



Influence of Inspirational Leadership on Employee Performance at Iraqi Public Universities: Mindfulness as the mediator

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Abstract

Background: Employee performance remains a cornerstone of institutional success in higher education, particularly within public universities facing growing challenges. Inspirational leadership has emerged as a powerful determinant in enhancing work behaviours and aligning individuals with organisational goals. However, its interaction with personal traits, such as mindfulness, and contextual elements, including employee-university fit, remains underexplored in the Iraqi context.

Objective: This study investigates the relationships among inspirational leadership, employee performance, and employee-university fit in Iraqi public universities. It further explores the mediating role of mindfulness in these relationships, guided by the principles of Social Exchange Theory (SET).

Methodology: Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to 604 academics in Iraqi public universities. A total of 375 valid responses were received (62%

response rate). The study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyse the data collected between March and May 2024, ensuring adherence to ethical protocols and maintaining participant anonymity.

Results: The findings revealed significant positive associations between inspirational leadership and employee performance. Mindfulness was found to partially mediate the effect of inspirational leadership on performance, strengthening the relational dynamics explained by SET.

Conclusion: Inspirational leadership enhances employee performance directly and indirectly by fostering mindfulness. Such leadership fosters a culture of commitment and psychological well-being in academic institutions.

Unique Contribution: This study provides novel insights into the interplay between leadership style and psychological traits within a Middle Eastern higher education setting, offering empirical evidence and practical implications for improving employee alignment, motivation, and performance in public universities.

Key Recommendation: Public university administrators should invest in leadership development programmes focusing on inspirational behaviours to cultivate employee mindfulness and improve overall performance and employee-university fit.

Keywords: Inspirational Leadership, Employee Performance, Mindfulness, Iraq

Introduction

Iraqi public higher education institutions face unique challenges, highlighting the importance of employee mental health. Mindfulness, a psychological resource, has been shown to reduce stress, increase job satisfaction, and improve individual performance. This study aims to explore the impact of mindfulness on employee performance in Iraqi public universities and develop targeted interventions to improve satisfaction and institutional outcomes. Iraqi higher education institutions also face multifaceted challenges, including political instability, limited resources, and the ongoing effects of conflict, all of which exacerbate stress on academic and administrative staff (Bhakuni & Saxena, 2023). Leadership research provides empirical data on the positive impact of this characteristic on employee performance within organisations.

Within this context, leadership plays a pivotal role in motivating staff, sustaining morale, and driving institutional resilience. Specifically, inspirational leadership—characterised by vision, encouragement, and a focus on shared goals—has emerged as a critical factor in navigating turbulent environments. However, leadership alone may not be sufficient. Personal psychological traits, such as mindfulness, are increasingly recognised as internal resources that can buffer stress and enhance performance outcomes. Mindfulness supports emotional regulation, attention control, and interpersonal functioning—qualities that are especially valuable in Iraq’s volatile academic landscape.

This study is important for several reasons. It advances leadership theory by examining psychological traits, such as mindfulness, that influence the effectiveness of leadership. Second, it demonstrates to Iraqi administrators and other higher education administrators how leadership development and mindfulness-based therapies can enhance employee outcomes. Third, it addresses the need for further research into Social Exchange Theory (SET) by providing a framework for analysing the dynamics of leader-employee interactions in complex organisational situations. Additionally, this study aims to investigate the relationship between inspirational leadership and workforce performance in Iraqi public colleges, as well as the

impact of inspirational leadership on employee mindfulness. To determine how mindfulness influences employee performance.

