

Organizational environment best practices: Empirical evidence from the UAE

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a modest attempt to bridge the gap between the rich western theories and the under-researched eastern contexts, namely UAE and to deeply explore the organizational practices and the quality of work-life using the Status-Certainty-Autonomy-Relatedness-Fairness (SCARF) construct. In this study, we first present the five core values that make up the SCARF model. This model is then used as the research lens for studying organizational practices. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews relating to the perceptions of nine managers from seven organizations. The data were analyzed and discussed qualitatively using an explanatory matrix with the assistance of a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package, called NVIVO software Version 9. We examined the effectiveness of these five values empirically to gain insight into organizational practices in the context of the UAE. An explanatory matrix emerged from the data that gives deep insights into organizational practices and to provide a structured explanation on these prevailing practices. The matrix also serves as the foundation of a theoretical model that could be used in future research to assess the quality of organizational practices. The study may be considered the first in the UAE to discuss workplace practices and the quality of work life. The main contribution of this study was the use of the SCARF model to investigate organizational practices and the use of dimensional analysis to derive and construct a theoretical model.

Keywords: Organizational Environment, SCARF, Multicultural, UAE.

JEL Classification: M5.

1. INTRODUCTION

The workforce of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is highly multicultural and is made up of approximately 200 nationalities, constituting 80 percent of the country's population (MEED, 2011). Emiratis only account for a minor percentage of the total workforce. This mixture of people creates a challenge for organizations to institute a healthy environment where employees are highly encouraged and committed. To date there have been few studies, which had examined the Middle East in general and the UAE organizations in particular concerning an organization's values, structures, relations and other management practices (Elbanan, 2010; Al-Shammari & Hussein, 2008). This study contributes to this endeavor and takes a unique qualitative approach to deeply explore employees' behavior in the UAE from the perspective of five espoused values that make up the SCARF construct that is created by (Rock, 2008).

More specifically, organizational values have been examined in many disciplines, including management, and especially to understand the organizational culture (e.g. Hofstede, 1997; Schein, 2004). Schwartz and Bilsky (1994, p.24) define values as "desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives". It has been found that one of the main drives of values is to direct the selection or valuation of behaviors, policies, individuals, and events. Collins and Porras (2002) define core values as the major pillars to reflect a firm's core ideology. Therefore, an organization can gain abundant insights into workplace practices and behaviors by evaluating organizational values.

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To the best of our knowledge, this study may be the first of its kind in the Middle East. It contributes to the literature by exploring new under-researched contexts and cultures i.e. the UAE. In this study, we have adopted five values that are useful in addressing different aspects of an employee's behaviors and attitudes. The findings were formulated into an explanatory matrix based on the work of Schatzman (2003). This matrix provides a framework to analyze and describe the rich data collected from several organizations. Following this introduction, the rest of the article is organized as follows: The different pillars of SCARF construct is described first. Section two is a literature review while section three is methodology. Section four is the results and discussion. Section five concludes the paper with policy recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Climate Best Practices

Organizational climate includes employees' perception of the values and expectations essential to the culture (Schein,1985). Organizational climate is found in the literature to be one of the critical success factors for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of today's organizations (Ceyda & Sevinc,2012). It is an outcome of many years of consistent operations. The current study uses the following SCARF model to describe the best practices organizational climate.

Five Espoused Values – SCARF Construct: Five interrelated values were identified by and have been adopted for this study. The five values are Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness. It has been previously argued that a person's life in an organization consists of either reward or threat reactions related to these five values (Rock, 2008). The SCARF construct originated from social neuroscience research, developed to determine the factors that influence work engagement for optimal performance (see for instance Cozolino, 2006, Rock, 2008). More specifically, the SCARF construct is built on the belief that the brain treats many social and emotional threats and rewards with similar influence as physical threats and rewards. Rock (2008) argues that these five pillars trigger either the primary reward or primary threat in one's brain. Collectively these five values are vital for leaders and managers to know its different implications needed to create a committed, satisfied and more productive workforce, see for instance, (Ratia, & Tuzlukaya, 2019), as shown in Figure (1). The following paragraphs describe each value in details.

