

# The Degree of Jordanian Universities' Organizational Agility

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## Abstract

The study aimed at exploring the degree of Jordanian universities' organizational agility and its relation to some variables. The correlational descriptive method was applied. The study sample consisted of (369) faculty members working at three public universities representing the three regions of Jordan: (Yarmouk University/The Northern Region), (The Hashemite University/The Central Region), and (Mutah University/The Southern Region). The study results revealed that the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities was moderate, and that there were no statistically significant differences in the degree due to sex, experience, and academic rank, but there were statistically significant differences in that degree due to (country of graduation), in favor of the faculty members who graduated from universities in Arab countries, and due to (university), in favor of The Hashemite University faculty members.

**Keywords:** universities, organizational agility, Jordan, Yarmuk, Muta, Hashemite

## 1. Introduction

One of the most important characteristics of successful universities is their high level of organizational agility that makes them able to predict, anticipate, and deal with sudden and unexpected changes wisely and sensibly, enable them to adjust their paths, direct their movements, overcome the negative sides, problems, challenges, threats and risks, maximize their advantages and seize their promising opportunities.

Successful universities, which face drastic changes, work hard to ensure having organizational agility and faculty members' openness to change in order to adapt to developments, anticipate and predict future events to control them, avoid their harm, and benefit from them, because 40%-70% of random university change attempts result in failure, which negatively affects their effectiveness, leads to a decline in their level of performance and reduces their employees' productivity (Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2019).

Universities' agility is their quick and planned responses to the changes that take place in their work environment represented by taking procedures and decisions to deal with them efficiently to avoid their their negatives consequences and gain their benefits (Al Hadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015). It is the universities' full awareness of all the problems they face and the chances they have, and their great ability to manage the available resources wisely in terms of time, cost, flexibility and effectiveness (Alzoubi, Al-otoum & Albatinah, 2011).

Agile universities react and respond proactively and preventively to the challenges that exist in their turbulent environment through adopting new ways of doing work, re-reflection to reach a new mentality in teaching, research, and community service, and openness change.

Organizational agility enables universities to positively adapt to both labor market requirements and rapid technological progress, contributes to defining their capabilities, environment and competing institutions, enable them to manage, control, and influence continuous internal and external changes by generating new option and alternatives, develop effective skills to become more resilient, flexible and open to new events, ideas, and developments, improve their productivity and performance, and enhance employees' satisfaction, problem-solving skills and abilities, self-confidence, creativity, commitment to cooperation and teamwork, and sense of responsibility (Al-Enizi, 2019).

Briefly speaking, organizational agility in universities is their ability to achieve the desired results that they aspire, by developing and increasing knowledge, exploiting resources, that is reflected in their development and making

them agile in a turbulent and rapidly changing environment to ensure their excellent performance, the continuity of their competition, and their good response to changes (Abdul Razzaq, 2018).

Universities' agility is the the quick assembly of thei technology, employees, and management through a communication and Information infrastructure in a deliberate, effective, and coordinated response to the students' demands in continuously changing environments (Amos, 2018).

Universities allover the world have been facing changes in their environments. To stay competitive, they need to mobilise their resources and act proactively to capitalize on the changes. Universities' agility is characterized by their flexibility and ease with which they restructure and modify their practices and processes when faced with new changes in their environments (Menon & Suresh, 2020).

To respond effectively to sudden and unprecented changes, Agile universities resort to rapidity, wise knowledge management and learning capability through data collection and analysis, effective decision making, quick deployment of solutions, project teams, speed in software development, responsiveness innovation, information technologies including process Knowledge and communication technologies, the ability to detect and seize opportunities, appreciation of the value of creation, capture, and competitive performance, the convergence of computing and communication, sensitivity to the voice of students, mastering of uncertainty, virtual organization, cooperative relationships, intelligent technologies integrated into a coordinated, interdependent system, responsiveness, competency.

Thus, agility positively affects, utilizes and involves all aspects of a univrsties' architectures such as technology, business processes, people, information, and strategy (Hagen, 2019, Sambamurthy, Grover & Bharadwaj, 2003 ; Lin, Chiu & Chu, 2004)Trinh, Molla & Peszynski, 2012).