Several theoretical and empirical studies on leadership effectiveness indicate that it improves and influences faculty performance and volunteer behaviour (Bernardo et al., 2020). Previous studies have examined the impact of inspirational leadership and religion on teacher effectiveness. Hu et al. (2025) indicated a positive relationship between inspirational leadership and teacher performance in primary education. Bernardo et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of studying the interaction between inspirational leadership and religion in understanding staff motivation and commitment, revealing that combining these two elements enhances teacher engagement. Staff performance and leadership are closely related. A leader's ability to inspire team members to achieve their best results in higher levels of employee performance. Inspirational leadership is the ability to influence those around you and motivate others toward success positively (Roche et al., 2014). Although many academics highlight the importance of this link, few studies have examined the impact of inspirational leadership on employee performance (Adawiyah & Sopiah, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to understand how employees' feelings of organisational belonging can influence the relationship between inspirational leadership and employee performance (i.e., job performance and work duties). Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of mindfulness in enhancing leaders' well-being and employee performance in response to leadership stress (Roche et al., 2014). Extensive studies on mindfulness highlight its contribution to meeting leaders' demands for resilience and self-regulation. Good et al. (2016) argue that mindfulness is linked to several factors related to work performance. According to studies, mindfulness can improve work outcomes (Reb et al., 2014), job satisfaction and performance, interpersonal relationships, and reduce job burnout and disengagement.

More research is needed on mindfulness, particularly its impact on performance. This research makes several contributions to scientific literature and management practice. First, it addresses calls for more research on the mediating processes that explain the influence of leadership on employee performance (Adawiyah & Sopiah, 2023). This study specifically examines the mediating effects of mindfulness in the workplace. Research examining whether different mediators sequentially influence the relationship between leadership and employee performance is scarce. This study examines whether mindfulness at work gradually moderates this link to address the existing gap. Previous leadership studies have examined the influence of personality factors on subordinates' perceptions and responses to different leadership styles (Bhakuni & Saxena, 2023). To our knowledge, no previous studies have examined whether mindfulness enhances the effects of inspirational leadership. This research advances our understanding of the conditions under which inspirational leadership influences employee performance by examining the moderating function of mindfulness. The findings of this study enable higher education institutions in Iraq to understand the factors and conditions that influence employee performance, facilitating informed judgments about their human resource management strategies (Balogun et al., 2016). By developing a theoretical model that integrates cognitive and motivational mechanisms of employee engagement and providing empirical data on how mindfulness mediates the relationship between inspirational leadership and employee performance in selected Iraqi universities, this study adds to the body of research on this topic.

Literature and building hypotheses.

Social exchange theories (SET)

The theory is also known as a general sociological theory that aims to explain how resources are exchanged between individuals and groups during interactions. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), social transactions are governed by reciprocity, focus on the long term, and emphasise unlimited responsibilities and social and emotional benefits. SET can be used to explain how mindfulness affects performance, as well as other hypothetical relationships, through the lens of reciprocal relationships and cost-benefit analysis in social interactions. Individuals balance the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. When they perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs, they are more likely to continue interacting and reciprocate. Mindfulness enhances an individual's ability to be present, control their emotions, and recognise the needs of others.

Inspirational leadership and employee performance (EP)

Inspirational leadership, a key component of transformational leadership, has a significant influence on employee performance. It fosters a constructive work environment where employees feel valued, inspired, and empowered, leading to increased productivity, job satisfaction, and overall performance improvement. The interplay between inspirational leadership and employee performance extends beyond mere motivation; it also encompasses the development of a nurturing organisational culture that fosters collaboration and trust. As highlighted by Bhakuni and Saxena (2023), SET illuminates the dynamic, reciprocal exchange in the workplace. When leaders genuinely appreciate their employees, engagement flourishes like wildflowers in spring. This mutual respect sparks collaboration, energising teams to reach new heights of performance. Mulki et al. (2015) found that while a participatory inspirational leader has no discernible immediate impact on employee performance, it exerts an indirect influence via the mediation variable of supervisor satisfaction. According to another study by Alhasnawi et al. (2023), participatory leaders have a significantly positive impact on employees' performance. Thus, we propose:

H1: Inspiring leadership significantly affects employee performance.

