

Improving Career Gratitude in line with Virtuous Leadership Strategy Practices: An Empirical Study

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This paper aims to explore the nature of the relationship between the qualities of virtuous leadership as an independent variable and career gratitude as a dependent variable. The research was carried out on mobile communications services in Iraq by way of a descriptive questionnaire and included the administrators of the researched company. 125 forms were distributed, but some were deemed invalid. Thus, 108 valid forms were used in the analysis in this study. The statistical methods and programs which were used were SPSS and LISREL. The results show that career gratitude is indicated in achieving excellence in the competitive environment. This research puts forward a set of scientific recommendations, the most prominent of which is that the company possesses information that can help it to implement an integrated strategic program and blueprint aimed at virtuous leadership.

Key words: *Virtuous Leadership, Career Gratitude, Telecommunication Sector.*

Introduction

Virtuous leadership is an important issue in the lives of many individuals due to the political, economic and technological requirements that form the basis of an organisation. Leadership involves a process of influencing and working on the ideas and actions of others in order to achieve the goals of the organisation (Ali, Almagtome & Hameedi, 2019). Virtuous leadership is aimed at improving organisational performance by adopting modern methods in the development of management. The idea for this research came about through a strategic vision of what most governmental organisations are suffering in Iraq, and the scarcity of research and studies related to virtuous leadership and its role in achieving gratitude and excellence among workers in the researched organisations. The research focuses on virtuous leadership strategies because this style of leadership supports positive behaviours and activities comprised of virtuous desires, habits, and actions. The modelling of virtuous qualities in leadership allows for the perpetuation of virtues within organisations. Career

gratitude has been highlighted because positive results evolve through words of thanks and individual satisfaction with leaders so that employees are willing to work with leadership under the most extreme conditions in order to obtain better productivity.

Literature Review

Virtuous Leadership Strategy

Virtuous leadership is an essential component that requires those who serve others to show moral virtues that requires not only the best of themselves but also acts to achieve and bring out the best results in others. Fidler (1967) introduced the theory of virtuous leadership on the basis of the argument that managers cannot be expected to adopt a particular leadership style if this conflicts with what they personally value (Bruno, 2016). The virtuous leadership strategy not only affects the awareness of the organisation's strategies, but also enables the organisation to find the appropriate means of achieving these strategies (De Araújo & Lopes, 2014). Therefore, virtuous leadership is a form of management that seeks to achieve greatness for individuals, organisations and society in a way that benefits the stakeholders in the long run, while also leaving a positive legacy for future generations. Virtuous leadership enables leaders to achieve 'moments of greatness' based on persistence and success in establishing relationships that add value, create wealth and build trust between stakeholders and society (Caldwell, Hasan, & Smith, 2015) (Ali, Hameedi, & Almagtome, 2019). Caldwell demonstrates the importance of virtuous leadership through its pursuit of service, discrimination and responsibility, as it develops organisational strategies for the long term, and constantly strives to ensure that members of the organisation understand the goals of the organisation that the leadership seeks to achieve. At the same time, it constantly works on behalf of the wider well-being. Moreover, it seeks to achieve sustainable development by building a better world for future generations, protecting peoples' futures, and creating a culture of mutual trust between leadership and individuals. Wang and Hackett (2016) explain that a virtuous leadership strategy carries with it all the advantages of the examples set by other leaders. Leaders would do well to demonstrate ethics, happiness and satisfaction (Hackett & Wang, 2012) (Almagtome, Shaker, Al-Fatlawi, & Bekheet, 2019).

Virtuous Leadership Dimensions

There are several basic applications, dimensions, and virtuous leadership strategies that many researchers have focused upon. Hessel (2013) defines a set of dimensions of virtuous leadership as being comprised of qualities such as wisdom, courage, justice, asceticism and respect. Wang (2011) defines six dimensions of virtuous leadership as courage, moderation, justice, wisdom, humanity and honesty. In accordance with a few of the strategic practices of virtuous leadership that researchers have focused on, wisdom, courage and justice are the main dimensions of virtuous leadership considered in this research.