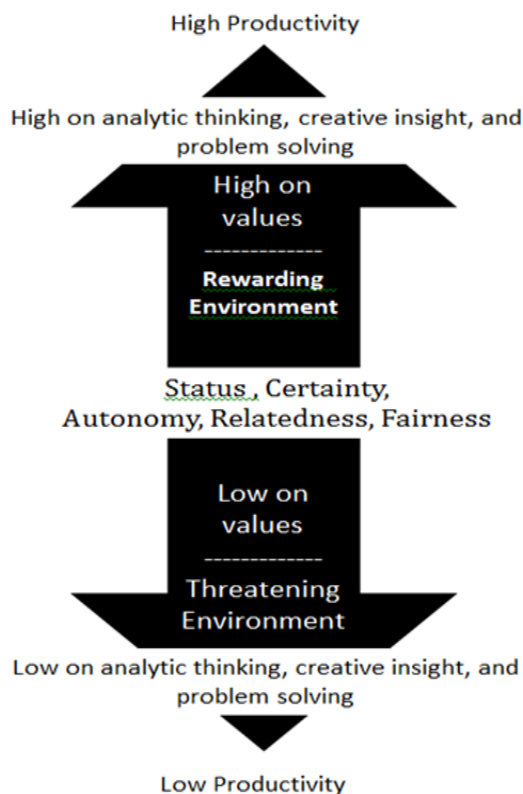


Figure 1. SCARF Conceptualization (Source: created by the authors)

Status: The core concept of an individual's status is prestige, value and the social position he or she holds compared to others in group-based activities (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007). Status is about relative significance, order and workplace superiority. It is about how people perceive one's relative importance and how much power he or she has to influence others' attitudes, actions and decisions (Rostamy, Hosseini, Azar, Khaef-Elahi, & Hassanzadeh, 2008). Previous studies have identified two major sources of status i.e. the first source is described as gifted (Diekmann, Sondak & Barsness, 2007). The second source is made (Lamertz & Aquino, 2004; Rostamy et al., 2008, Van Prooijen et al., 2002, 2005).

Certainty: Certainty is another vital organizational value (Parker, 2005). Certainty is about the elimination of contradiction and ambiguity in the workplace. York and Venkatraman, (2010) have stressed the fact that perception of workplace certainty can be reinforced by transparent top-down practices. Also, managing employees' expectations through continuous clear communication are key to enhancing certainty within the workplace. High uncertainty may lead to unwelcomed results (Gerekova & Schuller, 2005). Recently, Jalonen (2012) argues that a lack of certainty precludes people from engaging in situations with blurred outcomes.

Autonomy: Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1980) defined workplace autonomy as the degree of freedom one has to plan a task and how to accomplish it. Rock (2010) and Rock and Cox (2012) define autonomy as the extent to which employees can manage either their environment or their response to the situation. Autonomy is similar to the concept of high-decision latitude which is known as a significant contributor to the development of very productive behavior prototypes (Ganster, 1989; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Smith, Tisak, Hahn, & Schmieder, 1997; Hornung & Rousseau 2007). Low decision latitude, on the other hand, decreases the ability to tackle stress and hinder the skill of problem-solving (Hornung & Rousseau 2007). Job autonomy is often used to assess situational factors that may influence one's performance (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Barrick & Mount, 1993; Lee, Ashford, & Bobko, 1990). In situations where employees have a high level of job autonomy, performance is more likely to be attributed to one's factors (Apker, Ford, & Fox, 2003; Fuller, Hester, & Cox, 2010; Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997).

Relatedness: Relatedness in the workplace is about enhancing the societal bonds with line manager, among team members and peers within an organization (Kaufman & Dodge, 2009; Pehrsson, 2010). Relatedness is considered as a trigger of one's behavior to be included in or excluded from a workplace social cluster (Rock, 2010). From the human resource perspective, people who are always working alone and with limited healthy social connections are more likely to be exposed to health disorders (Larose, Tarabulsy, & Cyrenne, 2005; Bugeja, Ibrahim, Ozanne-Smith & Brodie, 2009) and those who have a high sense of belonging have higher motivation levels (Larose et al., 2005).

Fairness: The concept of fairness can be conceptualized into two components: the fairness of outcomes allocations, known as distributive justice, and procedural justice, which refers to the fairness of the processes that lead to the outcomes (Hornibrook, Fearn, & Lazzarin, 2009; Konovsky, 2000). Fairness in organizations should be fulfilled at the individual level (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Konovsky, 2000), at the group or team level, or even in mergers and acquisitions (Griffith, Harvey, and Lush, 2006; Roberson & Colquitt, 2005). The concept of fairness has often been centered around on one of two pillars, proportionality or egalitarianism (Rasinski, 1987; McMillan-Capehart, & Orlando, 2005). Proportionality is defined as the belief that one's outcomes are equal to inputs. Egalitarianism is the belief that fairness is when outcomes and results are distributed evenly.

3. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT – EMIRATI CULTURE AND CONTEXT

The Emirati Workforce Composition

Based on World Meters (2018), the population of the UAE at the end of 2018 is 9.54 million. The males are almost 72 percent and the balance is females with a median age of 33.5 years. More specifically, the population of the local native Emiratis is only 15 percent (only 1.4 million out of the 9.54 million), the rest are expatriates who are mostly from India, Pakistan, Iran, China, Egypt, the Philippines, and Western countries (Your Dubai Guide, 2018). In terms of religion, Islam is both the official and majority religion in the UAE. Other religions represented in the country including Christianity who represents about 10 percent of the total population, then come to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Sikhism that are practiced by non-nationals (Reynolds & Langton, 2019). Referring to the latest statistics, the United Arab Emirates that includes over 200 nationalities, is rated as the most cosmopolitan country around the world which comprises of 83 percent of its population were born in another country (UAE Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace Survey Report, 2018; Worldatlas, 2018).

Emiratization Program — A Nation-Wide Strategic Approach

The growing pool of UAE Nationals entering the workforce has generated pressure on companies to reduce their use of foreign labor. As a way of reducing the dependency on foreign workers and correcting the population imbalance, the UAE Government developed a strategic program called 'Emiratization' in the 1990s (Suliman, 2003). Although, correcting this discrepancy seems to be a long-term challenging process argued that UAE organizations are requested to bridge the gap between the company's strategic objectives of hiring UAE nationals with direct managers' expectations to recruit fully qualified and equipped workers, of which locals are in short supply, as discussed by Forrest, (2003). Thus, many of the UAE organizations have begun to seriously take a second look at their current recruitment practices keeping in mind the fact that the domestic workforce is far too small to meet the demand for labor (Al-Qatami, 2003). Thus, Emiratization of the UAE workforce remains a national objective, although mandated hiring of nationals has been limited to only a few sectors, such as banking, which has 4 percent quota, insurance, which has 5% quota and trade, which has 2 percent quota for companies employing 50 workers or more as well as quotas in the federal government (UAE Country Report, 2011).

Barriers to Career Paths – “Wasta”

"Wasta" is highly recognized as one of the most influential negative factors that hinder career development in the Arab region in general and in the UAE in particular (UAE Country Report, 2011). That means if you have the right connections or family background you can get things done (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). More specifically, "wasta" remains traditional in its influence in the career advancement of individuals and business life and social life and is unlikely to diminish shortly, despite the perception that it is an unfair practice, as argued by (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011).

4. METHODS

Research Intent and Propositions

Because relatively little or even non-existent research on the SCARF construct and its organizational outcomes, researchers in the UAE know very little about whether findings in the Western context are also applicable and can be extended to other contexts such as the Gulf region in general and the UAE in particular. Therefore, the present study is a modest attempt to bridge the gap between the rich western theories and the under-researched eastern contexts and to deeply explore the condition of SCARF-related initiatives and policies in the United Arab Emirates. Hence, the current research has three main objectives, as follow:

1. To explore and evaluate the quality of organizational practices using the SCARF construct in non-western context and culture i.e. the UAE.
2. To assess the impact of these organizational practices using the SCARF construct on the different organizational outcomes such as employees' commitment, satisfaction, retention, and engagement in the research context.
3. To pave the way and to set the foundation for the future research initiatives by proposing a comprehensive research construct that defines the level of quality of the most appropriate organizational practices using the SCARF construct in the research context. This construct will be tested and validated in a larger and longitudinal research agenda.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to gain insights into organizational practices in the UAE using a set of values as the research lens. The research is exploratory and based on multiple qualitative cases studies. Qualitative case studies are useful for discovery (Yin, 2003), especially in situations where knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or even non-existent. The literature on organizational practices in the UAE is limited (Elbanna, 2010), which makes the exploratory nature of qualitative research appropriate. Burns (2000) argues that a multiple-case study design is advantageous as the evidence will be more convincing, even though it takes more time and effort than most investigators may have. Confidence in the generalizability may be enhanced by increasing the number of cases to be studied (Blaikie, 2000).

Seven organizations were conveniently identified from six different industries, namely, food, health, IT/telecommunication, government service, aviation, and education. The study focuses mainly on human

resources managers. Based on the perspective of these five values, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed and used to deeply explore organizational practices in six organizations. Semi-structured interviewing is an appropriate technique when knowledge about the research topic is limited (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002). The questions used were mainly directed to the managers' perceptions of the five values and the practices used to promote those values.

