



Leadership – style, satisfaction and commitment

Leadership
satisfaction and
commitment

An exploration in the United Arab Emirates' construction sector

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide an examination of the extent to which different leadership styles impact employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through a case analysis in the construction sector.

Design/methodology/approach – The research is based on a survey of three companies, one client organization, one consultancy firm and one contracting company. The useable survey comprised 251 individual responses from 600 distributed, giving a response rate of 41.83 percent.

Findings – The findings show that consultative and consensus leadership styles are prevalent in the construction sector in the UAE. Further, it was found that an employee's job satisfaction is strongly affected by leadership, with more than 50 percent of survey respondents stating that leadership strongly influences their job satisfaction. Leadership style was found to moderately to strongly affect organizational commitment of employees in the industry in the UAE.

Practical implications – The survey provides a useful instrument by which organizations across other sectors and within different cultural contexts can evaluate the significance of leadership style, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Originality/value – The work is unique in that it is an examination of the impact of organizational leadership style within a contemporary regional context. A number of studies have been carried out in the Arab world that suggest that leadership in Arab culture nurtures consultative and participative tendencies. These are all outdated by more than a decade and no recent study in the Arabian Gulf region exists and none which explore leadership styles' impact on employees.

Keywords Leadership style, Job satisfaction, Organizational commitment, United Arab Emirates, Construction

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a high growth economy, which is rapidly diversifying into areas of tourism, manufacturing, logistics, banking and finance. In support and promotion of these industries a visible construction boom has been experienced in the UAE. As per 2007 reports the country's construction industry is valued at \$221 billion – the highest in the region. This highlights the fact that planned construction is the focus of the UAE, particularly in the city of Dubai (Randeree, 2009). The shortage of indigenous manpower in the construction industry attracted a large influx of foreign workers, known as expatriates or expats. The UAE construction industry is mostly dependent on foreign workers from South Asia (India, Pakistan,



Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka), other Arab countries and European nations. Similar demographics exist across other countries in the Middle East, lending leadership and management a global context. Without drawing on the affect of culture, as a globally observed phenomenon, leadership style influences much of organizational behavior. In determining how leadership style factors on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the context of this study, Yousef (2000) has examined the relationship between organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance in the UAE and found significant results. It is thus a respected fact that leadership style is a factor of employee performance, which makes the choice of the former an important decision. This study aims to gauge the prevalent and preferred leadership styles in the context of the UAE.

2. Leadership style

Kim and Maubourgne (1992) stated that leadership is the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organizational goals. Leadership style is a leader's combination of attitude and behavior, which leads to certain regularity and predictability in dealing with group members (Dubrin, 2004) and is the relatively consistent pattern of behavior that characterizes a leader. The study of leadership style is an extension of understanding leadership behaviors and attitude.

There are several styles of leadership such as: autocratic, bureaucratic, *laissez-faire*, charismatic, democratic, participative, situational, transactional, and transformational leadership (Mosadeghrad, 2003a). A leader may have knowledge and skills to act effectively in one situation but may not emerge as effective in a different situation (Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006). Implicitly, different styles are needed for different situations and each leader must know when to exhibit a particular approach.

Yukl (1994) lists the following factors as determinants of leadership style:

- level in the authority hierarchy;
- function and size of the organizational unit;
- task characteristics and technology;
- lateral interdependence;
- crisis situation;
- stages in the organization life cycle; and
- subordinates' competence and performance.

Maheshwari (1980) states that the style of decision making in an organization is the result of a complex interaction of several factors, including the context and characteristics of the organization, the nature of the decisions and the attributes and preferences of the decision makers. Blanchard and Wakin (1991) point out that the degree of difficulty of the task plays a significant role in determining the right leadership style. Whyte (1988) argues that the choice of leadership style depends on the nature of the task, the power available to the leader, the experience of the subordinates, the culture of the organization, the preferred style of the leader, the style preferred by subordinates and time available for task completion.

In the last decade the development of global markets has created numerous cross-cultural teams and the ensuing dialogue has formed the basis for transacting

global business (Adler, 2002). Literature contends that leadership behavior is culturally determined (e.g. Adler, 1991). Robbins (1993) suggests that national culture plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of leadership style. Similarly, Adler (1991) has argued that national boundaries make considerable differences in leadership style. Bass (1990) also concludes that culture does influence leadership. According to Den Hartog *et al.* (1999), in a culture where authoritarian leadership is valued, it would be pointless acting in a way more characteristic of a participative or democratic leader. But in a culture that endorses a more nurturing and humanistic leadership style, being sensitive and considerate as a leader could be functional (Augsberg *et al.*, 2009). Notably, Hofstede's (1983) four-dimensional framework demonstrates that national cultures vary to such a degree that McKenna (2006) argues they eventually affect the selection of leadership style in one way or another. Research in cross-cultural studies of management maintains that managers adopt different leadership styles, depending on the pattern of organization and their individual characteristics (Ali, 1989a).

