

Strategic Leadership Dimensions and Their Effect on Learning Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the influence of strategic leadership on the process of building learning organizations within the higher education sector, drawing on a field investigation carried out at Kirkuk University. The dimensions of strategic leadership addressed in the study are human capital, ethical practices, organizational culture, and strategic vision, while the dimensions of the learning organization consist of shared vision, leadership, learning, and change.

Research Methodology: A descriptive-analytical approach was adopted, and a structured questionnaire was distributed to 120 administrative and academic leaders, including deans, assistant deans, heads of departments, and directors of divisions and units. Data normality was verified before applying parametric statistical procedures through SPSS version 26.

Results: The findings indicate a positive and statistically significant correlation between strategic leadership and learning organizations, and every dimension of strategic leadership was found to exert a significant effect on learning organizations, with strategic vision emerging as the strongest predictor.

Conclusions: Strengthening strategic leadership practices contributes meaningfully to the transformation of universities into learning organizations.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design and the single-institution sample restrict the generalizability of the findings.

Contributions: The study extends the strategic leadership literature within an Iraqi higher education context and offers practical guidance for university administrators seeking to cultivate organizational learning.

Keywords: *Ethical Practices, Human Capital, Learning Organizations, Strategic Leadership, Strategic Vision*

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions around the world are operating in an environment shaped by rapid technological change, an accelerating knowledge explosion, and intensifying competitive pressure among universities for students, funding, and academic reputation (Bilgin, Bilgin, & Kilinc, 2020). These conditions push universities to move away from rigid, centralized administrative habits and toward management approaches that can adapt quickly and respond effectively to a changing external environment (Kassaneh, Bolisani, & Scarso, 2023). Strategic leadership has become one of the management concepts most closely associated with this shift, since it is concerned with guiding

organizations toward long-term goals through the formulation of a coherent future vision and the making of sound strategic decisions. Strategic leadership is no longer understood merely as a mechanism for producing change. It is increasingly viewed as a driver that strengthens organizational capability and cultivates a working environment that stimulates learning and innovation among employees ([Kadim et al., 2025](#)).

Parallel to this development, the concept of the learning organization has attracted sustained attention in the management literature because it captures an organization's capacity to acquire, generate, and share knowledge in ways that improve performance and support long-term sustainability. This capacity is especially relevant to universities, which function as centers for the production and dissemination of knowledge and therefore depend on leadership that can nurture a culture of organizational learning while developing the intellectual capital embedded in faculty and staff ([Cai et al., 2026](#)). A university that fails to build such a culture risks falling behind in an environment where knowledge itself is the primary competitive resource ([Githuku, Nzulwa, & Kweni, 2022](#)).

The rapid transformation of higher education requires universities to shift from traditional bureaucratic models toward learning organizations that promote innovation, knowledge sharing, and adaptability. However, several Iraqi universities, including Kirkuk University, continue to face centralized decision-making, limited employee empowerment, and insufficient strategic leadership practices that may hinder organizational learning and institutional performance. Although strategic leadership is widely recognized as a driver of organizational transformation, its role in building learning organizations at Kirkuk University remains insufficiently examined. Therefore, this study investigates the effect of strategic leadership on building a learning organization by assessing the level of strategic leadership and learning organization practices and examining the relationship and influence between these two constructs ([Mohammad, Sağsan, & Şeşen, 2024](#)).

The importance of this research can be considered from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the academic literature on strategic leadership and learning organizations, particularly within the Iraqi setting where empirical evidence remains limited. It also offers an integrative framework that connects two constructs that are frequently discussed separately in contemporary management thought, and it supports the broader research agenda concerned with organizational transformation in universities. From a practical standpoint, the findings can help administrative leaders at Kirkuk University better understand how strategic leadership shapes organizational learning, provide evidence-based recommendations that can be used to strengthen university performance, and support the institution's ongoing efforts to become a more adaptive and innovative learning organization ([Wallo, Kock, Coetzer, & Lundqvist, 2023](#)).

