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Research Paper

The Role of Competent Leadership According to Herzberg's Model in Enhancing Job Satisfaction from The Perspective of Faculty Members in Some Faculties of Physical Education and Sports Sciences

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ABSTRACT	Manuscript Info.
<p>The purpose of the research is to check how good leadership, according to the Herzberg model, affects the level of job satisfaction among the faculty of the selected colleges of physical education and sport sciences. The study was conducted in the form of descriptive-analytic research where a questionnaire comprising two broader dimensions, that is, competent leadership and job satisfaction, was administered to a random selection of 120 teaching staff members. The statistical analysis results showed that effective leadership is significantly positively related to job satisfaction, and the improvement of faculty satisfaction highly relies on the reinforcement of leadership skills.</p> <p>It is also identified that effective leadership practices are essential in institutes of higher learning, particularly faculties in physical education and sports sciences, because of the influence they have on improving a conducive environment at work and creating the desire to work among the staff. It further proposes particular training programs to develop the leadership capacity of academic leaders, usher in recognition- and motivation-driven strategies, and lessen the institutional climate to be less hard and less intimidating.</p>	<p>✓ ISSN No: 2584- 184X ✓ Received: 06-07-2025 ✓ Accepted: 25-08-2025 ✓ Published: 14-09-2025 ✓ MRR:3(9):2025;25-31 ✓ ©2025, All Rights Reserved. ✓ Peer Review Process: Yes ✓ Plagiarism Checked: Yes</p>
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KEYWORDS: Competent leadership, Herzberg's model, job satisfaction, faculty, physical education, and sports sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern society is undergoing a rapid change in several areas that require constant evolution and improvement of quality within schools. Competent leadership is one of the most influential factors in the fulfillment of this objective because it forms the core component of leading and inspiring people toward institutional goals, as well as ensuring sustainability and development. In order to be successful and sustainable, educational institutions need to be led by strong, efficient

administrative leadership that can influence behavior, motivate, and foster efficiency when performing tasks.

In this context, the Herzberg model offers a very useful outlook on the concept since it highlights the connection between leadership and job satisfaction. It classifies the determinants of satisfaction into two broad categories, namely motivating factors and hygiene factors, with an emphasis on the leader's role in enhancing the positive drivers whilst reducing the barriers in the workplace.

Physical education and sports sciences faculties constitute a crucial part of higher education and research because of the academic and scientific tasks they bear; they need an active and supportive environment. Job satisfaction among the members of the faculty will have a direct impact on increasing the standard of teaching and research output, and eventually the institution and society. Considering the impact of leadership practices and motivational strategies on enhancing the administrative performance and decision-making in Iraqi faculties of physical education and sports sciences, Saber et al. (2023) also indicate that department heads are a focus of the new study. The results emphasize the importance of enhancing leadership skills and promoting incentive-driven mechanisms within the academic world.

In this perspective, this research paper attempts to investigate the effects of effective leadership, based on the Herzberg model, on the job satisfaction of faculty members working in colleges of physical education and sports sciences. The objective is to offer evidence-based proposals that can be used to enhance the working environment, foster academic excellence, and improve institutional quality.

The importance of this study is revealed at a variety of levels:

1. Academic dimension: To deepen the body of knowledge on the connection between leadership and job satisfaction, especially in the framework of physical education and sports sciences.
2. Practical dimension: To provide practical recommendations that academic administrations can implement to improve the work climate and increase faculty satisfaction.
3. Institutional dimension: To help the institutions of education fulfill their strategic objectives by highlighting the importance of good leadership in ensuring the quality of teaching and research outputs.
4. Social dimension: Involvement in the development of society through the enhancement of educational and research outputs, consequently leading to the production of qualified and exceptional professionals.

Overall, the research can be described as an important step toward creating a healthier academic climate within faculties of physical education and sports sciences by emphasizing the necessity of effective leadership to create job satisfaction among the faculty.

Research Problem

Job satisfaction represents one of the major challenges faced by faculty members in higher education institutions. Several studies have reported that a considerable proportion of academic staff experience moderate to low levels of satisfaction, which negatively affects both the quality of education and overall institutional performance. Systematic reviews in the field of higher education confirm a significant positive correlation between effective leadership practices and academic satisfaction. However, within faculties of physical education and sports sciences, the application of this relationship has received limited empirical attention.

