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The Relationship between Lean Leadership and Competitive Success for a Group of Smart Phone Marketing Outlets in Najaf Governorate in Iraq

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Abstract

The research is aimed at testing the relationship between lean leadership as an independent variable through its dimensions (1) culture of continuous improvement, (2) self-development, (3) scientific qualifications, (4) Gemba, and (5) Hosbin Kanri, and competitive success as a dependent variable through its dimensions (1) level of product and service quality, (2) organizational management, and use of resources, (3) strengthening of corporate culture, (4) application of knowledge and use of ICT, and (5) knowledge and experience of the market. A group of smart phone marketing outlets in Alnajaf Alashraf governorate has been chosen as a spatial domain to conduct the study due to its importance to the governorate. The research included two hypothesis for testing correlation and influence. The research population has mounted (380) workers, from which a sample of (193) has been selected according to sample size table style accredited to (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970:608). The data was processed by (Spss .v. 23). The research concluded that success in employing some of the dimensions of lean leadership helps the organization achieve many advantages that help it in employing its strengths to encounter external challenges, which will positively be reflected in improving its competitive positioning, which is the first step towards achieving the competitive success that most of contemporary business organizations seek to achieve.

Key words: lean leadership, competitive success, smart phones marketing outlets.

Introduction

Various organizations encounter increasing competitive challenges due to the instability of competitive environment that suffers from continuing mobility in its economic, social, political, and cultural factors because of the activities performed by different competitors in order to attract potential customers and preserve the existing ones and prevent them from purchasing competing products through presenting a different set of products that gets along with their actual needs (Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2019). This situation leads to instability of organizations, which generates different pressures increasing the difficulty of keeping up with various competitive developments that drove organizations to search among the recognized leadership modes that, when applied give the organization competitive momentum based on its strengths. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), employees' attitudes are greatly influenced by the way leaders behave, and it serves as a behavioral model to achieve a culture of continuous improvement (Kim & Toya, 2019).

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Hereby, comes lean leadership as a vital tool that grants the administration a competitive and marketing depth based on its ability to continuously adapt to external forces (Slater et. Al.,2015), attention to continuous development of the organization operations and its products in order to guarantee filling the competitive gap with other competitors and presenting what gets along with customer critical requirements and preventing him from consuming the competing products and leaving the organization due to some reason, and working on continuous development of the staff in order to help them acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities, to empower them of correctly perform their jobs which helps the organization achieve its competitive success, with focusing on correct treatment of mistakes that lead to the arise of problems suffered by the organization, through the existence of the manager at the place where problems arise. With the manager being present at the place where problems arise, the search for different reasons behind them, the effort to treat them and turning mistakes from weaknesses suffered by the organization and its staff into strengths that can be used by the organization itself in achieving competitive success through applying management by errors would be easier (Michalicki et al . 2016). However, the desired leadership behaviors and activities identified during the different stages of lean implementation still need to be better studied and understood (Camuffo & Gerli, 2018). Also Implementing lean activities requires people to fully commit to continuous change in addition to directing external customers, as well as the great ability that senior lean leaders must possess in implementing these activities according to their various lean stages.

This requires senior managers to engage in a specific form of lean leadership practices. This level of leadership is also essential for organizations' success and sustainability in lean transformation) (Netland et al,2020). Moreover, Lean should be an endless journey of improvement.

The research aims at answering the following question: Does the application of lean leadership and its dimensions lead to achieve competitive success?

In order to answer this question, a set of goals were articulated, the most important among them is testing the relationship between lean leadership and competitive success. The research was conducted on a various group of marketing outlets of smart phones in Alnajaf Alashraf governorate in the Republic of Iraq and questionnaires were distributed among all staff working inside these outlets.

The contribution of the researcher is by testing the relationship between lean leadership and competitive success, a subject that has not been studied before according to his knowledge. Besides, providing the sample under research with different set of recommendations that will help them market their products and influencing costumers in order to attract him and to prevent him from purchasing the products of the competitors in preparation for the achievement of competitive success for as long as possible.

First: the relationship between lean leadership and competitive success:

The Toyota Production System was adopted as a management philosophy through which waste of all types is reduced by eliminating inefficient activities (Alsmadi et al., 2012), and this is called lean.

Lean is a “systematic approach to identify and eliminate waste through continuous improvement, flowing the product at the pull of the customer in pursuit of perfection” (Sunder, 2015).