Given these considerations, understanding the relationship between strategic leadership and the building of learning organizations carries particular importance for Iraqi universities, including Kirkuk University. Diagnosing the current state of leadership practice and evaluating the extent to which such practice supports a genuine transformation toward organizational learning can help identify concrete pathways for institutional improvement and long-term competitiveness. This study responds to that need by investigating how the dimensions of strategic leadership, namely human capital, ethical practices, organizational culture, and strategic vision, relate to and influence the dimensions of the learning organization, namely shared vision, leadership, learning, and change, among administrative and academic leaders at Kirkuk University.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Strategic Leadership: Concept and Definition

Strategic leadership occupies a pivotal position in guiding the direction of contemporary organizations. It contributes to motivating employees to follow the example of effective leaders by articulating a clear vision of the future and working purposefully within that vision, and it functions as a practical tool for addressing obstacles that stand in the way of organizational development, making it an essential mechanism for successful change management ([Hadrawi, 2018](#)). Strategic

leaders are the individuals responsible for making decisions about the future direction of the organization and for determining organizational intent ([Samimi et al., 2020](#)). Strategic leadership can also be understood as the capacity to comprehensively understand the organization and its surrounding environment in order to bring about strategic change through the people who work within the organization, with the ultimate aim of enabling short-term stability alongside long-term survival ([Samimi et al., 2020](#)). Related work emphasizes that the qualities expected of a leader at the highest levels of an organizational hierarchy should ideally be diffused throughout the institution, so that the organization benefits fully from the efficiency of its human capital and other resources, technology included ([Hidayah, 2015](#)).

Strategic leadership also shapes an organization's strategic direction and its capacity to manage change within a dynamic business environment. Recent evidence suggests that leaders who hold a long-term vision and who are capable of managing innovation can meaningfully improve organizational performance, and that leadership accountability is a key factor in building organizational stability and stakeholder trust ([Kadim et al., 2025](#)). Other scholars define strategic leadership as the ability of a leader to articulate an organized vision, prepare in advance, set strategic goals, think strategically, work effectively as part of a team, and make the decisions necessary to achieve organizational goals, while also stressing the capacity to anticipate the future, remain flexible, and delegate authority to others when strategic change becomes necessary ([Gusmão, 2018](#)).

Taken together, this body of work supports a working definition of strategic leadership as the ability of a leader to guide an organization toward its future goals through change management, employee empowerment, and effective decision-making, in a manner that strengthens organizational learning, encourages knowledge sharing, and helps transform the organization into a learning environment capable of continuous development and adaptation.

2.2 The Importance of Strategic Leadership

The growing complexity of the contemporary business environment has increased the need for a clear leadership vision capable of managing that complexity, and at times converting it into an opportunity for organizational benefit through the presence of strategic leadership able to turn threats into advantages ([Abdel Wahab, 2025](#)). Strategic leadership is important in directing employee behavior toward the achievement of desired goals and in raising the quality of strategic decision-making, since the leader concentrates effort and directs energy toward the best possible levels of achievement within the relationship between leaders and subordinates, and strategic leadership itself represents an evolution of leadership styles that allows leaders to keep pace with change ([Thys et al., 2023](#)). Strategic leadership is described as an essential component of organizational activity and as the organizational pinnacle of the modern business environment, contributing to the attraction of stakeholders through innovation and helping consolidate a culture of creativity that in turn allows the organization to sustain its leading position ([Nomas, 2025](#)).

Strategic leadership is also considered important in achieving both long-term and short-term organizational goals, since leaders concentrate on building the resources, capacities, and competencies needed to sustain competitive advantage, and strategic leadership plays a role in shaping organizational structure, building organizational culture, applying effective control systems, making optimal use of institutional potential, and developing human capital, all of which help the organization adapt to change and secure its future through the integration of individual, group, and organizational strategies ([Andrews, 2023](#)). Strategic leadership has further been defined as the ability of leaders to guide an organization toward long-term goals by formulating a clear strategic vision, managing organizational change, and strengthening the organization's capacity to adapt to environmental change, thereby ensuring sustainable performance and organizational effectiveness ([Ferede & Getahun, 2026](#)). A closely related definition frames strategic leadership as guiding the organization through leadership practices connected to strategic direction, human capital development, and the promotion of organizational culture and organizational control, in ways that support institutional excellence ([Al-Qawasmi & Shaqour, 2026](#)). A recent bibliometric review of strategic leadership research spanning four decades of scholarship confirms that the field

remains active and continues to expand rapidly across multiple disciplinary contexts ([Cuomo et al., 2023](#)).

2.3 Dimensions of Strategic Leadership

2.3.1 Human Capital

Human capital refers to individuals who possess skills and knowledge that increase the strategic value of the organization. Human capital is commonly understood as the skills that human resources bring to an organization and is treated as a valuable organizational asset, reflecting the idea that investment in individuals, through education and training, raises individual productivity. Human capital has also been described as the sum of the characteristics, skills, and abilities that employees possess and that can be directed toward organizational goals, with the effective use of human capital representing a genuine source of organizational excellence and a foundation for achieving unconventional levels of achievement ([Obeidat et al., 2021](#)). Because of this, contemporary managerial thinking places considerable emphasis on giving human resources the attention and opportunity needed to turn them into an effective strategic advantage at the organizational level.

