
The effect of servant leadership on service quality: An applied research in the Babylon Water Directorate

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Abstract

The current research deals with two important variables, which are servant leadership as an independent variable, and service quality as an approved variable, and the purpose of the research is to know whether there is an effect of servant leadership on the quality of the service provided and what is the relationship between them, and there are (150) individuals representing the research sample out of a total of 230 individuals, represented by employees and leaders Central in the Babylon Water Directorate. The questionnaire was used as a basic tool for data collection and included (50) items, and ready-made measurements were used in preparing the items. Questionnaire, and after evaluating and testing the reliability of the study measurement tools, the researcher conducted data analysis and hypothesis testing using advanced statistical tools and analyzed them through the statistical program (SPSS V.26). As the research found a positive impact between the dimensions of servant leadership and service quality in the research organization. The research concluded with a set of recommendations for the research body to improve the quality of service provided to citizens.

Key Words: Servant Leadership, Service Quality.

Introduction

The rapid development and challenges faced by organizations today at all levels has led to their need for dynamic management that can meet these challenges and rapid changes, and the need for servant leadership has become urgent, the priority of which is to encourage individuals to have a balance in their lives between practicing leadership and serving others and encouraging subordinates to take advantage of opportunities. And the development of their career that will lead to upgrading the level of their organizations. Relationships between leaders and subordinates play a big role in raising the level of individual performance and thus raising the level of the organization's performance, which will achieve quality in the service provided and

satisfy the customer. The Babel Water Directorate (the researched organization) is considered one of the most prominent governmental service organizations. In Babylon Governorate, since its main goal is to provide a good service (delivering safe drinking water to all citizens in Babylon Governorate) and this represents the essence of the success of these organizations, and according to what was mentioned above, the researcher made a structure for the research, including four studies, the first topic reviewed the scientific methodology for research, and the second research For the theoretical framework of the research, the third for the practical side of the research, and the fourth for the conclusions and recommendations.

1. Introduction

In this axis, the researcher seeks to present a map of the progress of the research according to methodological steps and to define the course of the research and how to manage it by explaining its problem, importance, objectives, hypotheses, methodology, research tool and its testing, and the spatial, temporal and human limits of the research.

1.1 the research problem

A group of questions can be raised to formulate the research problem as follows:

- 1- What is the degree of adoption by the researched organization of the servant leadership style?
- 2 What is the impact of adopting the servant leadership style in improving service quality?
- 3- What is the nature of the relationship (link and influence) between servant leadership and service quality in Babylon Water Directorate?

1.2 The research importance

The importance of research is evidenced by the following:

- 1-The importance of research stems from the study of two important variables (servant leadership and service quality) in their dimensions and application of research in the Babylon Water Directorate, which is considered an important organization because of its important role in providing basic service to citizens.
- 2- The research contributes to enriching knowledge about the concept of servant leadership, which is considered one of the modern concepts of leadership and the urgent need to practice such an ethical leadership style in all organizations.

1.3 The research objectives

- 1-Providing those interested and concerned with theoretical and practical information on the nature of the research variables, and the extent of their impact on the research sample to draw the attention of the leaders of the researched organization and its transformation into a service leadership pattern that fits into the turbulent reality in Iraq and is reflected in providing the best services to citizens.
- 2- Determining and diagnosing the indicators adopted in providing the service in the Babylon Water Directorate and what are the factors affecting them and providing the required solutions

1.4 The hypothetical outline of the research

The researcher built a hypothesis diagram for the research that reflects the correlation and influence relationships between the research variables, as shown in Figure (1)