The Dimensional Analysis Framework was adopted to assist in the analysis of the rich data collected (Schatzman, 1991). The dimensional analysis provides a structured way to categorize data and to construct an explanatory matrix to illuminate the final findings. Dimensional Analysis was introduced in 1970 as an alternative approach to the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The dimensional analysis may also be used to generate theory. The operation of dimensional analysis is further explained in the analysis section.

The participants' responses were analyzed individually and then collectively using the framework of dimensional analysis. For more details of the case analysis approach see Figure 2. The central focus of the study was on the combined results of the seven cases, which could, collectively, provide insights into organizational practices in the UAE. The qualitative software NVIVO Version 9.0 was used to facilitate the analysis.

The trustworthiness of this study is supported by the elaborate discussions based on the data collected from multiple organizations. We have clarified the details in the analysis by using excerpts from the various participants. The credibility of the research findings is supported by comparison with the extant literature (e.g. Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Gerekova & Schuller, 2005; Hornung & Rousseau 2007; Konovsky, 2000; Larose et al.,2005).

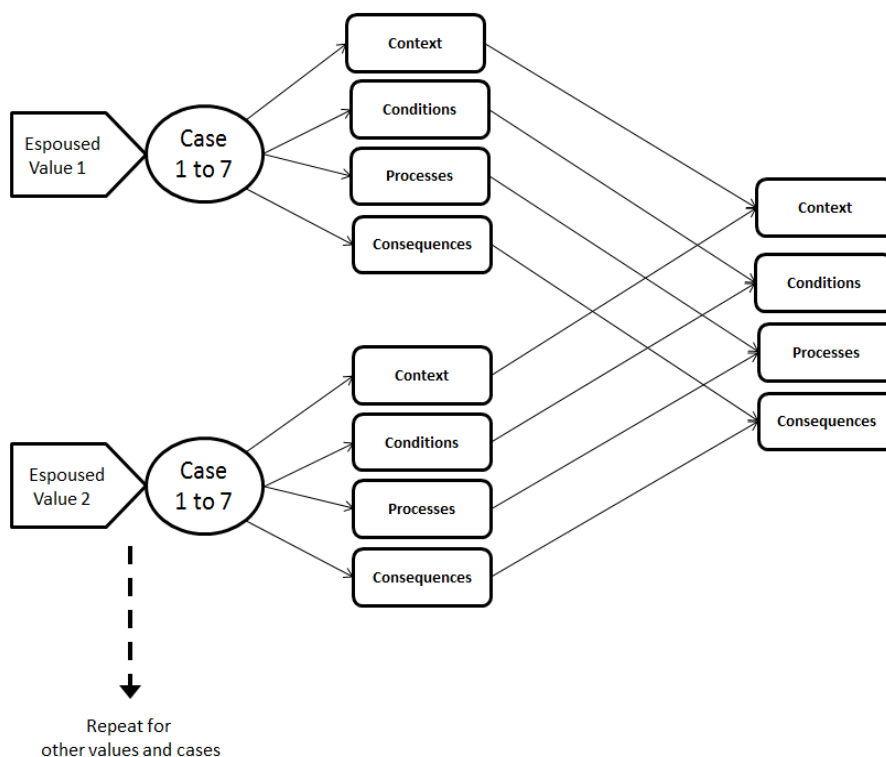


Figure 2. A case analysis approach (Source: Created by the authors)

Background to the Cases

The organizations selected for this study were from several industries to ensure the inclusion of different perspectives. More specifically, seven UAE cases were selected based on the size and convenience of access. A summary of the cases is given in Table 1 below. The names of firms have been disguised to maintain confidentiality. A total of nine managers were interviewed for approximately 60 minutes each. Most of the participants were HR managers, who provided the primary data source for the rich insights into how each organization perceived and applied the five espoused values.

