Productive workplace behaviour at the governmental sector: the case of the UAE

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Productive workplace behaviour at the governmental sector: the case of the UAE

Amna Abdallah and Salam Abdallah
Abu Dhabi University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that influence the improvement of productive work behaviour (PWB) in the dynamic, ergonomic nature.

Design/methodology/approach – The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) is used, in experiment 1, to select and prioritise the most relevant criteria for improvement of PWB. A multi-criteria method is used to analyse and compare the importance of four main criteria and 16 sub-criteria identified from previous studies. The structural equation modelling (SEM) is also used to validate the findings of experiment 1.

Findings – This study revealed that not all criteria are considered important for improving PWB. Flexibility and job specifications were the top-scored criteria. These criteria collectively accounted for more than 65% of the four studied criteria. The SEM emphasised the significance of flexibility and job description of the changing dynamics of organisational regulation during the contemporary economic and managerial turmoil.

Research limitations/implications – This study explored the criteria required to improve PWB. The findings recommend that future studies should be designed to identify new elements and add new criteria and test the newly introduced variables at a physical workplace after the outbreak ends.

Practical implications – Knowledge of the differential impacts of the criteria on the performance of PWB govern decision-makers in private and governmental organisation, especially at such times of economic turmoil and need for innovative strategies.

Originality/value – Few studies have explored workplace behaviour and the environment in the government sector. Therefore, the focus of this study is the comprehensive coverage of workplace behaviour and the criteria influencing its productivity before and during the coronavirus outbreak.

Keywords Analytic hierarchy process, Workplace behaviour, Flexibility, Governmental organisations, Structural equation modelling

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The workplace is a platform where various behaviours are practised. Workplace behaviours affect employees and organisations alike because they are part of the constructs of the norms of the organisation, which include "expected behaviours, languages, principles, and postulations that allow the workplace to perform at a suitable pace." When workplace behaviours conform to the norms of the organisation, a productive work environment is created. However, when behaviours violate norms, the overall functioning of the organisation and the well-being of the employees are compromised (Geue, 1997; Theurer *et al.*, 2018).

Productive workplace behaviour (PWB) has become the prime concern of several organisations, especially in the UAE. Organisations, whether public or private, have started to restructure their administrative and management systems to guarantee the loyalty, commitment and productivity of employees, so that the performance of the organisation can be advanced (Ibrahim and Al-Falasi, 2014). On the contrary, any behaviour aimed at harming organisations or employees is classified as counter-PWB, according to Fox *et al.* (2001).

While organisations mainly depend on assets as valuable elements of boosting growth and developing financial performance (Brennan and Mattice, 2013), the UAE has recently

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been focussing on new methods in the management of human resources (Ibrahim and Al-Falasi, 2014). The new management policies used in the UAE's public sector promotes PWB, despite the widespread counterproductive behaviour observed in many organisations worldwide.

PWB implementation stipulates coordination among investors who have different perspectives and seek diversified interests. Therefore, this paper describes a holistic study that identifies four criteria and explains their impact on PWB performance; the aim is to resolve the conflict between the several parties involved in managing physical assets. To date, few research articles have explored the effect of four combined criteria on the performance of PWB. Experiment 2 in this study validates the effective criteria and sub-criteria that can affect PWB in the context of governmental organisations in the UAE, using structural equation modelling (SEM).

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: the next section presents a survey of the literature. Section 3 presents the research methodology as well as an overview of the AHP and SEM. Section 4 presents the results, while Section 5 discusses the findings of this study. Section 6 presents the conclusions and the implications of the study and discusses the limitations of the research and suggestions for future studies.

2. Literature review

Appelbaum *et al.* (2007) referred to the workplace as a container of a diversity of behaviours, which can positively or negatively influence individuals working in the organisation and the organisation itself. Behaviour in a workplace can be relevant to performing a task, and it can also include social interactions with coworkers in an organisation (Karahanna *et al.*, 2005). The investigation of workplace behaviour is vital to business and econometrics studies because deviant workplace behaviour can cause organisations and nations remarkable damage in terms of decreased productivity, increased costs, inefficient quality and deterioration of reputation (Nasir and Bashir, 2012).

Corporate governance is less privileged than private sectors, given the legal protection of investors, the guarantee of productivity and the minimisation of expenditures. In government sector organisations, employees are not provided with healthy, work-friendly environments; they are often overburdened with work and tight deadlines. Compared to employees of private organisations, public sector employees do not enjoy many extra benefits, perks, bonuses or allowances. Hence, they face tremendous financial pressures, resulting in extremely low job satisfaction (Glińska-Neweś and Szostek, 2018; Nasir and Bashir, 2012). In private sectors, employees are involved in the decision-making process and are given power, while in the public sector, the decisions of top management are forced upon employees, and there is no concept of employee empowerment. Furthermore, economic policy reforms, streamlined foreign investment regulations and the multicultural lifestyle afforded to employees are some of the challenges facing corporate governance. Improving the public sector's performance is a vital dimension of e-government benefits and addresses the demands to cut budgets and the corruption, fraud and misuse of organisational property facing many governments around the world (Gupta and Jana, 2003).

The workplace has been widely discussed in the literature. For instance, Ajala (2012) focused on workplace demands in the health sector, Hitlan and Noel (2009) explored workplace exclusion in an American utility company and Ross and Boles (1994) studied the workplace environment and relations in the hospitality industry. However, few studies have explored workplace behaviour in the context of the government sector (Feeney and DeHart-Davis, 2009; Raman *et al.*, 2016 and Goddard, 1997). Therefore, the main focus of this study is

the comprehensive assessment of workplace behaviour and the criteria influencing its productivity.

