

# THE EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON STRATEGIC AMBIDEXTERITY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE CAPABILITIES

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## Abstract

The present research aims to examine the effects of strategic leadership on strategic ambidexterity, as well as to test the mediating role of human resource capabilities in the relationship between these two concepts. A survey was conducted on a sample represented by (122) employees of several business hotels located in the city of Najaf, in Iraq. Analytical statistical tools were used, including correlation, regression (on the software SPSS V.28), as well as the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach and the Sobel test (on the software AMOS V.26). A set of conclusions were obtained, putting the emphasis on the strength of the mediating role of human resource capabilities in developing the association between strategic leadership and ambidexterity among employees of business hotels in the city of Najaf.

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership; Strategic Ambidexterity; strategic Human Resources Capabilities; Business Hotels; the City of Najaf.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In such a contemporary complex environment marked by an intense competition, a large number of competitors are producing goods or services and adopting many strategies to commercialize them. The readiness of each organization to explore and exploit the best opportunities and its ability to develop distinctive capabilities in its field of work will enable it to build up its strategic ambidexterity. The dividing line in its ultimate success lies therefore in its ability to cope with all the changes through a convenient strategic leadership.

On the other hand, many institutions are nowadays influenced by the volatility of their environment that is marked by an intangible economy. Such an economy considers knowledge as a basic pillar and an important source of competitive advantages for organizations. Indeed, in the light of the extensive transformations and developments witnessed by the business world, institutions are confronting many local and global challenges. They are called upon seizing the best opportunities and improving their performance, through the management of their knowledge. They also resort to building and developing their abilities to adapt to the current changes, and unleash the intellectual energies and capabilities of human resources at all the levels, in addition to leveraging better opportunities to improve their performance in accordance with their capabilities. In the last decade, the need for leaders with distinctive skills and capabilities has increased,

enabling them to develop a future vision, to face the fluctuations of the environment and the speed of its events, as well as to adapt to its requirements, in order to ensure the success and survival of institutions. Therefore, there was a need to pay attention to strategic leadership and to prepare distinguished leaders who possess the skills and capabilities that allow them to improve the needs of their subordinates, to care for them and to influence their behaviors towards a better performance for the hotels located in Iraq, in the city of Najaf in particular. Strategic human resources capabilities are one of the essential levers for organizations that seek to achieve a competitive advantage. Such capacities enable individuals foster their structure through knowledge, experience, creativity and level of practice.

Accordingly, strategic human resources could play an effective mediating role in the relationship between strategic leadership and strategic ambidexterity within the business hotels of Najaf.

In light of the above statements, the current investigation seeks to bring up novelty in the area of human resources by exploring the possible associations between leadership, strategic ambidexterity, and human resource capabilities.

The paper is structured in four sections. The first section deals with the literature review, whereas the second presents the research methodology. The third section is to be devoted to the practical investigation and the presentation of the main results; while the conclusions and recommendations will be therefore outlined in light of the statistical findings.

## **2. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1. Strategic leadership**

#### **2.1.1. Scope and features of strategic leadership**

Strategic leadership has been largely assimilated to the formulation and the development of a vision inside organizations in today's rapidly changing environment. Unfortunately, visionary leaders are not easily embraced by organizations, and unless they are supported by administrative managers, they may not be suitable for all kinds of firms within the current century. In fact, according to Rowe (2001, p. 85), the organizations' tendency to opt for visionary leaders is risky. That is why, identifying and describing the capabilities that are expected for an effective strategic leadership is more than required in this new competitive landscape. Effective strategic leaders should then be able of developing and communicating a vision, fostering dynamic core competencies, emphasizing and benefiting from their human capital effectively, investing in developing new technologies, engaging in valuable strategies, building and maintaining an effective organizational culture, implementing balanced controls, and deploying ethical practices (Akbari, Omrane et al, 2022; Hitt et al, 2010, p. 439; AlAwad and Omrane, 2023).

In addition to strategic leaders leading the adoption of appropriate strategies for their organizations, there is a need to translate the strategy into action by converting it into operational terms. This can be done through “strategy maps” and “balanced scorecards” that suggest to “*provide a framework for describing and communicating the strategy in a consistent and insightful way*”. Such an ability involves aligning individuals with their future organizational situation or position. The core key element of this capability corresponds to the encouragement of the employees’ commitment through a set of shared values. The leader’s personal values and ideas appear to be of paramount importance in this process and leadership skills might contribute to convert them into real actions of guidance for others. Accordingly, leaders should be capable of understanding themselves as well as the values they hold and could convey to their collaborators through a good and clear communication (Davies & Davies, 2004, p. 30).

### **2.1.2. Dimensions of strategic leadership**

According to Abuzaid (2016), Adaileh (2021), Hitt et al (2007, 2010), as well as Samimi et al (2020), strategic leadership comprise four dimensions which are: guiding the strategic vision, strengthening the human capital competencies, developing an organizational culture, as well as affirming ethical practices.

#### **a. Guiding the strategic vision**

The future vision of an organization motivates its employees through its heritage and it might encourage them to meet their expectations associated to achieving the required changes and development. The future vision acts also as a guide for many perspectives of the organizational strategy and its implementation process, ensuring motivation, leadership, employee transformation, and organizational design (Abuzaid, 2016; Hitt et al, 2007, 2010). In fact, the most changes that correlate to the strategic direction are difficult to design and implement. Accordingly, leaders who have a strong personality may obtain the commitment of their stakeholders and their adhesion to a new vision, as well as its corresponding short-term and long-term goals through developing the human capital.

#### **b. Developing the human capital**

Human capital is defined as a group of individuals who possess skills, knowledge and capabilities that contribute to increasing the economic value of the organization. Being the fact that the capabilities, experiences and skills that make up human capital are not equal among employees, some of them might be more competent than others. In other words, certain persons might possess the aforementioned components more than others and could therefore produce new ideas that positively reflect on the organization, its products and its market share. These individuals form the intellectual capital of firms, and represent the more effective capital of institutions. It is considered as the competitive asset that carry out the process of creative and strategic development based on innovation and renewal, which is the key to survival and prosperity in the rapidly changing work environment.

### **c. Promoting the organizational culture**

The organizational culture comprises the set of ideologies, symbols, and core values that an entire organization shares and that influences ultimately the way it operates. Strategic leaders play a major role in developing and enhancing the organizational culture. The strategic leader may use the reward system, symbols, and organizational structure among other tools to shape the desired corporate culture. The organizational culture often encourages the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities, especially in big firms, as the entrepreneurial spirit is the primary source of growth and creativity. Organizations that encourage the entrepreneurial culture allow their employees to work freely, independently, and to manage their selves. At the same time, they support creative, novel and unfamiliar ideas. In other words, as long as the culture affects what the organization accomplishes and the way it contributes to directing and controlling the employees' behaviors, competitive advantage(s) will be gained. This falls on the shoulders of strategic leaders.

