



Faculty of Technology Management and Technopreneurship

**THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES TOWARDS
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES JOB SATISFACTION IN ABU DHABI-
UAE**

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**THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES TOWARDS PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES JOB SATISFACTION IN ABU DHABI-UAE**

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family members who were
assist me during my study journey.



ABSTRACT

Employees in the public sector prioritize job satisfaction, considering it as an internal principle shaped by various workplace components. Recognizing the impact of leadership attributes on job satisfaction, public enterprises must be mindful of employing appropriate leadership practices. Unfortunately, organizational neglect has led to an increase in unusual employee reactions. This study aims to assess the effects of leadership attributes on job satisfaction in the UAE's public sector, particularly within the unique context of a workforce comprising expatriates from diverse societies, whose terms of employment differ fundamentally from local Emiratis. A total of 350 survey questionnaires were randomly distributed among UAE public organizations' employees, with 266 usable responses, yielding a 76% response rate. The Bass and Avolio Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ x5) scales were employed to measure leadership attributes. The study builds a model that scrutinizes the interaction between transformational and transactional leadership attributes and job satisfaction in the UAE's public organizations. Through quantitative data analysis, the model identifies determinants, highlighting the dependence of transformative and transactional leadership styles on specific components. The proposed model contributes theoretically by offering insights into the nuanced relationship between leadership attributes and job satisfaction in the distinctive context of the UAE's public sector. In practical terms, the study suggests potential enhancements in organizational performance by leveraging transformational and transactional leadership styles. The comparison of actual outcomes with planned outputs serves as a practical benchmark for organizational success. Furthermore, the study underscores organizations' adaptability in a changing environment, defining performance as the continuous cultivation of transformational and transactional leadership styles. To refine the scale and reduce data volume, an in-depth analysis using AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The structures explored in this study were the subject of a captivating presentation on structural equation modeling. The findings underscore the significant impact of transformational and transactional leadership attributes on the job satisfaction of UAE public sector employees.

KESAN SIFAT KEPIMPINAN TERHADAP KEPUASAN KERJA PEKERJA SEKTOR AWAM DI ABU DHABI- UAE

ABSTRAK

Pekerja dalam sektor awam memberi tumpuan tinggi kepada kepuasan kerja, menganggapnya sebagai prinsip dalaman yang dipengaruhi oleh pelbagai komponen dalam tempat kerja. Pengurusan awam perlu peka terhadap penggunaan sifat kepimpinan yang sesuai mengingatkan impak pelbagai faktor terhadap kepuasan kerja. Namun, pengabaian organisasi ini telah mengakibatkan peningkatan tindak balas pekerja yang tidak biasa. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai kesan sifat kepimpinan ke atas kepuasan kerja pekerja dalam sektor awam UAE, terutamanya dalam konteks khas tenaga kerja yang terdiri daripada pelbagai masyarakat asing, di mana terma pekerjaan mereka secara asasnya berbeza dari penduduk tempatan Emirati. Sebanyak 350 borang soal selidik telah diagih secara rawak kepada pekerja organisasi awam UAE; 266 daripadanya telah dikembalikan dan boleh digunakan, dengan kadar respons sebanyak 76%. Skala soal selidik kepimpinan multi-faktor Bass dan Avolio (MLQ x5) telah digunakan untuk mengukur sifat kepimpinan. Kajian ini membina model yang menyelidik interaksi antara sifat kepimpinan transformasi dan transaksi serta kepuasan kerja dalam organisasi awam UAE. Melalui analisis data kuantitatif, model ini mengenal pasti faktor penentu, menekankan kebergantungan gaya kepimpinan transformasi dan transaksi pada komponen tertentu. Model yang dicadangkan memberikan sumbangan secara teoretikal dengan memberikan pandangan mendalam mengenai hubungan yang rumit antara sifat kepimpinan dan kepuasan kerja dalam konteks unik sektor awam UAE. Dalam konteks praktikal, kajian ini mencadangkan peningkatan potensi dalam prestasi organisasi dengan memanfaatkan gaya kepimpinan transformasi dan transaksi. Perbandingan hasil sebenar dengan hasil yang dirancang berfungsi sebagai penanda aras praktikal untuk kejayaan organisasi. Selanjutnya, kajian menekankan kebolehan organisasi untuk menyesuaikan diri dalam persekitaran yang berubah, dengan mentakrifkan prestasi sebagai penanaman berterusan gaya kepimpinan transformasi dan transaksi. Bagi menyempurnakan skala dan mengurangkan jumlah data, analisis mendalam menggunakan AMOS untuk analisis faktor pengesahan (CFA) telah dilakukan. Struktur yang dikaji dalam kajian ini menjadi subjek dalam satu persembahan yang menarik mengenai pemodelan persamaan struktur. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa sifat kepimpinan transformasi dan transaksi secara signifikan mempengaruhi kepuasan kerja pekerja sektor awam UAE.