2.3.2 Ethical Practices

Ethical practices reflect an organization's commitment to fairness and transparency in recruitment, evaluation, and compensation, in ways that preserve individual rights and ensure equitable treatment ([Mondy & Martocchio, 2016](#)). Ethical practices have also been defined as adherence to the policies and guidelines that decision-makers follow in their dealings with employees, grounded in values such as honesty and fairness ([Dessler, 2020](#)). Other work emphasizes the human dimension of ethical practice, arguing that ethical behavior is expressed through the positive obligations an employer undertakes to provide a fair and equitable working environment ([Olanipekun, 2022](#)).

2.3.3 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture, particularly when oriented toward knowledge, functions as more than an organizational backdrop; it operates as a dynamic capability that stimulates innovation-oriented behavior and represents the governing structure through which new ideas are received, evaluated, and converted into decisions ([Ho et al., 2022](#)). Culture of this type has been described as an organizational environment in which knowledge is treated as a central asset, and in which the ongoing creation and exchange of knowledge continuously shapes strategic decision-making, so that knowledge culture becomes an internal cognitive structure rather than merely an external stimulus ([Ali & Ahmad, 2023](#)). A knowledge-oriented organizational culture has similarly been described as an environment that supports and promotes the acquisition, exchange, use, and creation of knowledge through shared values, open communication, and collaborative learning processes ([Al-Kurdi et al., 2018](#)).

2.3.4 Strategic Vision

Strategic vision refers to a complete and comprehensive understanding on the part of managerial and strategic leadership regarding stakeholders, developed through the interpretation and analysis of the external environment so that all stakeholders can be informed of the future direction of the organization through the development of its mission and objectives. Strategic vision combines both core ideologies and an expected future state, and within the organization it is typically the responsibility of senior directors to formulate this future vision ([Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2021](#)).

2.4 Learning Organizations: Concept and Definition

Organizations seek to develop their employees through training, the acquisition of practical skills, and education, and many institutions now provide employees with educational opportunities through institutes and universities or recruit graduates directly to meet their need for highly qualified human resources. Within this context, a third and increasingly important dimension has emerged, namely learning itself. Training carries a largely mechanical dimension associated with the transfer of skill, expressed through a defined sequence of actions related to operating equipment or completing a production task, and conventional education follows a broadly similar pattern in the acquisition of information, since both processes tend to involve a comparatively static transfer of knowledge from an expert instructor to a trainee or student, with the hierarchical and largely

one-directional communication that this implies ([Al-Janabi, 2022](#)). Learning, by contrast, is understood as a more continuous and reciprocal process that unfolds throughout the organization rather than being confined to formally designated training episodes.

A learning organization can accordingly be described as an institution that is able to create the outcomes it desires, a setting in which people continually expand their capacity for creativity and pursue the goals they wish to achieve through new and broader ways of thinking, where collective ambition is released and where individuals remain engaged in learning a holistic vision that draws appreciation from foundational principles ([Grieves, 2008](#)). A learning organization has also been described as a system-wide change program that emphasizes the reduction of organizational layers, the engagement of all employees in continuous self-directed learning, and collective effort to strengthen the organization's capacity to generate new ideas and new information ([Al-Qutop et al., 2011](#)). Related definitions emphasize a setting in which people constantly expand their ability to achieve the outcomes they genuinely desire, where new and expanded ways of thinking are nurtured, where collective ambition is liberated, and where people continuously learn how to learn ([Dawood et al., 2015](#)). A learning organization has similarly been defined as one that continually expands its capacity to shape its own future and to adapt to changes occurring in its environment (Ratianu, 2015), and as a setting in which people constantly expand their abilities, achieve genuine goals, sustain new ways of thinking, and build new shared aspirations ([Luhn, 2016](#)). More recent scholarship defines a learning organization as an organizational system that provides a common learning platform and mechanisms for exchanging knowledge among employees, thereby promoting individual and group learning and effectively disseminating knowledge in ways that support innovation and sustainable development ([Cai et al., 2026](#)).

