



Providing a Lean Leadership Model (A Comparative Study of Islamic Azad Universities and State Universities of Fars Province)

Nasir Akbari¹, Masoud Pourkiani^{2}, Saeed Sayadi³, Sanjar Salajegheh⁴, Ayob Sheykhi⁵*

¹ *Department of Management, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.*

² *Department of Management, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5370-3768>, Email: pourkiani@iauk.ac.ir

³ *Department of Management, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.*

⁴ *Department of Management, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.*

⁵ *Department of Statistics, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Iran*

Abstract

The purpose of the present research is to design a lean leadership model. Lean leadership components were identified through exploratory studies and polling the experts' opinions using Delphi technique; then these factors were tested in the form of a model designed in the target population. The statistical population of the research consists of three groups. The first group consisted of experts; 31 comments were used to design the template. The second group consisted of the staff of the Azad University out of which 240 were selected and the third group consisted of the staff of the State University of which 282 were selected as sample. This research is descriptive that has been done as a survey. The method of data collection in this research is a combination of library and field studies. Confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and one-sample t-test were used to analyze the data. The research findings, while confirming the proposed model, showed that lean leadership includes commitment to self-development, development of others, persistency in lean thinking, daily support of continuous improvement, effective listening, creating outlook, aligning goals with outlook, defining effective propelling organizational values components.

Keywords: Adaptation, Leadership, Lean leadership,

Introduction

Leadership is the most important component in how to manage an organization; it makes a big difference between an organization and its competitors. In the current business environment, the leadership situation in organizations has a direct and unique relation to the success of organizations

(Khosrowshahi, 2016). The unparalleled role of leadership in organizational efficiency in addressing the changes is due to the radical differences in organizational leadership styles, and organizational leadership has a far more significant impact in the current business environment than ever before (Mir Hosseini, 2017). It may have been a while ago that the leadership of an organization

could drive the organization with the least ingenuity and ability relying on some organizational advantages. But in the current business environment, the speed of decision-making and risk-taking has caused that even in some cases without the right information, the organization should make the right decision in the least amount of time. This can only be possible by the leaders who have a maximal intuition (Ehsani Moghaddam, 2019).

Womack and Jones have used the term lean thinking to indicate the widespread use of the term in business. Lean thinking provides a way by which value can be determined. It arranged the value-creating activities in the best possible order and sequence; whenever needed, we can implement them and perform with the greatest amount of impact (Farrokhnejad Kashki, 2014). This type of thinking is lean because it can provide a way through which we can do more with the least resources (i.e. less manpower, less equipment, less time and less space) and at the same time, getting them closer by addressing the needs of consumers. The results suggest that managers need to go beyond management techniques in order to apply successfully lean management which is achieved through the application of soft measures and the development of appropriate characteristics of a lean organizational culture (Bortolotti et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

For (Dombrowski & Mielke, 2014), disregarding lean philosophy, ignoring people and solving their problems are the main causes of successive failures that are due to weaknesses in leadership. (Awais, 2017) set the pattern of lean leadership development in four stages: (1) commitment to self-development; (2) development of the

others; (3) daily support of Kaizen; and (4) creating perspective and alignment of goals. Lean leadership requires having lean thinking; lean thinking is a methodology for the time and quality improvement cycle that is done by eliminating waste. (Bobbio et al., 2016) state that lean leadership guarantees sustainability by coaching people and defining values, perspectives, and goals. The lean leadership in the role of facilitative in organizations helps training at the organizational and individual levels; intelligent emotional communication is a prominent feature of facilitative leadership. The results show that communication competence and emotional intelligence are key aspects of leadership in effective learning (Jafari, 2018). Researchers believe that there is a positive relationship between lean team effectiveness and leaders' self-transcendence values as well as a negative relationship between lean team effectiveness and leaders' preservation and survival values (Aij & Teunissen, 2017). Lean leadership has emphasized the formation of regular group meetings. The findings also confirm that the psychological conditions of involvement and attendance balance the relationship between the use or facilitation of managerial meetings and employees' activity (Khaleghi, 2015).