2.1 Workplace flexibility

Flexibility in the workplace refers to the freedom of choice given to workers to choose when, where and for how long they perform a task; the goal is to eliminate conflict with workers' personal lives and needs (Jeffrey Hill *et al.*, 2008). Workplace flexibility is either viewed from an organisational or worker perspective. The organisational perspective of flexibility is dedicated to meeting the dynamic needs of the market and to balancing production costs and quality, among other goals. Jeffrey Hill *et al.* (2008) argued that time flexibility includes giving employees alternatives for their workplace arrival and departure times. It also includes providing flexible working hours, enabling workers to choose between full-time and part-time work. Time flexibility also involves permitting employees to leave the workplace during working hours for personal or familial reasons. Such flexible working hours positively influence the well-being of workers. Flexible payment allows workers to choose certain elements of their salary, including insurance and retirement funds (Choo *et al.*, 2016; Yadav *et al.*, 2016). This leniency, again, brings the fulfilment of familial needs into the workplace because it customises benefits according to familial and personal status. Therefore, family insurance, for instance, can be one of the benefits workers may choose (Jeffrey Hill *et al.*, 2008).

Ugargol and Patrick (2018) argued that flexible workplaces increase job satisfaction and engagement with the organisation and tasks. Flexible workplaces offer different work locations and the option to complete tasks off-desk, whether often or occasionally (Jeffrey Hill *et al.*, 2008). Yadav *et al.* (2016) added another possibility to workplace flexibility: the virtual workplaces of global organisations. Off-site offices grant workers flexibility in choosing the preferred location to perform a task Blok *et al.* (2012) stated that physical workspaces no longer exist in the modern workplace, given the increasing number of employees who currently work remotely. Workplace flexibility is associated with positive work behaviours, such as commitment, engagement, collaboration, knowledge sharing and developing an overall sense of satisfaction and well-being (Lee and DeVoe, 2012; Bamel *et al.*, 2013; Whyman *et al.*, 2015). To conclude, flexibility in the workplace is one of the most critical criteria for employee productivity because it preserves work-life balance.

2.2 Effective leadership

Ethical leadership is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making". Vision, role model and ethics are critical parameters for successful leadership.

Appelbaum *et al.* (2007) attributed the unethical behaviours of employees to the absence of moral leadership. Hence, leadership and productive work behaviour are linked in several ways. Leadership influences job satisfaction, absenteeism, commitment and quitting inclinations. Mehta and Srishti (2000) proposed that leaders should adopt a vision to empower workers and enhance their commitment to the organisation and, accordingly, improves their productivity. Leadership vision, which shows commitment to "people, planet, and profit," replaces the traditional leadership that is focused on organisational profits. The new philanthropic vision motivates workers in different sectors to be more productive, as it addresses the spiritual dimension and perceives business organisations as "living organisms." Hiltunen (2013) argued that visionary leadership is what makes the difference between successful and unsuccessful new business plans and product updates.

Ethical leadership encourages productivity and dissuades employees from deviant practices. This study analysed a cross-organisational sample of 190 supervisor-employee

dyads. The results showed that ethical leaders led employees' to evaluate prosocial behaviour as moral conduct and antisocial behaviour as an immoral practice (Resick *et al.*, 2013). Conversely, working with immoral leaders reduces job satisfaction and leaves space for unethical actions by employees (Mathieu and Babiak, 2016). Overall, promoting the productive behaviour of employees is undoubtedly relevant to leadership, which enhances ethical behaviour, proposes a creative vision and, accordingly, provides a role model to follow.

2.3 Job specifications

Job specifications are perceived by employees as a type of organisational support that obliges them to perform with commitment, productivity and appreciation (Poon, 2006).

Joiner and Bakalis (2006) proposed that job specifications affect employees' commitment to the organisation. They distributed a questionnaire survey among Australian academics working in a public university. They defined four job specifications that influence organisational commitment. Their findings indicated that enjoying favourable job specifications, namely, supervisor support, coworker support, role clarity and resource availability, is positively associated with devotion to the employing organisation. Joiner and Bakalis (2006) proved that employees understand supportive supervision as part of general organisational support. Therefore, supervisors are encouraged to dedicate time and effort to help workers understand their roles and to give constant feedback on their performance. Poon (2006) also found that when employees trust their supervisors, they tend to help their colleagues with dedication and passion.

Unclear roles and vague job responsibilities increase quitting intentions. However, when job descriptions, duties and obligations are clearly written, employees become more committed to their organisations. Moreover, supportive supervision and cooperative coworkers crystallise employees' role clarity (Joiner and Bakalis, 2006). Providing access to resources reflects the organisation's appreciation of and commitment towards staff members and employees. It is also perceived by employees as a type of organisational support that obliges them to show equal commitment and gratitude to the organisation. This is especially true when resources are equally accessible to permanent and casual workers (Joiner and Bakalis, 2006). Therefore, supervisor support, coworker support, clear job descriptions and access to resources are the main job specifications of interest. To conclude, job specifications, including both official reports and voluntary cooperation, affect the productivity of employees in the workplace.

2.4 Information technology

Information technology (IT) is defined as the use of computers to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data or information, often in the context of a business or other enterprise. Although IT has enabled revolutionary advances, concerns have been raised about its dark side (Kaur *et al.*, 2018; Tarafdar *et al.*, 2015).

Human activity is now assessed via a smartphone or wearable sensor that can provide information about an individual's level of daily physical activity, especially in situations where sedentary behaviour usually occurs, such as in modern workplace environments (Spinsante *et al.*, 2016). This computational processing of work performance is ushering in the precise monitoring of daily activity in the workplace. For example, the android activity monitor known as SmartStep, which captures necessary data wirelessly over low-energy bluetooth, was developed to accurately monitor daily activity in the workplace (Hegde and Sazonov, 2014).

Computational resources, memory and current open-source applications, such as the Waikato Environment for knowledge analysis and java data mining, are neither designed nor optimised to run with full functionality on mobile platforms. Thus, a relevant problem addressed in this work is the mobile implementation of a human activity recognition system,

including response time and energy consumption requirements (Spinsante *et al.*, 2016). The dark and bright sides of applying IT in the workplace are, therefore, can either encourage or discourage productive behaviour among workers. Table 1 summarises the four criteria and their sub-criteria. This study investigates the influence of workplace flexibility, job specifications, leadership and IT on productive work behaviour before the coronavirus outbreak. To cross-validate the obtained results, we conducted another experiment using SEM to evaluate the applicability of the four criteria during working turmoil and the sub-criteria (March 15 to April 15, 2020).

