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Leadership Dynamics in Organizational Change: An In-Depth Exploration of Public and Private Sectors in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

The study explores leadership dynamics in Saudi Arabia that have evolved organisational change focusing on public and private sectors. It examined strategies used by private firms focused on innovation and employee engagement and the bureaucratic challenges public firms face. The study has adopted qualitative analysis in which several interviews were conducted through thematic analysis. The study has also applied quantitative analysis, revealing varied perceptions of organizational change among 38 participants, with the private sector being more open, effective communication moderate, and leadership styles influencing success. The analysis has explored discussing the organizational change in Saudi Arabia. The findings explored a divergence in the organizational change strategies of private and public organizations in Saudi Arabia. Motivated by innovation and employee involvement, private enterprises differ from public organizations in terms of the bureaucratic challenges they face. Leadership has a crucial part in achieving great outcomes when leaders effectively engage in mediation, dispute resolution, and emotional management of their staff. Additionally, it was discovered that leaders played an active role in effectively managing time, fostering discipline, and highlighting employee dedication, all of which contributed to the successful implementation of organizational transformation initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of material, social, and economic components in 'narratives of ordering' can help in comprehending organisational change as a performance or impact (Doolin, 2003; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2009). The Saudi public organizations were undergoing significant changes due to implementing the government's reform plan, Vision 2030 (Aladwan *et al.*, 2022). Entrepreneurial leadership in Saudi Arabian SMEs positively influences organizational innovation and employee creativity, highlighting the need for fostering a culture of innovation to fully unleash employee potential (Naushad, 2022). The successful implementation of strategy in Saudi public organizations relies on creating a cohesive body responsible for coordinating strategy execution across the entire organization (Dasan, 2022). Saudi Arabia is undergoing its first phase of digital transformation, focusing on innovation, solid foundation, cybersecurity investment, and government partnership (Alharbi, 2019a).

Saudi Arabia's private organization is set to significantly contribute to its information-based economy and development plan, focusing on knowledge management systems and their implementation (Gharamah *et al.*, 2018). The studies have highlighted the most important factor is leadership, through which the change in the organization creates an impact. However, in private firms, employees experience a more pleasant organisational environment, with strong leadership strategies in shaping the climate (Fernandes *et al.*, 2015; Vukasović, 2019). In the 21st century, organisational leaders must

effectively manage rapid and complex change to ensure future success and maintain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving economy (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). The leader's capacity to evaluate and improve an organisation's ability for change is a critical aspect of managing transformation programs (Charan *et al.*, 2002; Martin, 2017). The change in Saudi companies, including private and public organisation, was coming as the study has observed different factors in terms of personality traits and leadership factor that has included in terms of productivity impact of upbringing, family, and social circumstances on Leadership Development.

Theoretical Framework

Trait Theory and Behavioral Adaptation in Leadership

The trait theory emerged in the early 1900s, followed by the behavioral leadership theory in the 1950s and 1960s. The trait theory identifies personal attributes to explain unique leadership performance, while the behavioral theory focuses on effective leadership behaviours. (Goff, 2003). Fuller *et al.* (1999) were highly intrigued by the trait approach as it provides a comprehensive explanation of how attributes impact leadership (Fuller *et al.*, 1999). However, studying the trait and behavioral leadership has given individuals with the valuable insights and skills that can improve their communication, adaptability, self-awareness, decision making and continues development as leaders. However, these benefits can contribute towards effectiveness as a leader and their ability in giving organisational success (van der Hoek *et al.*, 2021).

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Organisation in Saudi Arabia

The study conducted a comprehensive comparative analysis of public and private organisations in Saudi Arabia, examining their organisational dynamics, procedures, structures, communication strategies, and overall efficiency. Organisational policies that support international employees can enhance diversity and performance in Saudi Arabia's private sector (Abaker *et al.*, 2019). Further, research has also explored the stakeholder involved in the private and public domains through distinctive methods of operation and also influenced within their respective sectors. Saudi conglomerate customised an ethical code of ethics for stakeholders to overcome cultural barriers and fosters a culture of stakeholder communication, demonstrating cultural sensitivity and successful acceptance across Saudi Arabia (Katzir & Perry-Hazan, 2023).