Drawing on this body of work, the present study defines a learning organization as the organization's ability to promote continuous learning among its employees, develop their knowledge and skills, and encourage knowledge exchange, teamwork, and creative thinking, in a manner that improves organizational performance, supports adaptation to environmental change, and helps the organization achieve its goals efficiently.

2.5 The Importance of Learning Organizations

The importance of learning organizations is reflected in their emphasis on strengthening the capacity of employees to think and on expanding the knowledge base of the institution as a whole, a consideration that matters because a substantial share of developed economies now rest on knowledge-based activity. Learning organizations can accordingly be viewed as a kind of knowledge factory, one that encourages individuals to acquire knowledge on their own initiative. The importance of a learning organization is reflected in several concrete benefits associated with cultivating a learning culture, including improved employee job satisfaction, higher productivity and efficiency, stronger leadership development at every organizational level, and an enhanced capacity for organization-wide adaptation, all of which tend to make employees more competitive within their fields ([Soh & Ali, 2021](#)). Learning organizations have also been described in terms of their capacity to empower people, stimulate collaboration and collective learning, support open communication, and recognize the interdependence among individuals, organizations, and the wider community ([Gautam, 2022](#)). More broadly, the importance of a learning organization stems from its contribution to organizational performance and to the development of employee capability through continuous learning and knowledge exchange, since it raises productivity, stimulates innovation, and strengthens the organization's ability to adapt to environmental and technological change. A learning organization further helps build a supportive environment for continuous development, effective decision-making, and competitive advantage, a consideration that has become especially salient given the pace of digital transformation across many industries ([Aman & Surwanti, 2026](#)).

2.6 Dimensions of Learning Organizations

Learning organizations have received considerable attention from researchers and have been examined through multiple sets of dimensions. The present study relies on four dimensions drawn from a range of scientific sources that align with the objectives and variables of the study.

2.6.1 Shared Vision

Shared vision is one of the foundational dimensions of the learning organization, since it reflects the existence of a unified future orientation that the organization adopts and that employees come to believe in and work toward, in a manner that strengthens organizational belonging and creates a collective commitment to achieving institutional goals. A shared vision also helps direct and unify employee effort within a clear strategic framework, which supports the organization's capacity for adaptation and sustainability ([Fonseca & Alves, 2024](#)). Recent evidence further confirms that a shared vision functions as a mechanism for strengthening collaboration and motivating employees toward innovation and goal achievement ([Hrnjić et al., 2025](#)).

2.6.2 Leadership

Leadership represents a key pillar in building a learning organization, since its role includes supporting a continuous learning environment and encouraging employees to share knowledge and participate in decision-making. Effective leadership contributes to employee empowerment, fosters creativity, and helps develop an organizational culture that supports learning and adaptation to environmental change through clear vision and flexible management practice ([Fonseca & Alves, 2024](#)). Recent evidence confirms that leadership oriented toward learning has a direct positive effect on institutional performance and on the quality of organizational outcomes ([Hrnjić et al., 2025](#)).

2.6.3 Learning

Learning within a learning organization refers to the continuous acquisition of knowledge and experience through training, development, and interaction among individuals, a process that contributes to improved individual and collective performance. Learning is understood as an ongoing process that allows employees to develop the abilities and skills needed to address contemporary challenges and changes, while also supporting critical and creative thinking within the organization ([Pinheiro & Alves, 2024](#)). Continuous learning further contributes to employee efficiency and strengthens the organization's ability to innovate and develop ([Khay, 2024](#)).

2.6.4 Change

Change is one of the essential dimensions of a learning organization, reflecting the organization's ability to adapt to environmental, technological, and organizational shifts through the development of working methods and the modernization of organizational knowledge. A learning organization does not merely respond to change but actively seeks to anticipate and manage it through a culture of continuous learning and organizational flexibility ([Khay, 2024](#)). Organizational change within learning organizations is also connected to the development of organizational structures, the promotion of innovation, and the achievement of institutional sustainability ([Pinheiro & Alves, 2024](#)).

2.7 Linking Strategic Leadership to Learning Organizations

The theoretical review presented above suggests a coherent conceptual link between the dimensions of strategic leadership and the dimensions of the learning organization. Human capital development is expected to support learning because organizations that invest in employee skills and knowledge create the underlying capability needed for continuous learning to occur ([Obeidat et al., 2021](#)). Ethical practices are expected to support learning because trust, transparency, and fairness create the psychological safety that employees need before they are willing to share knowledge openly ([Olanipekun, 2022](#)). Organizational culture is expected to support learning because a culture oriented toward knowledge exchange and collaboration provides the informal infrastructure through which learning actually takes place ([Ho et al., 2022](#)). Strategic vision is expected to support learning because a clearly articulated future direction gives employees a shared purpose around which collective learning can be organized ([Fonseca & Alves, 2024](#)). These theoretical linkages provide the conceptual foundation for the hypotheses tested in the remainder of this study.

