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Organizational Performance Evaluation Using European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Model: Case Study of the Central Bank of Iraq

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Abstract

This study seeks to assess the organizational performance of the Central Bank of Iraq using the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM 2025) model. By identifying strengths, weaknesses, and performance gaps, the research provides practical insights aimed at achieving organizational excellence and sustainability in emerging economies.The study used EFQM-aligned checklists to collect data, which were then analyzed using weighted averages and mathematical equations. Statistical tools, including SPSS and the least significant difference (LSD) test, were used to rank EFQM criteria according to their impact on improving performance quality.The Central Bank of Iraq achieved a 66.4% compliance rate with EFQM standards and excelled in areas such as organizational culture and leadership, and stakeholder engagement (88%). However, significant deficiencies were detected in strategic and operational performance (31%), highlighting critical areas for targeted improvement initiatives.While the study is limited to the Central Bank of Iraq, the EFQM framework provides a versatile tool for improving organizations in diverse contexts. Future research could explore its application across different sectors and geographies to validate the findings.This research represents a pioneering effort to apply the EFQM 2025 criteria to assess organizational performance in an emerging economy. Its findings provide practical recommendations for policy makers and practitioners, contributing to the broader discourse on quality management in dynamic environments.

Keywords: *Organizational Performance Evaluation, EFQM Model, Improvement.*

Introduction

Organizational performance assessment has become one of the basic management tools used as a strategy to understand the current performance of organizations and work to improve it in line with the requirements of their activities. Organizations face increasing challenges and pressures to ensure their continuity and growth. This requires the adoption of comprehensive quality models that focus on measuring and analyzing performance to identify areas for improvement. The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model is one of the leading frameworks in this field, especially with the shift from traditional quality concepts to a more comprehensive approach to organizational excellence.

The Central Bank of Iraq is a living example of the application of the EFQM model, as it has witnessed the growth of its organizational structure and organizational philosophy while seeking to adopt global trends in the management of central banks (MANSOOR et al., 2021). Despite these efforts, the bank has not yet conducted a comprehensive assessment of its actual performance based on internationally recognized standards. In light of these challenges, this research aims to provide an accurate diagnosis of the level of performance of the Central Bank of Iraq, and to analyze the gap between its current performance and the requirements of the EFQM 2025 standards.

The research also aims to provide clear recommendations to improve performance in the Central Bank of Iraq. Senior management to improve organizational performance and ensure compliance with excellence standards. It highlights the role of the EFQM model as an effective tool for improving performance, contributing to achieving organizational excellence and the ability to adapt to rapid changes, thus supporting long-term sustainability.

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Literature Review

Organizational Performance Evaluation

Organizational performance assessment is defined as the evaluation of business results to determine strategic effectiveness and operational efficiency, which helps to implement changes and address problems (Al-Nabhan, 2015). It includes the collection of necessary data and information over a specific period of time, and their comparison with previously established standards and plans, with the aim of identifying strengths and weaknesses in all management functions within the organization (Atwi, 2023). Performance evaluation is an integral part of the control process, directing activities towards achieving specified goals by establishing performance indicators that guide decision-making and correct the course of activities in case of deviations. In other words, it focuses on improving activities to achieve goals and correct their paths (Farhi, 2019).

In summary, organizational performance evaluation can be defined by the following key points:

- It is an interaction between the internal environment components of the organization, helping it adapt to changes in the external environment and exploit available opportunities.
- It helps the organization identify its current position and discover strengths and weaknesses by comparing with pre-set goals, setting a starting point for improvement programs.
- It aims to measure the organization's ability to achieve the required levels of performance.
- It provides a feedback system that allows the organization to assess its performance against set standards, aiding management in making future decisions.

EFQM Model 2025

After the establishment of the European Union in 1986, 14 CEOs of major European companies founded the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) on September 5, 1988 (Shahin & Pourbahman, 2011). Headquartered in Brussels, EFQM includes over 500 organizations worldwide (Zamani & Esfan, 2014). EFQM is the leading organization addressing strategic quality issues in Europe, with a focus on fostering excellence in performance, increasing competitiveness, and building a better future for individuals, communities, and organizational globally. It also emphasizes supporting effective change management and performance improvement (Mishara & Lanan, 2021). The model illustrates the relationship between the organization's goals and strategies and the creation of sustainable value for key stakeholders in order to achieve outstanding results (Turisova et al., 2021).

