



# The Role of Charismatic Leadership in Enhancing Organizational Sustainability: The Mediating Effects of the Grey Wolf Approach – Evidence from Private Universities in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Najih Samin Ahmed 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Project Management, College of Commerce, University of Sulaimani, Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region, IRAQ

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## ABSTRACT:

This study explores the impact of charismatic leadership on organizational sustainability, emphasizing the mediating role of the “Grey Wolf” approach within the private education sector, specifically among private universities in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Employing a quantitative case study methodology, data were collected through a pre-tested structured questionnaire distributed electronically and internally to relevant participants. A total of 97 valid responses were obtained and analyzed statistically. The findings reveal that charismatic leadership, particularly its environmental sensing dimension plays a critical and decisive role in advancing organizational sustainability. Moreover, the Grey Wolf approach significantly enhances this effect as a mediating variable. These dynamics reflect a growing organizational emphasis on the efficient and effective use of available resources to achieve sustainable outcomes in increasingly competitive business environments. Based on the results, the study recommends that the administrations of the surveyed private universities prioritize the development of charismatic leadership practices and the integration of the Grey Wolf approach. These elements should be regarded as strategic assets, essential for fostering adaptability, promoting change, and addressing the evolving challenges of sustainability in modern service-oriented institutions.

**Keywords:** Charismatic leadership; Grey wolf approach; Organizational sustainability; Private universities; Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic and competitive academic environment of higher education institutions, private universities face increasing pressure to maintain their organizational sustainability amid challenges related to funding fluctuations, evolving educational technology, and growing stakeholder demands. The ability of these institutions to survive and thrive depends largely on the effectiveness of their leadership styles [1]. In this context, charismatic leadership is of particular importance due to its ability to transform organizations by motivating individuals, fostering collective commitment, and directing efforts toward achieving long-term goals consistent with the principles of sustainable development [2].

Charismatic leadership is one of the most prominent leadership styles receiving increasing attention in management literature due to its profound impact on motivating individuals and driving organizations toward excellence and sustainability. This leadership style is characterized by leaders' ability to inspire their followers through a vision for the future and emotional connection, in addition to their exceptional skills in building trust and motivation [3]. This type of

\*Corresponding author: [najih.ahmed@univsul.edu.iq](mailto:najih.ahmed@univsul.edu.iq)

leadership also provides opportunities to develop more flexible and efficient models capable of adapting to environmental changes and balancing organizational goals with economic and social considerations [4]. In the context of higher education institutions, the importance of charismatic leadership is growing, given the nature of academic work, which requires balancing educational and research objectives with economic and administrative pressures. Charismatic leaders can create a work environment that encourages creativity and innovation by engaging employees in formulating future visions, motivating them to overcome challenges, and building a spirit of teamwork. Their strong presence within institutions enhances their ability to adapt to rapid changes in the external environment and contributes to establishing organizational sustainability as a primary goal of contemporary higher education strategies [5].

However, the effectiveness of this leadership cannot be achieved in isolation from the behavioral and strategic contexts within which it operates. Here, the "grey wolf approach" emerges as an emerging conceptual framework that links leadership behavioral intelligence with organizational resilience. The gray wolf approach relies on practices derived from the collective behavior of gray wolves, such as hierarchical cooperation, strategic flexibility, team cohesion, and adaptive planning. These are all characteristics that can be integrated within charismatic leadership frameworks to enhance effective organizational performance [6]. Through this integration, charismatic leaders can enhance organizational sustainability by stimulating dynamic organizational responses capable of responding to complex challenges.

Based on the above, the higher education institutions seeking to achieve organizational sustainability in the face of increasing environmental challenges need new leadership models that go beyond traditional frameworks and consider the psychological and behavioral dimensions that influence leader behavior. From this perspective, this study contributes to bridging a significant knowledge gap in the leadership and sustainability literature by exploring the mediating role of "grey wolf" behavior in the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability.

Therefore, the theoretical significance of this study stems from its attempt to present a new conceptual framework that integrates leadership charisma with the behavioral and cultural norms that characterize organizational environments. The study hypothesizes that "grey wolf behavior" represents a psychological and social mechanism through which the effectiveness of charismatic leadership can be enhanced in the academic work environment. Thus, the theoretical originality of this study lies in its highlighting of "grey wolf behavior" as an unconventional behavioral and symbolic approach that can influence the effectiveness of charismatic leaders in guiding their organizations toward more sustainable practices. This unconventional approach represents a qualitative scientific contribution, as it reshapes our understanding of leadership dynamics by blending the charismatic dimension with behavioral and cultural patterns stemming from the local work environment.

Consequently, the central problem statement of this study revolved around exploring how charismatic leadership can be effectively used to promote organizational sustainability and the extent to which the "grey wolf" approach contributes to this relationship. This, in turn, raises a set of fundamental research questions that stimulate a reconsideration of traditional leadership models and contribute to developing our understanding of the relationship between leadership and sustainable organizational behavior:

1. To what extent can the charismatic influence of leadership enhance organizational sustainability?
2. How does "grey wolf" behavior influence the effectiveness of charismatic leaders within business organizations?
3. Can "grey wolf" behavior serve as a mediating mechanism that enhances the influence of charismatic leadership on the adoption of organizational sustainability practices?

On this basis, answering these questions not only contributes to enriching theory, but also provides a practical framework that decision-makers and practitioners can adopt to develop leadership strategies more aligned with the requirements of sustainable development in complex institutional contexts.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In light of the dynamic changes and increasing challenges facing contemporary organizations, there is a growing need for effective leadership models that go beyond traditional leadership styles and enhance organizations' ability to adapt and achieve organizational sustainability. In this context, charismatic leadership has emerged as one of the most influential models for guiding organizational behavior toward achieving long-term strategic goals [7]. This leadership is characterized by its ability to inspire, motivate, and build a collective vision that transcends individual interests, enhancing organizational commitment and institutional innovation [8].

Although numerous studies have confirmed the contribution of charismatic leaders to establishing an organizational culture that supports change and sustainability [9]; [10], this effect has not been unanimously confirmed. Some researchers have suggested that charisma alone may not be sufficient to bring about sustainable change, but rather requires the presence of mediating psychological and behavioral mechanisms that activate this effect within the organizational context [8]; [11]. This disparity in findings points to a gap in our

understanding of the indirect influence mechanisms of charismatic leadership, emphasizing the need to explore new mediators within diverse cultural contexts.

Therefore, the "grey wolf" approach is of particular research interest. It can be considered a symbolic and behavioral framework that embodies leadership qualities based on cohesion, adaptive planning, and leading from the shadows, qualities that may complement or enhance the charismatic influence of leaders. Although this concept has been used in some political and cultural literature, it has not been systematically analyzed or integrated into academic leadership models. It would constitute an original theoretical addition if proposed as a mediating variable in the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability.

It is worth noting that most studies examining charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability have been conducted in Western economic contexts with stable institutional structures, where formal systems and governance play a pivotal role in supporting leadership [12]. In non-Western contexts, particularly in higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, symbolic and cultural interactions play a more prominent role, making the gray wolf approach relevant for understanding how leaders steer their organizations toward more sustainable practices.

In light of the above, the gap this study seeks to address lies in the absence of theoretical models linking charismatic leadership to organizational sustainability from a symbolic behavioral perspective. Furthermore, the gray wolf approach, as a mediating variable that explains the mechanism of leadership charisma in the institutional context, has not received sufficient attention, as has the limited research representation of non-Western cultural and organizational contexts, particularly in higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Accordingly, this study aims to present an integrated conceptual model that combines charismatic leadership traits and symbolic behaviors, represented by the gray wolf approach as a psychological and cultural driver that enhances leaders' ability to lead their organizations toward effective sustainability practices. Thus, theoretically, the study contributes to redirecting the academic debate on the effectiveness of charismatic leadership by employing a previously unexplored symbolic behavioral dimension. It also establishes the concept of charismatic leadership in the organizational literature, particularly in cultural contexts with informal structures. Furthermore, the study expands the validity of Western leadership theories by testing them in a local educational setting (Iraqi Kurdistan), enhancing their cross-cultural relevance. This theoretical approach not only enriches the literature but also provides an analytical tool that can be used to develop alternative leadership strategies that align with the requirements of sustainable development in complex and changing organizational environments. Further details on the study variables and their dimensions are provided below, according to the intended objective.