1. Courage involves educating the mind, facing up to danger, and choosing the right actions and decisions with boldness and valour. Courage has been defined as ‘the conviction to do what you think is true despite the dire risks and consequences for this choice’ (Wang, 2011). Yearley (2003) states that courage allows people to overcome or control fear, especially fears that hinder people from doing what they wish to do or believe they should do.
2. Justice is an important moral concept, and its importance stems from its application in moral and social decision-making. It requires fairness in the protection of the rights of all (Wang, 2011). Yearley (2003) believes that justice is a personal trait that motivates recognition, respect, protection and the equal treatment of others according to uniform and objective criteria.
3. Wisdom is the ability to recognise and follow the most appropriate course of action and common sense in practical or financial affairs, and these are the distinctive features that enable leaders to make the right judgments, and achieve the right goals (Wang, 2011). Therefore, wisdom is regarded as a positive personality trait, ‘whereby the mind acts in distinguishing true good in all circumstances and choosing the correct means to achieve it’ (Sison, 2003).

Career Gratitude

Gratitude refers to a feeling of admiration, gratitude and appreciation for life (Müceldili, Erdil, Akgün, & Keskin, 2015)(Al-Wattar, Almagtome, & AL-Shafeay, 2019). It is difficult to define a specific concept of gratitude, as it has been known to be an aspect of the nature of some people, whereas for others it may be a response to adaptation (Stegen & Wankier, 2018). Although career gratitude has not been studied with great accuracy, it plays an important role in organisations, and its practice during work is no less important than its practice in everyday life. Based on the principle ‘I help you and we will help others’, several researchers have addressed career gratitude, which is sometimes called collective gratitude. Fehr et al. (2017) define career gratitude as ‘sharing among all members of the organisation through a process arising from individuals' own experiences of gratitude at the organisational level. In other words, ‘it is the interaction and social and organisational exchange between the members of the organisation, and it is the result of a group of operations from bottom to top’, which is an expression through words of thanks to the benefactors during the work. Gratitude is of great importance within organisations. It is a key part of an organisation's social context, and some organisations may use it as a competitive advantage to maintain their product line (Bartlett, Condon, Cruz, Baumann, & Desteno, 2012).

Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) define career gratitude as a positive emotion that involves personality assessment and state that it affects an individual's job evaluation. Morgan, Gulliford, and Kristjánsson (2017) define career gratitude as the feeling and attitude of

appreciation or thanks for the benefits received or expect to receive and state that a feeling of true gratitude opens up channels for more goodness to enter into our career experience. On the other hand, Di Fabio, Palazzeschi, and Bucci (2017) explain that gratitude has a significant impact on the organisation's success due to its direct impact on improving the organisation's climate. Gratitude contributes to the well-being of the individual, reduces negative emotions and supports the performance of workers, giving them the freedom to express their thoughts. In addition, it has an important impact on organisational well-being because it is the ideal antidote for eliminating toxic ideas that circulate among individuals within organisations. Thus, gratitude promotes reciprocity, teamwork and altruism. It also supports organisational behaviours in terms of assistance, participation, donation, cooperation and volunteering, and promotes the social behaviours of working individuals by increasing their well-being and performance. Therefore, it benefits workers in particular and the organisation in general. Career gratitude helps support the prosperity and success of the organisation as a result of a staff liaison group of organisational processes. Individuals who are exposed to significantly positive emotions gain the loyalty of customers, increase sales and thus obtain more financial profits (Khan, Aijaz, Anas, & Husain, 2016). In addition, gratitude over time leads to stronger social ties, a better organisational climate, and more positive and effective actions, and all these actions lead to the development of individuals and institutions (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Finally, Yip et al. (2018) describe the importance of career gratitude in social interactions or positive social behaviours as helping commitment and cooperation with business partners as it facilitates cooperation and social connectedness.

Dimensions of Career Gratitude

Many researchers indicate that career gratitude depends on a set of dimensions produced when an individual receives positive benefits. In this context, Emmons and McCullough (2003) outline the main dimensions of gratitude:

- Feelings of gratitude when the individual receives benefit
- Estimation of the situation, or what is called self-esteem
- Expression of feelings of gratitude

Baker (2011) explains that gratitude has four main dimensions (strength or intensity of gratitude, repetition of gratitude, expression of gratitude, and intensity of expression of gratitude). The power of gratitude refers to the feeling of gratitude, which is what is expressed. As for the repetition of gratitude, this refers to the frequency of the amount of gratitude expressed during a specific period. Whereas, the extension of gratitude refers to the events that a person feels gratitude for and responds positively to. Finally, the intensity of grateful expression refers to the number of people for whom a person is grateful for in

relation to a particular positive outcome. Morgan et al. (2017) identify three dimensions of functional gratitude as:

- Feelings of gratitude, which means retaining feelings of gratitude towards the people who have helped us.
- Estimating Attitudes: That is, individuals must have a full appreciation of the assistance provided to them by others.
- Gratitude Behaviour: This refers to the behaviour of individuals and it represents feelings of gratitude, which are expressed in gratitude behaviours.

