Unveiling Dubai's knowledge economy: A Journey towards enhancing knowledge exchange and human capital

Abstract

Purpose: *The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence the development of human capital by examining the interplay between different organizational mechanisms, including leadership, organizational culture, and HRM practices. This study aims to enhance our understanding of how knowledge exchange influences human capital, with a specific focus on the unique context of Dubai, an area and context that have been underexplored in this research domain.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *This study employed a survey-based approach, involving 611 participants working across different sectors based in Dubai. We used partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) as the statistical analysis method.*

Findings: *The results of the study indicate that leadership behaviours have a predictive influence on organizational culture. In turn, organizational culture significantly affects knowledge exchange. Additionally, the study reveals that commitment-based HRM practices play a significant moderating role in the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange.*

Originality: *This study contributes to the existing literature by providing valuable insights into the interplay between leadership, organizational culture, and commitment-based HRM practices. By exploring these factors and their influence on knowledge exchange and human capital, the study enhances both the theoretical understanding and practical application in this field.*

Implications: *The findings of this study have important implications for organizations in Dubai and beyond. Understanding the relationships between leadership, organizational culture, commitment-based HRM practices, and knowledge exchange can help organizations develop strategies to enhance their human capital. By fostering a positive organizational culture, implementing effective leadership practices, and adopting commitment-based HRM practices, organizations can promote knowledge exchange and ultimately improve their human capital development.*

Keywords: Leadership; knowledge exchange; human capital; organizational culture; Dubai

Introduction

In the 21st century, knowledge has garnered significant attention as a crucial competitive resource (Darwish et al., 2020). Scholars have emphasized the strategic importance of knowledge and proposed the knowledge-based view to explain variations in organizations' capability to obtain and apply external knowledge for innovation (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Within this perspective, human capital, characterized by its creativity, knowledge, experience, and technical skills has emerged as a valuable resource (Scuotto et al., 2022; Hewett et al., 2018). The definition of human capital includes the knowledge, abilities, and skills possessed and utilized by individuals (Graff Zivin & Neidell, 2013), plays a critical role in contributing to a firm's knowledge creation (Bonner et al., 2023). In addition, Haak-Saheem et al. (2017) suggest that while the relation between human capital and competitive advantage is widely acknowledged, further investigation is needed to comprehend the influence of HR practices and policies on human capital development. Growing evidence suggests that the acquisition, development, exchange, and sharing of ideas, experiences, and learning, both within and outside organizations, significantly contribute to human capital development (Vidotto et al., 2017). However, our understanding of the mechanisms that make human capital more effective than others remains limited, despite the recognition of human capital as an important factor in explaining firm performance (e.g., Mohammad et al., 2021). Although limited studies have explored the impact of organizational mechanisms such as recruitment and selection, training and, performance evaluation and rewards on human capital (e.g., Wright, 2021; Delery & Roumpi, 2017), our comprehension of this relationship, particularly in emerging markets, is still inadequate. A contextualized understanding of human capital can greatly assist managers in designing, assessing, and delivering HRM practices effectively within different cultural contexts (Bilan, Mishchuk, & Dzhyhar, 2017). In this study, our focus is on the city of Dubai, situated within the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a region where investment in human potential

holds significant importance, especially in affluent oil-rich Gulf nations. The country aims to construct a multifaceted economy centered on knowledge, and it has given high priority to obtaining, nurturing, sharing, and innovating knowledge as outlined in its Vision 2030. Substantial endeavors have been allocated to realize this ambition. Haak-Saheem et al. (2017) found that the creation and exchange of knowledge hold substantial implications for the social, cultural, and economic advancement of emerging economies within the Arab Gulf nations. Knowledge exchange significantly contributes to human capital development by enhancing skills, broadening expertise, and fostering a culture of continuous learning. Through interactions with diverse perspectives, individuals acquire new abilities, adapt to change, and cultivate transferable skills like critical thinking and effective communication (Islam, Chaudhary, & Aziz, 2022). Networking opportunities arise, enabling collaboration, innovation, and interdisciplinary thinking. Moreover, knowledge exchange encourages personal growth, builds confidence, and facilitates teaching and mentorship roles. This dynamic process ultimately empowers individuals to be adaptable, productive, and valuable contributors across various domains (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2017). Dubai has launched initiatives to transform into a Smart City, leveraging advanced digital means for sustainable development, growth, improved governance, and public well-being (Al Jawali et al., 2022). Over the past few decades, Dubai has reduced its reliance on oil and made substantial investments in new technologies, infrastructure, and public services, showcasing its commitment to a knowledge-driven economy (Pereira et al., 2020; Al Jawali et al., 2022). Thus, Dubai serves as a compelling case study for our theoretical propositions. This study aims to advance our knowledge of the practices influencing human capital development by examining organizational mechanisms such as leadership, organizational culture, and commitment-based HRM practices, and investigating how these mechanisms impact knowledge exchange and subsequently human capital. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing

valuable insights into the interplay between leadership, organizational culture, and commitment-based HRM practices. By exploring these factors and their influence on knowledge exchange and human capital, the study enhances both the theoretical understanding and practical application in the field.

