

# **ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP OF MIDDLE MANAGERS ON THE STRATEGIC COMMITMENT OF OPERATIONAL MANAGERS WITH THE MEDIATION OF STRATEGIC CONSENSUS**

**(A case study in The State Company for Petrochemical Industries)**

**(Study applied to a sample Banks listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange for the period 2015 - 2017)**

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## **Abstract**

The present research has analyzed the impact of visionary leadership of middle managers on the strategic commitment of operational managers through the mediation of strategic consensus. The current research is applied in terms of its purpose and is considered a descriptive- survey research. The statistical population of this research was 150 supply chain managers of the Iraq State Company for Petrochemical Industries- Basrah, whose data was collected by questionnaire method. According to Cochran's formula, the minimum sample size was 108 people who were randomly selected, 133 questionnaires were returned to distribution managers and 110 questionnaires were returned, and all analyzes were based on 110 people.

**Keywords:** visionary leadership, strategic commitment, strategic consensus.

## **Introduction**

### **1- Statement of the problem**

Any strategy, no matter how well formulated, is ineffective without people throughout the organization implementing the strategy. The failure to implement the strategy is often due to the lack of commitment of the teams at the middle and lower levels of the organization to the strategy. To develop such a strategic commitment, the leadership of the team's senior managers is critical. In this way, the visionary leadership of managers plays a key role by conveying an image of the future to employees and convincing them to participate in the realization of the vision (Ates et al., 2020).

Among the members of the organization, middle managers play a significant role in the success or failure of implementing organizational changes (Urquhart et al., 2019). They are the coordinators of the day-to-day activities of an organizational unit with the activities of related groups. The importance of focusing on middle managers is that they provide the possibility of developing an understanding of internal organizational processes that are the basis of strategy formation in organizational changes (Woodridge and Floyd, 2008). To nurture their subordinates, they may use a variety of leadership styles, including visionary leadership (Bai et al., 2016).

Visionary leadership speaks directly to the creation of strategic commitment because it focuses on the motivation to pursue a strategic vision (Carten et al., 2014). Both the leadership literature and the strategy process literature extol the virtues of visionary leadership. In support of this positive view, Research on visionary leadership has so far only reported on organizational and contextual variables that enhance the positive effects of visionary leadership. Despite the recognition of the relevance of visionary leadership for the strategy process, only a handful of studies on visionary leadership strategy have been examined according to the mentioned materials, this research seeks to analyze the impact of visionary leadership of senior managers on the strategic commitment of operational managers with the mediation of strategic consensus.

## **2- Theoretical foundations and research background**

### **2-1- Visionary leadership**

Visionary leadership is the leader's ability to shape and convey the organization's vision by providing directions and setting priorities to advance the organization and achieve new levels of success. A visionary leader must be wise and know how to implement strategy in the organization that leads the company to growth and success (Atdirawong, 2021). As a result, companies need leaders who can achieve its vision. and lead to maintain competitive advantage. Visionary leadership shows a leader's ability to share a vision to link the organizational desire to the future goal, through empowering subordinates to participate in identifying the vision, which leads to organizational transformations (Berson et al., 2001)

### **2-2- Strategic commitment**

The strategic commitment of middle managers is related to the degree of their understanding and support of the goals of a strategy and the strategic direction of the organization. In other words, strategic commitment is related to the degree of compatibility of people's behavior with the strategic direction of the organization (Ford et al., 2003). This type of commitment is distinguishable from organizational commitment and is a better predictor of employees' behavioral support for the intended change. Commitment can create a desire to cooperate more with others and make a double effort to achieve change goals in a person, and also increase performance (Sango et al., 2019).

### **2-3- Strategic consensus**

Consensus is defined as "the agreement of all parties on a group decision. Consensus occurs only after discussion of the pros and cons of issues, and when all (not a majority) of managers agree." Gird (Dess and Orijer, 1987). In the field of corporate strategy, consensus is named as "the agreement between the organization's strategy regarding the company's goals and the appropriate competitive methods to achieve them" (Gonzalez et al., 2012).