Inspirational leadership and leaders' mindfulness

Inspire leaders are not under pressure and have a good awareness of their principles. They uphold beliefs with a strong sense of duty and purpose to bring about constructive change. This cultivates a mindset of creativity and achievement, pushing excellence in skills. Additionally, we came across a study on the work success and mindfulness of Australian executives. Because it encourages focused, engaging, and motivating behaviour—all of which are traits of inspirational leadership—leader mindfulness should enhance inspirational leadership, as will be covered in the following paragraphs (Good et al., 2016). To the best of our knowledge, the study of leaders' mindfulness at work is still in its infancy, with a focus primarily on individuals rather than groups. In Iraqi public universities, where resources are limited and job security is often uncertain, inspirational leadership fills critical motivational gaps. When leaders demonstrate optimism and support, employees often respond with increased effort and loyalty, which are vital to the institution's resilience and performance. Inspirational leaders create emotionally safe environments (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). SET suggests that this favourable social climate stimulates reciprocal states such as mindfulness, where employees pay open and mindful attention, which promotes self-regulation and presence at work (Miralles et al., 2024).

H2: Inspiring leadership has a significant impact on leaders' mindfulness.

Leaders' mindfulness and employee performance

The connection between leaders' mindfulness and employee performance is a growing area of interest in organisational behaviour and leadership studies. Employers gain from a leader's mindfulness meditation as well as their employees (Al-Owaidi et al., 2023). Mindful leaders exhibit full awareness and attention, which enhances team management and employee engagement. According to the proposal, a leader's mindfulness is linked to a greater implementation of equity for employees, which in turn mitigates emotional exhaustion and improves job performance (Al-Owaidi et al., 2023). Liang et al. (2016) found in one of the few studies that leader mindfulness reduced the impact on employee efficiency, with more conscious leaders being less likely to act abusively in response to subpar EP. Given the social and political pressures facing Iraqi employees (such as political interference and administrative instability), inspirational leadership helps them cope with psychological stress (Al-Owaidi et al., 2023). This support encourages employees to remain mentally and emotionally engaged, cultivating mindfulness even under (Miralles et al., 2024). From a SET perspective, mindfulness can be viewed as a personal resource developed in exchange for a supportive (Miralles et al., 2024). Mindfulness helps employees regulate emotions and improve performance. Consequently, this research posits the subsequent hypothesis:

H3: The Leader's mindfulness significantly affects the employee's performance.

Mindfulness in the connection between inspirational leaders and employee performance

Scholarly interest in the mediation function of mindfulness in the connection between EP and inspiring leadership has started to grow. Through their encouraging and imaginative actions, inspirational leaders may help their teams develop a mindfulness culture. Employees who indicated elevated levels of mindfulness, for instance, showed a higher propensity to have favourable outcomes, such as improved work performance and job satisfaction, especially in settings with supportive leadership. Similarly, research by Kroon et al. (2017) showed that employees who experience inspiring leadership are more conscious, which improves their performance.

Reb et al. (2014) looked at the impact of inspiring leaders on EP across Kenyan SOEs. The research demonstrated that Inspirational was both significantly and favourably connected with EP and forecasted staff performance. The research determined that inspiring leadership improved employee performance in Kenyan state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Moreover, inspiring leadership constituted 6.4%. The two studies mentioned underscore the significance of inspirational leadership in enhancing employee performance; therefore, this study posits that inspirational leadership has a substantial impact on employee performance in the workplace. The present study examined the moderating effect of mindfulness on the connection between inspirational leadership and EP. Employees often face challenges such as outdated infrastructure, bureaucratic burden, and conflict between management levels (Bhakuni & Saxena, 2023). Mindful employees are more flexible and able to handle ambiguity, which makes them more productive, even in restrictive environments. Thus, mindfulness becomes both a product and a response to social interactions within the university system.

Inspirational leadership initiates social interactions that foster mindfulness, which in turn drives performance. SET interprets this chain as a multi-layered reciprocal process: First, employees receive psychological benefits (such as clarity and security), which enhance internal states (such as mindfulness), which ultimately translate into external behaviours (such as improved job performance). In Iraqi universities, where structural reform is underway, leaders play a pivotal role in shaping employee behaviours (Good et al., 2016). The mindfulness acquired through this interaction becomes a key mechanism for sustaining performance, even in the face of institutional instability. Thus, a theory was put out for investigation.

H4: Mindfulness mediates the connection between inspirational leadership and employee performance.