2.8 Research Hypotheses

To address the research problem, the study formulates two main hypotheses, each of which is supported by four sub-hypotheses corresponding to the dimensions of strategic leadership. The first main hypothesis states that a significant correlation exists between strategic leadership and learning organizations, from which the following sub-hypotheses are derived:

H₁: Strategic leadership is significantly correlated with learning organizations

The second main hypothesis states that strategic leadership has a significant effect on learning organizations, from which the following sub-hypotheses are derived:

H₂: Strategic leadership has a significant effect on learning organizations

2.9 Research Model

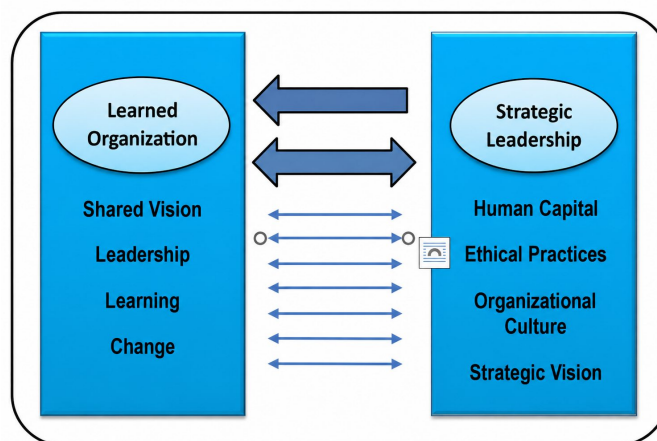


Figure 1. Hypothetical study scheme

Figure 1 presents the hypothesized research model that links the dimensions of strategic leadership to the dimensions of the learning organization. The model was developed by the researcher to visualize both the correlation hypotheses and the effect hypotheses examined in the study. Strategic leadership is positioned as the independent variable and is decomposed into four dimensions, namely human capital, ethical practices, organizational culture, and strategic vision. The learning organization is positioned as the dependent variable and is decomposed into shared vision, leadership, learning, and change. Two categories of arrows connect the independent to the dependent construct: one category represents the hypothesized correlation between the two variables, and the second represents the hypothesized directional effect of strategic leadership on the learning organization. The model therefore functions as a conceptual map that guided both the design of the questionnaire and the statistical testing strategy described in the following sections.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The study relies on a descriptive-analytical approach suited to the nature of the research problem, which aims to diagnose the reality of strategic leadership practice and to analyze its effect on the process of building a learning organization at Kirkuk University. This approach is grounded in the collection of data from the field and the statistical analysis of that data in order to reach evidence-based scientific conclusions.

3.2 Research Population and Sample

A field survey method was used, with a structured questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for collecting data from a sample of administrative and academic leaders at Kirkuk University, including deans, assistant deans, heads of departments, and directors of divisions and units. A total of 120 usable responses were obtained and analyzed using SPSS version 26.

3.3 Data Collection Sources and Tools

The research relies on two main sources of data. Primary data were obtained directly from the research population through the opinions expressed by administrative leaders at Kirkuk University by means of the questionnaire developed for the purposes of this study. Secondary data were drawn from books, scientific journals, university theses, and previously published research on strategic leadership and learning organizations, providing the theoretical foundation on which the study is built.

3.4 Methods of Statistical Analysis

To answer the research questions and test the study hypotheses, the researcher applied several statistical procedures. Arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated to determine the relative importance of the research variables and their associated items. The correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between the research variables. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the characteristics of the research sample. Cronbach's alpha was applied to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire items designed to measure the study variables (Taber, 2018).

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Before distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of academic referees who assessed the clarity, relevance, and apparent validity of its items, a step intended to strengthen the accuracy of the instrument's design. The results of the reliability analysis reported in Table 1 show that Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire as a whole reached 0.944. This value is considerably higher than the generally accepted minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the questionnaire items and confirming that the instrument possesses a satisfactory level of stability and reliability for use in statistical analysis and hypothesis testing (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019).

Table 1. Reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	Value
Cronbach Alpha	0.944
Number of Items	40

Table 1 reports the reliability statistics for the questionnaire as a whole. The instrument comprises 40 items, and the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.944 confirms a high level of internal consistency across all items included in the survey instrument.