With the studies carried out on the factors affecting the commitment to change of middle managers, it is possible to mention things such as the perceived support of the desired change by senior management, the type of employees' perception of organizational justice, and participation in decision-making (Barton and Ambrosini, 2013). Ford et al. (2003), conducted a study and concluded that the strategic commitment of middle managers is related to their

understanding and support of the goals of a strategy and the strategic direction of the organization. In other words, strategic commitment is related to the degree of compatibility of people's behavior with the strategic direction of the organization.

Cheema et al. in (2015), in their study titled Employee Participation and Visionary Leadership: Impact on Customer and Employee Satisfaction, investigated the impact of employee participation and visionary leadership (vision guidance, emotional commitment) on customer and employee satisfaction. The results indicated a significant relationship between visionary leadership and emotional commitment on customer and employee satisfaction. Ethirawong et al. (2021), conducted a study titled Identifying Factors Affecting Visionary Leadership: Empirical Evidence from the Thai Manufacturing Industry. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the key factors affecting visionary leadership in the context of the Thai manufacturing industry. The results showed that communication skills have the greatest impact on leadership

### 5- Conceptual model and research hypotheses

According to the studies conducted and the investigation of the background of the research and the description of what was done in the first part, the hypotheses of the research are formulated and measured as follows:

- 1- The visionary leadership of middle managers has an effect on the strategic consensus of operational managers.
- 2- The strategic consensus of middle managers affects the strategic commitment of operational managers.
- 3- The visionary leadership of middle managers has an effect on the strategic commitment of operational managers by mediating the strategic consensus of operational managers. The conceptual model of the research can be seen in table (1).

**table (1) conceptual model of research**

Visionary leadership	Strategic consensus	Strategic commitment
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### 3- Research methodology

**3-1-** The current research is practical in terms of its purpose, because its findings can be put to practical use and its purpose is to develop practical knowledge in a specific field. Also, considering that a questionnaire tool was used to collect the data and it aims to describe the relationships between the variables using statistical tests, it is considered a descriptive-survey research. The statistical population of this research is 150 supply chain managers of the Iraq State Company for Petrochemical Industries- Basrah, whose data was collected by questionnaire method. According to Cochran's formula, the minimum sample size was 108 people who were randomly selected, 133 questionnaires were returned to distribution managers and 110 questionnaires were returned, and all analyzes were based on 110 people.

Questionnaire questions were designed in two demographic sections and main questions and a 5-point Likert scale. Demographic questions included gender, age and education, and the main questions were 11 questions.

### 3-2- Validity and reliability

In this research, due to the standard nature of the questionnaire, its validity was implicitly confirmed. But for more certainty, the face validity method has been used. For this purpose, the questionnaire was given to a number of professors, and they will be asked to comment on each question and regarding the evaluation of the related goal, and the questionnaire will be approved with partial amendments. The convergent validity of the research was checked with the help of average variance expanded (AVE). Reliability is one of the technical characteristics of the measurement tool, which refers to the accuracy, reliability, stability or repeatability of the test results. In this research, two common standard measures of Cronbach's alpha and CR combined reliability were used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Next, the definition of each variable used in this formula will come. Cronbach (1951) mentioned a high standard of 0.7 for Cronbach's alpha. Also, Frenell and Locker (1981) have expressed a high level of 0.5 for AVE and a high standard of 0.7 for CR.

$$r_{\alpha} = \frac{j}{j-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum S_j^2}{S^2} \right)$$

A: Reliability coefficient of the whole test

J: number of test question subsets

S<sub>j</sub>: j test variance

S: Variance of total scores of questions

Types of mediation effect

Three decades ago, Baron and Kenny (1986) presented an approach to mediation analysis that is still routinely used by many researchers. However, more recent research points to conceptual and methodological problems with Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach (e.g., Hayes, 2013)

In this regard, our description is based on Zhao et al.'s (2010) synthesis of previous research on mediation analysis and relevant directions for future research.

The authors identify two types of disintermediation:

- No mediation, only direct: the direct effect is significant, but the indirect effect is not.
- No mediation without effect: direct and indirect effects are not significant.

In addition, they identify three types of mediation:

Complementary mediation: the indirect effect and the direct effect are both significant and in the same direction.