Literature review

Knowledge-based view and human capital

The knowledge-based view (KBV) builds upon the resource-based perspective, highlighting knowledge as the primary resource for creating value, heterogeneity, and competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Kianto, Sáenz, & Aramburu, 2017). Human capital has long been acknowledged by resource-based scholars as a crucial resource explaining superior firm performance (Hörisch, Johnson, & Schaltegger, 2015). The KBV of human capital argues that the knowledge embedded within human capital is universally valuable and difficult to imitate, distinguishing it from the generic perspective of the resource-based view (Minbaeva, 2013). Knowledge is a dynamic process that changes over time (Simao & Franco, 2018) and is influenced by employees' cognitive abilities, skills, cognitive abilities, roles and their social skills (Nieves, Quintana, & Osorio, 2014). Facilitating the transfer of knowledge within an organization holds paramount importance as it serves as a conduit for harnessing the full potential of the organization's accumulated expertise Chaudhary et al., 2023). The process involves the transmission of specialized knowledge from employees who possess a deep understanding of specific areas to their colleagues and peers (Ali, Chaudhary, & Islam, 2023). This exchange of insights is not only essential for maintaining a dynamic and innovative environment but also plays a pivotal role in driving the organization's competitive edge. By enabling the seamless flow of knowledge, organizations can optimize their operational efficiency, adapt to evolving challenges, and proactively capitalize on emerging opportunities.

As knowledge cascades from experts to others, it transforms into a valuable resource that empowers employees at all levels to make informed decisions, enhance their skills, and collectively contribute to the organization's growth and success (Khatoon et al., 2022; Han & Li 2015). The knowledge-based view of organizations contributes to the enrichment of organizational theory by delving into crucial dimensions such as coordination mechanisms, organizational structure, management roles, and the allocation of decision-making (Islam et al., 2022a). This perspective acknowledges that knowledge, as a strategic asset, plays a pivotal role in shaping the way organizations function and evolve (Islam & Asad, 2021). In terms of coordination, it highlights how the effective sharing and utilization of knowledge among different units or departments lead to improved synergies and collaborative efforts. Furthermore, the organizational structure is seen through the lens of knowledge flows, emphasizing how the arrangement of roles and departments impacts the accessibility and dissemination of expertise (Islam et al., 2022b; Kazanjian, Drazin, & Glynn, 2017). In a knowledge-based environment, organizations heavily rely on employee knowledge (Abdul-Jalal, Toulson, & Tweed, 2013), making the approach to human capital development a significant determinant of knowledge outcomes. According to the KBV, sustainable competitive advantage hinges on an organization's aptitude to effectively manage and exploit asymmetries in explicit and tacit knowledge. Amarakoon, Weerawardena, and Verreynne (2018) suggests that explicit knowledge is communicated in a modifiable form, while tacit knowledge is exposed through its application. Explicit knowledge is more readily transferable, as it can be communicated as modifiable information, whereas tacit knowledge poses greater challenges for transfer (Polanyi, 1958). In today's organizational landscape characterized by demographic changes, globalization, and technological advancements, the concept of the knowledge-based worker has gained prominence (Minbaeva, 2013). Technology plays an indispensable and transformative role in facilitating learning and human capital development.

In recent years, its impact has been progressively recognized, as it not only drives the demand for new skills and relational requirements within organizations but also revolutionizes the methods by which human capital development is conducted and knowledge is transferred among organizations (Chowdhury et al., 2022). This paradigm shift has led to a growing emphasis on the strategic utilization of knowledge by both organizations and individual employees, with technology emerging as a valuable facilitator of these critical processes. The influential role of technology in enabling learning and human capital development cannot be overstated (Abdul-Jalal, Toulson, & Tweed, 2013). As organizations navigate the dynamic and rapidly evolving business landscape, they must constantly adapt to stay competitive. This necessitates acquiring new skills and knowledge, which technology has played a pivotal role in driving. The relentless progress of technology has sparked the demand for emerging skills, such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, cybersecurity, and digital marketing. As organizations strive to remain relevant and responsive to market needs, they recognize the importance of investing in these skills and providing avenues for employees to acquire them (Wei & Miraglia, 2017).

Leadership and organizational culture

Scholars have increasingly emphasized the vital role of leadership in predicting innovation and learning within organizations in recent years (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Effective leaders have the capacity to present new ideas, establish strategic goals, and foster innovation among their subordinates. They play a significant role in shaping employee behaviors and motivating them to actively contribute towards organizational objectives (Azanza, Moriano, & Molero, 2013; Darwish & Nusairat, 2008). Leadership effectiveness is often defined by the leader's power to motivate and inspire their subordinates towards collective goals, missions, or visions (Ince, 2023). The leader's beliefs, values, and corporate culture significantly influence the creation of organizational visions, which, in turn, shape strategic development and performance (Fan et

al., 2023). Leadership has a pivotal role in determining organizational practices and behaviors. Organizational culture, on the other hand, refers to the shared meaning and behavior patterns that distinguish one organization from another (Abukhait, Bani-Melhem, & Zeffane, 2019). Leadership and organizational culture are interconnected, with mutual influences between the two (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022). While organizational culture tends to exert more control over the leader than the other way around, leaders still have a significant impact on culture, particularly through role-modeling (Mohd. Shamsudin et al., 2022). Studies have highlighted the importance of leaders in cultural development, suggesting that leaders leverage their knowledge of organizational culture to drive change (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). Furthermore, leadership behaviors are strongly associated with employees' perceptions of culture (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020), and leadership itself becomes embedded in organizational culture and daily routines (Torpman, 2004). Some studies have explored the predictive role of leadership behaviors in shaping organizational culture (Fan et al., 2023). While much of the existing research on leadership and organizational culture is grounded in Western contexts and has limited applicability to emerging economies, this study aims to examine the association between leadership and organizational culture in a unique institutional setting. Specifically, the combination of visionary local leadership and a diverse global workforce in Dubai presents an intriguing environment that challenges existing theories and concepts. Dubai's sociocultural and economic and growth has led to a significant influx of foreign employees, resulting in organizations with diverse workforces. Given the rapid growth of Dubai's economy, its demographic characteristics, and the wide range of job opportunities available to a diverse group of expatriates, exploring the relationship between leadership and organizational culture becomes particularly interesting. Thus, our first hypothesis is:

H1: Leadership is directly related to organizational culture

Organizational culture and knowledge exchange

When individuals join an organization, they must familiarize themselves with the organizational culture to assess their fit and determine how they can integrate effectively. Organizational culture plays a pivotal role in distinguishing between organizations operating within the same national culture (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2017). In the ever-evolving and dynamic business environment that has characterized the past few decades, the role of knowledge transfer has taken on a pronounced and pivotal significance in the quest to elevate the competitive advantage held by organizations (Islam et al., 2021; Zeng et al., 2019). This importance is particularly accentuated for multinational companies that navigate the intricate and interconnected global landscape. Furthermore, the acceleration of technological advancements and the proliferation of digital communication tools have accelerated the pace and reach of knowledge transfer (Jia et al., 2023). Organizations can now harness digital platforms to enable real-time collaboration, virtual training sessions, and cross-functional dialogues that transcend geographical boundaries. This dynamic mode of knowledge exchange allows multinational companies to not only disseminate information swiftly but also to foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation (Chaudhary et al., 2023). In the context of maintaining a competitive advantage, the efficient transfer of knowledge enables organizations to reduce duplication of efforts, learn from past mistakes, and identify emerging opportunities with greater agility. It empowers teams to capitalize on lessons learned, capitalize on emerging trends, and proactively respond to challenges, all of which contribute to strengthening the organization's overall position within the market (Wei & Miraglia, 2017). Organizational culture plays a multifaceted role in shaping the dynamics of knowledge management initiatives within a company. Beyond influencing perceptions of desirability, feasibility, and practicality regarding knowledge exchange, culture also establishes critical supervisory relations that impact the engagement of employees in such initiatives (González-Lozada et al. 2023). The presence of strong supervisory support within an organizational culture can serve as a catalyst

for knowledge exchange activities. When supervisors actively endorse and participate in knowledge exchange, it communicates to employees the importance of the endeavor, leading to higher engagement levels (Ng, 2023). This participation is not only about verbal support but also involves actively demonstrating a commitment to knowledge exchange through their own actions (Nam Nguyen & Mohamed, 2011). Furthermore, participation and engagement in knowledge exchange are closely intertwined with the concept of participation in the organizational context. A culture that values participation empowers employees to become active contributors rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Ahmady, Nikooravesh, and Mehrpour, 2016). When individuals feel their input is valued and sought after, they are more likely to engage in knowledge exchange activities with enthusiasm. Participation can extend beyond knowledge exchange to the collaborative creation and validation of knowledge. This collaborative process is essential for fostering a dynamic and evolving knowledge base within the organization (Shin, 2004). Effective communication is the glue that holds together the various elements of culture, supervisory relations, and participation in knowledge exchange (Laubengaier, Hahn, & Wagner, 2019). Communication serves as the bridge that connects the intentions of organizational culture with the actions of employees. Clear and transparent communication about the value of knowledge exchange, the benefits it brings, and how it aligns with the organization's goals can motivate individuals to actively participate (Scuotto et al., 2022). Open lines of communication also facilitate the identification of suitable recipients for knowledge, ensuring that the right information reaches the right people at the right time (Simao & Franco, 2018). The supervisory relation aspect becomes particularly significant within the context of communication. Supervisors can act as conduits of information, ensuring that the knowledge flows efficiently throughout the organization (Martin & Javalgi, 2019). Their role in clarifying expectations, providing feedback, and recognizing contributions can significantly influence how employees perceive the importance of knowledge exchange (Nieves, Quintana,

& Osorio, 2014). Effective communication from supervisors can address any uncertainties or hesitations employees might have and foster a sense of psychological safety that encourages knowledge exchange (Laubengaier, Hahn, & Wagner, 2019). In the specific case of Dubai and the Arab world, where cultural norms and practices might differ from the Western context, communication takes on added importance (Mohammad & Darwish, 2022; Rezaei Zadeh et al. 2020). Cultural nuances can impact how information is conveyed and received. An inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to communication is crucial for ensuring that knowledge exchange initiatives are well-received and embraced by employees in these regions (González-Lozada et al., 2023). This leads us to our second hypothesis:

H2: There is a direct relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange

Moderating effect of commitment-based HRM practice

The importance of knowledge exchange as a catalyst for organizational success, innovation, and competitiveness cannot be overstated. A crucial factor in fostering an environment conducive to knowledge exchange is the organizational culture, which comprises shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape employees' behaviors (Alanezi et al., 2020; Haak-Saheem and Darwish, 2021). A culture that prioritizes openness, collaboration, and continuous learning is more likely to encourage employees to freely exchange knowledge and ideas. However, the link between organizational culture and knowledge exchange is not solely determined by culture itself; rather, commitment-focused human HRM practices play a pivotal moderating role in this relationship (Pak et al., 2019; Haak-Saheem et al., 2017). Commitment-focused HRM practices encompass a range of strategies aimed at cultivating employee dedication and loyalty. These practices, including selection policies, interactive policies, and training and development policies, are pivotal in shaping employees' attitudes and engagement