### *1.1 Study Problem*

Some aspects of routine, slow, traditional and bureaucrtic administrative practices are prevalent and dominant at some Jordanian universities. They constitute ostacles to responding properly and to modern technological changes, and hinder changing the universities into agile institutions. This was confirmed by Alshoraty(2009) who described some of the problems of Arab universities in general: The traditionl essence of their structure, content and nature, administrative centralization, inability to cope with local and global changes, rigidity, and lack of flexibility. So the idea of the study, whose problem was to answer the following two questions, appered:

- 1) What is the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities from the point of view of faculty members?
- 2) Does the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities, from the point of view of faculty members, differ according to the following variables: sex, experience, academic rank, and country of graduation?

### *1.2 Study Significance*

The importance of the study lies in providing educational policy makers at with the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities, which may enable them to take appropriate procedures and prepare suitable plans in that regard. Also, the study may encourage researchers to conduct studies on organizational agility in community colleges, schools and kindergartens and help graduate students by providing them with a useful theoretical background on organizational agility.

### *1.3 Literature Review*

After reviewing a number of studies related to the subject of the study, the researchers found out the following:

-Several studies have been conducted on organizational agility, but most of them were in companies, hotels, hospitals, banks, but not in educational institutions, and only few of them were in universities.

-Most of the foreign studies related to study subject were conducted in Iran's universities. For example, the study of Khavari, Arasteh, & Jafari (2016) and Mirzaei (2016) investigated the level of organizational agility at Azad University. Taboli & Bahmanyari (2017) studied the relation between organizational intelligence and organizational agility at Shiraz University. Sadegpour, Cherabin, Shekari, & Zende (2019) carried out a qualitative and descriptive study on the factors affecting the Practice of organizational agility, leadership and entrepreneurship at Mashhad University.

-A number of Arabic studies related to organizational agility. Among them were the following: Ahmed (2016) focused on ways to improve administrative performance at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia, using the organizational agility approach, and present a proposed vision for improving that performance. The aim of al-Talhi (2018) was to identify the most important factors that affect the level of organizational agility in higher education institutions in the Saudi Arabia. Abdullah and Amir (2019) were interested in exploring the relation of strategic

agility and organizational excellence among employees at a number of Iraqi private colleges. Al-Taii, Ismail, and Khader (2020) conducted an exploratory study to determine the role of human resources maintenance on the types of organizational agility (sensing agility, decision making agility, and acting agility) at private universities/Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Al-Enizi (2019) investigated the relation between the level of organizational agility of academic leaders at Kuwait University and competitiveness, from the faculty members' point of view. Mohammed (2019) conducted a study that aimed at determining the management by wandering around practices and its impact on the dimensions of organizational agility at three Egyptian public universities. Abdel-Aal (2019) focused on identifying the information technology requirements needed to achieve strategic agility at Egyptian universities. Mansour (2020) finding out at the requirements for developing administrative performance at the Faculty of Education at Mansoura University in Egypt in light of the organizational agility approach from the faculty members' point of view. Omar (2020) attempted to explore the degree of organizational agility practice at an Egyptian university. Abu Jbara (2020) investigated strategic agility and Its Impact on promoting entrepreneurial orientation at the universities of Gaza Strip in Palestine.

-No Jordanian studies dealing with the study subject were found except the study of Aqilan (2019), that was conducted at private, not public Jordanian universities.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Population and Sample

The correlational descriptive method was applied. The study population consisted of (2163) faculty members at three public universities representing the three regions of Jordan: (Yarmouk University/Northern Region), (The Hashemite University/Central Region), and (Mutah University/Southern Region). The study sample consisted of 369 faculty members. Table (1) shows the distribution of the sample according to its variables.

Table 1. The study sample according to its variables

Variable	Level/Category	Number	Percentage
Sex	Male	280	75.9%
	Female	89	24.1%
	Total	369	100%
Experience	Less than 10 years	162	43.9%
	10 years or more	207	56.1%
	Total	369	100%
Academic Rank	Professor	107	29%
	Associate Professor	117	31.7%
	Assistant Professor	145	39.3%
	Total	369	100%
University	Yarmouk University	161	43.6%
	The Hashemite University	122	33.1
	Mutah University	86	23.3%
	Total	369	100%
Country of Graduation	Arab	145	39.3%
	Foreign	224	60.7%
	Total	369	100%

### 2.2 Tool

The researchers have developed a questionnaire to measure the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities after benefiting from the following previous studies: Hammouda et al. (2018), Abdul Razzaq (2018), Maghawry (2016), AlHadid and Abu-Rumman (2015), Alzoubi, Al-otoum, & Albatinah (2011), Raiesi & Amirnejad (2017), and Chakravarty, Grewal, Sambamurthy (2013).

