THE ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STRATEGY AND PRODUCT QUALITY

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between leadership strategy and product quality. A quantitative method and an online Google form were used to collect data from the 202 Jordanian employees in food companies. The research problem is that the quality of food products is diverging between food industry companies in Jordan. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to find out the factors that have an effect on the product quality, such as leadership strategy and job satisfaction. The findings of this research conclude that there is a positive relationship between leadership strategy and product quality, and leadership strategy with job satisfaction. In addition, results revealed that job satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between leadership strategy and product quality in the food industry companies in Jordan. The findings indicate that content employees are more inclined to exceed their job obligations, participating in discretionary actions that enhance quality improvements. The value and the originality of this research is to provide a deep understanding and practical implications to the food companies' management on how the employees' product quality may be influenced by their leadership strategy and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Leadership, Mediator, Product Quality, Strategy, Originality, Job Satisfaction

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Jordanian food industry plays a crucial role in the national economy, making substantial contributions to gross domestic product (GDP) and providing employment opportunities (Rabboh et al., 2023). The industry includes a wide range of products that meet the needs of local and international markets, reflecting the diversity and richness of Jordan's agricultural and food production. According to recent data, the Jordanian food industry contributes about 7% to the country's GDP and employs a significant portion of the workforce, highlighting its key role in economic stability and growth (Rabboh et al., 2023).

In this context, leadership has become key to improving product quality and promoting job satisfaction in the industry (Ugboro & Obeng, 2000). Effective leadership is essential to creating a work environment that motivates employees, drives innovation, and ensures high product quality standards (Kupa et al., 2024). These efforts signal a concerted effort to align organizational goals with employee welfare, aiming not only to improve operational efficiency but also overall output quality.

This study seeks to determine the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the link between leadership and product quality. This study enhances the existing knowledge base by offering empirical information regarding the interplay among

leadership, satisfaction with work, and product quality in the food business. In fact, it highlights the importance of job satisfaction as a mediating factor, providing practical insights for Jordanian food companies. By understanding how leadership strategies can improve employee satisfaction and product quality, management can develop strategies to improve operational efficiency and competitive advantage (Abudaqa et al., 2024). This study contributes to the theoretical framework of leadership and job satisfaction, providing a model that is applicable across industries and regions.

Therefore, the current research proposed that food industry product quality is unstable, which may cause a problem in the Jordanian market. In addition, many factors such as leadership and job satisfaction may affect product quality. The existing problem has received little attention so far in experimental research on the food industry dilemma. Consequently, this research examines the question:

RQ: What is the role of job satisfaction as a mediator between the leadership and product quality in the food industry in Jordan?

However, it is essential to fill the gap in the previous studies by examining the mediating role of job satisfaction in the complex relationship between leadership and product quality, which is influenced by different factors, namely the organizational culture, the industry norms, and the individual differences. We need more research to delve into the subtleties of this relationship and pinpoint tactics for enhancing leadership practices to improve job satisfaction and product quality outcomes in food industry organizations.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyses the methodology that has been used to conduct empirical research on the food industry. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 discusses the findings. Section 6 ends the paper with a conclusion and implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Leadership

Leadership is widely acknowledged as one of the most studied phenomena, as proposed by Vandenabeele et al. (2014). Leadership is vital in all fields of human endeavor because it is a key success factor in any effort that includes people working collaboratively, and it is the capacity to foster trust and elicit support from individuals tasked with accomplishing organizational goals. Despite the multitude of definitions of leadership, the role of leadership has consistently been to guide an organization towards its objectives (Wangmo, 2021).

The concept of leadership strategy can differ depending on the person or situation mentioned (Veliu et al., 2017). Leadership strategy refers to the pattern of all a leader's actions as seen or referred to by subordinates (Noor, 2013). In addition, Van Wart (2013) describes leadership strategy as a combination of personality characteristics, skills, and behaviors. Hence, there are various approaches to leadership, including trait, behavioral, and contingency. Theories of behavioral leadership, in contrast to the characteristic theory, place a greater emphasis on leaders' behaviors (Wangmo, 2021). In 1939, Kurt Lewin performed the first behavior leadership study at Iowa University, where he headed a group of academics to discover behavioral leadership strategy (Bass, 2007). Three major leadership strategies were discovered by the team: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.