In 1991, the European Foundation for Quality Management introduced the European Quality Award program to reward outstanding companies based on the Deming and Baldrige models, with a focus on improving activities and eliminating waste (Youssef et al., 2017). The first Excellence Award was issued in 1992 (Fonseca et al., 2021). The model has undergone periodic reviews and updates based on scientific and practical research to meet the requirements of self-assessment and improving organizations towards excellence and sustainability (Youssef, 2021).

In 2019, the European Foundation for Quality Management launched a new comprehensive model after a comprehensive review that included collaboration with award-winning organizations, users, academics, and business leaders. This review incorporated a set of European principles, including the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Social Charter, along with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (EFQM, 2020).

In 2024, EFQM introduced several revisions to the model, including:

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- Promoting purpose-focused leadership and supporting change and innovation, replacing "force for good" with "positive impact."

- Integrating flexibility into work, ensuring fluid supply chains and business continuity, especially with the emergence of remote work.

- Measuring strategic and operational performance through four sub-criteria: stakeholder expectations, economic performance, transformation, and sustainability.

- Introducing a RADAR matrix with two assessment scales: one for direction and execution, and another for results.

These updates were driven by several challenges, including:

- *Organizational Adaptation to Ecosystem Dynamics*: Organizations face significant challenges in managing daily operations amidst rapid changes in their economic and social environments.

- *The Need For Objective, Collaborative, and Empowering Standard Methods*: Organizational must adopt collaborative approaches, reducing hierarchical levels to facilitate decision-making.

- *Defining the Required Human Resources*: Organizations must accurately identify their human resource needs to add value.

- *Responsibility Towards the Ecosystem*: Organizations must recognize their role in nurturing the economic and social environment to achieve sustainable development.

- *Creation of Sustainable Value For Stakeholders*: A culture fostering cooperation and joint development with stakeholders is essential.

- *Innovation and Creativity*: Organizations need to adopt innovative practices to drive performance improvement.

- *Ability To Address Ecosystem Opportunities And Threats*: Organizations must identify and respond to opportunities and threats within their environments to ensure long-term success.

The EFQM model aims to improve processes through organizational self-assessment, providing an independent view of an organization's performance. Self-assessment outcomes serve as a basis for identifying best practices (Süt˝oová et al., 2022). The model's general nature makes it applicable to all types of organizations, regardless of size, scope, or industry sector (Al-Dajani, 2013).

EFQM Model Framework

The EFQM framework consists of seven criteria divided into three main areas: direction, execution, and results, as shown in Figure 1.

- ***Direction*** helps senior management understand its objectives, activities, external stakeholders, structure, environment, policies, strategies, and guiding philosophies (Narver & Slater, 2004). It refers to long-term decision-making aimed at achieving goals by analyzing internal strengths and weaknesses and adapting them to external opportunities and threats, thereby enhancing the organization's competitive advantage (Al-Majali, 2009).

- *Execution* focuses on the implementation of strategies by senior management. Effective execution determines whether the organization's strategy will succeed or fail, as it can correct errors resulting from inadequate planning (Al Rashoud, 2017).

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- *Results* reflect the organization's achievements, measuring key outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction (Al-Dajani, 2013).