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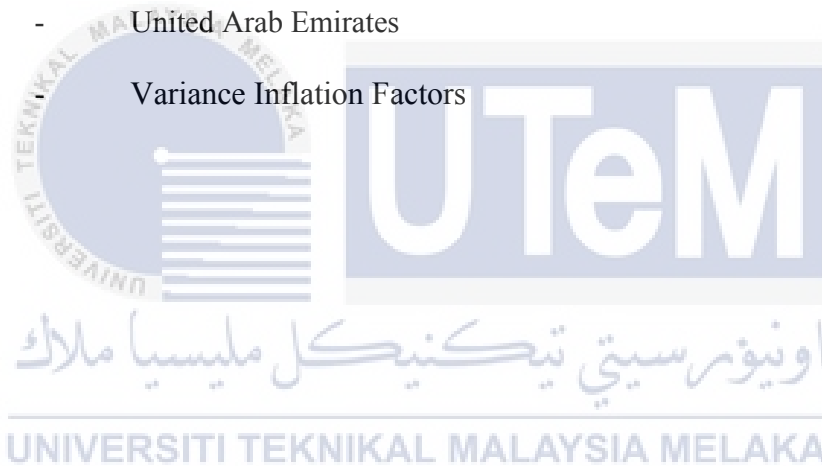
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	-	Analysis of Moment Structure
AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	-	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
KMO	-	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MBE	-	Management-by-Exception
PLS	-	Partial Least Square
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modeling
UAE	-	United Arab Emirates
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factors



LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Al Yahyae, O. R. H., and Mohamad, M. A., 2021. Perceptions of public sector employees on transformational leadership characteristics which influencing job satisfaction. *International Journal of Sustainable Construction, Engineering, and Technology*, 12(5), pp. 147-155.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by presenting the background of the research. The research problem is subsequently articulated, the research aim stated with its accompanying research questions and objectives. In addition, the scope of the research is contextualized. Subsequently, the thesis structures are also presented, designed around the research objectives in dimensions for the effects of leadership attributes on job satisfaction of UAE public sector employees to facilitate leadership in the organizational field, in addition to studying organization's overall acceptance of this type of leadership in this particular context (Ashok et al., 2021). The public organizations seeking to foster a culture of innovation and enhance employee satisfaction should prioritize the development and promotion of transformational leadership practices (Hassan, 2018).

Historically, strategic management, performance management and other managerial practices and principles concerned primarily with helping corporate enterprises that were threatened with obsolescence to re-engineer themselves. However, public sectors globally or regionally in the Arab States are faced some fundamental systematic socio-political and economic challenges. This has necessitated according to Saleem (2015) transformation to be made within the universal public sector which has become increasingly linked to a broader attempt at nation-building. Boamah et al. (2018) amongst other scholars arrived at the view that public administrations globally are forced to transform themselves into more efficient and effective, customer-centric service providers. In order to do so, public managers have

adopted private sector for leadership and management styles for solving organizational issues. In case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) there has been a drive to improve the effectiveness of its' public sector in order to make it (public sector) more responsive to the needs of the country's population and external stakeholders; through the implementation of global best practices, and management tools such as transformational leadership styles in the UAE's public administration for the delivery of government services (Hassan, 2018).