levels (Al Bastaki et al., 2021; Ahmady et al., 2016; Darwish et al. 2013). Firstly, selection policies that emphasize cultural fit during the recruitment process set the stage for commitment. When candidates align with the organization's values and culture, they are more likely to integrate seamlessly into the work environment. This alignment enhances their motivation to engage in knowledge exchange, as they feel a genuine connection to the organization's goals and principles (Martin & Javalgi, 2019; Pereira et al., 2020). Secondly, interactive policies that promote collaboration, open communication, and teamwork create a sense of community within the organization. When employees feel valued and connected, they are more inclined to exchange their knowledge and expertise. The relationships fostered through interactive policies foster trust and diminish the perceived risks associated with exchanging one's insights (González-Lozada et al., 2023; Han & Li, 2015). Thirdly, training and development policies are instrumental in signaling an organization's commitment to its employees' growth. When employees are provided with opportunities for ongoing learning and skill enhancement, they perceive the organization as invested in their professional development (Al Bastaki et al., 2021; Vidotto et al., 2017). This acknowledgment fosters a reciprocal commitment, encouraging employees to reciprocate through active participation in knowledge exchange endeavors (Rubel, Kee, & Rimi, 2021). These commitment-focused HRM practices serve as critical moderating factors in the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange. By aligning selection, interaction, and training policies with the organization's values and goals, HRM practices amplify employee commitment, engagement, and loyalty. This alignment between HRM practices and organizational culture creates an atmosphere where knowledge exchange is not just endorsed but becomes an integral facet of the organizational fabric (Subramony et al., 2018). Thus, our third hypothesis is:

H3: Commitment-focused human resource practices play a moderating role in the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange.

Knowledge exchange and human capital

Employees' skills and abilities are fundamental components of human capital that contribute to a strong knowledge base. These competencies can be innate, but they can also be developed through training and career development opportunities provided by the companies (Huey Yiing & Zaman Bin Ahmad, 2009). Training experiences facilitate the building of connections among diverse individuals and enable the transfer of knowledge from one task to another (Rubel, Kee, & Rimi, 2021). Similarly, exposure to different work positions enhances individuals' abilities, allowing them to understand knowledge in different areas while also exchanging their existing knowledge. Training and development programs not only improve employees' abilities but also increase their self-efficacy, leading to greater confidence in their abilities and a greater willingness to exchange knowledge with others (Hewett et al., 2018). Formal training, team-building training, cross-training, and job rotation programs are effective in enhancing employees' abilities and fostering interactions between employees, resulting in the development social capital (e.g. interpersonal ties and shared language) that effectively boost knowledge flows within organizations (Hassan, 2022). The sustainability of an organization depends on its capability to embrace new ideas and innovations, with innovations being the main outcome of the knowledge exchange process within a sustainable organization (Triguero Sánchez et al., 2016). Previous research has highlighted the importance of employees' educational background, experience, and skills as critical components of human capital that significantly contribute to the success of enterprises (Hewett et al., 2018; Rubel, Kee, & Rimi, 2021). However, there is a lack of understanding regarding how employee experience, skills, and educational influence the knowledge exchange and the creation of knowledge within organizations. It is crucial to recognize that knowledge is built over communications among the human capital within an organization (Garavan et al., 2022). These interactions occur when members exchange ideas through both formal and informal channels (Khassawneh,

Mohammad, & Ben-Abdallah, 2022; Mercurio, 2015). The exchange of knowledge plays a crucial role in the development of human capital by enriching skills, expanding expertise, and nurturing a continuous learning culture. Engaging with a variety of viewpoints enables individuals to acquire fresh competencies, adjust to changes, and cultivate versatile skills such as critical thinking and effective communication (Islam, Chaudhary, & Aziz, 2022). This interaction fosters networking opportunities that foster collaboration, innovation, and interdisciplinary thought. Furthermore, the exchange of knowledge promotes personal development, boosts self-assurance, and facilitates roles in teaching and mentorship. Ultimately, this dynamic process empowers individuals to remain adaptable, productive, and valuable contributors across various domains (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2017). This leads us to our next hypothesis:

H4: Knowledge Exchange is directly related to human capital

Leadership and human capital

Leadership is intricately intertwined with human capital, encompassing elements of learning and education, experience and expertise, and innovation and creation (Hewett et al., 2018; Rezaei Zadeh et al., 2020). Effective leadership plays a pivotal role in harnessing and optimizing these facets of human capital to drive organizational growth and success (Birasnav, Rangnekar, and Dalpati, 2011). Leadership sets the tone for a culture of continuous learning and education within an organization. A leader who values personal growth and development will encourage employees to acquire new knowledge and skills (Huey Yiing & Zaman Bin Ahmad, 2009). By fostering an environment where learning is embraced, leaders ensure that human capital is constantly expanding. They may provide resources for further education, support attendance in workshops and seminars, and promote self-directed learning. This not only benefits individual employees but also enriches the collective expertise of the organization