Business organizations practice their various activities in an unstable dynamic competitive environment which leads to more pressures that limits its ability to survive competitions for long time, what requires their administrations to build untraditional modes of leadership in order to achieve competitive success (Fawcett & Cooper, 2001). Hereby comes lean leadership as one of the recognizable modes of leadership that helps the administration employ the organization strengths to enhance its marketing capabilities in order to achieve competitive success as long as possible. In business world, principles and styles of agile production are often accepted as a criterion to achieve high efficiency and competitive success. Yet, most of these organizations do not realize the importance of use of agile style in administrative leadership (Michalicki et al. 2016).

Some studies lack for clear scientific evidences concerning personal modes which has the (Big Five). As leadership is a personal characteristic acquiring special importance when organizations encounter the necessary change, there is no way other than utilization of lean leadership gradually in order to enter deliberate and successive changes that can meet the marketing ambitions on the long term and help in improving the organization's competitive and marketing positions (Aij et al.,2015:121).

Lean leadership is aimed at the adoption of an active style of leadership capable of influencing the staff in order to build a teamwork distinguished by sustainable resources, capabilities, and skills that qualify them to perform their jobs without problem limiting their capabilities of competition in external marketing environment (Shang,2014 :1146).

According to (Dombrowski&Mielke,2013:570), lean leadership is a modern style intended to invent a different set if recognizable strategies that can contribute somehow to building teams with unique skills adding more value to the organization, its staff, and its customers. Whereas, (Dombrowski&Mielke,2014:566) views lean leadership as a system and an advanced scientific style aimed at the achievement of marketing and competitive sustainability through applying continuous improvement to the organization's operations and involving the staff in the internal operations and in decision-making.

Lean leadership is a blend of characteristics, by implementing it, a leader seek to focus on essential values instead of making profits on the short term through emphasizing on the costumers to solve their problems and providing them with unexpected value and building a homogeneous teamwork capable of performing its tasks precisely to encounter the risks of continuous change in external environment that may affect the organization capability in achieving competitive success (Liker,2014:9). Lean leadership is a process by which a leader determines the main goal of the organization or one or more trends for a group of individuals to help them working efficiently with complete commitment to the achievement of marketing, competitive, and organizational goals (Aij et al.,2015:121). Lean leadership is defined as a social process undertaken by individuals with personality traits consistent with lean principles in order to sustain continuous improvement (Seidel et al., 2019).

And because lean leadership is a style based on continuous improvement to achieve perfection and to utilize errors in improvement, basics of agile leadership must be included for self-development through granting the individuals skills and capabilities that fit with the nature of their jobs, long term improvement, continuous learning, experience-based decision-making, focusing on costumer, and consistency of goals with the levels of the organization to achieve competitive success (Trenkner,2016:134). The success of the organization requires creating an appropriate work environment characterized by openness and overcoming the fear factor. This can only be achieved with strong leadership

Finally, the researcher view lean leadership as a modern organizational orientation intended to improvement of organization culture, encouragement of the staff on developing their self-capabilities, recruitment on basis of personal capabilities and recognizable scientific qualifications, and focusing on customer with building sustainable relationships with him in order to support competitive position to achieve long term competitive success.

Hypothesis (1): *"There is a positive influential relationship between lean leadership and competitive success".*

Second: The Relationship Between Culture of Continuous Improvement and Competitive Success

Culture of continuous improvement denotes to all orientations and behaviors that are based on long term thinking and lead to the achievement of competitive success which could be achieved when the organization operations are flawless and no inventory or trash can lead to side problems that can obstruct the organization capability of achieving the improvement required to reach stability and to avoid failure (**Dombrowski & Mielke,2013:570**).

Hypothesis (2): *"There is a positive influential relationship between culture of continuous improvement and competitive success".*

Third: Relationship Between Self-development and Competitive Success

Self-development refers to individuals capability of developing their own skills in order to perform the tasks assigned to them in a manner consistent the self-awareness of the leader and his capability to determine developmental requirements that constitute the initial plan towards self-improvement through comprehending knowledge and skills needed by the organization in functions that may help it determine customer needs and translating them into strategic goals, operations, and certain workers (**Trenkner,2016:134**) .

Hypothesis (3): *"There is a positive influential relationship between Self-development and competitive success".*

Fourth: Relationship Between Scientific Qualifications and Competitive Success

The term "scientific qualifications" is intended to motivate the leader to lead and employ the workers for jobs commensurate with their scientific qualification to ensure workers are harmonious with jobs which are appropriate with their own capabilities, to empower them to make decisions independently and to direct them towards organizational learning and problem-solving in short time without any negative effects on work. Hiring a staff with an advanced scientific qualifications signals the competitors that the organization has highly skillful workers with advanced capabilities that can help their organizations adopt marketing strategies enabling them to achieve sustainable competitive succes (2014 ,**Dombrowski & Mielke**).

