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Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

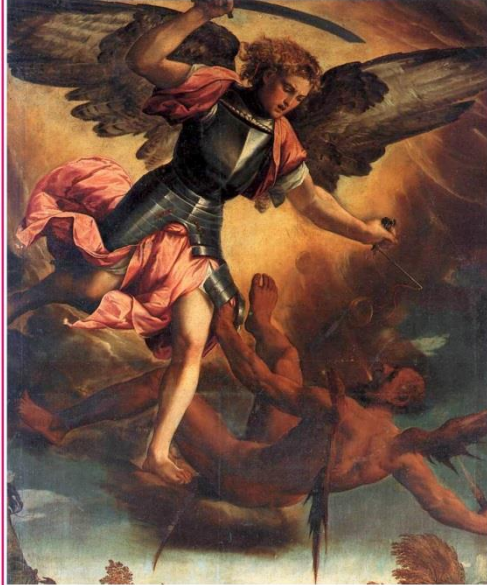
Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

20

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

Effect of soft skills on strategic alignment Applied research in Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI)

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to identify the effect of soft skills in achieving strategic alignment in the Trade Bank of Iraqi. To achieve the aim of the research, the researcher designed a questionnaire that included (60) items to analysis of data from the research sample consisting of (45) respondents. Statistical program SPSS Many statistical methods were used to achieve the objective of the research. After conducting the analysis of the research data, the research reached a number of conclusions, the most important of which is a positive and significant effect of the soft skills and their distance in achieving strategic alignment. To develop strategies that contribute to the employment of soft skills and to acceptable degrees in order to achieve strategic alignment. This is due to the very close nature of the variables. And the fact that the bank's research sample enjoys a good reputation in the local community despite its recent establishment, which makes it a fertile environment to attract the best skilled workers and apply these skills to achieve strategic alignment in order to achieve its objectives in the long, medium and short term and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: Soft Skills, strategic alignment

Efecto de las habilidades blandas en la alineación estratégica. Investigación aplicada en el Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI)

Resumen

El objetivo de la investigación es identificar el efecto de las habilidades blandas para lograr la alineación estratégica en el Trade Bank of Iraq. Para lograr el objetivo de la investigación, el investigador diseñó un cuestionario que incluía (60) ítems para el análisis de datos de la muestra de investigación que constaba de (45) encuestados. Programa estadístico SPSS Se utilizaron muchos métodos estadísticos para lograr el objetivo de la investigación. Después de realizar el análisis de los datos de la investigación, la investigación llegó a una serie de conclusiones, la más importante de las cuales es un efecto positivo y significativo de las habilidades blandas y su distancia para lograr la alineación estratégica. Desarrollar estrategias que contribuyan al empleo de habilidades blandas y a grados aceptables para lograr la alineación estratégica. Esto se debe a la naturaleza muy cercana de las variables. Y el hecho de que la muestra de investigación del banco goza de una buena reputación en la comunidad local a pesar de su reciente establecimiento, lo que lo convierte en un entorno fértil para atraer a los trabajadores mejor calificados y aplicar estas habilidades para lograr la alineación estratégica con el fin de lograr sus objetivos a largo plazo. , a medio y corto plazo y mantener una ventaja competitiva sostenible.

Palabras clave: habilidades blandas, alineación estratégica

1. Introduction:

All organizations are keen to carry out their various activities with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. This is the result of the administrative process of the human element, which contributes to achieving a goal that aims at achieving a goal. The human element is the most important element on which organizations depend on implementing their programs and achieving their objectives. How to make the human factor best for the Organization's account, leading to growth and development, increased productivity, profitability and efficient service delivery. The best use of inputs or inputs depends primarily on the human element of the organization e. To ensure that the organization continues to achieve its goals successfully in the long term by acquiring soft skills that are no longer perfect and are