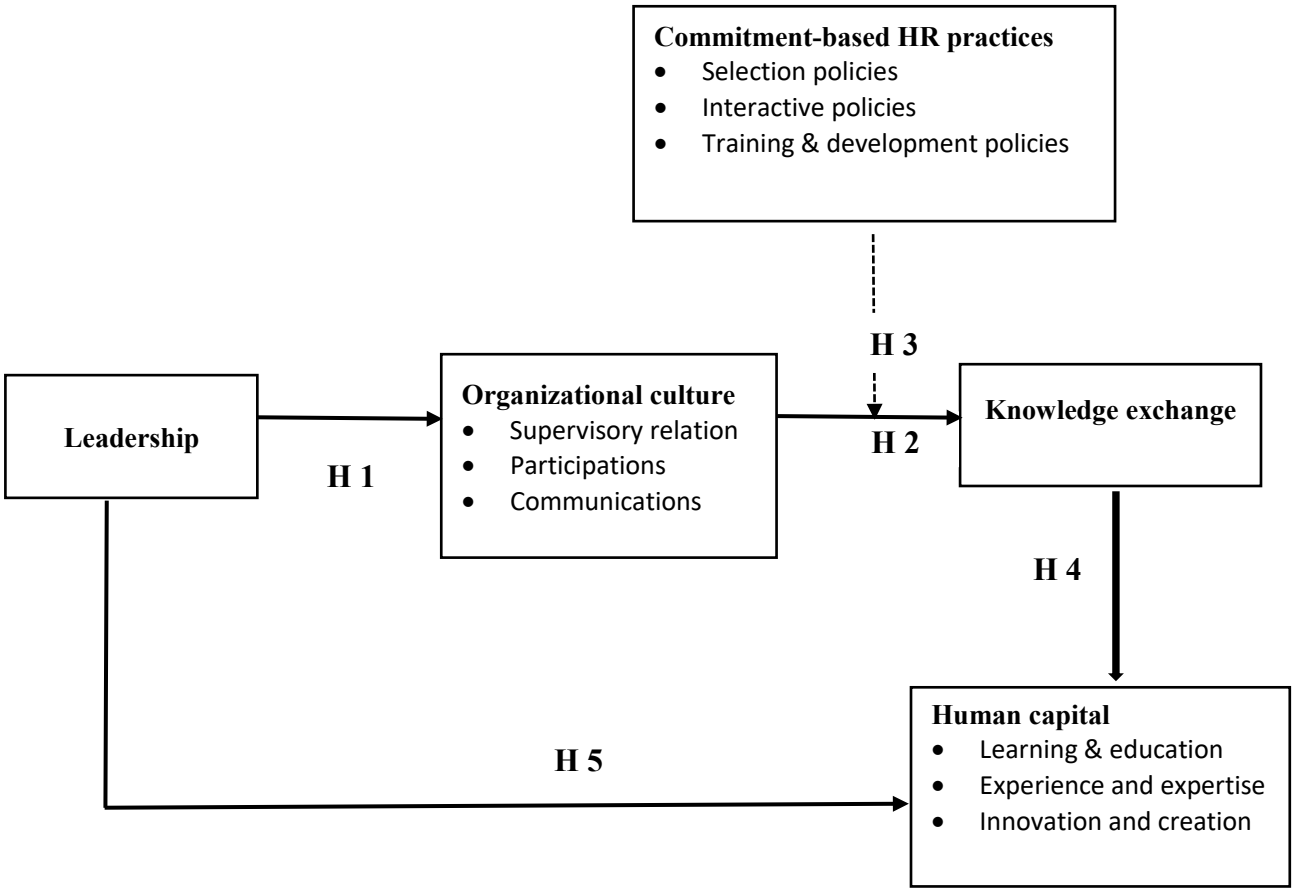
(Haak-Saheem et al., 2017). Leadership leverages experience and expertise to guide decision-making and problem-solving. Experienced leaders possess a wealth of knowledge that they can exchange with their teams, providing valuable insights that cannot be easily learned from textbooks (Hewett et al., 2018). Their guidance helps employees avoid common pitfalls and capitalize on opportunities. Furthermore, leaders recognize and cultivate the expertise of their team members, promoting a culture where diverse skills are acknowledged and utilized effectively (Subramony et al., 2018). Innovation thrives under visionary leadership; leaders who champion creativity and out-of-the-box thinking inspire their teams to explore novel ideas and approaches. They create an environment where calculated risks are encouraged, and failure is viewed as a stepping stone to innovation. Effective leaders support employees in their pursuit of innovative solutions by providing the necessary resources, removing barriers, and fostering a culture that values experimentation (Darwish et al., 2020). Leadership also plays a crucial role in influencing earning potential and career growth. Leaders who recognize and reward merit, initiative, and contributions motivate employees to excel and achieve higher levels of success. Through performance evaluations, promotions, and fair compensation practices, leaders can directly impact employees' earning potential and provide a clear path for career advancement (Garavan et al., 2022). Leaders are instrumental in nurturing and developing their team members' skills and potential. They identify areas for growth and create opportunities for employees to gain experience and broaden their expertise. Effective leaders provide guidance, mentorship, and constructive feedback, which are essential components of fostering human capital development (Martin & Javalgi, 2019). Leadership sets the cultural tone within an organization. A leader who values and supports their team's growth, learning, and innovative thinking fosters a positive and supportive environment. Such an environment is conducive to attracting and retaining talented individuals who want to contribute their skills and creativity to the organization's success. In essence, effective leadership serves as a catalyst for optimizing

human capital in the areas of learning and education, experience and expertise, and innovation and creation. Hence, our fifth hypothesis is:

H5: Leadership is directly related to human capital

Based on the hypotheses we developed, the theoretical framework is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework



Source: Authors

Methodology

Sample and data collection

For data collection in this study, we employed a survey-based approach with individuals as the unit of analysis. We targeted individuals employed across 1,220 firms in the Emirate of Dubai. We collected data from these individuals using an online questionnaire. The targeted individuals work in three categories of firms operating in Dubai: private, government, and semi-government organizations. To ensure a relatively representative sample, we employed a stratified sampling method, primarily aiming to select individuals representing the three targeted categories. We targeted a comparable number of individuals from each category, aiming to achieve a balanced representation across the three categories, as guided by the formula provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). This approach, to some extent, enabled us to obtain a well-rounded sample that better represented the individuals and their managerial levels across firms in Dubai's private, government, and semi-government sectors (although the response rate from semi-government firms were relatively higher than the other two categories). It's important to note that the objective of this research was not to conduct an intra-comparison among these different categories; this aspect could be explored in future research. Instead, our primary goal was to have a well-rounded sample that reflects a relatively normal distribution among the three categories.

