



**CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR
IMPLEMENTING MANAGEMENT BY WALKING
AROUND IN DUBAI'S UTILITIES AND MUNICIPAL
SECTOR**



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AND MUNICIPAL SECTOR**

Mohamed Abdalla Hussain Ali

Doctor of Philosophy

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WALKING AROUND IN DUBAI'S UTILITIES AND MUNICIPAL SECTOR**

MOHAMED ABDALLA HUSSAIN ALI

**A thesis submitted
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



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DEDICATION

To my mother, father, wife, and beloved family for always being with me through all the hardships of my study by giving consistent support and encouragement.



ABSTRACT

Enhancing employee performance is a key objective in organizational management, and Management by Walking Around (MBWA) has gained popularity as an effective technique, particularly within Dubai's public sector. MBWA involves managers actively engaging with employees through informal, spontaneous interactions as they perform their daily tasks. This approach aims to improve performance by fostering direct, meaningful communication and addressing issues in real-time, thereby creating a more dynamic and responsive work environment. Despite its growing adoption, there are significant gaps in both practical application and conceptual understanding of MBWA. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) essential for the effective implementation of MBWA. Utilizing a quantitative research approach with a sample of 480 respondents from Dubai's Utilities and Municipal Sector, the study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to identify key factors influencing MBWA and its impact on performance. The findings reveal that MBWA significantly enhances performance, with a robust path coefficient of 0.421 and a T-value of 6.134. Among the factors, Communication (CM) stands out with a particularly strong positive effect on MBWA (coefficient of 1.042 and T-value of 10.233), emphasizing the crucial role of effective information exchange. Organizational Culture (CU) also positively impacts MBWA (coefficient of 0.502 and T-value of 9.958), reflecting the importance of shared values and norms. Additionally, Employee Engagement (EE), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Reward Management (RM), Top Management Support (TM), and Training (TR) positively influence MBWA, with coefficients ranging from 0.309 to 0.379. However, Behavior (BE) and Creativity (CT) show negative or insignificant effects, suggesting limited contributions to MBWA. Discovering Facts (DF) and Feedback (FB) also exhibit weak or non-significant effects. Theoretically, this study contributes to trait theory by identifying and categorizing key traits and factors that impact MBWA's effectiveness. It enriches the theory by linking traits such as Communication, Organizational Culture, and Employee Engagement to successful MBWA implementation, thus providing a comprehensive framework that addresses existing gaps in the literature. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for managers in Dubai's public sector. By highlighting the CSFs crucial for MBWA's success, it provides clear guidelines for enhancing employee performance through this management technique. The study underscores the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture and aligning management practices with the identified critical success factors to achieve optimal performance outcomes.

FAKTOR KEJAYAAN KRITIKAL UNTUK MELAKSANAKAN PENGURUSAN SECARA TINJAUAN SEKITAR DI SEKTOR UTILITI DAN PERBANDARAN DUBAI

ABSTRAK

Meningkatkan prestasi pekerja merupakan objektif utama dalam pengurusan organisasi, dan pendekatan Pengurusan dengan Berjalan Sekitar (MBWA) semakin popular sebagai teknik yang berkesan, terutamanya dalam sektor awam Dubai. MBWA melibatkan pengurus yang berinteraksi secara aktif dengan pekerja melalui perbualan tidak formal dan spontan semasa mereka melaksanakan tugas harian. Pendekatan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan prestasi dengan menggalakkan komunikasi langsung yang bermakna dan menangani isu-isu secara masa nyata, sekali gus mewujudkan persekitaran kerja yang lebih dinamik dan responsif. Walaupun penggunaan MBWA semakin meluas, terdapat jurang ketara dalam aplikasi praktikal dan kefahaman teori tentang MBWA. Kajian ini menangani jurang tersebut dengan menyiasat Faktor Kejayaan Kritikal (CSFs) yang penting untuk pelaksanaan MBWA yang berkesan. Menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kuantitatif dengan sampel 480 responden dari sektor Utiliti dan Perbandaran Dubai, kajian ini menggunakan Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur (SEM) untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor utama yang mempengaruhi MBWA dan kesannya terhadap prestasi. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa MBWA meningkatkan prestasi dengan ketara, dengan pekali laluan yang kukuh sebanyak 0.421 dan nilai-T sebanyak 6.134. Antara faktor-faktor tersebut, Komunikasi (CM) menonjol dengan kesan positif yang sangat kuat terhadap MBWA (pekali sebanyak 1.042 dan nilai-T sebanyak 10.233), menekankan peranan penting dalam pertukaran maklumat yang berkesan. Budaya Organisasi (CU) juga memberi kesan positif kepada MBWA (pekali sebanyak 0.502 dan nilai-T sebanyak 9.958), yang mencerminkan kepentingan nilai dan norma yang dikongsi bersama. Selain itu, Penglibatan Pekerja (EE), Perancangan Sumber Enterprise (ERP), Pengurusan Ganjaran (RM), Sokongan Pengurusan Atasan (TM), dan Latihan (TR) turut memberi pengaruh positif terhadap MBWA, dengan pekali yang berkisar antara 0.309 hingga 0.379. Walau bagaimanapun, Tingkah Laku (BE) dan Kreativiti (CT) menunjukkan kesan negatif atau tidak signifikan, mencadangkan sumbangan yang terhad kepada MBWA. Penemuan Fakta (DF) dan Maklum Balas (FB) juga menunjukkan kesan yang lemah atau tidak signifikan. Dari segi teori, kajian ini menyumbang kepada teori sifat dengan mengenal pasti dan mengkategorikan sifat-sifat dan faktor-faktor utama yang mempengaruhi keberkesanan MBWA. Ia memperkayakan teori dengan menghubungkan sifat-sifat seperti Komunikasi, Budaya Organisasi, dan Penglibatan Pekerja dengan pelaksanaan MBWA yang berjaya, sekali gus menyediakan rangka kerja menyeluruh yang menangani jurang yang sedia ada dalam literatur. Secara praktikal, kajian ini menawarkan pandangan yang boleh dilaksanakan untuk pengurus dalam sektor awam Dubai. Dengan menekankan CSF yang penting untuk kejayaan MBWA, ia menyediakan garis panduan yang jelas untuk meningkatkan prestasi pekerja melalui teknik pengurusan ini. Kajian ini menekankan kepentingan membangunkan budaya organisasi yang menyokong dan menyelaraskan amalan pengurusan dengan faktor kejayaan kritikal yang dikenal pasti untuk mencapai hasil prestasi yang optimum.

