizations at present realize the importance of digital leadership because they are in an environment of rapid change. Digital leaders understand the importance of technology and are aware of

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new innovations and technological trends. Therefore, they can guide the organization to keep pace with this change and exploit the opportunities available. Digital leaders have a strong strategic vision of technology and how to use it to achieve the goals of the organization. They can determine the correct direction of technology and apply it in all aspects of the organization, from internal processes to improving the customer experience and expanding business. Digital leadership also enhances employee engagement and enables them to make the most of technology. Therefore, digital leaders work to build a collaborative and innovative culture and promote the development of employee skills in the field of technology, which contributes to increasing job satisfaction and belonging to an organization.

Third: Research Objectives: Recently, it was noted that the efforts of digital leaders lead to the adoption of technology and its effective application in the institution, which is reflected positively on the field reality of the Islamic University in the province of Najaf and its excellence in the competitive environment, so the research aims to:

1. Analyzing the dimensions of digital leadership in the scientific departments of a number of colleges in the private universities in Najaf Governorate.
2. Analyzing the reality of job performance in the scientific departments in the private universities in Najaf Governorate.
3. Test the strength of the relationship between digital leadership and job performance.
4. Testing the impact of digital leadership on job performance.

Fourth: Research plan To clarify the correlations of the independent variable with all its subvariables and the dependent variable with all its subvariables, the research model was designed as a hypothetical model in line with the research problem, its importance, objectives and approach, and this can be illustrated as in Figure (1).

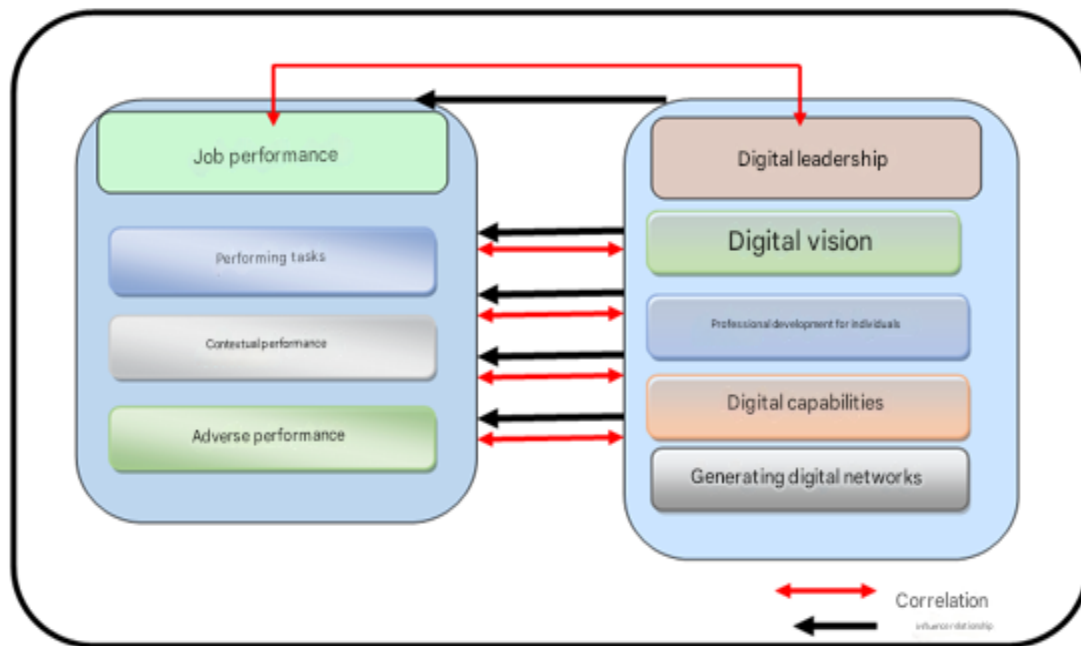


Figure (1) Hypothetical research scheme

Research Community and Sample:The researcher was selected by a number of faculties at the Islamic University in Najaf Governorate as a research community because of its work and foundations that need knowledge, as well as the successive changes in the higher education environment. Accordingly, a random sample of heads of departments and rapporteurs in the scientific departments of a number of faculties was selected.

