The Role of Authentic Leadership in Achieving Operational Resilience in Higher Education –

UAE Context

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Abstract

The focus of this phenomenological qualitative study is to explore what constitutes Authentic Leadership (AL) and its role in fostering Operational Resilience (OR) within the UAE's Higher Education (HE) sector. The AL phenomenon has gained momentum owing to its ability to align with organisational demands for moral integrity and genuine leadership behaviour. Although the concept of AL has assumed a central locus in recent literature on leadership, this research remains in its infancy both conceptually and empirically. In particular, the knowledge of non-Western cultures offers very limited insights into how AL is viewed in different cultural contexts, which hinders the construction of AL and its application within diverse socio-cultural regions. Therefore, drawing upon interpretative individual experiences with the leadership behaviours in the Emirates, one of the aims of this research is to offer a new cognisance of AL as well as to initiate an exploration of the interplay between AL and OR within a culturally heterogeneous and under-represented context, such as the Emirates.

The principles of social constructivism and hermeneutic phenomenology influenced the methodological framework in this study. Rich in-depth data from ten faculty members, with diverse cultural backgrounds across different HE institutions in the country, were collected utilising semi-structured, one-on-one interviews and open-ended questions. To support attaining the research objectives and to enable a nuanced understanding of AL and its impact on OR, the analysis of these rich detailed and personal interviews utilised the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method.

The novelty of this research lies in illuminating the ideological and socio-cultural contextualisation of AL in the Emirates. Notably, the findings highlight the presence of a twofold model of AL, where the constituents and associated behaviours are instituted on the principles of Islamic leadership. The analysis of the 'thick data' also reveals new dimensions and behaviours ascribed to AL in the Emirates, challenging existing Western-centered paradigms. Furthermore, the outcomes of the data analysis reveal a new phenomenon - the emergence of IT-mediated AL behaviours, which has not been reported in earlier research. Additionally, this study identifies links between Universalist and Relativist ideologies, exemplifying the influence of distinct socio-cultural characteristics on AL behaviours and their contribution to achieving OR in the UAE's HE sector. While the findings illustrate the complex relationship

between AL and OR and indicate that AL may partially contribute to OR, they also highlight the deficiencies in the operationalisation of Western-based AL behaviours in the Emirates, suggesting that other factors are likely to be at play.

The value of this study is in challenging the existing body of knowledge by offering critical insights into the dynamics of AL in a demographically diverse environment. It also contributes to bridging conceptual and methodological gaps in academic understandings of AL phenomenon and its role in aiding OR. Recommendations for future research include further exploration of distinct gender-based and ideologically-centered perceptions of AL, which will enrich the cross-cultural awareness of the phenomenon, and investigation of system-driven transitions and adaptations of the AL framework within evolving global HE systems. These efforts may offer a more comprehensive understanding of how AL behaviours intersect with heterogeneous cultural and organisational contexts to influence OR.

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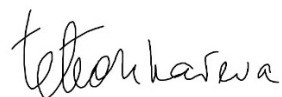
I am also thankful for Dr. Andrew Hanks's positivity, guidance, and motivation throughout the years he supervised me. Also, for his assistance in navigating the administrative processes.

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my work and has not previously been submitted for any other degree at Staffordshire University or another institution.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Exploring Authentic Leadership (AL) within the diverse socio-behavioural context of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) offers intriguing and compelling avenues for research. Yet, this endeavour may also pose challenges, due to the complex religious and cultural landscape, as well as distinct regional dynamics prevalent in the Middle East. While the country enjoys substantial economic growth, scholarly inquiries into leadership in the UAE only began to surface predominantly after the 2000s. This lateness could be attributed to several factors, including the country's relatively recent establishment in 1971, as well as cultural impediments that hinder leadership research in the UAE. However, economic globalisation has sparked a renewed intellectual curiosity and an increased interest in exploring leadership within the Emirates. Therefore, despite potential challenges, unravelling and making sense of diverse interpretations of AL within the cultural heterogeneity of the UAE can be a deeply rewarding journey for the researcher. While the phenomenological exploration undertaken was an emotional roller-coaster, it remains personally enriching and fulfilling to know that the outcomes of this inquiry add value to the cross-cultural understanding of Authentic Leadership.

This chapter offers an overview of the research topic and the purpose of the study. Additionally, it demonstrates the research gap which guides the methodological decisions of the research. Next, the chapter informs the research context and provides a summary of the conceptual and methodological contributions to the existing body of knowledge. It concludes with the structural overview and significance of the thesis.

1.1 Why Authentic Leadership?

This exploratory study and the selection of the research topic were motivated by the author's extensive professional experience in the Gulf region, particularly in the field of Higher Education (HE). For more than 16 years, the researcher has worked in the UAE in a Business Faculty, teaching various human resources and business courses, including leadership, to undergraduate students. During this time, the researcher had the opportunity to work with leaders and employees with various ethnic backgrounds and has been subject to diverse leadership behaviours originating within Western as well as Middle

Eastern cultural context. As a European woman who has worked in Canada and spent nearly two decades in the UAE, the author's worldview has been shaped by her practical experiences and interactions with people from diverse backgrounds worldwide. Hence, the researcher believes that an understanding of what constitutes AL in the Emirates can be achieved by exploring the rich, culturally subjective interpretations of individuals' lived experiences within HE in the country. Therefore, the researcher's personal circumstances and own lived experiences of the phenomenon prompted the initial inspiration for this study and guide the investigation. Furthermore, being an academic for more than a decade, the innate motivation emanated from professional interest in investigating the adequacy and relevancy of AL, which was derived in the Western cultural context, to the heterogenous socio-cultural environment in the Emirates.

While leadership has been acknowledged as a behaviour emerging within social dynamics and influenced by distinct contexts (Gardner *et al.*, 2005), the Western-centric definitions often overlook the unique cross-cultural and religion-infused interpretations of the construct. Fundamentally, leadership holds a central significance within the Muslim community, as it is rooted in the teachings of Prophet Mohammed who said that *'When three are on a journey, they should appoint one of them as their leader'* (Aldulaimi, 2019). The directedness of this recommendation is not a surprise as Islam has long been perceived as a rule-based system (Rehman and Askari, 2010). According to several scholars (Beekun and Badawi, 1999; Yousef, 2000; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Rehman and Askari, 2010; Aldulaimi, 2019), there are two primary channels that direct a Muslim's socio-behavioural roadmap: (1) the Holy book of the Quran, which is the primary religious text in Islam and is considered by Muslims to be 'The Word of Allah' (e.g. God) (Aldulaimi, 2019); and (2) the example of life practices and sayings of Prophet Mohammed which are called 'Hadith'. Consequentially, the recommendations of God are explained and put into practice by His Messenger and Prophet. Hence, these are regarded as rules ('Hadith'). Ultimately, Beekun and Badawi (1999) and Adair (2010) viewed Prophet Mohammed as a seminal leadership architype in the Middle Eastern culture, exemplifying the virtues of morality in leadership. In their conceptual discussions, these authors argue that Prophet Mohammed serves as the epitome of a leader, embodying ethical behaviours grounded in virtues such as 'truthfulness, integrity, trustworthiness, justice, benevolence, humility, kindness, and patience' (Adair, 2010). Essentially, being genuine and acting on the individual's moral principles are rooted in Islamic ideology as the way of life, irrespective of location or time. Besides,

within Islamic ethics, individuals are judged based on the content of their moral character (Abdulahi, 2016). Hence, ideological beliefs establish a relatively unalterable model of leadership behaviour which guides the cognisance of leadership in the Muslim community (Greaves, 2012; Aldulaimi, 2019).

In contrast, leadership research in Western culture(s) has a longstanding history, yet the existing definitions of the leadership phenomenon are obfuscated by conceptual ambiguities and controversies. Essentially, the trajectory of leadership research in the West reflects the extensive endeavours of scholars to investigate challenges related to leadership behaviours that impact organisational performance and the achievement of desired outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Yukl, 2012; Northouse, 2016). Relatedly, House and Aditya (1997), alongside scholars like Yukl (2013) and Northouse (2016) perceive leadership as a dynamic process, underlining the leader's influence over followers as pivotal in motivating and empowering individuals to contribute towards organisational success. Relatedly, social scientists have sought to distinguish the traits, behaviours, sources of power, situational elements, and processes directing a leader's capacity to influence followers and achieve organisational objectives. Therefore, various stages of the academic introspection reflect the evolution of leadership theorisation spanning from simplistic trait-based approaches to more nuanced and multifaceted perspectives, such as the transformational leadership model (Avolio and Bass, 1988). However, Yukl and Gardner (2020) noted that the cumulative knowledge of leadership primarily reflects the individual perceptions and interests of the researchers in the selective aspects of the phenomenon. Noticeably, the abundance of disparate approaches for conceptualising, measuring, exploring, and critiquing leadership in the literature confuses the comprehension of the leadership domain. This criticism should be acknowledged when examining the numerous perspectives on the constituents of leadership.

In view of the above discussion, there is a notable polarisation in conceptual perceptions of leadership between Western and Islamic cultures. Recognising these theoretical weaknesses, Shahin and Wright (2004), Walumbwa *et al.* (2005) and Avolio *et al.* (2009) recommend that future meanings should be informed by cross-cultural examination of the leadership domain. This necessitates an in-depth cognisance of diverse cultural dimensions and their manifestation in various contexts. In this view, House *et al.* (2004) argue that the distinct cultural dimensions in each society are founded on the collective sharing of similar beliefs, values, and motives that define the unique societal identity. Relatedly, the interpretations or meanings assigned by the community members to commonly lived experiences with

major events are passed down across generations (House, 2004). Similarly, in social sciences, culture is defined as a collection of values, beliefs and philosophical assumptions which enact as agents for establishing a network for the social dissemination of information and communication (Birukou *et al.*, 2013). From the perspective of social psychology, Nisbett and Masuda (2003) affirmed the subliminal effect of unique cultural features on an individual's values, beliefs, and practices. Relatedly, several researchers framed culture as a group-formation phenomenon that directs a person's inward perceptions, values and inter-relational behaviour (Lewis, 2006; Hofstede and Minkov, 2010a; Chan and Cheung, 2012). For example, according to Hofstede (1980), culture is understood as a 'collective programming of the minds' of individuals within a shared context (p. 43). Given that scholars perceive leadership as a fundamental property of socially constructed behaviour within a distinct context, it is assumed that its interpretation and significance can vary across different social and cultural settings (Yukl and Gardner, 2020). Therefore, contemporary researchers have advocated directing academic attention towards an in-depth understanding of the nuances of diverse cultural contexts when conceptualising leadership behaviours (Kim *et al.*, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011).

For organisations, leadership stands out as the most sought-after and highly valued asset, serving as both the catalyst and the conduit for achieving organisational objectives (Northouse, 2019). As a result, to substantiate the critical influence of leadership behaviours on organisational performance, scholars have developed a wide range of leadership frameworks (Mango, 2018). However, many leadership theories remain primarily descriptive and conceptual, lacking practical application and therefore, unable to inform the practice of leadership (Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Kouzes and Posner, 2012; Mango, 2018). In addition, the questionable leadership practices in the early 2000s, which cost organisations billions of dollars and had wider devastating impacts on societies (Brown and Mitchell, 2010; Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2012; Shin, 2012), further complicated researchers' and management practitioners' perceptions of the way the leaders achieve the organisational goals. The loss of corporate confidence in leaders' conduct raised sound concerns with respect to their ability to achieve operational resilience (OR) (George, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2005; Yukl, 2012). It became evident that although over the past 50 years, much has been written about leadership, during this period the organisational challenges have outpaced theoretical developments (Gardner *et al.*, 2011). What is of the essence during the last decade is not anymore only *'What'* the leaders have achieved through the manifestation of their style, actions, behaviours, and/or absence of

actions, but *'How'* they actually operate. Therefore, studies suggest that the emergence of the AL phenomenon was first derived from anxieties among practitioners who voiced their concerns about leadership integrity, particularly in the West (George, 2003;Gardner *et al.,* 2005). Consequentially, the AL model is perceived as a direct response to concerns among organisational stakeholders, and society at large, regarding leaders' ethical judgments and moral values (George, 2007). Therefore, it is not surprising that AL originated within the business management area. Relatedly, some scholars perceive AL as a normative behavioural model which demonstrates a novel outlook of the dyad: Content (*'What'*) vs Process (*'How'*) (Pioli *et al.*, 2020). This demonstrates a significant shift in the theoretical paradigms of leadership. Moreover, AL enabled leaders across all business sectors to seek to regain stakeholders' trust and, at the same time, stirred leadership research into exploration of the constituents of genuine leadership behaviour.