### **d. Affirming ethical practices**

The strategic leader bears a personal responsibility for developing and strengthening ethical practices throughout the organization. He should constantly make clear that ethical behaviors constitute the central part of the organization's vision and mission. To do so, strategic leaders could promote ethical behaviors through several practices, including: (a) making themselves a role model for others, (b) encouraging employees to make ethical decisions, (c) the establishment of ethical training programs, (d) supporting ethical behaviors at all organizational levels, (e) addressing unethical behaviors via early identification of perpetrators and changing their organizational positions, (f) disseminating and informing the stakeholders of the organizational ethical standards, (g) implementing appropriate methods and procedures for the achievement of organizational ethics, (h) developing and using reward systems for good ethics, and (i) promoting a work environment where everyone works respectfully.

## **2.2. Strategic ambidexterity: definitions and types**

There is a growing consensus that strategic ambidexterity (i.e., the simultaneous exploration of new capabilities and the exploitation of existing capabilities) is critical for the long-term success of an organization. Strategic ambidexterity ensures long-term success by balancing the needs to innovate and adapt to the environmental changes, while simultaneously improving and expanding the existing processes and technologies (Voss & Voss, 2013, p. 2).

Exploitation and exploration are two fundamentally different mechanisms related to how organizations learn and adapt. With exploitation, firms focus on refining and expanding the existing processes and technologies. They aspire to better integration, efficiency, and profitability in the short term. Exploitation in product innovation implies that firms attempt to establish new connections within their existing competencies, technologies, and products to learn how to make their products better or cheaper. Conversely, with exploration, organizations engage in discovery, experimentation, and diversification to

create new competencies that are typically geared towards adapting to external changes. It can be done by developing new green products and/or creating new market(s) for those products. A new product can be used as a “tool” to discover and experiment with new competencies (Peters & Buijs, 2022, p. 176).

Within the strategic management and organizational theory literature, much attention has been paid to managing the preferences among conflicting demands. For instance, researchers have explored a comprehensive tension between the organizations' goals centered on alignment and those revolving around adaptability. Some scholars have hypothesized that successful organizations are those who could effectively reconcile both alignment and adaptability. Other researchers have rather described this tension as a balance between incremental and radical organizational changes and have affirmed that the reasons behind such a tension lie in the fact that a firm's productivity could inhibit its flexibility to innovate (Judge & Blocker, 2008, p. 191).

The prior literature has widely stressed that strategic ambidexterity comprises the two main dimensions that revolve around exploring new opportunities, and exploiting the existing ones.

### **2.2.1. Exploring opportunities**

New opportunities refer to the conception and development of new and innovative products, processes, or services. They also lead to the promotion of creativity and the maturation of modern ideas starting from determining their real status, as the basic aspects of the research process help expand the horizons of thinking, study and interest. It is a step towards transcending the boundaries of known things to come up with novelty. While the organization is able to identify the best opportunities and appropriate related fields, it should take into account the strengths of its competitors. The organization is supposed to invest in good opportunities, manage the helm of work through them, and gather the resources/technologies that enable it to deal with such opportunities. It should also accept any adventure that might accompany the process of seizing them.

### **2.2.2. Exploiting opportunities**

Opportunities are exploited through continuous changes that enable the organization to maximize its efficiency and control its ideal locations. It is expected that such opportunities enable the organization to improve its activities in the short term. They are designed to meet the requirements of the actual customers, and the needs of the current markets. They serve also to expand the current knowledge and skills, as well as to develop the existing products and services while improving the current distribution channels. Consequently, leveraging opportunities requires a convergent thinking in order to foster the current capabilities and enhance the efficiency of the organizational strategic resources.

## **2.3. Strategic Human Resource (HR) Capabilities**

The field of strategic human resource management has enjoyed, over the past two decades, a remarkable growing interest among practitioners, managers, and scholars,

depicting its important contribution not only in the academic literature, but also within management practices. As the field of human resource management begins to reach maturity, the status of strategic human capital is to be assessed as a field of investigation and management practice (Becker & Huselid, 2006, p. 2).

### **2.3.1. Definitions and types of strategic HR capabilities**

Strategic human resource management involves developing and implementing human resource strategies that comply with business strategies and enable the organization to achieve its objectives (Omrane et al, 2023).

It traduces a general idea of how to achieve an integrative view or a “fit” between Human Resources and business strategies, the benefits of taking a long-term view of where HR should go, how to go, and how to implement coherent and mutually supportive HR strategies. Importantly, it is also about how the members of the HR function adopt a strategic approach on a daily basis. It means that they have to show up their capacity to work as a collective group or team, ensuring that the activities they might undertake support the achievement of the business strategies on an ongoing basis and are consciously concerned with seeing that their activities are adding value to the whole organization (Armstrong, 2006, p. 1).

Under the current circumstances, it is expected that organizations operate at higher levels, overcome different problems, and maintain diverse tasks in order to succeed.

Such efficient organizations will have greater confidence in their abilities and less uncertainty about themselves compared to those with low employee self-efficacy. They see their problems as a challenge rather than a threat and actively seek new opportunities.

Accordingly, strategic human resource management includes the functions or tasks that are performed within organizations in order to provide suitable and harmonious human resources to achieve the organizational goals. In fact, the strategic functions of human resource management mean that organizations could adapt the skills, attitudes and behaviors of their employees to their diverse jobs until achieving their corporate goals (Moradi et al, 2016, p. 2058).

### **2.3.2. Dimensions of strategic human resource capabilities**

According to and Obeidat et al. (2018), strategic human resource capabilities might incorporate four dimensions: knowledge, adhesion to change, creativity, as well as level of practices.

#### **a. Knowledge**

The successive developments in the fields of communications, information systems, technologies and networks, and the emergence of the Internet) have all led to the growth of the role of knowledge in the success of business organizations, with its contribution to the transformation of these organizations into the new global economy that has become known as the knowledge economy, which affects knowledge capital and competition

through human capabilities. Where writers and researchers differed about the concept of knowledge, and this is natural, because everyone looks at knowledge from a certain angle that suits his tendencies and trends based on linguistic or operational definitions that reflect his point of view.

#### **b. Changeability/Commitment (adhesion) to change**

Changeability is defined as the ability to transform and adapt to changes in the light of the availability of capabilities and requirements for doing so. Commitment to change might depend on: (a) the beliefs and intentions of employees, (b) the extent of their needs to make changes, as well as (c) their expectations and capacity to bring changes in their organizations and deal with them successfully. Sociologists affirm that *"the only thing that does not change is change itself"*. In others words, change is a continuous state that occurs via voluntary or involuntary actions, undertaken intentionally or unintentionally, with a prior planning, spontaneously, automatically, or by circumstance.