## 2.1 CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP: CONCEPT AND DEFINITION

Charismatic leadership is a fundamental concept in management and organizational behavior literature, due to its effective impact on motivating individuals and guiding them toward achieving organizational goals [13]. Charisma is highlighted as a fundamental element that distinguishes some leaders from others, as it attracts others and inspires loyalty and trust, even without the need for formal authority [14]. Charisma is viewed as one of three forms of authority [15]. He believed that a charismatic leader possesses exceptional qualities that are considered inspirational or supernatural, which grants him the legitimacy to influence the group. A charismatic leader is distinguished by his ability to present a clear vision for the future, create a sense of collective purpose, and inspire feelings of hope and trust among individuals. Recent studies have shown that charismatic leadership is characterized by an adaptive leadership style, where leaders shape organizational structures by influencing individuals on a personal level [16]. Studies have linked charismatic leadership to various organizational outcomes, including employee motivation, organizational commitment, and performance [17].

Furthermore, the role of charisma is also influenced by cultural dynamics, with many researchers arguing that charisma intersects with cultural norms and values, which shape how individuals view and interact with charismatic leaders. It has been contributed to the mobilization around charismatic leadership in Arab organizations, given that charismatic individuals enjoy a special advantage, particularly in environments that emphasize personal appreciation and genuine loyalty by [18]. Also, it has been pointed out that charismatic leaders in the Arab context are often viewed as "saviors," especially in times of crisis, increasing followers' reliance on them for decision-making, which can be positive or negative depending on the relationship between charisma and local forces by [19].

Charismatic leadership is generally defined as "the ability to inspire and motivate individuals through unique personal qualities and a compelling vision" [14]. The origin of this concept goes back to sociologist Max Weber, who defined charisma as "a type of authority based on exceptional qualities in the leader's personality" [15]. Among the most important characteristics of a charismatic leader are clarity of vision, self-confidence, effective communication skills, and the ability to motivate others.

Charismatic leadership is defined as the attraction of subordinates to a leader who possesses tremendous power and the ability to attract subordinates to an effective personality [20]. Charismatic leadership helps teams become more oriented toward Non-traditional behaviors at the team level, rather than unconventional individual behaviors, by linking team

members' identities to the collective identity of the organization [21]. Charismatic leadership relies on the heroic qualities of the leader's personality rather than formal status. Directing and influencing individuals and subordinates within the organization is achieved through personal relationships and interpersonal communication. These patterns are most evident in informal organizations and among organizations with similar orientations and ideas. It was explained that charismatic leaders inspire team members to engage in divergent thinking and seek the resources necessary to translate this thinking into action [22]. Although observed that the charismatic political leader as focusing on conveying positive emotions and describing a promising future vision by [23], while charismatic leadership as leadership based on values, symbols, and emotion [24]. It is defined as "a personality with exceptional abilities to lead, persuade, and captivate others" [25]. They are also characterized by the ability to inspire others when communicating with them and attract their attention in an unusual way." Finally, it is defined as leadership that gives the leader exceptional powers to attract subordinates to the leader and subordinates to integrate the achievement of their goals with the organization's vision by [26]. It suggests the presence of qualitative abilities and capabilities in the charismatic personality, allowing them the freedom to spread and excel.

## **2.2 CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS**

In this study, the researcher adopted five main dimensions of charismatic leadership: visionary and inspirational communication, risk-taking and innovation, environmental sensing, Non-traditional behavior, and consideration of follower needs. This selection was based on the findings of numerous researchers, including [27]; [26]; [1]; [16] and [14]. These dimensions have been widely accepted in the literature, reflecting their accurate representation of the nature of charismatic leadership. The selection of these dimensions was consistent with the nature of the current study, its objectives, and the field in which it was conducted. This helps guide business organizations, including the organizations under study, toward achieving their goals and promoting the adoption of charismatic leadership practices as an effective approach to supporting organizational sustainability. These dimensions will be explored in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### **2.2.1 VISIONARY AND INSPIRATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

Visionary and inspirational communication is an essential component of charismatic leadership, playing a fundamental role in promoting organizational sustainability. Leaders who possess this dimension are adept at crafting an engaging future vision that resonates with their followers, fostering a shared sense of purpose and direction [28]. Visionary communication enables leaders to formulate sustainability goals that align with the values and aspirations of organizational members [29]. In the context of business, where organizations strive to achieve long-term sustainability amidst social, political, and economic challenges, leaders' ability to inspire and mobilize stakeholders through visionary narratives is critical. This communication not only motivates employees but also fosters commitment to sustainable practices by connecting them to the organization's broader mission and societal contributions [30].

Furthermore, inspirational communication is an effective psychological mechanism that enhances followers' confidence in leadership and increases their willingness to engage in pro-environmental behaviors. A recent study highlights how charismatic leader leverage emotional and symbolic language to influence their followers' cognitive and emotional states, enhancing their engagement with sustainability initiatives [31]. Within the Grey Wolf approach—a culturally resonant leadership model that emphasizes resilience, loyalty, and bold action—visionary and inspirational communication is even more prominent. It bridges the gap between the leader and their followers by evoking shared cultural values, enhancing the leader's moral authority, and motivating the workforce toward achieving sustainability goals [32]. This dimension thus serves as a catalyst for aligning individual and organizational goals, paving the way for transformational change in higher education institutions.

### **2.2.2 RISK-TAKING AND INNOVATION**

Charismatic leadership, characterized by insightful thinking, self-confidence, and a propensity for risk-taking, plays a fundamental role in fostering innovation within organizations. In the context of business organizations, these leadership qualities are essential for establishing a culture that embraces experimentation and continuous improvement. Charismatic leaders often act as catalysts for change by challenging conventional practices and encouraging subordinates to pursue new ideas and unconventional solutions. This leadership style aligns closely with the dimensions of innovation and risk-taking, enabling employees to step outside their comfort zone, take calculated risks, and adopt proactive behaviors that contribute to organizational sustainability [33]; [34]. Recent studies indicate that charismatic leadership has a direct positive impact on organizational innovation, a critical factor in achieving long-term sustainability, particularly in dynamic and competitive sectors such as higher education [35]. Furthermore, charismatic leaders' ability to frame risks positively enables organizations to cope with uncertainty more effectively. In operating environments such as service organizations, where social, political, and economic transformations pose ongoing challenges, the visionary nature of charismatic leaders helps organizations anticipate and adapt to change. By inspiring a shared vision and mobilizing collective commitment, these leaders facilitate the development of innovative practices and sustainable strategies. Incorporating the gray wolf approach—which emphasizes courage, resilience, and adaptability—enhances this effect, as it aligns with the risk-taking and innovation dimensions of charismatic leadership [6]. Empirical evidence from service

organizations supports this view, showing that institutions with charismatic leadership are more likely to implement innovative programs and strategic initiatives that enhance academic quality and institutional sustainability [36].

### **2.2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY**

The environmental sensitivity of charismatic leadership plays a fundamental role in guiding organizations toward sustainability, particularly in the context of private organizations in the Middle East. Environmental sensing refers to a leader's ability to perceive, interpret, and respond to changes in the external environment, such as environmental, social, and organizational pressures, and to strategically integrate this awareness into organizational practices [37]. Charismatic leaders, known for their insightful thinking and deeply held personal values, are particularly effective at identifying environmental opportunities and threats, enabling their organizations to adapt in proactive and innovative ways. This is particularly important in academic institutions, where leadership must navigate dynamic learning environments. A recent regional study of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq confirmed that leadership styles, including charismatic leadership, significantly contribute to establishing an organizational culture that values sustainability and responsiveness to environmental stimuli [38].

Furthermore, environmental sensing enables charismatic leaders to inspire collective action toward sustainability by integrating environmental awareness into the organization's vision and operational strategy. These leaders often demonstrate behaviors that motivate their followers to engage in environmentally responsible activities, embedding sustainability in the organization's identity [39]. This is achieved through mechanisms such as inspirational communication, setting high expectations, and leading by example. In the context of higher education, these leaders can leverage curricula, such as the Grey Wolf Curriculum, to institutionalize sustainability education and promote long-term environmental stewardship. A recent study found that charismatic leadership with strong environmental sensing significantly predicted employee pro-environmental behaviors and organizational alignment with sustainability goals, particularly in service organizations striving to achieve global sustainability standards [40].