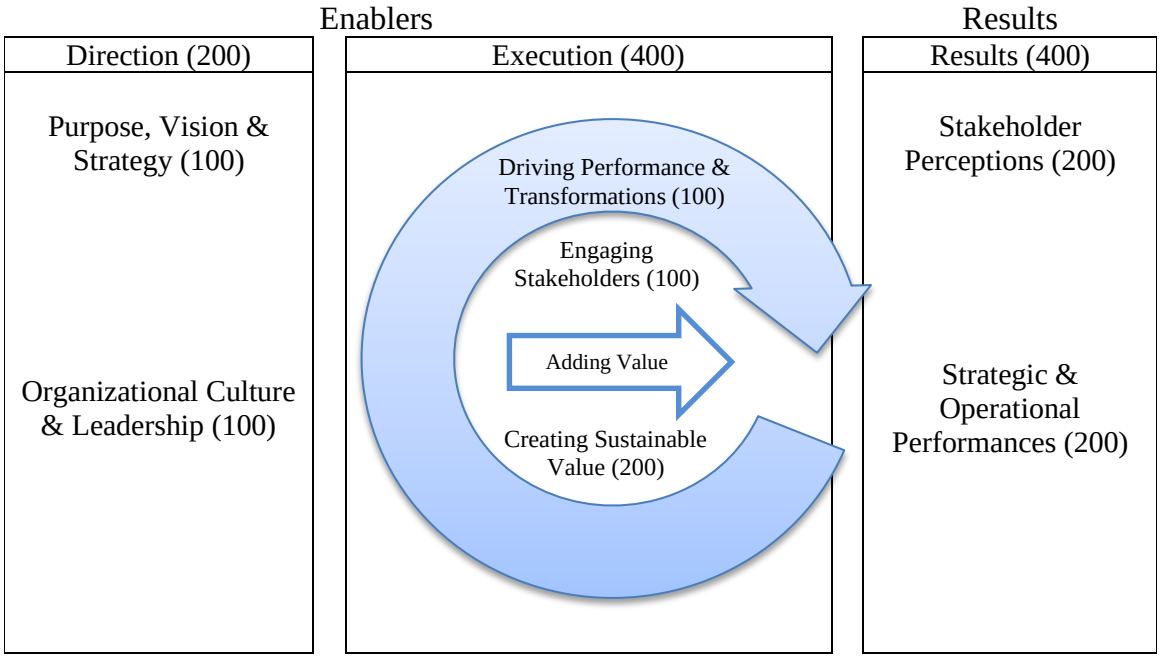

Figure 1. EFQM 2020 Model Criteria and Weights: Enablers and Results

The EFQM model provides a total of 1000 points in the evaluation process: 600 points are allocated to the enablers (Direction and Execution), and 400 points to Results. The distribution is as follows: 600 points are assigned to the enablers, with a maximum of 100 points for each of the first, second, third, and fifth criteria, while the fourth criterion (Creating Sustainable Value) is allocated 200 points. For the Results category, 400 points are distributed, with a maximum of 200 points for each of the sixth and seventh criteria. The model emphasizes that while results are important, they only reflect what has already happened. What matters most is understanding the organization's purpose, who it serves, whether it has the right culture for success, and how it creates and delivers value (Hauber, 2020).

EFQM is a practical tool for measuring an organization's progress toward excellence, identifying gaps, and providing appropriate solutions (Abu Saada, 2013). It is a modern management approach for self-assessment in both public and private sectors, helping senior management focus on strengths and areas for improvement to achieve sustainable excellence (Soltanifar, 2015). According to Oakland (2014), the model helps organizations utilize their resources to achieve desired performance outcomes, thus acting as a business improvement model. It is a comprehensive tool for evaluating organizational performance, covering all levels, including individuals, organizational units, and external environments, contributing to sustainability and excellence.

Methodology

The case study approach was adopted for this research, as it is the most suitable methodology for achieving the study's objectives. This approach enables precise data collection through various tools such as personal interviews, observations, questionnaires, and inquiries, along with direct analysis to obtain relevant information.

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Data Collection Methods

Two methods were used for data collection:

- *Theoretical Aspect:* The research relied on the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model's guidance document, as well as previous literature and academic studies in the research area. This provided the theoretical foundation for applying the standards in the study.

- *Practical Aspect*: A checklist was used, developed according to the requirements of the EFQM 2025 model standards, to evaluate the application of the model at the Central Bank of Iraq. Data were collected from reports, data, and documents related to the bank's activities, in addition to observations and personal interviews with bank officials. A seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 to 6) was used to measure the degree of application for each criterion.