Furthermore, Ali (1989b) finds that leadership style differs significantly by country. Al-Faleh (1987) points out that Arab culture has certain distinctive characteristics that dominate managerial thinking and behavior. Evans *et al.* (1989) have argued that leadership style is a function of the level of industrialization, but cultural characteristics play a significant role in tempering its effects.

Campbell *et al.* (1993) note that leadership style itself and eventual task outcome had a strong impact on perceptions of appropriateness of leadership style, whereas gender and organizational setting had no substantive impact. Buckham (1990) argues that the type of industry sector (private or public) and an organization's size play important roles in the determination of the effectiveness of leadership style.

Studies of leadership styles have revealed that there are not only differences in the styles preferred by followers in different cultures, but the specific behaviors, which reflect these styles, may vary from culture to culture. Cultural differences may also limit the universality of new leadership paradigms, such as the theory of transactional and transformation leadership introduced by Bass (1985) and later revised by Bass and Avolio (1994), who stated that this theory has some degree of universality.

In terms of organizations, the influence of national culture on individual behavior is well established and the differences between eastern and western cultures are rather significant (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). The differences in national cultures are reflected in how organizations are structured and managed (Chen, 2001). For example, firms in South Korea and Chinese firms in Taiwan tend to be owned by founders and families. They tend to be paternalistic, promote values of high power distance and collectivism, and have bureaucratic control and centralized decision making with little worker empowerment. Promotion is often associated with family ties and networks (El Kahal, 2002). Rowlinson *et al.* (1993) supports these views, noting that most Asian societies follow a collectivist pattern. By contrast, Western firms tend to be owned by public shareholder and run by a professional manager. They are flatter in structure, less bureaucratic, promote individualism, decentralized decision making and more empowering to their workers. Promotion is often linked with personal competencies and merits (Chen, 2001; El Kahal, 2002).

Earlier studies have examined leadership style in Asia as well as the Arab world. In the Far East for example, Rowlinson *et al.* (1993) found that no predominant leadership style exists in the Hong Kong construction sector, though a prevalence for project

leaders to use both participative and directive leadership styles was established. Ali *et al.* (1995) investigated the decision-making styles of UAE national (citizen) managers and foreign expatriates. The results suggest that the consultative style was predominant. Similarly, Ali (1993) examined the leadership styles of Arab Gulf executives. The results also point to a strong preference for the consultative style. Furthermore, Ali (1989b) reported that Arab executives are highly committed to the consultative style.

Dahhan (1988) studied leadership styles of Jordanian management, concluding that they follow an authoritative style, a finding that is also reported by Badaway (1980) for Middle Eastern managers. A number of studies have been carried out in the Arab world that suggest leadership in Arab culture nurtures consultative and participative tendencies (e.g. Ali *et al.*, 1997). This preference demonstrates the influence of Islamic and tribal values and beliefs, both of which are evident (Ali, 1989a; Randeree and Faramawy, 2011).

Leadership style has been proven a determinant of more than one aspect in organizations and employee behavior. Two vital aspects that are of interest to understand the importance of the choice of leadership style are job satisfaction and organizational commitment, both direct factors on employee performance and in turn organizational success.

3. Job satisfaction

Before identifying the impact of leadership and leadership style on employee job satisfaction, a detail of factors and characteristics of job satisfaction is called for. Overall job satisfaction has been defined as “a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one’s job and what one perceives it as offering” (Locke, 1969). Job satisfaction is viewed as the extent to which a worker feels positively or negatively about his job (Odom *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, Mosadeghrad (2003a) defined employee job satisfaction as an attitude that people have about their jobs and the organizations in which they perform these jobs. Methodologically, we can define job satisfaction as an employee’s affective reaction to a job, based on a comparison between actual outcomes and desired outcomes (Mosadeghrad, 2003b).

Job satisfaction is generally recognized as a multifaceted construct that includes employee feelings about a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic job elements. It encompasses specific aspects of satisfaction related to pay, benefits, promotion, work conditions, supervision, organizational practices and relationships with co-workers (Misener *et al.*, 1996).

Literature suggests that numerous factors influence employee job satisfaction, including: salaries, fringe benefits, achievement, autonomy, recognition, communication, working conditions, job importance, co workers, degree of professionalism, organizational climate, interpersonal relationships, working for a reputable agency, supervisory support, positive affectivity, job security, workplace flexibility, working within a team environment and genetic factors. Many scholars (e.g. Ilies and Judg, 2003; McNeese-Smith, 1999) cite sources of low satisfaction being associated with working with unskilled or inappropriately trained staff; laborious tasks such as documentation; repetition of duties; tensions within role expectations; role ambiguity; role conflict; job/patient care; feeling overloaded; the increasing need to

be available for overtime; relations with co-workers; personal factors and organizational factors.