### **2.2.4 UNCONVENTIONAL BEHAVIOR**

Non-traditional behavior refers to leaders' tendency to challenge established norms, take calculated risks, and adopt innovative practices that depart from traditional approaches. These behaviors can catalyze significant organizational change and enhance adaptability and resilience in the face of environmental challenges [26]. Non-traditional behavior reflects a leader's willingness to challenge norms, defy bureaucratic constraints, and seek innovative solutions to complex problems [29]. In the context of sustainability, this behavior enables charismatic leaders to question environmentally harmful traditions and launch transformative practices aligned with sustainability values. A study found that charismatic leaders in educational institutions who exhibited Non-traditional behavior were more effective in leading green initiatives and integrating sustainability into organizational strategies [41]. This proactive stance contributes to building an organizational culture that values adaptability, continuous improvement, and environmental responsibility, which are essential factors for long-term sustainability. Furthermore, the effectiveness of Non-traditional behaviors in promoting sustainability can be enhanced through strategic, systematic interventions, such as the "Grey Wolf" approach, which aims to instill environmental and ethical awareness in service settings. Charismatic leaders who support these approaches often do so by modeling risk-taking and forward-looking behaviors, demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainability. As noted in the study numbered [42], when university leaders integrate sustainability-focused educational materials and encourage interdisciplinary innovation, they not only foster environmental awareness among staff and students but also legitimize organizational efforts to address environmental challenges. This synergy between leadership behavior and curricular reform enhances an institution's ability to adapt to changing environmental demands while maintaining academic integrity and social responsibility.

### **2.2.5 CONSIDERATION OF FOLLOWER NEEDS**

This dimension reflects a leader's ability to recognize and support the unique aspirations, values, and development goals of their followers, which in turn enhances motivation and engagement [29]. In the context of sustainability, this type of leadership fosters a participatory environment in which team members feel valued and empowered to contribute to the achievement of long-term environmental and social goals. It has been reported in the study [41] that charismatic leader who prioritized the well-being and development of their followers created more cohesive and sustainability-focused development environments, enabling greater alignment between organizational practices and sustainable development goals. In addition, incorporating the "Grey Wolf" approach, which emphasizes environmental awareness, ethical leadership, and social responsibility, can enhance this leadership dimension. Charismatic leaders, who are sensitive to the needs of their followers, often use these approaches as a tool to enhance employees' sense of purpose and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable action. By involving team members in designing development curricula and providing professional development opportunities in the field of sustainable development, leaders ensure that the organization's goals align with personal growth aspirations [42]. This alignment strengthens followers' organizational identity and collective commitment to sustainability, which in turn enhances the organization's overall environmental and social performance.

## 2.3 GREY WOLF APPROACH: CONCEPT AND MEDIATING ROLE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

In light of the evolving landscape of organizational leadership, particularly in the context of private universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the integration of cultural heritage and modern leadership models has led to the emergence of innovative frameworks aimed at promoting sustainability. One such framework is the Grey Wolf Approach, which represents a bridge between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability. The Grey Wolf Approach is a conceptual framework that integrates cultural symbolism, ethical leadership, and sustainability values. The Grey Wolf Approach draws its inspiration from the Grey Wolf's attributes of wisdom, resilience, guidance, and social responsibility, deeply rooted in folklore and various cultural narratives [43]. In the organizational context, this approach translates these attributes into leadership behaviors that emphasize ethical conduct, visionary thinking, and a strong commitment to community well-being. By aligning leadership practices with cultural values, the gray wolf approach fosters a sense of identity and purpose among organizational members, enhancing their engagement and institutional commitment to sustainability goals [44]. Charismatic leadership, known for its vision, personal influence, and emotional connection with followers, is essential for operationalizing the gray wolf approach. Charismatic leaders in academic institutions in the Kurdistan Region can leverage this approach to inspire and institutionalize sustainable behavior. An assertion exists that charismatic leaders who exhibit unconventional behaviors and demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of their followers are more effective in embedding environmental care values into organizational culture [36]. These leaders often advocate for reforms, such as redesigning service curricula or community sustainability initiatives that reflect global best practices and local traditions, making their impact more lasting and contextually relevant [45].

Thus, this culture-based approach aligns with the principles of charismatic leadership, characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate followers through personal appeal, vision, and a deep understanding of their needs and aspirations. Charismatic leaders who embody the gray wolf approach are adept at articulating a compelling vision for sustainability that aligns with the organization's cultural context, facilitating shared commitment to sustainable practices. Thus, the mediating role of the gray wolf approach is evident in how it translates the abstract qualities of charismatic leadership into organizational and sustainable practices. By emphasizing cultural alignment, ethical reflection, and educational transformation, this approach, in turn, strengthens the link between leadership vision and sustainability outcomes. It also fosters a shared identity among business stakeholders, increasing engagement and long-term commitment to the SDGs. Thus, the Grey Wolf approach is not only a cultural and educational tool, but it also enhances the effectiveness of charismatic leadership in building organizational systems capable of addressing environmental and social challenges [44]. Based on the above, we find that the Grey Wolf approach represents a crucial mediating mechanism in the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability. By providing a culturally consistent framework, this approach enables charismatic leaders to translate their vision and influence into tangible sustainability outcomes. This mediation occurs through several pathways, the most important of which are:

**A. Cultural alignment:** This approach ensures that sustainability initiatives are not viewed as an external imposition, but rather as an integral part of the organization's cultural fabric. This alignment enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of sustainability practices among organizational members.

**B. Enhancing engagement:** By leveraging cultural symbols and narratives, the gray wolf approach fosters a deeper emotional connection between leaders and followers. This connection, in turn, enhances follower engagement and willingness to embrace sustainability initiatives.

**C. Ethical leadership:** This approach emphasizes ethical behavior and social responsibility, which are essential components of both charismatic leadership and sustainability. This focus reinforces the ethical imperative of sustainability, thereby encouraging ethical decision-making at all organizational levels throughout the organization.

## 2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: CONCEPT AND DEFINITION

Organizational sustainability refers to an organization's ability to operate in a way that ensures its long-term sustainability by balancing economic performance, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. This concept has evolved beyond mere compliance, becoming an integral part of strategic planning and risk management. In 2024, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) introduced the ESG Principles, which provide a global framework for environmental, social, and governance practices. These principles aim to support organizations of all sizes in making consistent and transparent sustainability disclosures and decisions [46].

A comprehensive approach to organizational sustainability encompasses multiple dimensions beyond the traditional focus on the environment. The International Sustainability Standards Organization (ISSO) proposed the Organizational Sustainability Model (OSM), highlighting key dimensions: environment, society, ethics, labor, investments, resource use, procurement, business model, and culture. This multidimensional perspective emphasizes that true sustainability requires alignment of an organization's governance, values, and strategies [47].

Leadership plays a Fundamental role in embedding sustainability into an organization's culture. The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) 2024 emphasizes the need for executive leadership and board engagement to promote environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting and integrate sustainability into strategic decision-making. Business leaders are increasingly recognizing the impact of ESG performance on financial results, brand reputation, and access to capital [1]. Therefore, sustainability is no longer simply a matter of compliance; it is a critical factor in long-term business success.

Despite this progress, many organizations still struggle to fully integrate sustainability into their core operations. A recent study by The Conference Board (2024) revealed that less than a third of companies have implemented comprehensive sustainability programs. Barriers include poor cultural integration of sustainability values and ineffective communication with stakeholders about sustainability initiatives. To overcome these obstacles, organizations must redesign their structures and policies to reflect sustainability priorities at all operational levels. [48].

Therefore, the concept of organizational sustainability sometimes referred to as administrative or institutional sustainability has become one of the most important management areas that have received significant attention, particularly in organizations concerned with long-term sustainability, environmental issues, social responsibility, and sustainable development. However, the concept of organizational sustainability remains shrouded in ambiguity regarding its definition, indicators, measurement, and achievement. In brief, organizational sustainability as the achievement of the concept of sustainability in the administrative field or in administrative affairs related to organizations of various types in society [36]. Other definitions of organizational sustainability include the following:

- **Organizational sustainability** is the practices an organization follows to maintain the continuity of its operations and activities efficiently and effectively at the economic, social, and environmental levels [49].
- **Organizational sustainability** is the extent to which an organization has organizational structures capable of performing its required roles, including serving society and contributing to achieving sustainable development [50].
- **Organizational sustainability** is the organization's ability to continue, achieve success, progress, and meet the current needs of its beneficiaries, without this negatively impacting its ability to meet the future needs of these beneficiaries [51].