#### **c. Creativity**

Creativity, perceived as a different deliberate way of thinking and the ability to design things/products/services via new ways/methods has been linked to the first beginnings of the human existence on earth, when individuals sought to reach better living conditions in all their aspects of life. Its presence has been marked in both formal and informal organizations where managers attempt to reach optimal states and levels of performance, through creativity.

#### **d. Level of practice**

Effective practices are assimilated to performing different tasks of work appropriately and supporting employees with appropriate decisions and actions that might ensure obtaining a competitive advantage for the organization. Human capital contributes strongly to achieving the organizational goals and profits. However, to boost its efficiency, leaders and managers within organizations should encourage and support them to foster their diverse and numerous skills and capabilities. It will be also necessary to undertake and care for the corresponding practices through specialized departments. The effectiveness of human resources management stems from the existence of a set of consistent policies that guide administrative operations and practices in human resources issues. It could be boosted consistently with the organizational goals on the one hand, and with the new approaches of human resource policies centered on the worker as a partner on the other hand.

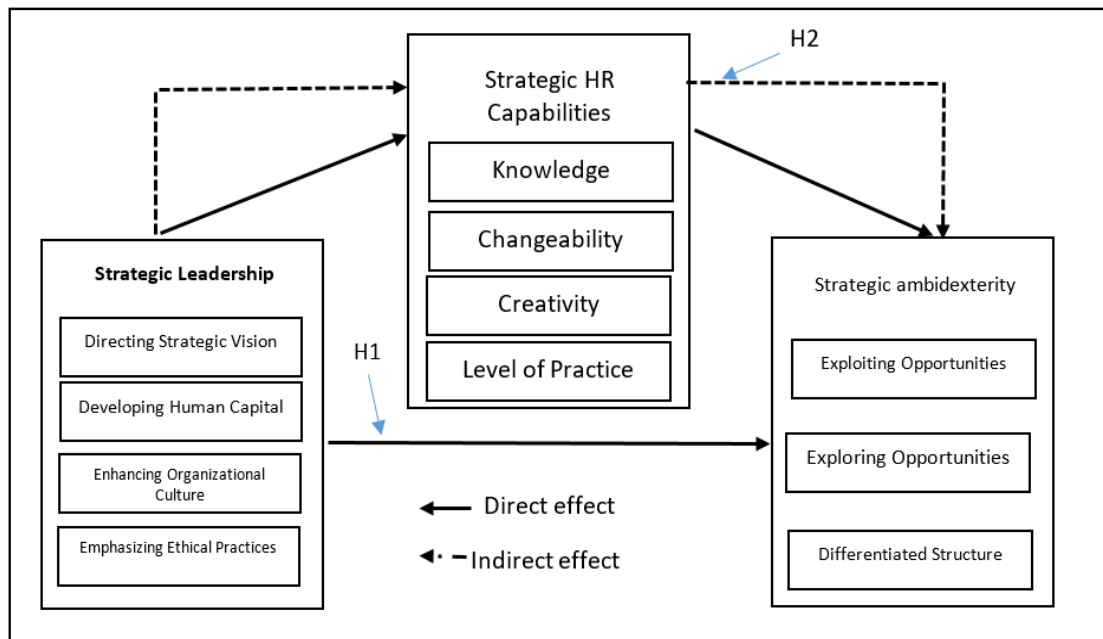
### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

In order to in-depth understand and apprehend the theoretical aspect of our study, a practical investigation has been conducted. The possible relationships between the research variables of our research, i.e. strategic leadership, Human resource capabilities, and strategic ambidexterity, have been tested. For this purpose, a deductive approach

was adopted and a quantitative research method was also chosen for collecting, and analyzing data by reference to appropriate softwares, i.e. SPSS (V.28) and AMOS (V.26).

### 3.1. Proposed model and research hypotheses

In compliance with the theoretical observations stated above, the conceptual model has been elaborated, as shown in figure 1 below. It represents the logical testable relationships that might exist between the three main concepts of our research.



**Figure 1: Proposed research model for the study**

In line with the objectives of our research and its proposed framework as stated above, the research hypotheses could be formulated as follows:

- H1. There is a direct significant effect of strategic leadership on Strategic ambidexterity in the business hotels of Najaf.
- H2. The strategic human resource capabilities mediate significantly the association between strategic leadership and strategic ambidexterity within the business hotels located in Najaf.

### 3.2. Target population, sample, and sociodemographic profiles of respondents

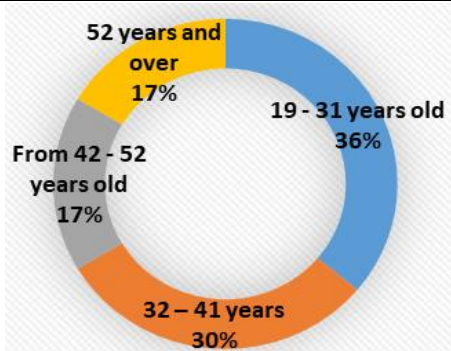
Some commercial hotels located in the city of Najaf were selected for the purpose of our investigation and a list of all the employees of those hotels was generated. Among the (170) middle managers constituting our target population, (118) filled questionnaires were returned to us from respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to the middle managers who were characterized by specified demographic factors related to their age, gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience. To verify the respondents' level of awareness and check their ability to answer the whole questions accurately, those



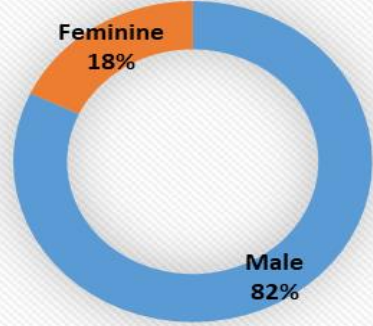
demographic variables were considered for descriptive analysis' purposes. Table (1) illustrates a description of the demographic profiles of our sample.

**Table 1: Sociodemographic profiles of respondents**

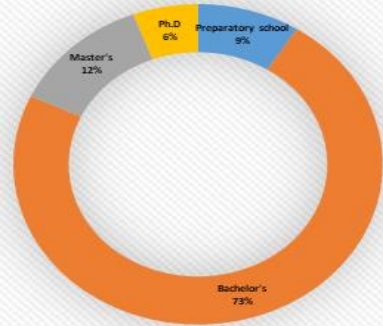
Age (years old)	Freg.	Ratio
19 - 31	44	%36.1
32 - 41	37	%30.3
42-52	21	%17.2
52 and over	20	%16.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100</b>



Genre	Freg.	Ratio
Men	100	%82.0
Women	22	%18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100</b>



Qualifications	Freg.	Ratio
Preparatory school	11	%9.0
Bachelor's	89	%73.0
Master's	15	%12.3
Ph.D	7	%5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100</b>



Years of experience	Freg.	Ratio
4years and less	22	%18.03
From 5 to 9 years	59	%48.36
From 10 to 16 years	14	%11.48
17years to 21 years	17	%13.93
22or more	10	%8.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100</b>

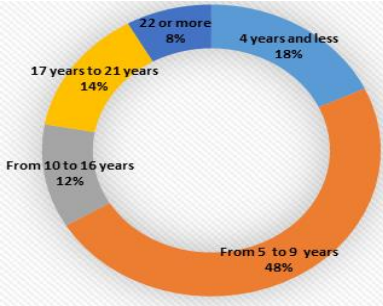


Table 1 presents the various age levels of the targeted interviewees. The age group of 19 to 31 years old constituted 36.1%, whereas the group aged 32 to 42 years accounted for 30.3% of the total surveyed population. The age distribution of the participants points out that the majority were from the youth.