We note from previous studies that there is broad agreement that career gratitude has three main dimensions, except for Baker (2011), who adds a fourth dimension. The researchers agree with Morgan's view, which is found to be appropriate to the variables of this study.

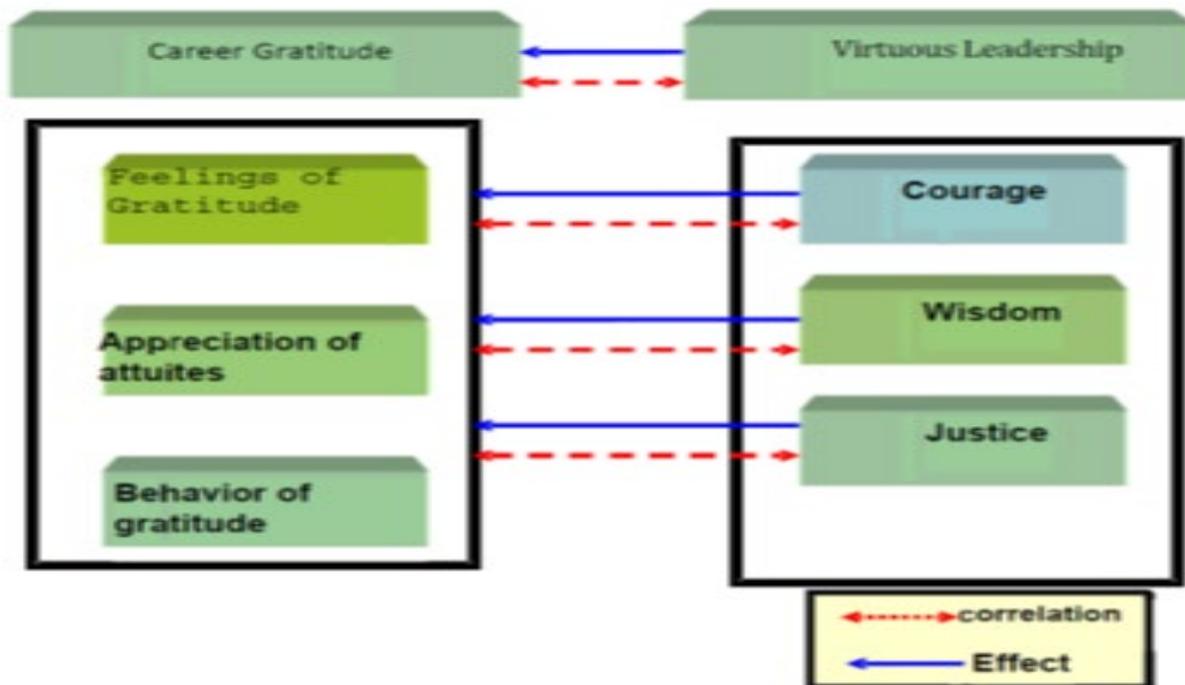
Methodology

Career gratitude is built on a foundation of outstanding leadership qualities, which reflects the role of virtuous leadership. It also reflects the ability of the researched organisation to devise creative ways of solving the problems it faces and focus on the social responsibility that the organisation seeks to achieve through community research. The importance of research for the organisation is focused on achieving substantive contributions that support and reinforce the use of the virtues of the organisation's virtuous leadership ideals in order to achieve best practices and decisions that serve the achievement of its vision. In addition, research attempts to measure, test and diagnose the reality of virtuous leadership in the research sample (Babylon Health Department) and its role in promoting and strengthening employee gratitude. Accordingly, this research aims to:

- 1) Analyse and define the dimensions of virtuous leadership and their relationship to job gratitude in the study sample organisation.
- 2) Define real indicators in order to measure and identify strengths and weaknesses in the foundations of virtuous leadership.