## 2.5 ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY DIMENSION

Organizational sustainability embodies a multidimensional approach to ensuring long-term success, balancing economic performance with social responsibility and environmental conservation. These dimensions—environmental, social, and economic—are often referred to as the "triple aim." They have been recognized by numerous researchers in this field, such as [52]; [53]; [54]; [55] and [56]. The environmental dimension focuses on reducing the ecological footprint, promoting green innovations, and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations. The social dimension focuses on ethical practices, employee well-being, community engagement, and equity. The economic dimension includes financial viability and efficient resource management. Together, these dimensions lead organizations toward sustainable development that benefits stakeholders and the planet. These dimensions are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

## 2.6 THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

The environmental dimension of organizational sustainability has received increasing practical attention in recent years, amid increasing pressure on businesses from stakeholders, regulators, and the public to mitigate their environmental impacts. In response, many companies are implementing a range of environmentally sustainable practices, including energy efficiency, waste reduction, water resource management and green product innovation [57]. investments in environmental sustainability not only contribute to reducing long-term operating costs but also enhance a company's reputation and competitive advantage [58]. These organizations are gradually integrating environmental management systems and adopting circular economy principles in line with international environmental standards and ensuring their long-term sustainability.

As a result, the environmental dimension has become a strategic imperative within sustainability agendas. Leadership, particularly charismatic leadership, plays a Fundamental role in achieving environmental goals by fostering a culture of environmental responsibility and ethical behavior. Through inspiring motivation and a clear environmental vision, these leaders play an effective role in embedding sustainability values into all organizational practices. leadership styles characterized by ethical orientation and innovative motivation significantly influence the adoption of sustainable practices, especially in-service organizations, as leaders who demonstrated a strong environmental commitment and greater attractiveness were more effective in mobilizing institutional efforts towards environmentally conscious operations [59].

## 2.7 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

In the past few years, organizational sustainability has emerged as a multidimensional concept, critical to long-term corporate sustainability. Previously focused on environmental aspects, the sustainability discourse has expanded to include social dimensions that directly impact a company's resilience, risk profile, and strategic direction. The social dimension, often viewed as the "core pillar of sustainability" has received significant attention from researchers and practitioners alike due to its profound impact on workforce dynamics, community relations, and reputational capital [55]. This expanded understanding recognizes that organizations operate within complex social and economic systems, where internal and external stakeholders increasingly expect ethical behavior, social justice, and human-centered practices [57].

Empirical research has provided increasing evidence that social sustainability initiatives are not only morally desirable but also economically rational. For example, a strong link between social responsibility practices and employer standing, finding that organizations perceived as socially just attract and retain top talent more effectively pointed out in [60]. These findings highlight that social sustainability practices are increasingly integrated into performance management systems, indicating a strategic shift from short-term operational objectives to long-term value creation. From the perspective of service organizations, the social dimension of organizational sustainability plays a vital role in enhancing corporate legitimacy and operational sustainability. Social sustainability also includes practices that ensure fair treatment of employees, promote inclusiveness, and maintain ethical relationships with local communities and suppliers. By incorporating these practices into their core strategies, organizations not only boost employee morale and productivity but also enhance their ability to operate in competitive and socially conscious markets [61].

## 2.8 THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The economic dimension of organizational sustainability is fundamental for private organizations seeking to achieve long-term sustainability and a competitive advantage. This dimension includes financial performance, cost efficiency, risk management, and strategic investments that align with sustainable practices. Recent studies have shown that companies that incorporate sustainable financial management approaches—such as those based on the "economics for the common good" framework—often experience improvements in their competitiveness and financial stability. This positive effect has been observed across different sizes of organizations and sectors, indicating that sustainability-oriented strategies are economically beneficial regardless of firm size [62].

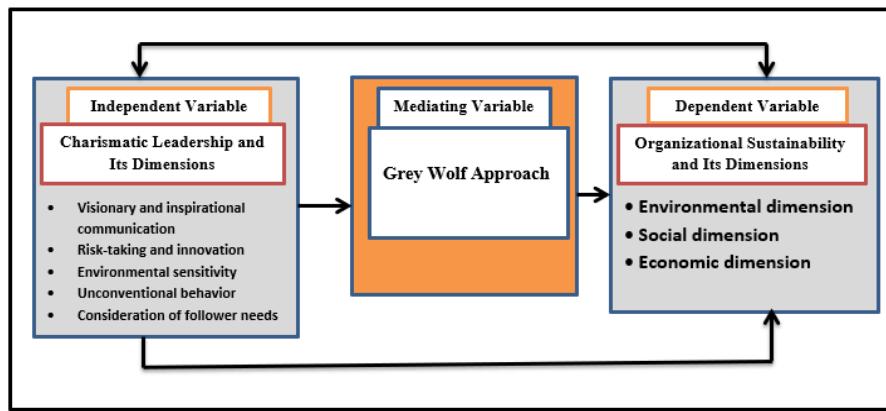
In addition, implementing environmentally sustainable practices contributes significantly to economic sustainability. Companies that adopt practices such as waste reduction, green energy use, and environmentally responsible production often report increased profitability and operational efficiency. This connection supports the "ability-motivation-opportunity" (AMO) theory, which explains how organizational resources, employee engagement, and innovation opportunities can lead to better environmental and economic outcomes [63]. Essentially, economic sustainability and environmental responsibility in business are not in conflict, but rather mutually reinforcing.

## 3 METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This paper uses descriptive data with a major focus on how the mediating role played by the gray wolf approach explains the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability. Thus, this section explains the methodological approach taken in this study in relation to the study model, hypothesis development, data collection methodology.

### 3.1 STUDY MODEL

A systematic approach to the study's problem, considering its core content and the questions it seeks to address requires the development of a hypothetical model designed to achieve the study's objectives. This model is grounded in the analysis of relationships (both correlation and influence), drawing upon relevant previous research related to the subject. The arrows in the hypothetical model, as illustrated in Figure (1), represent the logical flow of relationships among the variables: the independent variable (charismatic leadership), the mediating variable (the Grey Wolf approach), and the dependent variable (organizational sustainability).



**FIGURE 1. Study Model**

(Source: Prepared and proposed by the researcher)

### 3.2 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Based on the study model and by depending on the literature review in the current study, the following hypotheses were drafted as they align with the objectives and content of the study.

*H1: Charismatic leadership has a strong role in the organizational sustainability of the private universities under study.*

*H2: Charismatic leadership dimensions have a strong role in the organizational sustainability of the private universities under study.*

*H3: Charismatic leadership has a strong role in the gray wolf approach of the private universities under study.*

*H4: Charismatic leadership dimensions have a strong role in the gray wolf approach of the private universities under study.*

*H5: Gray wolf approach has a strong role in the organizational sustainability of the private universities under study.*

*H6: Charismatic leadership has an indirect strong role in the organizational sustainability through the mediating role of the Gray Wolf approach of the private universities under study.*

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

This study relied on descriptive and analytical data to understand and explain the mechanisms through which the Grey Wolf approach contributes as a mediating variable to clarifying the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability. A stratified random sampling method was used as a statistical procedure to ensure equal and accurate representation of the study population, which consists of four private universities in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Cihan University, University of Human Development, Komar University, and Tishk University. A questionnaire was used as the primary tool for collecting quantitative data. It was designed to suit the specific organizational environment of the targeted institutions, following a comprehensive review of the scientific literature and previous studies relevant to the study variables. The initial version of the questionnaire was presented to a committee of academics and experts specializing in the fields of management and organization, and its content was modified based on their feedback to ensure the highest levels of validity and relevance to the study population.

The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: the first section covered demographic data (such as gender, age, educational level, and years of experience), while the second section focused on charismatic leadership and its dimensions as the independent variable, in addition to the Grey Wolf approach as the mediating variable. The third section addressed organizational sustainability indicators as the dependent variable. A five-point Likert scale was used to assess participants' responses, with the level of agreement with each item ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). To ensure a sufficient response rate and analyzable data, the questionnaires were distributed electronically via internal corporate communication channels (such as Viber and WhatsApp), which contributed to increasing response rates and reducing invalid questionnaires. This process resulted in 97 completed questionnaires, which were used as the final sample for statistical analysis.