Lean leaders consider spiritual leadership techniques and use spirituality to guide and motivate employees. They focus on fostering self-awareness, self-direction, and continuous growth of employees by focusing on both aspects of the self-professionalism and the personality of employees and working on the morale of followers at emotional, value, mental, and technical levels. The capabilities and characteristics of this type of leadership on the one hand and the lack of internal and native study of lean organizational leadership has led the



researcher to identify a model (dimensions, components, variables, and indices) of lean leadership in a comprehensive research. On the other hand, he tries to extract the native variables and indices of the model through in-depth and semi-structured interviews with managers and experts in the field of organizational leadership. In other words, the main problem of this research has two parts of theoretical and practical gaps:

Available theory gaps include:

- Lack of sufficient, and consistent studies in the field of lean management and leadership
- Absence of a comprehensive theoretical and practical model in the field of lean leadership
- Lack of definitions of concepts, dimensions, components, and variables of lean leadership

The practical gaps include:

- Lack of the tools necessary for lean organizational leadership
- Providing a lean leadership model for organizations
- Effective and effective use of the dimensions, components and variables of the model in a variety of leadership and managerial areas

Importance and necessity of paying attention to the concept of lean leadership

Leadership is essential to the successful performance of any organization. Leadership researchers are trying to understand what contributes to leadership success and organizational success (Golparvar & Rafiezadeh, 2012). Leadership is a paradigm model for others to follow. An example and paradigm is to set a high standard for others whereas the leader motivates them and

encourages them to follow him (Hassani, 2019). In an organization, leaders shape the values of that organization, extend them, and always protect them. Also, in order to preserve and promote these values more and more, he/she is beginning to implement them, and like the prophets in his/her behavior, embody these values in the spirit of the organization. According to Bronze, leaders and followers increase each other's motivation and drive the organization's progress through this bilateral relationship. Based on its ethical and human standards, management will lead to the growth and transformation of values in the leader and organization under his leadership (Jafari et al., 2017). Understanding the performances of organizational leadership is also essential by providing a principal perspective that expresses the overall identity of the system and its purpose is to respect one another and to create systems that enable effective communication between individuals. The word leadership has different meanings for different people. Researchers often define the phenomenon of leadership according to their personal opinion. After a comprehensive review of the leadership literature, Dehani et al. concluded that the definitions of leadership are approximately the number of people who have attempted to define it (Dehani et al., 2020). Every manager and leader must be able to achieve organizational goals through individuals. For years, managers have been taught that their ability to achieve goals is directly related to their ability to motivate people. Nowadays, this matter is more important as human issues, communication and relationships between the manager and subordinates have increased. Especially, the individual works are on the decline and the importance of teamwork is on the rise. In order to coordinate and integrate forces, the manager, along with acquiring the necessary

knowledge and expertise and developing it through human resource education, must teach the right management skills, behaviors, and human relationships based on the individual and social values as the needs and time required. This promotes the quality of managerial leadership in the organization (Dutton, 2009).

Researches done on the organizational improvement projects shows that 46% of the organization's failures in organizational improvements were due to inadequate leadership. In addition, 62% of the companies that have had to leave business were exposed to mismanagement. Even the decline of the giants such as Yahoo, Sony, Nokia, Kodak, and many other businesses that were the best for many years are considered to be due to their inadequate leadership (Bortolotti et al., 2015). The combination of these failures and other evidence has necessitated the development of lean organizational leaders. What is the difference between "lean leadership" and other types of organizational leadership? What different merits and characteristics can determine this classification?

Research literature

Leadership is one of the most widely studied organizational issues. However, there is still no consensus among leaders on the definition of leadership. Definitions vary with the emphasis on leadership abilities, personality traits, effective relationships, cognitive versus emotional approach, person-orientation versus group-orientation, and self-inclination versus collective tendencies (Buck & Watson, 2018). The process of influencing others and motivating them to work together to accomplish group goals is called leadership, or it can be said that leadership is the process of influencing others so that they strive to achieve

organizational goals. The leadership is considered the "Art of Influencing Others"; that is to say, the followers have to optionally obey the leader. Therefore, leadership, in general, is intended to influence individuals and motivate them to strive to achieve group goals willingly, enthusiastically, and passionately (Rezaei, 2015).