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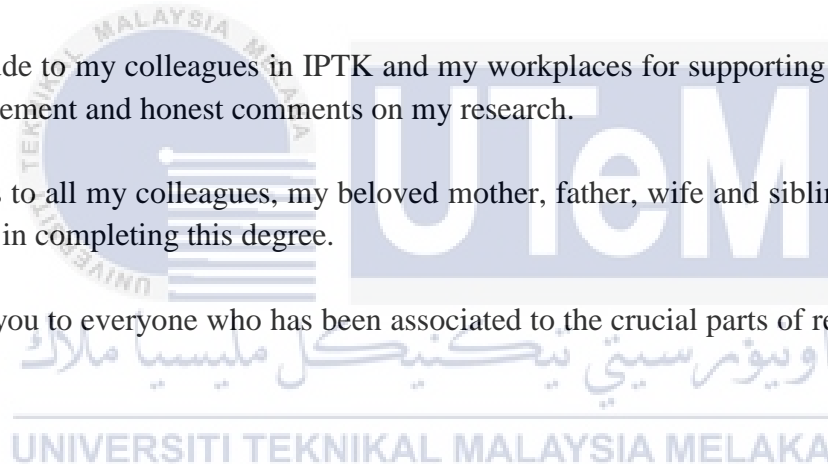


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSF	Critical Success Factor
MBWA	Management by Walking Around
NSBM	New Service Business Model
NSO	New Service Process
NSP	New Service Product
SI	Service Innovation
SIP	Service Innovation Performance
SQ	Service Quality
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor



LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Abdalla Hussain Ali, and Norliah Kudus., 2022. Critical Success Factor in the Implementation of MBWA in DUBAI Public Sector. Mathematical Statistician and Engineering Applications, Volume 71, Issue 3, pp. 43–53.

Abdalla Hussain Ali, Norliah Kudus, and Muliati Sedek., 2022. Bibliometric Analysis of Management by Walking Around Education Research from 2012 to 2022. Publisher Res Militaris, Volume 12, Issue 4.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the research study and provides the necessary background information. The chapter started by discussing the background of the study and explaining the context at which the study was conducted. Then, the articulation of the research problem that this study intends to address was covered, illustrating the avenue of the research gap. Moreover, the chapter highlighted the research questions and objectives. In addition, the chapter covers the significance of the research, its scope, the definition of key terms, and the overall structure of the thesis. In conclusion, the last section provides a concise summary of the chapter's key points.

1.2 Research Background

The utility and municipality sectors in Dubai face substantial management challenges that require immediate attention. Public sector managers in Dubai are increasingly pressured to enhance organizational performance and mitigate potential service disruptions. These sectors are critical in delivering essential services to residents, necessitating efficient resource allocation and effective management practices (Bryson and Crosby, 2018). The urgency for performance improvement arises from the multifaceted responsibilities of the public sector, encompassing the delivery of crucial services, fiscal accountability, and maintaining organizational transparency (Denhardt and Denhardt,

2015). Shortcomings in performance can significantly impact citizen well-being and erode trust in governmental entities (Bovaird and Loffler, 2018).