3.6 Test of Normal Distribution

Table 2. Results of the normal distribution test

Variable	K-S Statistic	df	K-S Sig.	S-W Statistic	df	S-W Sig.
Strategic Leadership (X)	0.072	120	0.200	0.986	120	0.318
Learning Organization (Y)	0.081	120	0.116	0.981	120	0.145

Table 2 presents the results of the normal distribution test conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk procedures. The significance values for both study variables exceeded the conventional threshold of 0.05. The significance level for strategic leadership reached 0.200 under the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.318 under the Shapiro-Wilk test, while the significance level for the learning organization reached 0.116 under the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.145 under the Shapiro-Wilk test. These results indicate that the study data follow a normal distribution, supporting acceptance of the null hypothesis of normality and confirming that the data are appropriate for the use of parametric statistical procedures in testing the study hypotheses and analyzing relationships between variables. Table 2 summarizes the normality diagnostics for the two principal study variables, strategic leadership and the learning organization, across both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, together with the associated degrees of freedom and significance levels.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Description and Diagnosis of Strategic Leadership

Table 3. Research sample responses on the dimensions of strategic leadership

Dimension	Mean	SD	Coeff. of Variation (%)	Relative Importance (%)
Human Capital	2.925	0.909	31.06	58.50
Ethical Practices	2.998	0.934	31.15	59.97
Organizational Culture	2.965	0.905	30.51	59.30
Strategic Vision	2.930	0.915	31.24	58.60
Overall Average	2.955	0.916	30.99	59.09

Table 3 reports the sample's assessment of the dimensions of strategic leadership. The overall mean reached 2.955, with a relative importance of 59.09%, indicating an acceptable, though moderate, level of institutional attention to strategic leadership practice. Among the individual dimensions, ethical practices ranked first in relative importance, with a mean of 2.998 and relative importance of 59.97%, followed by organizational culture with a mean of 2.965 and relative importance of 59.30%, then strategic vision with a mean of 2.930 and relative importance of 58.60%, while human capital ranked last with a mean of 2.925 and relative importance of 58.50%. The coefficient of variation for these dimensions ranged between 30.51% and 31.24%, reflecting a relatively consistent pattern of dispersion in respondent opinions across the four dimensions of strategic leadership. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and relative importance, for each of the four dimensions of strategic leadership as well as the overall composite score for the construct.

4.2 Description and Diagnosis of Learning Organizations

Table 4. Research sample responses on the dimensions of learning organizations

Dimension	Mean	SD	Coeff. of Variation (%)	Relative Importance (%)
Shared Vision	3.102	0.881	28.40	62.04
Leadership	3.085	0.896	29.04	61.70
Learning	3.120	0.874	28.01	62.40
Change	3.041	0.902	29.66	60.82
Overall Average	3.087	0.888	28.78	61.74

Table 4 reports the sample's assessment of the dimensions of the learning organization. The overall mean reached 3.087, with a relative importance of 61.74%, indicating a moderately positive orientation within the university toward the adoption of learning organization practices. Among the individual dimensions, learning ranked first with a mean of 3.120 and relative importance of 62.40%, followed by shared vision with a mean of 3.102 and relative importance of 62.04%, then leadership with a mean of 3.085 and relative importance of 61.70%, while change ranked last with a mean of 3.041 and relative importance of 60.82%. The coefficient of variation ranged between 28.01% and 29.66% across these dimensions, indicating a good degree of consistency and convergence in respondent opinions, with a comparatively low level of dispersion. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the four dimensions of the learning organization, namely shared vision, leadership, learning, and change, together with the overall composite score for the construct.

4.3 Testing the Correlation Hypotheses

Table 5. Correlation between strategic leadership and learning organizations

Dimension	Correlation with Learning Organizations
Human Capital	0.691**
Ethical Practices	0.724**
Organizational Culture	0.668**
Strategic Vision	0.743**
Strategic Leadership (overall)	0.758**

Table 5 reports the results of the correlation analysis. The overall correlation coefficient between strategic leadership and the learning organization reached 0.758 at a significance level of 0.01, indicating a strong and statistically significant relationship between the two constructs and supporting acceptance of the first main hypothesis. The Pearson correlation coefficients linking each dimension of strategic leadership, namely human capital, ethical practices, organizational culture, and strategic vision, to the learning organization, along with the overall correlation coefficient for strategic leadership as a composite construct. All coefficients are significant at the 0.01 level based on a sample of 120 respondents.