Job satisfaction straddles several related attitudes. For example, people can experience emotional responses to remuneration, promotion opportunities, relations with superiors and colleagues, and the work itself (McKenna, 2006). Organizational factors which impact job satisfaction include pay, benefits and promotion, leadership (Miller and Monge, 1986) and work groups and working conditions (Hodgetts, 1991). Employees who experience job satisfaction are more likely to be productive and stay on the job (McNeese-Smith, 1997). Additionally, satisfied employees are more innovative and play a greater role in decision-making within organizations (Kivimaki and Kalimo, 1994).

Substantial research indicates that a leader and his style being perceived as trustworthy leads to positive outcomes for the organization, which eventually affects job satisfaction. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) examined the findings and implications of the research that had been conducted during the previous four decades about trust in leadership. They concluded that the highest specific relationships (r) with trust was in relation to job satisfaction ($r = 0.51$), followed by organizational commitment ($r = 0.49$) and turnover intentions – trust in your leader results in lower attrition of employees ($r = 0.40$). Among determinants of job satisfaction, leadership is viewed as an important predictor and plays a central role.

Within the context of the Arab world, Bhuain and Islam (1996) examined the extent to which expatriate employees in Saudi Arabia are satisfied with the security of their jobs and the relationship between satisfaction with job security and continuance commitment. They found that expatriate employees in Saudi Arabia do not strongly express that they are satisfied with their job security. Furthermore, expatriate employees' satisfaction with job security is significantly correlated with continuance commitment. A recent case study by Randeree and Chaudhry (2007) concluded that job satisfaction affects productivity of employees in a culturally diversified environment. Although information is available, research studies in the Middle East on this subject are fragmented and sometimes contradictory.

4. Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment has three basic components: identification with the organization's goals and values; involvement in the organization through effort; and loyalty to the organization (Al-Meer, 1989). Similarly, Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualized three components of organizational commitment. Affective commitment relates the person's emotional attachment to his organization. Continuance commitment is a person's perception of the costs and risks associated with leaving his current organization. There is considerable evidence that there are two aspects of continuance commitment – personal sacrifice that leaving would involve and a lack of alternatives available to the person. Finally, normative commitment gives a moral dimension, based on a person's felt obligation and responsibility to his or her employing organization.

As the underlying component of commitment in various definitions pertains to the desire of employees to remain in their organizations or to their unwillingness to change organizations for moderate personal advantage (Joseph and Deshpande, 1996), greater job satisfaction is expected to lead to stronger organizational commitment. Several

researchers have examined the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment and have shown that job satisfaction is a determinant of organizational commitment (e.g. MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998; Currivan, 1999; Lok and Crawford, 1999). Vandenberg and Lance (1992) examined the causal order of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. They found that organizational commitment causes job satisfaction. Russ and McNeilly (1995) looked into the relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction using experience, gender and performance as moderators. They discovered that experience and performance moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction dimensions.

Some studies have reported strong correlations of organizational commitment and job satisfaction with attrition (Benkhoff, 1997). When employees are dissatisfied at work, they are less committed and will look for other opportunities. Job satisfaction can enhance organizational commitment and reduce an employee's intention to leave a firm (Murphy and Gorchels, 1996). Those businesses that do not offer attractive career development programs can lose good workers to competitors offering better job opportunities (Rita and Kirschenbaum, 1999). If external opportunities are unavailable, they may remain with their present employer, but emotionally or mentally "withdraw" from the organization.

Numerous antecedents of job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been suggested in the earlier studies (e.g. Chen and Francesco, 2000). For example, leadership (Williams and Hazer, 1986) and organizational culture (Trice and Beyer, 1993) were shown to have significant impact on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lok and Crawford, 2001). The effect of leadership style on organizational commitment is important to investigate because it has been found that organizational commitment affects other organizational outcomes, including turnover intentions, company sales and profitability (Benkhoff, 1997). Yousef (2000) studied the relationship between organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance in the UAE and found significant positive results. However, his study reveals moderating effects of national culture on the relationships of leadership behavior with organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance.

5. Methodology

The UAE has been chosen as a setting for this study, based on its high rating among its Middle-Eastern counterparts and its position as a model of growth (Randree, 2008). The spread of industry across numerous sectors makes the UAE an attractive context for leadership studies. A qualitative analysis was undertaken amongst employees in the construction industry of the UAE, to ascertain employee perceptions of leadership styles. The developed questionnaire was divided into sections pertaining to personal information (age, gender, nationality, and work group), leadership style, factors affecting job satisfaction and factors affecting organizational commitment. Work group was ascertained from the job description the participant wrote into the survey questionnaire. Ten leadership styles were explored, as detailed in the questionnaire (the complete questionnaire appears in the Appendix). In total, 600 questionnaires were distributed to three selected companies, accessible through professional relationships. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed in a client organization, 250 questionnaires were circulated in a consultancy company and 200 questionnaires were

distributed in a contractor firm. Completed questionnaires were collected in person, one month after their delivery.