In theory, AL offered a novel opportunity to anchor the leadership domain with the fundamentals of authenticity, honesty, and transparency (George, 2003). Since its inception, it distinguished itself from other leadership concepts by prioritising leaders' self-awareness and genuine behaviour, fostering trust and confidence (George, 2003). From this perspective, AL is recognised for its role in aiding individuals and organisations in overcoming setbacks, inspiring purpose, and fostering genuine self-awareness and transparency among stakeholders (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). Its unique framework addresses complex ethical dilemmas, diverging from previous models by highlighting the importance of leader morality and self-awareness. These unique leadership dimensions underscore the novelty of the AL framework and expose the gap in the cognisance of the leadership domain as presented in the earlier leadership models (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2005). Nonetheless, authentic leaders' actions are determined by individuals' distinct values and beliefs, as well as transparent relationships with employees, as opposed to simply employing personality traits and system processes for achieving organisational outcomes. An authentic leader's ability to foster trustful relationship with followers is the primary constituent of the AL framework (George, 2003). Relatedly, Tierney (2008) defined trust as the ability of both leaders and followers to communicate cultural meanings rather than rational facts. This necessitates an in-depth exploration of the cultural contingencies attached to the interpretation of AL across diverse demographic contexts. Ultimately, AL has redirected leadership research towards exploring how leaders can align their core values with those of their followers to promote fairness and

ethical behaviour towards employees, the organisation, and society as a whole. However, the limited cross-cultural cognisance of AL demonstrates a significant conceptual gap in the existing research.

The major criticism of the existing leadership theorisations, including AL, is their strong bias toward Western culture (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Dickson *et al.*, 2012). Despite significant cultural variations worldwide, the Western-centred Universalist viewpoint, which assumes a degree of constancy in leadership behaviours, remains prevalent in the literature (Dickson *et al.*, 2012; Steers, Sanchez-Runde and Nardon, 2012). Hence, these Western scholars suggest that leadership frameworks originating from the Western context can be transferred to diverse socio-cultural settings. These views are contested by Avolio *et al.* (2009), Mittal and Dorfman (2012), and Kabasakal *et al.* (2012) who claim that the materialisation of distinct leadership behaviours differs across diverse geographical regions. Therefore, these authors recommend redefining the leadership domain, including AL, by extensive cross-cultural exploration. However, the body of Americo-European AL literature remains more proliferate than that relating to the Middle East (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). Hence, Avolio *et al.* (2009) state that what we know so far about AL is largely influenced by Western ontological positions on the subject. This gap is further widened by emerging research from the Middle East and Egypt, where the leadership paradox is conceptualised as a social exchange process, derived from collective community practices (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, these perspectives contrast sharply with Western assumptions that support the individualistic nature of leadership (Yammarino *et al.*, 2005; Gardner *et al.*, 2011). Ultimately, the Universalist standpoint seeks to categorise AL behaviours from a North American, or European position, in contrast to what may seem a Relativist standpoint in the Middle East, or Asia (Li *et al.*, 2014; Khan and Panarina, 2017). This noticeable polarisation within the existing schools of thought in the West and Middle East suggests that applying leadership styles which are demonstrated to be effective in Western socio-cultural contexts and then assuming similar outcomes in Arab countries may not be appropriate (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Aldulaimi, 2019).

In theory, the emergence of AL signifies the dynamic and evolving leader-followers' interactions within the dyad as well as with their environment (Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). Hence, AL is not solely about the leaders but is equally concerned with the relational processes and socio-culturally bound behaviours of followers in promoting authentic behaviours, and

fostering trust and transparency (Northouse, 2019). According to Shahin and Wright (2004), leaders' actions and follower's reciprocity reflect individuals' distinctive cultural values, behaviours, and attitudes. Relatedly, some researchers have raised concerns as to whether there can be a more accurate description of the meaning and application of AL, citing cross-cultural differences as a barrier to this effort (Liu *et al.,* 2007; Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Karacay *et al.,* 2018). Building on this perspective, several contemporary theorists argue that due to the differences in values between Western and non-Western societies, imposing Western-defined leadership models across diverse cultural settings is projected to result in unsatisfactory, or counter-productive outcomes (Kenneth and Dianne, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011; Lux and Mao, 2019). Nonetheless, according to Mittal and Dorfman (2012), this misaligned perception of leadership qualities may not be exclusive to the Middle East, but may significantly vary across several similar cultures, thereby calling into question the theoretical assumptions of AL theory. In this view, Whitehead and Brown's (2011) theoretical discussion challenges the interpretative dialogue on the cross-cultural applicability of AL by providing evidence from the Far East. Subsequent publications suggest that a Western-crafted leadership framework may be incongruent with practices outside of the Western context and therefore, face cultural misconceptions (Khan and Panarina, 2017). Therefore, researchers agree that achieving a comprehensive understanding of AL necessitates defining the context-based nature of the phenomenon. This entails conducting an in-depth investigation into individuals' perceptions regarding the traits and behaviours defining AL. Given the influence of a person's cultural background on interpreting authenticity, it is presumed that the perceptions of AL behaviour will vary from one socio-cultural context to another. This criticism is valid to a certain extent, as traditional stereotypes of diverse cultural aspects may not be relevant to the current demographics, religious beliefs, and socio-behavioural composition of Western and Middle Eastern countries.

1.2 The Context of the Research

Given the exploratory nature of this research, understanding the context is essential. Therefore, a brief overview of the context is included in the introduction to orient the reader and establish the significance of the research setting before a more detailed exploration in the following chapter.

Since this study is based in the UAE, it is relevant to discuss the diverse socio-cultural landscape of the Emirates. The country is recognised as one of the major economies in the Gulf region, and as a high-income developing market economy (Jha and Tandon, 2019; Arabian Business, 2022). However, despite often being generalised, the distinctness of its economic expansion, religious orientation, demographical composition and socio-behavioural patterns strongly differentiates the Emirates from other Middle Eastern and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Hence, this section offers an introductory background of the economic, religious, socio-cultural and HE environment of the UAE, including the country's political structure and governance, which is developed further in Chapter 3.

Fundamentally, wealth from oil resources has influenced the work organisation and the socio-cultural landscape in the country (Davidson, 2005, p. 5). Following the end of British protection and the establishment of UAE in 1971 as a unity of seven Sheikhdoms (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Ajman, Fujairah, and Umm Al Quwain), the Emirates has attracted significant foreign investment for exploring the fossil reserves, which soon extended to all industrial sectors and accelerated the country's economic growth (Hvidt, 2009). Alongside the newly gained economic and political freedom, sheikhs realised that the Emirates' population was too small, and the Emiratis lacked the required qualifications and skills to implement the government's ambitious vision for developing the impoverished sheikhdoms into internationally recognised markets. Therefore, the rulers capitalised on imported foreign leadership expertise and general labour (Krane, 2009). Hence, between 1971 and 1990, the development of the UAE's tax-free and business-friendly market was reliant on Western leadership and technical competencies, while the mid-level workforce came from the Indian subcontinent and Far Eastern countries (Heard-Bey, 2005; Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Consequentially, a wide-ranging representation of international business executives transferred to the UAE to oversee the economic opportunities of their international firms' subsidiaries in the new emerging market. This migration facilitated the transition of diverse leadership ideologies in the country. Simultaneously, the rapid diversification of businesses has fostered the migration of an equally heterogeneous workforce with global representation into the Emirates. In 2015, the number of migrant employees in the UAE was 91% higher than the number of nationals (e.g. Emiratis) (Gates, 2015), exemplifying the diversity of leadership styles and cultural values. Currently, the country accommodates 9,991 million residents and nationals, representing more than 200 nationalities (UAE Government, 2020; The World Bank, 2021). However, Emirati citizens

constitute only 11.5% of the total population (Global Media Insight, 2022). Interestingly, data from the UAE government revealed that the largest foreign community in 2020 is from India, followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other Asian, European and African countries. These findings demonstrate a major cultural shift from the previous dominance of Anglo-American demographics (UAE Government, 2020).

Relatedly, Herb (1999) and Hvidt (2007) characterised the leadership of UAE as a neo-patrimonial model of governance, demonstrating both its hierarchal and economically driven foundation. In contrast to rapid economic development and modernisation, the Emirates sustained its conservative political governance which originated within the framework of Islam, and tribal values and societal organisation (Davidson, 2005; Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, despite the authority's aim to decentralise the authoritarian leadership model (see Chapter 2), the UAE federation remains governed as a federal monarchy where the rulers of each of the seven emirates are united around the Ruler of Abu Dhabi who is also the President of the UAE and the Head of the State (Almezaini, 2012; UAE Government, 2022b).

As discussed above, the ideology of Islam guides all aspects of life for Muslims. Therefore, it should be noted that the UAE is among the 12 countries in the world where Islam is declared as the state religion (Rehman and Askari, 2010). Relatedly, the constitutional and juridical systems in the Emirates are founded on the tenets of Islamic beliefs (Davidson, 2005). Unlike Western countries, which managed to separate the influence of the church over state affairs, religion in the UAE, and broader Arabian countries, directs individual's personal and career decisions and behaviour (Riel, 2011). Moreover, while religion in Western society often remains a private matter, this is not the case in most Arab states. For Muslims, Islam constitutes a holistic socio-economic system that informs individuals' perceptions of right and wrong (Zinke, 1999; Abdulahi, 2016).

Contrary to the conservative state government and juridical system, the Emirates have achieved remarkable economic progress. Over the past fifty years, the UAE government's progressive vision has driven numerous commercially oriented strategies to globalise the nation's economy. During the most recently held Expo 2020, the UAE showcased the authorities' and businesses' active pursuit of foreign investments, as well as openness to international communication channels, and other means of economic globalisation. Correspondingly, the Emirates' HE sector is continuously evolving to reflect the needs and expectations of the citizens and the fast growing expatriate population, cultural shifts and

economic demands. Therefore, similar to the strategies for industrial development, the country has imported diverse curriculum and teaching expertise from Western academia by inviting a vast number of foreign HE providers to open their branches in the Emirates (Alsharari, 2018). Furthermore, the market attractiveness and geopolitical status established the UAE as a 'knowledge hub' within the GCC and the broader Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region (Shukla, 2020). The country also offers opportunities for international universities to establish branch campuses closer to their source markets, which is particularly significant in a post-COVID-19 world with travel and visa restrictions affecting international student enrollments in traditional Western (e.g. USA, UK, Canada, and Australia) higher education hubs. As a result, Altbach (2014), Zahran *et al.* (2016) and ElKaleh (2019) have highlighted the federal authorities' efforts in developing the tertiary education sector to enhance the UAE's economic competitiveness. These views are supported by data from Higher Education UAE (Gulf News, 2017), indicating that the commercialisation of the HE in the country contributed more than $1 billion (around AED 3.67 billion[1]) to the UAE's revenue. This underscored the state's consistent efforts to generate profit from various sources, including HE, which contributes to the country's GDP. Hence, scholars attribute the progress of HE in the country to the influence of business-driven and neo-liberal strategies (Giroux, 2009; Barnawi, 2017; Alsharari, 2018). However, the neo-liberal approach towards enhancing the HE sector, and the trend towards corporatisation of academic leadership in the Emirates (Abdulla *et al.*, 2022), are anticipated to widen the gap between culturally congruent leadership behaviours and market-driven demands for economic gains.

It is assumed that the tension between traditional (e.g. Islamic ideology and tribal customs) inspired and economically driven leadership behaviour will continue to develop, which will further impact academic leadership in HE in the Emirates. Despite economic progress and industrial diversification, traditional tribal values and prescriptions of Islam remain central to conduct in the country (Aldulaimi, 2019). Firm family ties and loyalty to family and friends, preserving family honour, and obedience to the patriarch in the community, continue to guide an individual's socialisation patterns and career choices, especially for Emirati women (Rutledge *et al.*, 2011; Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). Noticeably, the liberal private business regulations in the last decade have significantly altered the demographics in the country.

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[1] USD 1 = 3.67 United Arab Emirates Dirham (AED)

Consequently, some authors claim that the massive migration of a diverse workforce into the UAE has been perceived by the citizens as a threat to the social cohesion of local communities, and the growing number of imported cultures has not always been appreciated by the locals (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Bin Taher *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, Heard-Bey (2001) and Davidson (2009) argue that situating Emirati nationals as a minority group could be threatening to the unity of the nation's culture, values, and identity. What is more, the arrival of foreign workers has created an extremely competitive labour market for the Emiratis, especially in the private sector (Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). Relatedly, recognising the growing influence of globalisation and the migration of foreign workers into the country, the UAE authorities have introduced a number of social welfare initiatives for the indigenous community, as well as targeted employment programmes (e.g. Emiratisation). These strategies aim at preserving the collective way of living and maintaining the government's credibility among nationals (see Chapter 2). As a result, there are two distinct leadership styles in the country: (1) homogenous in the public departments, and (2) heterogeneous in the private companies (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2013) (see Chapter 2).