Competitive mediation: the indirect effect and the direct effect are both significant and in the opposite direction.

- Only indirect mediation: the indirect effect is significant, but the direct effect is not.

In this sense, Zhao et al.'s (2010) procedure is consistent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) concept of partial mediation and full mediation. In fact, if the direct effect is not significant, we are facing the situation of only indirect mediation, but if in addition to the indirect effect, the direct effect is significant, we can distinguish complementary and competitive mediation:

In complementary mediation, the direct effect and the indirect effect are in the same direction.

In other words, the product of the direct effect and the indirect effect is positive.

In Greer's correlational mediation, the product of the direct effect and the indirect effect is

negative. Competing mediation supports the hypothesized mediating effect, but also suggests that another mediator may be present whose sign of the indirect effect is the same as the direct effect. It is important to note that in competitive mediation, the mediating construct acts as a suppressor variable, which significantly reduces the total effect of the first variable on the third

The analysis process is as follows

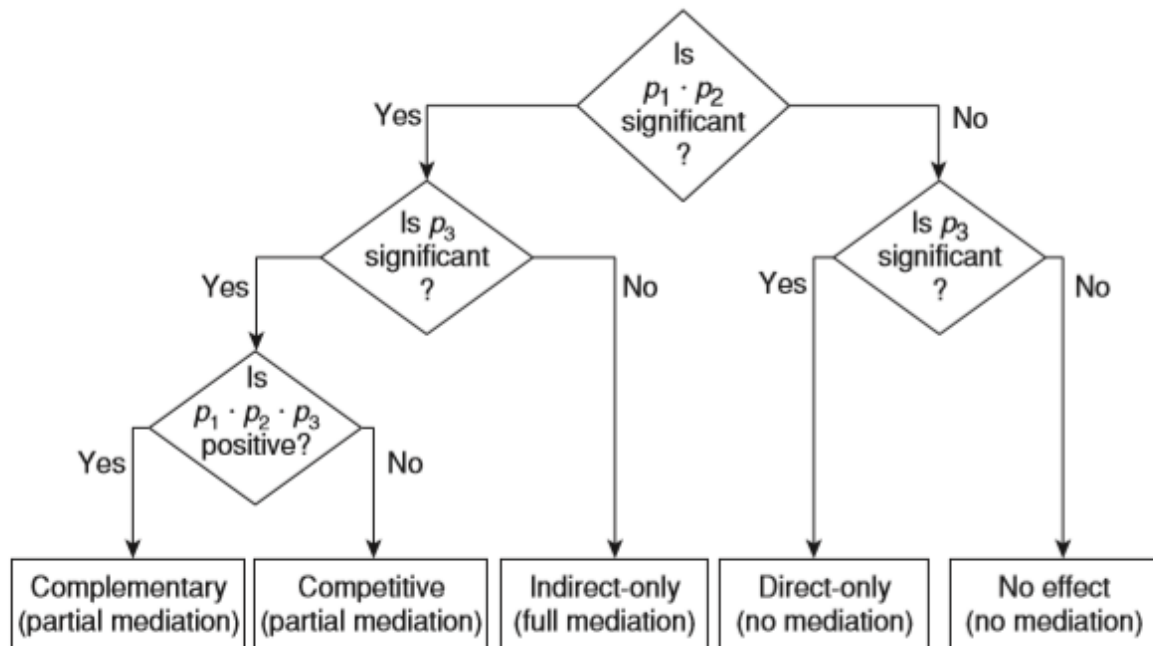


Figure (1) mediation analysis process (Hayes et al., 2021)

### 3-3- Data analysis method

SPSS software was used for data analysis and PLS software was used for factor analysis and modeling of structural equations. Modeling of structural equations by PLS method is evaluated and interpreted in two stages. These stages include measurement model test and structural model test, in each of these stages indicators are reported; In the following, each of these steps will be explained: 1) Measurement model test: The measurement model test includes the check of convergent validity (at the level of factors and at the level of reagents) as well as the check of auditory validity or diagnostic validity. at the level of agents and at the level of reagents).2) Evaluating the structural model to examine the relationship between the underlying variables: after the external model test, the internal model should be presented that shows the relationship between the underlying variables of the research and the structural equation of the structural equation model. By using the internal model, research hypotheses can be examined.

