

The Relationship Between Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment Among Employees of the Iraqi Ministry of Sport: The Mediating Role of Organizational Justice

Amir Hossein. Monazami^{1*}, Mohammad Ali. Salman², Meysam. Rahimizadeh³

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran

² MA Student, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: a.h.monazami@sru.ac.ir

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Aliakbar Aminbeidokhti Educational Administration, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Semnan University, Semnan, Iran kafashpor@um.ac.ir	Reviewer 1: Mehrdad Bayat Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran. Email: bayatmehrdad60@pnu.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Manijeh Haghighinasab Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran Email: haghighinasab@srbiau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The description of the sampling method is internally inconsistent and should be revised. The Methods section states that “proportionate stratified random sampling was used,” while the reported population and analyzed sample are both 300 employees. If all members of the target population were included, random sampling did not occur. Alternatively, if only a subset was actually sampled, the precise population size, stratum sizes, selected numbers from each stratum, response rate, and final valid sample should be reported. The manuscript should provide enough information to permit replication of the sampling process, particularly because occupational strata such as managers, experts, and administrative employees were explicitly used as the basis for sample selection.

The measurement description requires substantial clarification because the instruments presented in the Methods section do not correspond to the indicators used in the PLS-SEM measurement model. The manuscript states that “the MLQ contained 40 items,” that the Niehoff and Moorman Organizational Justice Questionnaire contained 20 items, and that the Meyer and Allen Organizational Commitment Questionnaire contained 24 items. However, the Findings section subsequently states that leadership style was represented by only 12 indicators, organizational justice by 9 indicators, and organizational commitment by 9 indicators. The authors must explain how the original 84 questionnaire items were reduced to 30 indicators before model estimation. It should be stated whether abbreviated validated versions were used, whether item parcels were constructed, whether only selected items were administered, or whether items were removed empirically. This is essential for evaluating content validity.

The manuscript should clarify the conceptual status of leadership style in the structural model. The descriptive section distinguishes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, yet the structural analysis treats “Leadership Style (LS)” as a single latent construct. The authors need to explain whether these three theoretically distinct leadership styles were modeled as first-order dimensions of a higher-order leadership construct or whether their scores were combined into a single composite. Combining transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership without an explicit higher-order measurement rationale may be conceptually problematic because the styles represent qualitatively different, and sometimes opposing, leadership behaviors. The measurement specification should therefore be clearly described and theoretically justified.

The reported assessment of discriminant validity contains a serious statistical error that must be corrected. The manuscript states that “the Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied,” yet Table 2 reports a square root of AVE of .768 for organizational justice and a correlation of .808 between organizational justice and organizational commitment. Because .768 is lower than .808, the Fornell–Larcker requirement is explicitly violated for organizational justice. Similarly, the diagonal value for organizational commitment (.790) is also below its correlation with organizational justice (.808). Thus, discriminant validity between organizational justice and organizational commitment cannot be claimed based on the reported matrix. The authors should acknowledge this problem, calculate HTMT, report its confidence intervals if available, and reconsider the measurement specification if discriminant validity remains inadequate.

The interpretation of model fit should be more cautious. The manuscript states that “SRMR = .082... indicated acceptable model fit.” An SRMR of .082 is marginally above the frequently cited .08 criterion, although some PLS-SEM applications accept values below .10. The authors should therefore describe the result as acceptable or marginal rather than unequivocally good. Furthermore, the exact SmartPLS output should be identified, because SRMR can be reported for both saturated and estimated models. The same caution applies to NFI = .91; NFI in PLS-SEM should not be interpreted in precisely the same manner as conventional covariance-based SEM fit indices.