In the initial stage, a preliminary approach was taken to identify participants from these companies. Two criteria were used for participant selection: excluding unrelated organizations and excluding Director Generals of large-sized organizations to maintain focus. Permission was obtained to create the survey platform using the Dubai Government server to ensure adherence to business ethics. The final number of usable questionnaires was 611 respondents after excluding those with missing data and other issues. Among them, 76% identified as female, 79% were married individuals, and 95% held at least a Bachelor's degree. Additionally,

63% were non-UAE nationals, while UAE nationals accounted for 37% of the sample. In terms of employment, 50% were from semi-government organizations, 22% from government entities, and 29% from private organizations.

Measurement

The constructs of leadership, organizational culture, commitment-based HRM practices, knowledge exchange, and human capital were assessed in this study using scales derived from established measures found in the existing literature. The measurement of leadership was adapted from the work of Wang and Noe (2010), providing a foundation for evaluating leadership qualities within the organizational context. To capture the nuances of organizational culture, we employed the framework proposed by Gaertner and Nollen (1989), which has been widely recognized in the field. The assessment of commitment-based HRM practices drew upon the research of Delery and Doty (1996) and MacDuffie (1995), offering a comprehensive understanding of HRM practices that foster employee commitment. To gauge knowledge exchange, we referred to the seminal works of Argote, McEvily, and Reagans (2003), and Collins and Smith (2006), which have contributed significantly to our understanding of knowledge exchange processes in organizations. Lastly, the measurement of human capital was developed based on the conceptualization by Bontis (1998), providing a framework for assessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by individuals within the organization. All constructs and their respective items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, allowing participants to express their agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Analysis

Validitay and reliabilty tests

The results of the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) were assessed following a two-stage approach as recommended by Hair et al. (2017). In the first stage, the focus was on evaluating the measurement models, which involved examining the reliability and validity of the construct measures. In the second stage, attention shifted to evaluating the structural models and examining the hypothesized relationships among the variables. Convergent validity, a sub-type of construct validity, was examined to ensure that the measures effectively captured the intended constructs. Convergent validity demonstrates that measures that are meant to measure the same construct are indeed related. Discriminant validity, on the other hand, shows that measures that are not supposed to be related are indeed unrelated. Both types of validity are crucial for establishing strong construct validity. Additionally, the validity and reliability were assessed to evaluate the measurement model.

Based on the findings presented in Table 1, it is evident that the item loadings not only meet the statistical significance criteria but also exceed the threshold of 0.5. Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable surpasses the recommended value of 0.5. Additionally, both composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha scores are above the threshold of 0.7. These results collectively suggest that the measures used for the variables exhibit strong convergent validity and reliability (e.g., Singh et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2020).

Table 1 - Item loadings, AVE, and reliability of the variables

	No. of Indicators/items retained	No. of indicators/items removed	Indicator (item) loading	AVE	CR	CA
I. LS	5	17	.84-.89	.75	.92	.94
II. OC	3	0	.82-.89	.73	.81	.89
II. KE	4	4	.79-.91	.76	.89	.93
V. CBHRP	3	0	.88-.94	.85	.91	.95
V. HC	3	3	.95-.96	.91	.95	.97

Notes: All item loadings are significant at .001 ($p<.001$); AVE= average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability; CA = Cronbach's α. LS=Leadership. OC= Organisational culture. KE= Knowledge exchange. CBHRP= Commitment-based HRM practices. HC= Human capital. Source: PLS-SEM

By closely examining Table 2, we can observe a significant pattern: the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (found on the diagonal) are greater than the correlations between the variables (found off-diagonal). This observation aligns with the criterion put forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981), providing compelling evidence that the measures, when considered collectively, demonstrate discriminant validity.

Table 2 Square roots of AVE and correlation co-efficient

Variables	Mean	SD	LS	OC	KE	CBHRP	HC
LS	4.47	.76	**(0.868)**				
OC	4.38	.93	0.760	**(0.852)**			
KE	4.45	.81	0.845	0.766	**(0.924)**		
CBHRP	4.45	.77	0.735	0.683	0.817	**(0.869)**	
HC	4.54	.64	0.829	0.707	0.832	0.847	**(0.956)**

Notes: Diagonal elements are the square root of AVE of constructs, while the off-diagonal elements are the correlation between constructs. For discriminant validity, the diagonal elements should be larger than the off-diagonal elements. Few correlations coefficients are slightly high (above .08); however, these values are considered acceptable as the statistical problems caused by multicollinearity occur at high level of correlations (.90 and higher). Hence, it can be concluded that no multicollinearity between these constructs is evident (for more details on this issue please see Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Source: SPSS.

The statistical evidence from the overall goodness of fit and quality indices of the structural equation model strongly supports the acceptability of the estimates. The validity and reliability analyses confirm that the measurement model is suitable for subsequent structural model estimation. The goodness of fit and quality indices of the model meet the acceptable criteria, indicating a strong fit. The average path coefficient (APC) of 0.495 ($P<0.05$) demonstrates both the strength and significance of the relationships between the variables. This suggests that the model effectively captures the associations among the constructs. Furthermore, the average R-squared (ARS) of 0.630 ($P<0.05$) indicates that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in the dependent variable. The average adjusted R-squared (AARS) of 0.629 ($P<0.05$) further supports the model's ability to account for the variance while considering the number of predictors. The average block VIF (AVIF) of 2.231 and average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF) of 2.439 fall within the acceptable range (<= 5), indicating minimal multicollinearity

