

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Examining the Effects of Work Values on Employee Commitment in UAE via Literature Survey

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**Abstract:** Objective Employee commitment remains long standing determinant of the survival of organizations, although the state of the existing body of knowledge on employee commitment signified that most of the existing studies were primarily conducted in the Western business contexts, and less is known about employee commitment and its correlates in the non-Western countries. In addition, some scholars reiterate that organizations would accomplish goals that individuals cannot do alone, but this could only be made possible via employee commitment and productivity. If this position is anything to go by, then it could be said that employee commitment is paramount to organizational survival. Thus, factors that could enhance the commitment of workforce are worthy-researching. Methods Via literature survey, the current study presented a logic-based and empirically-based conceptual discussion to signify that work values, which connote career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, and recreation, health and transport, could exert influence on employee commitment. Results and Conclusion Based on the literature review, it could be stressed that the work values' dimensions, as identified previously, could enhance employee commitment. With this, it could be said that the present body has widened the scope of the existing body of knowledge in the organizational commitment research area. However, future studies can further this study empirically which involves data collection on the same constructs of the study and data analyses. Implications of the study were also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Employee commitment, Work values, Literature review, Conceptual paper, UAE.*

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### Introduction

According to Al Marri, Abdul Halim and Haim [1], organizations would accomplish goals that individuals cannot do alone, but this could only be made possible via employee commitment and productivity. In the recent time, organizations are experiencing tremendous change where the implications are resulting in a high level of staff turnover, distrust and stress. In view of these increasing circumstances, creating high levels of employee commitment and linking them to their organizations is a constant issue for business managers and leaders [2].

In this respect, employee commitment is considered to be significant research area for Middle Eastern businesses which have an increasing need to understand both the practical and theoretical implications which describe commitment as an attitude

reflecting the quality of the relationships that link the individual to the organization [2].

In spite of extensive research on employee commitment, most of the previous studies have been primarily conducted in Western business contexts, up to date, and less is known about employee commitment and its correlates in non-Western countries [3]. Based on the literature review, the role of workplace values and beliefs play an important role in determining the understanding of employee commitment [4].

This means that there is a need to understand workplace values and factors that determine employees' commitment. This is congruent to the assertion by Becker [5], who pointed out that "to understand commitment fully, there is a need to discover the system of values within which the

mechanisms and processes described workplace”.

Since the workplace values are an important component of work, there is a need to review the work values’ construct in the Middle East as it has been limited mainly to Western Europe and North America. From this, it is essentially important to investigate how work values are impacted by the governments of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

As stated by, Williams and Bhanugopan [6] work values in the Middle East have received limited academic attention. This is basically because of social culture in UAE as one of the member states of (GCC), is often clashes with the workplace environment as it consists of more than 180 nationalities from a wide range of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds [7,8,9,10]. In this respect, Hofstede [11] indicates that work values are important because they are reflected in culture. Further, work values do generally affect a number of work-related behaviours [12, 6].

Consequent upon this, there is a need to investigate empirically the possible relationships between work values, composing career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport, and employee commitment to have a clear understanding on it and to enhance the UAE Strategic Plan and its vision of 2023. Thus, this study intends to explore the construct validity of all variables in the theoretical framework.

## Literature Review

### Conceptual Definitions of the Constructs

#### Employee Commitment

Based on the literature, the concept of employee commitment has been treated as a variable of interest in its own right and a variety of definitions have been suggested [4, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19]. Recently, the concept of commitment has attracted more attention from researchers, this is due to the changes that taking place in employment practices which have arisen from the international employment marketplace and increased alternatives for skilled employees in a global economy [17].

This is proven in the UAE marketplace environment that many companies attracted to the UAE because of the advanced infrastructure, modern investment laws and the extremely skilled employees [9]. Furthermore, employee commitment is defined as “the psychological attachment felt by the employees for the organization or psychological state of mind which binds the individual to the organization” [20].

Therefore, in the present study employee commitment is seen to have a significant impact on organisational outcomes as well as considered to be crucial element in employees’ behaviour [4, 2]. Aladwan et al. [2] stated that employee commitment can have a significant impact on organizations through contributing to productivity increases, organizational performance, opportunities for staff satisfaction, and lower absenteeism.

To achieve that, committed employees are mainly considered to be loyal and productive members of organizations. In this regard, Kanter [21] proposed that employee commitment can be defined as “the personal loyalty and individual dedication individuals are willing to give to their organisation”. Indicating that, when the employees realize that leaving their current organisation will be costly, they will be less likely to leave their organisation.