Sixth: Data and information collection tools: The researcher relied on many sources represented in the scientific references (such as books, theses, theses, journals and periodicals available in libraries and on the Internet) to cover the theoretical aspect of the variables of the current research.

The research limits:

1. Spatial boundaries: The scientific departments of a number of faculties were selected at the Islamic University in Najaf Governorate.
2. Time limits: It conducted the data collection and analysis process for the period from 20/6/2024 to 2/12/2024.
3. Scientific limits: The research determined scientifically what came with its questions, its problem and its objectives.

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Eighth: Research Structure The research consists of four sections. The first section is concerned with presenting the research methodology, while the second section is concerned with presenting the theoretical framework. The third section is concerned with analyzing and treating the hypotheses of the research. Finally, the fourth section presents the most important conclusions and recommendations reached.

SECTION TWO

Theoretical framework of the research

First: Digital Leadership:

1- Concept of Digital Leadership

Leadership is one of the concepts that have many views on its definition and interpretation, and in conjunction with the development of organizational thought, many theories have emerged, starting with the theory of traits and behavioral theories and the emergence of modern trends in leadership thought, contemporary theories and theories of the most modern leadership, and Digital Leadership is one of the concepts that are still under modern studies, as there are many workers who perform their work in the Internet space or remotely in their homes, and this means the existence of a virtual work environment, not actual (Nuri and Muhammad,2022: 164). (Al-Hulaibi and Al-Qahtani,2023: 459) define digital leadership as: "The ability of leadership to exercise leadership roles using a range of digital technologies and tools such as: mobile devices, communications applications, web applications, electronic platforms, artificial intelligence, and big data, and enable workers to use them to make sustainable changes in the organizational culture, mission, objectives, and administrative processes of the organization." (Al-Tai and Al-Hadrawi,2019: 23) believe that digital leadership is characterized by a different set of skills, attitudes, knowledge, and personal and professional experiences. It is noticeable that leadership is flexible and adaptable, and the possession of intellectual curiosity is broad, as well as the thirst to learn about new knowledge. It is noted (Al Hammadi and Owais,2021: 1288) that digital leaders are distinguished from other leaders by a different mix of skills, attitudes, knowledge, and professional and personal experiences. Leadership must be driven by unique attitudes that keep pace with the digital age without dispensing with the traditional features of leadership. The leader must be flexible and adaptable, possess a broad intellectual curiosity, be hungry for new knowledge and passionate about what they do, and insist on continuous learning through digital learning methods. They maintain a more equal approach where they are more results-oriented than what was required of previous leaders. While (Al-Fares and Khalid,2022: 135) focuses on developing digital leadership by integrating digital culture and competence to use digital technology as part of the leadership style to generate value, due to the digital nature where information is easily accessible globally, in real time and transparently, leadership styles in the digital age have developed the following characteristics:

- (1) Creativity
- (2) Deep knowledge.
- (3) Strong communication and cooperation.
- (4) Honest engagement through vision.

While (Mahmoud and Abdul Sattar,2022: 166) believe that digital leadership differs from traditional leadership in that it does not focus on the characteristics or actions of leaders, but instead emphasizes that leaders must develop, direct, manage, and apply technology to various organizational processes to improve operational performance. The application of leadership skills is also necessary for organizational leaders to help their organizations apply technology in useful ways and prepare their organizations for the twenty-first century.

Based on the above literature, the researcher believes that digital leadership refers to the ability of individuals or organizations to lead and navigate effectively in the digital environment, and ensures that digital technologies, data and trends are understood and utilized to drive innovation and achieve the strategic objectives of the organization.