It is worth noting that although the study population included a group of private universities in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the researcher faced challenges that prevented him from achieving

complete freedom in collecting the targeted number of questionnaires. Some administrative and routine procedures in these institutions hindered the process of distributing questionnaires, whether electronically or by paper means, which constitutes one of the recurring challenges facing researchers in the research work environment within the region. This is partly due to the complex security conditions facing Iraq in general and the Kurdistan Region in particular, which negatively impacts the flexibility of accessing participants and collecting the necessary data. Despite these obstacles, the researcher was able to collect (97) questionnaires suitable for analysis. Private universities in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq were chosen as the study population due to their close connection to the research topic and problem, which enhances the study's ability to achieve its objectives. The target sample included a group of deans, department heads, and faculty members, as well as administrative and technical cadres at these universities.

The selection of Sulaymaniyah Governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as the study area stems from several academic and methodological reasons related to the nature of the educational environment and the prevailing organizational context in this region. These reasons include:

First, Sulaymaniyah Governorate is one of the region's most prominent academic centers, with a large number of private universities and colleges that have witnessed remarkable growth in recent years. This makes it a suitable setting for studying leadership styles and organizational sustainability practices in private higher education institutions.

Second, Sulaymaniyah Governorate is characterized by the diversity of administrative structures and organizational cultures within its academic institutions, providing a valuable opportunity to analyze the mutual influence of charismatic leadership and unconventional methodologies, such as the "Grey Wolf Approach," in promoting sustainability practices.

Third, Sulaymaniyah Governorate is showing increasing interest in developing administrative leadership in the higher education sector, alongside the challenges these institutions face in balancing institutional growth with sustainability requirements. This highlights the need for in-depth studies that shed light on the leadership dynamics affecting this field.

### 3.4 STUDY RESULTS ANALYSIS

This section highlights the survey results and the statistical methods used to test the hypotheses. This approach undoubtedly plays an important role in deepening our understanding of the role of charismatic leadership in promoting organizational sustainability through the mediating effects of the Grey Wolf approach. Therefore, the next section discusses the sample distribution according to the demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, academic achievement, and university service duration); this is followed by a discussion of the current study's hypothesis testing, based on the analysis used (correlation and regression analysis).

### 3.5 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The current section is a brief description of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Simple frequency counts were used to categorize the participants on the basis of the following personal information, like gender, age, academic achievement and university service duration (see Table 1). Further details on these characteristics are provided below.

**Gender:** The data in table 1, show that the gender composition of the sample is slightly male (58.8%), while females account for (41.2%). This distribution indicates that although the number of male academic and administrative staff members slightly exceeds that of females, there is a relatively balanced representation, enhancing the possibility of generalizing the results across genders. It also indicates that the perspectives of both males and females are likely to influence **perceptions** of charismatic leadership and institutional sustainability.

**Age Groups:** Table 1, reflects the age distribution of the young academic workforce in the middle of their careers. The highest percentage of the study sample was in the age group (30 years and younger) at (34.0%), followed by the age group (31-40 and 41-50 years) at (29.9%), and then the age group (50 years and older) at (6.2%). Accordingly, these figures indicate that the majority of participants were under the age of fifty, indicating a dynamic, change-oriented corporate culture. This demographic group is of particular importance in leadership and sustainability studies, as younger professionals in the middle of their careers may be more receptive to progressive leadership styles, such as charismatic leadership and innovation-based sustainability practices.

**Table 1. Gender**

Male		Female	
Number	%	Number	%
57	58.8	40	41.2

**Table 2. Age group**

30 years and younger		From 31-40		From 41-50		More than 50	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
33	34.0	29	29.9	29	229.9	6	6.2

**Table 3. Academic Achievement**

High school		Higher Diploma		Bachelor's		Master's		PHD	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	1.0	1	1.0	20	20.6	39	40.2	36	37.1

**Table 4. University Service Duration**

1-5		6-10		10 years and above	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
41	42.7	29	30.2	26	27.1

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results of the statistical analysis

**Academic Achievement:** Table 3, shows that the majority of study participants hold a master's degree (40.2%), followed by those with a doctorate degree (37.1%). As for the remaining study participants, those with a diploma and a high school diploma (1.0%) are in close proportions. These results indicate that the majority of participants hold postgraduate degrees (master's or doctorate), which is consistent with the academic context of private universities. This highly educated sample is likely to have a comprehensive understanding of leadership concepts and sustainability issues, which strengthens the validity of the data related to the gray wolf approach and charismatic leadership.

**University Service Duration:** From table 4, we conclude that the majority of study participants had between one and five years of service (41 participants, representing 42.7%), followed by six to ten years (29 participants, representing 30.2%), and then participants with more than ten years of service (26 participants, representing 27.1%). Thus, the data indicate that a large proportion of participants were new employees with relatively medium service and experience. This distribution is relevant to the study, as individuals with between one and ten years of service and experience are more influenced by current leadership styles and institutional sustainability strategies, with their experiences reflecting contemporary organizational dynamics within private universities.

### 3.6 HYPOTHESIS TESTING OF STUDY

The current study relied on correlation analysis and regression analyses to test the study's hypotheses. The following are more details about the results of these analyses:

#### 3.6.1 CORRELATION AND REGRESSION ANALYSES FOR VARIABLES

SPSS (version 28) was used to test the correlation and regression analyses of the hypotheses contained in the study's methodology. The hypothesis tests were as follows:

**H1:** *Charismatic leadership has a strong role in the organizational sustainability of the private universities under study.*

Based on this hypothesis, the results presented in table 5 provide strong empirical support, with consistent statistical evidence for charismatic leadership and its role in enhancing organizational sustainability. The academic analysis showed that the correlation coefficient between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability was 0.848, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level, confirming that as perceptions of charismatic leadership increase, so do practices and outcomes associated with organizational sustainability within the private universities included in the study. As well as, the academic and professional analysis of the impact of charismatic leadership on organizational sustainability indicates a high R<sup>2</sup> value (71.9%), confirming that charismatic leadership explains approximately 72% of the variance in organizational sustainability, which is a significant percentage. The F statistic is also highly statistically significant, indicating that the regression model fits the data well. Furthermore, the regression coefficient (B = 0.904) and the statistically significant t-value confirm that charismatic leadership exerts a strong and direct positive effect on enhancing sustainability practices in the private universities under study. Therefore,

the above results mean that the first main hypothesis of the section on testing the role above in the current study is achieved.

**Table 5. Results of Testing Role of Charismatic Leadership and Its Dimensions in Organizational Sustainability**

Dependent Variable (Organizational Sustainability)	Correlation	Statistical Significance	R <sup>2</sup> Correlation Coefficient	(F) Statistics	Statistical Significance	(B) Regression Coefficient	(T) Value	Statistical Significance	
Charismatic Leadership Dimensions	<b>Visionary and Inspirational Communication</b>	<b>0.720**</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.518</b>	<b>102.052</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.761</b>	<b>10.102</b>	<b>0.000</b>
	<b>Risk-taking and Innovation</b>	<b>0.779**</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.607</b>	<b>146.836</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.758</b>	<b>12.118</b>	<b>0.000</b>
	<b>Environmental Sensitivity</b>	<b>0.810**</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.656</b>	<b>181.062</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.720</b>	<b>13.456</b>	<b>0.000</b>
	<b>Unconventional Behavior</b>	<b>0.747**</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.559</b>	<b>120.187</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.750</b>	<b>10.963</b>	<b>0.000</b>
	<b>Consideration of follower needs</b>	<b>0.678**</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.460</b>	<b>81.012</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.545</b>	<b>9.001</b>	<b>0.000</b>
	<b>Charismatic Leadership Variable</b>	<b>0.848**</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.719</b>	<b>243.361</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.904</b>	<b>15.600</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Source: Prepared by the researcher from the outputs of the SPSS-28 program

\* Significant at the (0.05) level \*\* Significant at the (0.01) level 97N= F tabular = 4.08

**H2: Charismatic leadership dimensions have a strong role in the organizational sustainability of the private universities under study.**

It is noted from Table (5) above that the results of the tests related to the dimensions of the second main hypothesis were as follows:

- Visionary and inspirational communication:** According to the results of table 5, there is a positive correlation of (0.720\*\*) between visionary and inspirational communication and organizational sustainability, which is good at the significance level of 0.00. This dimension reflects the leader's ability to formulate a convincing vision and motivate others. The high regression coefficient (B = 0.761) also indicates that with every unit increase in the application of visionary and inspirational communication by university leaders, there is a corresponding and significant increase in perceived organizational sustainability. The F value (102.052) and t value (10.102) are both statistically significant at the 0.01 level, confirming the reliability and explanatory power of the model. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates that visionary and inspirational communication explains approximately 51.8% of the variance in organizational sustainability. Accordingly, these results confirm that leaders' ability to communicate a compelling vision, clarify long-term goals, and inspire commitment among subordinates is a vital driver of sustainability in academic institutions.
- Risk-taking and innovation:** According to the results of table 5 of the correlation matrix, it became clear that there is a positive correlation between risk, innovation, and organizational sustainability (0.779\*\*), which is a good percentage at the significance level (0.00). This dimension indicates the leader's willingness to accept uncertainty and foster creativity. The results of table 5 also confirm that the high regression coefficient (B = 0.758) indicates that a one-unit increase in risk-taking and innovation behavior leads to a 0.758-unit increase in organizational sustainability, highlighting a statistically significant impact. Both the F statistic (146.836) and t-value (12.118) are highly statistically significant, reinforcing the robustness of the relationship between the risk-taking and innovation dimensions and organizational sustainability. Furthermore, the high R<sup>2</sup> value (0.607) confirms that risk-taking and innovation have high predictive power for this independent variable. This indicates that 60.7% of the variance in

organizational sustainability is attributable to risk-taking and innovation behavior in leadership, an indicator of strong explanatory power.

3. **Environmental sensitivity:** In light of the results of table 5 of the correlation matrix, it appears that there is a positive correlation between environmental sensing and organizational sustainability ( $0.810^{**}$ ), which is a very good relationship at the significance level (0.00). Accordingly, environmental sensing shows the strongest individual correlation with sustainability among the dimensions. As well as, the impact of environmental sensing on enhancing organizational sustainability is evident in the results of table 5, which reflect a positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.720$ ). This means that every one-unit increase in environmental sensing leads to a 0.720-unit improvement in organizational sustainability, indicating a strong practical impact. The significant  $F$  (181.062) and  $t$  (13.456) statistical values also enhance the strength and reliability of the model. Furthermore, the  $R^2$  value (0.656) indicates a high level of explanatory power. This demonstrates that 65.6% of the variance in organizational sustainability can be explained by leaders' ability to sense the environment, reflecting significant explanatory power. Accordingly, the correlation and regression measures confirm that leaders who demonstrate strong environmental awareness are better able to implement adaptive and forward-looking strategies that are consistent with enhancing organizational sustainability.
4. **Unconventional behavior:** The results of table 5 indicated that there is a strong positive correlation between unconventional behavior and organizational sustainability ( $0.747^{**}$ ) at a significance level of (0.00). Accordingly, unconventional behavior reflects the leader's tendency to challenge norms and introduce new approaches. The results of Table 2 also indicate the presence of a significant impact of the dimension of unconventional behavior in promoting organizational sustainability. This dimension, defined as a leader's willingness to challenge norms, adopt unique approaches, and take bold and unconventional actions, shows a remarkable and statistically significant impact on promoting organizational sustainability. Relevant statistics indicate that the  $R^2$  coefficient of 0.559 accounts for more than half of the variance in organizational sustainability, reflecting high explanatory power. This value indicates that 55.9% of the variance in organizational sustainability can be explained by this leadership trait alone. Furthermore, the positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.750$ ) also shows a significant positive impact, meaning that increased unconventional behaviors among leaders are associated with higher sustainability outcomes. Furthermore, the high  $F$  and  $t$  values, along with the significance levels ( $p = 0.000$ ), confirm the robustness and reliability of this relationship.
5. **Consideration of follower needs:** In the results of table 5, it became clear that there is a positive correlation between consideration of follower needs of followers and organizational sustainability ( $0.678^{**}$ ), which is a somewhat desirable ratio at the significance level (0.00). Although this correlation is slightly lower than the other dimensions, it is still positive and significant. It indicates that empathetic and supportive leadership promotes a values-based culture that is consistent with sustainability principles, especially in academic environments where human capital is pivotal. Also, interpreting the results indicates that the  $R^2$  value of 0.460 means that 46% of the variance in organizational sustainability can be explained by this leadership behavior alone (consideration of follower needs), demonstrating significant explanatory power. The positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.545$ ) also indicates that increased leaders' attention to followers' needs is associated with a similar improvement in sustainability outcomes. The high statistical significance ( $F = 81.012$ ;  $t = 9.001$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) confirms the reliability and validity of this effect. Accordingly, these results are consistent with the theories of transformational and charismatic leadership, particularly the idea that attention to the individual needs of followers enhances commitment, engagement, and a shared sense of purpose. **Thus, the above results indicate that the second main hypothesis is met.**

### **H3: Charismatic leadership has a strong role in the gray wolf approach of the private universities under study.**

The above hypothesis indicated the existence of a direct and significant role of charismatic leadership on the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach in the private universities under study. Based on the professional and academic analysis of this hypothesis, the results presented in Table 6 provide compelling statistical evidence supporting this proposed hypothesis; where this analysis of the relationship between charismatic leadership and the Grey Wolf approach showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient between charismatic leadership and the Grey Wolf approach was 0.886, with a  $p$ -value of 0.000. This indicates a very strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the magnitude of this correlation confirms that charismatic leadership behaviors are fully consistent with the core elements of the Grey Wolf approach in the context of private universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. As well as, the analysis demonstrates a strong and statistically significant effect of charismatic leadership on the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach in the private universities under study. The overall correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.886$ ) between charismatic leadership and the gray wolf approach reflects a very strong and positive relationship, indicating that as the degree of charismatic leadership increases, the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach improves significantly. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.785$ ) also indicates that 78.5% of the variance in the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach can be explained by charismatic leadership, demonstrating high explanatory power. Furthermore, the regression coefficient ( $B = 0.894$ ), coupled with a highly significant  $t$ -value ( $t = 18.629$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), confirms that the effect of charismatic

leadership is not only statistically significant but also practically substantial. This reinforces the substantial and statistically significant influence of charismatic leadership on strategic behavior, consistent with the gray wolf model, which demands transformational, inspirational, and flexible leadership due to its unconventional strategies, environmental acumen, and measured risk tolerance—the hallmarks of charismatic leadership, which are fully consistent with the behavioral and cognitive foundations of the gray wolf model.

**Table 6. Results of Testing Role of Charismatic Leadership and Its Dimensions on Gray Wolf Approach effectiveness**

Dependent Variable (Gray Wolf Approach)	Correlation	Statistical Significance	R <sup>2</sup> Correlation Coefficient	(F) Statistics	Statistical Significance	(B) Regression Coefficient	(T) Value	Statistical Significance	
Charismatic Leadership Dimensions	<b>Visionary and Inspirational Communication</b>	0.724**	0.000	0.525	104.887	0.000	0.725	10.241	0.000
	<b>Risk-taking and Innovation</b>	0.810**	0.000	0.657	181.579	0.000	0.747	13.475	0.000
	<b>Environmental Sensitivity</b>	0.820**	0.000	0.672	194.576	0.000	0.690	13.949	0.000
	<b>Unconventional Behavior</b>	0.794**	0.000	0.630	161.561	0.000	0.754	12.711	0.000
	<b>Consideration of follower needs</b>	0.747**	0.000	0.557	119.598	0.000	0.568	10.936	0.000
	<b>Charismatic Leadership Variable</b>	0.886**	0.000	0.785	347.045	0.000	0.894	18.629	0.000

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher from the outputs of the (SPSS-28) program.