In an autocratic leadership strategy, leaders keep a close eye on their subordinates and make sure that duties are completed on time (Mullins, 2007). The most important issue in this manner was how researchers describe the autocratic person in charge. They order or threaten employees to meet organizational goals. As a result, the strategy is seen as task-oriented (Van Vugt et al., 2004). As for democratic leadership strategy, "participative leadership" is another name for this sort of leadership (Bell, n.d.). Democratic leaders are more persuasive in their leadership strategy (Jermsittiparsert, 2020). According to Northouse (2021), they work with their employees rather than controlling them, attempting to treat everyone equally and without discrimination. According to Goleman et al. (2002), democratic leaders boost subordinates' self-esteem, and organizations can have a positive work environment.

However, laissez-faire leadership strategy is described by these terms: "non-leadership" (Northouse, 2021), "passive leaders" (Yang, 2015), or "no leadership" (Aydin et al., 2013). Leaders fail to respond to requests for help and are hesitant to offer their opinions on important issues; it is regarded as a negative leadership strategy. Because their leaders are frequently absent, this model offers staff the opportunity to find answers to problems on their own (Alloubani et al., 2019). Leaders who practice laissez-faire leadership avoid making decisions, abdicating responsibility, and abusing their authority (Schriesheim et al., 2009).

According to Yulk (2010), effective leaders should be able to recognize when to employ various influence strategies and obtain the required skills to carry out various influence attempts effectively. By and large, effective leadership entails expressing a vision, creating loyalty, and directing individuals' abilities toward the intended outcomes. According to research, leadership has a significant impact on employee performance and commitment (Wang et al., 2005).

2.2. Product quality

One of the most essential strategic objectives of modern manufacturing firms is to manufacture high-quality products (Wacker & Sheu, 1994). Quality is critical in the business world since it helps to retain customer satisfaction and loyalty while also reducing risk (Hallowell, 1996; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). However, the term Quality is "an extremely slippery term, easy to see but exasperatingly difficult to articulate", according to one description (Garvin, 1988, p. 3). In contrast to objective quality, product quality refers to consumers' subjective perceptions from a given consuming situation, Objective quality pertains to the actual technological superiority of a product, which can be quantified and verified (Zeithaml, 1988).

Companies try to grasp how to keep the quality level high at every phase within production, manufacturing, and even providing services because company managers believe that quality guarantees big profits in business. Service, design, brand name, and packaging are all intangible values that products can provide to customers, and all of them will

increase customers' perceptions of product quality (Bytyçi et al., 2023; Daoud et al., 2023; Taliang et al., 2023).

2.3. Job satisfaction

Herzberg et al. (2017) presented the idea that different parts of one's own job can provide satisfaction. Moreover, motivation theory distinguishes motivators from hygiene factors, which are the absence of what causes job dissatisfaction. The term job satisfaction refers to an employee's overall pleasant feelings about their job (Mardanov, 2020). Job satisfaction, according to Currie and Eveline (2011), is much more than an attitude that describes one's internal state, either subjectively or numerically. Employees' sentiments of contentment, autonomy of thinking, detachment from stress, and confidence regarding job needs are all indicators of job satisfaction (Dhamija et al., 2019).

Successful companies prioritize employee job satisfaction over customer satisfaction, recognizing that satisfied workers satisfy customers, produce higher-quality products, maintain high work efficiency, and stay with the company (Mardanov, 2020). One aspect of job satisfaction describes an individual's overall feelings about their work, while the other focuses on specific aspects of their work, such as their payment, working conditions, relationship with their supervisor, etc. (Singh et al., 2020). Leadership is mostly considered to be management's most important role, which entails persuading individuals and organizations to specific goals (Clark et al., 2009). Leaders who cultivate positive relationships with their subordinates will have an impact on their subordinates' discretionary behavior. In a 2006 survey of 1264 employers conducted by the Institute of Management and Administration, it was discovered that when there was an increase in high expectations of good employee leadership, job satisfaction decreased (Chen, 2020).

2.4. Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

2.4.1. Leadership strategy and product quality

Leadership strategies wield profound influence; transformational leadership, marked by vision and inspiration, correlates with superior product quality through its promotion of innovation and continuous improvement (García-Morales et al., 2012). Leaders shape organizational culture by instilling values that prioritize quality, foster engagement, and empower employees to uphold high standards. Effective communication, transparency, and goal-setting by leaders are imperative for aligning efforts and addressing quality issues promptly (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015).