#### Career-Growth

It is one of the key terminal values that could be tightly associated with employees’ commitment [22, 23]. Based on this, more attention has been paid to the role of career growth in organizations, this is due to the important relationship between career growth, individual and organizational outcomes. The importance of these relationships to employees will reflect good results on individual and organizational performance [23].

From this, Wu et al. [24] defined career-growth as “the degree of importance which an individual place on acquiring new knowledge, exerting creativity, and promoting personal development during the course of their work. The degree of importance which an individual place on fulfilling their lifelong goals, application of personal talent, improving quality of life and enhancing their social welfare during the course of their

work". Similarly, Wang et al. [25] affirmed that career growth refers to "the degree to which employees experience career growth within their current organization rather than the assessment of career outcomes across their total work career". This means that, employees are in need to develop their skills that will ensure their employability.

### **Social Interaction**

Social interaction is one of the instrumental values that affect employee commitment. Social interaction defined as "the degree of importance which an individual place on achieving an excellent level of social interaction and sharing their daily emotional experiences with colleagues and superiors, as well as establishing harmonious social relationships with others during the course of their work" [24]. This is referring to the extent to which organizational employees interact with each other in terms of communication and coordination. The excellent level of social interaction provides channels for information exchange among employees of an organization [26].

Kasekende et al. [27] defines the social interaction as a psychological contract which is involves individual beliefs that shaped by the organization to exchange agreement between individuals and their organization. In this context, exchange agreement ensures the ability to deliver what was promised as it is a key point in explaining individual responses at work.

### **Security and Economic**

These are also an instrumental value which is identified by Wu et al. [24] as "the degree of importance which an individual place on reaching reasonable economic remuneration through holistic organizational systems, to satisfy their sense of security during the course of their work". Based on Moguerou [28] job security is a key determinant of job satisfaction in all sectors of employment and significantly increases the employee's job satisfaction. From this, Bin Taher et al. [10] reported that changes in business processes in the UAE public sector yielded fear of losing employment.

This is because the majority of the UAE workforces are expatriate employees. Meaning that expatriates often think that the transformation of the quality of public

services will require changes to business process reengineering (BPR) and business process automation (BPA), as a result, expatriate workforce will be replaced with the UAE nationals. At the same time, the UAE locals may feel that business process reengineering, and business process automation, can result in automation of their duties, which in turn, make their jobs dismissed or less relevant. These anxieties often give rise to fierce resistance to change in the UAE public sector from expatriates and UAE locals alike.

### **Stability and Freedom**

These are also an instrumental value is stability and freedom. Which refer to "the degree of importance which an individual place on regularly and stably performing his job without tension, anxiety, chaos or fear" [23]. To this end, Windsor and Ashkanasy [29] stated that stability refers to security of employment. In addition to that, stability represents the extent to which an organization provides stable job for employees. Moreover, stability enhances employees' perceptions towards their work with more efforts and appropriate ways to fulfil their job.

Besides that, stability and freedom in an organization refer to the degree of which the organization provides freedom, independence for the employees in arranging their jobs, and in determining the procedure to deal with their tasks. In addition, Faisal and Al-Esmael [30] indicated that independence of employees is considered to be a significant outcome for employees in an organization. This is because the employees will evaluate controls negatively which can be in the form of orders and rules that imposed by the organization.

### **Recreation, Health and Transport**

Recreation, health and transport could be defined as "the degree of importance which an individual place on attaining sufficient physical energy, recreation activities and availability of convenient traffic transport options during their work" [24]. This is consistent with the assertion by Wu et al. [31] that recreation is basically described as a set of activities that people involving in, during their leisure time, in which they relish and enjoy as having interaction and socially values.

The recreational activities may include different actions of amuse, and incentives, for instance travel, games, sports, music, and dance.

Hence, recreation is needed for lifelong wellbeing among employees, because it helps them in releasing their stress. This is because Tsai [32] in his study of “the Health-Related Quality of Life and Work-Related Stress of White-Collar Migrant Workers”, that the recognized work-related stress had an indirect impact on health-related quality of life. This means that, by enhancing the level of leisure activity this would be contributing to increase self-rated health and other individual health indices, similarly, the outcomes of organizations will be enhanced, for instance, absence, and sickness. Therefore, it is worthy to note that work-recreation balance is most likely related to both lifestyle and health status [33, 31].