Table 1. Summary of Cases

Case #	Firm Name	Type	Organization	Industry	Participants
1	A	Private	Date Factory	Food	1 HR Officer
2	B	Public	Hospital	Health	2 HR Managers
3	C	Semi-Public	Telecommunication	IT/Telecom	2 HR Managers
4	D	Public	Municipality	Government service sector	1 HR Manager
5	E	Public	Airport	Aviation	1 HR Manager
6	F	Private	University	Education	1 G. Manager
7	G	Public	University	Education	1 G. Manager

5. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of the analysis in this study is to develop an explanatory matrix (Schatzman, 1991), which is useful in providing a structured explanation of the results, rather than a mere description of the findings. The analytic matrix consists of five categories: Perspective, Context, Conditions, Processes, and Consequences. The category, Perspective is the research lens to guide the analysis. Context sets the boundary of the inquiry and describes the salient factors affecting the phenomenon. Conditions are factors that either support or hinder certain processes of the examined phenomenon. Conditions are also influenced by the context. The fifth category is consequences, which is the outcome of the interaction between the perspective, context, conditions, and the processes. The perspective category was based on the five espoused values and emerged from the data since the objective of the research is to gain insights into organizational practices from the perspective of the predetermined espoused values. Therefore, the set of values was the vantage point used to guide the data collection and analysis to develop the explanatory matrix. The analysis follows a generic qualitative approach, identifying axial and theoretical codes. Axial and theoretical coding was conducted by eliminating redundancy, combining and refining categories into a smaller number of representative codes. Through constant comparison and categorization, 117 codes emerged, which were later refined to twenty-six axial codes in eleven theoretical codes (see Table 2). The codes are primarily related to context, conditions, processes or consequences. The same approach was used for each value and each case. This was followed by intra-case analysis to determine commonalities between codes, as shown in Figure 2.

After the analysis, the explanatory matrix was constructed, examined and subsequently named the "Quality of Organizational Practices" (Figure 3). The quality of the organizational practices matrix provides a powerful tool to understand the synergy between the five values and how they impact on an organization's practices. In the following sections, the dimensions of the explanatory matrix are discussed.

Perspective: As noted above, the perspective dimension was a prior decision and emerged exclusively from the data analysis. Managers were asked questions specifically related to these five values in terms of their perceptions and applications within their organizations.

Context: Most of the participants' responses referred to three dominant dimensions, which were interpreted to be the context for the quality of organizational practices. These dimensions are Working Environment, Policies and Procedures, Employee Educational and Cultural Diversity. The dimensions provide the scope of the boundary in which to examine the quality of practices in these seven UAE organizations.

Conditions: From the perspective of the five espoused values and in the context of Working Environment, Policies and Procedures, Employee Educational and Cultural Diversity, the conditions of the quality of organizational practices are articulated through three main dimensions, namely, Competencies, Corporate Governance, and Information Technology.

Competencies: refer to the different set of skills, educational levels and workplace expertise of both managers and their subordinates. These competencies are seen by the participants as contributing to the quality of the organizational practices. The participants' statements highlighted the different levels of education of their employees, which imposes a barrier for communicating policies and procedures and other attributes such as "having control, self-esteem and self-evaluation", as mentioned by one of the participants. Manager competencies were also addressed: "some managers lack decision-making competencies". This is seen as a limiting factor of autonomy by one of the HR managers. Management style was also addressed in terms of managers' ability to communicate and foster a friendly and team-spirited atmosphere.

Table 2. Components of the Explanatory Matrix

Matrix Component	Theoretical Codes	Axial Codes
Perspective: A predetermined single dimension as an examination lens.	Five Espoused Values Working Environment Policies and Procedures Employee Educational and Cultural Diversity	
Context: Emergent dimensions that set the boundaries and the environment of research		
Conditions: Dimensions that are necessary for the processes to occur	Competencies Cooperative Governance Information Technology	Employee Attributes and Competencies Management Style and Competencies Cooperative Environment Diversity Democratic Nepotism / Favoritism Policy and Procedures IS/IT Use
Processes: Various actions discussed to achieve the espoused values	Training Work Organization Employee Management Climate-improvement initiatives	Development Guidance Flexible Working Environment Accountability and Control Hiring and Promotion Measurement Policy and Procedures Diversity Inclusion Collaboration Building Healthy Relations Communication Complaint System
Consequences: Dimensions that arose from conditions and processes	Commitment & Performance	Empowerment Commitment Job Enrichment Equality Performance Expectation