6. Results and analysis

The useable survey comprised 251 forms giving a response rate of 41.83 percent. This is considered satisfactory for a construction industry survey in the Middle East. The general characteristics of the survey show that employees from the Indian Sub-continent (South Asia) are the largest demographic group in the construction industry by nationality with male dominance. The prevalence of defined leadership styles in the organizations, and their perceived pervasiveness, were measured by respondents using a five-point Likert scale, only if it was present. Table I summarizes the percentage and mean of the responses with Figure 1 illustrating noticeable to high significance.

The mean analysis of the survey revealed that consensus and team management leadership style is moderate to noticeably present. Almost 40 percent of respondents felt that consultative leadership style, while about 50 percent of the respondents believed consensus leadership style are noticeably prevalent. However, about 30 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that team management leadership style is highly present.

The mean analysis of the responses indicated that six strongly influencing factors are evident in relation to job satisfaction (Table II). These are:

- (1) salary;
- (2) nature of work;
- (3) job flexibility;
- (4) job security;
- (5) direct manager's behavior; and
- (6) company leadership.

The results demonstrated that for each factor approximately 50 percent of the respondents believed that the nature of work, and 40 percent of the respondents felt that direct manager's behavior, very strongly influence their job satisfaction. However, around 50 percent of the responses indicated that salary, job security and company leadership strongly influence job satisfaction.

Representation of the relative prevalence of different leadership styles measures shows that the most observed is the consensus leadership style followed by the consultative leadership styles. Furthermore, analysis of the factors in relation to their affect on the organizational commitment of employees indicated that organizational commitment of the employees is strongly influenced by salary, nature of work, company culture, direct manager's behavior, and company leadership (Table III).

The response rate for each factor revealed that around 50 percent of respondents' organizational commitment is very strongly influenced by direct manager's behavior. Furthermore, more than 40 percent of the respondents felt that their organizational commitment was strongly affected by other benefits, nature of work, job flexibility, job timing, company culture and leadership.

The three general queries in the questionnaire regarding the influence of leadership style on an employee's job satisfaction and organizational commitment on a five-point

Table I.
Prevailing leadership
styles

Leadership styles	1 = Rarely present		2 = Occasionally present		3 = Moderately present		4 = Noticeably present		5 = Highly present		Mean	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Autocratic	80	31.9	32	12.7	84	33.5	45	17.9	6	2.4	2.5	1.19
Consultative	8	3.2	47	18.7	57	22.7	104	41.4	31	12.4	3.4	1.04
Consensus	8	3.2	19	7.6	56	22.3	125	49.8	33	13.1	3.6	0.93
Democratic	23	9.2	96	38.2	68	27.1	25	10.0	34	13.5	2.8	1.18
Authority-compliance	78	31.1	44	17.5	55	21.9	64	25.5	3	1.2	2.5	1.22
Country club management	68	27.1	38	15.1	87	34.7	44	17.5	2	0.8	2.5	1.11
Impoverished management	129	51.4	29	11.6	48	19.1	26	10.4	7	2.8	2.0	1.20
Middle-of-the-road management	90	35.9	48	19.1	64	25.5	32	12.7	5	2.0	2.2	1.15
Team management	8	3.2	20	8.0	97	38.6	46	18.3	76	30.3	3.7	1.10
Transformational leadership	18	7.2	33	13.1	92	36.7	73	29.1	20	8.0	3.2	1.03

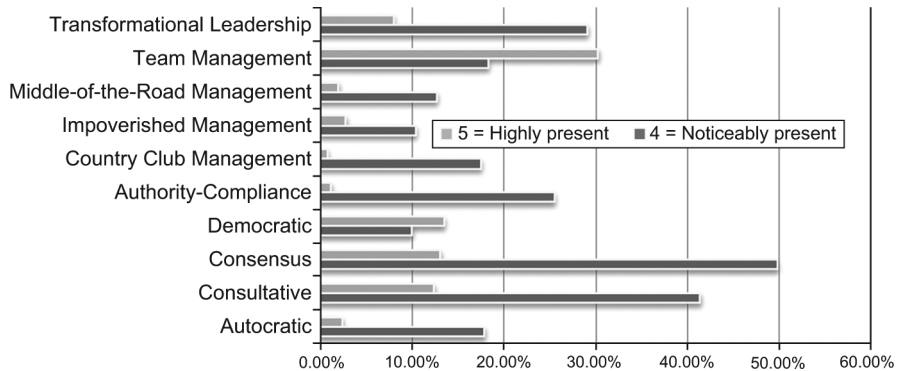


Figure 1.
Noticeably and highly
present leadership styles

Likert scale reveals that a company’s leadership style strongly influences employee job satisfaction (4.1) and organizational commitment (3.8).