### Hypotheses Development

In countries where the culture is greatly different from that of Western countries, the predictors of employee commitment may be very different from the way Western organizations generally expect [34]. Based on this, Middle East has provided little research about employee commitment, in which a review of literature revealed dearth of studies on various aspects of the employment relationship in the Middle Eastern region in general and United Arab Emirates (UAE) in particular [35,34].

Studies based on UAE organizations can be extremely enlightening, because of its rich diversified workforce and management practices that are influenced by both Islamic culture and Western management practices. Diversity has an impact on employees' interrelation and employee commitment [36,37, 2, 35, 34].

In this respect, researchers and practitioners have believed that the level of employee commitment is considered as a driving force behind organization's performance [38]. Bin Taher et al. [10] observed that shortage of employee commitment has become an obstacle to change in the UAE public sector. However, several organizational and individual factors are behind this lack as it is a crucial factor in introducing and managing change in the UAE context [10].

In more specific, UAE is a young nation, and many of its social and economic institutes are

still emerging, and because of that, the UAE public sector often suffers from the lack of organizational maturity and stability [10]. Yazeen and Okour [8] stated that the lack of organizational maturity and stability is usually accompanied by the lack of change management capabilities and often results in frequent conflicts among employees and business units.

To date, employees in the UAE are changing jobs more often than the rest of the world. According to the MetLife findings, 75 % of UAE employers agree that benefits enable productivity, and 79 % want to shift costs of customized benefits to employees [39]. Similarly, 85% of UAE employees are not engaged in their jobs. In other words, levels of employee engagement in UAE remain very low.

According to Gallup, an analytics firm, about eight in ten UAE workers (85%) are not engaged or actively disengaged in their work, meaning the overwhelming majority are not psychologically committed to their jobs and are less likely to become more productive. Moreover, Gallup's “State of the Global Workplace” report, which covers 155 countries, showed that only 16% of employees across the UAE are connected to their work [40].

However, the key to success is to understand the environment and adapt the right action accordingly, this is because, low employee commitment in UAE [10] can be interpreted as a consequence of the lack of understanding of how to manage people in the organizations, as long as, MOI's strategic approach seeking for new ways to communicate effectively with all segments of the society, provide them with comfort and peace, and continue to meet their needs [41].

Whilst, employee commitment is seen to have a significant impact on workforce wellbeing [4], several studies have attempted to understand the nature, antecedents, and consequences of employee commitment, indicating that employee commitment was significantly associated with employee work related attitudes for instance, job satisfaction, turnover, and some other withdrawal behaviours such as turnover intention, absenteeism, which decrease organizational performance [42].

This is supported by Nair [39] that staff turnover in the UAE higher than global average. Besides that, MetLife reports that

56% looking to switch in next 12 months if benefits don't add up. Furthermore, since the recognition that work values are an important component of work in UAE, the behaviour of nationals at the individual level are not consistently and properly equipped in either experience or skills to effectively replace expatriate management in terms of productivity and performance. This means that work values of nationals have been suggested as being less focused on productivity than those of expatriates [6].

Therefore, these aspects of Emirati culture require special attention when implementing change. Accordingly, in supporting employee commitment, the key components to create an environment conducive to Emiratization, this can be measured by work values and individual attitudes which may play a very important role of explaining employees' commitment to the organization. By doing so, the work values need to be examined through career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport as the main components of work values in this study. As it is basically based on the employees' beliefs regarding what organization owe them and what they owe to their organizations.

To a certain context, these psychological contracts explain the employment relationships among an employer and an employee at the individual level. This is confirmed by the social exchange theory that the perception of employees towards psychological contracts will directly affect their commitment and play a crucial role in an organization's general performance and competitiveness [9].

In this study, these components are among the various factors that influencing employee commitment in the UAE context where the individual employees might expect organizations to repay them for their loyalty and commitment to non-job tasks, which could be done through a number of non-financial ways such as retention, personal development, flexible working and advancement.

As a result, there is a need to achieve more flexibility regarding non-permanent employees, labor resource, address new forms of contractual engagements which in turn, describe characteristics of job insecurity, lack of access to benefits and lack of attachment to the organization, as a whole, in the Middle

East context in general and the UAE in particular, career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport describing commitment as an attitude reflecting the quality of the relationship and link between the individuals and organizations.