At the level of individual dimensions, human capital showed a positive and significant correlation with the learning organization, with a correlation coefficient of 0.691 at the 0.01 significance level, suggesting that the development of employee skills and the investment in their abilities and experience contributes to strengthening the characteristics of a learning organization, supporting acceptance of the first sub-hypothesis. Ethical practices showed a positive and significant correlation with the learning organization, with a correlation coefficient of 0.724 at the 0.01 significance level, reflecting the importance of adherence to ethical values, transparency, and integrity in supporting an organizational learning environment and encouraging knowledge exchange, supporting acceptance of the second sub-hypothesis. Organizational culture showed a positive and significant correlation with the learning organization, with a correlation coefficient of 0.668 at the 0.01 significance level, indicating that an organizational culture supportive of cooperation, learning, and experience sharing contributes to the development of a learning organization, supporting acceptance of the third sub-hypothesis. Strategic vision recorded the strongest correlation with the learning organization among all four dimensions, with a coefficient of 0.743 at the 0.01 significance level, indicating that clarity of future direction and the orientation of employees toward shared strategic goals strengthens the organization's capacity for continuous learning, supporting acceptance of the fourth sub-hypothesis.

Taken together, these results confirm that all dimensions of strategic leadership are positively and significantly correlated, at the 0.01 level, with the learning organization, supporting the first main hypothesis and each of its four sub-hypotheses, and underscoring the importance of strategic leadership in strengthening the characteristics of a learning organization.

4.4 Testing the Effect Hypotheses

Table 6. Regression results for the effect of strategic leadership on learning organizations

Dimension	β	R ²	Calculated F	Sig.
Human Capital	0.642	0.478	83.517	0.000
Ethical Practices	0.701	0.524	96.824	0.000
Organizational Culture	0.618	0.446	77.306	0.000
Strategic Vision	0.732	0.552	108.265	0.000
Strategic Leadership (overall)	0.785	0.574	126.418	0.000

Table 6 reports the results of the regression analysis conducted to test the effect hypotheses. The results show a positive and significant effect of strategic leadership on the learning organization, with a significance level of 0.000, well below the 0.01 threshold, confirming the significance of this effect and supporting acceptance of the second main hypothesis. The results of the simple regression analysis for the effect of each dimension of strategic leadership, and of strategic leadership as a whole, on the learning organization. The table reports the standardized regression coefficient, the coefficient of determination, the calculated F statistic, and the associated significance level for a sample of 120 respondents.

At the level of individual dimensions, human capital showed a significant effect on the learning organization, with a regression coefficient of 0.642 and a coefficient of determination of 0.478, indicating that this dimension explains a substantial share of the variance in the learning organization and underscoring the importance of developing employee capability and skill in supporting the characteristics of a learning organization, supporting acceptance of the first sub-hypothesis. Ethical practices showed a significant effect, with a regression coefficient of 0.701 and a coefficient of determination of 0.524, indicating that adherence to ethical values and practices contributes meaningfully to the promotion of a learning organization, supporting acceptance of the second sub-hypothesis. Organizational culture showed a significant effect, with a regression coefficient of 0.618 and a coefficient of determination of 0.446, indicating that organizational culture plays an important role in supporting learning organization characteristics, even though it recorded the smallest relative effect among the four dimensions while remaining statistically significant, supporting acceptance of the third sub-hypothesis. Strategic vision showed the strongest effect among the four dimensions, with a regression coefficient of 0.732 and a coefficient of determination of 0.552, indicating that this dimension contributes the most to explaining variance in the learning organization, supporting acceptance of the fourth sub-hypothesis.

Overall, these results confirm that every dimension of strategic leadership exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on the learning organization, supporting acceptance of the second main hypothesis and each of its four sub-hypotheses. Strategic leadership as a composite construct produced a regression coefficient of 0.785 and a coefficient of determination of 0.574, with an F statistic of 126.418 significant at the 0.000 level, indicating that strategic leadership explains a substantial proportion of the variance observed in the learning organization at Kirkuk University.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The pattern of results obtained in this study is broadly consistent with prior research linking strategic leadership to organizational learning outcomes in a range of institutional settings ([Ashkevari & Ghasemi, 2023](#)). The strength of the strategic vision dimension in particular echoes findings reported in studies of leadership within learning-oriented institutions, where a clearly communicated future direction has repeatedly emerged as one of the strongest predictors of organizational learning capacity ([Hrnjić et al., 2025](#)). The comparatively modest, though still significant, contribution of organizational culture may reflect the layered and often slow-moving nature of cultural change within long-established public universities, where formal structures can outpace the informal norms that ultimately determine how knowledge is shared day to day ([Al-Kurdi et al., 2018](#)). The relatively strong role played by ethical practices further reinforces the argument that trust and perceived fairness function as preconditions for open knowledge exchange, since employees are unlikely to share what they know in an environment they perceive as inequitable ([Olanipekun, 2022](#)). Considered together, these findings support the broader claim that strategic leadership operates as a multidimensional lever, one whose separate components combine to shape the extent to which a university functions as a genuine learning organization rather than as a purely administrative institution ([Cao et al., 2025](#)).