One of the example has included in which Saudi Airline democratic leadership styles improves individual performance by creating an inclusive, participative work environment. This approach empowers employees, and also encourages active participation in decision making and also promotes efficient relationships. This fosters transparency and enabling better communication across all levels that has led to higher engagement, motivation and aligned with company goals. Also, this approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement and achievement in the fast-paced aviation sector (Saad Alessa, 2021).

Transformational leadership, psychological ownership, work environment, employee participation, incentives, and motivation significantly enhance organisational performance in Saudi Arabia's gold sector (Alhshedi *et al.*, 2020; Piedade *et al.*, 2019). Operations in the Saudi construction industry where effective leadership, positive attitudes, and the cultivation of motivation and knowledge can significantly improve safety compliance and involvement in electrical construction projects (Basahel, 2021). Communication strategies in Saudi Arabia in which pharmacy executives in Saudi Arabia excel in communication, emphasising the importance of effective methods to nurture strong relationships and drive positive healthcare industry transformations (Alfaifi *et al.*, 2022).

Relationship between Leadership Style, Organization's Nature of Work, and Leader's Personality

Leadership style can be influenced through personal attributes that include charisma, decisiveness and empathy. Different leadership styles significantly impact the success of Saudi Arabian public organisations, which significantly enhances their performance (Preko, 2022). The Transformational Leadership Style significantly impacts organisational learning and staff performance within Saudi banks (Jomah, 2022). In Saudi Arabia, paternalistic and transformative leadership styles positively impact employee motivation, while

authoritarian leadership styles have negligible effects (Altheeb, 2020; Islam *et al.*, 2018). Cultural elements like gender equality, assertiveness, and future orientation significantly influence the leadership efficacy of women leaders in Saudi Arabia's education sector (Alsubhi *et al.*, 2020). School leaders in Saudi Arabia face challenges like gender segregation, workforce promotion, and parental expectations, utilising coping mechanisms like adhering to regulations and bypassing them (Sywelem, 2022). In terms of personality, higher levels of innovation and interpersonal skills increase the likelihood of becoming opinion leaders on social media, but extraversion doesn't affect this tendency (Dukhaykh, 2021). Saudi leaders have shown versatile leadership by balancing exploration, exploitation and temporal flexibility, as reported by global workers (Hu *et al.*, 2020). It has also been observed that the power distance orientation and collectivist culture significantly influence leadership styles in Asia, affecting organisational and strategic results (Pizzolitto *et al.*, 2023).

Sources of Power and Positive Effects on Organisational Success

The sources of power that are available to heads in the public and private sectors of Saudi Arabia presented a mix that was affected by cultural, political, and organisation factors. Many times, leaders in the public sector draw their power from hierarchies and established values which they have to obey (Banee, 2022). Contrary to this, the private sector can be expected to see a more diverse distribution of power based on knowledge, innovation, and strategy. Leadership principles in Saudi Arabia significantly impact organisational objectives through visionary, participatory, and transformative approaches, leading to increased productivity, innovation, and teamwork (Villanueva *et al.*, 2020). Successful leadership was consistent with a cultural focus on deference to authority; thus, leaders who can inspire and motivate teams and create an inclusive workplace according to local cultural norms help develop a healthy work environment (Saini, 2021). The shift in focus was driven from the competitive and global work environment, requiring organisations to adapt to dynamic and evolving events (Ahakwa *et al.*, 2021; López-Cabarcos *et al.*, 2022). Organisations require a skilled leader who can comprehend the complexities of the evolving global landscape. Exploration of the positive effects of leadership concepts on productivity, organisational success, and a healthy work environment (Ariussanto *et al.*, 2020).