Transformational leadership in all manifestations and attributes has emerged as the most preferred choice of leadership style for adoption as the catalyst for increased institutional performance and sustainable service delivery ideals. Drawing on a growing body of literature, which highlighted that transformational leadership style of political leaders or corporate managers will elicit positive responses from employees that culminate generally into greater levels job satisfaction (Al-Ahmadi, 2021).

This study has been designed to assess the effects of leadership styles on employees' job satisfaction in the UAE's public sector, especially where a significant percentage of total work force consists of expatriates coming from diverse societies, whose terms of employment is fundamentally different from the local Emirates. The next section frames and contextualized the research background. This introductory chapter aims to provide an overview of the research undertaken to develop this thesis, including sections on the contextual background to the study, the research problem, the theoretical background, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, and the significance of the study, significance of the investigation and the organization of the thesis, with a brief description of the context of each chapter.

1.2 Background of the study

The United Arab Emirates (territory: 83,600 square kilometres) is situated on the eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula and includes an archipelago of 200 islands which extends over approximately 5900 square kilometres (UAE annual book 2000; Simmons, 2005). The Dawlat al Imarat al Arabiyya al Mutta hida (state of the United Arab Emirates) or, more commonly as the United Arab Emirates was established as a federal state in 1971 by agreement of the rulers of the seven emirates that now make up the UAE (Thompson, 2013). Figure 1.1 depicts the UAE geographical location which area of location of the study; along with some of its neighbouring countries.

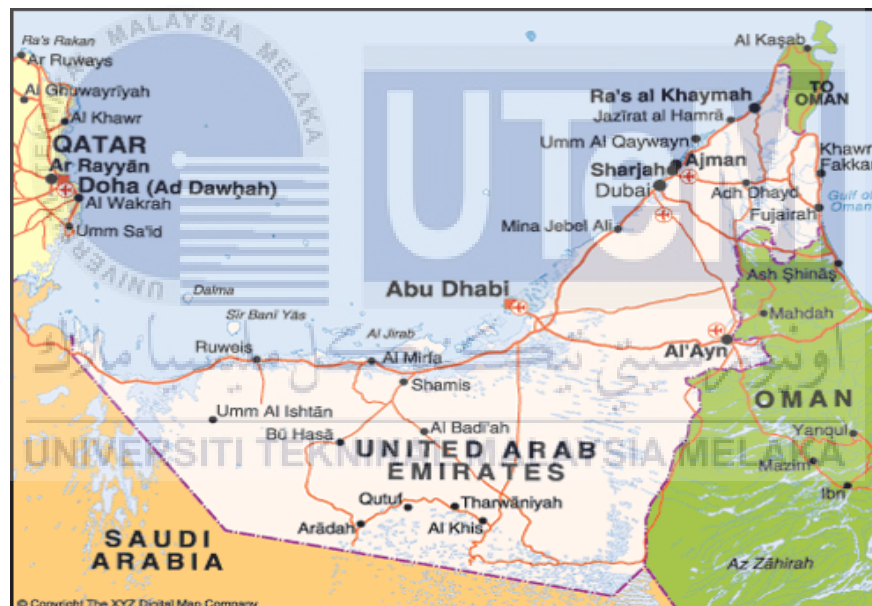


Figure 1.1: Map of the Middle East (Political Maps of United Arab Emirates, 2021)

As outlined in the Constitution, the UAE has two formal tiers or spheres of government, namely the federal and local governments. This structure applies to each of the seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah and Al-Fujaira (Sundar et al., 2019). Public administration institutions at the federal level are capably supported by local governments of the seven emirates. Each varies in size and has

evolved over time with the growth of the country. However, their mechanisms differ from emirate to emirate, depending on factors such as population, area, and degree of development (Sundar et al., 2019). The federal government oversees matters of national significance, such as defense and foreign affairs, while local governments manage local services and infrastructure within their respective emirates. This dual governance structure ensures efficient administration and effective delivery of services to citizens and residents across the UAE. Collaboration between federal and local authorities is key to addressing both national priorities and local needs, fostering unity, stability, and development throughout the country.