**H4: Charismatic leadership dimensions have a strong role in the gray wolf approach of the private universities under study.**

It is noted from table 6 above that the results of the tests related to the dimensions of the fourth main hypothesis were as follows:

- Visionary and inspirational communication:** The results table 6 shows a positive relationship (0.724\*\*) between visionary and inspirational communication and the gray wolf approach, which is good at the significance level (0.00). This dimension reflects the leader's ability to formulate a convincing future vision and inspire his followers. In addition, the coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> (0.525) explains approximately 52.5% of the variance in the effectiveness of the Grey Wolf approach based on the visionary and inspirational communication dimension. In addition, the value (F = 104.887) and (p = 0.000) explain a significant amount of the variance in the dependent variable. Furthermore, the regression coefficient B (0.725) confirms that a one-unit increase in visionary and inspirational communication leads to a 0.725-unit increase in the effectiveness of the Grey Wolf approach, assuming other factors are constant. The t-value (10.241) also confirms that the regression coefficient is significantly different from zero.
- Risk-taking and innovation:** According to the results of table 6, it became clear that there is a positive correlation between risk-taking and innovation and the gray wolf approach (0.810\*\*), which is a very good percentage at the significance level (0.00). This close correlation indicates that leaders who are open to experimentation, innovation, and risk are the most consistent with the gray wolf metaphor. The results of the same table also confirm the existence of a significant impact of the risk-taking and innovation dimension on the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach. The high regression coefficient (B = 0.747) indicates that a one-unit increase in risk-taking and innovation is associated with a 0.747-unit increase in the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach, assuming other factors remain constant. Both the F statistic (181.579) and the t value (13.475) are highly statistically significant, reinforcing the robustness of the relationship between the risk-taking and innovation dimensions, one of the dimensions of charismatic leadership, and the gray wolf approach. Furthermore, the high R<sup>2</sup> value (0.657) confirms that risk-taking

and innovation have high predictive power for this independent variable. These results indicate that approximately 65.7% of the variance in the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach can be explained by the risk-taking and innovation dimensions.

- 3- **Environmental sensitivity:** In light of the results of table 6, it appears that there is a positive correlation between environmental sensing and the gray wolf approach (0.820\*\*), which is a very good relationship at the significance level (0.00). Therefore, this is the strongest correlation among the leadership dimensions. It is evident that leaders who understand and respond to internal and external environments reflect the strategic awareness and contextual intelligence of the gray wolf model, which are essential for dealing with dynamic learning environments. The impact of environmental sensing on the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach is also evident in the results of Table (3), which reflect a positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.690$ ), indicating that a one-unit increase in the environmental sensing dimension corresponds to a significant increase in the gray wolf approach by 69%. As well as the significant statistical values of  $F$  (194.576) and  $t$  (13.949), they enhance the strength and reliability of the model. Furthermore, the  $R^2$  value (0.672) indicates a high level of explanatory power. This, in turn, explains approximately 67.2% of the variance in the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach through environmental sensing. The high correlation ( $R^2$ ) and statistically significant regression measures confirm that leaders who demonstrate strong environmental awareness are better able to implement adaptive and forward-looking strategies consistent with the gray wolf approach.
- 4- **Unconventional behavior:** The results of table 6 indicate a strong positive correlation between unconventional behavior and the gray wolf approach (0.794\*\*) at a significance level of 0.00. Therefore, it appears that unconventional behavior, defined as a deviation from traditional practices, is closely related to the gray wolf approach. This suggests that non-traditional and visionary behaviors are not only acceptable but perhaps even expected from leaders who adhere to the gray wolf model. According to the results of the same table, the high regression coefficient ( $B = 0.754$ ) indicates that a one-unit increase in unconventional behavior is associated with a 75.4% increase in the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach, assuming other factors are constant. Both the  $F$  statistic (161.561) and the  $t$  value (12.711) are highly statistically significant, strengthening the robustness of the relationship between the unconventional behavior dimension and the gray wolf approach. Furthermore, the  $R^2$  value (0.630) confirms that unconventional behavior has acceptable predictive power for this independent variable. These results indicate that approximately 63% of the variance in the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach can be explained by the non-traditional behavior dimension. This finding, in turn, confirms that leaders who challenge conventional norms and demonstrate creative, boundary-pushing behaviors are best able to successfully implement complex and adaptive strategies, such as the gray wolf approach, especially in competitive and evolving educational environments.
- 5- **Consideration of follower needs:** In the results of table 6, it became clear that there is a positive correlation between consideration of follower needs and the Grey Wolf approach (0.747\*\*), which is a good percentage at the significance level (0.00). This significant relationship demonstrates that empathy, support, and attention to individual needs are essential components of the Grey Wolf approach. It also confirms that strong leadership is not limited to a strategic vision but also includes a deep and effective relationship with followers. Furthermore, there is a significant impact of the dimension of consideration of follower needs on the effectiveness of the Grey Wolf approach. The interpretation of the results indicates that an  $R^2$  value of 0.557 means that 55.7% of the variance in the effectiveness of the Grey Wolf approach is due to considering followers' needs, indicating the high explanatory power of this leadership dimension. The positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.568$ ) also indicates that increased leaders' consideration of followers' needs is associated with a corresponding improvement in the outcomes of the Grey Wolf approach. The high statistical significance ( $F = 119.598$ ;  $t = 10.936$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) confirms the reliability and validity of this effect. Thus, these data reveal that when leaders prioritize empathy, support, and individual attention, they foster greater engagement and consensus, two key factors that enhance the implementation of bold strategic models such as the Grey Wolf approach. **Hence, all these results for the mentioned dimensions indicate the validity of the fourth main hypothesis (H4) mentioned above.**

**H5: Gray wolf approach has a strong role in the organizational sustainability of the private universities under study.**

Based on hypothesis (H5) above, the data presented in table 7 provide strong empirical support for this hypothesis through the presence of a positive and highly statistically significant correlation between the two variables. Academic analysis of the relationship showed that the correlation between the Grey Wolf approach and organizational sustainability was 0.884, with a  $p$ -value of 0.000, indicating a strong positive and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level. This suggests that with the increase in leadership practices rooted in the Grey Wolf approach, levels of organizational sustainability in private universities also tend to improve significantly.

The results presented in the same table also provide compelling statistical evidence supporting this proposed hypothesis (H5). The analysis demonstrates a strong and statistically significant effect of the gray wolf approach on enhancing organizational sustainability in the private universities under study. The overall correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.884$ ) between the gray wolf approach and organizational sustainability reflects a very strong and positive relationship, indicating that as the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach increases, organizational sustainability improves

significantly. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.781$ ) also indicates that approximately 78.1% of the variance in organizational sustainability can be explained by the gray wolf approach, which has significant predictive power and reflects the robustness of the model. Moreover, the regression coefficient ( $B = 0.934$ ), along with the highly significant t-value ( $t = 18.419, p = 0.000$ ), confirms that the impact of the gray wolf approach is not only statistically significant but also practically significant. This finding thus highlights the strategic value of the gray wolf approach in promoting resilience, adaptability, and long-term sustainable growth in the academic sector. Accordingly, the results of the above analysis indicate that the fifth main hypothesis (H5) is confirmed.

**Table 7. Impact of the gray wolf approach in enhancing organizational sustainability**

Dependent Variable (Organizational Sustainability)	Correlation	Statistical Significance	R <sup>2</sup> Correlation Coefficient	(F) Statistics	Statistical Significance	(B) Regression Coefficient	(T) Value	Statistical Significance
Gray Wolf Approach	0.884**	0.000	0.781	339.251	0.000	0.934	18.419	0.000

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher from the outputs of the (SPSS-28) program.

**H6: Charismatic leadership has an indirect strong role in the organizational sustainability through the mediating role of the Gray Wolf approach of the private universities under study.**

The results in table 8 demonstrate high statistical significance, supporting the sixth hypothesis (H6), which states that charismatic leadership has a strong indirect effect on improving organizational sustainability through the mediating role of the gray wolf approach in the context of the private universities studied. The direct path from charismatic leadership to organizational sustainability indicates a positive and significant effect ( $\beta = 0.286, t = 6.03, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the charismatic leadership style directly contributes to improving organizational sustainability, even in the absence of mediating factors. The overall indirect effect, mediated by the gray wolf approach as a mediating variable, was significantly stronger ( $\beta = 0.618, t = 9.21, p < 0.001$ ), confirming the critical role of the gray wolf approach in strengthening the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational sustainability. This fundamental difference between direct and indirect effects demonstrates that mediation by the gray wolf approach, in whole or in part, represents a key mechanism through which charismatic leadership exerts its deepest and most lasting impact.

**Table 8. Shows the direct and indirect effect of the sixth hypothesis (H6)**

Path	Type of Impact	( $\beta$ )	(SE)	t-value	p-value	Sig
(CL) → (GW) → (OS)	Total direct impact	0.286	0.071	6.03	<.001	.000
(CL) → (GW) → (OS)	Total indirect impact	0.618	.0579	9.21	<.001	.000

**Note:** Charismatic Leadership (CL); Grey Wolf (GW); Organizational Sustainability (OS)

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher from the outputs of the SPSS-28 program

Theoretically, these findings support behavioral models that argue that charismatic leadership does not operate in isolation from context or complementary approaches. Rather, its effectiveness is enhanced when its strategic insights are translated into practical models, such as the gray wolf approach, which emphasizes flexibility, boldness, and adaptability in complex organizational environments.