From the literature review, the authors have built a research model as shown in Figure 1 below:

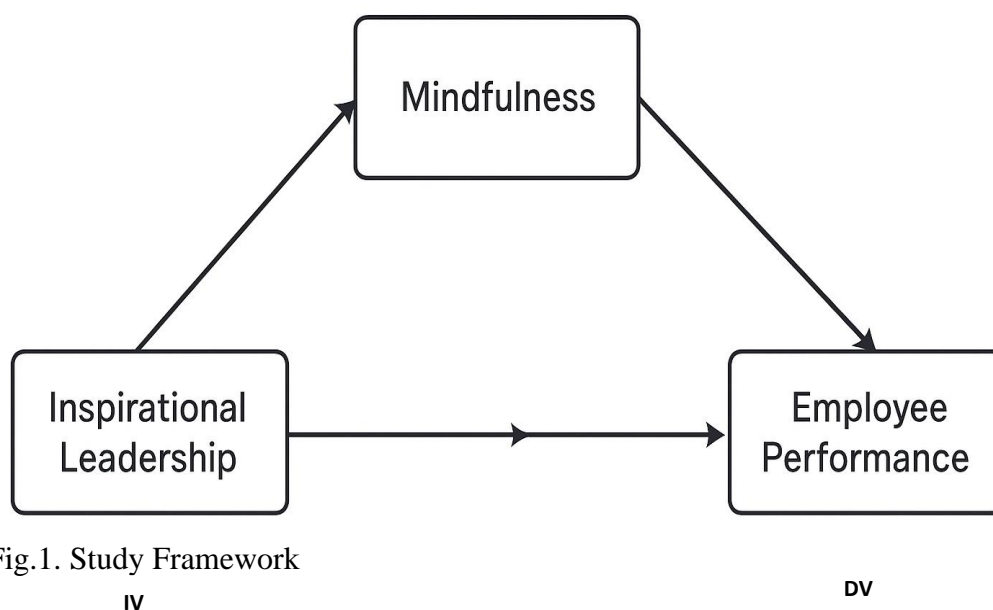


Fig.1. Study Framework
IV DV

Methodology

Design of the Study

This research adopted a positive philosophy with a deductive approach to examine the proposed theoretical framework. A cross-sectional research design was employed, which allowed data collection at a single point in time to investigate the relationships between inspirational leadership, mindfulness, and employee performance.

Population of the Study

The target population consisted of academic and administrative staff in public higher education institutions (HEIs) across Iraq. The study considered diverse roles, including deans, vice-deans, department heads, and managers, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of institutional performance drivers.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 604 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 375 valid responses were received, representing a 62% response rate. This exceeded the minimum required size of 48, as calculated using G*Power analysis (Erdfelder et al., 2009), ensuring adequate statistical power. A purposive sampling technique was employed to target individuals holding leadership and decision-making positions, aiming to gather relevant insights on the research variables.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire composed of previously validated scales.

- Inspirational Leadership: 6 items adapted from Joshi et al. (2009).
- Employee Performance: 8 items adapted from prior research.
- Mindfulness: 18 items across five subdimensions (presence, observe, nonreactivity, nonjudgment, decentering) adapted from Dhiman (2021).

The questionnaire underwent expert review, back-to-back translation (English–Arabic–English), and a pilot test to ensure clarity and appropriateness for the study context.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure construct validity, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted. Items with low factor loadings (below 0.5) were removed. Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5, confirming internal consistency and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion, with values below the threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). To address common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, and no dominant factor was found, indicating acceptable bias levels.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected between March and May 2024. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, in accordance with ethical standards. For analysis, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used via SmartPLS software. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to test the significance of direct and indirect relationships. Model fitness was assessed using VIF, R², Q², and path coefficients.

Improvements to Instruments

All the composite measurement scales employed in this research were sourced from prior studies and modified for the present research environment. The mindfulness scale comprises a total of 18 items, including three items for presence, four items for observation, four items for nonreactivity, four items for nonjudgment, and three items for decentering (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). Regarding the development of the surveys for the present research, one underwent several stages, with the initial stage including reviewing the survey by experts in the subject matter to enhance the flow and simplicity of the questionnaire. Secondly, two bilingual scholars assisted with the reverse transcription of the questionnaire's inquiry items from English to Arabic and vice versa. Disparities were addressed with the co-authors once consultation was done. Third, a pilot test was conducted to determine whether the survey questions are relevant, easily comprehensible, and clearly stated. Some of the measurement items had suggestive revisions depending on the respondents.