2- The importance of Digital Leadership

The importance of digital leadership is crystallized from its positive effects in many fields, especially in the cognitive age, as (Nouri and Muhammad,2022: 16 5) believes that digital transformation as a process has accelerated currently, as it is necessary for leaders in government sectors, business sector, public organizations and civil society to modify the policies followed, and to take all necessary measures in accordance with the developments that appear in various areas of life and to try to make the best use of digital technology and by following a set of rules that guide the behavior of workers within organizations. Al-Hulaibi and Al-Qahtani (2023: 461) emphasize that digital leadership plays an important role in supporting the digital environment in order to enhance learning and develop leadership practices, through modern technological methods that reformulate knowledge in order to achieve adaptation from traditional leadership to digital leadership and digital learning contexts. While (Al-Khazali et al.,2022: 2151) showed the importance of digital leadership through the following points:

1. Digital leadership is key to countering the era of the Industrial Revolution (0.4), also called the Age of Turbulence, which has also proven devastating for companies unable to go hand in hand with change.

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2. Digital leadership has been able to guide the company to always adapt to changing times to connect people to open ecosystems and is able to balance human and technological participation in work and thinking.
3. that digital leadership has been a new concept in the corporate world where management functions are achieved through digital platforms.
4. Digital leadership is a strategic mindset that uses available resources to improve what we do, while anticipating the changes needed to foster a culture, focused on engagement and achievement, that builds a changing leadership that arises from the symbiotic relationship between leaders and technology.

(Al-Harathi and Al-Jaid,2022: 471) pointed out that the importance of digital leadership in the field of education is highlighted in the following points:

1. The possibility of meeting the scientific and cognitive needs and aspirations of students.
2. Improving the retention and recall of acquired information.
3. Supporting the maintenance of databases for the organization as a whole in digital methods.
4. Improve the level of services provided by the organization and simplify procedures, to save time, effort and money.
5. Improvement of outputs (physical/ human) both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Dimensions of digital leadership (Nouri and Mohammed,2022: 166) pointed out that digital leadership consists of four dimensions, namely:

1. Digital vision: The vision itself clarifies the future ambitions of the organization so that it reflects on the enthusiastic spirit and drives workers towards achieving it. Digital leaders play strategic roles and work with their business leaders to help develop the digital business vision and strategies. In the context of higher education, the digital vision includes participation in the formulation and development of the digital vision, the dissemination of digital trends clearly, and belief in the digital vision, as well as compliance with the digital vision and its adoption to unify the efforts of all members in order to achieve strategic goals (Nuri and Muhammad,2022: 166). (Rahma and Osama,2022: 61) defines digital vision as "those perceptions and ambitions of what the situation should be in the future, that is, determining where the organization is going digitally and therefore it is a mental image of the desired future or future path that determines the destination you want to reach, the market position you intend to achieve, and the type of capabilities and capabilities you plan to develop."

2- Professional Development: Skills development requires digital leadership to take a proactive role in helping to guide the leadership team towards an overall digital business strategy (Nouri and Mohammed,2022: 166). He defines it (Al-Qasimiyaand Al-Omari,2018: 458): "It is an ongoing institutional and individual process aimed at developing the behavior, skills and thinking of an employee to be more efficient and effective to achieve the roles assigned to him"

3- Digital Capabilities: In the context of digital leadership, capabilities include the knowledge required to use digital technology and the ability to use it in administration and academic activities, and to realize the real value of digital technology, as well as encouraging the adoption of gradual digital transformation (Nouri and Muhammad,2022: 166).

4- Digital Network Generation: (Nouri and Muhammad,2022: 166) believe that the generation of digital networks requires orientations towards a collaborative approach to achieve goals, focusing on carrying out activities and communicating digital knowledge through digital networks, as well as accomplishing administrative tasks through digital network applications, and building relationships through digital media.