Despite the critical need for a supportive and motivating environment for faculty in sports sciences, research on leadership styles within these faculties remains scarce. Most previous studies have examined the influence of general leadership approaches, such as transformational or transactional leadership, on performance within sports organizations outside the academic context. In contrast, Herzberg's two-factor theory—distinguishing between motivators (e.g., achievement and recognition) and hygiene factors (e.g., work conditions and policies)—has been widely applied in management and education, but rarely in relation to faculty job satisfaction in sports sciences colleges. This gap underscores the necessity of investigating leadership effectiveness through Herzberg's framework to better understand its role in shaping satisfaction levels among academic staff.

Additionally, the literature points to the need for carefully designed tools to measure job satisfaction based on Herzberg's model, particularly within the cultural and organizational context of faculties of physical education. Accordingly, the research problem stems from the absence of systematic studies that apply Herzberg's model to competent leadership in these faculties, as well as from the lack of practical strategies that academic administrations can adopt to develop leadership skills that sustainably enhance faculty satisfaction.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To test whether there is a statistically significant positive relationship between competent leadership and the level of job satisfaction among faculty members.
2. To examine the extent to which motivator factors in Herzberg's model (e.g., achievement and recognition) exert a stronger positive effect on job satisfaction compared to hygiene factors.
3. To evaluate the influence of hygiene factors (e.g., institutional policies and working conditions) on job satisfaction, while acknowledging their relatively weaker effect compared to motivators.
4. To identify whether statistically significant differences exist in the average level of job satisfaction between faculties adopting effective leadership practices and those that do not, in favor of the former.

Research Scope

Human scope: Faculty members teaching in selected colleges of physical education and sports sciences.

Time scope: From 22/2/2025 to 20/5/2025.

Spatial scope: Selected faculties of physical education and sports sciences in Iraq.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employed the descriptive-analytical method, as it is well-suited to the nature of the research problem and the procedures adopted. This approach is among the most widely used in psychological and educational research, given its focus on examining phenomena as they exist in reality. It provides an accurate account either through qualitative descriptions that

highlight characteristics and features, or through quantitative measures that present numerical indicators of magnitude and frequency.

In the current study, the descriptive–analytical method was applied to explore the phenomenon of competent leadership and assess its relationship with job satisfaction, while analyzing this relationship within the framework of Herzberg’s two-factor model.

Research Population and Sample

1. Research Population

The study population comprises faculty members working in colleges of physical education and sports sciences at public universities in Iraq during the academic year 2024–2025, totaling 692 members.

2. Research Sample

From the total population, a sample of 120 faculty members was drawn using the stratified random sampling technique, ensuring proportional representation across five major universities. This method was adopted to achieve balanced participation that reflects the actual distribution of the research population.

Table 1: Distribution of the Study Population and Sample (n = 120)

University	Number of Faculty Members (N)	Percentage of Population (%)	Sample Size (n)
University of Baghdad	238	34.39	30
University of Mosul	175	25.28	24
University of Diyala	141	20.37	18
Tikrit University	66	9.56	24
University of Kirkuk	72	10.40	24
Total	692	100	120

Research Tool: Questionnaire

1. Questionnaire Construction

The research tool consisted of a structured questionnaire developed in alignment with the study objectives. It was divided into two main dimensions:

- **First axis (Competent Leadership):** Comprised of 10 items, each framed in the form “The leader is characterized by ...”.
- **Second axis (Job Satisfaction):** Comprised of 10 items, each framed in the form “I feel ...”.
- **Response Format:** A five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree was adopted to measure participants’ responses.

2. Validity of the Tool

Three sports management and performance measurement experts reviewed the questionnaire to achieve content validity. Depending on their observations, some slight changes were made to enhance clarity and suitability. Also, content validity ratio (CVR) was computed on each item, and the results proved

to be greatly above the set minimum, which proves the appropriateness of the items.