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Methodology

This research aimed to present a lean leadership model through library studies (referring to written documents such as books, magazines, etc.). At the same time as identifying the components of lean leadership, interviews with the experts were conducted. The expert interview was mainly of semi-structured ones. In such interviews, the interviewer obtains different facts from the interviewee during the interview. The expert interview was conducted for two purposes. The one is for presenting the components extracted from library studies to the experts and consulting them on the extracted dimensions and components and identifying aspects and the components that have not been considered in library studies. The other purpose of the expert interview was to understand better the variables for



their operational definition, to extract the criteria and classify them appropriately. Then, we used the opinion poll by Delphi method to finalize the components of lean leadership. A special type of open-ended questionnaire was used for an expert opinion poll.

Then, to validate the model in the statistical population, the model designed is tested in the target population. Accordingly, the present research seeks to present a lean leadership model in Islamic Azad universities and state universities in Fars province. According to the abovementioned, this research is descriptive in terms of method and, it is an applied developmental research in terms of purpose. It has collected data through the field research method and used the Delphi technique in different stages of research.

The statistical population of this research constituted the informed experts in the process of model building. The experts in the present research were university professors and experts in the field of comparison who were involved in the model building through the Delphi technique and 30 of them were selected as sample. The second group of the statistical population was the staff of Islamic Azad universities of Fars province with 650 people out of whom 240 were selected using Krejcie and Morgan table. The third group consisted of 1085 employees of state universities of Fars province, 282 of whom were selected using Krejcie and Morgan table.

Four questionnaires were used for data collection. At first, a specific type of

questionnaire (open-ended), consisting of general (demographic) and specialized questions, was designed and implemented for expert opinion poll with the aim of finalizing the lean leadership components and research model. In this research, two questionnaires were used for measuring lean leadership for two statistical populations of Azad University and state university. The reason is that the components and sub-components of lean leadership were not identical in two statistical populations. The fourth questionnaire was also used to measure the validity of the lean leadership Model by the experts. In this research, a one-sample t-test and SPSS version 23 were used for data analysis.

Results

Question 1: What are the dimensions of lean leadership in Fars Azad universities?

One sample t-test was used to investigate this question. The experts' opinion on the proportion of each of the dimensions of lean leadership with the lean leadership variable in the Azad Universities has been presented in (Table 1).

H₀: There is no correlation between the dimensions of lean leadership and lean leadership variable in the Azad universities of Fars province.

H₂: There is a correlation between the dimensions of lean leadership and lean leadership variable in the Azad universities of Fars province.

Table 1. One-sample t-test results to investigate the proportion of lean leadership dimensions with lean leadership variable in the Azad universities of Fars province

Variable	Theoretical mean = 0.3				
	Mean observed	Standard deviation	Statistic t	Freedom of degree	p
Commitment to self-development	3.94	0.86	5.987	29	*0.001< 0
Development of others	3.98	0.81	6.653	29	*0.001< 0
Persistence in lean thinking	3.83	0.79	5.732	29	*0.001< 0
Daily support for continuous improvement	3.68	0.86	4.333	29	*0.001< 0
Effective listening	3.72	0.88	4.484	29	*0.001< 0
Creating perspective	3.83	0.79	5.732	29	*0.001< 0
Aligning goals with perspective	4.08	0.77	7.629	29	*0.001< 0
Determining effective and driving organizational values	4	0.68	8.028	29	*0.001< 0

* Significant at 0.05 level

As can be seen in (Table 1), since the significance level corresponding to the t-statistic is less than 0.05 for all dimensions, so the hypothesis H_0 is rejected ($P < 0.05$). Also, considering the t-statistic is positive and a calculated mean is greater than 3 for these variables, it can be concluded that there is a fit between all dimensions of lean leadership and the variables of lean leadership. Thus, it can be said that lean leadership in the Islamic Azad Universities from the experts' point of view includes commitment to self-development, development of others, persistence in lean thinking, daily support for continuous improvement, effective listening, creating perspective, aligning goals with perspective

and determining effective and driving organizational values.

Question 1-1: What are the lean leadership Sub-Components in the Azad Universities of Fars Province? One sample t-test was used to investigate this question. The experts' opinions on the proportion of each subcomponent in the Islamic Azad Universities of Fars Province are presented in (Table 2).