SECOND: JOB PERFORMANCE

1- Concept of Job performance

Employees occupy a pivotal position in the organization and are valuable assets. They make things happen in the organization and take the organization to the next level through improved job performance. The dynamic nature of the business environment and the highly competitive job performance of employees have been set as one of the top priorities for almost all organizations. Job performance is a critical factor in every organization. It is the basis for the success of any organization. If the individual's performance is in accordance with the expected standards, the organization's performance will be improved and improved. Therefore, management must conduct an in-depth analysis of its employees and know the specific factors that increase the high job performance of employees (Allawi and Abdul Sada,2022 :89). (Issa,2023: 160) defines job performance as a behavioral process that determines the actions of employees and the extent of their contribution to the completion of the work assigned to them, in light of coordination and supervision between the various administrative units, andthat the job performance of the individual is determined according to motivation, will and ability to carry out tasks with the quality and quantity expected of each employee in his job. More broadly, (Al-Husseini,2017: 286) defines performance as the set of administrative behaviors that express the employee's work, which includes quality performance, good implementation, the technical expertise required in the job, in addition to communication and interaction with the rest of the members of the organization and adherence to the

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administrative regulations governing his work, and striving to respond to them with care. The term job performance consists of (Al-Saati and Al-Khafaji,2014: 242):

✚ **Performance:** It is the accomplishment of an implementation, the practice of anything ordered.

✚ **Job:** It is the organizational performance unit that is assigned to the group of workers who occupy this job and perform all the duties, responsibilities and powers it contains that are homogeneous and complementary in order to achieve the purpose for which the job was created.

Job performance is the result of the interaction of the two factors of ability and motivation together, as the relationship is clear between the two variables. The individual may have the ability to perform a certain work, but he will not be able to accomplish it efficiently and effectively if he does not have sufficient motivation to perform it, and vice versa. The individual may have sufficient motivation to perform the work, but he may not perform it as required because of the lack of sufficient capacity for it. Job performance refers to the degree to which the tasks constituting the individual's job are achieved and completed, and it reflects how the individual achieves or satisfies the requirements of the job (Jassim,2022: 365). (Jabbar and Al-Hasnawi,2022: 11) defines job performance as a function of individual ability, skills, and effort in a given situation, and the employee's behavioral outcome, which indicates that the employee displays positive attitudes towards his organization.

Based on the above literature, the researcher believes that job performance refers to the extent to which an individual has succeeded in carrying out the tasks, responsibilities and objectives assigned to him within a specific job or role.

2- **Importance of job performance** the interest of the organization's management and leadership in the level of performance usually exceeds the interest of its employees, and that performance at any organizational level within the institution and in any part of it is not a reflection of the capabilities and motivations of heads and leaders as well. The importance of performance from the institution's point of view is due to its association with its life cycle in its various stages, namely: (survival and continuity stage, stability stage, reputation and pride stage, stage of discrimination and then the leadership stage. Therefore, the institution's ability to overcome some stage of growth and enter a more advanced stage depends on its levels of performance (Jassim,2022: 366). Therefore, job performance is one of the most important axes of professional work, so the success of any organization is achieved by achieving its goals, which depend mainly on the performance of the human resource, and the importance of job performance can be summarized as follows (Jabbar and Al-Hasnawi,2022: 11): -

- a) Promotes the success of the organization in managing its resources and ensuring the improvement of its activities.
- b) Reveal the strengths and weaknesses of employees in performing the work assigned to them.
- c) Improves the quality of output inputs and outputs.

(Al-Azzawi and Abdullah, 2020: 164) Performance is a center for guessing the success or failure of organizations in their decisions. It is one of the methods through which an organization can identify and evaluate its various internal activities, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate its performance compared to the performance of other competing organizations that practice similar or similar activities to their activities in the same industry. We can determine the importance of organizational performance by comparing organizations and others to judge strategies and structures and achieve goals from the results that performance obtains.