The table above depicts also the educational qualifications of respondents, revealing that 89 hold a bachelor's degree, 15 possess a master's degree, and 7 have a doctorate diploma. Participants were thus sufficiently well- educated to comprehend and appropriately engage with the different components/parts of the questionnaire.

On the other hand, the table presents the number of years of experience of the participants, indicating that 59 interviewees have service duration of 5 to 9 years; 14 of them have 10 to 16 years of experience. 17 workers have 17 to 21 years; whereas 10 of them have more than 22 years.

During these years, workers have gained knowledge and experience in addressing the workplace challenges and making wise decisions related to them.

### 3.3. Descriptive analysis (related to the latent variables and their dimensions/items)

In what follows, the descriptive analysis aims to examine the dimensions of the latent variables of our research and their corresponding indicators, on the basis of the opinions of the 122 middle managers working in the various business hotels located in Najaf. The level of response was assessed according to the participants' answers, via a five-point Likert scale that adapts well to our questionnaire items. The responses were quantified to determine the category length for each degree of the five-point weighting, yielding the findings shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Weighted average and responses' level**

Answer direction	Weighted average	
Strongly Agree	5	4.21
Agree	4.2	3.41
Neutral	3.4	2.61
Disagree	2.6	1.81
Strongly Disagree	1.8	1

#### 3.3.1. Descriptive analysis of 'Strategic Leadership'

The table 3 presented hereafter outlines a statistical description associated to the latent variable "strategic leadership". The total weighted arithmetic mean is approximately 3.316, indicating a tendency towards neutrality. The general standard deviation value is 0.783, with a coefficient of variation (henceforth CV) of 23.6% and an agreement rate of 66.3%.

These results reflect the average level of strategic leadership practices in certain commercial hotels of Najaf. In terms of availability and consistency of responses from the participants, ethical practices were highly ranked, while strategic vision was the lowest ranked dimension.

**Table 3: Descriptive analysis of ‘strategic leadership’**

Paragraphs/Items	Mean	Relative importance (%)	Std. Deviation	C.V (%)	NO
<b>Dimension 1: Directing the strategic vision</b>					
The hotel leaders support all their workers to understand the future vision	3.027	60.50	0.908	30.00	5
All the employees participate in expressing the hotel's future vision	3.536	70.70	0.631	17.85	1
The hotel leaders seek to instill confidence among employees to achieve its goals.	3.511	70.20	0.689	19.62	2
The hotel leaders benefit from the experiences of successful local and international institutions in determining the future direction.	3.422	68.40	0.749	21.89	3
The hotel leaders adopt clear strategies in the medium and long term.	3.118	62.40	0.838	26.88	4
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.323</b>	<b>66.5</b>	<b>0.763</b>	<b>22.96</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Dimension 2: Developing the human capital</b>					
The hotel leaders select individuals with the skills and competencies to implement the strategic plans.	2.777	55.5	0.916	33.0	5
The hotel leaders encourage learning among employees.	3.417	68.3	0.754	22.1	3
The hotel leaders use material rewards to maintain the performance of the outstanding workers.	3.732	74.6	0.605	16.2	1
The hotel leaders do their best to reduce the frustrations caused by failure among employees.	3.003	60.1	0.829	27.6	4
The hotel leaders encourage workers to generate new ideas to achieve the hotel's goals.	3.611	72.2	0.668	18.5	2
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.308</b>	<b>66.2</b>	<b>0.754</b>	<b>22.81</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Dimension 3: Enhancing the hotel's culture</b>					
The hotel leaders seek to strengthen the social relations/connections among employees.	3.651	60.50	0.648	17.75	1
Employees are selected and promoted on the basis of their experience and competences to achieve the hotel's objectives.	3.287	70.70	0.881	26.80	4
The hotel leaders are keen to clarify the hotel's rules, procedures, and orders to all workers.	3.197	70.20	0.919	28.75	5
The hotel leaders encourage clear lines of communication for a better flow of information.	3.562	68.40	0.679	19.06	2
The hotel leaders focus on dealing directly with conflicts that arise between employees rather than ignoring them	3.387	62.40	0.738	21.79	3

<b>General average</b>	<b>3.417</b>	<b>68.3</b>	<b>0.773</b>	<b>22.62</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Dimension 4: Emphasizing the ethical practices within the hotel</b>					
There are many procedures that the leaders take to confront the behaviors that might hinder the hotel's success.	3.437	68.7	0.718	20.9	1
The hotel leaders rely on justice and fairness in dealing with all the employees	3.232	64.6	0.792	24.5	2
The hotel leaders care about the conditions of the personnel whenever needed, such as illnesses and security.	3.165	63.3	0.991	31.3	4
Employees are committed to apply the ethical practices within the hotel	3.028	60.6	0.858	28.3	3
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.215</b>	<b>64.3</b>	<b>0.840</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strategic leadership</b>	<b>3.316</b>	<b>%66.3</b>	<b>0.783</b>	<b>%23.6</b>	

Source: Outputs of the SPSS (V.28) program

### 3.3.2. Descriptive analysis of 'Strategic Human Resource Capabilities'

The following Table 4 presents the statistical description of the Strategic Human Resources Capabilities' variable which was assessed through four dimensions, each one encompassing five paragraphs.

As shown in the table 4, the weighted arithmetic mean average is heading towards (neutrality) as it was estimated to be (3.322), with a general standard deviation of (0.820), a coefficient of variation of (24.7%), and an agreement rate of (66.4%). Those findings affirm that there is moderate availability and awareness of the behaviors of strategic human resources capabilities for workers in the studied business hotels of Najaf. Moreover, the dimension of changeability came in the first place, while the level of practice was the last ranked one.