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between strategic leadership and the building of learning organizations at Kirkuk University, and the evidence gathered supports several conclusions. A positive and statistically significant correlation was found between strategic

leadership, across all four of its dimensions, and the learning organization, indicating that strengthening strategic leadership practice is reflected positively in the extent to which the university functions as a learning organization. Every dimension of strategic leadership was also found to exert a statistically significant effect on the learning organization at the 0.01 level, confirming the strength of the research model and its grounding in sound statistical procedure.

Strategic vision emerged as the most influential dimension within the learning organization, pointing to the importance of a clearly articulated future direction in promoting organizational learning. Ethical practices were found to make a substantial contribution to supporting the learning environment of the university by fostering trust, transparency, and constructive organizational behavior, while human capital emerged as a key pillar in building a learning organization through the development of employee skill and experience. Organizational culture, although it produced the smallest relative effect among the four dimensions, remained an important element in supporting organizational learning processes. Strategic leadership as a composite construct demonstrated a good level of explanatory power for changes occurring within the learning organization, reflecting the overall strength of the independent variable in accounting for variation in the dependent variable. The overlapping contribution of the individual dimensions further suggests that a learning organization does not rest on any single leadership dimension but on the integration of several dimensions working together, and the results as a whole confirm that adopting strategic leadership in an integrated manner contributes directly to strengthening the characteristics of a learning organization and to improving organizational performance more broadly.

Building on these conclusions, several recommendations follow for university administrators and policymakers. Strategic leadership practices in universities and similar institutions should be strengthened through the adoption of clear plans grounded in a well-defined future vision. Greater attention should be devoted to developing human capital through continuous training and the deliberate building of professional and knowledge-based capacity among employees. Ethical practices should be promoted through clear codes of conduct and the consistent application of transparency and integrity in institutional decision-making. Efforts should be made to develop an organizational culture that supports learning by encouraging teamwork and knowledge sharing across departments. Leadership development programs focused on strategic thinking and decision-making should be made available to support management leaders at every level. Universities should work to create an institutional environment that stimulates innovation and continuous learning, strengthen internal communication systems to ensure the flow of knowledge across different management levels, make deliberate use of research findings such as these in the development of strategic institutional policy, and focus on integrating the dimensions of strategic leadership rather than treating them as separate or independent initiatives.

5.2 Research Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. The research relied on a cross-sectional design, which captures perceptions of strategic leadership and the learning organization at a single point in time and cannot establish causal ordering between the two constructs with certainty. The sample was drawn from a single institution, Kirkuk University, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other universities operating under different administrative, cultural, or resource conditions. Data collection relied entirely on a self-administered questionnaire, which introduces the possibility of common method bias and reflects the subjective perceptions of respondents rather than objective indicators of institutional performance. The sample size of 120 respondents, while adequate for the statistical procedures applied, remains comparatively modest and may not fully capture the diversity of leadership experience present across the university's various colleges and administrative units.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Study

Future research could usefully extend the present findings in several directions. Comparative studies involving multiple universities, including both public and private institutions across different regions of Iraq, would help clarify whether the patterns identified here generalize beyond a single institutional context. Longitudinal designs that track strategic leadership practice and

learning organization characteristics over an extended period would allow researchers to draw firmer conclusions about the direction of causality between the two constructs. Future studies might also incorporate qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews with administrative leaders, to complement the quantitative findings reported here and to capture the lived experience of strategic leadership practice in greater depth. Additional research could examine potential mediating or moderating variables, including organizational trust, digital transformation capacity, or employee engagement, that may help explain the mechanisms through which strategic leadership translates into organizational learning outcomes. Finally, replicating this study within non-academic organizational settings, such as public administration or the private sector, would help establish whether the relationships identified here hold across different types of institutions.

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