The globalisation of businesses, the 'influx' of diverse ideological and socio-behavioural patterns, the technologically enabled borderless flow of information and communication (such as social media), and the rise of consumerism are just a few characteristics of the modern UAE. These changes are expected to shape Emirates residents' perceptions and practice of AL in the country. This might create difficulties in understanding the status of AL behaviour in this paradoxical context. Therefore, this study investigates leaders' challenges of being 'self', establishing trust and creating resilient organisational structures in culturally pluralistic workplaces that share contrarian cultural backgrounds, values and moral beliefs.

1.3 Conceptual and Methodological Deficiencies in AL Research

As suggested by Avolio *et al.* (2009), one of the primary research priorities should be the investigation of leadership within cultures, including Islamic cultures, that are under-represented in academic literature. Although the UAE has made rapid progress on the world stage, both in terms of commerce and growth, its academic enterprises are still not on par with North America and Europe. This lag is partially explained by the relatively recent transformation of the Trucial States into a nation in 1971

(Hvidt, 2009). Therefore, any attempt to understand HE and its leadership in the UAE prior to 1971 would be pointless, compared to the West where several studies were conducted before this era (Hohnen, 1960; Hyatt, 1969; Roaden, 1970). Despite scholars' efforts to fill the substantial gap in the leadership literature for the UAE, the focus of the country's post-independence research is restricted mainly to political and industrial leadership (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Mathias, 2017). Regrettably, few studies on academic leadership in the Emirates (Burden-Leahy, 2009; Barnawi, 2017; Alsharari, 2018) have been focused on exploring the concept within the context of the UAE higher education. Moreover, just two publications (Al Samkari and David, 2019; Saleh and Shaker, 2020) attempt to comprehend the emergence of AL in education in the country. However, the focus of these studies was on the leadership behaviour in the school, rather than the HE system.

Inevitably, the discussion in the preceding paragraphs directs the discourse towards the methodological foundation in defining the AL phenomenon. Noticeably, leadership research suffers from: (1) dominance of Western literature with insufficient consideration of the importance of distinctive cultural influences on organisational behaviour, and (2) limited empirical research to support the many leadership models, including AL, and their variations, notably the overreliance on quantitative survey-based research (Yammarino *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, the analysis of literature on AL by Pioli *et al.* (2020) between 1997 and 2018 revealed a dominance of quantitative data collection methods. For example, out of 431 articles, 225 (52.2%) publications presented results of testing a measurement instrument. According to the authors, this trend intensified after 2008 when Walumbwa *et al.* (2008) introduced the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). ALD is the first instrument for measuring AL. It was developed on the fundamentals of the 16-item scale proposed by Ilies *et al.* (2005). In an attempt to improve the performance and cost efficiency of the ALQ, Neider & Schriesheim (2011) presented the 6-factor model of the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI), later followed by the development of the Authentic Leadership Integrated Questionnaire (AL-IQ), by Levesque-Côté *et al.* (2018). According to Roof's (2014) and Pioli *et al.* 's (2020) analysis of research on AL conducted between 2003 and 2018, the predominant focus was on quantitative research, with most publications also originating from Western countries. This trend reflects a strong inclination towards practice-oriented testing of AL.

In support of these findings, an analysis of existing literature on AL by Gardner *et al.* (2011) and Roof (2014) revealed that academic research on AL in the Middle East commenced after 2010 (see Chapter 3).

Further analysis of forty-two publications on AL between 2007 and 2020 demonstrated that merely seven (17%) of the articles on AL originated from the broader Middle East region, and only six (14%) concerned the UAE. Notably, quantitative analysis emerged as the preferred research method in thirty-eight publications, accounting for 90% of data collection, while qualitative research methods were utilised in only three (7%) of the studies. Moreover, there was only one publication (2%) that used mixed research methods. Furthermore, out of 640 participants, only four contributed to the qualitative research, constituting less than 1% (0.4%) of the total data collected on AL in the UAE. However, quantitative research methods are inappropriate when seeking to capture unique individual's perceptions of the studied phenomenon, highlighting the need to understand AL in qualitative terms.

Building upon the above analysis, the review of existing literature on AL uncovered a significant methodological. Specifically, there is a deficiency in phenomenological studies of AL from the Middle East. Given the exploratory nature of this research and its primary objective to understand the essence of AL through individuals' experiential interpretations of AL behaviours, the study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective (Heidegger, 2005). In theory, hermeneutics phenomenology is recognised for interpreting various subjective descriptors of reality and individual's experiences within a specific context (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016), allowing for a deeper understanding of AL. Accordingly, data analysis is conducted through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). As defined by Smith (2004), IPA is a qualitative approach that examines personal lived experiences in detail, making it relevant to this inquiry. Within this outlook, it is assumed that the nuanced interpretation and meaning ascribed to the constituents of AL are contingent upon the varied socio-behavioural perspectives within the context of the Emirates. Since the focus of this research is exploring the construal of AL within the heterogeneous landscape of the Emirates, which exhibits a rich representation of both indigenous (e.g., Emirati) and diverse (e.g., Expatriate) cultural distinctiveness, a meaningful construct of what defines AL and the outcomes it provides to the HE sector will necessarily emanate from the voices of academics who have either work, or have previously worked, in the UAE.

1.4 The Research Gap

It is unsurprising, given the observations in the previous section, that AL literature lacks adequate evidence to affirm the positive relationship between AL theory and organisational outcomes (Gardner *et al.,* 2011), except for the work of Luthans *et al.* (2007) that attempted to establish a correlation between AL and operational resilience (OR). Hence, what has been established so far is that AL literature suffers from three major deficiencies: an inadequate interpretation of AL; poor interlinkages between AL and OR, and limited research into AL in HE in the UAE (see Figure 1).
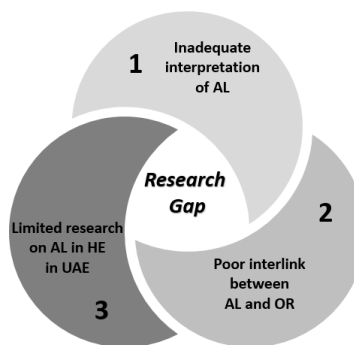
Figure 1.1: Research Gap

The research gap reveals that practitioners are often ambiguous about the definition and meanings of AL, whilst the linkage between AL and OR is missing in both the Western and UAE literature. In addition, the UAE has very few studies on the AL phenomenon in the HE sector. Considering the potential clash between Middle Eastern and Western leadership ideologies (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Mittal and Dorfman, 2012), and substantial methodological gap in exploring the AL in UAE, it is crucial to explore AL, and its relationship to OR, within the HE in the country. Therefore, the research gap in Figure 1 provides support to the subsequent section which highlights the objectives of the study and lays out the foundation for the wider literature review presented in Chapter 2.

1.5 Research Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

The key objectives of this study are to explore the interpretations of the individuals' lived experiences with AL behaviours in the UAE, and the influence of the distinct Emirates' context in adopting AL behaviour. Therefore, the premise of this study is affixed to the argument raised by academics on the

urgency and the necessity to investigate AL in under-represented cultures, such as the Middle East (Avolio *et al.,* 2009). Besides, according to phenomenologists, so long as people are content and accept organisational leadership styles and practices within their own culture, their voices should be at the core of any definitions, or conceptualisation of the AL phenomenon (Husserl, 1931, cited in Reiners, 2012; Van Manen, 2016). Hence, part of the purpose of this study is to gain an insider voice to add to the jigsaw that defines AL, as it applies to the culturally pluralistic community in UAE, and to enhance the contemporary cognisance of the field.

Correspondingly, the formulation of the study's research questions addresses the research objectives (Creswell, 2009). Within these guidelines, this study seeks to answer the primary research question: *Can operational resilience be achieved through Authentic Leadership behaviours in Higher Education in the UAE?*

In doing so, the following secondary research questions were generated for the qualitative component of the research:

1. *How do employees' experiences of leadership approaches help define AL in the UAE?*
2. *What UAE contextual factors influence AL behaviour and practices in the UAE?*
3. *How does AL behaviour influence operational resilience in the UAE?*

The lack of adequate evidence in the literature that establishes explicit correlations between AL and OR, or affirms OR as an outcome of AL behaviours in the HE environment in UAE, exposes a significant conceptual gap in the existing body of knowledge. Hence the aims of this research are to offer insights into the propensity of AL practices in promoting, or aiding, OR in the HE sector in this country.

1.6 Structural Overview and Significance of the Thesis

The primary objective of this inquiry is to address both the noticeably limited research and general understanding of AL and its contributions to achieving OR in HE within the UAE context. One criticism of of the research on AL is that the literature is skewed abysmally, leaving tabloid journalism to prescribe what leadership should look like in the Middle Eastern countries (Hvidt, 2007; Riel, 2011; Greaves, 2012). Therefore, considering the AL framework is founded on an individual's moral values and beliefs, which are consistent with one's inherited socio-cultural characteristics, the argument in the literature on the

cultural contingencies of the AL construct highlights the significance of this study (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2014; Lux and Mao, 2019).

The thesis comprises seven themed chapters. The primary aim of the initial four chapters is to provide a rich context for this research by exploring critical issues, reviewing pertinent literature, and justifying the research methodology. The purpose of the current chapter (*chapter one*) is to introduce the background of the study, define the research gap, outline the research objectives, and explicate the structure and contributions of the research.

Following the introduction in chapter one, *chapter two* initiates the process of addressing gaps in the theoretical perspectives on the research matter by presenting current insights into the Emirates' socio-cultural context and distinctive identity. Therefore, the discussion in *chapter two* highlights context-specific perceptions of leadership behaviour in the UAE and contrasts them with Western paradigms. In addition, this chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the distinct political, social, economic, and religious environment in the UAE, arguing for both the ideological and cultural congruence of the concept of leadership and establishing the relativist and collectivist nature of the leadership in the Emirates. Additionally, the systematic analysis reveals the coexistence of neo-patrimonial and neo-liberal leadership behaviours in the Emirates. Furthermore, this part of the study underscores the linguistic-specific and gender-infused interpretations of authenticity and AL behaviours in the country, and the broader Middle East region. The chapter also explores the development, objectives, and purpose of HE while considering socio-cultural sensitivities in the Emirates.

Next, *chapter three* extends the discussion on context-specific perceptions of leadership behaviour and situates the study within the existing body of knowledge by critically evaluating relevant academic theories of leadership in relation to the research questions. The chapter commences with a clear distinction between the roles of leadership and management, and an explication of the multilayered structure of organisational academic leadership. This is followed by highlighting the relative importance of academic study in leadership and tracing the evolution of academic paradigms towards AL. The chapter explores the conceptualisation of leadership in the Western school of thought and demonstrates the individualistic nature of this approach. This is followed by critically exploring arguments on diverse academic paradigms regarding globalisation, the universal applicability of leadership theories, and cross-

cultural contextualisation of the phenomenon. Next, the analysis critiques outdated cross-cultural studies, especially those attempting to profile the cultural landscape of the UAE. The review of literature reveals fundamental contradictions in the understanding of 'authenticity' in both Western and Middle Eastern contexts and demonstrates the dominance of Western perceptions of AL. Later, the chapter examines the influence of neo-liberal reforms on academic leadership and defines OR, while exploring the relationship between AL and OR in academic research. The critical review of the literature highlights substantial conceptual and methodological deficiencies. These weaknesses are then linked with arguments from chapter one to substantiate the research gap and reinforce the main research question. Therefore, both *chapter two* and *chapter three* set the groundwork for rationalising the research methodology.

Consequently, *chapter four* is concerned with the philosophical and methodological foundation of this study. It commences with a summary of methodological gaps in current research and the conceptual framework of the study. This first section provides detailed information on the research paradigm, methodology, research design, research methods, techniques, and rationale with reference to the research questions. The chapter introduces Hermeneutics Phenomenology and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), followed by a section dedicated to the researcher's reflexivity as well as a discussion of validity, reliability, and ethical considerations in this inquiry. The constructivist orientation of the research methodology aims to uncover the constituents of AL through diverse experiential interpretations of the domain. The novelty lies in the inductive qualitative approach to exploring AL, focusing on followers' perspectives in the UAE HE setting. Thus, from a methodological perspective, this study bridges the gap with the predominantly Western-centered and quantitative exploration of AL, and associated research instruments, which fails to capture substantially divergent contexts and cultural circumstances (Gardner *et al.,* 2011; Avolio and Mhatre, 2012). Besides, this is the first inquiry in the UAE to utilise phenomenological research, in combination with an IPA approach, to explore the role of AL behaviour in achieving OR in HE in the country.