A culture of continuous improvement, driven by leaders who encourage experimentation and ethical conduct, underpins product integrity and resilience (Manning, 2020). Collaboration with stakeholders, including suppliers and customers, extends leadership's impact on product quality beyond organizational boundaries. In essence, effective leadership is the linchpin for cultivating a quality-centric culture and driving sustained excellence in product outcomes. Prior studies have demonstrated that

product quality is a crucial positioning element that significantly influences purchasing decisions (Shaharudin et al., 2011). Product quality is a significant strategic approach employed by global brands to establish a competitive advantage and augment brand equity. Additionally, Otubanjo (2013) observed that product quality is a primary aspect in establishing brand leadership.

The intricate interplay between leadership and product quality underscores the essence of effective organizational governance. Leadership strategies, ranging from autocratic to participative, exert differential impacts on quality outcomes, with transformational leadership often heralded for its positive influence on innovation and quality consciousness (El-Zayaty, 2016). However, the absence of authentic leadership or the proliferation of toxic leadership behaviors can engender distrust, demotivation, and ultimately compromised product quality. Beyond individual leadership strategies, the overarching leadership framework encompasses communication practices, strategic visioning, and ethical stewardship, all of which profoundly shape the quality culture within an organization (Wortman, 2017).

Moreover, the dynamic nature of markets and technological advancements necessitates leaders to continuously adapt and evolve their approaches to quality management, embracing concepts such as agile methodologies and lean principles to drive efficiency and responsiveness in product development processes (Kolasani, 2023). Thus, the symbiotic relationship between leadership and product quality underscores the imperative for leaders to not only inspire but also to empower, engage, and continuously innovate in pursuit of excellence. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: There is a positive relationship between leadership strategy and product quality in the food industry companies in Jordan.

2.4.2. Leadership strategy and job satisfaction

The communication of leaders significantly impacts employees' performance, job satisfaction, and attitudes (Dubey et al., 2023). Leaders influence not just the emotional and mental well-being of employees but also significantly affect their intrinsically motivated behaviors aimed at achieving organizational goals (Burns, 2004). Job satisfaction is the term used to describe the positive mental and emotional state that occurs when individuals appreciate their work and their career. Effective leadership motivates employees by comprehending their emotions, personal ambitions, and aspirations, and by individually addressing, advising, and guiding them in the appropriate direction. According to research, employees' motivation is enhanced by effective leadership, which in turn increases their productivity and job satisfaction (Goleman et al., 2002).

According to research, organizational leadership strategy influences employee work satisfaction (Al-Sada et al., 2017). For instance, Wu et al. (2003) found that a leader who creates an organization that presents specific values and beliefs is responsible for creating a particular culture. Hence, culture is a changing process instead of being stationary. In their summary of the ancient view of job satisfaction, Gottfredson and Holland (1990) cautioned that the satisfaction of an employee

relative to a specific job results from fulfilling various motivational requirements. Madlock's (2012) study shows a statistically significant relationship between managers' ability to communicate and overall work satisfaction in the organization. Additionally, transformational leaders motivate work staff for hard work and divert the concentration toward a shared vision in the context of the organization's welfare linked to development and accomplishment (Givens, 2008). Consequently, using a particular leadership strategy may help an organization achieve its objectives and become more effective (Shrestha et al., 2019). We present the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a positive relationship between leadership strategy and job satisfaction in the food industry companies in Jordan.

2.4.3. Job satisfaction and product quality

Organizational success is fundamentally dependent on the relationship between job satisfaction and product quality, which is profoundly ingrained in both empirical research and theoretical frameworks. Locke et al. (1983) define job satisfaction as a positive or pleasurable emotional state that arises from an evaluation of one's job or workplace experiences. In contrast, product quality is the extent to which a product meets consumer expectations and adheres to established standards. Several interconnected mechanisms underscore the importance of human means routines in organizational performance, explaining the relationship between these two variables. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between job satisfaction and product quality. For instance, research by Patterson et al. (2004) found that job satisfaction was a strong predictor of organizational performance, including product quality, in the manufacturing sector. These findings suggest that satisfied employees are more likely to go above and beyond their job requirements, engaging in discretionary behaviors that contribute to quality improvements.