**Table 4: Descriptive analysis of 'strategic human resources capabilities'**

Paragraphs/Items	Mean	Relative importance (%)	Std. Deviation	C.V (%)	NO.
<b>Dimension 1: Knowledge</b>					
The hotel managers rely on scientific methods to uncover the tacit knowledge within the minds of employees	3.113	62.26	0.967	31.06	5
The hotel direction is keen to hold seminars and workshops to generate knowledge	3.265	65.30	0.874	26.77	4
The hotel direction is usually hiring experts in the field of knowledge management to preserve the hotel's knowledge	3.421	68.42	0.709	20.72	2
The hotel direction consults with experts, listens to them, and works to take their suggestions and involve them in decision-making	3.313	66.26	0.841	25.38	3
Hotel employees can easily access the stored knowledge	3.621	72.42	0.678	18.72	1
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.347</b>	<b>66.93</b>	<b>0.814</b>	<b>24.32</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Dimension 2: Changeability</b>					
The objectives of change are clearly and precisely defined	3.392	67.84	0.817	24.09	3
The management works on a continuous update of the hotel's regulations and systems to facilitate the work procedures.	3.417	68.34	0.714	20.90	2
The managers support the participation of employees in the process of planning for change inside the hotel	3.008	60.16	0.939	31.22	5
The management has a flexible organizational structure that responds to the changes occurring in the surrounding environment.	3.553	71.06	0.621	17.48	1
The ability to change is related to the beliefs and intentions of individuals and the extent of the need to make change	3.241	64.82	0.888	27.40	4
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.322</b>	<b>66.44</b>	<b>0.796</b>	<b>23.95</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Dimension 3: Creativity</b>					
The company's managers are keen to adopt new methods and approaches in performing various businesses and activities	3.472	69.44	0.677	19.50	1
The hotel leaders enhance the creative abilities of their employees at all administrative levels	3.288	65.76	0.914	27.80	4
The hotel leaders are keen to use modern technologies in their work	3.401	68.02	0.729	21.43	2
The hotel leaders view creativity and innovation as a source of excellence within the various activities and services of the hotel	3.023	60.46	0.961	31.79	5
The hotel managers are keen to benefit from the experiences of other companies in the field of creativity and innovation in their businesses.	3.316	66.32	0.813	24.52	3
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.300</b>	<b>66.00</b>	<b>0.819</b>	<b>24.81</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Fourth Dimension: Level of Practice</b>					
The managers work to fill the job vacancies from outside	3.481	69.62	0.777	22.32	2
The training and development objectives of the hotel are multiple and long-term oriented	3.002	60.04	0.979	32.61	5
The hotel managers have specific programs that serve to evaluate the overall performance accurately	3.421	68.42	0.889	25.99	3
The process of dealing with deviations is carried out via a cooperative work between the direction and the employees	3.155	63.10	0.911	28.87	4
The managers provide compensation and incentives that are consistent with the expectations of the hotel's employees	3.526	70.52	0.703	19.94	1
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.317</b>	<b>66.34</b>	<b>0.852</b>	<b>25.68</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Strategic HR Capabilities</b>	<b>3.322</b>	<b>%66.4</b>	<b>0.820</b>	<b>24.7</b>	

Source: Outputs of the SPSS (V.28) program

### 3.3.3. Descriptive analysis of ‘Strategic ambidexterity’

The subsequent table 5 presents a statistical overview of the latent variable ‘Strategic ambidexterity’, assessed through three dimensions, each one comprising five items. The findings indicate that the total weighted arithmetic mean is approaching neutrality, recorded at 3.356. It is accompanied by a general standard deviation of ‘0.783’ and a coefficient of variation of 23.3%. The relative importance of ‘Strategic ambidexterity’ stands at 67.1%, reflecting a moderate level of availability and awareness in certain commercial hotels of Najaf. Notably, the distinct structure emerged as the most significant aspect for participants; while the exploration of opportunities was ranked by them as the lowest one.

**Table 5: Descriptive analysis of ‘Strategic ambidexterity’**

Paragraphs/Items	Mean	Relative importance	Std. Deviation	C.V	NO.
<b>Dimension 1: Exploiting opportunities</b>					
The management is constantly seeking to make minor modifications to its existing services.	3.761	75.22	0.647	17.20	1
The management seeks to improve the quality of its services to increase the volume of transactions in its hotel environment.	3.221	64.42	0.849	26.36	4
The management is making substantial improvements to its existing services with high quality.	3.444	68.88	0.702	20.38	2
Reducing the costs of internal operations in hotel dealings with customers is an important goal sought by the hotel policy.	3.102	62.04	0.918	29.59	5
The hotel is expanding in providing services to existing customers in accordance with their desires.	3.334	66.68	0.769	23.07	3
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.372</b>	<b>67.45</b>	<b>0.777</b>	<b>23.04</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Dimension 2: Exploring opportunities</b>					
The management tests the new service style offered by other hotels in its current markets.	3.202	64.04	0.911	28.45	4
The hotel management innovates methods and policies that are compatible with the desires of the volatile and unstable markets.	3.161	63.22	0.999	31.60	5
The hotel management tries to accept non-standard requests that go beyond the current services to explore new opportunities.	3.464	69.28	0.722	20.84	2
The management adopts opening new hotel branches as well as attracting new customers.	3.401	68.02	0.738	21.70	3
The hotel management senses the available opportunities before other hotels and works to seize them.	3.554	71.08	0.639	17.98	1
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.356</b>	<b>67.13</b>	<b>0.802</b>	<b>23.89</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Dimension 3: Differentiated structure</b>					
The hotel markets its services and new dealings comprehensively in the entire market available to the hotel.	3.466	69.32	0.621	17.92	1
The organizational structure of the hotel is based on the functional basis with branches in the governorates to meet the desires of customers.	3.269	65.38	0.824	25.21	4

The departments and production lines are clearly divided within the hotel.	3.377	67.54	0.788	23.33	3
The hotel structure depends on (departments, branches, independent units that enhance creativity and innovation.	3.188	63.76	0.909	28.51	5
The hotel units and departments focus when developing their long-term plans.	3.398	67.96	0.704	20.72	2
The hotel markets its services and new dealings comprehensively in the entire market available to the hotel.	3.466	69.32	0.621	17.92	1
<b>General average</b>	<b>3.340</b>	<b>66.79</b>	<b>0.769</b>	<b>23.03</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strategic ambidexterity</b>	<b>3.356</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>0.783</b>	<b>23.3</b>	

Source: Outputs of the SPSS (V.28) program

#### 4. RESULTS' PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

In what follows, will be presented the reliability, constructs' validity findings, as well as the hypotheses' testing results.

##### 4.1. Reliability (stability coefficient) and normal distribution of data

It appears from the table 6 hereafter that all the kurtosis and skewness coefficients ranged between ( $\pm 1.96$ ), indicating that the data follow a normal distribution. Accordingly, parametric methods were adopted for conducting the subsequent statistical analyses (Hair et al., 2010). The stability coefficient was used for the reliability checking via the calculation of Cronbach's alpha, whose value should be greater than (70%). It is clear from the table 6 below that all the values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from (81.78%-91.76%), indicating the reliability of the measurement scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The conditions of normal distribution and stability coefficient for the scale were then achieved.