(Rahima and Saadoun,2023: 73) believe that job performance is a meaningful means to achieve the goal of the organization, as it occupies an important position as an outcome of all activities at the level of the individual and the organization according to the following:

A. **The importance of job performance for the individual:** The importance of job performance for the individual can be limited as follows :

- 1) Promotion and transfer: The capabilities of individuals are determined by measuring their job performance, and thus determining their eligibility for promotion or transfer.
- 2) Evaluation: Job performance is of great importance in the use of heads and managers in the evaluation process and to identify the level of job performance of employees in determining their effectiveness, efficiency and ability to develop and enhance their performance.
- 3) Salaries and wages: Job performance is an indicator to measure the level of performance of workers, and to determine the wages, salaries and bonuses to which workers are entitled and which are commensurate with the work and achievements they carry out.

B. **The importance of performance for the organization:** Organizations are interested in job performance because the level of progress and success of any organization is directly related to job performance, and that all organizations consider job performance an integral part of them as a reflection of the capabilities and motivations of workers.

3- **Determinants and factors affecting job performance:** (Al-Saati and Al-Khafaji,2014: 243) and (Jassim,2022: 366) agreed on a model based on three main determinants: -

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- a) **Effort:** Effort refers to the physical and mental energy that an individual exerts to perform his task or job in order to reach the highest rates of giving in his field of work.
- b) **Abilities:** Abilities refer to the personal characteristics he uses to perform his job or tasks.
- c) **Individual perception of their role:** The individual's personal behavior during performance of their perceptions and impressions of how they practice in the organization.

There are many factors that affect job performance, namely (Al-Azzawi and Abdullah, 2020: 164):

- a) **The conflict between personal values and work requirements:** where the behavior of an individual is influenced by external factors as well as internal factors such as the values and beliefs he believes in.
- b) **Weak desire to work:** The individual's lack of conviction to work is due to the weakness of the organization in satisfying his needs and desires.
- c) **Poor training:** Any failure by the organization to identify its training needs correctly and accurately will weaken the effectiveness and efficiency of the training program.
- d) **Poor discipline:** Because the lack of good application of procedures and accountability against defaulting workers leads them to laziness or slowdown in accomplishing the tasks assigned to them.
- e) **Weak management:** If the management of the organization is weak, this will make the process of monitoring the performance of workers weak, even if the workers perform their work, they will be unmotivated and disengaged.

4- Dimensions of job performance (Al-Rashed and Ali,2021: 63-68) and (Nouri and Mohammed,2022: 169-170) agreed that job performance includes those behaviors in individuals that contribute to achieving organizational goals. They emphasize that the elements of job performance include: task performance, contextual performance, and unproductive work behavior. They believe that the availability of these elements together constitute a comprehensive and integrated approach to overall job performance, and due to the agreement of some writers and researchers on these elements and the fact that they measure the behaviors of the individual in performing the job, these three elements will be adopted precisely because they reflect the types of performance at the level of individuals as they are consistent with the objectives of this research, and these elements can be clarified as follows: -

A. task performance :(Jabbar and Al-Hasnawi,2022: 12) believe that performing tasks requires more cognitive abilities and is mainly facilitated by knowledge of the tasks (knowledge or technical principles required to ensure job performance and the ability to handle multiple tasks), task skill (applying technical knowledge to successfully accomplish the task without much supervision) , and task habits (an innate ability to respond to specific functions that facilitate or hinder performance).To measure the performance of tasks and duties, the organization can use a set of performance standards that will be adopted in this study (Al-Fares and Khalid,2022: 136):

1. Absenteeism: A decrease in long work periods - the duration of absenteeism indicates high morale among employees.
2. Communicating with colleagues: Increasing the mixing of management with employees leads to raising their morale and motivation, which leads to a positive reflection on the performance of employees. Labor
3. Accuracy at work: It means the employee's high skill in performing his work according to the prescribed standards.
4. Self-confidence: It means the confidence of the human employee in his qualities, abilities and evaluation of his work.