3. Methodology

This paper describes a holistic study that aims to identify four criteria and explain their impact on workplace behaviour in order to resolve the conflict between the several parties involved in managing physical assets. The decision to improve PWB is multidimensional, and the importance of each predisposing factor can differ from one case to another. Therefore, each decision-maker may react differently to similar prompting factors. In this study, we conducted two experiments. The first experiment is conducted on experts from the UAE before the pandemic. The results are analysed using AHP. The second experiment enrolls more items to the AHP-based questionnaire and checks the validity of the hypothesis using SEM.

3.1 Experiment 1: AHP-based analysis

The AHP is often used to compare and identify the relative importance of each factor; it, therefore, helps decision-makers evaluate the most critical elements (Saaty, 2008). AHP is a powerful and flexible tool that is also effective for handling both quantitative and qualitative factors because it accepts a small sample size if the participants are experts. AHP analysis consists of several steps that, when applied correctly, can solve complex problems with intricate dimensions (Saaty, 2008).

Phase 1 involves structuring a hierarchy by breaking problems down into small elements. The first level describes the goal to be achieved; the second and third levels identify the primary criteria and sub-criteria, while the final level includes the different alternatives. The hierarchical structure of this study is shown in Figure 1.

The criteria are integrated into four dimensions: flexibility, job specification, leadership and information technology. Concerning content validity, the criteria identified were approved by ten experts in PWB, who work in different governmental organisations and specialise in relevant fields. Some items required rewording to ensure that they were representative of the intended constructs. This step allowed us to be confident about the validity of the proposed research framework.

Phase 2 involved the construction of a pairwise comparison matrix of size (4×4). The data in the matrix were obtained from the comparison of paired criteria by experts. Those comparisons were called judgements and were carried out using a nine-point scale.

The score (1) denotes equal importance between the paired criteria. Moderate importance between the two criteria was scored with (3), while strong importance was scored with (5). Very strong importance was scored with (7), while extreme importance was scored with (9). Values of 2, 4, 6 and 8 represented the in-between groups. The questionnaire (Appendix) was designed using the four criteria identified for the improvement of the PWB and using a nine-point scale.

The target population included personnel in managerial- or operational-level positions with roles and responsibilities that are significantly involved in the management of physical assets. The average years of experience the participants had ranged between 15 and 28 years. The sample is, therefore, consistent with the prerequisites of the AHP method. The

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Priority vector
Flexibility	1	6	7	7	0.386
Job Specifications	1/6	1	7	9	0.263
Leadership	1/7	1/7	1	5	0.176
Information technology	1/7	2	1/5	1	0.036

CR value: 0.079 < 0.10 (consistent)

Geometric means of pair-wise comparison of sub-criteria (flexibility)

		A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	Priority
A1	Pay and benefit	1	2	5	5	5	5	0.284
A2	Time flexibility	1/2	1	5	2	5	5	0.306
A3	Place of work	1/5	1/5	1	1/2	5	5	0.143
A4	Learning	1/5	1/2	2	1	5	5	0.144
A5	Performance appraisal	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	1	5	0.076
A6	Career planning	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	1	

CR value: 0.01 < 0.10 (consistent)

Geometric means of pair-wise comparison of sub-criteria (job specifications)

		C1	C2	C3	C4	
B1	Supervisor support	1	7	8	7	0.449
B2	Coworker support	1/7	1	5	5	0.287
B3	Clear job description	1/8	1/5	1	5	0.167
B4	Access to resources	1/7	1/5	1/5	1	0.093

CR value: 0.04 < 0.10 (consistent)

Geometric means of pair-wise comparison of subcriteria (leadership)

		E1	E2	E3	
C1	Vision	1	1	2	0.430
C2	Role model	1	1	1	0.330
C3	Ethics	1/2	1	1	0.236

CR value: 0.03 < 0.10 (consistent)

Geometric means of pair-wise comparison of sub-criteria (information technology)

		H1	H2	H3	
D1	IT security	1	9	9	0.636
D2	Computational processing	1/9	1	9	0.250
D3	E-maintenance	1/9	1/9	1	0.110

CR value: 0.05 < 0.10 (consistent)

Table 1. Geometric means of pair-wise comparison of main criteria and their sub-criteria

researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the volunteering participants. Each meeting lasted 30–45 min.

Phase 3 of the AHP checks consistency and develops the overall ranking of priority. A geometric mean approach is used to combine individual judgements of pairwise comparison and obtain consensus for pairwise comparison judgement matrices for the entire sample (Saaty, 2008). The consistency index (CI) was calculated by the following equation:

$$CI = \frac{\lambda \max - n}{n - 1}$$

The CR is used to assess whether a matrix is sufficiently consistent. The CR is the ratio of the CI to the random index (RI), which is the CI of a matrix of generated random comparisons:

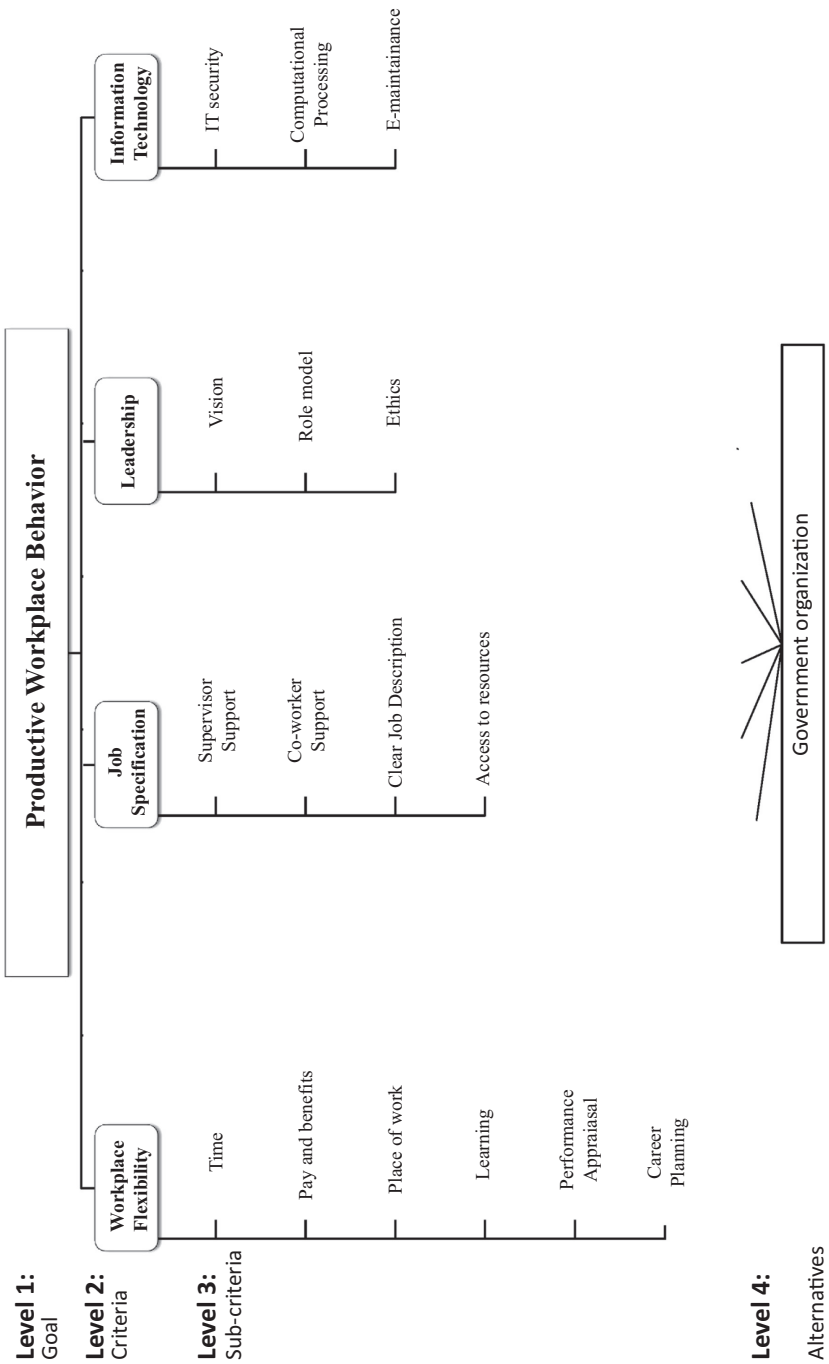

Figure 1.
The four studied criteria and their sub-criteria

$$CR = \frac{\text{Consistency index}}{\text{Random index}}$$

Random pairwise comparisons have been simulated to produce average random indices for different-sized matrices. According to Saaty, (2008), CR is acceptable if it does not exceed 0.10. If it is greater than 0.10, then the judgement matrix is inconsistent. The values of RI were all 0.007 for each criterion.

3.2 Experiment 2: SEM-based analysis

SEM facilitates the specification of latent variable models that address the effects of clustering and include measurement errors both within and between groups. There are two approaches to applying SEM: Covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) approach and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). In this study, PLS-SEM is used because our sample was less than 200 experts. The first SEM sub-model, referred to as the measurement model, is used to define a small number of underlying constructs (or latent variables) through measuring their observed indicators. Figure 2 illustrates our proposed conceptual model, which is based on the findings of experiment 1.

The factors that affect the dynamic profile of flexibility at the workplace in the UAE governmental sectors, based on the AHP analysis. These latent variables were job specifications, sectors, effective leadership, workplace flexibility and organisational performance in governmental sectors. Normed chi-square, root mean square error of