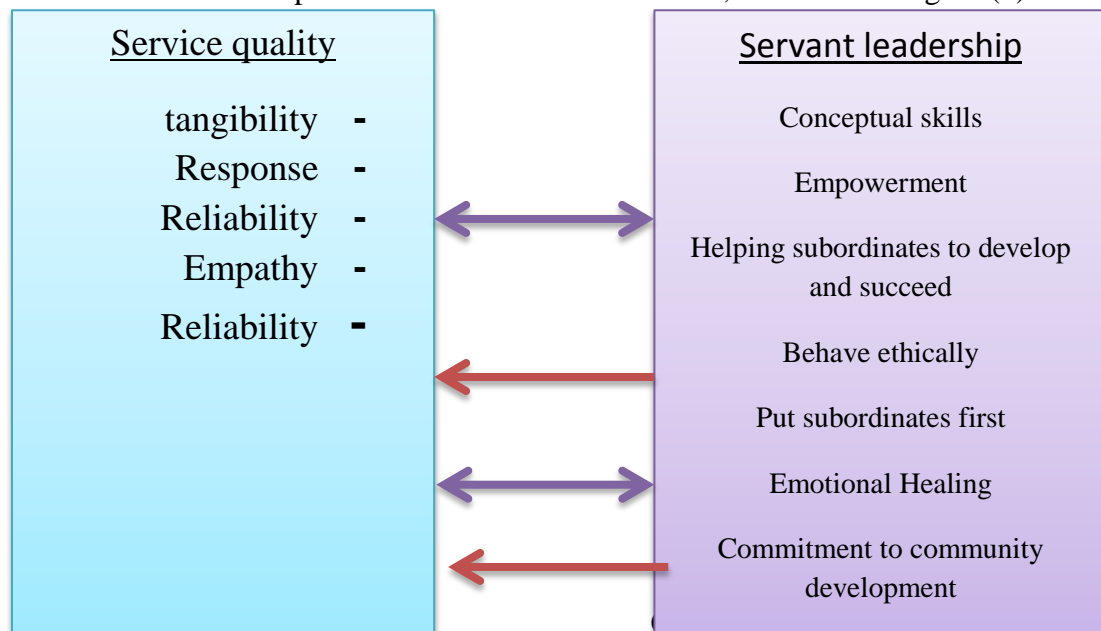


Figure 1: The research model

1.5: Research hypotheses

A- The first main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation between the servant leadership and the quality of service in the Babil Water Directorate, and the following sub-hypotheses arise from it:

1- There is a statistically significant correlation between conceptual skills and service quality in Babylon Water Directorate.

2- There is a statistically significant correlation between empowerment and service quality in the researched organization.

3- There is a statistically significant correlation between helping subordinates to develop, succeed and service quality in Babylon Water Directorate.

4- There is a statistically significant correlation between conducting ethics and quality of service in the researched institution.

5- There is a statistically significant correlation between the status of subordinates first and the quality of service in Babylon Water Directorate.

6- There is a statistically significant correlation between emotional healing and service quality in the researched organization.

7- There is a statistically significant correlation between commitment to community development and service quality in the researched organization.

B- The second main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant impact relationship for the servant leadership in improving the quality of service and its dimensions in the Babylon Water Directorate, and the following sub-hypotheses arise from it:

1- There is a statistically significant impact relationship for conceptual skills on service quality in Babylon Water Directorate.

- 2- There is an impact relationship of statistical significance for empowerment on service quality in the researched organization.
- 3- There is a statistically significant impact relationship in helping subordinates to develop and succeed in service quality in Babylon Water Directorate.
- 4- There is a statistically significant impact relationship for ethical behavior on service quality in the researched organization.
- 5- There is a statistically significant impact relationship for placing subordinates first on service quality in Babylon Water Directorate.
- 6- There is a statistically significant impact relationship for emotional recovery on the quality of service in the researched organization.
- 7- There is a statistically significant impact relationship for the commitment to community development in the quality of service in the researched organization.

1.6: Research methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive and analytical approach to analyze the correlation and influence relationships between the research variables.

1.7: Research limitations

- 1- Spatial boundaries: Babylon Water Directorate, which is one of the service departments of the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Public Municipalities.
- 2- Temporal boundaries: The temporal limits for the preparation of the research in its theoretical and field sides extended from 1/9/2020 until 1/3/2021.
- 3- Human boundaries: The human limits for this research were the employees and leaderships at the middle administrative levels in the Babylon Water Directorate, where the sample size was (150).

1.8: The method of data collection

The researchers relied on collecting data on two aspects, namely:

- 1- Relevant resources were relied upon to cover the theoretical side of the research.
- 2- Questionnaire form: It represents the main research tool in collecting information and data for the practical side. Through the questionnaire, the opinions of the sample members were examined and the five Likert scale was used, which is characterized by ease and accuracy. The researcher reviewed the directions and ideas of previous researchers for the purpose of preparing the questionnaire, and it was presented to a group of specialized arbitrators.