The following chapter, *chapter five,* presents the interpretations of participants' articulations of their lived experience with AL behaviours in the HE context in the UAE, along with the key findings of this research. The chapter demonstrates that the combination of context and time has affected interviewees' sense-making of their subjective experience with the leadership behaviour in the UAE. As shown in this

inquiry, cultural circumstances profoundly influence individuals' construal of meaning, highlighting the impact of distinct socio-cultural features on understanding AL within the Emirates. This comprehension is crucial for navigating the dynamic and complex interplay between divergence and convergence within the cross-cultural context of the phenomenon. The significance of these findings lies in uncovering the existence of a two-dimensional model of AL, associated with the Islamic leadership framework. The IPA illustrates the conflict between Universalist and Relativist leadership ideologies and how their relationship alters the AL behaviours between the various levels of academic leadership and the faculty in HE in the Emirates. The results also emphasise the limited accessibility of academic leadership by faculty and communication challenges within this dyad. Furthermore, participants' interpretations highlighted new dimensions of AL, such as reliability, and a reversed model of 'trait' and 'state' authenticity (Slabu *et al.,* 2014). What is more, the data present a novel outlook of AL behaviours that are projected by the Information Technology systems in the academic sector. Such findings have not been reported by other studies into AL. Besides, the data in this study address the conceptual weaknesses in AL literature by providing context-based definitions. Additionally, the research contributes to filling the research gap in HE in the UAE, which represents a unique demographically heterogeneous landscape.

The following chapter, *chapter six*, underlines the research discoveries by analysing the collected data and establishing correlations with the reviewed literature. The discussion in this chapter substantiates the novelty of the AL phenomenon in the UAE and the subsequent outcomes associated with OR in HE in the country. A key contribution to cross-cultural AL research is highlighting the principles of the Islamic ideology, along with the distinct cultural contingencies, as a foundation of the domain. Additionally, the discovery of the transition of AL behaviours into IT-driven processes, as uncovered by this study, constitutes a pioneering contribution to the AL research. Furthermore, this exploratory inquiry from the UAE investigates the variables in the relationship between AL and OR within the HE sector, a topic not previously explored by researchers. Therefore, this research offers insights into the dependency of OR as an outcome of AL behaviour from the perspective of the HE.

The conclusions are presented in *chapter seven*, describing in detail how the research questions have been addressed and positioning the newly generated knowledge within the current state of academic awareness. It defends the socio-religious foundation of the construal of the AL framework. The discussion highlights the presence of novel AL behaviours and rationalises their adequacy to the distinct ideological

and cultural circumstances in the UAE. Additionally, the chapter associates the attainment of OR within the guidelines of both the neo-patrimonial state leadership and the neo-liberal market context of HE in the Emirates. It debates the transition of AL behaviours into system-driven processes and the attainment of OR in tertiary education. The chapter concludes by addressing the limitations and implications for future research.

The novelty of this study is in uncovering, and relating, both power distance aspects and Islamic ideology consciousness of authenticity, particularly within the AL domain, which prompts further exploration of the stated assumptions. Therefore, by expanding the investigation and literature base on AL, this research provides a reference and foundation for further study of the phenomenon in countries where the indigenous socio-behavioural patterns are governed by religious ideology, such as Islam. Additionally, the findings in this research motivate further gender-associated cognisance of the AL domain. Furthermore, the discussion suggests a new direction of future research that will explore the transition of the theoretical model of AL into corresponding behaviour in a non-Western environment, acknowledging the mediating role of the Information Technology (IT) systems in the process. Therefore, this research initiates avenues for future cross-cultural research on the system-driven understanding of the AL phenomenon.

Besides, the timing of this research resonates with the implementation of the most current vision of the UAE government for transforming the HE sector into a strategic stakeholder in developing the knowledge economy of the country. Therefore, the research is able to capture both internal and external pressures on the HE sector in the Emirates and upon academic leadership to enact change and achieve organisational ambidexterity. Hence, this research offers an up-to-date cross-cultural understanding of the overall adequacy of the AL framework for the purpose of achieving OR in HE in the UAE. It also motivates future inquiries that could result in developing and validating novel leadership frameworks that are more applicable to this academic context and other global HE enterprises. The Middle East, including the UAE, is a particularly under-researched region that has recently begun to attract academic attention (Kabasakal *et al.,* 2012). Therefore, the value of the findings and the proposed interpretations sets a foundation for future research and development of the AL framework from the perspective of the Emirates and similar multicultural contexts.

CHAPTER 2 THE UAE CONTEXT

Given the complexity of the researched phenomenon (e.g., AI and its relationship with OR) and the distinctiveness of the research context, the literature review is presented across two chapters. The initial literature review in Chapter 2 lays the foundation for the study's contextual positioning. This is followed by a more in-depth and focused review of relevant literature in Chapter 3, examining key themes and theoretical frameworks that inform the research.

Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the socio-political and economic infrastructure of the UAE, providing a socio-cultural grounding for understanding how AL is interpreted within this context. This aligns with the views of Conger (1998) and Creswell (2018) who stated that a fundamental understanding of leadership as a concept is only possible when individuals' real-life stories are situated within the context of their distinct culture. Therefore, Conger (1998) noted that research outcomes may be mediated by the diversity of demographic contexts. This view is supported by Petticrew and Roberts (2008), and Maguire and Delahunt (2017), who argued the necessity for real-life background information for validating the research findings and uncovering the meanings of perceptions. However, due to the scarcity of academic research on leadership specific to the UAE, along with the government reports and research from the country, this study also analyses publications from the broad Middle Eastern and GCC region. This approach is supported by Largan and Morris (2019) and Cheong et al. (2023) who agree that secondary research involves the analysis of existing data sources such as government reports, academic publications, policy documents, and statistical databases. In doing so, the authors further emphasise that the application of clear selection criteria is essential to ensure the relevance, credibility, and applicability of the findings. In line with these views, the researcher has considered the following criteria for the secondary research in this chapter: (1) *relevance to the UAE context* by ensuring that the data sources directly pertain to the UAE's HE sector, cultural dynamics, or organisational structures. This includes documents from UAE governmental bodies, regional educational authorities, and scholarly research focusing on the UAE and the Gulf region; (2) *credibility and authority* by utilising data from reputable and authoritative sources, such as official government publications, recognised academic journals, and established research institutions which further enhances the trustworthiness of the research findings; (3) *timeliness and currency* by prioritising recent publications to ensure that the data reflects the current

state of the UAE's HE landscape. This is particularly important given the rapid developments in the country's educational policies and infrastructure; (4) *alignment with research objectives* by selecting secondary data that aligns with the main research question and objectives. Hence, it ensures that the data contributes meaningfully to the study's aims and supports the analytical framework; and (5) *ethical use of data* by adhering to ethical standards by properly citing all secondary sources. The above criteria ensure that the secondary research in Chapter 2 is robust, contextually appropriate, and ethically sound, thereby strengthening the overall quality and credibility of the study within the HE context in the Emirates.

The following sections provide theoretical perspectives on the specificities of the UAE context and the leadership culture in the country. The progression of this review enables the methodical understanding of what is known and what the gaps are with the other demographics' viewpoints on AL, and the AL-OR relationship in the HE. Hence, the chapter contributes by setting the stage for the fieldwork research.

2.1 Religious and Socio-Behavioural Background of UAE

2.1.1 UAE Sheikhdoms

Although the area of the UAE has been inhabited for over 120,000 years and served as a major crossroads for trading, historically the Emirates existed as scattered and poverty-ridden settlements (e.g. Bedouin tribes) within the harsh environment in the Arabic Peninsula (Heard-Bey, 2001). The early urbanisation of major ports in the area and demographic diversification originated as a byproduct of the pearling industry (Davidson, 2005). Since the late 1890s, the impoverished settlements in the southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula which constitute the present-day Emirates, were part of the Trucial States federation which was under the protection of the British government. Due to the unfertile desert environment, and their nomadic lifestyle, the socio-economic status of each tribe was similar to the others (Heard-Bey, 2001). The key factors distinguishing the traditional Bedu tribes from each other were: (1) the collective pursuing of natural resources for ensuring the tribal members' survival in the unfertile desert environment, (2) the interests of the members as a group (Aldulaimi, 2019), and (3) the tribal name. According to Heard-Bey (2001, p. 99), in genealogical terms, the kinship in the Emirates culture commenced from the horizontal progression of the tribal name. Today nationals are aware of

their tribal heritage due to the tribal name which is a part of the family name (Heard-Bey, 2001). Furthermore, following the tribal traditions, the current hereditary rulers (e.g., *'sheikhs'*) are elected among some of the most powerful tribes such as Bani Yas, Al Rashidi, and Ahl'Ali (Heard-Bey, 2001;Hvidt, 2007). Therefore, the Bedouin's traditions are considered antecedents to the monarchial organisation of the present-day UAE (Heard-Bey, 2001, Greaves, 2012). Additional criteria for electing a sheikh of the Bedouin's tribe included age, wisdom and bravery, and a combination of these proved the leader's capability to ensure the survival and well-being of the group (Bin Taher *et al.,* 2015; Aldulaimi, 2019). Due to trust and loyalty granted by the group members, the sheikh adopted centralised decision-making practices, reinforcing the individual power in deciding on major social, economic, and political issues concerning the group.

These orthodox practices have influenced modern-day leadership behaviour in the country in several unique aspects. Firstly, similar leadership behaviour has been reported in the current research by Bin Taher *et al.* (2015) and Aldulaimi (2019) who claim that the national Emirati culture, particularly the collectivistic mentality, is firmly inscribed in the mindset of public sector employees in the country. Secondly, since community members have declared their trust in the sheikh, the authors argue that questioning the leader's authority is perceived as a weakness and threat to the legitimacy and authority of government entities in the UAE. Thirdly, the horizontal and vertical expansion of the tribal name within immediate family members through marriages and birth rights fostered the hierarchal tribal organisation which has influenced the federal and public organisations in the country (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 99). However, despite being authoritative, the centralised decision-making in the Bedouin tribes ensured the collective well-being of all group members and established a novel harmonised socio-economic response to the economic and environmental challenges in the pre-UAE federation era (Greaves, 2012, p. 98). Thus, the tribal configuration, culture, and governance are perceived as distinct antecedents of the current social and political context of the UAE (Davidson, 2009; Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012).

2.1.2 The Religious Context

For Muslims, Islam is a comprehensive manual to life. It should also be noted that in the UAE Islam is declared the official religion by the constitution (Rehman and Askari, 2010; Greaves, 2012). Generally, the merits of Islamic ideology, which are held upon the supernatural power represented by Allah (e.g.

God), justify all aspects of life in Arabic societies in the Gulf, including values, social rules, the political landscape, community relations, ways of doing business, economic infrastructure, foreign relations and the dealing with non-Muslims (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008;Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Islamic ideology is articulated in the Quran, which is believed to be the verbatim word of Allah and therefore, represents the unaltered and final revelation from God (Rafiki and Wahab, 2014). It teaches normative Muslim behaviour as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, who is considered by Muslims to be the last prophet of God (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the example of Prophet Mohammed's leadership traits and style as well as the prescriptions in the Quran, have defined the acceptable behavioural patterns for both leaders and followers in Muslim communities, and have established the fundamentals of the Islamic framework of leadership (Yousef, 2001). Moreover, for Muslims, Allah is one and incomparable. Relatedly, this approach towards God justifies community members' obedience to the authority without questioning the legitimacy of the leader or criticism, and their acceptance of power inequality (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). Thus, in Muslim societies, such as the UAE, the authority of the leadership figure, and the undisputable power the position carries in directing all group activities, is readily accepted by all community members.

Additionally, the ideological propositions define the criteria for leadership performance and effectiveness, decision-making process, and followership behaviour. In support of this view, Aldulaimi (2019) claims that the Quran emphasises the importance of modelling the qualities and behaviour demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, given the rising emphasis on leadership performance and effectiveness, scholars have concurred that the essence of Islamic leadership involves carrying out *'good deeds'* and striving to establish *'God's order'*, which is inherently ethical (Ali and Weir, 2005; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Mir, 2010). Additionally, as outlined in the Quran, rulers in Muslim society are required to consult experts within the community before deciding on any given matter (Abdulahi, 2016; Aldulaimi, 2019). Hence, leadership behaviour in Islamic culture demonstrates a strong orientation towards relational and collectivist leadership behaviour (Abdulahi, 2016; Aldulaimi, 2019). From an organisational viewpoint, Beekun & Badawi (1999) note that leadership capacity to perceive beyond conventional limits and devise innovative solutions that may elude others was similarly inspired by the example set by Prophet Mohammed. In Islamic doctrine, leaders are compelled to take a proactive role in guiding, motivating, and serving as role models for their followers, rather than assuming the highest

position of authority (Aldulaimi, 2019). Likewise, scholars in the field of Islamic work ethics regard followership behaviour as an outcome influenced by the charismatic leadership of the Prophet. Therefore, individuals within the Muslim community are inclined to follow leaders who demonstrate the same integrity in ethical conduct as Prophet Mohammed. In return, this fosters a sense of loyalty among followers, as they tend to model the behaviour of admired and respected leaders (Stone *et al.*, 2004). Hence, simulating parents, leaders and other figures of authority is natural behaviour within Muslim society.