H_0 : There is no correlation between lean leadership subcomponents in in the Islamic Azad Universities of Fars Province.

H_1 : There is a correlation between the lean leadership subcomponents in the Islamic Azad Universities in Fars Province.



Table 2. Results of One-sample t-test results to investigate the proportion of lean leadership sub-components in the Islamic Azad Universities of Fars province

Variable	Theoretical mean = 0.3				
	Mean observed	Standard deviation	Statistic t	Freedom of degree	p
Intelligent emotional communication	4.06	0.82	7.059	29	*0.001<0
flexibility	3.96	1.06	4.966	29	*0.001<0
Self-awareness	3.96	0.92	5.706	29	*0.001<0
Self Confidence	3.76	1.22	3.434	29	*0.001<0
Empowerment	3.90	1.02	4.791	29	*0.001<0
Participatory decision making	4.10	0.75	7.940	29	*0.001<0
Motivation	2.96	0.96	1.491	29	*0.001<0
Learning	3.83	0.98	4.631	29	*0.001<0
Sustainable understanding of customer value	3.96	0.80	6.547	29	*0.001<0
Work processes	2.91	1.05	1.633	29	*0.001<0
Continuous improvement	3.56	1.04	2.984	29	*0.001<0
Commitment to continuous improvement	3.80	0.96	4.558	29	*0.001<0
Listening	3.73	0.94	4.253	29	*0.001<0
Competence to communicate	3.75	1.09	3.746	29	*0.001<0
Facilitation	2.73	0.98	1.097	29	*0.001<0
Composing a perspective	3.86	1.10	4.292	29	*0.001<0
Realism of perspective	3.70	1.02	3.751	29	*0.001<0
Understandability of the perspective	3.93	0.78	6.513	29	*0.001<0
Modeling Values	3.96	0.92	5.706	29	*0.001<0
Common goals	4.20	0.71	9.200	29	*0.001<0
Understanding and identifying needs	3.90	0.80	6.139	29	*0.001<0
Individual expectations	4.10	0.71	8.462	29	*0.001<0

* Significant at 0.05 level

Question 2: What are the dimensions of lean leadership in state universities of Fars province? One-sample t-test was used to investigate this question. The experts' opinions on the proportion of each of the dimensions of lean leadership with the variable of lean leadership in the state universities are presented in (Table 3).

H₀: There is no correlation between the dimensions of lean leadership and the variable of lean leadership in the state universities of Fars province.

H₁: There is a correlation between the dimensions of lean leadership and the variable of lean leadership in the state universities of Fars province.

Table 3. One-sample t-test results to examine the correlation of lean leadership dimensions with the variable of lean leadership in state universities of Fars province

Variable	Theoretical mean = 0.3				
	Mean observed	Standard deviation	Statistic t	Freedom of degree	p
Commitment to self-development	4.10	0.68	8.869	29	*0.001<0
Development of others	4.10	0.74	8.047	29	*0.001<0
Persistence in lean thinking	4.04	0.77	7.365	29	*0.001<0
Daily support for continuous improvement	4.18	0.71	9.091	29	*0.001<0
Effective listening	3.93	0.77	6.595	29	*0.001<0
Creating perspective	3.64	0.85	4.117	29	*0.001<0
Aligning goals with perspective	3.88	0.70	6.880	29	*0.001<0
Determining effective and driving organizational values	3.75	0.83	4.901	29	*0.001<0

* Significant at 0.05 level

As can be seen in (Table 3), since the significance level corresponding to the t-statistic is less than 0.05 for all dimensions, so the hypothesis H_0 is rejected ($P < 0.05$). Also, the positive t-statistic and a calculated mean greater than 3 for these variables indicate that there is a correlation between all the dimensions of lean leadership and the variable of lean leadership. Therefore, we can say that lean leadership in the state universities from the experts' point of view includes commitment to self-development, development of others, persistence in lean thinking, daily support for continuous improvement, effective listening, creating perspective, aligning goals with perspective

and determining effective and driving Organizational values .