1.9 the statistical tools used

The statistical program SPSS Ver.26 was completely relied upon to perform the statistical analyzes required for the research, as percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviations and coefficient of variation were used, as well as the use of correlation coefficient (Pearson), regression coefficient, and (F-test), (R²) and (T)

1.10: tests of validity and reliability of the questionnaire

In order to achieve the apparent validity of the questionnaire, it was presented to a group of arbitrators to demonstrate its validity and suitability to the research variables. The items of the questionnaire were modified according to the views of the

arbitrators. As for the stability test, it was done by calculating the internal consistency coefficient Alpha Crownbach, where the Crownbach coefficient was 0.938 for all the variables of the questionnaire, and this confirms the validity of the research tool.

2.: The theoretical side of the research

2.1 - Servant Leadership:

1- The concept and definition of servant leadership

The theory of servant leadership has gained the attention of many writers and researchers in leadership literature, especially in recent years, and the concept of servant leadership has become widely spread until it has become one of the most important leadership styles today (Olesia et al., 2003). Servant leadership aims to develop the ability of subordinates, improve their performance, and provide them with the necessary and basic information to be able in turn to achieve the goals of the organization and community service (Mowery, 2017). The style of servant leadership is receiving increasing attention as it represents one of the forms of ideal leadership (Spears, 2010). Servant leadership theory is considered one of the best models of leadership as it is mainly concerned with the relationship between leaders and followers (Farling et al., 1999). Adopting the servant leadership style will help organizations achieve their goals through ethical leadership practices (Read et al., 2011). The definition of servant leadership differed according to the different writers and researchers and their orientations (Mook, 2012). Lord, (1999) defines it as a theory based on communicating with subordinates to understand and realize their needs and desires, to know the characteristics that they have, and to help them achieve their goals. Understanding and practicing leadership that puts the interest of subordinates before its own (Laub, 2004). It promotes the value and development of individuals, the practice of originality, and the building of team spirit, and all this is in the interest of the individual and the organization.

2- Dimensions of servant leadership

Through a review of the literature on servant leadership, it becomes evident that writers and researchers have differently defined the dimensions of servant leadership according to their different opinions, as each of them defined these dimensions according to their point of view. (Liden et al., 2008) believes that they are conceptual skills, empowerment, concern for subordinates and helping them to develop and succeed, act ethically, put subordinates first, emotional healing, and commitment to community development. (Barbuto & Hayden, 2011) presented the dimensions as vision, emotional healing, and persuasion. Nsiah & Walker, (2013) that define it as the vision, concern for subordinates and helping them to succeed, trust, act with ethics), as defined by Mc Carren et al., (2016) as empathy, putting subordinates first, acting ethically, modesty. From the point of view of Renfro, (2019), who includes conceptual skills, empowerment, caring for subordinates and helping them to succeed, emotional healing, community development, acting ethically, and putting

subordinates first. From the researchers' point of view, we believe that the dimensions of servant leadership are the ones that have won the agreement of most writers and researchers, which are conceptual skills, empowerment, caring for subordinates and helping them to succeed, emotional healing, community development, acting ethically, putting subordinates first.

2.2 - Quality of Service:

1- The concept of service quality: one of the basic issues for the survival and continuity of organizations and their success is the quality of service, gaining customer satisfaction and retaining them, and building long-term relationships with them Adem & Devi, 2015. The views of writers and researchers on the concept of service quality have varied, as Lovelock & Wright, (2002) defined it as the degree of satisfaction achieved by the service provided to the customer through the satisfaction and fulfillment of his needs and desires. It represents the customer's fulfillment and the customer's satisfaction can be known by comparing his expectations with the actual service provided to his/her. (Permatasari, et al., 2017). The researchers believe that the quality of service is the provision of services accurately and efficiently to meet the expectations of the customer.

2-Dimensions of service quality: The views of writers and researchers about the dimensions of basic service quality diverged. In 1985, Parasurman and his colleagues were able to identify the main dimensions of service quality through a series of group interviews where they identified ten dimensions, and Parasurman and his colleagues were able to merge them into five dimensions only to be adopted. The customer in evaluating service quality and most researchers agree to define these five dimensions. (Incesu & Asikgil, 2012), and among the researchers who agreed to define these five dimensions (Tsoukatose & Rand, 2007), (Lubis & Utami, 2015) (Limbourg, et al, 2016), (Giday, 2017) and other researchers, and the following is an explanation of each of these five dimensions:-

1- Tangibility: means the physical evidence of the service, which is considered as a companion to it when it is presented and is represented by the equipment, material facilities, communication equipment, and the uniform of the service provider (Russell, 2000).