In the relationship between Muslims and Allah, fate defines all aspects of one's life (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Relatedly, a number of interpretations associate the influence of the Islamic religion on social behaviour with fatalism (Sidani & Thornberry, 2010; Riel, 2011; Aldulaimi, 2019). A common expression of the belief that the future is determined by Allah is the word *'Inshallah'* which means *'If God wills'* (Riel, 2011). Relatedly, Ali *et al.* (2004), Kabasakal *et al.* (2012) and Aldulaimi (2019) collectively agree that acceptance and unconditionally following the prescriptions of Islam result in a passive attitude towards the future. These views are similar to the cultural characterisation of the UAE by Minkov and Hofstede (2011), whose research uncovered a high level of power distance and uncertainty avoidance in the Emirates. Such characteristics can be justified by ideological teachings, which advocate for submission to the higher authority (e.g. Allah) and therefore, support both the premises of AL behaviour and the hierarchical structure of Muslim society (Riel, 2011).

Furthermore, Islam upholds a collectivistic culture, founded on strong family and kinship relationships (Aldulaimi, 2019). Therefore, Aldulaimi (2019) and Alsarhan *et al.* (2021) claim that the leadership framework in the Muslim society is determined by family structure and customs. Formerly, males have been perceived as breadwinners and protectors of family financial stability, while women have followed more traditional careers in education, health care, and medicine, which were acceptable to the religious guidelines and most Arabic communities (Sidani, 2005). Relatedly, in the present UAE public entities, males are seeking higher rank positions, which will offer greater financial benefits and social status, and are inclined to attend to family and friendship obligations as opposed to operational requirements (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Williams *et al.*, 2013; Mathias, 2017).

However, these interpretations have been argued to be associated with tribal traditions as opposed to Islamic teaching (Ali *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, the philosophical debates of Islamic scholars (Ali *et al.*, 2004) suggest that the beliefs that people are at the mercy of their environment, rather than being in control of it, are generally taken out of context, considering that the religion also encourages Muslims to make, and be accountable for, their own choices in life. Additionally, a key feature in the Quranic verses is the acknowledgement of the equality of women, and the recognition of their value in developing the social fabric of the Muslim community. As a result of the efforts of the UAE government, in 2020, Emirati women represented 70% of the university graduates in the UAE, and 28% of the workforce, including private companies (Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2020). Yet, to date, many Emirati women are required to *'bargain'* their tertiary education choice and career with the family patriarch who in most cases is the father (Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). Therefore, the distinct socio-cultural sensitivities and community expectations have influenced the curricula offered by the HE institutions in the country which is projected to alter the academic leadership in the UAE (see Section 3.2). Furthermore, the reviewed literature exposes significant deficiencies in the cognisance of the cultural landscape in the Emirates which are explained in the following paragraphs. Notably, the current cultural proliferation of the UAE (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011) is inadequate to support AL research in the country.

While it is not the primary focus of this study, it is worth noting the religious orientation of UAE society, as it signifies the principal divergence with the Western cultures in terms of moral values and beliefs that directly alter the socio-behavioural and economic perspectives in both contexts (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008).

2.1.3 UAE State Framework and Public Sector Leadership

After long-lasting colonial rule, during the 1960s and 1970s, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, all of which presently constitute the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), declared their independence (Harry, 2007). However, despite sharing connected territories, the significant cultural diversity among the GCC countries shaped their political, diplomatic, military, and commercial strategies and progress (Greaves, 2012; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, Samier (2014)

states that understanding the distinctiveness of a country's government and leadership framework, and their values and development, is only possible by understanding its contextual novelty. In the case of the UAE, this knowledge is guided by hermeneutic Islamic and traditional philosophy.

Although the Emirates have built impressive sovereign wealth and attracted a diversity of foreign investments over the last fifty years, the political landscape remains within the hereditary monarchial structure (Davidson, 2009; Seznec, 2010). Prior to 1971, the UAE state framework was defined by the Trucial Sheikdoms of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, Fujairah, and Ras al-Khaimah, where the leadership in each settlement was bestowed upon the hereditary tribal sheikh (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). According to Beekun and Badawi (1999), the indigenous leadership style in the Gulf sheikhdoms encompasses both the individual's positional (e.g. legitimate) as well as personal (e.g. referent) power. In addition, several authors emphasised that *'justice'*, as opposed to *'democracy'*, is the cornerstone of the leadership behaviour in the Emirates (Hvidt, 2007; Muczyk and Holt, 2008). Nonetheless, the political system in the newly established country was influenced by colonial authoritarian practices which were focused on ensuring communities' submission to the protectorate's regulations (Ali, 1992; ElKaleh, 2019).

Currently, the UAE is a constitutional federation within which each one of the seven emirates continues the tradition of maintaining its own ruling autonomy (Almezaini, 2012; UAE Government, 2022d). Therefore, despite being united under the same federal governance system, each emirate remains autonomously ruled by its hereditary sheikh (Davidson, 2005). Hence, the ruler of each emirate directs the economic and social development initiatives of local government. Relatedly, Krane (2009, p.10) defined the UAE as a *'tribal autocracy'*, while Mathias (2017) labelled it as a *'federal monarchy',* where public administration is founded upon tribal, clan and family allegiances. Although the country is not governed as a presidential republic, currently the Ruler of Abu Dhabi is the President of the UAE and the Head of the State, while the Ruler of Dubai is the Prime Minister of the country (UAE Government, 2022d).

As discussed in Chapter 1, Islamic ideology and state governance are intertwined in the UAE's federal framework (Rehman and Askari, 2010). Moreover, declaring Islam as a state religion enables a firm identification of the government with its citizens (Rehman and Askari, 2010; Greaves, 2012). In addition,

the explicit rule-based foundation of Islamic ideology guides the crafting of a 'just economic system, good governance, respect for human rights, freedom of choice and protection under a specified code of law, and the code by which to manage external relations (with non-Muslims)' (Rehman and Askari, 2010). Relatedly, Davidson (2009) and Forstenlechner *et al.* (2012) argue the religious foundation of the country's foreign policy and international relations. Therefore, unlike Western countries where the power of the church and the state are clearly differentiated, the propositions of Islam, as outlined by the Quran, direct the federal policies and leadership practices in all sectors of the Emirates (Davidson, 2005; Riel, 2011). Additionally, the Islamic identity of the Emirates and the religious framework govern the state constitution and juridical (e.g. *'Shari'a'*) system philosophies (Davidson, 2005). *'Shari'a law'* outlines the regulations concerning family relations and disputes, inheritance, and taxation (UAE Government, 2022b). Thus, the state's constitution and legislation ensure the Islamic influence on the UAE's policies and socio-economic relationships and reaffirm the belief that family, as opposed to the individual, is the key factor in building the society (Williams *et al.*, 2013; ElKaleh, 2019).

The political system and associated processes in the UAE are defined by Emirati citizens as a *'majlis style'* democracy (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). According to Collin (2012) the meaning of the Arabic word *'majlis'* (مجلس) translates into 'sitting together', a 'meeting', or a 'consultation'; while other authors translate it as a 'place for sitting' and therefore, justifying the utilisation of the term in describing various types of meetings (Segal, 2012). In theory, Herb (2009, cited in Segal, 2012) offered four popular interpretations of the word *'majlis'* to non-Arabic speakers with reference to: (1) an informal get-together and socialising of men, which happens at least once a week in a designated meeting room that is built for this purpose; (2) a formal meeting held by the members of the ruling dynasties and/or other important, or high-ranked, individuals where any citizen can approach the ruler and discuss individual's concerns and/or present complaints; (3) a consultative council; and, (4) a legislative council. Relatedly, these formal consensual meetings are associated with the characteristics of Islamic leadership behaviours, where leaders are required to consult the broader community on various administrative and socio-economic developments and ensure public agreement on the unilateral decisions made by the leader (Ather and Sobhani, 2007; Aldulaimi, 2019). Therefore, these practices suggest the presence of pseudo-consultative leadership behaviour which has been reported in other Arabic countries (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Boussif, 2009).

The conservatism of the political governance of the country has been acknowledged by several authors as a key factor in ensuring the political longevity and stability of the UAE (Almezaini, 2012; Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Aldulaimi, 2019). However, in recognition of the increasing requirements for social and political inclusion of its citizens in national decision-making processes, and to decentralise the government practices, in 2006 the UAE authorities established the Federal National Council (FNC) (UAE Government, 2022c). The FNC, which translates as '*al-Majlis al-Watani al-Ittihadi*' in Arabic, demonstrates the aim of the government to revolutionise its agenda and global image by increasing public participation in major federal decisions (Mathias, 2017). This legislative body is equivalent to a parliament and consists of 40 members, with 50% of them being women (UAE Government, 2022c). Although the establishment of the FNC, and the creation of the Electoral College, represent the authorities' landmark steps towards reforming the UAE political system, the council plays only an advisory role and follows the '*majlis-style'* consultative system (Herb, 2009). Moreover, the majority of representatives have been elected within the inner circle of the hereditary ruling families, or the Emirates' elite (Almezaini, 2012). In addition, twenty of the FNC members are indirectly elected by the hand-picked 12% of Emirati citizens who have voting rights through an electoral college, while the other twenty are appointed by the rulers of each Emirate (UAE Government, 2022c). Nonetheless, the Ruler decides on the demographic representation, and other terms and conditions of the voters. Consequently, similar bureaucratic organisational mechanisms and top-down leadership approaches have transitioned and influenced the structures of public departments in the country (McAdam *et al.*, 2013; Bin Taher *et al.*, 2015). Although the establishment of the FNC demonstrates the UAE's institutional and cultural orientation towards more contemporary leadership behaviour (Mathias, 2017), the execution of this approach continues to highlight the Arab tendency to prioritise individuals over organisations which resonates with similar research findings on leadership practices in the Middle East (Ali, 1992; Neal *et al.*, 2005; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012).

In theory, the UAE government has committed to promoting leadership competencies across all levels of administration in the country, as opposed to defining the leadership model as a monarch's domain (Mathias, 2017). However, the existing research does not explicitly articulate which leadership style(s) is going to be endorsed, the Anglo-American approach, which is currently taught in HE in the country, or the traditional Arab-Muslim, which is demonstrated by the public sector administration (Herb, 2009;

Almezaini, 2012). Therefore, such tensions are projected to problematise academic leadership in the Emirates.

Relatedly, Herb (1999) and Davidson (2009) define the current political governance as a neo-patrimonial approach which incorporates inclusive systems for modernisation with more formalised structures, and therefore, resonates with the nation's vision for progressive socio-economic growth. Some of the key features of the new political consciousness are illustrated by the direct communication channels of the citizens with the rulers (e.g., *majlis*), and the attempts to expand participation by establishing semi-elected councils, such as the FNC (UAE Government, 2022c). Additionally, recognising the increasing influx of new corporates in the country, the government aims towards transitioning into a *'smart governance'* fostering open dialogue between citizens and public administration (Al-Obthani and Ameen, 2019). However, the primary objective of this initiative is to preserve collective leadership practices. An example of this vision is the development of the Digital Dubai Brand. Introduced in 2014, the project established the IT infrastructure, regulatory frameworks and organisational structures for digitalising the administrative and management functions in the emirate (Salem, 2016;Khan *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, innovative IT applications improved communication between businesses, the government and the public. Furthermore, IT system-driven operations have triggered cross-government cultural transformation and instigated a culture of openness, transparency, and fostered a collaborative government style (Al-Obthani and Ameen, 2019). Additionally, the authorities believe that this strategy will foster trust with residents and positively influence the quality and image of the public sector (Al-Obthani and Ameen, 2019).

However, government roles remain structured around the figure of the ruler, and government officials or representatives of the elite maintain a relationship of personal dependence on the ruler's grace and good favour (Hvidt, 2009). Therefore, Abdulami (2019) associates consultative leadership practices and the manner of participative decision-making style with the tribal culture, and Islamic values and beliefs. In contrast to the lack of active citizen participation in the political system of the country (Herb, 2009), the UAE government has adopted an open laissez-faire economic approach to promoting economic liberalisation (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Earlier research by Hvidt (2007) claims that the UAE's developmental achievements and the advancement of the Emirates, specifically Dubai, were an outcome of the state's governance structure. The author views the federal authority as a unity of ruling, carrying

the characteristics of soft authoritarianism; a strong focus on accelerating business development; considerations for active market intervention; and a lean government apparatus. Overall, the UAE federal authorities demonstrate a pragmatic, as opposed to ideological, approach to the Emirates' business developments (Forstenlechner, Rutledge and Alnuaimi, 2012). Hence, the state structure supports the academic argument for a neo-patrimonial political foundation of the economic progress (Forstenlechner, Rutledge and Alnuaimi, 2012).