Results

Analysis of Demographics

The demographic data analysis of the research sample (n = 375) reveals a diverse and well-qualified group of participants. In terms of gender, 56% of the respondents are male, while 44% are female, indicating a slight predominance of male representation. Age-wise, the preponderance of participation (37.6%) is among those aged 30 to 40 years, followed closely by those aged 40 to 50 years, who represent 36.8%. Respondents above 50 years constitute 23.2%, while only 2.4% are under 30, highlighting a sample predominantly composed of middle-aged and older individuals. Regarding educational qualifications, 50.4% of the participants hold a PhD, demonstrating a significant proportion of highly educated individuals. Master's degree holders represent 25.87% of the sample, followed by 13.07% with bachelor's degrees. Those with Diplomas and other qualifications constitute 6.67% and 4.00%, respectively. This educational profile suggests a highly qualified cohort, reflective of the professional nature of the respondents. The distribution of professional roles indicates that 40.27% of the participants are Heads of Departments, while 22.67% serve as Vice Deans. Administrative Managers account for 16.53% of the sample, followed by Deans (8.27%), Audit Managers (7.20%), and Finance Managers (5.07%). These figures illustrate a strong representation of leadership and management positions among the respondents. In terms of work experience, the largest group (34.93%) comprises participants with 2 to 6 years of experience. Individuals with 6 to 10 years and 10 to 15 years of experience account for 31.73% and 20.53%, respectively. Those with more than 15 years of experience represent 10.40%, while only 2.4% have less than two years of professional experience. This indicates that the sample is predominantly composed of experienced professionals.

Model of Measurement

The model of measurement was examined by using factor loading, CR, and AVE (Hair Jr et al., 2017). It can be seen from Table 1 that all the item loadings were above the prescribed cut-off of 0.5, except for inspirational leadership two and nonjudgment 3. Such items were omitted due to their small loadings (Haer Jr et al., 2017). Although the work performance was less than 0.7, it was retained because deleting it did not improve composite and discriminator validity. Consequently, the constructs' composite reliability (CR) was greater than 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.5. Hence, there are no issues regarding convergent validity for these latent variables (see Table 1).

Table 1. Measurement Model on FL, CR, and AVE

Constructs	Item	FL	CA	CR	AVE
Work Performance	WP1	0.755	0.898	0.918	0.584
	WP2	0.836			
	WP3	0.832			
	WP4	0.710			
	WP5	0.671			
	WP6	0.776			
	WP7	0.730			
	WP8	0.787			
Inspirational Leadership	IL1	0.721	0.816	0.871	0.576
	IL2	D			
	IL3	0.782			
	IL4	0.709			
	IL5	0.783			
	IL6	0.732			

Presence	PR1	0.845	0.772	0.867	0.684
	PR2	0.783			
	PR3	0.851			
Observe	OB1	0.852	0.885	0.920	0.743
	OB2	0.845			
	OB3	0.886			
	OB4	0.865			
Nonreactivity	NO1	0.764	0.883	0.890	0.570
	NO2	0.908			
	NO3	0.894			
	NO4	0.875			
Nonjudgment	NON1	0.889	0.767	0.859	0.618
	NON2	0.872			
	NON3	D			
	NON4	0.855			
Decentering	DE1	0.774	0.861	0.906	0.706
	DE2	0.875			
	DE3	0.870			

HTMT has been used as the criterion to confirm the legitimacy of discrimination in the construction. Distributive reliability is depicted in Table 2, where HTMT values were less than 0.85, as postulated by Hensler et al. (2015) to demonstrate discriminant validity. The collinearity issues in the present research have been investigated to determine their impact on regression statistics. Har et al. (2017) have pointed out that the values of the VIF should not exceed 5. According to the results, none of the items scored more than 5, which is the cut-off point. Therefore, it is clear that the dataset does not exhibit any measures of multicollinearity.