Research highlights the significance of comprehending various sources of authority and Arabia's distinctive socio-cultural in employing effective leadership principles for organisational success in Saudi.

Psychological Aspects of Leadership: Choosing the Right Personality for the Task

In Saudi Arabia, paternalistic and transformative leadership styles positively impact employee motivation, while authoritarian leadership styles have negligible

effects (Altheeb, 2020). Psychological factors like emotional intelligence, strategic influence, and effective managerial concepts significantly influence a leader’s leadership culture in a complex management environment (Kononets, 2019).

Framework for identifying leadership qualities, focusing on psychological factors, to improve organisational efficiency and achieve exceptional results through the Psychological aspect is important in operating the company (London *et al.*, 2023).

Organisational citizenship conduct influences transformational leadership behaviour, psychological ownership, and employee success in Saudi Arabia’s gold industry but doesn’t influence the working environment, employee participation, and motivation (Alhashedi *et al.*, 2021). Hogan *et al.* (2021) suggest that personality measurements alone do not accurately predict leadership success. However, using the big-five model can improve the effectiveness and practicality of personality trait assessment (Hogan *et al.*, 2021).

Exploration of Factors Such as Upbringing, Family, and Social Circumstances in Shaping Leadership Traits

Childhood, family history and societal situation all those factors were all significantly influenced in the leadership characteristics. Resilience, effective communication and responsibility were the key traits of the leadership (Shportun *et al.*, 2020). Family beliefs and cultural

background have influenced decision-making, teamwork and ethical concerns (Reck *et al.*, 2021). Further, personal experiences have also influenced leadership effectiveness, and age has influenced the leadership quality of individuals at different life stages with different leadership styles (Huynh & Hua, 2020). However, those factors help organisations develop an effective life stage with unique leadership styles.

METHODOLOGY

The study has used qualitative analysis with thematic analysis and survey of 39 participants using quantitative analysis, involving interviews with three members from both private and government organisations.

Quantitative Analysis

Frequency Analysis

Statistics

The study has found that around 38 participants have shown that the perceptions of the organisational change based on gender age group, employment sector and alignment with the goals. Though the private sector perceived as more open to change, and effective communication during change is considered to be moderate. Leadership styles and work nature influence success, with personal backgrounds showing a significant role. However, these findings have shown valuable insights for further analysis and exploration.

Table 1: Frequency Analysis

		Gender	Age Group	Employment Sector	To what extent do you believe that organizational change is actively embraced in your workplace?	How well do you think the current organizational change initiatives in your organization align with the overall goals and vision?	In your opinion, does the public sector in Saudi Arabia or the private sector exhibit a greater willingness to embrace and implement organizational change?	Which sector, public or private, do you believe demonstrates more effective communication strategies during periods of organizational change?	How would you describe the predominant leadership style in your organization during times of change?	Do you think the nature of work in your organization influences the success of leadership during organizational change?	To what extent do you think the psychological well-being of leaders influences their ability to navigate and lead through organizational change?	Does the personal background (education, experience, etc.) of leaders play a crucial role in the success of organizational change initiatives?
N	Valid	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.21	3.03	1.45	3.79	3.63	2.03	1.87	2.97	3.76	2.39	4.00

Thematic Analysis

Organisational Change in Saudi Arabia

“Saudi private companies are successfully implementing organisational change through strategic planning and employee engagement by adopting innovation and leading to improved performance”.

Participant one has stated that private enterprises in Saudi Arabia are implementing organisational transformation through a strategic strategy that prioritises innovation and employee involvement. This approach ensured alignment with overall objectives that enhanced operational effectiveness and fostered a sense of ownership among employees. This approach not only drives strategic goals but also creates a flexible work environment for long-term success.

“All I know in Saudi Arabia public sector faces more bureaucracy and hierarchical structure through successful digital transformation program that was introduced through stakeholder engagement well, and the company is focused more on inclusivity and collaboration in minimising the resistance to change”.