2.1.4 UAE Socio-Behavioural Configuration

There are two core fundamentals that define the socio-behavioural context in the UAE: (1) the blend of Islamic and tribal (Bedouin) values and customs (Heard-Bey, 2005); and (2) fluctuations in the oil sector (Davidson, 2005). In the literature, the UAE has been characterised as a traditional society which is reliant on religious convictions (Lewis, 2006). Relatedly, Mathias (2017) claimed that the trend of blending faith and traditions expands its influence on behavioural patterns in the modern UAE. Conversely, Davidson (2005) attributed the social and economic developments in the country to the influence of the oil market circumstances.

In theory, the family is perceived as a central institution in UAE society, and the cohabitation of the extended family represents the collective way of living in the country (Heard-Bey, 2001). Due to the scarcity of resources in the Arab demographic cluster in the past, the affiliation with the *'in-group'* and *'out-group'* cast has been inevitable for human survival. Formerly, this decision was bestowed upon by the tribal leader who has been granted the power to distribute resources among the individuals (Ali and Weir, 2005). Therefore, the *'in-group'* and *'out-group'* relational interface could be associated with the paternalistic nature of the leadership processes in the region. Hence, according to Heard-Bey (2001), the individual's existence is defined by the person's family association, and one's welfare is congruent with the actions of the community. Collective efforts, ensuring adequate living conditions in an infertile environment, instigated the interdependence of the community's members in the sheikhdoms (Heard-Bey, 2001). Relatedly, the obligations of group members to family and friends, maintaining the family honour and loyalty to the family patriarch, superseded any other requirements (Aldulaimi, 2019). Furthermore, the family was expected to support and protect its members. Besides, an individual's

decisions must be made after taking into consideration their impact on the entire family and community. Thus, the concept of family honour still guides an individual's behaviour in Arabic, and UAE culture (Aldulaimi, 2019). Furthermore, in many instances, the interests of the family, as opposed to personal aspirations, motivate the educational and career choices of the family members (Sidani, 2005).

In Muslim society, any family-related matter is considered private and hidden from other community members, and dealt with by *Shari'a law*, which is fundamentally established on the principles of Islam. Therefore, social behaviour in the Emirates is governed by a blend of Islamic ideology and a legal system that highlights the centrality of the family, and not the individual, as a foundation of the national community. Hence, *'face-saving'* behaviour has become a norm for the group and the leadership (Treacher, 2003; Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). As a result, the centrality of family reputation-induced behaviours, which are practiced in secrecy as they might be perceived as unacceptable, underscore the implicit features of the indigenous society in the UAE. In this respect, Aldulaimi (2019) claims that job title is a key factor when seeking a job as it grants the respect of the family. These statements are supported by research carried out by Forstenlechner *et al.*, (2012) and Williams *et al.*, (2013) which highlights job title orientation of the national workforce is title oriented.

As discussed above, the community in the UAE maintains a sound allegiance to gender norms associated with the country's indigenous patriarchal society structure (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). This loyalty accentuates the power distance and masculinity features of the social behaviours in the Emirates. Besides, the unquestionable dominance of men during colonial rule is considered the antecedent to the masculine characteristics of the UAE society (Treacher, 2003). In addition, the attitude toward higher authority in the Emirates' community originates from patriarchal authority which is usually the father, or the eldest member of the family (Sidani and Thornberry, 2010). Noticeably, the traditions of powerful patriarchy can be traced to the present leadership practices for reinforcing leadership control (Aldulaimi, 2019). Relatedly, Beekun and Badawi (1999), Mir (2010), as well as Williams *et al.* (2013) claim that the undisputable commitment to preserve family honour and respect for the patriarch has infused individuals' and leaders' behaviours in the Emirates. Hence, it is not unusual that socialisation and groups interactions in the UAE can be determined by the degree of familialism and relational interdependency which supports the existence of defined hierarchy, interdependent relationships and patriarchal authority (Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). These views are supported

by staple cross-cultural studies, categorising the UAE cultural background as a collectivistic society which sits high on power distance and masculinity scales (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011). However, the current socio-cultural configuration within the UAE critically challenges this cultural categorisation of the Emirates (see Section 3.3).

In theory, a number of studies affirm the primacy of the relational orientation of social and business behaviours in the Middle Eastern region (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Obeidat *et al.,* 2012; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). Besides, as evident in published articles (Neal, Finlay and Tansey, 2005; Suliman and Al Obaidli, 2013), despite the influence of social media, economic globalisation and the Western qualifications of young Emiratis, the UAE community's social ties and networks remain confined within traditional socio-behavioural structures. This accentuates the strong connection and social identification the community members have developed based on their tribal belonging, religion, and extended family ties. Therefore, several authors (Yahchouchi, 2009; Loewe *et al.,* 2013; Jenio, 2018) note that in Muslim societies, such as the UAE, it is normal for individuals to expect to be treated differently and to be given preference by their friends, acquaintances, or relatives who hold powerful positions, or high-level authority when looking for a job, promotion, or access to government services. Such expectations, aiming for personal gains, are naturally embedded in the social practices of Muslim communities (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, the socio-religious foundation of Emirati society has promoted *'wasta'* practices in the country.

The modern standard Arabic etymology of the word *'wasta'* (واسطة) explains the origins of the word as 'wāsiṭah' which can mean a medium and means, but also a personal connection used to gain something; or, as one who steers parties towards compromise (Jenio, 2018). However, as observed by several researchers, the meaning is often altered by the context in the Middle East and understood in terms of gaining something through extended favours and personal relations (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012). According to Aldulaimi (2019) *'wasta'* is an epitome of the decision-making practices in the Arabic countries and provides an understanding of how individuals operate in the organisations in the Middle East region. Other authors (Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013; Jenio, 2018; Alsarhan *et al.*, 2021) define *'wasta'* as nepotism, used in recruiting for higher-level positions, predominantly in the government sector. Additionally, Harry (2007), as well as Sidani and Thornberry (2010), explain *'wasta'* practices in the UAE against the backdrop of tribal and family traditions,

suggesting that teamwork outside the family may be difficult, and proposing that individual who is not able to find a government job has weak social relationships. On the contrary, since women in the UAE are expected to overcome a variety of cultural barriers and choose a socially acceptable career, *'wasta'* is a justifiable means for balancing work and family, and limiting social criticism based on the perceived noble purpose of the occupation (Williams, Wallis and Williams, 2013). However, Forstenlechner *et al.* (2012) warn against underestimating the power of *'wasta'* as it is often used to gain unmerited favour with the support of family members or social networks that are affiliated with the individual's tribe in the Emirates. This claim is supported by Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) who argue such practices prioritise loyalty to family rather than the organisation, which can implicitly influence leadership behaviours. However according to the most recent UAE government's KPIs, there is an increasing trend to hire and promote based on merit, as opposed to *'wasta'* (UAE Government, 2018).

On the other hand, Davidson (2005, p. 5) claims that the sensitivities in the oil sector direct all aspects of social change in the UAE, and most importantly, moderate the work structure. Noticeably, not all emirates have benefited equally from the country's oil-generated economic profit, which positioned them on different development paths (Heard-Bey, 2005). Presently, the two emirates that stand out are Abu Dhabi, due to its reliance on considerable overseas investments in the oil reserves, and Dubai, where the accelerated entrepreneurship initiatives are projected to compensate for the modest oil resources (Davidson, 2005). According to Rettab and Azzam (2011) and Rao (2020), these emirates provide the financial stability and security for the less wealthy areas and are the means to promote the UAE into the global marketplace, which in return is expected to increase the number of genuine employment opportunities for Emiratis in the private sector. However, the federal authorities recognised the need to preserve the nation's values and collectivism under market globalisation. Therefore, to reduce the economic imbalance between the emirates, which posit threats to national cohesiveness and unity, the UAE government has introduced various social welfare policies such as free housing, education, and reduced cost of utilities for citizens (Davidson, 2005, p. 294). These strategies are further supported by the ruler's centralised policies and regulations, directing the inclusion of the less developed emirates in distributing the profit generated from oil production and other business activities by the bigger emirates (Davidson, 2005).

In addition, the objectives of the extended benefits and proactive leadership initiatives for ensuring the employability of young Emiratis are to solidify the federal monarchy and avoid the risk of internal division (Forstenlechner *et al.,* 2012).

2.1.4.1 Emiratisation

The influx of diverse cultures and ethnicities has caused an unparalleled imbalance between UAE citizens and expatriates (Heard-Bey, 2005). While the sheikhdoms in the Trucial States prior to the 1970s were homogenous groups, due to the similarity in environmental and economic conditions, the current demographics in the UAE reflect a sweeping blend of cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. However, as discussed in Section 1.2, currently Emiratis are perceived as a minority group in the country. Hence, despite social stratification, nationals remain bound by firm cultural solidarity and maintain a defined set of behaviours towards each other, and with other nationalities (Davidson, 2005). These behaviours, in combination with the distinct economic benefits provided by the government, have developed UAE nationals' sense of superiority over expatriates and created an eligibility mindset in terms of guaranteed financial allowances and job security (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012).

Globalisation strategies in the UAE have led to limited job opportunities for Emiratis who must compete with a high number of expatriate employees in the job market. Therefore, since 2006, an Emiratisation programme was established that serves the nation and the authorities, not only by responding to unemployment pressures but also by maintaining collectivistic socio-behavioural pathways (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Williams *et al.*, 2013). However, according to recent research findings (Waxin *et al.*, 2018), the lack of relevant qualifications, skills and experience of Emiratis, their high salary expectations, and limited business and career awareness, are key obstacles to recruiting nationals by private companies. This places pressure on HE institutions to customise their curriculum as per the federal and market demands (Alsharari, 2018). On the other hand, government institutions have reserved jobs for nationals which attract higher interest among the younger UAE generation. Research data by Rutledge *et al.* (2011) evidence that Emiratis in public departments constituted almost three times more than those who worked in the private sector. On the contrary, the vision of the UAE government is that 75,000 Emiratis will be employed in the private sector between 2021-2025 (UAE

Government, 2021). Yousef (2000) and Rettab and Azzam (2011) draw attention to the government-directed influx of Emiratis into leadership positions and the notion of the transition of Islamic work ethics into the organisational environment, which may alter the cultural approaches adopted by the leadership in HE.

However, the characterisations of culture in the UAE have lagged behind the fast-paced economic and socio-demographic changes for more than a decade. Although the UAE maintains its strong Islamic values and beliefs and tribal identities, the society is evolving and transforming following the influence of foreign cultures, social media, the globalisation of the economy, a younger generation mindset, and the rise in consumerism due to the nation's wealth (Rutledge *et al.*, 2011; Bin Taher *et al.*, 2015; Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2020). Ultimately, globalisation and the growing expatriate workforce in UAE have facilitated the transmission of cultural differences across national borders and accelerated the dynamics of cultural changes within the national and organisational context (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Gates, 2015; Northouse, 2016). Thus, academic analysis of the uniqueness of the UAE culture is inconclusive and does not provide an adequate background for a comprehensive understanding of AL in the country.

2.2 The Higher Education Sector in the UAE

Burden-Leahy (2009) asserts that HE is considered a key factor in developing the Emirates' national identity and elevates the community members' sense of unity. Additionally, the author states that the value of the HE qualifications in UAE is measured by expertise in managing the economy and therefore, the outcomes of the tertiary education sector must be in alignment with market contingencies. These views are supported by Forstenlechner *et al.* (2012) who argue the progress of Emiratisation on the merits of the Emirati graduates' competencies that meet the industry's requirements.