Furthermore, Harter et al. (2002) demonstrated that business-unit outcomes, such as customer satisfaction and product quality, are significantly influenced by employee satisfaction and engagement. By prioritizing job satisfaction, organizations can create a virtuous cycle where satisfied employees drive higher product quality, leading to greater customer satisfaction and organizational success (Harter et al., 2002). Thus, it is not solely a human resource issue; it is a strategic imperative to invest in strategies that improve job satisfaction for achieving and sustaining high product quality. Therefore, we propose that:

H3: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and product quality in the food industry companies in Jordan.

2.5. The role of job satisfaction as a mediator between leadership strategy and product quality

Academic research has clarified the intricate dynamics between leadership, job satisfaction, and product quality, with job satisfaction emerging as a crucial mediator in this relationship (Choi et al., 2016; Ćulibrk et al., 2018). Scholars have extensively studied leadership strategies like transformational leadership to understand their direct impact on job satisfaction and product quality (Choi et al., 2016; Atmojo, 2015). Employees are inspired and motivated by transformational leaders, who create a productive workplace that values cooperation, trust, and a dedication to the organization's objectives. Employees feel appreciated, involved, and empowered to make a significant contribution to the company, which in turn improves their job satisfaction. Importantly, job satisfaction serves as a mediator in the leadership-product quality relationship by influencing employee attitudes and behaviors that directly impact product quality. Research indicates that employees who are highly satisfied tend to demonstrate higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors, including exceeding their job responsibilities to meet product quality standards (Sharma et al., 2011).

Moreover, studies have shown that when workers are satisfied with their jobs, their morale goes up, motivation, and retention, all of which support sustained efforts to maintain and improve product quality over time (Irabor & Okolie, 2019). Though it is essential to recognize that the relationship between leadership, job satisfaction, and product quality is complex and multifaceted, influenced by various contextual factors such as organizational culture, industry norms, and individual differences. We need more research to delve into the subtleties of this relationship and pinpoint tactics for enhancing leadership practices to improve job satisfaction and product quality outcomes in organizations. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H4: Job satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between leadership strategy and product quality in the food industry companies in Jordan.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of leadership strategy, product quality, and job satisfaction
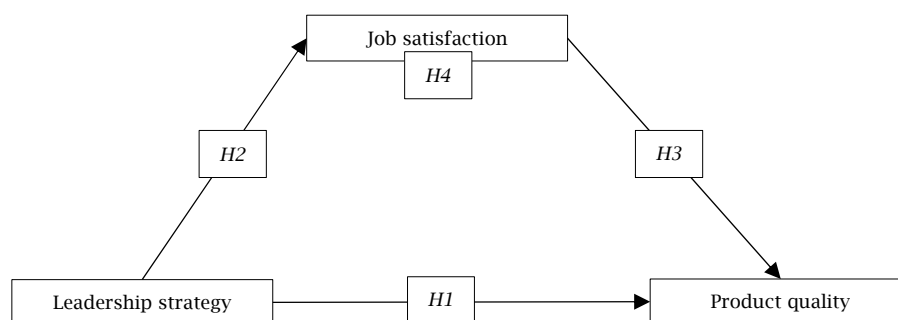
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and procedures

3.1.1. Sample

Data were collected from employees of food companies in the industrial zone of the City of Sahab in Jordan. A convenience sampling approach was used to collect data through the companies' emails. The sample involved 350 food company employees (53% male and 47% female). 202 usable questionnaires were returned, indicating a response rate of 70.7%. Based on these research results, respondents, and in terms of age, 60.9% were less than 35 years old. In terms of education, the majority were diploma graduates — 42.6%, and in terms of years of experience, 29.7% of employees have experience of less than five years, and 20.3% have experience of five to less than 10 years.

3.1.2. Procedures

A quantitative approach of an online questionnaire survey was used to measure these research factors of leadership, product quality, and job satisfaction. A convenience sampling approach was employed to collect data. The sample consists of employees from food companies in the industry zone of the City of Sahab in Jordan. A total of 202 usable questionnaires were obtained from the 350 questionnaires distributed and used for the analysis, which represents a response rate of 70.7%.