From an economic perspective, in a very short time frame the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has become one of the fastest growing and strongest economies within the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and in the world. The UAE is ranked second in GDP within GCC, the third in the Middle East and 30th in the world in 2011 (Askary et al., 2014). Once closely questioned, the UAE's competitiveness was largely since the UAE administration, regulatory bodies and by implication the country is the world's largest businessman (Thompson, 2016).

Saleem (2015) observed and noted how structures characterizing the public sector of modern economies, state activities, processes are constantly undergoing exponential changes as technocrats and policymakers face important questions about how to fulfill their core mission, respond to political and environmental changes, and deliver services to citizens in an efficient manner (Saleem, 2015). A comprehensive assessment of all public institutions, ministries, corporations, and independent agencies in the UAE would reflect the UAE's government demonstrated commitment to systemic reform in the public sector. The federal and local governments' emphasis on and shift from just simply administering services to engaging and empowering citizens by using e-government technology and social media to

interface with the general population. Biygautane and May (2015) for example, explain how technological advancement particularly in Dubai and UAE in general has facilitated the modernisation of the country's public administration. Parodically, the UAE's public sector according to Sarker et al. (2018) had been facing extraordinary pressure to change the way it manages performance. This presents government departments with opportunities and challenges involved in achieving a new approach to performance management.

As Moonesar cited in Sarker et al. (2018), the United Arab Emirates Federal government provides strategic directions to all federal ministries and individual emirates to develop and pursue public sector modernization and reform programs as part of UAE commitment to provide efficient public services to citizens and business community. Elbanana (2013) claims that the first concrete step towards strategic management in the UAE occurred in the Emirate of Dubai at the beginning of the 2000s. Then in 2007-2008 the Sheikh Mohammed leader of Dubai and Vice president of the UAE introduced federal ministries and other related public corporations and profit generating entities to strategic planning. Similarly, strategic planning development and framework were introduced to local government institutions in Abu Dhabi. Transformational leadership qualities as espoused by the UAE's Vice President Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum is increasingly viewed appropriate to been used as the fountainhead to achieve the strategic directions and intent in the UAE's post-independence state and public organizations due to new public management (NPM) changes.

Notwithstanding, such unconventional initiatives in the UAE's public sector; Buhumaid et al. (2016) echoed the concern that public sector leadership in the country like many other countries in the Arabian Gulf States, face the challenge of delivering government services to the country's demographics. Kin and Błażejowski (2014) had earlier explained

that leaders have a fundamental role to play in leading change and is continuously challenging the status quo. Transformation leadership is necessary for a paradigmatic shift from a bureaucratic rule-based to one based on the innovative, adaptive, flexible, and institutional culture of excellence (Kowch et al., 2021).

Northouse (2013) further explains that “transformation leadership is driven by the vision, values, long-term goals, and commitment to work for the benefit of young developing societies and their economic growth.” The implications of effecting systemic changes within the UAE’s public sector goes beyond economic growth and has a direct bearing on the custodian of such changes. This speaks to the effect on the job satisfaction of the employees both Emiratis and expatriates. Thus, this research is situated and framed within the transformational theory.

The former Trucial states bequeathed to the federal state of the UAE a Weberian bureaucratic model public sector. The model is built on the essential pillars of what Schachter et al. (2014) characterizes as command, rules, meritocracy control and strict hierarchy. Notwithstanding the presence of Weberian features within the UAE’s public administration, there has been a concerted effort to ensure the Arab identity created after the formation of the United Arab Emirates is not subsumed by the dominance of other cultural influences (Davidson, 2022).

There is a growing body of literature that has highlighted how traditionally there is an acceptance of the intertwining of autocratic tendency within Arab management and leadership styles. Thus, it is correct to note that the UAE’s public sector in the early days of its formation was an admixture of different public administration governance models and cultural characteristics.

Subsequent, to independence from the British, the country's public sector (both local and federal institutions) has emerged and morphed into multicultural public-sector administration constituting UAE and Euro-American citizens. Sarker et al. (2018) indicate that the UAE has an unhealthy reliance on international consultants makes the knowledge created very vulnerable to loss once they leave. Consultants are a rich source of rented knowledge, but if their experiences, observations, and recommendations are not well documented then the organization risks the loss of expensive knowledge. The findings of a previous research by Al-Yahya (2010) noted that 66% of the government institutions surveyed previously agreed that they lose core competencies when their staff members move to other organizations or units or moved to the private sector.