Table 1. Seven-Point Scale and Weights

#	Scale Points	Weight	Strengths and Weaknesses (Improvement Areas)
1	Fully Applied, Fully Documented	6	Strengths
2	Fully Applied, Partially Documented	5	Strengths Enhancement
3	Fully Applied, Not Documented	4	Strengths Enhancement
4	Partially Applied, Fully Documented	3	Strengths Enhancement
5	Partially Applied, Partially Documented	2	Weaknesses (Improvement Areas)
6	Partially Applied, Not Documented	1	Weaknesses (Improvement Areas)
7	Not Applied, Not Documented	0	Weaknesses (Improvement Areas)

Source: Al-Khatib, Samir Kamel (2008), Total Quality Management: A Contemporary Approach, 1st Edition, Egypt Library and Murtadha House, Baghdad, Iraq, p. 326.

Statistical Methods for Data Analysis

A set of statistical methods was applied to analyze the data from the checklist, evaluate the actual situation, and compare it with the EFQM model criteria. The following methods were used:

- *Weighted Mean ($\bar{x}$)*: The weighted average was calculated using the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum WiFi}{\sum Fi} \text{.....(1)}$$

Where the frequency of responses for each item in the scale was calculated to ensure accuracy and proper documentation of the application.

- *Percentage for Each Criterion (P):* The percentage of compliance with each EFQM criterion was calculated using the formula:

$$P = \frac{\sum wifi}{\sum fi*6} * 100 \text{..... (2)}$$

Where 6 represents the highest weight in the scale, indicating full compliance with the EFQM requirements.

- *Actual Achievement for Each Criterion (A):* The actual achievement for each criterion was calculated as the product of the percentage and the criterion's degree in the EFQM model:

$$A = P * D \text{ .... (3)}$$

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Where:

- P is the percentage
- D is the degree of the criterion.

Analysis of Differences Between Criteria

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess the differences between the EFQM model criteria and their impact on organizational performance. The least significant difference (LSD) method was used to test the differences between the seven EFQM model criteria using SPSS 26. This method relies on calculating the differences between the means using the following formula:

$$LSD_{0.05} = t_{0.05} * Sd$$

$$LSD_{0.01} = t_{0.01} * Sd$$

Where:

- t represents the tabulated t-value for the degrees of freedom in the variance analysis table,
- Sd is the standard error used to test the difference between the means of the two criteria.

The formula for standard error is:

$$Sd = \sqrt{\frac{2S_e^2}{r}}$$

Where:

- Se^2 is the mean square error in the variance analysis table.
- r is the number of items in each criterion.

And the formula for the standard error if the items within each dimension vary is:

$$Sd = \sqrt{S_e^2\left(\frac{1}{r1} + \frac{1}{r2}\right)}$$

r1 and r2 represent the number of items (questions) in the two dimensions being compared.

If the difference between two criteria is greater than or equal to the LSD value, the difference is considered significant; otherwise, it is considered non-significant

Data and Results

Table (2) illustrates the findings derived from the evaluation, accurately reflecting the Central Bank of Iraq's performance in alignment with the primary and secondary criteria of the EFQM 2025 model. These results are grounded in the adoption of practices characteristic of high-performing and sustainable organizational.

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Table (2). Results of Applying the EFQM Model Criteria at the Central Bank of Iraq

Key Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Number of Activities	Frequencies(Fi) for Each Weight (Wi)							$(\bar{x})$
			6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Purpose, Vision & Strategy	· Defines Purpose & Vision · Understands the Ecosystem, its Own Capabilities & Major Challenges · Identifies & Understands the Needs of Key Stakeholders · Develops & Adapts Strategy · Designs & Implements a Performance Management & Governance System	24	14	3	0	0	6	0	1	4.6
Organisational Culture & Leadership	· Steers the Organisation's Culture & Nurtures its Core Values · Creates the Conditions for Realising Change · Enables Creativity & Innovation · Unites & Engages Key Stakeholders with its Purpose, Vision & Strategy	19	15	1	0	0	2	1	0	5.3

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Engaging Stakeholders	· Customers: Builds Sustainable Relationships · People: Attracts, Engages, Develops & Retains · Business & Governing Stakeholders Secures & Sustains Ongoing Support · Society: Contributes to Development, Wellbeing & Prosperity · Partners & Suppliers: Builds Relationships & Ensures Support for Creating Sustainable Value	24	18	1	0	3	2	0	0	5.3
Creating Sustainable Value	· Defines the Value & How it is Created · Communicates & Sells the Value · Delivers the Value · Defines & Implements the Overall Experience	17	6	0	0	5	4	2	0	3.6
Driving Performance & Transformation	· Drives Performance · Transforms the Organisation for the Future · Drives Innovation & Technology	19	7	1	1	2	6	2	0	3.7