The research model was developed according to the results of the literature related to the issue of virtuous leadership and its role in achieving job gratitude, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model of the Research



The research model is composed of two main variables: virtuous leadership, in terms of its variables and its three sub-dimensions (courage, wisdom, justice) whereby all indicators are directed to measuring the levels of virtuous leadership. The second variable of research is functional gratitude measured in its three dimensions, which are feelings of gratitude, appreciation of situations, and gratitude behaviour. The research aims to embody the reality of the relationship between virtuous leadership (with its various dimensions) and job gratitude (with its various dimensions). In order to achieve the objectives of the research, the main research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1: There is a significant correlation relationship at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between virtuous leadership and career gratitude

H2: There is a significance effect at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of virtuous leadership on career gratitude

Results

The Normal Distribution Test of Research Data

Table 1 shows the results of the normal distribution according to the number of approved observations amounting to 110, as there is no missing value watch. In addition, the values of skewness and kurtosis are all close to zero, which means that all items of the variable are normally distributed.

Table 1: Results of the normal distribution test of virtuous leadership dimensions

#	coding	Valid	Missing	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
beyond courage items							
1	I1	110	0	-0.582	.304	0.663	.599
2	I2	110	0	-0.256	.304	-0.078	.599
3	I3	110	0	-0.481	.304	0.389	.599
4	I4	110	0	-0.804	.304	0.588	.599
beyond wisdom items							
1	I5	110	0	-0.410	.304	-0.333	.599
2	I6	110	0	-0.663	.304	-0.224	.599
3	I7	110	0	-0.708	.304	-0.317	.599
beyond justice items							
1	I8	110	0	-0.675	.304	-0.119	.599
2	I9	110	0	-0.862	.304	-0.109	.599
3	I10	110	0	-0.858	.304	-0.066	.599

Table 2 shows the results of the normal distribution, according to the number of approved observations amounting to 110, as there is no missing value watch. In addition, the values of skewness and kurtosis are all near zero, which means that all the paragraphs of the variable are naturally distributed.

Table 2: Results of the normal distribution test of career gratitude dimensions

		Valid	Missing	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
Items beyond gratitude							
1	I11	110	0	-0.980	.304	0.238	.599
2	I12	110	0	-1.143	.304	0.988	.599
3	I13	110	0	-1.020	.304	0.829	.599
Items beyond estimation of the situation							
1	I14	110	0	0.127	.304	-0.543	.599
2	I15	110	0	-0.494	.304	-0.475	.599
3	I16	110	0	-0.175	.304	-0.648	.599
Items beyond gratitude behaviour							
1	I17	110	0	-0.633	.304	-0.489	.599
2	I18	110	0	-0.504	.304	-0.448	.599
3	I19	110	0	-0.402	.304	-0.507	.599

The Preliminary Results Analysis

a. Analysis of Respondents' Opinions on Virtuous Leadership

This paragraph is limited to presenting and analysing sample opinions and responding to the virtuous leadership variable and uses statistical tools to reach the required analysis. The mean and standard deviation for the sample responses was calculated. Table 3 indicates the results of the descriptive analysis that was achieved at the level of dimensions and items.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of virtuous leadership

#	Symbol	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average	Standard Dev.
Beyond courage items						
1	I1	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.60	0.52
2	I2	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.30	1.06
3	I3	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.10	0.74
4	I4	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.20	0.63
#	Symbol	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average	Standard Dev.
Beyond wisdom items						
1	I4	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.40	0.70
2	I5	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.80	1.03
3	I6	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.40	0.84
#	Symbol	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average	Standard Dev.
Items beyond gratitude behaviour						
1	I7	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	0.82
2	I8	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.60	1.17
3	I9	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.80	1.14

Table 3 shows the following:

- 1) The dimension of courage achieved an arithmetic mean which is higher than the hypothetical mean by 4.3 with a standard deviation 0.92. This indicates a clear response by the respondents to the vertebrae of the dimension.
- 2) The wisdom dimension achieved a high arithmetic mean which is also higher than the hypothetical mean by 4.2 with a standard deviation 0.92. This indicates a clear response by the respondents to the vertebrae of the dimension.
- 3) The justice dimension achieved an arithmetic mean that was also higher than the hypothetical mean by 3.8 with a standard deviation of 0.92. This indicates a clear response by the respondents to the vertebrae of the dimension.