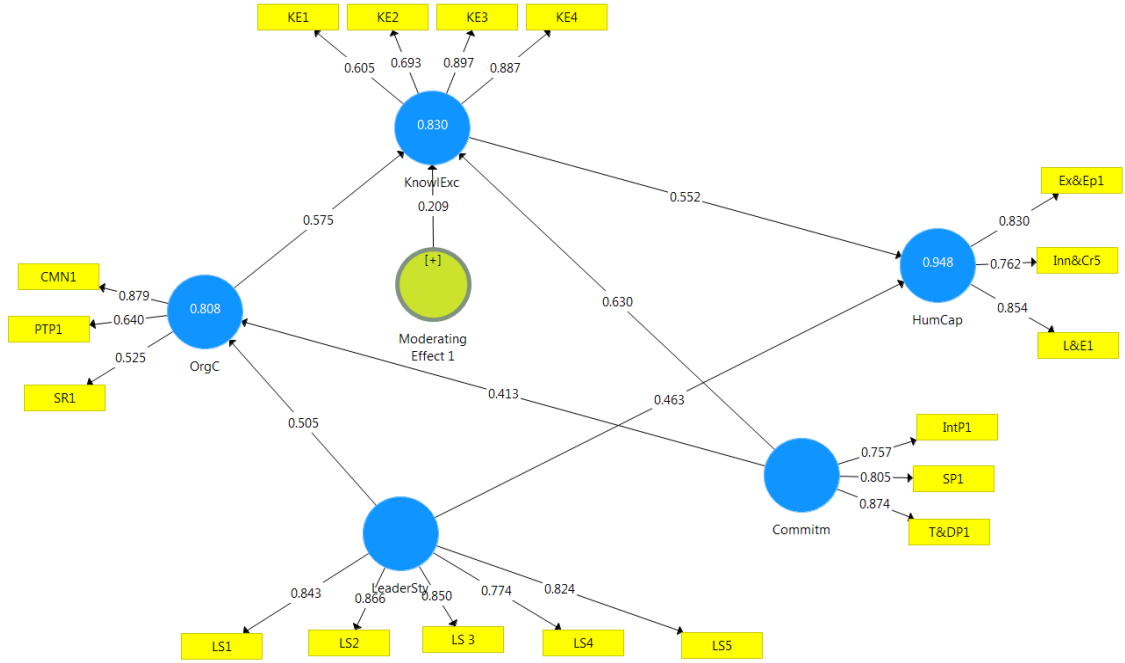
among the predictor variables. This suggests that the predictors contribute unique information to the model without excessive overlap. Finally, the large Tenenhaus goodness of fit (GoF) value of 0.706 reflects the overall fit of the model, indicating a strong relationship between the latent variables. This implies that the model provides a good representation of the observed data and effectively captures the underlying relationships among the variables. These indices provide robust evidence of the model's adequacy and demonstrate a favorable fit between the observed data and the model.

Model fit indices

WarpPLS differentiates itself from other software implementing PLS-SEM algorithms by offering users a wide array of model-wide fit indices, surpassing what is available in other SEM software. Notably, WarpPLS includes three key fit indices: the average path coefficient (APC), average R-squared (ARS), and average variance inflation factor (AFVIF). The Goodness of Fit (GoF), as defined by Tenenhaus et al. (2005), is also calculated in WarpPLS. The GoF is derived from the average communality index, which is computed by summing the squared loadings associated with the indicators of a latent variable and dividing the sum by the number of indicators. The average communality index considers all latent variables in the model. The APC is estimated to be 0.495, with a significant p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the variables under investigation. The ARS is 0.630, with a significant p-value of less than 0.001, suggesting that the model explains approximately 63% of the variance in the dependent variable. Additionally, the AARS is 0.629, also with a significant p-value of less than 0.001, providing an adjusted estimate of the model's explanatory power by considering the number of predictors. The AVIF is calculated to be 2.231, falling within an acceptable range (<= 5), with values ideally below 3.3, indicating the absence of severe multicollinearity among the predictor variables. Similarly, the AFVIF is 2.439, within an acceptable range (<= 5), confirming the absence of significant multicollinearity issues. The

Tenenhaus GoF is 0.706, suggesting a medium effect size and indicating a substantial relationship between the latent variables. These fit indices collectively demonstrate a satisfactory level of fit, providing statistical evidence that supports the validity of the estimated structural equation model. See Fig 2.

Figure 2 – Path model of the PLS approach to structural equation models



Source:WarpPLS

Results

The findings from the analysis of the structural model, as presented in Table 3, confirm the hypotheses proposed in the study. The first hypothesis (H1) is supported, indicating a significant positive impact of leadership style (LS) on organizational culture (OC) ($\beta = 0.762$, SE = 0.037, $p < 0.05$, f2 = 0.581). This suggests that higher scores in leadership style are associated with higher scores in organizational culture. The effect size (f2 = 0.581) indicates a substantial relationship, highlighting the importance of leadership style in shaping organizational culture. Moving on to the second hypothesis (H2), the results demonstrate that

organizational culture significantly influences knowledge exchange (β = 0.524, SE = 0.038, p < 0.05, f2 = 0.360). This indicates that a strong organizational culture is linked to higher levels of knowledge exchange and combination. The effect size (f2 = 0.360) further emphasizes the strength of the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange. Additionally, the findings of the research demonstrate that the influence of organizational culture on knowledge exchange is moderated by commitment-based HRM practices. The regression analysis yielded a significant result (β = -0.222, SE = 0.039, p < 0.05, f2 = 0.136), indicating that the strength of the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange diminishes when commitment-based HR practices are high. Conversely, when commitment-based HR practices are low, the relationship becomes stronger. Essentially, the influence of organizational culture on knowledge exchange is more pronounced among individuals with low commitment and less pronounced among those with high commitment. This moderation effect has a moderate effect size (f2 = 0.136). These findings provide empirical evidence supporting the proposed hypotheses and highlight the significant roles played by leadership style, organizational culture, and commitment-based HRM practices in shaping knowledge exchange and combination within an organization.