However, by addressing the mentioned components, this would give more comprehensive understanding on its relationships with the employee commitment, as argued by Forstenlechner [43] that, one of the key weaknesses of Emiratization remains the limited information about the work itself. In addition to that, the absence of a clear national framework reflected lack of individualistic efforts. In general, the concept of commitment in the workplace is still one of the most challenging and researched concepts in the fields of management, organizational behaviour, and human resource management in GCC countries [30].

From this, it is worthy to note that employee commitment in the present study is based on the effects of career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport as they are the primary enablers of employee commitment in an organization. This is emphasized the role of social exchange theory [44] that the organizations can provide all resources to their employees in "social exchange" which, in turn, increase level of employee commitment.

Based on social exchange theory, it can be argued that, when organizations provide all resources such as, interpersonal situations, expressions of esteem and respect, and recognition opportunities for their employees, the organizations initiate a social exchange relationship in which employees feel socially obligated to be committed [13].

Focusing on these enablers namely career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport, and employee commitment, can help employees to achieve their goals and objectives in the future. At the same time this will create a very good working environment which can be shared among employees, and thus, this would help the decision makers in UAE organizations and human resources to develop better strategies to improve commitment of their employees.

Faisal and Al-Esmael [30] stated that if head of departments and human resource managers meet the needs of their employees, their commitment will increase, and they will prefer to remain in their work. However, the key of success is to understand the environment and adapt the right action accordingly as MOI's strategic approach seeking new ways to communicate effectively with all segments of the society, provide them with comfort and peace, and continue to meet their needs [41].

Moreover, from the literature review, an abundance of studies has demonstrated the relationships between career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation health and transport, and employee commitment [e.g., 45, 46, 19, 47, 3, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 2, 70, 25, 71, 27, 72, 73, 6, 74, 75, 76, 4]. Based on the literature, several studies have emerged the influence of work values on employee commitment [77,45,46,19,47,3,36,37,12,2,72,6,35,34].

Work values in this study such as career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation health and transport, postulate to have the basic function of motivating and controlling the behaviour of individuals, which, in turn, strengthen the employee commitment. Career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation health and transport in this study considered as intrinsic and extrinsic variables [78, 79, 45], that measures workplace values in general.

The included values in this study attempts to link between, Career-growth [22, 23], as terminal values, and social interaction [27], and security and economic [28, 10], and stability and freedom [29, 30], and recreation, health and transport [31] as instrumental values that describing commitment as an attitude reflecting the quality of the relationship that links the individuals to their organization (MOI). Even though work values and individual attitudes play a very important role in explaining employees' commitment to their organization.

Jabeen et al. [9] argued that there is a need to understand the impact of these values and contracts on the attitudes and behaviours of employees at work in the UAE context, this is in accordance with the social exchange theory

[44] and reciprocity norms, as the employees make a lesser contribution to their organisations and its competitiveness. This is because the employees obtain less inducement as they are not being considered for long-term employment which may affect their career, loyalty, and commitment.

### **Taken Together, This Study Hypothesizes That**

#### **H1a**

Career-growth exerts a positive influence on employee commitment.

#### **H1b**

A social interaction exerts a positive influence on employee commitment.

#### **H1c**

Security and economic exerts a positive influence on employee commitment.

#### **H1d**

Stability and freedom exerts a positive influence on employee commitment.

#### **H1e**

Recreation, health and transport exert a positive influence on employee commitment.

### **Employee Commitment**

#### **Underpinning Theory**

In defining work values' association with the Emiratization (MOI) employee commitment, the present study will rely on social exchange theory (SET) [44]. This is because; in this study social exchange theory provides opportunity in explaining the relationship between employee and organisation. In addition to that, SET theory has been used to understand and explain why employees express their loyalty to the organization [44].

Social exchange theory is one of the theories that can be used to explain the relationship between employees and organization [80]. Blau [44] describes social exchange as "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do...bring from others." Social exchange theory was developed by Gouldner [81], and Blau [44], "in explaining the motivation behind the attitudes and behaviours exchanged between individuals and organizations".

In other words, Blau [44] was the first to use the term "theory of social exchange" to

describe social interactions, “in which the employees involved in such exchange behaviours believe they will receive either financial or social benefits from doing so”. The concepts of social exchange by Blau [44] and the norm of reciprocity by Gouldner [81] have been used by organizational researchers to define the motivational basis behind employee behaviours and the foundation of positive employee attitudes.