Data analysis in context of gender revealed that although the ratio of female respondents in respect to male is very low (which is expected in the construction industry) both genders tend to value democratic and team management leadership styles (Table IV).

Since age has a powerful effect in shaping attitudes (Oshagbemi, 2004) and Kakabadse *et al.* (1998) it was found that democratic leadership was the preferred style within this demographic (Table V). These findings also correlate with leadership views based on professional demographics of individuals, perhaps in part as older people would naturally have had more work experience and would also be expected to move into more senior positions with increasing years of service. In the context of education, 85.6 percent of respondents had gained a post-secondary qualification, which prevents an analysis of statistical significance across a range of educational qualifications. Data analysis in the context of work groups was based on five work groups:

- (1) senior managers;
- (2) junior managers;
- (3) engineers;
- (4) draftsmen; and
- (5) administrators.

The most preferred leadership styles by most of the work groups are democratic, team management, consultative and consensus leadership styles (Table VI).

A cross-cultural analysis of the data shown in Table VII reveals that the leadership styles preference of majority of the nationality groups revolves around team management, democratic, consensus, and consultative leadership styles. Based on the overall survey, the results indicate that by organizational subgroup (client, consultant and contractor), employees prefer democratic, consensus and team management leadership styles, as shown in Table VIII, though there is variation in each subgroup.

The literature search to determine the prevalent leadership styles in the UAE has not revealed any specific results. However, the investigation of Ali *et al.* (1995) and Yousef (2000) indicate that the dominant styles in the UAE are consultative and

Table II.
Influence of different
factors on employees' job
satisfaction

Factors	1 = Very Little Influence		2 = Little Influence		3 = Moderate Influence		4 = Strong Influence		5 = Very Strong Influence		Mean	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Salary	1	0.4	16	6.4	30	12.0	120	47.8	83	33.1	4.1	0.86
Other benefits	3	1.2	17	6.8	48	19.1	113	45.0	69	27.5	3.9	0.92
Nature of work	1	0.4	16	6.4	28	11.2	84	33.5	121	48.2	4.2	0.92
Job flexibility	0	0.0	16	6.4	39	15.5	107	42.6	88	35.1	4.1	0.87
Job security	1	0.4	1	0.4	56	22.3	117	46.6	75	29.9	4.1	0.76
Job timing	0	0.0	15	6.0	91	36.3	103	41.0	41	16.3	3.7	0.82
Company culture	0	0.0	43	17.1	45	17.9	80	31.9	82	32.7	3.8	1.08
Direct manager behaviour	0	0.0	10	4.0	60	23.9	83	33.1	97	38.6	4.1	0.89
Company leadership	1	0.4	3	1.2	54	21.5	132	52.6	60	23.9	4.0	0.74
Name of company	43	17.1	50	19.9	55	21.9	78	31.1	24	9.6	3.0	1.26
Place of work	3	1.2	28	11.2	75	29.9	72	28.7	71	28.3	3.7	1.04
Living environment	5	2.0	24	9.6	59	23.5	81	32.3	69	27.5	3.8	1.04
Inflation	2	0.8	30	12.0	120	47.8	45	17.9	52	20.7	3.5	0.98
Traffic	9	3.6	59	23.5	113	45.0	22	8.8	47	18.7	3.2	1.10

Factors	1 = Very Little Influence		2 = Little Influence		3 = Moderate Influence		4 = Strong Influence		5 = Very Strong Influence		Mean	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Salary	3	1.2	27	10.8	39	15.5	91	36.3	90	35.9	4.0	1.03
Other benefits	4	1.6	23	9.2	77	30.7	120	47.8	26	10.4	3.6	0.86
Nature of work	1	0.4	1	0.4	31	12.4	132	52.6	85	33.9	4.2	0.69
Job flexibility	1	0.4	36	14.3	42	16.7	122	48.6	49	19.5	3.7	0.95
Job security	0	0.0	15	6.0	89	35.5	75	29.9	71	28.3	3.8	0.92
Job timing	0	0.0	21	8.4	71	28.3	107	42.6	50	19.9	3.7	0.87
Company culture	0	0.0	20	8.0	35	13.9	111	44.2	84	33.5	4.0	0.89
Direct manager behaviour	0	0.0	4	1.6	38	15.1	85	33.9	123	49.0	4.3	0.78
Company leadership	1	0.4	5	2.0	66	26.3	112	44.6	66	26.3	3.9	0.80
Name of company	27	10.8	64	25.5	49	19.5	91	36.3	19	7.6	3.0	1.17
Place of work	13	5.2	31	12.4	111	44.2	49	19.5	46	18.3	3.3	1.08
Living environment	4	1.6	23	9.2	132	52.6	63	25.1	16	6.4	3.3	0.79
Inflation	3	1.2	91	36.3	105	41.8	35	13.9	16	6.4	2.9	0.89
Traffic	34	13.5	76	30.3	66	26.3	22	8.8	52	20.7	2.9	1.33