2-Reliability: It means "the ability of an organization to deliver the service it promised to provide to customers in an accurate, correct and consistent manner (Kotler, 1997).

3-Responsiveness: the response of employees in the organization to customers' complaints and providing the service immediately, which is the ability to make the service match the needs and desires of customers (Zeithaml, et al, 2006).

4-Reliability Assurance: The dimension of reliability refers to the knowledge that employees possess and the respect and kindness they show to customers and their ability to demonstrate confidence and safety to the customer.

5- Empathy: This includes the spirit of friendship and appreciation shown by the service provider to the customers, i.e. the behavior of the service provider with the customer (Render & Heizer, 1997).

3. the practical side of the research

3.1- Description and diagnosis of research variables and their analysis

A- Description and diagnosis of servant leadership dimensions: Table (1) shows the arithmetic mean, standard deviations, relative importance and coefficient of difference, as the servant leadership overall in Babylon Water District obtained an arithmetic mean (3.73) available, with a relative difference coefficient (22.1%), and a standard deviation (0.826) indicates agreement and homogeneity about the directorate's relative interest (74.6%). It is good in directing its leaders to provide support and assistance and a tendency to motivate their subordinates, and to build their interests above their own interests, in a way that benefits them and the directorate in the benefits and advantages and achieving its goals and the goals of the local community.

1- **Acting ethically:** Table 1 provides with a high arithmetic mean (4.21), indicating agreement, homogeneity and convergence in the sample opinions about the relative high interest of leaders in their dealings with others in fairness, honesty and confidence.

2- **Conceptual skills:** This dimension achieved a high mathematical medium (3.88), to be in the second order, contributing to its availability, good in knowing the directorate leaders of their organization and the tasks assigned to them, so that they would be more able to solve the problems facing them, in addition to helping their colleagues and subordinates and providing assistance.

3- **Putting subordinates first:** This dimension achieved an arithmetic medium (3.86) high indicating agreement, homogeneity and convergence of the research sample on the availability of the dimension, and its practice with the directorate's good interest in meeting the needs of subordinates, considering it a top priority for the leaders of the Babylon Water Directorate.

4- **Commitment to community development:** This dimension has been achieved in an arithmetic medium (3.73) that is high and good through the awareness and interest that the directorate's leaders give to building a coherent community within their directorate between workers and with them.

5- **Empowerment:** Solving this dimension Fifth, with a high arithmetic mean (3.58), indicating agreement, convergence and homogeneity in the opinions of the sample, in encouraging the leadership of the Directorate for its members to participate in making the necessary decisions, and solving the problems facing them through delegating to the decision-making authority, in a way that facilitates Procedures and acceleration in meeting the needs of the local citizen.

6- **Helping subordinates to develop and succeed.** This dimension is a sixth solution to refer to agreement, coherence and convergence in the level of answers about the

availability of the dimension in an arithmetic medium (3.48) through the direct interest of the directorate leaders in a real and sincere interest in the subordinates, and support them with everything they own, and what enables them to develop and motivate them to achieve success.

7 - **Emotional Healing:** This dimension was resolved in the seventh order, as the dimension obtained in total an arithmetic mean (3.26) available around the middle, in that the leaders of the Babylon Water Directorate have the ability to perceive and address the personal aspects of their subordinates.