### 4- Data analysis

Analyzing the data to check the correctness of the hypotheses is very important for any type of research. ; Data analysis is one of the main and most important parts of research. In this section, the data collected through the questionnaire is analyzed first. First, the frequencies

related to the general questions of the questionnaire (including: gender, education, and age) are analyzed and investigated, and the research hypotheses are tested in the next section.

#### 4-1- Frequency distribution of gender variable

The results related to the frequency distribution of the gender variable are shown in

**Table (2)**

gender	Frequency of sex	PERCENT
MALE	101	91.8
FEMALE	9	8.2
TOTAL	110	100.0

According to the results of the above table, 8.2% of the studied statistical sample are women and 91.8% of the studied statistical sample are men.

#### 4-2 frequency distribution of education level variable

The results related to the frequency distribution of the education level variable are shown in the table below

**Table (3) frequency distribution of education variable**

Education	Abundance	PERCENT
diploma	12	10.9
Bachelor's degree	46	41.8
Masters degree and higher	52	47.3
TOTAL	110	100.0

According to the results of the above table, among the sample, 12% have a diploma or post-graduate diploma, 46% have a bachelor's degree, and 52% have a post-graduate degree or higher.

#### 4-3 Frequency distribution of age level variable.

**Table (4) frequency distribution of age variable**

AGE	Abundance	PERCENT
41-45	7	6.4
46-50	7	6.4
51-55	77	70.0
MORE THAN55	19	17.3
TOTA	110	100.0

According to the results of the above table, among the sample people, 7% of the sample people were 41 to 45 years old. 7 percent were between 46 and 50 years old, 77 percent were between 51 and 55 years old, and 19 percent were over 55 years old.

1-testing the measurement model  
1-1- Convergent validity at the level of the indicators: To check the validity of each of the



observed variables or items, the factor load of each observed variable must be more than 0.4. The results can be seen in table (5)

**Table (5) results of factor loadings**

Significance level	factor load	Structure	
0/000	0.86	V1-1	<b>Visionary leadership</b>
0/000	0.85	V1-2	
0/000	0.84	V1-3	
/000	0.82	V1-4	
0/000	0.84	V2-1	<b>Strategic consensus</b>
0/000	0.85	V2-2	
0/000	0.86	V2-3	
0/000	0.88	V2-4	
0/000	0.89	V3-1	<b>Strategic commitment</b>
0/000	0.78	V3-2	
0/000	0.83	V3-3	
0/000	0.86	V3-4	

As can be seen in the above table, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, considering that the factor loadings of the questions related to the variables are above 0.4, it can be concluded that the items measure the data well

1- 2- Convergent validity at the level of factors using the average variance extracted AVE: Fresnel and Locker (1981) recommend AVE values of 0.5 and more, and this means that the desired structure explains 50% or more of the variance of its items. Table (6) shows the results related to the average variance extracted for each of the structures

**Table (6) investigation of convergent validity at the level of factors using the extracted average variance**

Strategic commitment	Strategic consensus	Visionary leadership	
0.716	0.741	0.717	AVE

The convergent validity (at the factor level) in all variables is more than 0.5, which indicates the appropriate validity of the measurement tool. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability criteria are also used to check the measurement models, and the results can be seen in the following table:

**Table (7) results related to Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
<b>Visionary leadership</b>	0.866	0.910
<b>Strategic consensus</b>	0.884	0.920

Strategic commitment	0.867	0.909
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## 2- To check the validity of the auditor or diagnostic validity, Chin (1998) recommends two criteria:

2- 1- Assessor validity or diagnostic validity at the level of items: the items or indicators of a structure must have the highest factor load on their structure; It means to have the least sectional load on other structures. Giffen and Ashtrab (2005) suggest that the factor load of each item on its related construct should be at least 0.1 more than the factor load of the same item on other constructs.