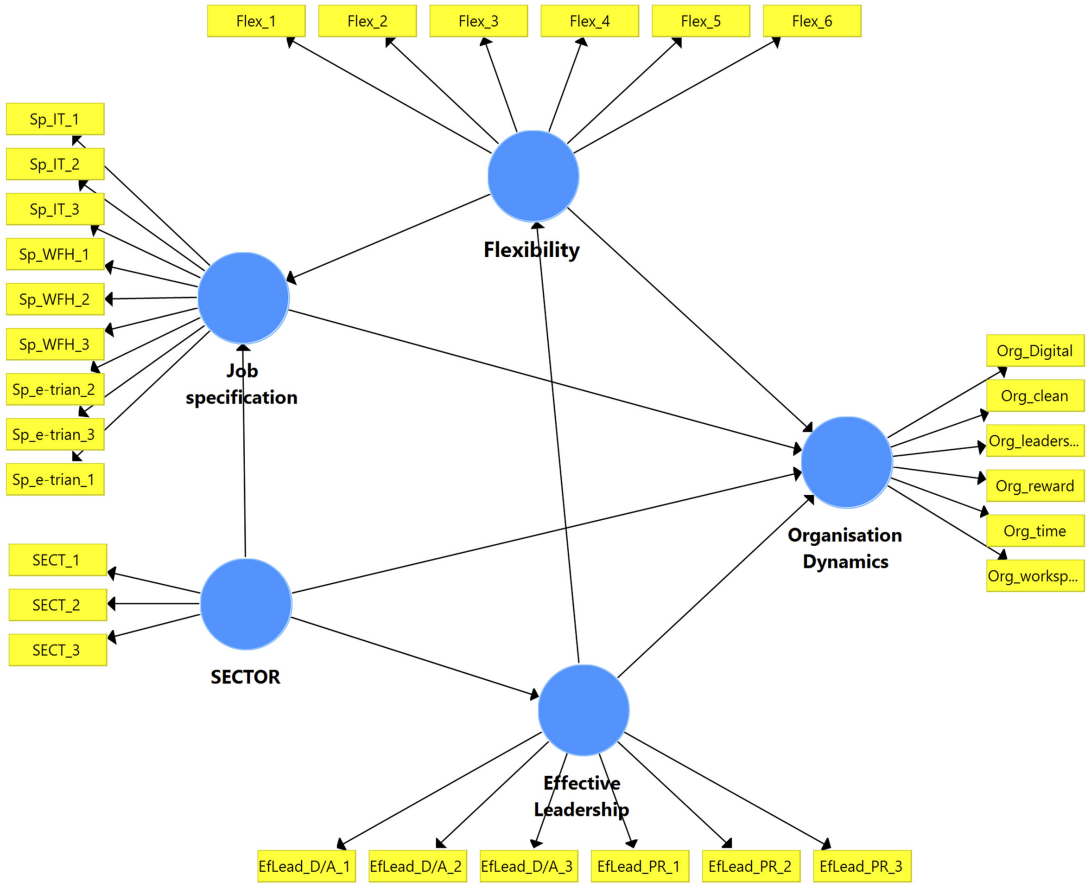

Figure 2.
The proposed hierarchy

approximation (RMSEA), standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), as well as comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), were used to assess the model fitness,. Values of less than 3.0 are considered as reasonable fit. RMSEA measures the discrepancy between the hypothesised model and the sample data per degree of freedom (the error of approximation), which provides a test of "close fit" rather than the "absolute" fit of the chi-square test. RMSEA combines information about the discrepancy between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices with a parsimony criterion for the degrees of freedom. Values of 0.06 or lower represent good fit to the data, while values of 0.07–0.08 suggest reasonable errors of approximation in the population. Values greater than 1.0 indicate a poor fit. The hypotheses tested in this experiment read as follows.

H1a. Effective leadership affects workplace flexibility.

H1b. Effective leadership governs the organisational performance.

H2a. Workplace flexibility moderates the changes on job specifications.

H2b. Workplace flexibility has an impact on organisational performance.

H3. Job specification influences organisational performance.

H4. IT controls the organisational performance.

H5a. The governmental sector influences the space given for effective leadership.

H5a. The governmental sector governs changes on job specifications.

H5a. The governmental sector moderates the organisational performance.

4. Results

4.1 Experiment 1

The experts were asked to evaluate the studied four criteria of the AHP model by comparing one criterion at a time to another (pairwise comparison) for their impact on the main criteria in the proposed hierarchy (AlJaberi *et al.*, 2017). To compare criteria, the experts relied on accurate data about the elements and used their judgements about the elements' relative meaning and importance.

Based on the judgements made by the ten experts, a pairwise comparison matrix of the four main criteria was established. Then, multiple judgements were synthesised using the geometric mean. The eigenvalue method is used to estimate the relative weights of the elements and their degree of importance. Relative weights are then integrated and synthesised for the final measurement of given decision alternatives and to determine priorities.

Flexibility and job specifications constitute more than 65% of improvements to PWB. It is also notable that the consensus responses satisfy an acceptable CR. To better understand the priorities reported, a pairwise comparison of the subcriteria within the resource criteria was also undertaken based on the respondents' consensus responses. The top five sub-criteria are time flexibility, pay and benefits, artificial intelligence, IT security and supervisor support.

Pay and benefits, time flexibility and learning were the most significant sub-criteria of flexibility. Concerning job specifications, supervisor support was the most crucial sub-criterion. The vision was slightly more critical than role model and ethics among the sub-criteria of leadership. We aimed to validate these findings at the hard times of the global health crisis that dictated new restrictions on work and workplace.

4.2 Experiment 2

The PLS-SEM is used to tweak the findings drawn from the AHP model and to test and eliminate the causal relationship by combining statistical data and qualitative assumptions. First, PLS-SEM analysis verifies the reliability and validity of the constructs. Reliability is assessed with internal consistency (using composite reliability) and items reliability (composite reliability from the item loadings), whereas validity consists of the convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was ascertained from the average variance explained (Table 2), while discriminant validity was assessed with the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 3).

The analysis of the responses, collected from March 15 to April 15 2020, to the 30 items, who proven valuable after measuring the exploratory factor analysis, was performed using SmartPLS. Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics corresponding to each item. Tables 4 and 5 show the out loadings, outer weight and VIF for each item.

Of the five independent latent variables, four constructs were included (job specification, effective leadership, flexibility and organisational performance). The indicators of the IT (IT security, computational processing and e-maintenance) did not show enough loadings to be enrolled in experiment 2. We added a new variable for sectors. Of the five independent

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for each item

No.	Indicator	Item	Missing	Mean	Standard Deviation	Excess Kurtosis
1	Job specification_	Sp_e-trian_1	0	1.686	0.974	3.838
2	e-training	Sp_e-trian_2	0	1.513	0.685	4.346
3		Sp_e-trian_3	0	1.508	0.758	4.279
4	Job specification_	Sp_WFH_1	0	1.88	0.832	−0.192
5	work-from-home	Sp_WFH_2	0	1.55	0.691	2.218
6		Sp_WFH_3	0	1.681	0.925	4.347
7	Job specification_ IT	Sp_IT_1	0	1.445	0.566	1.009
8	knowledge	Sp_IT_2	0	2.513	0.948	−0.297
9		Sp_IT_3	0	2.466	0.991	−0.304
10	Job specification_	SECT_1	0	2.461	1.047	−0.584
11	sector requisites	SECT_2	0	1.942	0.857	0.223
12		SECT_3	0	2.047	0.939	0.494
13	Effective leadership	EfLead_PR_vision_1	0	2.141	1.119	0.418
14		EfLead _PR_vision _2	0	2.152	0.882	0.111
15		EfLead _PR_ethics _3	0	2.11	0.906	0.609
16		EfLead _RoleModel_ethics_1	0	1.895	0.85	2.536
17		EfLead _ RoleModel _2	0	1.832	0.761	1.082
18		EfLead _ RoleModel _3	0	1.738	0.712	0.952
19	Workplace flexibility	Flex_Pay and benefit	0	2.147	1.058	1.315
20		Flex_Time flexibility	0	2.021	0.818	1.829
21		Flex_Place of work	0	2.23	1.073	0.507
22		Flex_ Learning	0	2.031	0.799	1.576
23		Flex_Performance appraisal	0	2.152	0.917	0.57
24		Flex_Career planning	0	2.277	0.939	0.979
25	Organisational	Org_Digital	0	1.958	0.758	1.679
26	performance	Org_time	0	2.251	0.981	1.173
27		Org_workspace	0	2.183	0.956	−0.14
28		Org_reward	0	1.759	0.712	2.496
29		Org_leadership	0	1.565	0.555	−0.906
30		Org_clean	0	1.518	0.52	−1.467