In today's era of heightened scrutiny and transparency demands, public sector organizations in Dubai are under constant evaluation by both the public and the media (Moss and Moulton, 2019). Operational errors, inefficiencies, or lapses in service quality can lead to severe consequences such as reputational damage and legal repercussions (Crosby et al., 2018). In response to these challenges, public sector managers are increasingly compelled to adopt innovative and effective management approaches (Osborne and Brown, 2013; Rosenbloom et al., 2022; Hoai et al., 2022; Modisakeng et al., 2020; and Alshahrani et al., 2022). One such approach gaining recognition is "Management by Walking Around" (MBWA), noted for its potential to enhance organizational performance and foster a culture of continuous improvement (Waring and Bishop, 2017; Durrah et al., 2020; Semfukwe, 2023; and Jain et al., 2023).

MBWA encourages managers to actively engage with frontline employees by personally visiting work areas, observing operations firsthand, and directly interacting with staff members (Lacity and Willcocks, 2021). This approach not only facilitates the identification and resolution of operational challenges but also promotes open communication and encourages employee involvement in problem-solving (Gill, 2019). Moreover, active participation in daily team activities enables managers to gain valuable insights into organizational strengths, weaknesses, and improvement opportunities (Peters and Waterman, 1982; and Javed, 2024), empowering informed decision-making and effective strategy implementation to enhance performance.

The adoption of MBWA in Dubai's public sector represents a proactive response to the imperative of enhancing service delivery, maintaining public trust, and addressing operational challenges effectively (Jones and Willcocks, 2020; Argus and Samson, 2021; and Javed, 2024). Organizations embracing MBWA under the guidance of their leaders, top-level managers, and policymakers drive strategic objectives forward through this innovative and dynamic management approach. MBWA has gained recognition and adoption not only in the United States but also in the United Kingdom, where its principles have been integrated into modern management strategies, marking a departure from traditional hierarchical structures and promoting closer alignment between managers and frontline workers (Dandoy et al., 2017).

Historically, managerial practices often isolated managers in offices removed from daily operations, creating communication barriers and limiting managers' understanding of frontline challenges (Mintzberg, 1973). MBWA emerged as a proactive solution to these limitations, advocating for a more engaged and approachable management style (Katzenbach and Smith, 2003). Central to MBWA is the active involvement of managers, immersing themselves in the workplace environment through frequent visits to various work areas, direct observation of tasks, and engaging conversations with employees (Peters and Waterman, 1982). This direct engagement provides managers with firsthand insights into operational challenges, employee concerns, and organizational dynamics. Furthermore, MBWA fosters an open culture where employees feel empowered to share perspectives and innovative ideas directly with management (Blanchard and Johnson, 1982), nurturing both individual development and organizational growth (Luthans, 2011).

In today's digital age, the widespread adoption of electronic communication and software solutions has transformed MBWA dynamics (Davenport, 2013). While physical presence remains valuable, managers supplement it with virtual interactions such as email, video conferencing, and online collaboration platforms to stay connected with remote or dispersed teams (Bower, 2014). However, the core principle of active engagement and genuine interest in employees' work and concerns remains unchanged (Kouzes and Posner, 2017). In essence, MBWA represents a profound shift in public sector leadership and management approaches (Jones and Willcocks, 2021), emphasizing leadership visibility, direct engagement with the workforce, and cultivating a workplace culture that values open communication, continuous improvement, and adaptability to technological advancements.

1.3 Problem Statement

The enhancement of employee performance stands as a central objective within contemporary organizational management strategies, particularly in sectors where operational efficiency and service quality are paramount. Management by Walking Around (MBWA) has emerged as a prominent technique in this regard, characterized by active managerial engagement with employees through regular visits to work areas, direct observation of activities, and personal interactions with staff members. In Dubai's public sector, especially within the utility and municipality sectors, MBWA has gained traction due to its potential to improve performance by fostering closer oversight and engagement between managers and employees. However, the implementation of MBWA is not without its challenges. Despite its growing adoption, significant issues persist regarding its practical application and conceptual underpinnings. One of the main problems is the inconsistency

in outcomes across different organizations. This inconsistency often stems from a lack of clear guidance on the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that are essential for effective MBWA implementation. Furthermore, the existing literature does not offer a comprehensive framework for identifying and categorizing these CSFs, leading to a gap in understanding how MBWA can be optimally employed to achieve performance enhancements.

Addressing these gaps is crucial, given the pressing issues faced by the utility and municipality sectors in Dubai. Recent performance data underscores the significance of these challenges. For instance, Asha (2014) reported a 15% increase in service complaints within the municipality sector over the past three years, indicating inefficiencies and delays in service delivery. Additionally, a survey by the Dubai Government Excellence Program revealed that 42% of employees in the utility sector felt disengaged due to inadequate managerial support and ineffective communication (Lee and Shin, 2023). These statistics highlight the need for effective management practices, such as MBWA, to tackle employee disengagement and operational inefficiencies.

The selection of the utility and municipality sectors for this study is particularly pertinent due to the specific challenges these sectors face. Both sectors are integral to Dubai's public service infrastructure and have been identified as having significant management and performance issues. For example, the utility sector deals with the complexities of managing extensive service delivery networks and ensuring consistent service quality. The municipality sector, on the other hand, faces challenges related to public service efficiency and responsiveness. These issues justify the focus on these sectors