An alternative method that would be suitable for conducting this research is a qualitative method by using interviews as a tool to collect the data, to find out the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between leadership strategy and product quality, which may present more explanation about these research variables.

3.2. Research measurements

For the purpose of this research, three measurement scales were employed. Leadership strategies survey, adopted by Bass (2007), includes three dimensions: 1) autocratic leadership strategy with 10 items, 2) democratic leadership strategy with 10 items, and 3) laissez-faire leadership strategy with 10 items. Job satisfaction survey, adopted by Spector (1994), includes seven dimensions: 1) pay, 2) promotion, 3) supervision, 4) fringe benefits, 5) operating conditions, 6) nature of work, and 7) communication, with four items for each, with a total of 28 items. Product quality adopted by Flynn (1994) with four items. A five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating "Strongly disagree" and 5 for "Strongly agree", to answer these research items.

4. RESULTS

To test this research and four hypotheses, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze these research findings.

SmartPLS4 was used in the current investigation. SmartPLS4 widely uses SEM techniques in management research. The data examined the four research hypotheses. Following a two-step analytical approach, the researchers first conducted the assessment of scale reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity of the measurement scale as shown in Table 1. Then, the researchers evaluated the structural model.

The three dimensions of autocratic leadership strategy, democratic leadership strategy, and laissez-faire leadership strategy are unified concepts that can be joined together ideally under an overall concept of leadership (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1986). In addition, seven dimensions of pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work, and communication are consistent constructs that can be united together supposedly under a complete idea of job satisfaction (Weng et al., 2010). Moreover, four items of product quality are interrelated items that can be combined theoretically under an overall abstraction of product quality. Consequently, the second-order construct approach was used. It presents the reduction of the model difficulty. In addition, it permits working with multiple items that reproduce a first-order factor (Esposito Vinzi et al., 2010).

4.1. Measurement of model results

Number of statistical techniques were used to find out the convergent validity such as: composite reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.70 (Marcoulides & Chin, 2013), average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1984), and all item loadings should be greater than 0.70 (Marcoulides & Chin, 2013). All three criteria of convergent validity were satisfied, as shown in Table 1, the CR ranged from 0.710 to 0.863, and the AVE*s* from 0.595 to 0.805. The items' loadings were all higher than 0.7.

Table 1. Results of items' loadings (Part 1)

Construct	Loading	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value
Leadership strategy: CR = 0.922; AVE = 0.595				
My manager always tries to include one or more of us in determining what to do and how to do it. However, he or she maintains the final decision-making authority ← Leadership strategy	0.739	2.347	0.867	16.636
My manager allows us to set priorities with his/her guidance ← Leadership strategy	0.710	2.525	0.791	13.614
My manager creates an environment where we are given ownership of the project and allowed to participate in the decision-making process ← Leadership strategy	0.713	2.198	0.868	16.754
My manager shares his/her leadership power with us ← Leadership strategy	0.746	2.460	0.797	15.401
My manager allows us to make the decisions to do our job ← Leadership strategy	0.765	2.535	0.797	16.720
My manager allows us to determine what needs to be done and how to do it ← Leadership strategy	0.831	2.416	0.882	27.022
My manager always prefers a voting system whenever a major decision has to be made ← Leadership strategy	0.787	2.243	0.876	26.505
My manager always seeks the approval of each or the majority of us for a major decision to pass in the institute's ← Leadership strategy	0.863	2.361	0.852	44.058

Table 1. Results of items' loadings (Part 2)

Construct	Loading	Mean	Std. dev.	T-value
Product quality: CR = 0.823; AVE = 0.623				
New product designs are thoroughly reviewed before the product is produced and sold ← Product quality	0.780	2.371	0.882	15.218
Customer requirements are thoroughly analyzed in the new product design process ← Product quality	0.749	2.426	0.877	12.223
Reducing the cost of new products is a more important priority than new product quality ← Product quality	0.835	2.361	0.840	31.124
On-time delivery concerns are more important than quality in the new product development process ← Product quality	0.793	2.431	0.825	20.007
Job satisfaction: CR = 0.775; AVE = 0.805				
The benefits we receive are as good as those most other organizations offer ← Job satisfaction	0.879	2.347	0.808	35.868
Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted ← Job satisfaction	0.915	2.441	0.783	79.624

Gefen and Straub (2011) proposed that discriminant validity is the degree to which of measure is not a reflection of some other factors, and the square root of the AVE for a dimension should be higher than its correlation with other dimensions in the study model. As shown in Table 2 square root of AVE for each construct was presented, whereas the off-diagonal elements are presented by low correlations between the measure of interest and the measures of other dimensions.