Hypothesis (4): *"There is a positive influential relationship between scientific qualification and competitive success".*

Fifth: The Relationship Between "Gemba" and Competitive Success

Gemba" is a Japanese term means real place or value-added place. In administration it means that leader heads towards the place where problems happen in order to fully comprehend the current operations and to analyze the reasons behind the problems so as to take counter actions before spending more time and effort and to determine the reason behind the problem and bring all efforts together to solve them quickly (**Dombrowski & Mielke,2013:571**). So, all organization leaders must be present at places where problems arise in order to determine the

reasons and providing solutions to ensure they do not arise again which in turn helps the organization stay competitive as long as possible (Aij et. Al.,2017).

Hypothesis (5): *"There is a positive influential relationship between Gemba and competitive success".*

Sixth: The Relationship Between Hoshin Kari and Competitive Success

Hoshin Kari is another Japanese term means goal management or dissemination of organization policy and it is aimed at adoption of decentralization, improvement of organizational operations, utilization of recognized systems consistent with trends of individual activities, and set long term goals to make sure continuous improvement activities have not contradictory orientations (Dombrowski & Mielke,2014:569). When organizations seek the achievement of competitive success, they must apply untraditional implications to guarantee fulfillment of unity of purpose that ensure the organization improvement of its competitive position compared with the competitors. Hereby comes (Hoshin Kanri) also known as goal administration and is considered as one of the styles organizations must adapt in order to achieve marketing and competitive success in a different way from competitors, which in turn gives them competitive advantage that makes them clearly recognizable (Shang, 2014).

Hypothesis (6): *"There is a positive influential relationship between Hoshin Kanri and competitive success".*

Methodology and Variables

The study adopted descriptive methodology and a questionnaire was used to collect data. The research plan was designed to clarify nature and orientations of influential relationships between its main and minor variables. The research depended on (Dombrowski & Mielke,2014) to determine dimensions of lean leadership which are (culture of continuous improvement, self-development, scientific qualifications, Gemba, and Hoshin Kanri, while it depended on (Gallardo-Vázquez, et al.,2019) to determine the main dimensions of competitive success variable which are, (1) level of product and service quality, (2) organizational management, and use of resources, (3) strengthening of corporate culture, (4) application of knowledge and use of ICT, and (5) knowledge and experience of the market.

5. Hypotheses Testing

The researcher has used multiple regression analysis in order to determine the influence of the independent variable (lean leadership) on the dependent variable (competitive success). The researcher depended Beta coefficient to determine the amount of change in the dependent variable (competitive success) caused by change in one unit of the independent variable (lean leadership) and (0.05) level of significance was adopted to verify the significance of influence. The calculated level of significance will be compared to the level of significance adopted by the researcher (0.05), as influences are considered significant if the level of significance was less than (0.05). The influence will be measured according to the following hypotheses:

A: Testing the influence of lean leadership on competitive success on the overall level:

First Hypothesis: *the hypothesis showed that lean leadership has positive influence on competitive success on the overall level. Table (1) shows the results of influence relationships:*

Table (1) Results of Testing Influence of Lean Leadership and Its Dimensions on Competitive Success.

Var.	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T.	Sig.	F.	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	1.276	0.160		7.991	0.000		
Lean Leadership	0.729	0.038	0.830	19.087	0.000		
Continuous improvement culture	-0.028	0.041	-0.038	-0.693	0.489	364.306	0.000 ^b
Self-development	0.174	0.041	0.249	4.218	0.000		
Scientific Qualifications	0.155	0.038	0.232	4.093	0.000		
Gemba	0.224	0.047	0.289	4.721	0.000		
Hoshin Kanri	0.184	0.039	0.301	4.760	0.000		
Dependent Variable: Y						(n= 193)	

According to the results showed in table (1), we notice that the lean leadership variable influences the competitive success variable by (0.830), and when matching the resulted level of significance (0.000) with the one presumed by the researcher (0.05), we find out that the resulted level of significance is smaller. As the calculated T-value (19.087) is bigger than its table value (1.96), the hypothesis is accepted at the level of this research, and we conclude that adoption of lean leadership grants the organization a strength positively reflected on the upper administration striving for achievement of stable competitive success to boost its position in the competitive environment and improve its competitiveness against the competitors.

B: Testing the influence of continuous improvement culture on competitive success on the overall level.