**Table (8) auditor validity or diagnostic validity at the level of items**

		Strategic commitment	Strategic consensus	Visionary leadership
Visionary	V1_1	0.423	0.452	0.861
	V1_2	0.366	0.468	0.858
	V1_3	0.448	0.466	0.842
	V1_4	0.324	0.542	0.826
Strategic	V2_1	0.843	0.448	0.346
	V2_2	0.854	0.458	0.437
	V2_3	0.863	0.432	0.399
	V2_4	0.884	0.467	0.403
Strategic	V3_1	0.572	0.896	0.521
	V3_2	0.323	0.783	0.431
	V3_3	0.431	0.838	0.441
	V3_4	0.416	0.862	0.526

In some other sources, it is stated that the items or indicators related to each structure should have (at least 0.4) the factor load on their own structure and on other structures (maximum 0.4). Therefore, considering that the items or indicators related to each construct have the highest factor load on their own construct (at least 0.4) and the least cross-sectional load on other constructs (at most 0.4), it can be concluded that the validity of the auditor or Diagnostic validity is established at the level of items.

2-2- Assessor validity or diagnostic validity at the level of factors or divergence of constructs: the square root of AVE of a construct must be more than the correlation of that construct with other constructs. This indicates that the correlation of that structure with its indicators is more than its correlation with other structures. In the following, the auditor's validity or diagnostic validity can be seen at the level of the factors or the divergence of structures:

**Table (9) auditor validity or diagnostic validity at the level of factors or divergence of structures**



	Strategic consensus	Strategic commitment	Visionary leadership
Strategic consensus	0.861		
Strategic commitment	0.525	0.846	
Visionary leadership	0.462	0.570	0.847

According to the method of Fornell and Larker, the elements on the diameter of the matrix must be larger than the values listed in the cells below them in order to realize the divergent validity of the second case (at the level of the structure). According to the above table, it can be seen that in all cases the diagonal elements are larger than the values listed below them, it can be concluded that the validity of the criterion is established at the level of the factors.

#### 4-5- Test of research hypotheses

In the form of a structural model, hypotheses were tested and the direction of the structural model was evaluated. Each path corresponds to one of the assumptions of the model, and the numbers on the arrows show the coefficient of the path. Each hypothesis is tested by examining the sign, size, and statistical significance of the path coefficient (beta) between each variable and the dependent variable. The path coefficient shows the direct effect of one structure on another structure. The higher the path coefficient, the greater the predictive effect of the hidden variable compared to the dependent variable. Considering the results of the study of the relationships between independent and dependent structures using the relevant coefficient, it is possible to examine the significance of the effects between the research structures. In order to investigate the significance of the path coefficient or beta, the significance of the t-value for each path coefficient should be taken into consideration (Taghvi Fard et al., 2018)

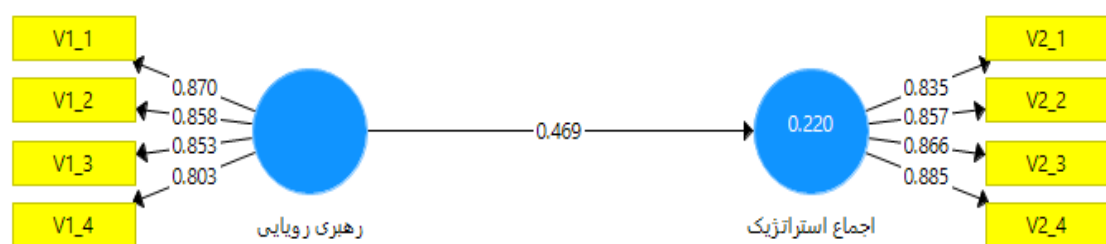


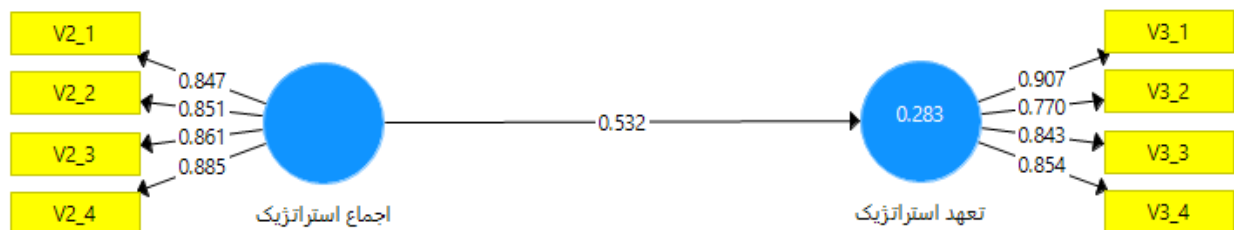
Figure (2) of the tested research model (Gratation coefficient and R square) of the first hypothesis