3. Reliability of the Tool

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested on a sample of 20 faculty members (not part of the main research sample) in the pilot study. Internal consistency was evaluated by determining the Alpha of Cronbach (α) as follows:

- **Competent Leadership:** $\alpha = 0.89$
- **Job Satisfaction:** $\alpha = 0.91$
- **Overall Questionnaire:** $\alpha = 0.90$

These values indicate a high level of reliability for the tool, confirming its suitability for application in the main study.

Data Collection Procedures

The steps that were used to gather research data were as follows:

1. **Formal Issuances:** approval is given by the deans of the colleges and the respective research centers of the five sampled universities.
2. **Questionnaire Distribution:** The questionnaire was distributed in two ways, i.e., electronically using academic email and in print form among the participants who could not complete the online questionnaire.
3. **Data Collection Period:** The period is between February 22 and April 2, 2025.
4. **Follow-Up Procedures:** Weekly reminders and making phone calls were done to evoke as much participation as possible and ensure a high return rate, which eventually reached a 95% response rate.

Data Analysis Plan

To address the research objectives and test the hypotheses, the following statistical techniques were employed:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Calculation of means, standard deviations, and scale limits for each dimension of competent leadership and job satisfaction.
2. **Reliability and Validity Testing:** Verification of the instrument’s quality using the **Content Validity Ratio (CVR)** and **Cronbach’s Alpha (α)** for internal consistency.
3. **Correlation Analysis (Pearson’s r):** To examine the degree and direction of the relationship between competent leadership and job satisfaction.
4. **Multiple Regression Analysis:** To assess the predictive contribution of motivational factors (achievement, recognition) and hygiene factors (work policies, working conditions) in explaining job satisfaction levels.

Descriptive Statistics

To provide an overview of the study variables, descriptive statistics were calculated, including the mean, standard deviation, and scale limits for each of the two main dimensions (competent leadership and job satisfaction). These indicators help in identifying the general trends in the responses of the faculty members, as well as the degree of variation within the sample.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables (n = 120)

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Competent Leadership	120	3.82	0.57
Job Satisfaction	120	3.65	0.63

It appears from Table 2 that faculty leaders achieved a relatively high mean score in the dimensions of leadership competence. This result aligns with the findings of *Ramezaninezhad et al.* in the field of sports cadres, which reported similarly high averages for motivating factors among coaches. On the other hand, the mean level of job satisfaction among faculty members was moderate ($M=3.65$), indicating that while the level is acceptable, there is still room for improvement. This outcome is consistent with comparable studies, such as those conducted among physical education professors in Iran, where the average satisfaction was close to 3.70.

Hypothesis Testing

1. Relationship Between Competent Leadership and Job Satisfaction

To test the first hypothesis (H1), the researcher employed Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results revealed a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between competent leadership and job satisfaction, as presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Competent Leadership and Job Satisfaction

First Variable	Second Variable	r	p-value
Competent Leadership	Job Satisfaction	0.65	< 0.001

Interpretation:

The correlation coefficient ($r=0.65$) indicates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship, confirming that higher perceptions of competent leadership are associated with greater job satisfaction among faculty members.

This finding is consistent with the study *Analyzing the Correlation Between Managers' Leadership Styles and Employee Job Satisfaction*, which reported correlation values ranging between 0.60 and 0.70 in various organizational contexts. It is further supported by research in the higher education sector that applied Herzberg's model, where similar correlations were found ($r \approx 0.62$).

Multiple Regression Analysis

To examine the second (H2) and third (H3) hypotheses regarding the relative influence of *motivating factors* versus *protective factors* on job satisfaction, a multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Equation for Predicting Job Satisfaction

Independent Variable	B	t	p-value
Motivating Factors (Achievement, Recognition)	0.48	6.12	< 0.001
Protective Factors (Policies, Working Conditions)	0.29	3.98	< 0.01
Model Constant	—	2.45	0.015

The model explained approximately 52% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.52$), with the regression equation found to be statistically significant ($F = 32.14, p < 0.001$).