b. Analysis of Respondents' Opinions on Career Gratitude

This paragraph is concerned with presenting and analysing the opinions of respondents and responding to the variable of job gratitude by relying on statistical tools to obtain the required analysis. Therefore, the mean and standard deviation of the responses of the sample were identified. Table 4 details the results of the descriptive analysis at the dimension and paragraph level for this variable.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Career Gratitude

#	Symbol	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average	Minimum
Items beyond feelings of gratitude						
1	I11	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.10	0.57
2	I12	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.50	0.53
3	I13	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.50	0.71
Symbol	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average	Minimum	Symbol
Items beyond the attitude of gratitude						
1	I14	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.20	0.63
2	I15	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.70	0.48
3	I16	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.23	0.73
Symbol	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average	Minimum	Symbol
Items beyond gratitude behaviour						
1	I17	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.20	0.92
2	I18	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.20	0.92
3	I19	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.80	0.79

The above table shows the results of the statistical description:

- 1) The response to the researched sample was high due to feelings of gratitude, as it obtained a high arithmetic mean that was higher than the hypothetical mean by 4.37 with a standard deviation of 0.82. This indicates the clarity of the response of the respondents to the vertebrae.
- 2) The attitude of gratitude also achieved a high arithmetic mean higher than the hypothetical mean by 4.38 with a standard deviation of 0.92. This indicates the clear response of respondents to the vertebrae of the dimension.
- 3) The response of the sample is high after the behaviour of gratitude, as it achieved an arithmetic mean that was higher than the hypothetical mean by 4.07, with a standard deviation of 0.82. This indicates the clear response of respondents to the dimension paragraphs.

Testing the Correlation Hypotheses of Study Variables

Through this part of the research, a statistical presentation was made to test the correlation between the research variables (virtuous leadership and job gratitude) and analysed them at the level of the research sample. Table 5 shows the results of testing the main hypothesis and the sub-hypotheses as follows:

Table 5: Correlation coefficient between study variables

#	Dimensions	Career gratitude	
		Correlation coefficient	Level of significance
1	Courage	0.71	0.01
2	Wisdom	0.72	0.01
3	Justice	0.67	0.01
4	Virtuous leadership	0.81	0.01

- 1) The first main hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between virtuous leadership and job gratitude at the macro level. The results in Table 5 show that there is a high correlation relationship of 0.81 between the two variables, with an acceptable level of significance within level 0.01 which is less than the specified level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the main hypothesis is accepted.
- 2) The first sub-hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between courage and career gratitude at the macro level. The results in Table 7 show that there is a correlation with a relationship of 0.71, with a level of significance within level 0.01 which is less than the specified level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the first sub-hypothesis is accepted.
- 3) The second sub-hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between wisdom and job gratitude at the macro level. The results in Table 5 show that there is a correlation rate of 0.72, and the level of significance was within level 0.01. It is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, therefore, the second sub-hypothesis is accepted.
- 4) The third sub-hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between justice and job gratitude. The results in Table 5 show a correlation relationship of 0.67, and the level of significance was within 0.01. It is less than the specified significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the third sub-hypothesis is accepted.

Testing the Impact Hypotheses of Study Variables

a. Testing of the first main hypothesis

This hypothesis indicates that there is a significant relationship between the influence of virtuous leadership on career gratitude. The findings of this experiment are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: The results of an impact analysis between virtuous leadership and career gratitude

Independent variable	Career gratitude								
	a	R2	F	P Value**	Regression model significance	Beta	T Value	P. Value**	Regression coefficient significance
Virtuous leadership	0.547	0.65	228.03	0.000	Significant	0.93	15.1	0.000	Significant

Table 6 shows the adjusted index of coefficient of determination (R^2) for virtuous leadership which reached 65%, which is an acceptable percentage indicating that 65% explain the total differences in job gratitude are determined by virtuous leadership. The remaining percentage of 35% represents the contribution rate for variables not included in the research model or random variables that cannot be controlled. In addition, the calculated value of (F) is 228.03, which is significant at the level of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model (the regression equation) is acceptable and this explains the relationship between virtuous leadership and job gratitude. The amount of the value of the regression coefficient (Beta) between them is 0.93. The significance value was tested by a t-test, which shows a calculated value of 15.1, which was significant at 0.05. Therefore, based on these results, this hypothesis is accepted.

b. Testing of the Second Main Hypothesis

This hypothesis suggests that there is a significant relationship of influence on the dimensions of virtuous leadership and career gratitude. The findings of this experiment are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: The Results of An Impact Analysis Between the Dimensions of Virtuous Leadership and Career Gratitude