latent variables, nine independent indicators were considered. Therefore, the initial measurement model in this study includes 45 indicators (observed variables) and five latent variables (constructs). Indicators that did not show outer loadings > 0.6 or outer model *t*-statistic >1.96 were omitted. Thus, only 30 indicators were retained for further analysis. The structural model evaluates the impact of any independent latent variable on the latent dependent variable. Goodness of fit indices showed an acceptable fit overall with the full model. The internal consistency reliability and its subscales were satisfactory. The measurement of the structural model that is drawn from the SmartPLS analysis is shown in Figure 3.

To test the hypotheses, the statistical significance of the path coefficient between the variables was examined. First, the direct effects of flexibility on organisational performance was statistically significant ($t = 3.819$, $p < 0.01$). Second, effective leadership ($t = 3.149$, $p < 0.01$) and job specification ($t = 3.151$, $p < 0.01$) had significant effects on organisational performance. The findings showed that all hypotheses were all supported, except for H4 and H5b (Tables 6 and 7).

5. Discussion

The results of this study suggest that improving PWB is an intricate process, which is influenced by the availability of adequate flexibility, job specifications, leadership and information technology.

Nonetheless, not all criteria were considered relevant to improving PWB. Flexibility and job specifications were the top-scored criteria. These two criteria collectively accounted for more than 65% of the studied four criteria. This result is consistent with the relevant studies in the literature (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2007; Bamel *et al.*, 2013; Blok *et al.*, 2012; Jeffrey Hill *et al.*, 2008; Karahanna *et al.*, 2005).

Furthermore, this study indicates that leadership and information technology are among the least important criteria for improving PWB. This finding contrasts

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, and average variance extracted for each construct

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Job specification	0.87	0.897	0.496
Sector	0.84	0.904	0.759
Effective leadership	0.878	0.909	0.625
Flexibility	0.846	0.89	0.585
Organisational performance	0.788	0.85	0.491

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Fornell	Effective leadership	Flexibility	Job specification	Organisational performance	Sector
Effective leadership	0.791				
Flexibility	0.817	0.765			
Job specification	0.791	0.725	0.704		
Organisation dynamics	0.757	0.739	0.714	0.7	
Sector	0.867	0.745	0.8	0.675	0.871

		Item	VIF	Loading	Weight
1	Job specification	Sp_e-trian_1	2.689	0.691	0.151
2		Sp_e-trian_2	3.745	0.816	0.186
3		Sp_e-trian_3	3.065	0.796	0.185
4		Sp_WFH_1	1.832	0.691	0.149
5		Sp_WFH_2	2.258	0.754	0.174
6		Sp_WFH_3	2.332	0.643	0.131
7		Sp_IT_1	2.475	0.767	0.166
8		Sp_IT_2	1.405	0.663	0.147
9		Sp_IT_3	1.38	0.664	0.122
10	Sector	SECT_1	1.727	0.801	0.328
11		SECT_2	2.93	0.927	0.411
12		SECT_3	2.298	0.88	0.404
13	Effective leadership	EfLead_PR_vision_1	1.552	0.699	0.189
14		EfLead _PR_vision _2	2.009	0.792	0.208
15		EfLead _PR_ethics _3	2.875	0.873	0.245
16		EfLead _RoleModel_ethics_1	2.963	0.874	0.235
17		EfLead _ RoleModel _2	1.803	0.742	0.189
18		EfLead _ RoleModel _3	1.728	0.747	0.191
19	Workplace flexibility	Flex_Pay and benefit	1.188	0.623	0.128
20		Flex_Time flexibility	2.677	0.852	0.237
21		Flex_Place of work	1.716	0.701	0.188
22		Flex_ Learning	2.346	0.839	0.246
23		Flex_Performance appraisal	2.859	0.877	0.252
24		Flex_Career planning	2	0.801	0.23
25	Organisational performance	Org_Digital	1.479	0.722	0.273
26		Org_time	1.185	0.495	0.167
27		Org_workspace	1.639	0.772	0.298
28		Org_reward	1.643	0.748	0.26
29		Org_leadership	1.698	0.648	0.169
30		Org_clean	2.006	0.776	0.241

Table 5.
Outer loadings, outer weight and VIF for each item

with previous studies, which have emphasised that familiarity with information technology is instrumental in improving the performance of any organisation (Hiltunen, 2013). This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that leadership is the first thing sacrificed by organisations when budget cuts occur (Zuashkiani *et al.*, 2011).