Table (10) of the results of the first hypothesis test

The result of the hypothesis	Significance level	T statistics	Coefficient of explanation	Regression coefficient	hypothesis		ROW
					dependent variable	independent variable	

proving a theory	0.000	4.02	0.22	0.46	Strategic consensus	Visionary leadership	1
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In the investigation related to the significance level, the value of p-value was 0.000, that is, as the regression coefficient is not equal to zero in the sample, this value is not equal to zero in the statistical population, and the first hypothesis is confirmed. The value of beta coefficient is 0.46, which shows that the impact of visionary leadership on strategic consensus is 46%, which means that 46% of changes in strategic consensus are related to visionary leadership; And since the calculated t value of this hypothesis is greater than 1.96; It can be said that visionary leadership has an effect on strategic consensus and this hypothesis is confirmed

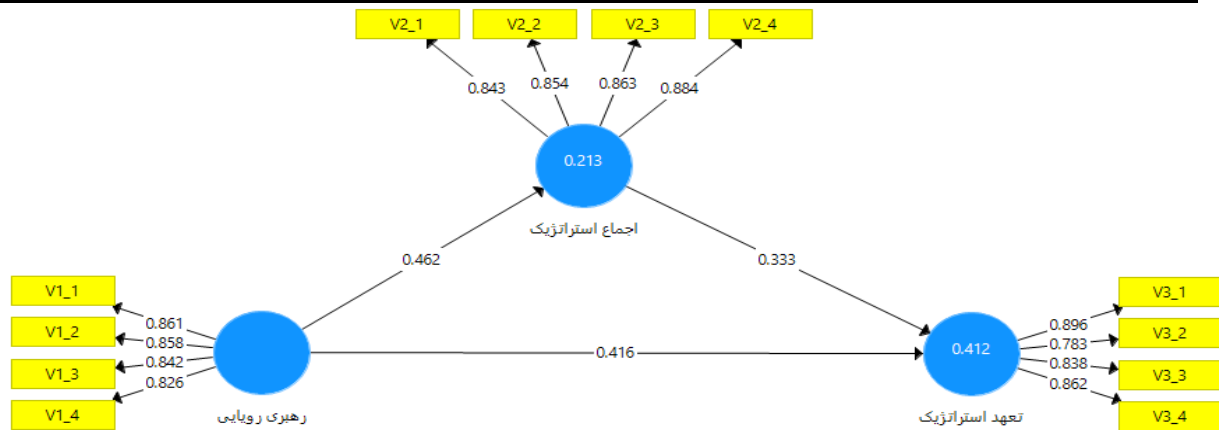


**Figure (3) of the tested model of the research (Gratation coefficient and R square) of the secondhypothesis**

**Table (11) of the results of the second hypothesis test**

The result of the hypothesis	Significance level	T statistics	Coefficient of explanation	Regression coefficient	hypothesis		row
					dependent variable	independent variable	
proving a theory	0.000	4.91	0.28	0.53	Strategic commitment	Strategic consensus	1

In the investigation related to the significance level, the value of p-value was 0.000, that is, as the regression coefficient is not equal to zero in the sample, this value is not equal to zero in the statistical population, and the second hypothesis is also confirmed. The value of the beta coefficient is 0.53, which shows that the influence of strategic consensus on strategic commitment is 53%, which means that 53% of the changes in strategic commitment are related to strategic consensus; And since the calculated t value of this hypothesis is greater than 1.96; It can be said that strategic consensus has an effect on strategic commitment and this hypothesis is confirmed