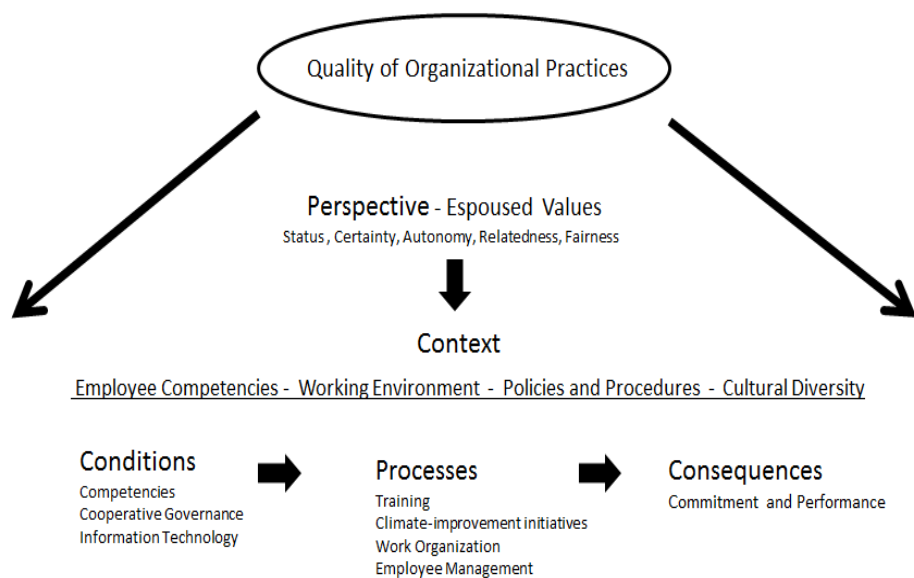


Figure 3. Explanatory matrix for organizational practices

Corporate Governance: is the theoretical code representing conditions related to the cooperative environment, diversity, democratic leadership, nepotism and favoritism and policies, and procedures. A concern was raised frequently about the diversity of the workforce, especially when nepotism is part of the management style. The UAE workforce is a complex composite of employees from different nationalities from all over the world. Managing such diversity of the workforce is challenging and it is difficult to ensure fairness and equality, as mentioned in the following statement:

"...Fairness is a difficult thing in a multi-environment organization. We try hard to be fair but this will never reach to the employees' expectations..."

To minimize this effect, a democratic leadership style, with adherence to a multitude of policies and procedure, is required, as indicated by one of the participants:

"...Our organization is in a good position compared to others and that is because of the democratic environment we have and we show to our employees..."

In the analysis, the use of information technology was also mentioned frequently. For example, "After joining they are updated either through their emails or their direct managers with the changes and the new rules and regulations". Information systems as a condition may be used in several ways to facilitate processes, either communicating instructions or directives or by integrating work activities across departments, as in the use of enterprise resource planning (ERP) that creates a cross-functional working environment. Information systems may also be used to expedite processes to appraise employees' performance, as expressed in this statement by one of the participants:

"...Our performance management is based on a system calls HRMIS. This system is divided into two sections; one is based setting smart objectives from 3 to 7..."

Processes: The conditions specified above facilitate processes such as employee training and development, flexible work organization, employee management and providing climate-improvement initiatives. These processes are required to foster high-quality organizational practice. Different types of training were mentioned as ways to provide guidance or develop employees in specific areas, as mentioned in these statements:

"...Before joining us they have a training course for 6 months telling them about the strategy, goals, mission, and vision of the organization and the type of job they will be doing... Also having brochures in different languages will help to reach a larger number of employees which will increase the level of certainty..."

"...by sharing information as quickly as possible once it is known. Equally important is sharing that you don't know the answer. Open communication can minimize the level of uncertainty..."

Effective employee management is another fundamental process contributing to the quality of organizational practices. What is evident in most of the cases that were investigated is the requirement to implement policies and procedures to ensure effective processes for hiring, promoting and performance evaluation. This ensures fairness and avoids nepotism and favoritism. It was also stated that work organizations require certain levels of flexibility, along with accountability and control mechanisms, as illustrated in the following statements:

"...our employees also contribute to improving the level of autonomy as they possess the required characteristics and understand the fact that with responsibility and freedom there is accountability and control..."

"...delegating more responsibility and involving them in setting future goals and objectives. For example, the manager of the sales dept. asked his sales representatives and required employees to contribute and help him in setting the objectives for 2012 and gave them the freedom to approach new targets and channels..."

The need for open channels within the organization was also presented as a way to improve work relations; some of the participants' illustrate this as shown below:

"...employees in the organization have a right to raise their voice against any unfair treatment or decisions taken about them. Such employees can appeal for justice or fairness..."

"...to understand employee perceptions of fairness we conduct a bi-annual employee satisfaction survey..."

"...To avoid negative perceptions or miscommunication between employees and management we are planning to create an online employee satisfaction survey..."