Techniques of PWB are used in many firms and are considered to be cost-effective for operating, maintaining and disposing of assets. This study focuses on the determinants of decision-making processes to select the most relevant criteria needed to improve PWB. Until now, such considerations had not been effectively identified and integrated into a single study, prompting this work to fill that gap. However, justifying the use of AHP and SEM models to evaluate the flexibility during the conventional and changing ergonomics is plausible (Al-Hakim and Hassan, 2013; Newaz *et al.*, 2020; Jakhar, 2015, 2017). SEM does not have a limitation on the number of variables. Many sub-criteria are considered under each criterion. The response has arrived for all the sub-criteria from the people involved in the decision-making. SEM takes measurement error into account on a statistical analysis of the observed and latent variables (Jakhar, 2015, 2017). Although we think that the pandemic has caused enormous changes on the requirements and parameters of productive workplace at the construct and indicator levels, several parameters are too basic to be structurally changed. Flexibility, effective leadership and job specification are epitomes of such strong pillars.

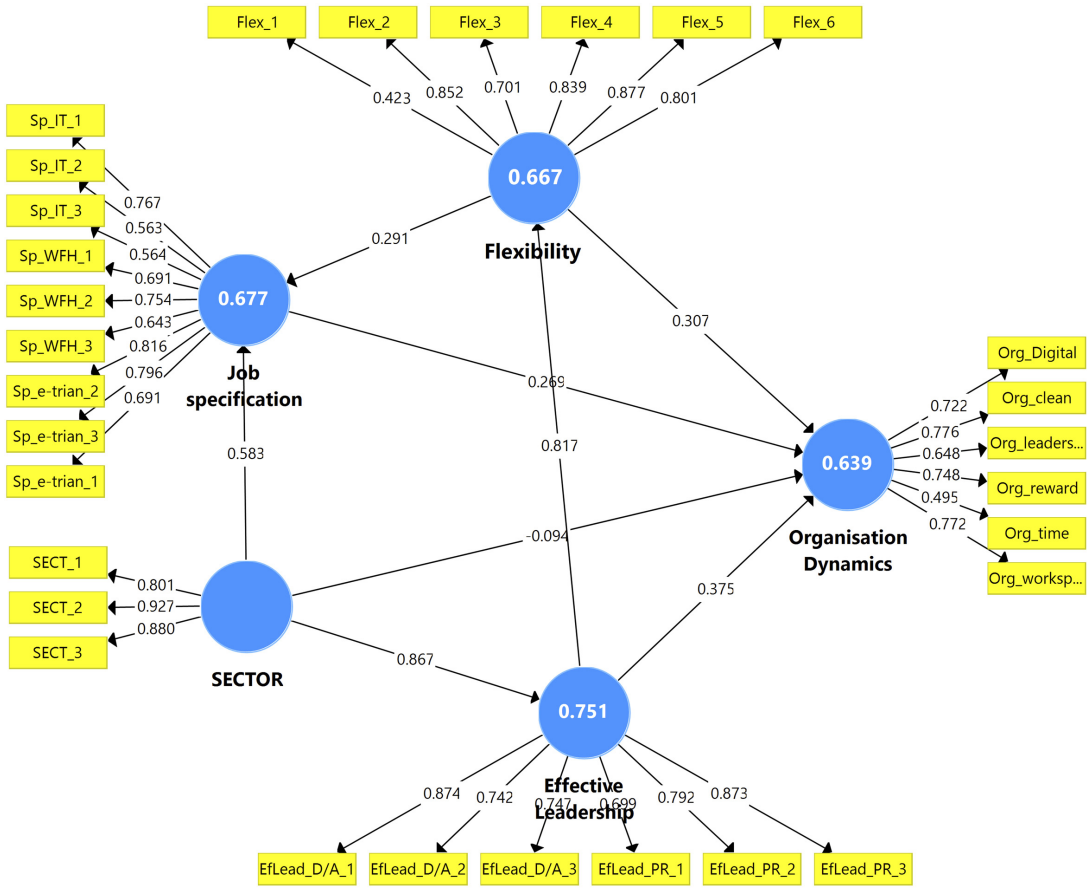

Figure 3.
The SEM-based conceptual model hierarchy

	Original	Mean	SD	Bias	*T*-test	*P* values	Confidence Interval Lower boundary	Confidence Interval Upper boundary
Effective leadership → Flexibility	0.817	0.82	0.027	0.004	30.66	0.000	0.764	0.868
Effective leadership → Organisational performance	0.375	0.369	0.119	−0.005	3.149	0.002	0.125	0.6
Flexibility → Job specification	0.291	0.297	0.055	0.006	5.311	0.000	0.182	0.398
Flexibility → Organisational performance	0.307	0.306	0.08	−0.001	3.819	0.000	0.129	0.45
Job specification → Organisational performance	0.269	0.283	0.085	0.014	3.151	0.002	0.111	0.446
Sector → Effective leadership	0.867	0.868	0.02	0.002	44.242	0.000	0.828	0.904
Sector → Job specification	0.583	0.577	0.055	−0.005	10.621	0.000	0.473	0.672
Sector → Organisational performance	−0.094	−0.095	0.108	−0.001	2.866	0.387	−0.305	0.132

Table 6.
T-tests values and the corresponding statistical significance for each construct

6. Managerial implications

The study of PWB and workplace deviance lies at the intersection between business and management, psychology, social Sciences, econometrics and finance, decision sciences and multidisciplinary domains. Dunlop and Lee (2004) found that workplace deviant behaviour was negatively and significantly associated with business unit performance measured both

subjectively and objectively. Organisational citizenship behaviour, however, failed to contribute to the prediction of business unit performance beyond the level that was achieved by workplace deviant behaviour. The presence of deviant employees among business units impinges upon the performance of the business unit, whereas organisational citizenship behaviour had comparatively little effect.

While previous studies have been confined to the investigation of decision-making for optimum maintenance strategies (Fouladgar *et al.*, 2012), this study used the AHP to determine the significance of different criteria for the improvement of PWB. Given that the analysed criteria also considered counterproductive behaviours, the current study comprehensively encompasses workplace behaviours. In addition, the diversity of the analysed criteria allows balanced coverage of job-related, employee-focused, technology-centred and leadership-related dimensions of PWB. Furthermore, this study is concerned with the public sector in the UAE, which has recently experienced several structural improvements. Therefore, the findings of this study should contribute to new management policies focussing on the development of human resources. Moreover, the lengthy face-to-face interviews conducted with the participants enriched the compiled data with responses to open questions, in addition to the scale-rated results of the questionnaire.