Another respondent has stated that Saudi Arabia’s public sector faces bureaucratic challenges. At the same time, private organisations prioritise digital transformation through inclusive cooperation, aiming to reduce resistance and foster a flexible corporate culture.

“I am working in the private technology firm where I have been able to successfully adopt the agile methodologies to enhance my management efficiency with open communication that is my leadership”.

One of the employees from a private technology company stated that they effectively utilised agile methods and enhanced productivity and efficiency through transparent communication and fostering a collaborative work environment.

“In the retail company, our leaders are successful in managing the change through digital transformation to enhance customer experience”.

The retail organisation successfully managed change by embracing digital information, optimising operations with cutting-edge technology, enhancing the consumer experience, and maintaining competitiveness in the dynamic retail industry.

“Working in a school government job where their system has collaborated with educators, parents and technology experts also implemented modern teaching methods, and it’s good”.

It has been explored that in a government role, the collaboration among educators, parents and technology experts enhances the educational experience and demonstrates dedication to technological advancements, thereby providing a comprehensive education.

“Being as an employee from public health where employees were capable to execute great organisational change”.

One of the public health employees, it was found that there was a significant transformed the organisation, optimising the effectiveness, enhancing service provision

and adapting to growing healthcare demands, ensuring community well-being.

Being as an employee from public health where employees were capable to execute organisational change as they are working in the field of public health where they have witnessed that the capability of employees to bring about significant and positive transformation within their organisation. However, in Saudi the public health sector workforce is capable in implementing the significant changes in exploring their skills and motivation.

Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Sectors

“Private tech companies have dynamic and entrepreneur culture where they value innovation and agility in Saudi Arab”.

Saudi Arabia’s private technology enterprises are renowned for their innovative culture, fostering a competitive edge and fostering rapid technological advancement, thereby ensuring the country’s technological progress.

“Being an eligible employee well enough in public health department as we are more focused in formal decision making and regulation”.

It has been stated that the employee is proficient in public health, focusing on formal decision-making and regulation.

“Facing challenges in adapting economic changes due to risk management while private manufacturing companies in integrating new technologies”.

The respondent stated that they struggle with risk management in economic fluctuations. At the same time, private manufacturing enterprises demonstrate agile strategies, emphasising the importance of efficient risk management and technological progress for long-term prosperity.

“Working they have some public regulatory challenges in adapting economic changes due to the complex frameworks”.

Navigating the workplace during economic changes is likened to solving a labyrinth due to complex public regulatory issues and sophisticated structures. Successful adaptation requires strategic approaches and investigative analysis to understand established protocols and guidelines.

“Working in the public sector and my company is accepting the change as I have a good leader with profound characteristics”.

From the public sector, employees were embracing change due to a competent leader with ingrained qualities that have indicated the abilities that have created a direct impact on the organisation’s ability to adopt and embrace the change.

“Working in the private company of leathers and they are not so good in implementing the change”.

The private leather firm is facing challenges in introducing change, resembling a deteriorating belt that needs modification. Despite these obstacles, there is optimism that the firm will eventually develop the ability to manage changes more smoothly. In the public sector, an exceptional leader can make the process of accepting

and adapting to change more feasible, transforming the process into an exhilarating journey.

Relationship between Leadership Style, Nature of Work, and Personality

“In my company, laissez-faire leadership style is adopted as this is one of the fast-paced private marketing agencies in Saudi where we believe in creativity”.

In this fast-paced private respondent from a marketing agency in Saudi Arabia, the laissez-faire leadership style has been adopted with creative expedition where freedom was celebrated and allowed team members to contribute ideas.

“Working in a government company where authorities create personalities clashes as an employee with autonomy preferences shown negative slower decision-making process that affects the performance”.

The employee experiences working in a government firm where interpersonal disputes and personality conflicts among workers who value autonomy negatively impact the organisation in the decision-making process have indicated that the organisational culture and management style impede productivity and effectiveness.