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	· Leverages Data-Driven Insights & Knowledge · Manages Assets & Resources									
Stakeholder Perceptions	· Customer Perception Results · People Perception Results · Business & Governing Stakeholder's Perception Results · Society Perception Results · Partners & Suppliers Perception Results	37	14	0	0	0	23	0	0	3.5
Strategic & Operational Performances	· Fulfilment of stakeholder expectations and their contribution · Economics and financials · Performance and transformation · Sustainability	8	0	0	0	0	7	1	0	1.9

The percentages of conformity and the gap magnitude for each criterion of the model were calculated using Equation (2) and are visually represented in Figure (2).

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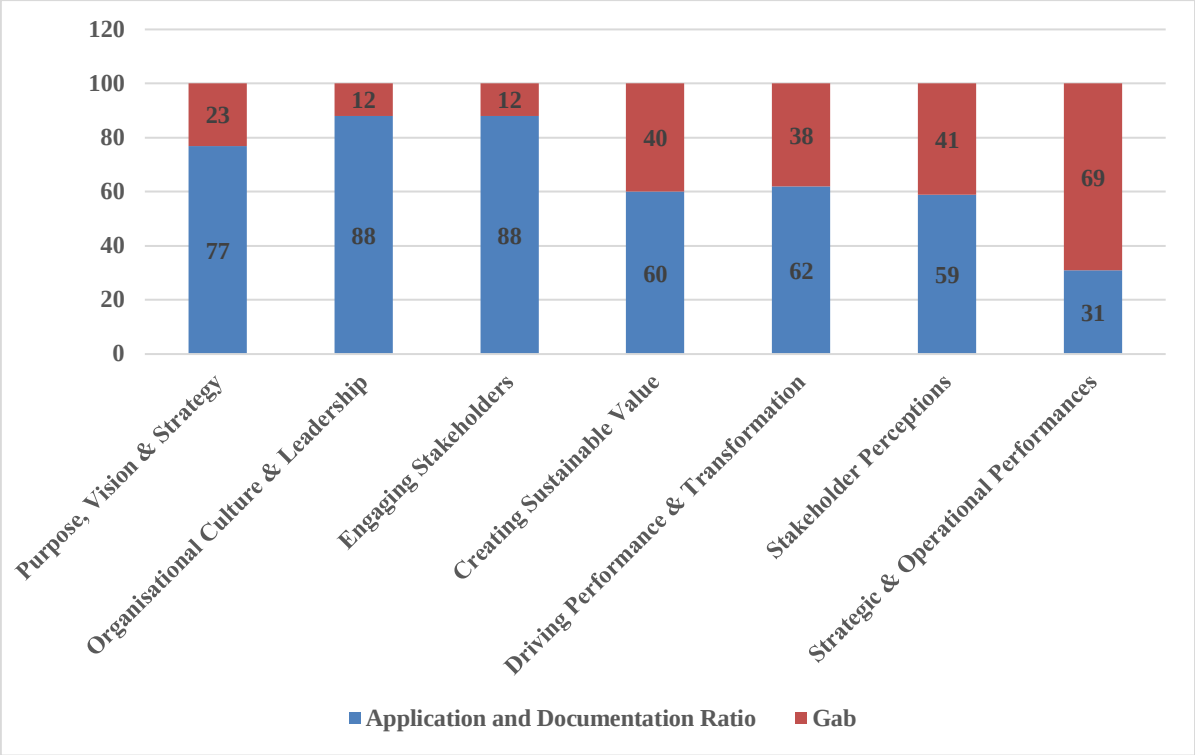

Figure (2). Application and Documentation Ratio of the EFQM Model Criteria

The actual achievement, based on the relative importance of each criterion in the model and the Central Bank of Iraq's performance compared to the official point allocation for each criterion, was calculated using Equation (3) and is illustrated in Figure (3).