**Table 6: Normal distribution of data and reliability checking**

Variables	Sub-variables	Number of items	Kurtosis	Skewness	Cronbach's alpha
Strategic Leadership	Directing Strategic Vision	5	0.877	-0.851	85.11%
	Developing Human Capital	5	0.796	-0.656	90.35%
	Enhancing Organizational Culture	5	0.655	-0.762	85.29%
	Emphasizing Ethical Practices	4	0.943	-0.613	87.25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0.818</b>	<b>0.7205-</b>	<b>%87.00</b>
Human Resource Capabilities	Knowledge	5	0.89	-0.61	91.76%
	Changeability	5	0.432	-0.711	81.16%
	Creativity	5	0.99	-0.81	82.46%
	Level of Practice	5	0.63	-0.555	89.58%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0.736</b>	<b>0.672-</b>	<b>%86.24</b>
Strategic ambidexterity	Exploiting Opportunities	5	0.724	-0.977	88.56%
	Exploring Opportunities	5	0.955	-0.931	87.66%
	Differentiated Structure	5	0.712	-0.811	81.78%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0.797</b>	<b>-0.906</b>	<b>%86.00</b>

Source: Outputs of SPSS (V.28)

#### 4.2. Construct validity (on the basis of the confirmatory factor analysis of the variables)

In what follows, the saturation values of the independent variable, i.e. strategic leadership, the mediating variable, i.e. strategic human resources capabilities, as well as the dependent variable, i.e. Strategic ambidexterity, exceeded the cutoff value of 0.40, indicating their significance. As illustrated in the following figures 2, 3, and 4, the required conditions for the confirmatory factor analysis were therefore been met. Additionally, the quality of fit indices was evaluated. All the values exceeded the critical value (CR) of 1.96, supporting the quality of the measurement fit. This indicates that all the items represented effectively their designated dimensions.

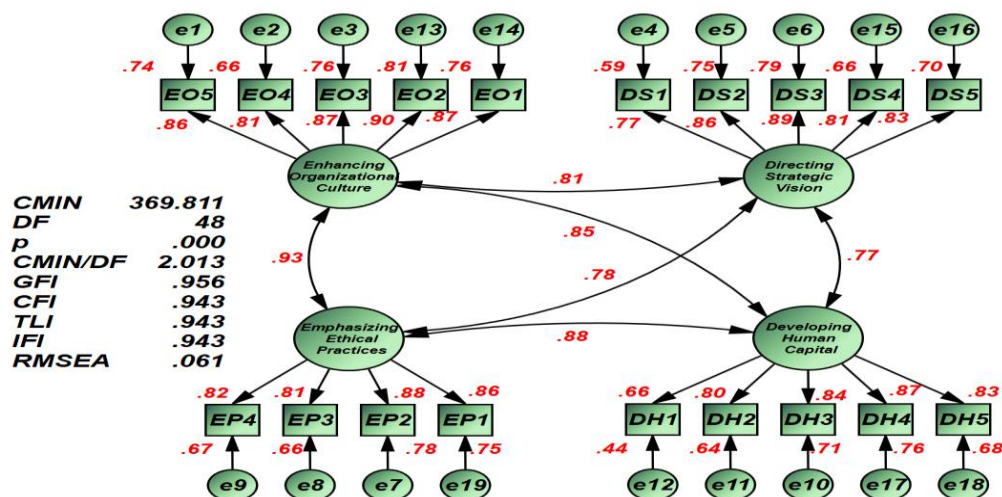


Figure 2. Factor analysis of the strategic leadership variable

Table 7: Factor analysis of 'strategic leadership'

Items	Paths	Dimensions	Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P
EO1	<---	Enhancing the hotel's Culture	0.871	0.045	21.793	***
EO2	<---		0.903	0.044	23.373	***
EO3	<---		0.872	0.041	21.823	***
EO4	<---		0.813	0.050	19.215	***
EO5	<---		0.860			
DS1	<---	Directing the strategic Vision	0.770			
DS2	<---		0.864	0.062	17.334	***
DS3	<---		0.890	0.065	17.992	***
DS4	<---		0.813	0.064	16.086	***
DS5	<---		0.835	0.064	16.610	***
EP1	<---	Emphasizing Ethical Practices	0.863	0.043	22.156	***
EP2	<---		0.882			
EP3	<---		0.810	0.047	19.608	***
EP4	<---		0.817	0.048	19.909	***
DH1	<---	Developing the human Capital	0.661	0.060	13.488	***
DH2	<---		0.798	0.053	17.619	***
DH3	<---		0.840			
DH4	<---		0.870	0.055	20.194	***
DH5	<---		0.827	0.056	18.634	***



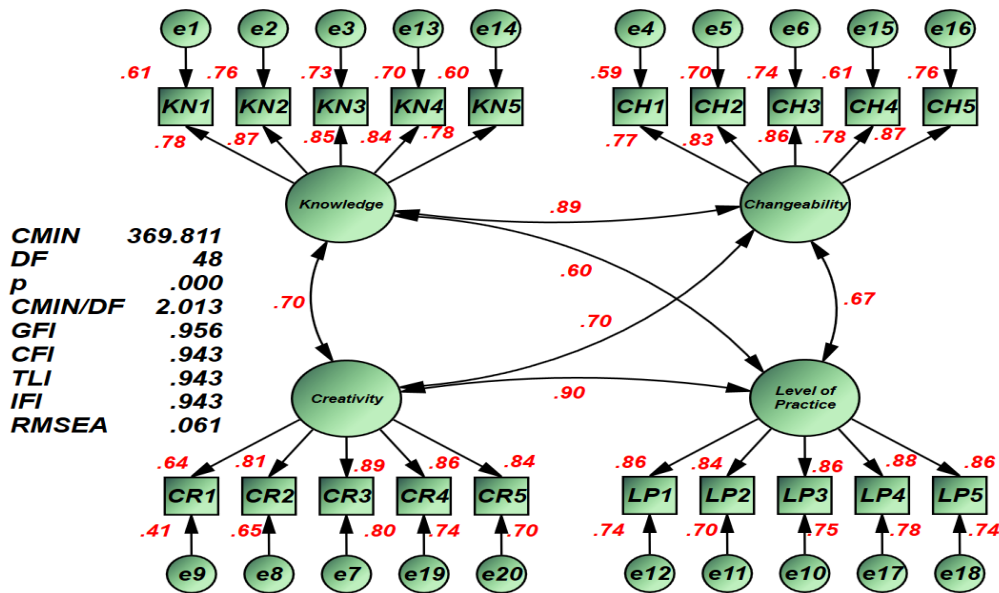


Figure 3: Factor analysis of the strategic human resource capabilities variable

Table 8: Factor analysis of ‘strategic human resource capabilities’