inevitable, it is one of the top priorities of high performance organizations in order to maintain competitive advantage. The strategic alignment is one of the topics that has had a significant impact on the organization's performance. Achieving strategic alignment at the internal level between the work colleagues and the external level among the competing organizations contributes greatly to improving the working environment. The strategic alignment with its various dimensions has an impact on the employees and the organization, When the human element of the organization finds a working environment in which there are standards for organizational and administrative communication that are those used by management, managers or individuals To provide information to the other parties, which serve primarily the purposes and objectives of the Organization and facilitate the work of managers. Hence, the current research sought to know the effect of soft skills in achieving strategic alignment. To achieve this goal, the current research divided into six paragraphs. The first paragraph included the introduction of the research. The second paragraph presented the research literature. The third paragraph dealt with the research methodology. Analysis of data, and finally came the fifth paragraph to conclude the research conclusions.

2. Literature Review:

a. Soft Skills:

According to (Maniscalco,2010: 9), "soft skills" refer to as set of qualities, habits, personality traits, attitudes and social values that everyone possesses to varying degrees and needs in daily life as much as they are required for work. (Lorenz,2009:12) refers to "soft skills" as qualities that make a person good employee and a compatible colleague. However, according to (Selamat, et al.,2013:289), the term "soft skills" are synonymous with basic skills, core competencies and interpersonal skills. Therefore, "soft skills" are individuals' innate cognitive abilities that are essential for good social relationships in the workplace. According to (yarkwa, et al., 2012: 238), "soft skills" such as information handling, information gathering and exchange are highly needed by organizations. Me et al. (Keil, et al.,2013:401) Confirms that workplace competencies include problem solving, communication skills, personal qualities and work ethics, which are classes of soft skills. (Marliyah, et al., 2018: 292) developed five classes of "soft skills": communication, problem-solving, goal-setting, planning, and task coordination.

Studies on the financial success of the Carnegie Endowment for Advanced Education, which was later confirmed by the Carnegie Institute of Technol-

ogy, found that 15% of anyone's financial success is due to the knowledge they have acquired, and 85% to their success. "Human engineering", such as an individual's personality and ability to lead people, ie soft skills (Shariffah,2013:1932). Developing "soft skills" for staff is critical to the effectiveness of organizations. Effective teamwork requires mastering specific abilities, such as leadership, coordination and communication management. This means that if organizations want to meet the life requirements of their future employees, they must address the acquisition of these soft skills and provide technology to support them (Seetha,2014:45). Several studies have been conducted on how the personal managerial skills of the organization's leaders can affect the organization's performance. These studies allowed customers to have a better understanding of the managers of the organizations, enabling them to select the appropriate managers of the organization. For example, the list of social skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, skills for identifying opportunities and managing changes as personal attributes affect the organization's success. The acquisition and use of these skills as well as the provision of training effects as an economic area are expected to have a significant return on the organization (Sail & Alavi,2010:228). (Janßen, et al.,2014:391) stated that the critical success of an organization depends on ten factors: the organization's mission, senior management support, schedules, customer consultation, staff recruitment, technical tasks, customer satisfaction, monitoring and feedback, and communication And solve problems. "Acquiring soft skills" among executives stimulates the discovery of effective approaches and solutions and innovation with increasing potential to improve the success of the organization (Massaro,et al.,2016:37).

Found (Mahasneh,2016:3) that competence, interpersonal skills and personal characteristics significantly affect the employability of individuals. (Sail & Alavi,2010:229) emphasizes that interpersonal skills increase staff knowledge after training. (Bailly & Léné,2013:79) stated that the structuring and awareness features of collaborative platforms based on chat and chat rooms can enhance the experience of learning soft skills (communication and leadership skills). (Ibrahim, et al.,2017:5) asserts that soft skills ensure successful teamwork, such as communication, leadership, negotiation or team management. Evidence indicates that there are links between performance and skills, and this relationship is the main motivation for increasing skills, as well as one of the main forces that legitimize them. Consequently, it is clear from the previous literature that communication skills, problem solving skills, leadership, teamwork, and interper-

sonal skills are some soft skill categories that have been empirically tested and have proven to improve employee performance and achieve strategic alignment and thus organizational success.