Table III.
Influence of different
factors on employees'
organizational
commitment

Table IV.
Leadership styles
preference by gender

Male <i>n</i> = 217	Female <i>n</i> = 34
Democratic	Democratic
Consensus	Team management
Team management	Consultative
Consultative	Autocratic
Transformational leadership	Consensus
Authority-compliance	Impoverished management
Country club management	Transformational leadership
Autocratic	Authority-compliance
Middle-of-the-road management	Country club management
Impoverished management	Middle-of-the-road management

participative. This validates earlier studies by Al-Jafary and Hollingsworth (1983) and Muna (1980) in the Arab world.

The results of the present study indicate that employees in the construction industry feel that consensus and team management leadership styles are predominantly prevalent in the industry, which are similar to the earlier findings. It implies that leaders in the industry encourage participation, involvement, and commitment before making decisions. They facilitate group discussions and decisions are made on general agreement of employees. A reason could be that since the industry in the UAE is culturally diverse, leaders prefer to have general consensus before reaching a decision.

The analysis revealed that an employee's job satisfaction is strongly affected by the following factors:

- salary;
- nature of work;
- job flexibility;
- job security;
- direct manager behavior; and
- company leadership.

The response rate showed that more than 50 percent of respondents felt that company leadership strongly influenced their job satisfaction, which validates earlier findings (Miller and Monge, 1986; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002), stating that people-centered or participative leadership style is a determinant of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction was found to be culturally affected – as in previous studies (e.g. Yavas *et al.*, 1990). However, the present study finds a small correlation between job satisfaction and culture. For example, it was found that a European national's job satisfaction is strongly influenced by company culture and direct manager's behavior, whereas a Far East Asian's job satisfaction is very strongly influenced by extrinsic factors such as job security, salary and other benefits.

It was also found that job satisfaction differs by gender. Male employees considered salary more influential, whereas female employees rated job security as more

Age 21-25 years <i>n</i> = 29	Age 26-30 years <i>n</i> = 90	Age 31-35 years <i>n</i> = 59	Age 36-45 years <i>n</i> = 62	Age 46-55 years <i>n</i> = 8
Consensus	Consultative	Democratic	Team management	Democratic
Team management	Democratic	Consensus	Democratic	Consensus
Democratic	Team management	Consultative	Consensus	Transformational leadership
Transformational leadership	Consensus	Team management	Consultative	Team management
Middle-of-the-road management	Autocratic	Authority-compliance	Transformational leadership	Authority-compliance
Consultative	Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership	Authority-compliance	Consultative
Authority-compliance	Authority-compliance	Country club management	Country club management	Country club management
Impoverished management	Country club management	Autocratic	Autocratic	Autocratic
Country club management	Middle-of-the-road management	Middle-of-the-road management	Middle-of-the-road management	Impoverished management
Autocratic	Impoverished management	Impoverished management	Impoverished management	Middle-of-the-road management

Table V.
Leadership styles preference by age group

Table VI.
Leadership styles
preference by work
groups

Senior managers <i>n</i> = 5	Junior managers <i>n</i> = 64	Engineers <i>n</i> = 113	Draftsmen <i>n</i> = 41	Administrators <i>n</i> = 31
Team management	Democratic	Consensus	Consultative	Team management
Consultative	Team management	Democratic	Democratic	Consultative
Autocratic	Consensus	Team management	Country club management	Consensus
Consensus	Consultative	Consultative	Consensus	Democratic
Authority-compliance	Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership	Autocratic	Transformational leadership
Democratic	Autocratic	Authority-compliance	Team management	Authority-compliance
Country club management	Authority-compliance	Country club management	Middle-of-the-road management	Country club management
Transformational leadership	Country club management	Middle-of-the-road management	Impoverished management	Middle-of-the-road management
Middle-of-the-road management	Impoverished management	Autocratic	Authority-compliance	Autocratic
Impoverished management	Middle-of-the-road management	Impoverished management	Transformational leadership	Impoverished management