7. Conclusion and limitations

The study revealed that not all criteria are considered important for improving PWB. Flexibility, leadership and job specifications were the top-scored criteria. These criteria collectively accounted for more than 65% of the four studied criteria. The SEM emphasised the significance of flexibility and job description of the changing dynamics of organisational regulation during the contemporary economic and managerial turmoil. Knowledge of the differential impacts of the criteria on the performance of PWB governs decision-makers in private and governmental organisation, especially at such times of economic turmoil and need for innovative strategies.

Nonetheless, the current data were collected only from organizations based in the UAE. Therefore, the results can only be expected to be valid within the time and geographical scope of data collection. Another limitation is that this study explored the criteria required to improve PWB in governmental organisations only. It is recommended that future studies be conducted in a more comprehensive way to contrast the influence of the parameters used in this study in the private and governmental sectors. Increasing the sample size is also recommended to elicit as many responses as possible. The sample size is limited in the current study because it did not depend only on questionnaires. In addition, 30-min interviews were conducted with each expert. Although this method of data collection qualitatively supports the data, it imposes limits on the sample size.

Table 7. Verification of hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	Verification
H1a	Effective leadership affects workplace flexibility	Supported
H1b	Effective leadership governs the organisational performance	Supported
H2a	Workplace flexibility moderate the changes in job specifications	Supported
H2b	Workplace flexibility has an impact on organisational performance	Supported
H3	Job specification influences organisational performance	Supported
H4	IT controls the organisational performance	Not supported
H5a	The governmental sector influences the space given for effective leadership	Supported
H5a	The governmental sector changes job specifications	Supported
H5a	The governmental sector moderates the organisational performance	Not supported

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation in this study. This survey will take 5–10 min to complete. It is imperative that you answer ALL the questions. This data will be used only for academic research purposes.

Please put the check (√) mark in the space provided in order to select your answer.

Section I: Demographic Questions

1. Please select your gender

[1] Male [2] Female

2. Select your age group

[1] 21–30 [2] 31–40 [3] 41–50 [4] 51–60 [5] > 60

3. Kindly specify your highest level of obtained education

[1] Diploma [2] Bachelor's degree [3] Master's Degree [4] Doctoral degree

Section II: Work Flexibility

Please indicate if the following work flexibility dimensions are marked at your organisation.

a. Time flexibility (alternative work schedules)

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

b. Pay and benefits flexibility (Health insurance, retirement benefits).

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

c. Place of work flexibility (working at home/ Satellite Location).

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

d. Learning flexibility (part-time learning).

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

e. Performance appraisal flexibility (continuous and comprehensive).

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

f. Career planning flexibility (encourages breaks and personal interests.

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

Section III: Job specifications

Please indicate if the following job specifications are prominent at your workplace.

a. Supervisor support

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

b. Coworker support

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

c. Clear job description

(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

d. Access to resources
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
Section IV: Leadership
Please indicate if the following parameters of Social sustainability are perceived at your workplace.
a. Vision
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
b. Role model
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
c. Ethics
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
Section V: Information technology
Kindly indicate if the following Information technology aspects are practiced at your work.
a. IT security
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
b. Computational processing and monitoring.
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
c. E-maintenance
(1) Strongly agree (2) agree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree
Section VI: The relative importance of sub-criteria

6.1. Relative importance of flexibility

6.2. Relative importance of Job specifications

	Equal importance 1	Moderate importance 2 3	Strong importance 4 5	Very strong importance 6 7	Extreme importance 8 9	
Time						Pay and benefit
Time						Place of work
Time						Learning
Time						Performance appraisal
Time						Career planning
Pay and benefit						Place of work
Pay and benefit						Learning
Pay and benefit						Performance appraisal
Pay and benefit						Career planning
Place of work						Learning
Place of work						Performance appraisal
Place of work						Career planning
Learning						Performance appraisal
Learning						Career planning
Performance appraisal						Career planning

6.3. Relative importance of leadership

	Equal importance		Moderate importance		Strong importance		Very strong importance		Extreme importance		
	1		*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	
Supervisor support											Coworker support
Supervisor support											Clear job description
Supervisor support											Access to resources
Coworker support											Clear job description
Coworker support											Access to resources
Clear job description											Access to resources

6.4. Relative importance of Information technology

	Equal importance		Moderate importance		Strong importance		Very strong importance		Extreme importance		
	1		*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	
IT security											Computational processing
IT security											E-maintenance
Computational processing											E-maintenance

In your opinion, what other criteria/sub-criteria can contribute to support and promote productive workplace behaviour (in the UAE)?

	Equal importance		Moderate importance		Strong importance		Very strong importance		Extreme importance		
	1		*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	
Vision											Role model
Vision											Ethics
Role model											*Ethics*

About the authors

Amna Abdallah is a DBA candidate at the School of Business Administration, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates. She obtained an MBA from Skyline University College in Sharjah, in Strategic Management and Leadership. Her research interests in the role of leadership in foresight the future, organization behaviours, motivating employees, innovate, and preventing counterproductive behaviours, and decision-making skills. Since 2000, she worked at the Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship - General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs – Dubai (GDRFADUBAI). Amna Abdallah is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: Amnaabdullah979@yahoo.com

Dr. Salam Abdallah is an IS&T academic and practitioner. He has over 15 years of experience working as an IT consultant before joining the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees overseeing ICT facilities and curriculum development at schools and vocational training centres in UNRWA's entire field of operations. He is a founder member of Special Interest Group of the Association of Information Systems: ICT and Global Development. Abdallah is also an active researcher in the field of Information Systems and has published his works in international conferences and journals with research interest in social, business and human aspects of the digital world. Currently he is a professor of management information systems at Abu Dhabi University and Head of MBA at the college of business.x.