Also, various climate-improvement processes were evident in most organizations, introduced to foster various espoused values, as mentioned in the following statements:

"...Recent recognition and allowance have been given for an employee in the production dept. for an innovative project he worked on alone and improved the efficiency of production line processing..."

"...We are now striving to maximize the workforce talents through motivating them and maintaining transparency in work processes such as giving information on time, identifying talents, motivating through training, communicating effectively within the organization and creating a fair environment for employees to work more effectively..."

Consequences: Commitment and performance are the two theoretical codes that emerged, and which were abstracted from the different attributes such as empowerment, commitment, job enrichment, equality, performance, and expectation. Commitment and performance are the consequences of the quality of organizational practices. Sample statements are given in Table 3 to illustrate the nature of statements that were extracted during the data analysis phase.

Table 3. Consequences sample statements

Axial codes	Participants Statements
Empowerment	<i>"...We are practicing many inspirational methods to acknowledge employees and encourage them to have a higher level of autonomy..."</i>
Commitment	<i>"...Create a perception of certainty that helps to build confidence and dedication in our employees especially those who work in teams..."</i>
Job Enrichment	<i>"...It makes the workplace a healthy environment and encourages employees to be creative and work hard because they believe they will be treated fairly..."</i>
Equality	<i>"...because of the influence of external individuals [wasta/ Nepotism] or employee contacts with high-level people, create differentiation in implementing fair treatment between employees..."</i>
Performance	<i>"...Winners of such a program enjoy a highly rewarding response and status level for a very motivating reason that could positively influence others' behavior by encouraging them to do better to win next year..."</i>
Expectation	<i>"...form of stability in any organization where standards are followed and implemented very well, policies and procedures are clearly defined..."</i>

To summarize the analysis, the organizational practices of the seven cases investigated produced a high quality organizational practices fostered by a combination of espoused values, requiring conditions such as appropriate employee competencies, corporate governance and the availability of information systems and technologies to facilitate processes such as employee management, training, conducting climate improvement initiatives and design appropriate work organization, all of which may lead to better performance and a committed workforce.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research implications of the present study are well defined. This research confirms the need for building high-quality organizational environment through different organizational practices such as effective open communication and employee management processes, fair hiring, performance measurement and promoting processes, a complaint system in place, enriched jobs and finally healthy relationships. These initiatives are considered the drivers for the committed and satisfied workforce. From practical standpoints, the current study sheds the light on the significance of one's status in his/her outcomes. Besides, the results of the current study encourage managers to share information with subordinates to generate a high degree of certainty and confidence. The latter becomes a necessity in today's business environment where recession is a matter of fact. From a cultural point of view, the present study has emphasized the significant role of the cultural norms and its impact on day to day attitudes and behaviors. As previously discussed, the UAE is considered a multi-diversified culture. Therefore, it is a must for UAE managers to operate with a global mindset to be able to resolve the conflict between individualistic cultures (e.g. USA), see for instance, (Leach-López, Leach, & Lee, 2019), which promote individuals autonomy and empowerment and collectivistic cultures (e.g. UAE) that promote guidance and systematic direct supervision. Finally, the present study discusses various strategies to enhance group cohesiveness in such a collectivistic research context i.e. the UAE. Examples of these strategies

are open and free communication channels, handshaking, building trust among team members, management by walking around and regular workplace social gatherings.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has two main limitations. The first arises because of the location of the organizations studied, which were all based in one city in the UAE. To reduce this effect, seven organizations were selected to ensure that the findings were plausible and could be generalized to other organizations in other emirates. The other limitation is due to the biases inherent in qualitative research. To improve the credibility of the analysis and to ensure consistency and coherence in constructing the explanatory matrix, more than one researcher was involved in the analysis. Despite the limitations, the findings are plausible and supported by the literature. The explanatory matrix is a useful contribution to the field of organizational practices, especially in the context of the UAE. The discussion section has identified some areas that should be further investigated. The first is the examination of the challenges of intercultural communication in a multicultural and multilingual work environment. The other is the role of information technology in reducing uncertainty and promoting relatedness. The positive results of this study also strongly suggest the usefulness of the SCARF construct as a tool for constructing work organizations, policies and procedures, guiding management practices, and improving emotional intelligence, as argued by (Bin Ahmad, 2019). The study is proposing a new research construct, as shown in Figure 4, which is based on the explanatory matrix. This construct may be a useful guide for measuring the quality of organizational practices with a quantitative research agenda.