Question 2-1: What are the lean leadership subcomponents in the State Universities of Fars Province? One-sample t-test was used to investigate this question. The experts' views on the proportion of each of the lean leadership subcomponents in the state universities of Fars province are presented in (Table 4).

H_0 : There is no correlation between lean leadership subcomponents in the state universities of Fars province.

H_1 : There is a correlation between the components of lean leadership in the state universities of Fars province.

Table 4. One-sample t-test results to investigate the correlation of lean leadership components in the Islamic Azad Universities of Fars province

Variable	Theoretical mean = 0.3				
	Mean observed	Standard deviation	Statistic t	Freedom of degree	p
Intelligent emotional communication	4.10	0.86	7.131	29	*0.001<0
flexibility	4.13	0.81	7.557	29	*0.001<0
Self-awareness	2.86	0.82	1.059	29	0.341
Self Confidence	2.93	0.86	1.215	29	0.287
Empowerment	4.23	0.77	8.729	29	*0.001<0
Participatory decision making	2.95	0.81	1.577	29	0.204



Motivation	3.93	0.86	5.887	29	*0.001<0
Learning	3.93	1.01	5.037	29	*0.001<0
Sustainable understanding of customer value	2.87	0.85	1.656	29	0.200
Work processes	4.16	0.74	8.558	29	*0.001<0
Continuous improvement	4.20	0.66	9.893	29	*0.001<0
Commitment to continuous improvement	4.16	0.83	7.663	29	*0.001<0
Listening	4.16	0.79	8.074	29	*0.001<0
Competence to communicate	3.86	0.89	5.227	29	*0.001<0
Facilitation	3.76	1.06	4.137	29	*0.001<0
Composing a perspective	3.43	1.06	2.357	29	*0.001<0
Realism of perspective	3.66	1.06	3.440	29	*0.001<0
Understandability of the perspective	2.94	1.91	1.809	29	0.222
Modeling Values	3.73	0.90	4.428	29	*0.001<0
Common goals	4.03	0.92	6.100	29	*0.001<0
Understanding and identifying needs	3.86	0.97	4.878	29	*0.001<0
Individual expectations	2.89	1.06	1.254	29	0.231

* Significant at 0.05 level

Question 3: What is the validity of the Lean leadership Model in the Islamic Azad Universities of Fars Province?

The value of the fit indices indicates the suitability of the proposed research model (the fit indices of the proposed research model has been presented in the relevant tables). The research final model is as the following: ratio test has been used to answer this question. For performing this test, we consider the following hypotheses:

Assumption 0: The designed model has low validity.

Opposite assumption: The designed model has high and acceptable validity.

As the overwhelming majority of experts have found the final model to be appropriate

and the p-value is less than 0.05, the designed model is therefore highly valid. Also, given that the validity of the designed model is 0.96 from the experts' point of view, the designed model has an acceptable validity.

-Qualitative description of the experts' responses to the final validity of the model (Azad)

According to the opinions of 31 experts, 5 people (16.1%) evaluated the validity of the final model as moderate, 6 people (19.3%) evaluated the validity of the final model as desirable, and 20 (64.5%) people evaluated the validity as completely desirable (Table 5).

Table 5. Qualitative Description of Experts' Response to Model's Final Validation

Row		Frequency	Percentage of frequency
Respondent	Moderate	5	16.1
	Desirable	6	19.3
	Very desirable	20	64.3
Total		31	100

Validation of the "Research Final Model" with independent t-test:

Given that p-value of the optimal adequacy level is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that is the optimal adequacy of the "research

final model" is confirmed; so that the "research final model" based on the scale of

(Hosseinian et al., 2017). is at a strong level (Table 6).

Table 6. Study of Experts' Views on the Sub-Components of the Research Final Pattern

Variable	Theoretical mean = 0.3				
	Mean observed	Standard deviation	T statistics	Freedom of degree	p
(State) Final Pattern	4.15	0.42	17.384	30	*0.001< 0

Question 4: What is the validity of the lean leadership Model in the state Universities of Fars province?

The value of the fit indices indicates the suitability of the proposed research model (the fit indices of the proposed research model are presented in the relevant tables).

Ratio test has been used to answer this question. For performing this test, we consider the following hypotheses:

Assumption 0: The designed model has low validity.