b. Strategic Alignment:

Since the environment is constantly changing, it is essential that strategic planning change accordingly to maintain “balance” or “relevance” to the external environment. He (Pun,2004:904) investigated the distinction between “content” (ie, what decisions and actions) and “process” (ie, how those decisions and actions) come up with a strategy. The “content” literature emphasizes competitive priority issues, which include cost, quality, speed of delivery, reliability, flexibility and innovation. On the other hand, “process” is a pattern or procedure by which the strategy is developed and implemented (Kearns, et al.,2003:2). (Kudo, et al.,2012:283) argued that organizations should define the content and process of their strategies in light of their location in the industry, their objectives, opportunities and resources. (Alaceva & Rusu,2015:715) believed that much of the business literature was busy finding more sophisticated techniques for formulating best strategies. However, business success depends not only on finding the right strategy, but also on ensuring that it is reflected in a pattern of appropriate strategic actions.

)Liang, et al,2017:864) noted that empirical research has shown that research and development contributes relatively more to traditional production measures, usually on capital, of organizations, and can therefore be extended to broader measures. However, whether its strategic direction should be directed with the direction of other business functions, it is still unclear. To assess the relative importance of managing technological problems, he completed (Scott,2001:17) a study that identified “strategic planning of technological products” as a priority for organizations, as perceived by industry experts and academia. To illustrate the nature and dimensions of the problem, Scott also completed a study to follow up on two of the most important sub-problems: “linking technological strategic planning with the strategic planning of organizations”, and “linking strategic planning for research and development to planning the development of business unit products.” Scott called it the “connection problem”. The ultimate goal of strategic alignment is business performance.

(Torabkhani,et al.,2008:3) suggested that critical success factors for multifunctional teamwork include strategic alignment between functions, supportive of the teamwork climate and team-based accountability. It is universally accepted that organizations try to align their R&D activi-

ties with their business objectives, but achieving this alignment is difficult in practice. Note (Yarifard, et al., 2016:90) that the emergence of the core competency framework has been extremely useful in creating and legitimizing the work of the organization, a language in which technical competence and strengths in research and development can be monitored and their returns to competitive advantage measured. This has led organizations to express their R&D priorities explicitly in terms of core competencies. (Mohapatra, et al., 2016:233) claimed that understanding how knowledge is shared in the alignment process contributes to the creation of superior organizational strategies. (Lopes, et al., 2017:476) emphasized the need for people throughout the organization to be genuinely compatible with the strategy and future of work. This is to preserve an organizational culture with a common goal leading to the achievement of the Organization's main objectives. (Malaspina & Jan, 2019:3) suggested that alignment depends on two basic axes: vertical and horizontal. The "vertical axis" is concerned with the organization, its capabilities, resources, staff and strategy. The "horizontal axis" represents the processes used by the organization to create value. The alignment includes a single direction and a common objective that allows the integration of all the capabilities and resources surrounding this key objective. (Karamat, et al., 2019:14) defined the strategic alignment process, as "whenever organizational or business unit plans change, executives are likely to need to reorganize the organization in the new direction." He argued (Shih, et al., 2018: 2389) that an organization can measure and manage the degree of alignment, and consequently the synergy, that is achieved across the organization, and thus the organization that has mastered this process can create competitive advantages that are difficult to imitate by competitors. In short, strategic management can be expressed as follows (Kaplan & Norton, 2006): Strategic Management = Attention + Implementation; "+" represents "Strategic alignment"

3. Research Methodology:

a. Research problem:

The working environments witnessed a rapid transformation that had positive and negative impacts on organizations according to their adaptive capacities and competitiveness. These transformations have generated an intellectual and philosophical debate about (why do some organizations have the ability to succeed and surpass their competitors while others fail? What distinguishes responsive and adaptive organizations from organizations that do not respond quickly and adapt to rapid changes in the work

environment?) The success and long-term sustainability of this success is based on the soft skills base, the need to achieve strategic alignment, and the spirit of initiative and excellence in this field. Once achieved, organizations learn and benefit from their experiences and continuously improve their operations to take advantage of the opportunities offered by markets. Thus, a problem was created and formulated in the form presented in the title of the research and integrated with its practical framework by measuring the impact of soft skills in achieving the strategic alignment of the Trade Bank of Iraq, thus strengthening its relations with stakeholders and generating concepts that restore confidence and overcome the obstacles seeking to undermine this reputation.

So the problem of research is to answer the main question of research (Is there a soft skill effect on achieving strategic alignment).

b. Research Objectives:

1. Explain the conceptual bases of the research variables, build a theoretical aspect that is comprehensive and original, and present the most important dimensions and standards of research.
2. Presenting and analyzing indicators of soft skills and their impact on the strategic alignment.
3. Attempt to direct the attention of the bank's management to research the dimensions of soft skills and make them more appropriate to the reality of performance required of them in the turbulent work environment in Iraq.
4. Open the field for researchers to start studies and future research to measure the impact of soft skills on other variables in other applied fields.

c. The proposed knowledge model for research:

The proposed knowledge model aims at clarifying the logical relations of the set of main variables and the related sub variables. The dimensions of the variables were chosen according to the intellectual and literary surveys of the sources. As in the following figure:

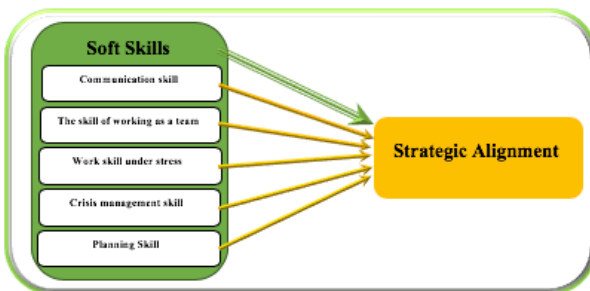


Figure (1) The proposed knowledge model for research

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

d. Research hypothesis:

In the light of the problem of research and the proposed cognitive model, the following hypothesis was formulated: (There is a significant positive effect of soft skills on the level of key variables and sub-dimensions in the strategic alignment.)

e. Research Method:

The research relied on the descriptive analytical approach because it is more appropriate to know the reality of the aspects of the research as it is characterized by a holistic view and coupled with the description of the situation to analyze it to reach accurate and detailed knowledge of the elements of the problem or phenomenon. Through this approach is the research and analysis of the phenomenon researched in the Trade Bank of Iraq for the purpose of ensuring the validity of the hypotheses or reject them and the development of results and make recommendations.

4. Data Analysis:

For the application of the field research, the research community was accredited in the Iraqi Trade Bank in Baghdad, which consisted of (25) branches. The sample was chosen according to the intentional sampling method which reached (45) respondents. The percentage of females (57%) and their number (26) is superior Percentage of males (43%) and their number (20), and the prevailing age group ranges between (31-40) years and they are of the category of young adults and the proportion (43%), with varying experiences mostly ranged between (11-15) years and this means that most They have experience in the work and their percentage (36%) of the total sample, in addition to possessing good academic qualifications as the proportion of those who hold a bachelor's degree Rios is (79%).