Independent variable	Career gratitude								
	a	R2	F	P Value**	Regression model significance	Beta	T value	P. Value**	Regression coefficient significance
Courage	0.504	0.60	176.18	0.000	Significant	0.19	2.48	0.018	Significant
wisdom	0.460	0.51	149.32	0.000	Significant	0.80	10.3	0.000	Significant
Justice	0.421	0.44	187.12	0.000	Significant	0.80	10.3	0.000	Significant

Table 7 shows the adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) which indicates that the ratio of (R^2) for the dimension of courage reached 60%, which is an acceptable percentage indicating that 60% can be explained by the total differences in career gratitude and is determined through the dimension of courage. The remaining percentage of 40% represents the contribution rate for variables not included in the research model or random variables that cannot be controlled. In addition, the calculated value of (F) is 176.18 which is significant at the 0.05 level. This shows that the regression model is acceptable and explains the

relationship between dimension of courage and career gratitude. It indicates the adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2), meaning that the wisdom participation reached 51%, which is an acceptable percentage indicating that 51% is explained by the total differences in job gratitude determined by the wisdom dimension. The remaining percentage of 49% represents the contribution rate of the variables that are not included in the research model or uncontrollable random variables. In addition, the calculated value of (F) reached 149.32 which is significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that the regression model is acceptable and explains the relationship between the dimension of wisdom and functional gratitude. The value of the regression coefficient (Beta) between wisdom and career gratitude was 0.80, and its significance was tested by t-test where its calculated value was 10.3, which was significant at the level of 0.05. The adjusted determination coefficient (R^2) indicates that the ratio of the interpreter to after-justice reached 44%, which is an acceptable percentage indicating that 44% explain that the total differences in job gratitude are determined by the dimension of justice and the remaining ratio 56% represents a contribution rate. In addition, the calculated value of (F) reached 126.87 which is significant at the 0.05 level and this indicates that the regression model is acceptable and explains the relationship between the dimension of justice and job gratitude. The value of the regression coefficient (Beta) between fairness and job gratitude was 0.80. Morale was tested using a t-test, where its calculated value was 10.3, which was significant at the 0.05 level. According to these results, this hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusions

In modern organisations, leaders are required to support individuals, whether they are employees or customers, and this can only be provided with virtuous leadership. This guarantees a virtuous leader who has a positive impact on the organisation in general and individuals in particular. This style of leadership can create a climate of gratitude within the organisation. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on career gratitude in companies because it has a positive impact on the individual and promotes moral cohesion within the work. This is evidenced by the results of the research, as the sample members accepted the paragraphs of career gratitude. In addition, the results show a positive acceptance of the sample members in the company, and the sample of the study, towards the paragraphs of the virtuous leadership variable. This means that they understand the importance of the concept of virtuous leadership and its role in promoting career gratitude. The results of the statistical analysis also show the validity of the first main hypothesis, namely, that there is a positive correlation between good leadership and career gratitude. This means that there is an awareness of the individuals working in the company, the study sample, and the practices of virtuous leadership that contribute to the employee's gratitude, which is subsequently reflected in the organisational performance of the company. According to the results of this study, it is clear that the study sample company has a great interest in activating and engaging in virtuous leadership. This is in addition to strengthening its strategic role, which aims to direct the



efforts of working individuals and to utilise their energies optimally. This is mainly due to the achievement of career gratitude among the working employees. The results of this study make it necessary for the organisation to concentrate the study sample (Asia Cell Communications Company) on the dimensions of virtuous leadership as this leads to achievement of the best results and provides the best services related to the company's work. In addition, it is important for the company to pay attention to ways of achieving loyalty. This, in turn, would be reflected in an increase in the provision of technology and administrative services and the implementation of mechanisms to maximise these efforts. Furthermore, it is important to study the mutual relationship between individuals (employees) and their subordinates and to remove any class differences between them by understanding the dimensions of virtuous leadership. In addition, there is a need for scientific conferences and symposia to clarify theoretical principles and functional and mathematical implementations that have been used in science, as well as the value of virtuous leadership, the positive results and the public benefits that they provide within the organisation. Finally, there is a need for further research and studies by scholars in order to become more familiar with the topics addressed in this research. In this way, the results of this research may open up a new way to learn about virtuous leadership and career gratitude.

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