It includes indicators of task performance such as completing job tasks, maintaining updated knowledge, working accurately and clearly, planning, organizing and solving problems, and that task performance refers to professionalism in accomplishing the activities officially specified for the individual, which is part of the individual's job and includes completing the tasks and duties specified in the job description (Nouri and Muhammad,2022: 169-170).

B. Contextual Performance: It refers to behaviors that indirectly contribute to transforming and addressing the core processes in the organization. These behaviors contribute to shaping the culture and organizational climate. Performance here is not an additional role in nature, but it is outside the scope of the basic functional tasks and depends on the circumstance in which it is accomplished to address operations. For example, it is directed towards voluntary work to carry out tasks outside the official role of work or work to help colleagues solve the problem related to work (Al-Azzawi and Abdullah, 2020: 165). (Nouri and Muhammad,2022: 169-170) believe that contextual performance is referred to as situational performance and that it includes behavior that indirectly contributes to addressing the core processes in the organization as well as its contribution to building both the organizational culture and the organizational climate.

C. Reverse or Confrontational Performance: Here it differs from the previous two types, as it is characterized by negative behavior at work, such as delays in work appointments or absences, as well as behaviors such as deviation and aggression (Al-Azzawi and Abdullah, 2020: 165). (Nouri and Muhammad,2022: 169-170) addresses unproductive work behaviors as referring to behaviors that appear in the individual that harm the well-being of the organization, such as behaviors that are out

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of task and complaining about doing the intended work wrong. These deviant behaviors are associated with negative consequences for the individual and the organization.

SECTION THREE

Conclusions And Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

1. The application of digital leadership in research organizations requires a variety of skills, attitudes, knowledge, and personal and professional experiences.
2. Digital leaders in research organizations are flexible and adaptable to changes, and hold intellectual curiosity and a desire to acquire new knowledge.
3. Job performance in the research organizations is determined by evaluating the behavior of workers and their contribution to the completion of the tasks assigned to them.
4. Job performance in the organizations examined depends on the individual's willingness and ability to carry out tasks effectively.
5. The possession of digital leaders who have the ability to adapt and flexibility to continuous changes in addition to acquiring new knowledge and benefiting from modern technology positively reflects the determination of job performance based on individual contribution and the ability to achieve the desired results at work.
6. That digital leadership is able to achieve the success of the organization by enhancing individual performance and achieving the goals set for the organization.
7. Digital leadership improves job performance by following modern and sophisticated technology methods and tools that contribute to enhancing performance, and are critical factors for organizations in the digital environment, as they contribute to enhancing learning and achieving success and excellence.

SECOND: RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Research organizations should provide training and development programs for their current and potential leaders in the field of digital leadership, including enhancing technical skills, adaptability to changes, and continuous learning.
2. Leaders in research organizations should be encouraged to cultivate their intellectual curiosity and desire to acquire new knowledge by providing opportunities to learn, explore, innovate, and encourage self-research.
3. It is essential that the researching organizations have effective systems to identify and measure the job performance of staff including leaders, and appropriate evaluation and monitoring tools can be used to assess the behavior of workers and their contribution to the achievement of the organization's goals.
4. Research organizations should focus on developing and empowering their staff to effectively carry out tasks by providing ongoing training and opportunities for personal and professional development.
5. Organizations should promote a culture of digital leadership and encourage leaders to adapt, be flexible and use modern technology in their daily work by promoting awareness and training on modern digital tools and technologies.
6. Organizations should encourage digital leaders to build a culture of communication and cooperation in the organization. This can be achieved by encouraging the use of digital communication and cooperation tools and promoting a work environment that encourages participation and knowledge exchange.
7. The research organizations should take advantage of modern technologies to enhance job performance by updating the tools and programs used in the organization to be compatible with the digital environment and facilitate work processes, communication and cooperation.

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