The data collection tool consisted of adopting the questionnaire form that was formulated according to (Likert Five Scale) to show the importance of the answer. The questionnaire included two aspects: (first) general information about the sample. The (second) part is the basic research questions related to soft skills and the impact of the strategic alignment of the bank with these skills.

a. Reliability Test:

The reliability of the questionnaire was measured by calculating (Cronbach's Alpha) coefficients for the questionnaire axes to ensure the reliability of the instrument on a (30) sample exploratory sample that was excluded from the total sample, as in the following table:

Table (1) Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the questionnaire axes

No	Variables	Phrases No	Cronbach's Alpha
1	X1	7	0.87
2	X2	7	0.90
3	X3	7	0.81
4	X4	7	0.91
5	X5	7	0.90
6	X	35	0.90
7	Y	25	0.90
8	General reliability of the questionnaire	60	0.93

Source: Preparation of the researcher based on the output of the calculator.

The above table shows that the (Alpha-Cronbach) coefficients for the resolution axes are high stability coefficients and meet research purposes. This means that by their different scales, they are highly stable and can be adopted at different times for the same individuals and produce the same results.

b. Test the research hypothesis:

There is a significant positive effect of soft skills on key variables and sub-dimensions in strategic alignment: Simple linear regression analysis was used to measure the effect of soft skills on strategic alignment according to the responses of the research sample as in the following table:

Table (2) Simple regression coefficients between soft skills variable and strategic alignment

No	Variable (X)	Variable (Y)				
		β	R ²	R	F	Sig
1	X1	0.26	0.16	0.39**	8.14	0.007
2	X2	0.25	0.21	0.46**	11.24	0.002
3	X3	0.02	0.00	0.03	0.04	0.841
4	X4	0.06	0.00	0.04	0.06	0.805
5	X5	0.14	0.23	0.48**	13.17	0.001
6	X	0.47	0.22	0.46**	11.84	0.001
7	Value (F) Tabular = 4.00 At the indication level 0.05.					

Source: Preparation of the researcher based on the output of the calculator.

By reviewing the results of the analysis in Table (2), it was found that there is a significant effect relationship between (X1) and (Y), according to the value of (F) and the value of (Sig) It was found that the calculated value of (F) is greater than its tabular value, in addition to that The value of (Sig) is within the acceptance zone at the level of significance (0.05) The coeffi-

coefficients of the regression model are shown in the following equation:

$$Y=B_0+B_1X_1$$

$$\text{Strategic Alignment (Y)} = 3.157 + 0.258X_1$$

This indicates that the value of ($\beta = 0.26$), that any change in the variable (X_1) by one unit will lead to a change (0.26) in the response variable of strategic alignment, and that the variable (X_1) explains (16%) of the changes in The variable (Y). There is a significant effect relationship between (X_2) and (Y) according to the value of (F) and the value of (Sig) It was found that the value of ((F) calculated greater than its tabular value, in addition to that the value of (Sig) is within the acceptance area at the level of significance (0.05) The coefficients of the regression model are as shown in the following equation:

$$Y=B_0+B_1X_2$$

$$\text{Strategic Alignment (Y)} = 3.219+ 0.248X_2$$

This indicates that the value of ($\beta = 0.25$), that any change in the variable (X_2) by one unit will lead to a change (0.25) in the response variable of the strategic alignment, and that the variable (X_2) explains (21%) of the changes in The variable (Y). There was no significant effect relationship between (X_3) and (Y) according to the value of (F) and (Sig) value. It was found that the calculated value of (F) is smaller than its tabular value, in addition to the value of (Sig) is not within the acceptance area At the significance level (0.05), the coefficients of the regression model are shown in the following equation:

$$Y=B_0+B_1X_3$$

$$\text{Strategic Alignment (Y)} = 4.165+ 0.024X_3$$

This indicates that the value of ($\beta = 0.02$), that any change in the variable (X_3) by one unit will lead to a change (0.02) in the response variable of the strategic alignment, and that the variable (X_3) does not explain any of the changes in the variable (Y). Also, there is no significant effect relationship between (X_4) and (Y) according to the value of (F) and (Sig) value. It turns out that the calculated value of (F) is smaller than its tabular value. At the significance level (0.05), the coefficients of the regression model are shown in the following equation:

$$Y=B_0+B_1X_4$$

$$\text{Strategic Alignment (Y)} = 4.164+ 0.024X_4$$

This indicates that the value of ($\beta = 0.02$), that any change in the variable (X4) by one unit will lead to a change (0.02) in the response variable of the strategic alignment, and that the variable (X4) does not explain any of the changes in the variable (Y). Moreover, there is a significant effect relationship between (X5) and (Y) according to the value of (F) and (Sig) value. It turns out that the calculated value of (F) is greater than its tabular value, in addition to the value of (Sig) is within the acceptance area At the significance level (0.05), the coefficients of the regression model are shown in the following equation:

$$Y=B_0+B_1X_5$$

$$\text{Strategic Alignment (Y)} = 2.871 + 0.315X_5$$

This indicates that the value of ($\beta = 0.14$), that any change in the variable (X5) by one unit will lead to a change (0.14) in the response variable of the strategic alignment, and that the variable (X5) explains (23%) of the changes in The variable (Y). Finally, there is a significant effect relationship between (X) and (Y) according to the value of (F) and (Sig) value. It turns out that the calculated value of (F) is greater than its tabular value. Significance (0.05) the regression coefficients are shown in the following equation:

$$Y=B_0+B_1X$$

$$\text{Strategic Alignment (Y)} = 2.270 + 0.471X$$

This indicates that the value of ($\beta = 0.47$), that any change in the variable (X) by one unit will lead to a change (0.47) in the response variable of the strategic alignment, and that the variable (X) explains (22%) of the changes in the variable (Y). The graph below shows the regression line equation between explanatory variable (X) soft skills and responsive variable (Y) strategic alignment.



Figure (2) Equation of the regression line between the variable (X & Y)

In light of the above, Figure (3) shows the results of the relationship of effect between the variables of the research model.

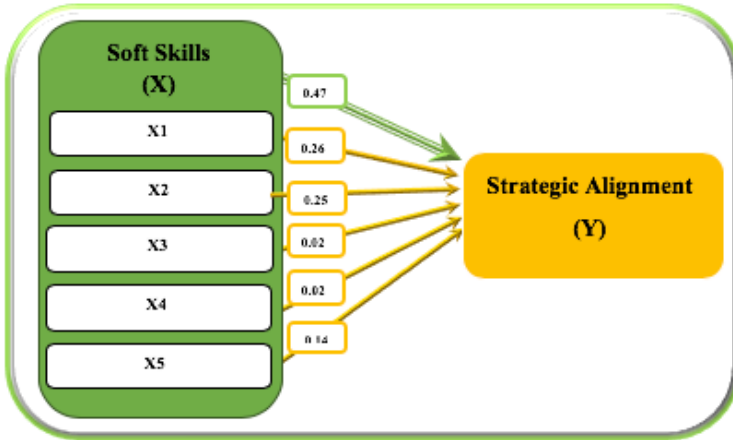


Figure (3) Effect relationship test results

5. Conclusions:

1. Strategic alignment is of great importance in contemporary organizations because it creates an organizational environment in which the spirit of cooperation and affection in the relationship between the staff and the senior management ensures a stable and problem-free working environment.

2. Soft skills create a common ground among customers, partners and colleagues in the work environment, allowing contemporary organizations to discover the points of mutual interest between all parties.

3. There is a positive and significant effect between the soft skills and strategic alignment, which means that the bank sample research works to employ soft skills to an acceptable degree in order to achieve strategic alignment. This is due to the nature of close correlation between variables.

4. There is ambiguity in the concept of soft skills among employees in the senior and middle management of the bank. Some of the basic principles of this concept are available but actual practice has not yet been demonstrated.

5. The Bank has a good reputation and reputation in the local community, making it a fertile environment to attract the best skilled

workers and apply these skills to achieve strategic alignment.

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 35, N° 20, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

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