## 1. Study Results Discussion

The results of the current study highlight the pivotal role of charismatic leadership and its dimensions in enhancing the effectiveness of the gray wolf approach and overall organizational sustainability in private universities. The results, supported by correlation and regression analyses, show statistically significant relationships at the 0.01 level, confirming the robustness and reliability of the results. The findings in Table (2) show that all dimensions of charismatic leadership are positively and statistically significantly related to both the gray wolf approach and organizational sustainability. These results confirm the interconnected and reinforcing roles of leadership vision, innovation, adaptability, and follower engagement in enhancing organizational resilience and sustainability.

As shown in the same table, charismatic leadership has a positive impact on organizational sustainability. Among the dimensions, environmental sensitivity ( $r = 0.81$ ), risk-taking, and innovation ( $r = 0.779$ ) had significant effects. These results are consistent with those of [13]; [50], which confirm that visionary, environmentally friendly transformational leaders foster environmental innovation and drive sustainability through proactive sensing and innovation strategies. Furthermore, the dimension of consideration of the follower's needs showed a statistically significant effect ( $r = 0.678$ ).

This is consistent with recent research by [26], who found that responsible leadership promotes sustainability through employee engagement, knowledge sharing, and value alignment.

Moreover, the results in Table (3) confirm that the general construct of charismatic leadership exhibits a strong, positive, and significant effect on the gray wolf approach. All sub-dimensions (visionary communication, risk-taking and innovation, environmental sensing, non-traditional behavior, and consideration of followers' needs) show significant positive effects. These results are consistent with previous studies (e.g., [29]; [14]) and echo recent literature emphasizing the role of transformational leadership in shaping an organization's adaptive capacity and strategic foresight [64].

In addition, the analysis in Table 4 shows a strong direct relationship between the gray wolf approach and organizational sustainability. This finding is particularly noteworthy because it empirically supports the strategic value of the gray wolf model for higher education institutions. Previous conceptual studies [65] have emphasized the importance of leadership flexibility and its transformative impact for achieving long-term sustainability. More recently, studies such as [66] have shown that these leadership styles encourage environmental responsiveness and strategic alignment in organizational development. These findings thus confirm that charismatic leadership—particularly when emphasizing risk-taking, environmental considerations, and visionary engagement—plays a fundamental role in institutional sustainability. Based on these leadership behaviors, the gray wolf approach emerges as an effective strategic path for private universities seeking sustainable development.

The results in Table 5 indicate a pivotal role for the "grey wolf" approach as a mediating mechanism that enhances the positive impact of charismatic leadership on organizational sustainability. This is consistent with recent studies that emphasize the importance of unconventional leadership dynamics in achieving sustainability goals. [3] study supports this trend, demonstrating that charismatic leaders promote innovation and sustainable behaviors by adopting symbolic and motivational approaches that inspire belonging and resilience. This intersects with the grey wolf concepts of boldness, leadership through challenge, and intelligent direction of organizational behavior.

The results of [19] study also indicate that behavioral mediation (such as unconventional leadership models) is an effective path to transforming charismatic influence into long-term strategic outcomes, especially in environments characterized by instability or intense competition, such as the private higher education sector. Thus, these findings, supported by recent studies, confirm that charismatic leadership not only directly impacts sustainability but that this impact is significantly enhanced when operationalized through hybrid leadership models such as the Grey Wolf approach, reflecting a shift toward more adaptive and effective leadership strategies in complex contexts.

## CONCLUSIONS

### General Conclusions

This study reveals new and integrated insights into how charismatic leadership contributes to enhancing organizational sustainability within private higher education institutions in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. By analyzing the mediating effect of the Grey Wolf approach, the findings highlight that charismatic leadership, despite its fundamental importance, only achieves the desired transformational impact if practiced within a flexible strategic framework and dynamic, adaptive organizational behavior, as embodied in this unconventional approach.

The study provides theoretical and empirical support for contemporary frameworks in the leadership and sustainable development literature by presenting a conceptual model that integrates charismatic leadership, symbolic behavior (the gray wolf approach), and dynamic capabilities (organizational sustainability), highlighting the interaction between these components within the local cultural context. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of charismatic leadership lies not only in the personal characteristics of the leader, but also in the extent to which they translate their vision into practices compatible with sustainable environmental and organizational challenges.

These findings contribute to expanding theoretical understanding in the field of leadership by highlighting the role of local context in shaping the effectiveness of leadership styles, while providing practical guidance for decision-makers in the higher education sector. The study emphasizes the need to redesign institutional policies and leadership development programs to be based on culturally and strategically responsive leadership models that contribute to achieving sustainability goals at the level of educational institutions. Thus, this study not only confirms what has been stated in previous literature, but also adds a new dimension by incorporating an unconventional local approach (the gray wolf approach) into modern leadership models, enhancing our understanding of effective leadership mechanisms in developing and complex contexts.

### Managerial Implications

In light of the theoretical and empirical findings of this study, it is clear that charismatic leadership plays an effective role in guiding private universities toward organizational sustainability, especially when this role is activated through the behavioral and symbolic framework provided by the gray wolf approach. From this, several fundamental managerial implications emerge, calling for a restructuring of leadership policies and practices in higher education institutions.

**First**, the study highlights the need for more integrated leadership models that combine personal charisma, strategic vision, and behavioral flexibility. In complex contexts such as universities, inspiring leadership is not sufficient; rather, it is essential to possess leadership tools capable of adapting to and guiding changing environments. This is what the gray wolf model offers through its insight, foresight, and organizational courage.

**Second**, the study findings demonstrate the importance of integrating local cultural symbols and behavioral patterns in shaping leadership identity within institutions. The gray wolf metaphor has proven effective as a symbolic tool that contributes to building leadership legitimacy, enhancing organizational ownership, and consolidating institutional identity. This makes the cultural context an active, rather than a neutral, factor in shaping administrative responses.

**Third**, the study calls for a more comprehensive alignment of institutional policies with sustainability goals. This requires translating leadership vision into concrete practices in the areas of academic planning, staff development, and ethical governance, while ensuring the sustainability of this approach by supporting an institutional culture based on collective commitment and a forward-looking vision.

**Fourth**, the study confirms that private universities in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate of the Kurdistan Region have the potential to be strategic incubators for sustainable development agendas, provided they are led by leaders with high symbolic and strategic competence. Therefore, developing these types of leadership capabilities is not an organizational luxury; rather, it represents a fundamental pillar for building more resilient, impactful, and future-oriented educational institutions.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study offers theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational resilience through the mediating role of the grey wolf approach, there are several methodological and contextual limitations that must be considered when interpreting or generalizing the findings. Foremost among these limitations is the limited geographical and cultural context of the study, as the sample was limited to private universities in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. While this context provides an ideal framework for analyzing the interaction between charismatic leadership and cultural factors, it may not necessarily reflect leadership dynamics in other educational institutions inside and outside Iraq. Therefore, replication of the study in different cultural and institutional contexts is still needed to test the validity and generalizability of the proposed model.

In addition, studies have been conducted that use quantitative tools (such as questionnaires) to measure complex behavioral and ethical concepts such as charisma and the grey wolf approach. These insights may require additional qualitative tools (such as interviews or discourse analysis) to delve deeper into the mechanisms of influence and symbolic meanings that underpin leadership practices. Therefore, future research should use diverse approaches to explore the hidden or unseen dimensions of this leadership style. The "grey wolf" approach, a new and emerging conceptual framework in the management literature, is still in its early stages of academic development. Therefore, it requires further theoretical and structural validation through future studies that examine its characteristics, functional dimensions, and implications across various fields and sectors, including business, healthcare, and government.

Finally, future research could deepen our understanding of the relationship between charismatic leadership and sustainability by including other mediating or antecedent variables, such as organizational culture, emotional intelligence, and digital governance, thus improving the comprehensiveness of the proposed theoretical model. Opening a new research path in this area will help build a more comprehensive understanding of the role of leadership in achieving sustainable change in universities and beyond.

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