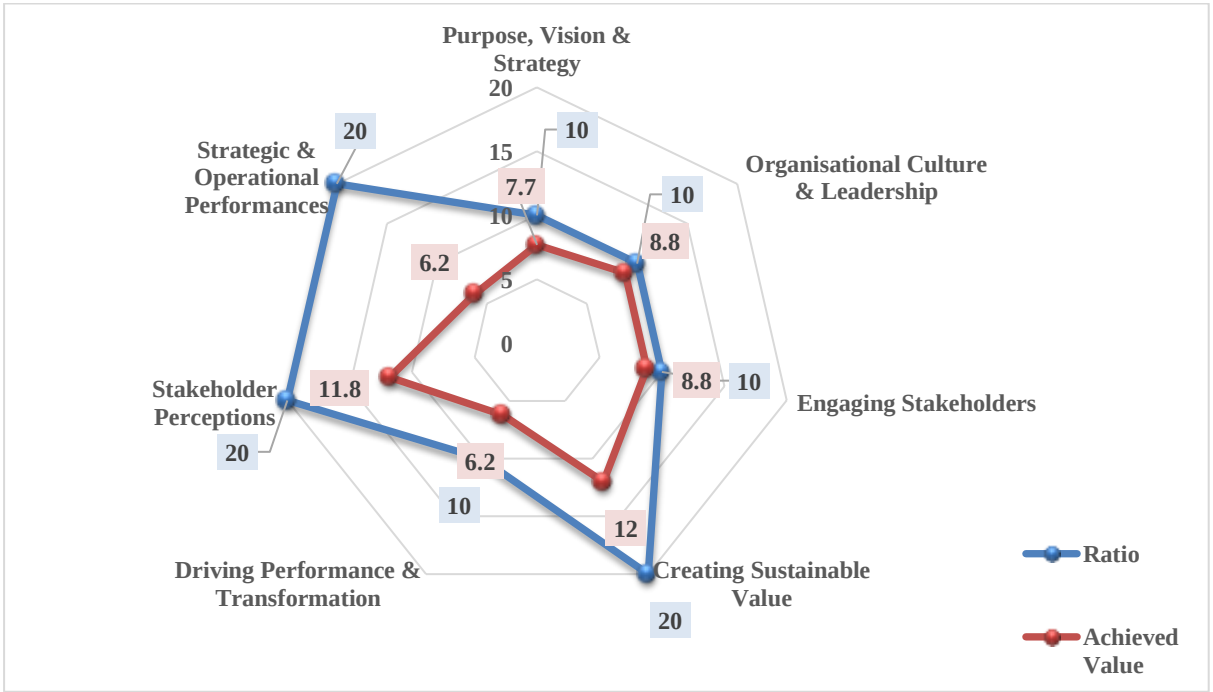

Figure (3). Radar Chart for Criterion Weight to Total Achievement

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Analysis of the Differences Between the Criteria.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Between the Criteria

The results of the ANOVA analysis reveal significant differences between the studied dimensions, as the calculated F-value (5.562) exceeds the tabulated value (2.80) at a 0.01 significance level. This indicates that the differences between the dimensions are not random, suggesting statistically significant effects among the studied dimensions.

Multiple Comparisons Between the Criteria

After applying the previous equations and using SPSS-26 to calculate the differences between the mean values of the Criteria and comparing them with the LSD values, the analysis reveals the following:

Table (3). Results of the Test for Differences Between the Mean Values of the EFQM Model Criteria

Comparative Criteria	*Significance Level*	*Value LSD*		Difference between means	Nature of differences
	P	0.01	0.05		
Strategy – & Vision ,Purpose & Organizational Culture Leadership	*0.181*	1.79	1.64	-0.743	Insignificant
Strategy – & Vision ,Purpose Engaging Stakeholders	0.214	1.85	1.15	-0.662	Insignificant
- Strategy & Vision ,Purpose Sustainable Value Creating	0.048	1.79	1.06	*1.083	Significant
Strategy - & Vision ,Purpose & Driving Performance Transformation	0.159	1.77	1.15	0.783	Insignificant
Strategy - & Vision ,Purpose Stakeholder Perceptions	0.09	1.85	1.12	0.823	Insignificant
Strategy - & Vision ,Purpose Operational & Strategic Performances	0	1.85	1.15	**2.645	Highly significant
& Culture Organizational Leadership - Engaging Stakeholders	0.886	1.8	1.12	0.081	Insignificant
& Culture Organizational Leadership - Creating Sustainable Value	0.004	1.75	1.11	**1.826	Highly significant
& Culture Organizational Leadership - Driving Performance Transformation &	0.011	1.79	1.2	*1.526	Significant
& Culture Organizational Leadership - Stakeholder Perceptions	0.003	1.79	1.22	*1.566	Significant
& Culture Organizational & Leadership - Strategic Operational Performances	0	1.46	1.22	**3.388	Highly significant
Stakeholders - Creating Engaging Sustainable Value	0.004	1.77	1.23	**1.744	Highly significant