The progressive vision of the UAE government has established the country as a major shareholder in emerging global markets. Within the guidelines of the state's development strategies, the Cabinet has decreed that the HE sector should play a key role in enhancing the quality of people's lives and diversifying the Emirates' economy by moving away from the reliance on oil production (UAE Government, 2022a). Furthermore, the ambitious government agenda for the country's future

highlighted the centrality of tertiary education in creating a competitive knowledge economy and achieving national sustainable development goals (MOE-UAE, 2020). However, as noted above, exponential economic growth and increased workforce diversity have created employment competition between Emiratis and expatriates (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Hence, HE institutions, and the UAE government, have been pressurised to ensure young nationals possess the skills and the abilities to meet industry demands (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, the Emiratisation programme requires that Emiratis graduate with skills that are consistent with international education standards (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, to respond to growing market demands for new competencies, and to ensure the employability of the UAE citizens in the private sector companies, authorities have welcomed a wide range of Western curricula and knowledge workers from leading HE institutions in the UK, USA, and partially from Canada, and Australia. Nonetheless, the development of HE in the country reflects the diversified efforts of the federal authorities to also respond to the growing educational needs of the rapidly increased expatriate population, which accounted for 89% of the total population as of 2021 (Global Media Insight, 2021). Relatedly, in October 2021 the Ministry of Education (MOE) reported that 65 private HE institutions have been accredited across the Emirates, as opposed to only 3 federal HE institutions, targeting expatriate and national students with programmes ranging from one-year diplomas to doctoral degrees (CAA, 2022). The total student population in profit-driven HE enterprises has reached 70% in 2018, the majority being from the expatriate communities (Kamal and Trines, 2018). Additionally, the diverse curricula are projected to decrease the *'outbound'* trend among expatriate students and increase the flow of *'inbound'* foreign students into the country (Shukla, 2020). Based on the reported data (Gulf News, 2017), it can be assumed that the economic benefits from the development of the tertiary education sector are comparable with business profitability (see Section 1.2).

Historically, the tribal and nomadic lifestyle of the UAE settlements before the 1970s provided limited teaching and learning opportunities for Emiratis (Kamal and Trines, 2018; Arar and Nasra, 2019). Social learning from the older population was the pervasive learning practice within the community. Islamic studies, Arab history and culture, traditions and language were central to young nationals' education in government schools, where the majority of the teachers were recruited from neighbouring Middle Eastern countries (Harry, 2007). Therefore, the former syllabus emphasised Muslim values and traditions, while the teaching methodology corresponded to the collectivist way of living. However, state initiatives

in the 1970s quickly enforced a structured educational system, adopting Western curricula and educational standards and replicating high school, collegiate and university establishments (Godwin, 2006). Due to the lack of educational infrastructure prior to 1971, this decision was prompted by the context and the authorities' respect for Western qualifications (Burden-Leahy, 2009). Successively, for the last two decades, the economic attractiveness and maturity of the UAE education market have drawn vast numbers of foreign and national investors, educators, and students, especially to Abu Dhabi and Dubai which are the largest Emirates. Currently, there are three distinct types of HE proprietorships in the UAE: state-owned, privately-owned by Emirati nationals, and international branch campuses (e.g., offshore university representation, founded by direct foreign investments) (MOE-UAE, 2020). These institutions are the principal providers of diverse curriculum options and Western academic qualifications to Emirati and expatriate students and established the English-taught curriculum as the '*lingua franca*' in the country (Ashour, 2020).

As a *'rentier'* state which offers generous welfare to its citizens (Davidson, 2005), and to balance the authorities' vision for national economic development with their social responsibility, the government provides Emiratis with free higher education at the three federal institutions. Besides, Article 17 of the UAE's Constitution explicitly states that education is a constitutional right of every citizen and therefore, all Emiratis are eligible for free higher education (MOE-UAE, 2020). Hence, upon their graduation from high school, each Emirati is eligible to apply to one of the three federal HE institutions where the curriculum mirrors North American and British HE standards: the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), or the Zayed University (ZU) (Alsharari, 2018). According to statistics, 80% to 90% of the overall student population at UAEU and ZU are Emirati female students, outnumbering male students in public tertiary education (Pennington 2017). This gender imbalance arises because towards the end of their high school education, Emirati men are usually targeted for employment by the police and the military (Pennington 2017; Kamal 2018).

The upward trend in building the UAE's educational capacity for anticipated national development and economic growth is sought across the entire HE sector. Since the privately-owned campuses provide the majority of HE opportunities in the UAE and are driven by profit, these institutions are mostly based in Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Kamal and Trines, 2018). In addition, recognising the financial contributions to the nation's economy (see Section 1.2) and motivated by profit maximisation, authorities have introduced

designated academic free zones (e.g. knowledge villages) for attracting foreign HE entities, which offer 100% ownership, tax exemption, and no restriction on profit, or capital, repatriation (Ashour and Fatima 2016; CAA, 2022). In line with its entrepreneurial initiatives, Dubai has been the first emirate to develop a local framework to invite foreign HE campuses to its free zones (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2017). According to existing statistics, as of 2017, Dubai had 10 free zones with 39 tertiary establishments, mostly representing international branches of reputed universities from 12 countries including the UK, Australia, Canada, India and the USA (Kamal and Trines, 2018). Therefore, Ashour and Fatima (2016) and PwC (2019) observe that following China, the highest number of foreign campuses is in the Emirates, representing 13% of the international branches worldwide and thereby, establishing UAE as the largest hub for overseas HE options within the GCC union and globally.

On the other hand, academics warned against the detrimental impact of globalisation and the commercialisation of HE in the UAE, citing the practice of offering subjects and specialisations which may not reflect the current market demands and socio-cultural circumstances (Barnawi, 2017;Alsharari, 2018). For example, the two federal universities (UAEU and ZU), and the government college (HCT) tend to offer more diverse specialisations (e.g., Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, History, Societal Design, Political and Economic Systems) than the private tertiary establishments, where 75% of all students are graduating with a very limited number of majors: Business and Engineering in Dubai, and Business and Education in Abu Dhabi (PwC, 2019). This is due to the fact that privately-owned and foreign universities are focused on offering more profitable programmes, and they often avoid those that either attract smaller enrolments or have higher infrastructure and running costs. Therefore, the transient nature of the expatriate population is of constant concern for private HE institutions as the continuity of the operations of their campuses is entirely dependable upon student fees (Ajayan and Balasubramanian, 2020). Due to the foreign students' global mobility and the opportunity they must pursue HE qualifications in their own country, the UAE has a relatively low number of undergraduate and postgraduate students, compared to more mature educational markets (PwC, 2019). However, the opening of campuses of highly ranked universities such as the University of Birmingham, is assumed to increase the global gravitas of the HE sector, and to close some of the gaps in the current system, resulting from the small range of available disciplines. Additionally, the government-driven strategy is to transition from traditional specialisations towards Information Technology, Sciences, Communication,

Media, and Design, alongside the continued focus on Engineering and target larger international student enrollments (PwC, 2019). Consequently, quite a few private universities and programs redesigned their curriculum delivery options and introduced new study options, such as *'open learning'* or *'blended learning'*, to increase student enrolment. The Hamdan Bin Mohammad Smart University represents the new government vision for 'smart education', as most students and teachers are from abroad (Alsharari, 2018). Even though *'outbound'* mobility outpaces the *'inbound'*, as of 2020 the UAE hosted approximately 58,000 local and 80,000 international students, respectively 60% of these are UAE based residents (UNESCO, 2020). To address student enrollment concerns, and to retain and increase the expatriate student population, recent immigration reforms enabled extended student visas from 1 year to 5 years, and up to 10 years for 'exceptional' students (Shukla, 2020).

However, where possible and affordable, students still prefer to study abroad. These decisions for expatriate students in the UAE are driven by economic concerns and the inability to afford tuition fees in private HE institutions, while Emirati degree-seeking students consider overseas *'western-style'* education as an opportunity to get a lucrative UAE government, or corporate job, and improve their English communication skills (Wilkins and Huisman, 2015). The trend of obtaining Western qualifications abroad can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s when the country lacked a HE infrastructure and hence, Emiratis had to pursue HE qualifications overseas (Burden-Leahy, 2009). According to the published data, as of the academic year 2019-2020, 13,480 UAE students are studying abroad for a degree in HE (UNESCO, 2020), with the UK and USA being the most popular study destinations. Additionally, employers reportedly prefer international graduates over graduates of local private institutions for their potentially global business competencies and mindset (Alsharari, 2018). Therefore, highly sought western-business skills and competencies by both graduates and businesses, attained by either studying abroad, or through HE providers in the UAE, mandated the alignment of the syllabus and the learning methodology with the Western quality standards. This was expected to cause tensions with the indigenous value system, as it is argued that the key reason for the irrelevance of the curricula emerges from the embedded value-based conflict in the design and delivery of Western curricula. In particular, the conflict between the Western valuing of individuality in critical thinking, decision-making and accountability, which is the foundation of the Western course content, over the Emiratis' collective behaviours and culture of loyalty and undisputable followership of the leader (Burden-Leahy, 2009;

Alsharari, 2018). This is supported by the evidence from published research, which exposed the weakened commitments of the overseas-educated Emiratis to observe the culture and welfare of their broader family circle and the obligations to collective behaviours (Mahani and Molki, 2011; Alsharari, 2018). Notably, there is a growing misalignment between the dominant Western curricula and standards, and preserving the UAE's national, cultural, and religious values, which could alter the traditional socio-behavioural norms in the Emirates. This influence is already evident in the decentralisation of government structures and the adoption of profit-oriented leadership behaviour. Additionally, several newly implemented policies have enforced a co-education model in government funded HE institutions (McAdam *et al.*, 2013; Bin Taher *et al.*, 2015). What is more, recent social engineering policy changes include considerations for allowing expatriates to live together outside of marriage and accepting the construction of religious temples by non-Muslim populations in the Emirates (Neve, 2021). Besides, the state government has supported major infrastructure developments and invested in foreign assets such as Manchester City FC and properties in the UK and US. While these strategies have integrated the Emirates into the global markets, they have also increased the country's international profile and subjected it to international scrutiny (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012).

The UAE's vision was to offer affordable education while quickly this was transitioned into competing with international institutions. This decreases the country's capacity to offer and sustain quality education that embraces the local culture, prepares individuals for citizenship, and serves national social and economic objectives, which are ultimately informed by its culture (Alsharari, 2018). Instead, graduates are taught to perform behaviours associated with the Western-dominated globalisation process. Therefore, a number of researchers in the field (Mahani and Molki, 2011; Ashour and Fatima, 2016) have criticised foreign universities in the UAE for perceiving the HE sector as an expensive business product which is misaligned with the traditional principles and values of Muslim society. They support these views with the fact that although the country experienced an influx of foreign educational establishments, the self-regulatory *'supply market'* in UAE caused a premature closer of some of the universities, such as the University of Southern Queensland in Dubai, and George Mason University in Ras Al Khaimah, citing cultural deficiencies of the syllabus. On the other hand, the emphasis on Western curricula does not necessarily ensure that qualifications meet the country's market requirements, which necessitates customising the programme matrices and adapting the course offerings to business

requirements in the Emirates. As a result, although it aligns with the local cultural values, it is not unusual that a university is faced with the challenge of modifying its curriculum to meet the requirements for international accreditation, and vice versa, resulting in perplexed curriculum models (Alsharari, 2018). Additionally, particular course content, such as the concept of trade unions or gender identification perceptions, taught in foreign universities in the UAE, proves to be culturally inappropriate. What is more, it is suggested that UAE-based institutions should be mindful when challenging the notions of *'inclusion'* and *'diversity'*, as these concepts indicate a foreign ideological foundation that contests and is at odds with the local cultural and legal context (Mahani & Molki, 2011; Alsharari, 2018). Thus, Alsharari (2018) argues that the internationalisation of HE in the UAE, and perceiving education as a marketable commodity, causes conflict with the traditional values and moral beliefs of the local community. The *'education-as-business model'* of the HE sector in the country may potentially alter both national and international goals of the HE sector, as well as the expectations from academic leadership (Alsharari, 2018).

Therefore, in response to the citizens' expectations for preserving the community's values and ensuring the alignment of Western qualifications with the demands of the local businesses, the federal leadership promoted collective community involvement in major decisions related to the development of the HE in the country. This included the country-wide digitalisation of public services which offer direct communication between citizens and the authorities, and decentralising the regulation of HE to each Emirate. Although the academic free zones granted foreign education branches 100% ownership, this flexibility may be adjusted by each emirate's authority which has the freedom to develop the regulatory environment for its own free zones. At the federal level, the tremendous growth of the country's HE landscape is regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (now MOE). The objectives of MOE are to improve the performance and standards in HE, in particular for private HE institutions. The ministry is also advising and supporting Emirati students in their choice of enrolling in local and international universities and encouraging scientific research (Al-Shaiba 2014). In this line, the MOE pursues two key objectives: encouraging progress in HE, while reaffirming the government's commitment to serve the interests of the local community and preserve the collective way of living.

On the other hand, institutional licensing and programme accreditation are in the jurisdiction of the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), demonstrating the authorities' efforts for decentralising

the leadership power structures (CAA, 2022). Further the audit of internationally attained HE qualifications by Emiratis and foreigners is exercised by The University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) which was established in 2008 to mediate conflicts by recognising degrees from universities, colleges, or courses, that had not been accredited by the CAA and consequentially, satisfying the Emirati community expectations (UQAIB, 2022). Additionally, the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), established in 2010, developed the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF ensures that the skills and knowledge that have been learnt are recognised throughout the country, and this provides the basis for the comparison of UAE qualifications with other national or international credentials. In addition, the NQF is expected to reduce tensions between international quality standards and national cultural values (National Qualifications Authority, 2022). Further, the objectives of the NQF are to improve Emiratis' employability and to offer a systematic approach towards linking HE qualifications with the demands of the local market. Additionally, the new framework demonstrates the formal response to the requirements of the Emiratisation programme which is focused on increasing the job opportunities for the young nationals and therefore, reaffirming the government's support of the Emirati community.