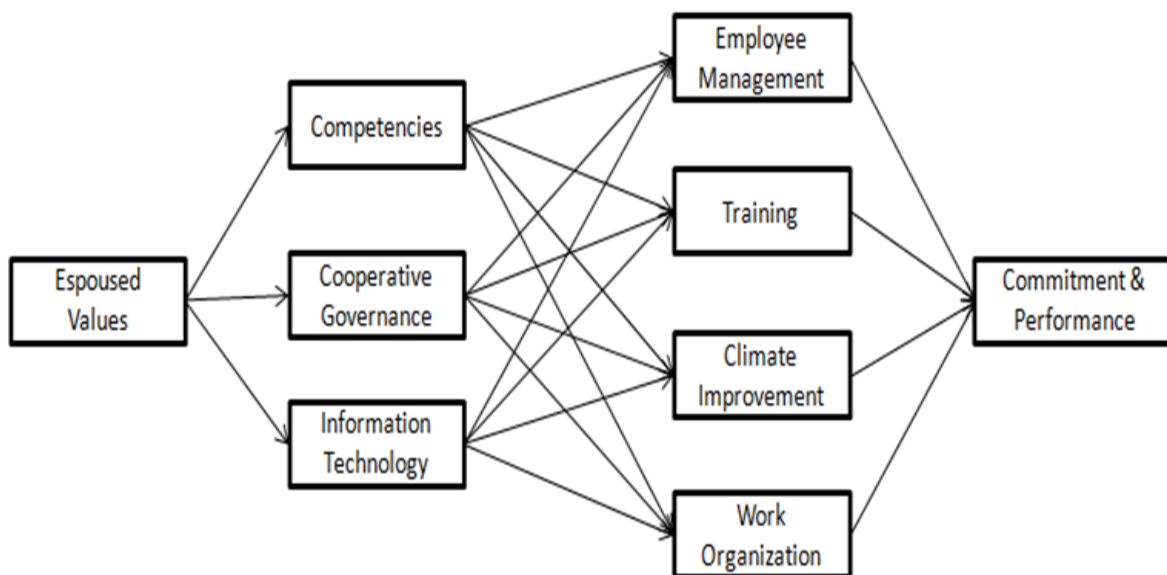


Figure 4. Proposed research model to measure the quality of organizational practices (Source: Created by the authors)

8. CONCLUSION

The quality of organizational practices is a complex and multifaceted organizational phenomenon that requires certain conditions and processes to achieve the organizational goal of commitment and performance. This study reveals the need for competencies among both employees and management in terms of their education level and effective management style. These are essential conditions for carrying out processes successfully to achieve the required performance. Employee competencies and educational level are probably some of the most challenging aspects for managers in the UAE, due to its multilingual and multicultural environment (MEED, 2011). The challenge is increased because some employees can only speak their native language, making internal communication difficult and requiring innovative ways of communication. As mentioned by one of the participants "...instructions are given usually in multiple languages to ensure work instructions are clearly understood..." Most of the managers interviewed stressed the need for training to better guide employees in performing their daily activities and as a way to reduce uncertainty resulting from unclear instructions and communications.

Interestingly, our results are congruent with previous studies outlining factors that may lead to a highly committed and effective workforce, such as having clear corporate governance, as a significant workplace condition, that fosters a cooperative environment, respect diversity, encourages a democratic atmosphere,

clarifies and unifies policies and procedures among the workforce and eliminates the negative impact of nepotism and favoritism (known as *wasta*) in hiring decisions (as argued before by Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). The use of information technology is one of the keys for flat-structure organizations and opening lines of communication with senior management. In this study information technology emerged as an internal condition facilitating different processes supporting internal communication and functional tasks. In the context of this study information technology reduced uncertainty and improved relatedness within the organizations that were studied. This is another area requiring further study to examine the role of information technology on those two values. Different climate improvement initiatives had been practiced in most of the organizations investigated. These initiatives contribute to having positive organizational atmospheres where people are happy to work. Examples of these endeavors are diversity inclusion, collaboration, improving communication, implementing compliant systems and the design of flexible workplace and welfare programs.

To sum up, the objective of the study reported here was to reveal the quality of organizational practices from the perspective of five espoused values in multicultural firms within a none-western context. This was achieved by using the five values of SCARF construct. The five values provide the lens that was used to examine the interplay between those values and organizational practice. Also, the use of the dimensional analysis framework was useful in revealing the quality of organizational practices and providing a structure to explain the findings relating to the factors that can lead to a better employee commitment and performance.

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