“Working in a construction company and here, transformational leadership is prevalent because of public infrastructure projects that need collaboration, but I think it might create conflicts I have seen because everyone here has different visionary aspects”.

Within the construction company, transformational leadership is predominant with demands of public infrastructure projects that necessitate extensive collaboration. Different perspectives and ambitions can sometimes lead to stress as team members navigate the challenges of aligning their visions within the broader transformational framework. Navigating these conflicts become essential to ensure that the positive aspects of transformational leadership, such as motivation and innovation, are not overshadowed which has allowed construction company in Saudi to thrive in delivering successful public infrastructure projects.

Psychological Aspects of Leadership and Personal Background

“Being an employee personal experience while working here it company leader is good at managing conflict. Also, he is strong enough to make our team’s performance strong”.

It has been stated that the IT firm’s boss is a skilled mediator, handling family issues and enhancing collective strength. Their leadership abilities and conflict resolution skills make the team navigate through problems effortlessly. In the public sector, an exceptional leader makes adapting to changes easier. Their confidence and guidance transform the process into an exhilarating journey, making it easier for the team to navigate through turbulent circumstances.

“Working in a government company where their leader is known for their values and principles as our leader is

giving respect to the team. I know I need an off because of some family problem; lead has permitted me and send a small gesture to my daughter as she was sick, that is why I have to leave my office early”.

In an IT firm, supervisor’s exceptional skills in mediating family disagreements and handling confrontations make me feel like a captain. Their adeptness in resolving conflicts and strong leadership abilities make the team effortlessly navigate through problems. In the public sector, an exceptional leader’s presence makes it easier to adapt to new circumstances. Their confidence in navigating the ship and their guidance transform the process into an exhilarating journey, making it more feasible to accept and adapt to change. Their guidance makes the process an exhilarating journey.

“Company of a leader has a good personal background that how to communicate reasonably with us. Our leader can deal with a diverse group of people”.

Experience with a public sector leader with exceptional communication skills akin to a friendly neighbor. They describe their ability to adapt to changes and the ease of doing so due to their leadership. They compare their role to a captain who navigates the turbulent waters of transformation, transforming the process into an exhilarating journey. The author values the leader’s calm and confident leadership, which makes the task of accepting and adapting to change more feasible. They believe that their exceptional leadership makes the task of accepting and adapting to change more feasible within their position in the public sector.

“Company leaders in the private telecom company have high levels of emotional intelligence, and I think it includes empathy and social regulation because they can easily manage our emotions. And also she can easily deal with us by giving us different solutions to our problems”.

An exceptional leader’s emotional intelligence is a hidden superpower, able to understand and regulate emotions, providing solutions like a kind friend. It is akin to having a mentor who provides professional guidance and manages emotional highs and lows with empathy. In the public sector, an exceptional leader’s presence makes it easier to adapt to change. An exceptional leader in the public sector is a key factor in facilitating change. They possess exceptional attributes that make them a distinct leader, transforming the process into an exhilarating journey.

“Leaders from government office are very tough in terms of punctuality and work ethics”.

Within a governmental establishment, the superior assumes the role of a timekeeper, placing significant emphasis on punctuality and work ethics with a committed approach. It is comparable to having a stringent but equitable coach who prioritises discipline and has elevated expectations for everyone’s dedication to their responsibilities.

“In my company, there is strong time management set by our seniors”.

It has been stated that in the company, seniors have crafted a time management where every minute counts.