Likert scale was applied. The following classification was adopted to assess the means of the items: (1-2.33: low), (2.34-3.67: moderate), and (3.68-5: high).

To ensure the validity of the study tool that measures the degree of organizational agility in Jordanian universities, the researchers distributed it to 23 experts who were faculty members specializing in educational sciences and working at universities in Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia,. In light of their notes and comments, some items of the

tool were rephrased and some linguistic and typographic modifications were made.

To prove the reliability of the study tool, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to find the coefficient of reliability of the its internal. It was found out to be (0.933). This indicated that the tool had an appropriate reliability coefficient to achieve the aim of the study.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The results of the first question: What is the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities from the point of view of faculty members?

To answer the question, the means and standard deviations of the responses of the sample members to the items of the scale of the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities were calculated, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The means arranged in a descending order and the standard deviations of the responses of the sample members to the scale of the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities from the viewpoint of the faculty members

Rank	Items	Means	Standard Deviations	Degree
1	The university uses information technology in knowledge management.	3.67	0.92	Moderate
2	The university is working to develop its performance to achieve excellence.	3.58	0.91	Moderate
3	The university faces challenges with great efficiency.	3.47	1.01	Moderate
4	The university is keen on continuous learning and benefit from previous experiences and expertise.	3.45	0.96	Moderate
5	The university keeps pace with scientific developments.	3.43	0.85	Moderate
6	The university is working to overcome the fluctuations in its environment.	3.42	0.89	Moderate
7	The university is adapting to the latest developments.	3.39	0.95	Moderate
8	The university is working to consolidate its strengths.	3.33	1.00	Moderate
9	The university responds quickly to changes in the external environment.	3.31	0.92	Moderate
10	The university is keen to take advantage of the opportunities available to it.	3.30	0.94	Moderate
11	The university is adapting to global changes.	3.25	1.00	Moderate
12	The university applies total quality standards.	3.19	0.93	Moderate
13	The university takes preventive procedures to face the threats it senses.	3.17	0.96	Moderate
14	The university determines the opportunities available to it based on scientific foundations.	3.15	0.96	Moderate
15	The university faces its weaknesses until it overcomes them.	3.13	0.96	Moderate
16	The university is flexible and not rigid.	3.07	0.97	Moderate
17	The university makes good use of its resources.	3.03	1.02	Moderate
18	The university senses the threats surrounding it based on scientific grounds.	3.01	0.98	Moderate
19	The university is working on developing its human capital.	3.01	1.03	Moderate

20	The university is distinguished by its creativity in providing innovative solutions to work problems.	2.96	0.98	Moderate
21	The university is committed to transparency in the decision-making process.	2.86	1.09	Moderate
22	The university applies decentralization in the decision-making process.	2.85	1.03	Moderate
	Total	3.23	0.70	Moderate

It is clear from Table 2 that. The degree was not found to be high due to the following possible reasons and factors:

-The items that received the lowest means in the tool for measuring the degree of organizational agility were: (The university is distinguished by creativity in providing innovative solutions to work problems), (The university is committed to transparency in the decision-making process), and (The university applies decentralization in the decision-making process). This meant that administrative centralization, lack of creativity in dealing with work problems, and lack of transparency in the universities' administrative process were factors that contributed to reducing the degree of universities' organizational agility. That reduction was deepened by the high pace and huge size of technological and scientific changes that made the task of universities to predict and influence them, take advantage of their opportunities, deal with their challenges, and overcome their negatives more difficult.

-Also, Corona pandemic may have contributed to making the degree of organizational agility in universities not high., It required many changes, innovations and developments that universities were unable to effectively provide, keep pace with, and adapt to financially, and technologically, such as distance learning, virtual classes, and interactive technological applications in light of the weakness of their information technology infrastructure.

-The universities lack some of the characteristics of agile universities in the world, such as adopting a strong strategy that shows their ability to achieve their goals even in difficult circumstances, having a flexible and adaptive organizational design in them, keeping pace with recent developments and changes in this regard to ensure achieving maximum success, changing their management system from individual to collective, from static culture to a culture of change, and from traditional hierarchical structure to modern structure that adopts participatory leadership (Mehrabi, Siyadat, & Allameh, 2013).

-The results of the second question:) Does the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities, from the point of view of faculty members, differ according to the following variables: sex, experience, academic rank, and country of graduation?