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	Job satisfaction	Leadership	Product quality
Job satisfaction	0.897		
Leadership strategy	0.584	0.771	
Product quality	0.453	0.453	0.790

Moreover, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion test was employed to find out the discriminant validity. Results in Table 3 showed

that all the values are less than 0.85, which means there are no discriminant validity problems according to the HTMT criterion.

Table 3. Discriminant validity — HTMT — matrix results

Construct	Job satisfaction	Leadership	Product quality
Job satisfaction			
Leadership strategy	0.654		
Product quality	0.556	0.488	

4.2. Structural model results

To evaluate this study model and to test the hypotheses, path coefficient estimation, the variance explained (R^2 value), and statistical significance are presented in Figure 2. The factor loading on the second-order factors ranges between 0.76–0.88, suggesting good formation of the second-order construct.

Figure 2. The relationship between the research factors, leadership strategy, product quality, and job satisfaction
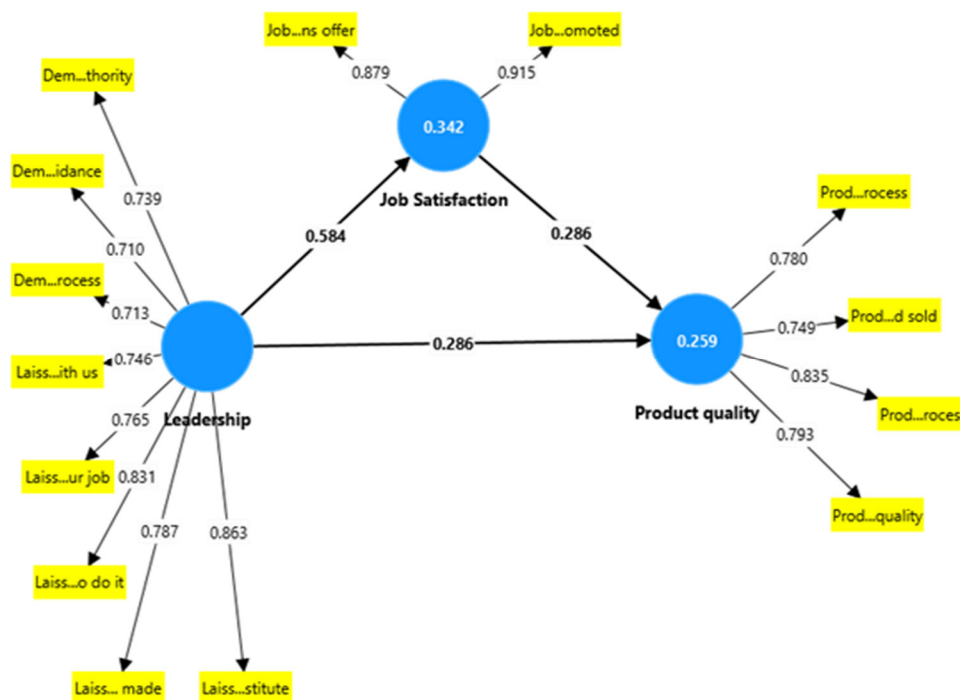
In order to find out the hypothesized structural model, including the R², estimated path coefficients, F-square, corrected bias confidence interval (CI), t-values, and p-value, Table 4 is presented. Based on

the model performance statistics, the proposed model has a good fit to the data. Bootstrapping was used to test the significance of each path (Gonçalves & White, 2005). The model explains 26% of the variance in product quality and 34% in job satisfaction. This provides support for *H1, H2, H3,* and *H4.*

Table 4. Results of partial least squares structural equation modeling

Hypothesized relationship	*Path coefficient*	*Bias-corrected CI*	*F-square*	*T-values*	*P-values*	*Conclusion*
Leadership strategy → Product quality	0.259	0.007	0.073	3.392	0.001	Accept *H1*
Leadership strategy → Job satisfaction	0.584	0.005	0.519	10.465	0.000	Accept *H2*
Job satisfaction → Product quality	0.342	-0.002	0.073	3.025	0.003	Accept *H3*
Leadership strategy → Job satisfaction → Product quality	0.167	0.000	0.304	2.830	0.005	Accept *H4*

5. DISCUSSION

These hypotheses offer a thorough framework for studying the connections between leadership strategies, job satisfaction, and product quality in food industry companies in Jordan. Performing empirical research to evaluate these ideas could offer useful insights for organizational leaders and policymakers seeking to improve quality outcomes in this industry. We can draw conclusions based on our findings and hypothesis testing.