Items	Paths	Dimensions	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
KN1	<---	Knowledge	0.781			
KN2	<---		0.874	0.060	18.023	***
KN3	<---		0.852	0.067	17.443	***
KN4	<---		0.839	0.062	17.094	***
KN5	<---		0.776	0.065	15.481	***
CH1	<---	Changeability	0.767			
CH2	<---		0.835	0.061	16.575	***
CH3	<---		0.862	0.061	17.247	***
CH4	<---		0.783	0.063	15.338	***
CH5	<---		0.873	0.060	17.516	***
CR1	<---	Creativity	0.642	0.049	13.698	***
CR2	<---		0.805	0.042	19.752	***
CR3	<---		0.895			
CR4	<---		0.861	0.039	22.545	***
CR5	<---		0.836	0.043	21.260	***
LP1	<---	Level of Practice	0.863	0.046	21.387	***
LP2	<---		0.839	0.046	20.312	***
LP3	<---		0.864			
LP4	<---		0.882	0.045	22.335	***
LP5	<---		0.860	0.051	21.258	***

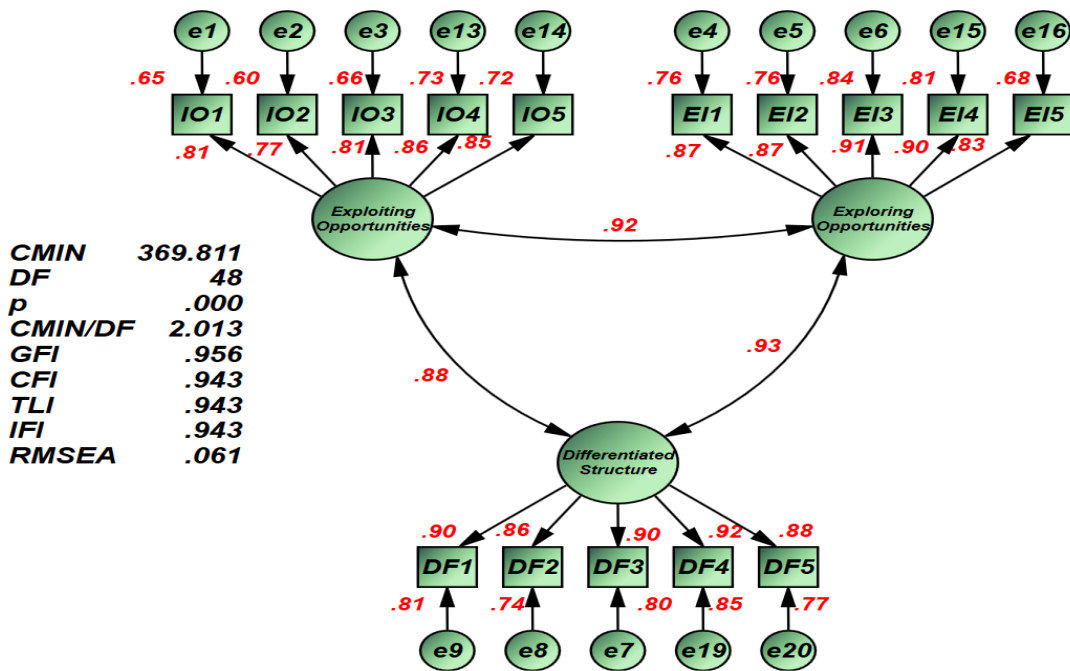


Figure 4: Factor analysis of the Strategic ambidexterity variable

Table 9: Factor analysis of ‘Strategic ambidexterity’

Items	Paths	Dimensions	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
IO1	<---	Exploiting Opportunities	0.806			
IO2	<---		0.772	0.061	16.035	***
IO3	<---		0.814	0.059	17.237	***
IO4	<---		0.857	0.053	18.558	***
IO5	<---		0.850	0.058	18.359	***
EI1	<---	Exploring Opportunities	0.871			
EI2	<---		0.873	0.045	22.614	***
EI3	<---		0.914	0.046	24.982	***
EI4	<---		0.900	0.047	24.118	***
EI5	<---		0.827	0.046	20.336	***
DF1	<---	Differentiated Structure	0.898	0.038	25.674	***
DF2	<---		0.858	0.040	23.089	***
DF3	<---		0.896			
DF4	<---		0.920	0.037	27.311	***
DF5	<---		0.880	0.041	24.414	***

### 4.3. Hypotheses’ testing results

The statistical method used for the empirical validation of our research was the structural equation modeling (SEM) multivariate technique. In fact, the SEM is understood to be the best approach for analyzing and modeling the relationships that might exist between latent variables (Hair et al., 2012).

Accordingly, a structural model was developed in order to test the hypotheses of the present study. It demonstrates the dependency of one variable, which is referred to as the dependent variable, on many other variables, which are referred to as the independent variable, as well as an intermediate variable, which is referred to as a mediator. The outcomes of the tests that were conducted on the hypotheses of direct and indirect influence are reported in Table 10 below.

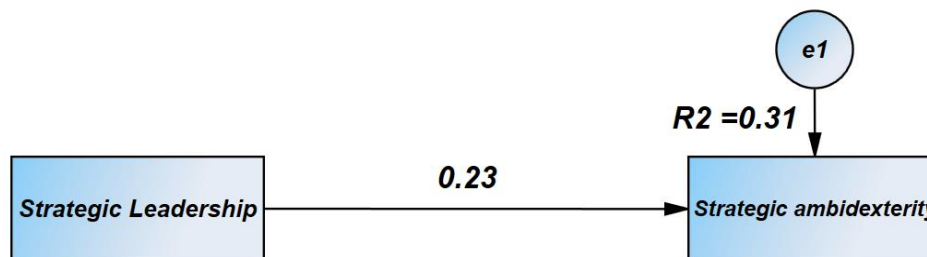
**Table 10: Structural model (direct and indirect effects) testing**

Paths				Indirect effect	Direct impact	Standard error	C.R.	R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.	
Strategic Leadership	→		Strategic ambidexterity	---	0.234	0.233	3.356	0.313	0.000	
Strategic Leadership	→	Strategic HR Capabilities	→	Strategic ambidexterity	0.618	---	10.231	0.577	0.000	
The amount of change brought about by strategic HR capabilities										
Strategic Leadership	→	Strategic HR Capabilities	→	Strategic ambidexterity	0.384	---	0.202	6.875	0.264	0.000

Source: AMOS (V.24)

By testing the first hypothesis (H1), it was found that strategic leadership has a direct and considerable impact on the Strategic ambidexterity of personnel working in the investigated business hotels of Najaf. As shown in the table 10 above, an increase in the value of the strategic leadership axis by one unit leads to an increase in the value of the Strategic ambidexterity axis by (0.234), and a critical percentage of (3.356), which is a significant value because the p-value was equal to zero and therefore less than the cutoff level of 5%. The direct effect relationship is therefore confirmed.

Furthermore, strategic leadership explains a proportion of the variance in Strategic ambidexterity, which accounted for 31.3% of the total variance. The remaining percentage, of 68.7%, is related to other variables that were not included in the research model. This indicates that the strategic ambidexterity of the business hotels of Najaf grows in proportion to the number of strategic leadership practices that are implemented.