Table 2. Discriminant according to the HTMT method

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Decentering							
2. Inspirational Leadership	0.247						
3. Nonjudgment	0.694	0.288					
4. Nonreactivity	0.457	0.292	0.495				
4. Observe	0.227	0.232	0.321	0.297			
5. Presence	0.384	0.413	0.396	0.412	0.249		
6. Work Performance	0.613	0.158	0.492	0.262	0.209	0.319	

We examined the reflective measurement model followed by Har Jr et al. (2017). In this study, five dimensions of Mindfulness. Decentering, nonjudgment, nonreactivity, observing, and presence were measured as five subscales and internal mindfulness was the second-order construct in the present study. The factor loadings, reliability, and validity were estimated to check the higher-order construct validity. Pointing at all the indicators of mindfulness in the table above, the analyses show that they all have loadings more than the minimum acceptable figure of 0.70 (Hair Jr et al., 2017). All items have high factor loadings; thus, none were deleted. Composite reliability coefficients, superior to the score of 0.700 advocated by Hair et al. (2017) for the second-order construct (Table 3), were used to evaluate the reliability and establish acceptable reliability. The validity for convergent validity was quite reasonable because the AVE exceeded 0.500 for the higher-order construct.

Table 3. FL, CR and AVE for HOC (Mindfulness)

Construct	Dimensions	Loadings	CR	AVE
Mindfulness	Decentering	0.801	0.899	0.628
	Nonjudgment	0.772		

Nonreactivity	0.782
Observe	0.751
Presence	0.739

Discriminant validity was also examined by ensuring the R^2 between any two latent variables is greater than the square part of the average variance extracted (AVE) for every latent variable. AVE for the concept exceeds its connections with all other factors, and applying HTMT, the bootstrap results obtained proved that the HTMT ratio is less than the .90 cut-off. Therefore, discriminant validity is achieved for the higher-order construct of mindfulness.

Structural Model

At this stage of the study, a collinearity test was performed ($VIF < 3.3$) before running the bootstrapping procedure, in which the proposed hypotheses were tested using 5,000 substituted samples. The results indicate that all direct correlations were statistically significant, meaning the H1 to H2 hypotheses have been accepted (see Table 4). In particular, inspirational leadership was positive and significantly related to mindfulness (H1: $\beta = 0.353$, $t = 6.339$, $p < 0.000$) and work performance (H2: $\beta = 0.515$, $t = 9.408$, $p < 0.000$). Additionally, mindfulness was positively and significantly related to work performance (H3: $\beta = 0.525$, $t = 11.360$, $p < 0.000$). Furthermore, the analysis of the bootstrapping procedure revealed that the link between inspirational leadership and work performance, mediated by mindfulness, was significant (H4: $\beta = 0.185$, $t = 5.850$, $p < 0.000$). This is a partial mediation due to the substantial correlation between IL and work performance.

Table 4. Evaluation of the structural model

Path coefficient	St. Beta	Mean	St. Error	T-t	P-v	Confidence Interval		f ²	Result
						LB	UB		
IL -> MIN	0.353	0.353	0.056	6.339	0.000	0.404	0.619	0.124	Yes
IL-> WP	0.515	0.513	0.055	9.408	0.000	0.279	0.472	0.258	Yes
MIN -> WP	0.525	0.529	0.046	11.36	0.000	0.420	0.563	0.431	Yes
IL -> MIN -> WP	0.185	0.190	0.032	5.850	0.000	0.214	0.331		Yes
R²	MIN	0.142		Q²	MIN	0.117			
	WP	0.326			WP	0.011			