Table (1) Presentation and analysis of servant leadership data (n = 150)

Coefficient of %variation	Relative importance %	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Variables
<u>17.7</u>	77.6	0.690	3.88	Conceptual skills
<u>24.2</u>	71.6	0.868	3.58	Empowerment
<u>25.2</u>	69.6	0.878	3.48	Helping subordinates to develop and succeed
<u>22.2</u>	77.2	0.858	3.86	Putting subordinates first
<u>18.7</u>	84.2	0.787	4.21	Behaving ethically
<u>31.3</u>	65.2	1.023	3.26	Emotional Healing
<u>22.9</u>	76.2	0.826	3.73	Commitment to community development
<u>22.1</u>	<u>74.6</u>	<u>0.826</u>	<u>3.73</u>	Servant leadership

B: - Description and diagnosis of quality service dimensions:

The adopted variable was measured the quality of service in Babylon Water Directorate through dimensions (tangibility, response, reliability, empathy, reliability), through (22) items, and through the means and methods of descriptive analysis, the results of the primary data were as follows:

- 1- The quality of the service overall obtained an arithmetic mean (4.07) available, and it is practiced in the Babylon Water Directorate with a good level of relative interest (81.4%), a standard deviation (0.754), and a relative difference coefficient (18.5%), which indicates agreement, consistency and convergence in the opinions of the research sample about the ability of the Babylon Water Directorate to provide services that its local audience expects and realizes their benefits in practice. The results of Table (2) showed the order of the service quality dimensions from the most contributing to its availability to the lowest agreement.

- 2- **Reliability:** This dimension was resolved in the first order regarding the availability of the dimension with a high arithmetic mean (4.18), and the ability of the Directorate to gain the confidence of the local citizen through its services.
- 3- **Assurance:** This dimension was solved in the second order in terms of its contribution to improving the quality of service, with an arithmetic mean (3.99), and its practice with the directorate's good relative interest through its ability to perform local service accurately and on time.
- 4- **Response:** This dimension has been achieved with a high arithmetic mean (4.24), and it is exercised with high relative interest in its desire to help citizens and provide them with immediate service as quickly as possible.
- 5- **Empathy:** This dimension came fourth out of the five dimensions of service quality, as it obtained an arithmetic mean (3.93) available, and it receives the relative good attention of the Babylon Water Directorate.
- 6- **Tangibility:** Solving this dimension in a fifth with an arithmetic mean (4.02), and practicing it in the directorate with good relative interest, represented by physical facilities, equipment, building, personnel appearance, communication methods, service techniques, mechanisms and equipment.

Table (2) Presentation and analysis of data (n = 150)

Coefficient of %variation	Relative %importance	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	variables
<u>23.9</u>	80.4	0.961	4.02	Reliability
<u>18.1</u>	84.4	0.770	4.24	Response
<u>17.4</u>	83.6	0.729	4.18	Assurance
<u>18.4</u>	78.6	0.724	3.93	Empathy
<u>18.1</u>	79.8	0.723	3.99	Tangibility
<u>18.5</u>	<u>81.4</u>	<u>0.754</u>	<u>4.07</u>	Quality service

From a review of tables (1,2), it becomes clear that the approved dimension of service quality has a relative difference coefficient (18.5%), while the service leadership has a relative difference coefficient (22.1%). Availability with an arithmetic mean (4.07), and for servant leadership (3.73), as the researchers find that the dimensions of quality were more available and contributed to improving them, at the expense of the dimensions of servant leadership.

3.2- Analysis and discussion of the research hypotheses**3.2.1: Verify the research hypothesis of correlation**

Verification of the sub-hypotheses: Through the researchers' review of the results of Table (3), we found that the central dimension has achieved all the relationships, and all of them are under a moral level less than (5%), so they were as follows:

A- (Conceptual skills, empowerment, helping subordinates to develop and succeed, putting subordinates first, acting ethically, emotional healing, commitment to community development) achieved six out of six relationships, with a percentage (100%) of positive, positive and strong correlational relationships with service quality. Altogether, all the relationships are at the level of significance (0.000), and from all these results accept the sub-hypotheses of the first main hypothesis.

B- Servant leadership achieved a total of six out of six relationships, with a percentage (100%) of positive and strong positive correlational relationships with overall service quality and all relationships at the significance level (0.000). A statistic between servant leadership and service quality in Babylon Water Directorate.