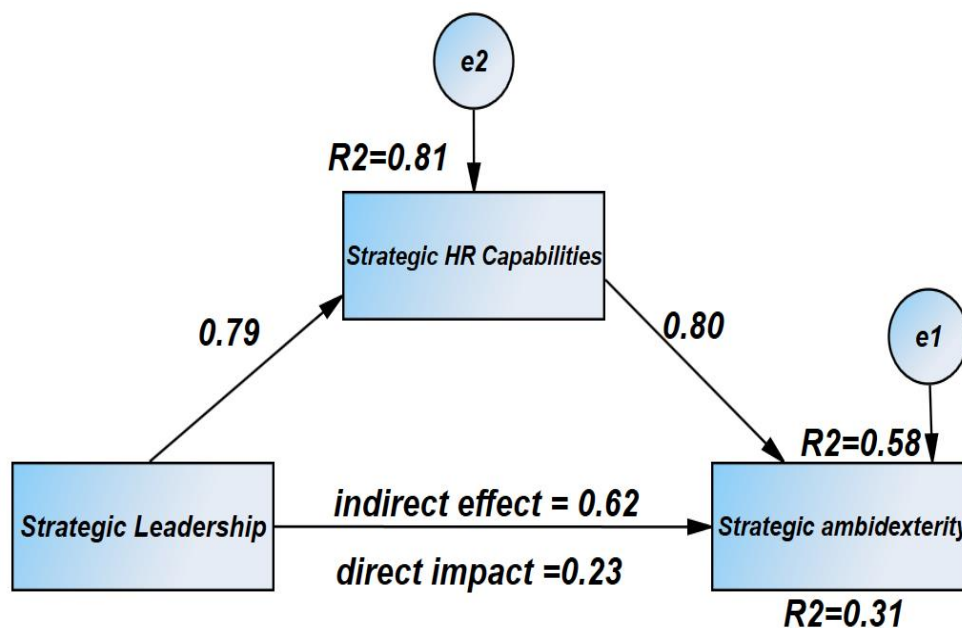


**Figure 5: Direct effect testing (strategic leadership on strategic ambidexterity)**

Source: AMOS (V. 26)

The secondary hypothesis (H.2) was tested, indicating a statistically significant indirect influence of strategic leadership on strategic ambidexterity, through the mediating effect of strategic human resource skills. As shown in table 10 above, a one-unit rise in strategic leadership, accompanied by strategic human resource capabilities, results in a one standard weight gain in Strategic ambidexterity of 0.618, with a critical value of 10.231 and a standard error of 0.031.

Such a finding reveals that strategic leadership accounting for 57.7% of the variance in strategic ambidexterity, is attributable to the presence of strategic human resource skills; while the residual variance is ascribed to other features that were not examined in the current study.



**Figure 6: Mediating effect (of Strategic HR capabilities) testing**

The results of the table above supported the empirical evidence that strategic human resources capabilities contribute to the enhancement of the impact of strategic leadership on strategic ambidexterity.

This finding is supported by the fact that the standard estimates have increased by (0.384), the standard error has decreased by (0.202), and the critical value has been improved by (6.875).

Additionally, the strategic ambidexterity has been significantly improved by the presence of strategic human resources capabilities, which accounted for (38.4%) of the variance in strategic ambidexterity. Such a finding implies that strategic ambidexterity of the interviewed employees is significantly enhanced by the hotel management's implementation of strategic leadership practices.

Those practices might incorporate: (a) instilling confidence among workers to achieve the hotel's objectives, (b) leveraging the experiences of successful local and international institutions to determine the future corporate direction, (c) adopting clear strategies for the medium and long term perspectives, (d) providing material rewards to maintain the returns of distinguished employees, and (e) selecting and promoting employees on the basis of their experiences and efficiency to reach the hotel's goals.

The Sobel test was also performed to confirm that strategic human resource capabilities, has a significant mediating impact on the relationship between strategic leadership and strategic ambidexterity.

As presented in the figure 7 below, the value of the Sobel test was (7.111); thus greater than the tabular t value (1.968). Consequently, the mediator variable has a significant effect on the association between strategic leadership and strategic ambidexterity.

Input			Test statistic:	p- value
$t_a$	16.510	Sobel test	7.11146600	0
$t_b$	6.66	Aroian test	7.51368790	0
		Goodman test	7.00166110	0
		Reset all	Calculate	

**Figure 7: Sobel test (based on t values)**

### 4.3. Results' discussion

Findings of the present investigation reported that human resource capabilities mediate significantly the relationship between strategic leadership and strategic ambidexterity within the business hotels of Najaf.

It implies that the studied hotels' top and middle managers are invited to promote their strategic leadership by helping all their employees understand their vision, and benefiting from experiences gained by successful local and international institutions in determining the future direction and generating new ideas for the achievement of the corporate goals. Such statements comply with those advanced by Abuzaid (2016); Akbari, Omrane et al (2022); Hitt et al (2007, 2010), as well as Akbari, Omrane et al (2022).

Hotels' managers are also called upon to reconsider their internal stakeholders, through fostering the capabilities of their strategic human resources. To do so, they are invited to rely on scientific methods to reveal the implicit knowledge within the minds of workers, as emphasized by Omrane et al (2023).

A continuous update of regulations and systems could also serve to facilitate work procedures, and foster the creative capabilities of employees at all the administrative levels.

Middle managers are also conveyed to develop and work on the strategic ambidexterity of their business hotels by making fundamental improvements to their existing services until reaching a high quality of their management, and testing new services afforded by other competitive hotels of the existing markets. Such a statement goes in line with those underlined by Voss & Voss (2013).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present research aimed at in-depth-understanding the relationships between strategic leadership, human resource capabilities, and strategic ambidexterity, especially in the hotel sector. It aspired to provide practical recommendations to enhance strategic leadership and develop the human capital of business hotels located in Najaf.

In order to reach out better decisions related to leadership and human capital empowerment in developing countries, an empirical investigation was carried out in the business hotels of Najaf. A quantitative approach was adopted and a survey was undertaken on a sample of 118 middle managers working in those hotels.

The attained results revealed that developing human resource skills is so important and that fostering staff capabilities might play an essential role in improving the strategic ambidexterity of business hotels, by fostering their capacity to explore, capture and leverage the best opportunities within the market.

Workers' skills might also be more impactful via a successful strategic leadership exercised by Top and middle managers of business hotels. In other words, those managers should adopt clear middle and long-term strategies for their hotels and implement appropriate strategic plans.

For this purpose, they are called to encourage their workers to participate actively in expressing the future vision of their hotels and achieving their goals, by instilling confidence among them, promoting their abilities, and reducing their sources of frustration. Paying attention to the clarification of rules, procedures and orders for all of them, as well as treating them fairly might boost their creativity and efficiency.

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