**Figure (4) of the tested research model (Gratation coefficient and R square) of the third hypothesis.**

**Table (12) of the results of the second hypothesis test**

The result of the hypothesis	meaningful	Effect indirect	meaningful	direct impact	meaningful	total effect	hypothesis			row
							dependent variable	Mediator	independent variable	
proving a theory	0.000	0.354	0.053	0.416	0.000	0.570	Strategic commitment	Strategic consensus	Visionary leadership	1

The estimated values in the above table and the output of the software show that:

A) The coefficient of determination for the strategic commitment variable was found to be equal to 0.41 percent, which, according to the values related to the effect size of the coefficient of determination index, this value is able to explain the variance of the strategic commitment variable.

b) The direct effect of visionary leadership on strategic commitment was equal to 0.416 and was not significant.

c) The value of the indirect effect coefficient of visionary leadership was equal to 0.254, which is significant at the ( $p < 0.05$ ) level.

d) The total effect was equal to 0.570, which was also significant.

Therefore, the research hypothesis based on the mediating role of strategic consensus on the relationship between the two variables of visionary leadership and strategic commitment is accepted, and considering that the direct effects are not statistically significant and the indirect effect is significant, it can be said that the mediation of the strategic consensus variable is The type of mediation is estimated only indirectly.

## Discussion

The present study investigated the effect of visionary leadership of middle managers on the strategic commitment of operational managers through the mediation of strategic consensus. SEM was used to test the hypotheses. This study showed how top managers can influence

strategic consensus and strategic commitment of their team through visionary leadership. This study draws on the literature on visionary leadership and the strategy process to advance our understanding of how top-level managers' visionary leadership affects team strategic commitment. Therefore, we advance our understanding of the visionary leadership role of the team manager in strategy implementation. We proposed and demonstrated that the team manager's visionary leadership is positively related to team consensus and strategic commitment. The result of the study can benefit managers who are trying to create visionary leadership and understand the importance of combining it as one of the most powerful tools to create consensus and strategic commitment and then improve organizational conditions.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies, including Maladji et al., 2012. and Ford et al. (2020) are consistent.

This research makes it possible to emphasize that for the effective implementation of strategic commitment, visionary leadership must be better understood and managed. Our study shows that high-level managers, as agents of change, experience cases that may manifest reactions in strategic consensus followed by strategic commitments. Our study helps to better understand why some strategies succeed and others fail. Our study of managerial perceptions of corporate strategies revealed that there may be a lack of clarity about corporate strategy, even at senior levels of the firm. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously explain why there may be a lack of consensus in a company and it should be given attention to managers. On the other hand, obstacles to creating strategic consensus should be considered by managers, for example, if consensus is due to poor communication, then communication should be improved.

If middle or operational managers are satisfied with their senior managers and have a good understanding of their manager, compared to those who do not have a good relationship with their manager, they are more inclined to accept the manager's point of view. It can also be said that some managers and even employees are inspired by their manager's personality and eventually adapt to the manager's vision. The emotional commitment of followers is necessary for the effective realization of the vision. When employees become more attached to their work, then with consensus and Strategic commitments are more willing to work towards the realization of the vision, so it is suggested to take steps in the path of consensus and then in the path of strategic commitment by considering the factors affecting visionary leadership, including emotional commitments.

During the different stages of this research, new points were realized and simultaneously with the progress of this research, more uncertainties were created in front of the researcher, which requires more research due to the existing limitations of their investigation. Therefore, the following topics are suggested for the research of future researchers who intend to work in this field: This research was especially focused on Iraqi supply chain managers. Therefore, future studies should emphasize the special characteristics of managers or managements, the use of different cultures and demographic characteristics to formulate a visionary leadership angle and other variables.

Choosing other tools such as interview and observation to collect information and data in order to reduce subjectivities and objectify the answers. For more credibility of these results, it is suggested that in the future, more research on the same issue be done in other production-

private and service organizations and its results be compared with the current research. It is suggested to carry out the research by taking into account other mediating or intervening variables such as organizational culture, organizational size, organizational environment and organizational trust in this organization. And from different perspectives, the dimensions of visionary leadership, consensus and strategic commitment should be investigated and the current research repeated and its results compared.

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