DISCUSSION

Organisational Change in Saudia Arabia, where private and government sectors have employed different ways for organisational transformation (Moshashai *et al.*, 2020). Most of the private firms in Saudia focused on innovation and employee participation (Akinwale *et al.*, 2020). Saudi companies were improving operational efficiency and creating an adaptable work environment (Alferaih, 2021). Most of the public sectors face bureaucratic challenges, while private organisations promote digital transformation (Kuldosheva, 2021). Private organisations in Saudi Arabia were employing customised strategies for successful transformation in various industries due to the unique dynamics and challenges in the region (Al-Kahtani *et al.*, 2022). Saudia Arabia public and private sectors differ in their focus and challenges as private enterprise focused on technological innovation to stay competitive and efficient while public health organisations prioritise regulatory frameworks and compliance measures (Ramady, 2010). Private manufacturing firms' businesses adapt to economic volatility and emphasise risk management and technical advancement; however, effective adaptation requires strategic measures and leadership (Gadekar *et al.*, 2022). Change management in both sectors is crucial for adopting leadership and strategic methods in Saudi Arabia to influence organisational transformation and achieve better opportunities (Alharbi, 2019b). Saudi Arabia employs various leadership styles, with private marketing agencies utilising laissez-faire to foster creativity, while government firms face interpersonal disputes and productivity challenges (Abdullah Alshammari *et al.*, 2023). It was also found that the construction companies were using transformational leadership to improve public infrastructure projects.

In contrast, effective conflict navigation has ensured that motivation and innovation prevail, enabling successful projects (Al Jabri *et al.*, 2021). The study indicates that most leaders in Saudi Arabia have demonstrated positive outcomes and are well-defined in their roles (Alshammari *et al.*, 2020). The study has analysed different leadership styles from different professionals where effective mediation and conflict resolution skills from different companies' experiences of employees raising collaboration. At the same time, self-assurance and direction in public organisations make change exciting. It was also observed that emotional intelligence is a hidden ability that has allowed employees to address the problem and regulate their emotions (Alferaih, 2021). Time management was also considered one of the aspects that has been emphasised from leaders in Saudia in taking the role of timekeeper and promoting discipline and commitment (Kassotaki, 2016; Mohiya & Sulphay, 2021). The results have also revealed that the ethical leadership at Saudi Telecom Company significantly boosts employee creativity by promoting justice and defining roles (Elqassaby, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Saudia Arabia's private and public companies were

implementing distinct approaches towards organisational change. However, private firms prioritise innovation and are active in innovation and employee participation, whereas public sectors face bureaucratic challenges. Leadership style has shown an essential role in driving organisation change in Saudia Arabia as private and public organisations have adopted different leadership styles as this has included transformational leadership and laissez-faire style, to adopt changes and effectively implement them. The study has indicated positive results and defines leadership roles in Saudi Arabia, with leaders demonstrating effective mediation, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Also engaged in managing time management, giving relaxation to their employees and dealing with employees' emotions and their work nature through promoting discipline and emphasising commitment.

RECOMMENDATION

- Private and public sectors both should have encouraged resilience and adaptability and also promote a holistic approach to change and promote leadership development.
- In achieving performance indicators for electronic government services that has required a balance approach, although they should adopt holistic evaluation framework that has included both qualitative and quantitative indicators and ensuring high quality services.

Novelty of Research

The study explores organisational change in Saudia Arabia, focusing on both private and public sectors. Also, uses academic literature, expert opinions, and employee perspectives to understand dynamics. The study uses trait theory and behavioral adaption in leadership to examine leadership to examine leadership styles, organisational structures and cultural context. The research methodology includes qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study has shared a comprehensive analysis of organisational change in Saudia Arabia, integrating private and public sectors. It explores leadership styles, psychological aspects, and the impact of personal background on leadership dynamics. The mixed-method approach captures the qualitative and quantitative analysis, offering valuable insights for practitioners in change management in Saudia Arabia.

Fulfillment of Research Gap

A gap in literature on organisational change in Saudia Arabia by conducting a comparative analysis of both privates and public sectors. It investigates leadership styles, psychological aspects, and the impact of personal background. The study uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to capture diverse perspectives and provide valuable insights for practitioners, and policy makers in implementing the organisational change initiatives in Saudia Arabia.

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