UAE Nationals <i>n</i> = 17	Other Arab Nationals <i>n</i> = 40	South Asians <i>n</i> = 129	Europeans <i>n</i> = 129	Far East Asians <i>n</i> = 18
Team management	Democratic	Democratic	Team management	Democratic
Democratic	Team management	Consensus	Consultative	Consensus
Consultative	Consensus	Consultative	Consensus	Team management
Consensus	Transformational leadership	Team management	Democratic	Transformational leadership
Impoverished management	Authority-compliance	Authority-compliance	Authority-compliance	Authority-compliance
Autocratic	Consultative	Transformational leadership	Country club management	Country club management
Transformational leadership	Middle-of-the-road management	Country club management	Transformational leadership	Autocratic
Middle-of-the-road management	Country club management	Autocratic	Autocratic	Consultative
Authority-compliance	Autocratic	Middle-of-the-road management	Middle-of-the-road management	Impoverished management
Country club management	Impoverished management	Impoverished management	Impoverished management	Middle-of-the-road management

Table VII.
Leadership styles preference by nationality and ethnicity

influential to their job satisfaction. Analysis by age group revealed that job satisfaction was affected by the employee's age. Young employees (21-30 years) were strongly influenced by salary, other benefits and nature of work; whereas older employees' (46-55 years) were more influenced by job security.

Analysis of different work groups suggested that a manager's job satisfaction is more strongly influenced by the nature of work, job flexibility and direct manager's behavior; however employees a level below management such as engineers felt that their job satisfaction is strongly affected by salary, other benefits and living environment.

The study found that organizational commitment of employees in the industry is strongly influenced by salary, nature of work, company culture, direct manager's behavior, and company leadership. The findings validate exploration of earlier researchers. In light of the survey response rate it was found that around 50 percent of respondents believe that their organizational commitment is very strongly influenced by direct manager's behavior and more than 40 percent of respondents' organizational commitment is strongly affected by other benefits, nature of work, job flexibility, job timing, company culture and its leadership.

It is interesting to note the observations based on responses by gender, which demonstrated that extent of the factors influencing organizational commitment is similar to job satisfaction, which highlights the correlation between them. However, both male and female employees feel that their direct manager's behavior is the most influencing factor on their organizational commitment.

The study also revealed that age groups do make a difference. It is found that young employees' (21-25 years) organizational commitment is very strongly affected by salary, nature of work, and direct manager's behavior; whereas employees in the age group of 36-45 years believe their organizational commitment is influenced by their manager's behavior, company culture and nature of work.

Analysis based on work groups revealed that employees at technical levels felt their organizational commitment is strongly influenced by salary, nature of work, job security, work timing, company culture and, most importantly, direct manager's behavior. Employees at managerial level believed that their organizational commitment is strongly affected by nature of work, company culture, and company leadership. Thus, leadership style affects moderate to strongly on organizational commitment of employees in the industry.

7. Conclusions

Based on these research findings, companies should re-examine senior management recruitment and employee retention strategies in the UAE and broader GCC region. The common trend found across all measures within the study was that managerial

Table VIII.
Top three leadership styles preferred by employees in each type of organization

Overall	Client organization	Consultant organization	Contractor organization
Democratic	Team management	Consultative	Democratic
Consensus	Democratic	Consensus	Transformational
Team management	Consultative	Team management	Consensus

behavior was highly significant to employees being satisfied with and committed to their employer. Thus, the upper echelons of organizations need to ensure that their human resource departments have mechanisms for managerial selection in place, which may include appropriate interview and recruitment policies and the implementation of psychometric tests or similar, to understand leadership skills and identify future prospective leaders.

The research also provides insight into areas for improving employee retention. In this regard, the study indicated two distinct areas. The first is related to terms and conditions, predominantly job security and salary, more significant with men, younger participants, ethnically Asian, and more junior staff. The second is work environment, principally nature of work and job flexibility, which was more prevalent among women, senior staff and European and Emirati citizens. Retaining employees must therefore carry a dual strategy to address these two sets of criteria. Structured pay scales and fixed-term renewal contracts would clearly improve retention rates for those to whom salary and security are important; whereas autonomy, flexible working practices and flatter organizational structures would favor those to whom the nature of work is significant.

The uniqueness of construction projects and distinct critical factors on every project makes it difficult to determine the best leadership style. The outcomes of this paper indicate that employees generally perceive consultative and consensus leadership styles as prevalent, but supports the findings of Toor and Ofori (2006) and Toor and Ogunlana (2006), who proposed that there is no one leadership style suitable for all situations. Leadership style was found to strongly affect an employee's job satisfaction and moderately to strongly affect organizational commitment of employees. The findings also suggest that the type of industry sector (private or public) and an organization's size play important roles in the determination of the effectiveness of leadership style and its impact on organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

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Further reading

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Important notes:

- The purpose is of this survey is to analyse the impact of leadership style on office employee's job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the construction industry of UAE.
- The questionnaire scales all the questions on a range of 1 to 5. The value of '1' stands for lowest influence/importance, whereas '5' shows greatest important/influence for the candidate.
- Leadership Style being measured through this survey is for managers and leaders in the construction industry in UAE. Thus, complete the form by viewing style of your leader if you know him/her well. The leader can be your Department Head, Sector Manager, Regional Manager, CEO of the company.
- The questionnaire provides a space for providing comments and/or reasons for choosing your selection.