Table (3): the correlation between two research variables

Quality service	Reliability	Empathy	Assurance	Response	tangibility	Dimensions
0.772**	0.660**	0.688**	0.737**	0.726**	0.727**	Conceptual skills
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
0.755**	0.646**	0.692**	0.744**	0.735**	0.750**	Empowerment
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
0.710**	0.647**	0.647**	0.681**	0.668**	0.732**	Helping subordinates to develop and succeed
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
0.732**	0.682**	0.683**	0.694**	0.690**	0.735**	Putting subordinates first
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
0.75**	0.654**	0.703**	0.762**	0.749**	0.750**	Behaving ethically skills
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
0.708**	0.607**	0.654**	0.716**	0.677**	0.716**	Emotional Healing
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
0.717**	0.638**	0.675**	0.696**	0.680**	0.724**	Commitment to

0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	community development
0.771**	0.683**	0.715**	0.758**	0.741**	0.774**	Servant leadership
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

P**<0.01, P*<0.05 (n=150)

3.2.2: Verify the research hypothesis of impact

1- The verification of sub-hypotheses:

As shown in the results of Table 4 that an impact analysis was found of conceptual skills, empowerment, helping subordinates to develop and succeed, behave ethically, putting subordinates first, emotional healing, and commitment to community development on overall service quality.. Moreover, all the sub-hypotheses of the influence hypothesis are accepted.

2- The verification of the second main hypothesis:

An effect (of servant leadership) on (service quality) was found in total, its value ($\beta = 0.771$), at the level of significance (sig = 0.000), which is less than its value (0.05), and the calculated value of (T) (49.084), while the percentage of its impact 77.1% in the overall quality of service, while the value of the constant was (0.768), that is, when the value of the marginal slope is equal to zero, or the value of the servant leadership is equal to zero, then the value of service quality in Babylon Water Directorate is equal to the value of the constant (0.768), and as shown by the results Table (4). From all of the above, the second main hypothesis is accepted (there is a statistically significant influence relationship for the servant leadership in improving service quality and its dimensions in the Babylon Water Directorate).

Table (4) The impact of servant leadership and its dimensions on service quality (n = 150)

F	T β	Sig	R ²	Bs	A	Independent variable
1165.329	34.137	0.000	0.596	0.772	0.668	Conceptual skills
1379.738	37.145	0.000	0.600	0.775	0.968	Empowerment
714.273	26.726	0.000	0.504	0.710	1.351	Helping subordinates to develop and succeed
971.698	31.172	0.000	0.536	0.732	0.910	Put subordinates first
1709.409	41.345	0.000	0.576	0.759	0.509	Behave ethically

699.216	26.443	0.000	0.501	0.708	1.084	Emotional healing
782.066	27.965	0.000	0.514	0.717	1.052	Commitment to community development
2409.21	49.084	0.000	0.594	0.771	0.768	Servant leadership

Source: SPSS V.26 Output

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 The conclusions

1- It is evident through the results of the statistical analysis that there is a high level of servant leadership dimensions (conceptual skills, empowerment, caring for subordinates and helping them to succeed, emotional healing, community development, acting ethically, putting subordinates first) and with a good degree of consistency in the sample answers, which gives an indication of leadership practice In Babylon Water Directorate for servant leadership style.

2-The level of service quality dimensions (tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, reliability, empathy) according to the opinions of the research sample individuals were positive and of a high degree, which indicates the interest of the researched organization in the quality of service.

3-It has been proven through the results of the research that there is a positive correlation and impact for servant leadership with its dimensions on service quality and its dimensions.

4- The Babylon Water Directorate directs its attention towards improving the quality of its services in a good way, employing its servant leadership practices mainly through its use of conceptual skills and empowerment, putting subordinates first, and acting ethically, but emotional healing was a discouraging relationship.

4.2 Recommendations

1-The success of any organization depends on the extent of the administrative leadership's conviction of the necessity of real concern for the quality of the service it provides to customers, and this conviction must be translated in the form of effective support and support through clarifying the vision and communicating it to all workers in the organization, and gaining their confidence to achieve continuity and success.

2- Motivating workers financially and morally, which encourages them to provide high levels of performance, which reflects positively on the quality of the service provided.

3-The necessity to work on creating a division or unit in the organizational structure of the Babylon Water Directorate, concerned with quality, and its association with the General Director is directly called the Quality Assurance Division or Unit.

4-Paying attention to improving the quality of the service provided through continuous training and development for the staff of Babylon Water Directorate, and to address the negatives that reduce the quality of service.

5- Work to implement and implement preventive maintenance programs for all projects and complexes of the directorate and provide the material and human resources necessary to reduce faults and the continuity of projects' work with the required efficiency, which enhances the quality of service.

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