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Stakeholders - Driving Engaging Transformation & Performance	0.012	1.67	1.15	*1.445	Significant
Stakeholders - Engaging Stakeholder Perceptions	0.005	1.77	1.15	1.485*	Significant
Stakeholders - Strategic Engaging Operational Performances &	0	1.77	1.12	3.307**	Highly significant
Sustainable Value - Creating & Driving Performance Transformation	0.628	1.86	1.11	-0.299	Insignificant
Sustainable Value - Creating Stakeholder Perceptions	0.64	1.89	1.15	-0.259	Insignificant
Sustainable Value - Creating Operational & Strategic Performances	0.003	1.79	1.06	1.563*	Significant
& Performance Driving Transformation - Stakeholder Perceptions	0.939	1.88	1.24	0.04	Insignificant
& Performance Driving & Transformation - Strategic Performances Operational	0.016	1.88	1.24	1.422*	Significant
Perceptions - Strategic Stakeholder Operational Performances &	0.012	1.89	1.15	1.432*	Significant

* Indicates that the differences are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level
** Indicates that the differences are highly statistically significant at a 99% confidence level

Findings from the Analysis

- *High-Importance Criteria*: The analyses revealed that the criteria of organizational culture and leadership and stakeholder engagement hold a higher significance compared to other criteria, showing clear significant differences. This indicates their substantial impact on enhancing organizational performance, reflecting the strength of performance in these areas. By strengthening organizational culture and leadership, the organizational can better adapt and grow, fostering an effective and sustainable work environment. Additionally, enhancing stakeholder engagement leads to improved relationships with all relevant parties, encouraging positive interaction and guiding efforts toward more effective achievement of organizational goals.

- *Secondary-Importance Criteria*: The performance leadership and transformation criteria, along with stakeholder perceptions, ranked second in importance. Significant differences were observed, demonstrating a strong impact between these criteria and others, although their effect is relatively lower compared to the primary criteria. Improving these criteria helps strike a balance between strategic leadership and stakeholder needs, ultimately boosting long-term organizational performance and contributing to the development of successful strategies for guiding and achieving organizational objectives.

- *Non-Significant Criteria*: As for criteria such as creating sustainable value and strategic and operational performance, improving them is essential for ensuring organizational performance sustainability. Although their impact may be less direct than other criteria, strengthening these areas will improve the effectiveness of organizational processes and contribute to better long-term results. Therefore, focusing on improving these criteria is critical to ensuring sustainable and balanced performance for the Central Bank.

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Conclusion

The organizational performance evaluation of the Central Bank of Iraq using the EFQM model shows significant progress in some areas, with a score of 615 points out of 1000, qualifying for a distinction certificate. The bank demonstrates leadership commitment and uses tools like the balanced scorecard. However, challenges include weak environmental analysis, insufficient stakeholder behavior analysis, and lack of effective change management. Additionally, there is a lack of distinction between strategic and operational performance.

The analysis revealed that "organizational culture and leadership" and "stakeholder engagement" have the most significant impact on performance. In contrast, "performance leadership and transformation" and "stakeholder perceptions" had a lesser effect. Criteria like "sustainable value creation" and "strategic and operational performance" showed the weakest impact, reflecting the need for integrated strategies.

Recommendations include enhancing the most impactful criteria, improving environmental analysis, developing a comprehensive performance management system, fostering innovation, strengthening stakeholder relationships, and adopting digitalization. Additionally, reinforcing knowledge transfer and skill development is crucial for sustained performance.

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