Table 3: Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	β	SE	p-value	f^2
H1: LS → OC	.762	.037	.000	.581
H2: OC→KE	.524	.038	.000	.360
H3: CBHRP * OC→ KE	-.222	.039	.000	.136
H4: KE→ HC	.509	.038	.000	.431
H5: LS → HC	.458	.038	.000	.383

Note: f2 is the Cohen's (1988) effect size coefficient: .02=small, .15=medium, .35=large. Source: WarpPLS

Upon further analysis of the data presented in Table 3, additional evidence emerges of significant relationships between knowledge exchange and human capital (β = 0.509, SE =

0.038, $p < 0.05$, $f2 = 0.431$) as well as between leadership and human capital ($\beta = 0.458$, SE = 0.038, $p < 0.05$, $f2 = 0.383$). These findings highlight that higher scores in both knowledge exchange and leadership are associated with higher scores in human capital. The positive path coefficients indicate that an increase in knowledge exchange and effective leadership correlates with an increase in human capital. These results contribute to our understanding of the factors influencing human capital development within the organization. They underscore the significance of fostering knowledge exchange and effective leadership in enhancing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals, thereby contributing to the overall human capital of the organization. The effect sizes ($f2 = 0.431$ for knowledge exchange and $f2 = 0.383$ for leadership) further emphasize the substantial relationship between these variables and human capital. These effect sizes highlight the magnitude of the impact and reinforce the importance of knowledge exchange and leadership in shaping and enhancing human capital within the organization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to elaborate and test a more detailed model of how different mechanisms such as leadership, organizational culture, knowledge exchange, innovation, and HR practices affect human capital. Our findings supported the idea that leadership behaviors are predictors of organizational culture. We also find that organizational culture significantly affects knowledge exchange and combination. As noted earlier, organizational culture influence employees' attitudes and behaviors towards knowledge exchange because it reflects their attributes and takes their work, organizational policies, and practices into account (Martin, & Javalgi, 2019). Significantly, our investigation uncovered a noteworthy negative moderation effect, signifying that an increase in commitment levels diminishes the influence of organizational culture on knowledge exchange.

Theoretical Implications

In this study, the aim was to develop and test a comprehensive model that delves into the interplay among various factors such as leadership, organizational culture, knowledge exchange, innovation, and HRM practices in influencing human capital. The findings of the study provided support for the notion that leadership behaviors can serve as predictors of organizational culture. Moreover, it was observed that organizational culture plays a significant role in influencing knowledge exchange and combination. This aligns with prior work emphasizing that organizational culture shapes employees' attitudes and behaviors toward knowledge exchange (Stor, 2023; Haak-Saheem and Darwish, 2021; Rasool et al., 2019). The study also uncovered a noteworthy negative moderation effect, revealing that higher levels of commitment can reduce the impact of organizational culture on knowledge exchange. The study makes a significant theoretical contribution by establishing links, direct effects, and moderating effects between key factors including leadership, organizational culture, knowledge exchange, HRM practices, and human capital. This goes beyond mere assumptions about the mechanisms affecting knowledge exchange and human capital, providing detailed insights into how leadership, organizational culture, and commitment-based HRM practices could influence these aspects (Mohammad et al., 2021). By examining these relationships, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of various elements in shaping human capital development.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of the research findings are multi-fold. The study highlights the importance of both leadership and organizational culture in facilitating knowledge transfer and exchange. Effective leadership behaviors can help establish a supportive culture that promotes learning and knowledge exchange. This can involve the creation of mission or vision

statements that endorse learning and transfer, recognizing and rewarding positive behaviors, demonstrating commitment to learning through actions, and removing obstacles to progress (Pereira, Temouri, & Patel, 2020). The study also has implications for HRM practices. While existing research has explored the connection between HRM practices and organizational performance, this study introduces the concept of commitment-based HRM practices as a moderating factor in the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge exchange. This insight underscores the role of HRM practices in shaping the dynamics of knowledge exchange and human capital development within an organization. The study proposes strategies for fostering a knowledge-exchange culture and incentivizing innovation. Implementing reward systems for generating innovative ideas and avoiding layoffs when productivity improves due to novel ideas are recommended. This highlights the importance of nurturing an environment conducive to idea generation, evaluation, and dissemination.

Limitation and future directions

Our study recognizes several areas that warrant further investigation and exploration. Firstly, future research can delve into the specific impact of different leadership styles on human capital, particularly by examining the relationship between transformative and transactional leadership styles and the development of human capital. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of how different leadership approaches influence the growth and enhancement of human capital within organizations. Secondly, considering that achieving high levels of innovation performance is contingent upon various processual and structural conditions, future studies could focus on examining specific HRM practices that may have different mediating effects in facilitating and supporting knowledge exchange. By investigating the mechanisms through which HRM practices impact knowledge-based processes, researchers can contribute to a deeper theoretical understanding of the underlying dynamics and identify more targeted strategies for promoting knowledge exchange and human capital development.

In addition to quantitative approaches, qualitative studies and field observations could provide valuable insights into the processes, means, and mechanisms through which human capital is developed. These alternative research methods can offer a more contextualized understanding of the dynamics involved in human capital development, capturing the rich nuances and complexities of the phenomenon. Furthermore, while our study was conducted in the unique context of the Dubai Emirate, it is important to explore whether the findings observed in this specific cultural setting are generalizable to other cultural contexts. Future research can examine cross-cultural similarities and differences to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural factors influence the relationships between leadership, organizational culture, HR practices, knowledge exchange, and human capital.

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