In order to achieve the UAE's Government socio-development agenda and to reform the country's public sector; Biygautane and Al-Yahya (2011) explained that hired mainly western consultants introduced 'many managerial techniques into the public sector (which are mostly known as New Public Management practices) to improve efficiency, quality of decision making and responsiveness to the public.

Biygautane and Al-Yahya (2010) noted how despite this expansion in human capital resources a body of studies has emerged which suggest how the prevalent high level of underutilization of knowledge and skills, especially in the public sector Biygautane and Al-Yahya (2010). Therein lies a problem as to whether the corporatization of the UAE public sector using transformational leadership styles or tools, or factors are driving the force behind job satisfaction in the UAE's public sector. The key research question discussed in this study may be to examine the impact of leadership on job satisfaction in a multicultural world among UAE public sector organizations, given their background, social-political

framework or lack of human resources, their geo-political climate and lack of democratic governance.

1.3 Problem statement

Organizations face escalating global competition and challenges in maintaining a competitive edge in the intricate global market environment (Al-Awlaqi et al., 2021). In the 21st century, companies must explore alternative modes of operation to enhance competitiveness, efficiency, and innovation (Bahadori et al., 2021). Successful international business demands that leaders acknowledge cultural differences affecting business practices in other countries (Zhang and Kang, 2020). To ensure the performance of 21st-century virtual teams, leaders need insights into Global Virtual Teams (Wilson, 2020). A study by Wang et al. (2020) suggests that leadership influences behavior through individuality and intellect rather than aggression or threat. Leaders, with unique styles, significantly impact outcomes, with some being more successful than others (Scicluna and Sammut, 2020).

In today's competitive global environment, organizations expand globally, facing numerous challenges in meeting objectives and outperforming others. Leaders play a pivotal role in achieving these goals, enhancing employee performance by job satisfaction, a subject of extensive research over the years with various definitions. Leadership, according to Saleem (2015), is the key to trust rooted in respect. Angka and Darma (2016) propose effective leaders as those leveraging power to improve followers and organizations.

Leadership emerges as a significant force for quality and creativity (Ali et al., 2013; Anastasiou and Garametsi, 2021), closely tied to practices involving people (Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). Influential personalities of leaders positively relate to job satisfaction and performance (Lim et al., 2017). Despite various theoretical approaches, transformative and transactional leadership remains the most renowned framework (Visvanathan et al., 2016). Transactional leadership involves recognizing, rewarding high performers, and penalizing poor

performers, which influence job satisfaction (Qing et al., 2019), while transformational leadership associates with subordinate moral values and inspiration (Mulla and Krishnan, 2011), which also influence job satisfaction.

While many researchers emphasize transformational leadership, transactional leadership also holds importance. Boamah et al. (2018) argue that the effectiveness of transformational style depends on personal skills, preferences, and experiences. Transactional leadership, however, may negatively impact organizational output (Qing et al., 2019; Odeh et al., 2021). In ambiguous situations, leaders should adopt the transformational style to identify key circumstances and choose the correct approach.

Both transformational and transactional leadership styles and their effects on organizations have been central to leadership research. Key organizational outcomes, including satisfaction, performance, group performance, and commitment, are linked to these styles (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 2019). Despite reports on transformational leadership's impact on job performance, limited research explores managerial transformational leadership effects on job satisfaction—a gap this study aims to fill by assessing transformational and transactional leadership styles in the UAE public sector.

Job satisfaction is critical among public organization staff, representing an internal concept influenced by various workplace dimensions. Public enterprises should adopt appropriate leadership styles, given the impact of these dimensions on job satisfaction. Unfortunately, organizational neglect has led to increased unusual employee responses.

Innovation-related activities, besides increasing profits, market share, and productivity, also yield non-financial advantages, enhancing well-being and creating meaning (Jensen et al., 2017; Hou et al., 2019). Innovation orientation benefits both employees and firm performance, with employees in innovative companies reporting increased job satisfaction (Grolleau et al., 2022).