To find out if there were differences in the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities, from the point of view of faculty members, according to the following variables: sex, experience, academic rank, university, and country of graduation, the means and standard deviations of the responses of the sample members to the scale that measures the degree of organizational agility were calculated, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the responses of the sample members to the scale of organizational agility at Jordanian universities according to the variables: Sex, experience, academic rank, university, and country of graduation)

Variable	Level	Number	Means	Standard Deviations
Sex	Male	280	3.22	0.72
	Female	89	3.26	0.66
Experience	Less than 10 years	162	3.20	0.69
	10 years and more	207	3.25	0.72
Academic Rank	Professor	107	3.32	0.67
	Associate Professor	117	3.17	0.67
	Assistant Professor	145	3.20	0.75
University	The Hashemite University	122	3.53	.72
	Yarmouk University	161	3.03	.70
	Mutah University	86	3.18	.54
Country of Graduation	Arab	125	3.35	.66
	Foreign	224	3.15	.72
Total	369		3.23	.70

Table 3 showed that there were apparent differences among the means of the responses of the sample members to the scale of organizational agility at Jordanian universities among faculty members from their point of view according to the variables (Sex, experience, scientific rank, university, and country of graduation).

To verify the significance of those apparent differences, a Five-Way ANOVA test was conducted for their responses, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Five Way ANOVA for the responses of the sample members to the scale of organizational agility in Jordanian universities according to the variables: (Sex, experience, academic rank, university, and country of graduation)

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Means of squares	F- Value	Significance Level
Sex	0.01	1	0.01	0.03	0.88
Experience	0.02	1	0.02	0.03	0.86
Academic Rank	0.93	2	0.46	1.04	0.36
University	16	2	8	17.96	0.00*
Country of Graduation	2.37	1	2.37	5.33	0.02*
Errors	160.74	361	0.45		

The results of Table 4 showed the following:

-There were no statistically significant differences in the means of the responses of the sample members to the scale of organizational agility at Jordanian universities due to (sex, experience, and academic rank), based on the calculated (F) values of (0.03, 0.03, and 1.04), respectively, and with a significance level (0.88, 0.86, and 0.36) respectively.

This means that the evaluation of the study sample members, regardless of their sex, experience, and academic rank, to the degree of organizational agility at their universities was similar. The reason for this could be that their evaluation on the level of organizational agility represented by the ability to predict the future, anticipate its potential changes and emerging events, deal with its challenges and opportunities in scientific ways, and intelligently respond to its consequences were not affected by being males or females, having long or short work experience, and holding high or low academic rank.

-There were statistically significant differences in the means of the responses of the sample members to the scale of the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities due to the variable the country of graduation, based on the calculated F value of (5.33), and at the level of significance (0.02), in favor of the faculty members who graduated from universities in Arab countries. This may be because many foreign universities, compared to Arab universities, were more able to adapt and adjust to global and local changes and effectively deal with. That made the evaluation of their faculty members graduates on the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities

less positive than their colleagues who graduated from universities in Arab countries.

-There were statistically significant differences in the means of the responses of the sample members to the scale of the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities due to university variable, based on the calculated F-value of (17.96), and at the level of significance (0.00). In order to find out in favor of which university those differences were, (LSD) test was conducted, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The results of the post-test (LSD) for the comparison between the means of the responses of the sample members to the scale of the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities due to university variable

Variable	Variable Levels	Means	The Hashemite University		Yarmouk University		Mutah University	
			Difference	Significance Level	Difference	Significance Level	Difference	Significance Level
University	The Hashemite University	3.53	-	-	0.49	0.00*	0.34	0.00*
	Yarmuk University	3.03	0.498	0.00*	-	-	-	-
	Mutah University	3.18	0.349	0.00*	-	-	-	-

Table 5 showed that there were statistically significant differences in the means of the responses of the sample members to the scale of the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities due to university variable, in favor of The Hashemite University. That could be attributed to the fact that The Hashemite University, which was founded in 1995, was more recent in terms of establishment than Yarmuk University which was established in 1974, and Muta University which was founded in 1981. That made it more interested in new changes, and more able to respond and adapt to them effectively.

#### 4. Recommendations

The researchers recommended taking procedures to raise the degree of organizational agility at Jordanian universities, which the study results showed that it was medium, such as:

-The universities should study the reasons for decreasing that degree and take appropriate decisions and policies to get rid of them.

-Public financial support for universities should partially depend on the degree of their organizational agility.

-The Ministry of Higher Education should adopt the degree of organizational agility as one of the criteria for accrediting universities and their programs.

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