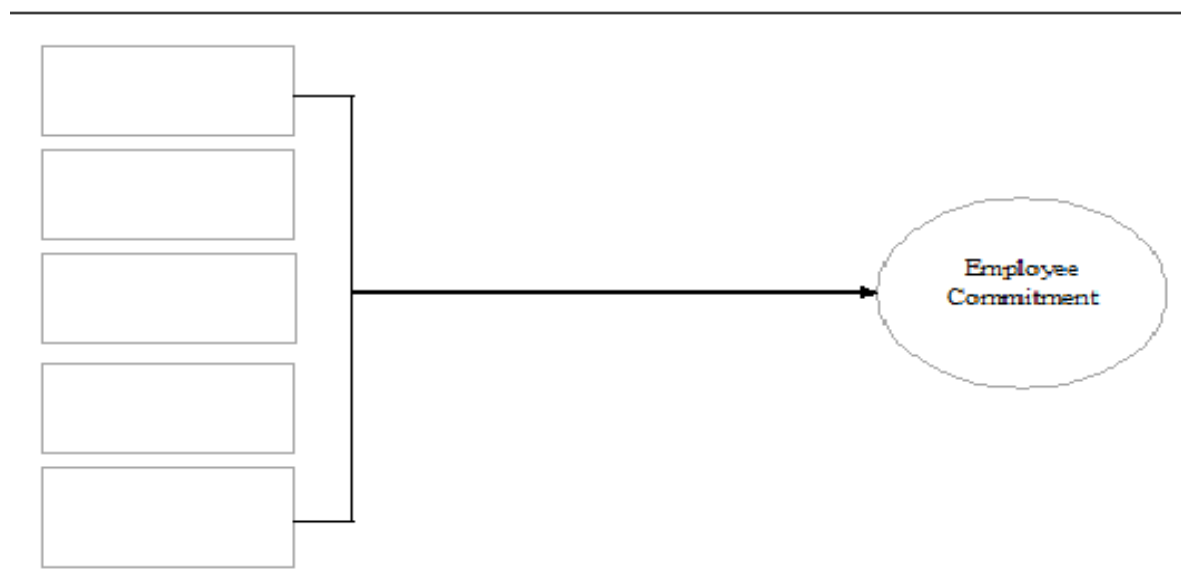
In this regard, Casimir et al. [82] stated that social exchange includes tangible and intangible exchanges between two parties, in this essence, it can be a social interaction that including “economic exchanges and social exchanges”. From this, economic exchange contains tangible exchanges that produce specific obligations.

While, social exchange arises when the employee behaves in the way that may benefit others without creating specific obligations. This means that the receiver is obligated based on the norm of reciprocity

[81]. In addition to that, the social exchanges involved the perceived organizational support which is basically forming the relationships between employees and their organizations [82]. Given this, this study assumes that social exchange theory to underpin the proposed research model, and the relationships between the variables of the study could be understood through SET.

### Research Framework

Based on the exposition in the preceding discussions, this work proposed a conceptual model which indicates possible relationships between career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport, and employee commitment. The model is underpinned by SET which explains the motivation behind the attitudes and behaviours exchanged between individuals and organizations [44]. This is illustrated in Fig. 1 below:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### Conclusion

The model proposed in this work is theorized based on the far-reaching survey of the extant literature. The model theorizes the possible relationships between career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, recreation, health and transport, and employee commitment, and thus enriching the present body of knowledge in organizational commitment research area. In this work, issues relating to theoretical and practical aspects of organizational commitment research were explicated. More

so, this study assumes that social exchange theory to underpin the proposed research model, and the relationships between the variables of the study could be understood through SET. Overall, Al Marri, Abdul Halim and Haim [1] opined that organizations would accomplish goals that individuals cannot do alone, but this could only be made possible via employee commitment and productivity. If this position is anything to go by, then it could be said that employee commitment is paramount to

organizational survival. Thus, factors that could enhance the commitment of workforce are worthy-researching. Via literature survey, the current study has conceptually signified that work values, which connote career-growth, social interaction, security and economic, stability and freedom, and recreation, health and transport, could exert influence on employee commitment. With this, it could be said that the present body

has widened the scope of the existing body of knowledge in the organizational commitment research area. However, future studies can further this study empirically which involves data collection on the same constructs of the study and data analyses. Regarding the practical aspect of this work, it can be a useful guide for the stakeholders and policy makers in United Arab Emirates on how they can enhance employee commitment.

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