The structural-model evaluation is incomplete because predictive relevance and collinearity diagnostics have not been reported. The manuscript states that “the R^2 value for organizational justice was .484” and “the R^2 value for organizational commitment was .685,” but R^2 alone does not provide a complete evaluation of a PLS structural model. The authors should report inner VIF values to demonstrate that predictor collinearity is not problematic and include Q^2 values obtained through blindfolding or an appropriate predictive assessment. If prediction is a principal justification for using PLS-SEM, PLSpredict would further strengthen the analysis. These additions would provide a more rigorous assessment of model quality.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

Related to the preceding issue, the very high correlation between organizational justice and organizational commitment requires theoretical and statistical attention. The manuscript reports that “organizational commitment and organizational justice exhibited a stronger correlation of .808.” A correlation of this magnitude suggests substantial conceptual overlap between the two latent constructs and raises concerns regarding empirical distinctiveness and potential collinearity. The authors should

report HTMT values, construct-level VIF statistics, and ideally cross-loadings or another appropriate discriminant-validity assessment. If HTMT exceeds accepted thresholds, the measurement model may need to be respecified before interpreting the structural relationships.

The mediation analysis is currently insufficient to support the statement that “organizational justice functioned as a full mediator.” Full mediation cannot be established merely because the path from leadership style to organizational justice is significant, the path from organizational justice to commitment is significant, and the direct leadership-to-commitment path is nonsignificant. The specific indirect effect $LS \rightarrow OJ \rightarrow OC$ must itself be estimated and tested using bootstrapping. The manuscript should report the indirect-effect coefficient, standard error, *t* statistic, *p* value, and preferably the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval. The total effect should also be reported. Without these statistics, the principal mediation conclusion is incomplete.

The structural-model results should report effect sizes rather than only *p* values. For example, the manuscript states that “the path from leadership style to organizational justice was statistically significant ($p < .001$)” and that “the path from organizational justice to organizational commitment was statistically significant ($p = .004$),” but no standardized path coefficients are provided. A significant *p* value does not indicate the magnitude or practical importance of an association. The authors should report standardized β coefficients, bootstrapped standard errors, *t* values, confidence intervals, and ideally f^2 effect sizes for each structural path. These estimates are necessary for comparing the relative strength of the hypothesized relationships.

The rationale for selecting PLS-SEM should be strengthened. The manuscript indicates that “the hypothesized model was examined using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS,” but the theoretical model contains only three major constructs and appears primarily confirmatory rather than prediction-oriented. Given the relatively large sample and theoretically established instruments, covariance-based SEM could also have been appropriate. The authors should explain why PLS-SEM was preferred, for example because of prediction objectives, hierarchical constructs, formative measurement, non-normality, model complexity, or exploratory purposes. Simply noting that PLS-SEM is less sensitive to normality is not sufficient justification for choosing it over alternative SEM approaches.

The normality assessment needs more precise reporting. The manuscript states that “all coefficients fell within the acceptable range of -2 to $+2$,” but the actual skewness and kurtosis values are not reported. Since PLS-SEM does not require multivariate normality, this analysis is not necessarily central, but once included it should be reported transparently. The authors should provide at least the minimum and maximum observed skewness and kurtosis values or explicitly state their ranges. More importantly, the manuscript should avoid implying that univariate skewness and kurtosis establish multivariate normality, as these are distinct statistical assumptions.

The indicator-retention procedure should be reported more transparently and aligned with contemporary PLS-SEM recommendations. The manuscript states that “indicators with factor loadings below .60, including LSR100, OC4, OC5, OC6, OJ6, and OJ8, were removed.” First, “LSR100” appears to be a coding or typographical error and should be checked carefully. Second, deleting indicators purely on statistical grounds can compromise content validity. The authors should provide the initial and final outer loadings for all retained and deleted indicators and explain the theoretical content represented by each removed item. The manuscript should demonstrate that item deletion did not disproportionately eliminate specific dimensions of leadership, organizational justice, or organizational commitment.

The extremely high composite reliability for leadership style requires critical examination. Table 2 reports “ $CR = .960$ ” for leadership style. Although values above .70 indicate adequate reliability, coefficients approaching or exceeding .95 can suggest indicator redundancy or excessively similar item wording rather than simply superior measurement quality. The statement that all values above .90 represent “very strong reliability” should therefore be moderated. The authors should assess whether redundant leadership indicators are inflating composite reliability and should report Cronbach’s α and preferably ρ_A alongside composite reliability to provide a more complete assessment of internal consistency.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.