A - Personal Information

Nationality group: UAE National Arab National Indian sub-continent European
 American Far East Asia Other

Gender: Male Female

Age: 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-45 46-55 >55

Marital Status: Single Married Divorced

Education: High School Diploma Graduate Post Graduate PhD

Professional Experience: 0-3 years 4-5 years 6-10 years 10-15 years 16-20 years
 20-30 years >30 years

No. of previous employers: 1 2 3 4 5 6-8 8-10 >10

Job description in the company:
.....

B – Leadership Style

B.1: What type of leadership style prevails in your department/company?

Leadership styles	Description	Circle one from each row (wherever applicable)
Autocratic	In this style leader retain most of the authority. He/She make decisions, assuming that group members will comply with it.	1 2 3 4 5
Consultative	Leader confers with group members before making decision. However they retain final authority to make decisions.	1 2 3 4 5
Consensus	Leader encourages group discussion about an issue and then makes a decision that reflects general agreement. A decision is not considered final until it appears that all parties involved will at least support the decision.	1 2 3 4 5

Figure A1.

(continued)

Democratic	In this style, a leader confers final authority on the group. The leader functions as collector of a group opinion and takes a vote before making a decision.	1 2 3 4 5
Authority-Compliance	A Leader with this orientation concentrates on maximising production while giving less concern for the people.	1 2 3 4 5
Country Club Management	In this style, a leader shows a minimum concern for production and a maximum concern for people. Primary attention is placed on good feelings among group members, at the expense of achieving results.	1 2 3 4 5
Impoverished Management	This style shows a minimum concern for both production and people. Such a leader does only the minimum required to remain a member of the firm.	1 2 3 4 5
Middle-of-the-Road Management	Leaders with this middle-of-the-road style do their job but avoid making waves and conform to the status quo. In short, they give approximately same importance to the work and concerns of the group members.	1 2 3 4 5
Team Management	This style integrates concerns for production and group members. It is goal-directed team approach that seeks to gain optimum results through participation, involvement, and commitment.	1 2 3 4 5
Transformational Leadership	This style mainly focuses on what leader accomplishes, rather than on the leader's personal characteristics and his or her relationship with group members. The transformational leader moves group members beyond their self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or society.	1 2 3 4 5

Note: If leadership style prevailing in your company does not match with above mentioned categories then please describe it in comments box,

B.1 (Contd..)

Any Comments:

B.2: How much does this prevailing leadership style influence you? 1 2 3 4 5

Any Comments:

B.3: How much influence does leadership style have on **your job satisfaction**? 1 2 3 4 5

Any Comments:

B.4: How much influence does leadership style have on your **organizational commitment**? 1 2 3 4 5

Any Comments:

(continued)

B.5: Rank the leadership styles mentioned below you would like to have in your leader.

Leadership style	Rank	Comments/Reasons
Autocratic		
Consultative		
Consensus		
Democratic		
Authority-Compliance		
Country Club Management		
Impoverished Management		
Middle-of-the-Road Management		
Team Management		
Transformational Leadership		

C – Factors affecting your Job Satisfaction

C.1: How much does following factors influence your Job Satisfaction?

Description	Circle one				
Salary	1	2	3	4	5
Other benefits such as bonuses, awards, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Nature of work	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility in work	1	2	3	4	5
Job Security	1	2	3	4	5
Job timing	1	2	3	4	5
Company culture	1	2	3	4	5
Direct Manager behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Company Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Name of the Company	1	2	3	4	5
Place of work (area, region, emirate, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Living environment	1	2	3	4	5
Inflation	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic	1	2	3	4	5
Any other factors influencing your Job Satisfaction?					

D – Factors affecting your Organizational Commitment

D.1: How much does following factors influence your Organizational Commitment?

Description	Circle one				
Salary	1	2	3	4	5
Other benefits such as bonuses, awards, etc.	1	2	3	4	5

Figure A1.

(continued)

Nature of work	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility in work	1	2	3	4	5
Job Security	1	2	3	4	5
Job timing	1	2	3	4	5
Company culture	1	2	3	4	5
Direct Manager behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Company Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Name of the Company	1	2	3	4	5
Place of work (area, region, emirate, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Living Environment	1	2	3	4	5
Inflation	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic	1	2	3	4	5

Leadership
satisfaction and
commitment

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Any other factors influencing your Organizational Commitment?

Figure A1.

About the authors

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