The hypothesis showed that continuous improvement culture has a positive influence on competitive success. Table (1) clarifies the results of the influence test:

According to table (1), we notice that continuous improvement culture influences the competitive success variable by (-0.038), and when matching the resulted level of significance (0.489) with the one presumed by the researcher (0.05), we find out that the resulted level of significance is bigger. As the calculated T-value (-0.693), the hypothesis is rejected at the level of this research, which implies the absence of striving for employment of a culture based on continuous improvement to quickly attract the customer and to positively influence him which effects in turn the capability of these organizations of achievement the necessary competitive success to survive in the competition on the long term.

C: Testing the influence of self-development on competitive success on the overall level.

This hypothesis shows that self-development has a positive influence on competitive success. Table (1) clarifies the results of influence test:

According to table (1), we notice that self-development influences the competitive success variable by (0.249), and when matching the resulted level of significance (0.489) with the one presumed by the researcher (0.05), we find out that the resulted level of significance is bigger. As the calculated T-value (4.218), the hypothesis is accepted at the level of this research, which

denotes the organization focus on development of its staff will lead to increase in its opportunities in achievement of competitive excellence that guarantees sustainable success on the long term.

D: Testing the influence of scientific qualifications on competitive success on the overall level.

This hypothesis shows that scientific qualifications has a positive influence on competitive success. Table (1) clarifies the results of influence test:

According to table (1), we notice that scientific qualifications influences the competitive success variable by (0.249), and when matching the resulted level of significance (0.232) with the one presumed by the researcher (0.05), we find out that the resulted level of significance is bigger. As the calculated T-value (4.093), the hypothesis is accepted at the level of this research, which implies that hiring workers with higher scientific qualifications will help the organization achieve better competitive results than hiring ones with lower scientific qualifications.

E: Testing the influence of Gemba on competitive success on the overall level.

This hypothesis shows that Gemba has a positive influence on competitive success. Table (1) clarifies the results of influence test:

This hypothesis shows that scientific qualifications has a positive influence on competitive success. Table (1) clarifies the results of influence test:

According to table (1), we notice that Gemba as a principle for problem-solving influences the competitive success variable by (0.301), and when matching the resulted level of significance (0.000) with the one presumed by the researcher (0.05), we find out that the resulted level of significance is bigger. As the calculated T-value is (4.760), the hypothesis is accepted at the level of this research. Which implies the importance of implementing thr organization policy and admission of necessary developments in order to reconsidering the organization procedures and practices which in turn boosts its ability to quickly achieve competitive success.

F: Testing the influence of Hoshin Kanri on competitive success on the overall level.

This hypothesis shows that scientific qualifications Has a positive influence on competitive success. Table (1) clarifies the results of influence test:

According to table (1), we notice that Hoshin influences the competitive success variable by (0.289), and when matching the resulted level of significance (0.000) with the one presumed by the researcher (0.05), we find out that the resulted level of significance is bigger. As the calculated T-value is (4.721), the hypothesis is accepted at the level of this research, which implies that presence of the manager at the place where problems happen will absolutely lead to diagnose the nuanced reasons and atmospheres behind them which results in turn with employing the participative efforts between managers and workers to solve these problems in a manner guarantees they will not arise in the future.

Discussion of Results

After processing the data with (spss, V.23), the results shows that lean leadership contributes to some extent to the achievement of competitive success sought by contemporary business organizations. Success in employment of dimensions of lean leadership helps the organization counter external challenges which will be reflected positively on improvement of its competitive positioning which is considered as the first step towards achievement of

competitive success. At the same time, the results show the organization neglect of adoption of having a culture that leads on the basis of continuous improvement what partially hinders its efforts in improvement of its competitive capabilities due to the possibility of arise of multiple gaps with the competitors. Besides, focusing on including the workers in development courses improves their performance concerning the duties assigned to them. Organization determination of skills and capabilities that are required in its workers will help it succeed in the performance of its complicated gobs in the future. One of the important points that must be taken into consideration due to its role in the achievement of competitive success is hiring workers with recognized scientific qualifications. The organization success in hiring such workers will help it achieve its organizational, competitive, and marketing goals, as talented workers are considered the right way towards achievement all the organization goals. The same results denotes that presence of managers at the places where problems arise helps the organization diagnose the reasons behind them, which eventually empower the manager from making the right decision based on the knowledge he gained by being present and motivate workers to perform their jobs properly from the first time and to avoid the arise of problems in the future. To the researcher knowledge, another study for the purpose of scientific comparison of the results is not available.

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