The hypothesis *H1* was approved. Although leadership and job satisfaction are influential aspects of creating product-quality outcomes, they do not work independently. Additional contextual elements, including organizational culture, resources, technology, and external market conditions, can have a substantial impact on the efficacy of quality management systems in a business (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Moreover, a favorable work atmosphere marked by elevated levels of contentment in one's employment cultivates employee involvement, dedication, and voluntary effort, resulting in enhanced outcomes in terms of product quality.

The hypothesis *H2* was accepted. Numerous studies have demonstrated the direct impact of leadership strategies on job satisfaction (Abd Rahman, 2021; Khairunnisa & Nadjib, 2019). Studies repeatedly link transformational leadership, defined by its focus on vision, inspiration, and personalized attention, to increased levels of job satisfaction among employees. However, a pleasant work environment not only increases job satisfaction but also motivates employees to put in extra effort and show dedication to projects aimed at improving quality.

For *H3*, accepted hypothesis findings show that happy workers are more open to training and development initiatives, which are crucial for upholding superior product quality in fast-paced market conditions (Patterson et al., 2004). Continuous learning and skill upgrading empower staff to stay up to date with technical advancements and growing quality requirements. Companies that allocate resources to the professional growth of their employees not only increase job contentment but also provide their personnel with the essential competencies to generate top-notch products.

Finally, the last hypothesis, *H4,* was supported. Findings indicate that a key mediating factor in the relationship between leadership and product quality is job satisfaction. This current research has discovered that job satisfaction acts as a mediator for the impact of leadership on many employee outcomes, such as performance, organizational commitment, and job-related attitudes. When individuals are content with their occupations, they are more inclined to exhibit elevated levels of engagement, commitment, and responsibility in their work, resulting in enhanced product quality outcomes (Irabor & Okolie, 2019).

Furthermore, the research has demonstrated that job satisfaction has a significant role in shaping how employees perceive the assistance they receive from their business. This view, in turn, influences their motivation to dedicate effort to tasks and projects related to maintaining quality. Moreover, the connection between job satisfaction and product quality is mutually influential and always changing. Studies reveal that individuals who experience job satisfaction are more likely to have fewer intentions of leaving their positions and have higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (Bakeer et al., 2021). These activities include assisting colleagues, offering suggestions for improvement, and adhering to quality standards. These activities help create a healthy organizational environment that supports attempts to improve quality.

6. CONCLUSION

This research examined the role of job satisfaction as a mediator between leadership and product quality. 202 participants from food companies in Jordan participated in this research. This research finding proposed that there is a positive relationship between leadership and two factors of product quality and job satisfaction. Moreover, there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and product quality. The results also showed that job satisfaction has a positive role as a mediator between leadership and product quality.

However, this research has a number of limitations. In fact, the population sample of this research was not diverse; a larger sample may improve the generalization of the implied results and may help future research have more robust results. In addition, this research presented the relationship between leadership and product quality in the food industry and job satisfaction as a mediator. Therefore, a future extension of this research would be the inclusion of more mediator variables, such as employees' characteristics and motivation. Moreover, this research analyses food industry employees' opinions about leadership. Future research may investigate food companies' managers' opinions about employees' product quality.

These research findings guide managers who are looking to develop the effectiveness of their employees' product quality. Previous research projected the impact of leadership on the employees' product quality. However, the results of the current research demonstrated that the employees who are job-satisfied are found to be more likely to enhance their product quality. Furthermore, results show that it is important for the managers to understand that the employees who believe in their company leaders are more willing to be able to improve their product quality. The results of this research confirmed that the employees' job satisfaction in food companies

has a positive impact on their product quality. Thus, food company managers should motivate their employees to be more satisfied, creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial to develop their product quality, which will intensify their company's performance and quality of products.

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