The results in Table 4 clearly indicate that motivating factors exert a stronger influence on job satisfaction compared to protective factors. This finding confirms the hypotheses (H2 and H3) and underscores Herzberg's assertion that intrinsic motivators are the primary drivers of satisfaction. These results are consistent with *Emery & Barker (2007)*, who emphasized that leadership styles focused on motivation enhance satisfaction more effectively than situational or contextual elements. Similarly, *Ramezaninezhad et al.* highlighted the importance of incentives in the sports training environment as a determinant of performance and satisfaction.

4. DISCUSSION

Correlates Well with Leadership and Job Satisfaction ($r=0.65$):

The high positive correlation observed between effective leadership and job satisfaction implies the decisive role of leadership in developing a favorable academic condition. This finding indicates that good leadership practices are the reason behind approximately 42 percent of the faculty satisfaction, and, therefore, leadership is not just an administrative role but a determining element in academic health and output.

These results reflect research in the sport domain, including Chelladurai and Saleh (1980), who established that coaches who establish trust and optimal climates through effective communication, effort recognition, and guidance help facilitate climates of trust and optimal performance. Al-Khatib (2020) found in the Arab region that participatory and motivational leadership styles had a strong influence on the satisfaction of sports club coaches in Jordan.

Applying these results to the academic setting, effective leadership will strengthen the impact of Herzberg motivators, i.e., recognition, achievement, and growth prospects that help faculty members feel appreciated and encouraged. This directly helps create institutional loyalty and long-term engagement. In this way, it becomes a strategic need and not just a practice to invest in leadership development in academic departments.

Preventive Factors are not as strong as Motivating Factors:

The outcome of the regression supports the two-factor theory developed by Herzberg, according to which intrinsic motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition, responsibility, and growth opportunities) are the foundation of long-term job satisfaction, and hygiene factors (e.g., salary, policies, and working conditions) only help to avoid feelings of dissatisfaction, but do not produce the true feeling of satisfaction.

Faculty members, in this study, placed more emphasis on motivating factors, i.e., recognition of academic success and career growth opportunities, than on the hygienic factors, i.e., salary or workplace conditions. This coincides with the studies provided by Yukl (2013) and Abdul Ghani (2019), who emphasized that internal reasons are major determinants of loyalty and commitment in schools.

Moreover, these results are also aligned with Saber et al. (2024), who demonstrated that incentives, especially financial ones, positively contribute to job performance among sports federation members in Kirkuk. Taken together, the results of this study point to the commonality of motivation in enhancing performance and satisfaction in education and sport settings. Such overpowering of motivational factors is evidence of highly developed awareness among faculty members about the significance of a positive working environment based on respect, recognition, and empowerment. In academia, a motivational effect is stronger than a material or procedural one as faculty members work to achieve and develop knowledge. Based on the findings, the authors suggest that motivational dimensions need to be emphasized by the academic leaders through the examination of the provisions of participation in the decision-making process, recognition of faculty efforts, constructive feedback, and a supportive climate towards professional development and creativity. Administrative or financial focus on its own will not guarantee sustainable job satisfaction.

Practical Considerations

Academic leaders are encouraged to focus on three complementary aspects:

1. Recognition of Achievements:

The consistent recognition of faculty achievement is one of the core pillars of improving satisfaction and professional engagement. Herzberg theorized in his two-factor theory that recognition is a motivator that causes real satisfaction because it is strongly connected to self-esteem, achievement, and higher-order needs. Recognition is not always tied to financial rewards, but it might also comprise public recognition, the emphasis on achievements during faculty meetings, or the promotion of publications and research to the outside world. As previously noted (e.g., Yukl, 2013), the material rewards are frequently less important than moral appreciation in an academic setting where intellectual and social values are highly valued.

2. Positive and Constructive Feedback:

Clearly, frequent and positive feedback is a very effective instrument of professional growth. Positive feedback that includes strengths but makes detailed suggestions on how to improve, builds empowerment, minimizes role ambiguity, and builds trust among the faculty in leadership. If the feedback is regular and fair, the culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect is supported.

3. Fair and Flexible Policies:

While classified by Herzberg as hygiene (protective) factors, fair policies remain crucial for creating a stable work environment and preventing dissatisfaction. Lack of fairness or excessive rigidity can undermine motivation, even in the presence of strong intrinsic motivators. Transparent promotion procedures, equal opportunities, and flexibility in addressing personal needs (e.g., scheduling or emergency support) form the ethical and psychological foundation on which motivating factors can thrive.