Opposite assumption: The designed model has high and acceptable validity.

As the overwhelming majority of experts have found the final model to be appropriate

and the p-value is less than 0.05, the designed model is therefore highly valid. Also, given that the validity of the designed model is 0.95 from the experts' point of view, the designed model has an acceptable validity.

-Qualitative description of the experts' response to the final validity of the model (state)

According to the opinions of 31 experts, 4 people (12.9%) evaluated the validity of the final model as moderate, 8 people (25.8%) evaluated the validity of the final model as desirable, and 19 people (61.3%) as completely desirable (Table 7).

Table 7. Qualitative Description of Experts' Response to (State) Model Final Validity

Row		Frequency	Frequency percentage
Respondent	Moderate	4	12.9
	Desirable	8	25.8
	Very desirable	19	61.3
Total		31	100

Validation of "Research Final Pattern" with independent t-test:

Given that the desired adequacy level value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that is the optimal adequacy of the "research

final pattern", is confirmed; so we can conclude that the "research final pattern" based on the scale of (Hosseinian et al., 2017). is at a strong level (Table 8).

Table 8. Study of Experts' Views on the Sub-Components of the Research Final Pattern

Variable	Theoretical mean = 0.3				
	Mean observed	Standard deviation	Statistic t	Freedom of degree	p
(State) Final Pattern	4.31	0.58	16.290	30	*0.001< 0



Discussion

Big differences in organizational leadership are the most important component of their success or failure. The leadership role is associated straightforwardly with the success of organizations, and their effectiveness is due to the fundamental differences in leadership styles. Researchers believe that leadership in the organization has a much stronger impact on the current business environment than ever before. It may have been a while ago that the organization could move forward with minimal intelligence and ability, relying on some organizational advantages. But in the current business environment, the speed of decision-making and risk-taking has caused the managers to make the right decisions in the least amount of time with limited information and sometimes even no information. It can only come from leaders who have the intelligence and the ability to discover through intuition. These are leaders who have a perspective of the future and who, for achieving that perspective, must transform it into an organizational ideal and make the goals clear. Therefore, Cutter, a well-known author of leadership issues, views it as the key to any organization's purity and considers it impossible without the active and continuous involvement and promotion of lean efforts across the organization through senior and middle managers, and especially leaders. He believes that in a traditional culture, staying lean is not supported because it requires challenging equilibrium; though this is not impossible while challenging. So, this can be considered as a launching pad through demonstrating actions that challenge the equilibrium situation and sometimes invade and change organizational habits and through the full support of the organization's leadership.

Conclusion

The development of lean culture is one of the other requirements that must be addressed. However, in addition to lean culture, lean thinking is also required. Lean thinking is a methodology for the cycle of improving time and quality that is accomplished by eliminating wasteful actions. The term lean thinking has been used by Womack and Jones and indicates the widespread use of the term in the business. This type of thinking is called lean because it can provide more value-added. For Dambrowski, a researcher on the subject of lean leadership, the ignorance of lean philosophy and disregard for individuals and the solution of their problems are one of the main causes of successive organizational failures that are due to weaknesses in leadership. Lean leadership emphasizes the need for regular group meetings. The findings also confirm that the psychological conditions of participation and regular attendance of managers in sessions improve many performances. Lean leaders have important capabilities and characteristics to lead today's organizations. They act as trainers with flexibility and dynamism. Lean leaders nurture the leadership talent of their followers and share leadership. Lean leaders are aware that in today's complex situation, vertical orientation and partialism of the organization are not effective. So, they avoid the sense of control and power, and, with greater confidence and flexibility without unnecessary or excessive interference in the organization affairs, they try to contribute to the self-circulation of organization and the emergence of self-regulation and self-organization processes. Thus, lean leaders facilitate self-organization by avoiding monopoly power and controlling the process. But what is the difference between

"lean leadership" and other forms of organizational leadership? What different merits and characteristics can determine this classification? The gap between lean production and lean thinking is the missing link. This missing loop is a set of management behaviors and structures that make up the lean management system. Lean management links an important part: the gap between lean tools and lean thinking. Lean management is a prerequisite for the lean leadership that leads the organization to its goal and success.

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