Notes: IL= Inspirational Leadership; MIN= Mindfulness; WP= Work Performance

Discussion

The researchers concluded that inspirational leadership has a statistically significant positive impact on EP in organisations. The study indicates that employees whose leadership inspires colleagues to work actively, fosters positive thinking, and instils confidence in achieving organisational goals can lead to successful adoption of employee performance. At the same time, they often create an atmosphere where workers feel valued and encouraged to pursue their personal and professional development. Meanwhile, an individual's ability to demonstrate leadership qualities is influenced by their environment, attitudes, as well as their own skills and characteristics (Adawiyah & Sopiah, 2023). Furthermore, inspiring leadership has demonstrated positive effects on staff happiness (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020), organisational experiences and knowledge, and organisational innovation. EP significantly improves through inspirational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating followers with passion and vision (Kargeti, 2023). This leadership approach enhances employee motivation, fosters a positive work environment, and increases productivity (Kargeti, 2023). This study highlights

the strong link between employee performance and inspirational leadership, and incorporating mindfulness can enhance these benefits. For leaders, maintaining an active and open state of attention to the present can be a helpful tool. Research indicates that mindfulness exercises enhance leadership traits, which are crucial for proficient leadership. Better leadership performance is achieved through the presence and attention of mindful leaders (King & Nesbit, 2015). This can be achieved through regular mindfulness exercises. Furthermore, incorporating mindfulness into executive coaching improves quality of life, job performance, and leadership ability (Al-Owaidi et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the study also revealed that mindfulness improves employee satisfaction and performance. This is due to the possibility of linking the management of an organization's core functions, from upstream to downstream, including logistics, equitable job allocation, and fair human resource management, to employee satisfaction, including increased employee numbers, retention, and job performance. We found empirical evidence supporting the notion of inspirational leadership in employee performance. Therefore, leaders' self-confidence, vision, change management, and sensitivity to environmental issues enable employee performance by providing them with autonomy, a sense of meaning and accomplishment, and fostering positive relationships and self-acceptance. This provides a conceptualisation of the importance of inspirational leadership in inspiring employees to achieve, which is consistent with the study of Balogun et al. (2016). This research assists organisational leaders in understanding the human characteristics essential for effectively managing employee performance throughout work time—novel, encompassing the provision of a new reference for leadership science within human resource management. Cultural disparities within some organisations may limit the scope of this study. Consequently, more studies might incorporate organisational culture variables from various nations.

Theoretical implications

By emphasising the value of inspiring leadership in the setting of some Iraqi colleges, this study advances leadership theory. It highlights the notion that planning is simply one aspect of leadership; another is inspiring and involves staff members in managerial choices. By including mindfulness as a mediating element, the study clarifies the intricate processes via which employees are influenced by inspiring leadership. Our understanding of the critical roles that soft skills, such as employee performance and mindfulness, play in the university setting is enhanced by this combination. To provide a multidisciplinary understanding of how these domains intersect within the framework of organisational and management metamorphosis and ingenuity, the research connects the areas of leadership, employee activism (performance), and well-being (mindfulness). Academics can utilise this research to demonstrate how psychological principles are applied in the business sector. It highlights the importance of concepts such as job performance and mindfulness in practical leadership situations.

Managerial implications

Organisations ought to allocate resources towards leadership development programmes that focus on developing compelling leadership traits and technical proficiency. Managers should receive training to inspire and encourage their employees, especially during the digital transition. Performance coaching can help leaders handle emotional aspects of change and lead with compassion. Mindfulness practices can help staff manage anxiety and tension, improving overall well-being. Leaders should define performance goals, communicate them effectively, and provide support to staff. Open dialogue and lifelong learning are essential for employees, as they foster trust and reduce resistance to change. This study can help marketers and academics develop leadership theories and interdisciplinary knowledge.

Limitations and direction for future research

Future research should explore the relationship between motivating and effective leaders and empirical findings. Validating leadership development programs across various industries and countries is crucial. Effects of leadership over time, development programs, and mindfulness on worker productivity and project viability in Iraqi universities should be investigated. Cultural differences should be taken into account in leadership and change management during transitions. Understanding the relationship between leadership practices, mindfulness, and employee performance during technological and economic transformations can help businesses effectively navigate digital challenges.

Conclusion

The study found that inspirational leadership has a positive impact on EP in Iraqi universities through mindfulness. Inspirational leadership enhances commitment and performance via mindfulness. Future studies should test these findings in other contexts or over time. The results clearly indicated the beneficial effects of inspirational leadership and innovative employee communication, facilitated by mindfulness, on employee engagement and commitment, thereby safeguarding performance. Leaders should prioritise human well-being to safeguard the workplace and facilitate the attainment of organisational objectives.

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