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Confirmation of Herzberg's Theory:

The findings validate Herzberg's principle of distinguishing between motivating and protective factors in job satisfaction. The results clearly indicate that intrinsic motivators (such as achievement and recognition) have a stronger and more sustainable effect on faculty satisfaction than external or administrative conditions.

2. The Role of Competent Leadership:

The study demonstrates that leadership practices emphasizing achievement, recognition, and supportive work environments significantly enhance job satisfaction among faculty members. This underscores the central role of efficient leadership in shaping a positive academic climate.

3. Applicability of Herzberg's Model in Academic Sports Contexts:

Using the Herzberg model in the faculties of physical education and sports sciences, the study confirms the possibility and applicability of the model. The findings are consistent with the existing literature on the topic of educational administration, which identifies the role of motivational leadership in educational institutions and subsequently generalizes its use to academic settings in sports contexts.

Recommendations

- Leadership Training Programs:** Design and introduce specific administrative leader workshops and training sessions, and especially work to reinforce motivating administrative leader behaviors like achievement recognition and professional appreciation.
- Systematic Recognition and Reward Mechanisms:** Develop formal processes for regular award of faculty excellence in teaching, research, and community service. Systemic mechanisms that promote intrinsic motivation (i.e., professional value and intellectual contribution) over purely financial incentives should be more of a priority.
- Policy and Procedure Review:** Identify and periodically revise and manage institutional policies to achieve fairness, transparency, and flexibility. This step should be designed to reduce the negative effect of protective (hygiene) factors (e.g., rigid procedures or inequitable practices) that might otherwise depress levels of satisfaction.
- Enhanced Communication Channels:** Strengthen communication between leadership and faculty members by instituting regular meetings, follow-up surveys, and open forums. Such channels will enable leaders to identify emerging needs and challenges promptly, and to respond with effective solutions that foster trust and collaboration.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Measuring Competent Leadership and Job Satisfaction according to Herzberg's Model

This questionnaire aims to measure the relationship between competent leadership practices and job satisfaction among faculty members in colleges of physical education and sports sciences.

General Instructions for Participants

1. Please answer all items honestly based on your personal experience.
2. There are no right or wrong answers.
3. Indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement using the following five-point Likert scale:
 - 1 = Never
 - 2 = Rarely
 - 3 = Sometimes
 - 4 = Often
 - 5 = Always

Part One: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for each item.

No.	Item	Answer Options
1	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
2	Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 30–39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40–49 <input type="checkbox"/> 50 and above
3	Academic Qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
4	Academic Rank	<input type="checkbox"/> Lecturer <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Lecturer <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Professor
5	Years of Teaching Experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5–10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11–15 <input type="checkbox"/> More than 15
6	University Name	

Part Two: Competent Leadership Scale

(10 items: "The leader is characterized by ...")

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	The leader encourages faculty members to innovate new teaching methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	The leader provides regular, constructive feedback on faculty performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	The leader participates with faculty members in decision-making related to academic programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	The leader creates a work environment that encourages cooperation and exchange of experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	The leader clearly articulates the college's goals and future vision and ensures follow-up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	The leader provides necessary resources and facilities to enable faculty members to perform effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	The leader recognizes and rewards research and teaching achievements appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	The leader communicates regularly with faculty members to explore their opinions and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	The leader is flexible in addressing urgent problems and seeks collaborative solutions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	The leader supports continuous professional development through specialized training and workshops.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part Three: Job Satisfaction Scale

(10 items: "I feel ...")

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel satisfied with the amount of teaching and research I have accomplished.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	I feel adequately appreciated by senior management when I achieve academic or scientific success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	I feel satisfied with professional development opportunities (e.g., conferences, workshops).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	The work environment at the college helps me perform my tasks efficiently.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	The college's reward and incentive system is fair and motivates high performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	I feel comfortable balancing work and personal life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	I have confidence in the college's policies and administrative procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Relationships among faculty members are positive and encourage teamwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	I feel secure in my job regarding continuity and promotion opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Overall, I feel satisfied with my work at the college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>