Nonetheless, driven by the Islamic ideology of *'doing good'* to people and the society (Abdulahi, 2016), in 2017 the UAE Government launched the National Higher Education Strategy 2030. The strategy highlighted two key criteria in the future development of HE: *quality* and *efficiency*. As envisioned by the government, the excellence of HE will be measured by the achievements of high-quality accreditation standards. Exceptional accomplishments in this category by the institutions, in terms of enhancing global competitiveness and rankings, and distinguished faculty will be awarded with attractive incentives. Relatedly, efficiency will be aligned with the graduation rates to demonstrate the output of the HE institutions in the Emirates (UAE Government, 2022a). This emphasises the new purpose of HE institutions as *'product-delivery'* entities which has been influenced by neo-liberal influence over the sector (Giroux, 2009; Barnawi, 2017). Therefore, Abdulla *et al.* (2022) note the shift towards corporatisation of the leadership in tertiary education in the country.

The progressive vision of the UAE's government encouraged the globalisation of the HE sector by aligning national and international HE quality standards. Although HE in the UAE is relatively young, the sector has taken significant steps towards its global integration by attaining global rankings and securing

worldwide recognised accreditations, which are considered major success factors in assessing institutional achievements. Consequentially, in 2019, a report from PwC confirmed that, for the academic year 2017-2018, the UAE's HE sector was ranked 12th in the world for its quality of education, recognising HE as a key contributor to the country's economic competitiveness (PwC, 2019). According to recent statistics provided by the Quacquarelli Symonds' (QS) (QS, 2021), three UAE Universities have been ranked between 200 and 400 in the tables of the best universities in the world. In addition, the Higher Colleges of Technology has become the world's first HE institution to achieve QS ESG 5-Star in the Environment, Sustainability and Governance (ESG) category (HCT, 2022). Measured in Western (neo-liberal) terms this has been seen as a significant improvement in the HE entities' quality, rankings, and reputation. However, the Western-centred criteria for assessing academic success such as competitiveness and accreditation, completion rates, and employability restrains the HE institutions' approach to embedding the cultural values and socio-behavioural collectivism of the Emirates. Therefore, researchers claim that state initiatives to develop standardised quality assurance programs for all federal and private HE enterprises, and acquire external accreditations (e.g. ACBSP, AACSB) pose a threat to the progress of the HE sector in the country (Mahani and Molki, 2011; Alsharari, 2018). As noted by Alsharari (2018), while HE has been challenged to acquire international accreditations, as a step on the path to global integration, the outcomes can be discordant in the UAE context, as international standards may be inappropriate to the values of the Emirates' indigenous community. Thus, it is recommended that international accreditation organisations should proceed with greater consciousness and consideration of the cultural realities of the local context (Alsharari, 2018).

The distinctness of HE in the country should be discussed in the context of the accelerated socio-economic advancements in the Emirates over the last 50 years. As well as providing a gateway to Western educational qualifications, the HE institutions enable the transition of diverse learning, cultural, and management ideologies within the UAE's educational environment, including leadership behaviour with a Western cultural orientation (Ajayan and Balasubramanian, 2020). Most recently, and influenced by global developments, the trend of neo-liberal reforms (Barnawi, 2017) and corporatisation of the leadership role in HE (Abdulla *et al.*, 2022) has gained increasing popularity in the UAE. However, some studies highlight the unfavourable social implications this transition may have on national cultural values and identity (Alsharari, 2018). Additionally, the government's efforts for including societal participation

in the decisions concerning the nation's progress, have been demonstrated by the accelerated digitalisation of public and private sector services. In HE, these strategies necessitated the integration of teaching and learning processes and the curricula with intelligent learning systems and transferring the management practices into IT-driven systems (Marks *et al.*, 2020;Al Shamsi, 2020). Relatedly, in 2017, the UAE government launched a radical new strategy to strengthen the UAE's position as a global hub for practising innovation and developing future technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) (UAE Government, 2017; WAM, 2017). These requirements create a demand for leaders' proficiency in corporate business skills and acumen and highlight the neo-liberal orientation of the HE reforms. This will speed up the corporatisation of academic leadership in the Emirates (Abdulla *et al.*, 2022), which will ultimately influence AL behaviours. Therefore, the new economic focus of the UAE government necessitates an efficient and innovative, but also culturally sensitive, leadership across all industrial sectors, including HE, that can deliver the government agenda and sustain the cultural values of the Emirates.

Essentially, there are two distinguished leadership approaches towards developing tertiary education in the Emirates: (1) an extension of federal neo-patrimonial leadership practices, supporting the public HE institutions designated for the citizens, and sponsored by the government budget, and (2) the neo-liberal leadership approaches, directing the market activities of the private HE entities. Therefore, academic leadership in the HE in the country is challenged by meeting the complex expectations of various shareholders: the UAE authorities, industry, international accreditation bodies, Emirati and expatriate community, including the faculty and students.

However, taking into consideration researchers' interest in exploring the UAE industrial and socio-cultural environment, Burden-Leahy (2009) and Litz and Scott (2017) accentuate the fact that education is the most under-researched segment in the UAE. Additionally, the unprecedented spread and adversary impact of Covid-19 challenged both the country and HE leadership. Nevertheless, the global pandemic offered the opportunity to rethink leadership behaviour for achieving OR in the HE sector. Besides, the existence of only two inquiries on AL behaviours in the education sector in UAE highlights the demand for further exploration of the topic considering the cultural idiosyncrasies of the Emirates.

2.3 The Nexus of Socio-Religious Circumstances and Leadership Culture in the UAE

In theory, leadership culture is defined as the body of knowledge that provides a comprehensive understanding of distinct cultural features, influencing both the leader's and followers' expectations of behaviour and practices that enable trust and effective governance (Greaves, 2012). As discussed above, the socio-cultural composition of the UAE has been influenced by Islamic ideology and Bedouin values and customs which mandate obedience to higher authority, loyalty to immediate and extended family and '*in-group*' peers, as well as preserving family honour (Davidson, 2005; Mathias, 2017). This highlights the importance of family, as opposed to the individual, in developing and sustaining society (Heard-Bey, 2005). Therefore, it is not surprising that the relational orientation of the individuals' social and business behaviours is defined by the collectivistic foundation of the indigenous UAE community.

Despite a plethora of studies on leadership in Western literature (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2016), North America and Europe are more likely to frame leadership theories and their practices from a behaviourist perspective. By contrast, in the UAE the understanding of leadership and its constituents emanates from a socio-religious perspective (Heard-Bey, 2001; Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012). This joint ideological and socio-anthropological stance has been demonstrated by a number of studies from the UAE (Davidson, 2005; Hvidt, 2009; Mathias, 2017) that suggest that the power of the leader, and trust in the leader, transcends from the traits of a supernatural power (e.g. Allah) as described in the Quran, and as later instigated by Prophet Mohammed (Greaves, 2012). For example, Muslim leaders aim to mirror the consistency of Prophet Mohammed's moral traits, including confidence in truth, humility, goodness, humanness, compassion, courage, kindness, wisdom, and integrity (Aldulaimi, 2019). According to Adair (2010), Prophet Mohammed is perceived as a seminal leadership architype in Middle Eastern culture, leading to an analogy between the virtue-centric approach in the Islamic culture and the 'heroic' Great Man concept in the West. Hence, Muslim perceptions of moral traits suggest partial alignment with Western-centered premises of the trait theory. However, the Islamic foundation of leadership traits sharply contrasts with the psycho-behaviourist approach which is common in the Western context. This demonstrates a major divergence from the Western conceptualisations where traits are perceived as a psychological cognition of inherited qualities, while the Muslim perspective offers a static paradigm of leadership, failing to propose how the leadership traits could be operationalised in the organisational setting. Consequentially, this outlook could cause

contradictory leadership behavioural patterns and value-based conflict in the multicultural context of the Emirates. With the above, it is possible to suggest that we have two main schools of thought about leadership traits as far as the UAE, and the Middle East, are concerned.

Additionally, the antecedents of the hierarchical leadership framework in the UAE can be traced back to the very origins of the nation as they arise from the societal organisation, traditions of Bedouin tribes, and colonialism where, in all cases, the legitimacy of the leader was defined by the kinship and the social rank, as opposed to the person's merits (Heard-Bey, 2001). The demonstration of leadership power by making decisions on behalf of the group and reinforcing centralised decision-making leadership practices is validated by the collective way of living and societal expectations in the Emirates. However, despite advocating for a consultative approach to decision-making concerning group members, the Quran also sets boundaries and limits on the leader's exercise of power (Beekun and Badawi, 1999). Initially, the tribal customs in the UAE necessitated wide community involvement when discussing all major aspects of life. Therefore, leaders were required to seek input from community members who are experts in the specific area and decide after consulting with the concerned individuals in the 'majlis' (Ali and Weir, 2005). Hence, in theory, decision-making practices in the UAE could be partially associated with democratic (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939) and consultative (Likert, 1961) leadership styles.

Within the same outlook, the consultative leadership behaviours in Muslim society draw similarities with the practices of some of the European governments in the 21st century. As noted by Döring and Hellström (2013) as well as French and Hodder (2016), formalised consultation is part of representative democracy and is legally established in the European Union (EU). Numerous Western European governments have embraced the coalition government model, which emphasises consensus building among various political parties (Döring and Hellström, 2013). However, the consultations between the leader and the community experts in the Muslim community are informal and not binding; hence, exposing the pseudo-participative leadership behaviour (Boussif, 2009). Moreover, obtaining the agreement of organisational members on decisions that have already been made is merely a formality, given that the relationship between the involved participants and the leader is primarily based on loyalty. This practice exposes a major contradiction with the decision-making processes in European governments where the final decision is an informed outcome of expert consensus (French and Hodder, 2016; Aldulaimi, 2019). Besides, the leadership decision-making style in the Muslim community demonstrates a significant

divergence from the decision-making practices in the West where in countries such as the US and UK the Employees (or more accurately their representatives) set up the agenda and directly influence the final decision through voting mechanisms. Therefore, unlike elitist (majority/minority) approaches, the key ingredient in the practical wisdom within the Muslim community is building consensus around a pre-determined leader's decision, as opposed to formally inform and consult in support of the leader's final choice of action in the Western cultures (Aldulaimi, 2019). Such decision-making practices in the Muslim society are justified by the *Hadith* wisdom which asserts that there is *'no regret after consultation'*.

Hence, several authors (Neal *et al.*, 2005; Al-Obthani & Ameen, 2019) state that the unquestionable acceptance of the decisions made by the higher authority sits well within the UAE context as it is in line with Islamic values and tribal customs. Additionally, Minkov and Hofstede (2011) position these decision-making practices within the features of a high uncertainty avoidance culture. Nonetheless, the masculinity features in the leadership behaviour in the country could be explained by the colonial legacy and leadership behaviours ensuring the survival of the tribe members (Treacher, 2003).

In the UAE, the *'majlis'* style discussions demonstrate open door and decentralised leadership practices for encouraging informal communication between the ruler and the public, and at the same time, increasing the credibility and validating the legitimacy of the leadership appointment (Hvidt, 2007). Relatedly, Bin Taher *et al.* (2015) and Aldulaimi (2019) state that the sheikh's legitimacy is affirmed by the trust followers grant the individual when electing him as a leader and therefore, the acceptance of the legitimacy of the appointment is absolute and undisputable by the community members. These statements are supported by Mathias (2017), who noted that employees in the government organisations in the UAE avoid sharing their perceptions on trust and legitimacy of the leadership, and therefore, the cognisance of both aspects in the UAE context is implicit. It should be noted that the implicit trust from the ruler is perceived as a guarantee of the person's advancement within the leadership system in the Emirates (Hvidt, 2007). This leadership behaviour highlights the significance of the *'in-group'* membership in Muslim society. Ultimately, the trend of the implicit influence of distinct religious and cultural features, as instigated by Islam and traditional sheikhdoms' values, governs both leaders' and followers' behaviours, including allegiance to the higher authority.

In fact, the semantics of the word 'Islam' translate this Arabic noun as *'accept'*, *'submit'*, and *'surrender'* to the will of God (Gerstner and Day, 1997; Mir, 2010) and therefore affirm the high power-distance features of Middle Eastern society (House *et al.*, 2004; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). Relatedly, as postulated in earlier Islamic leadership narratives, individuals with innate leadership traits demonstrate genuine concern and are deeply committed to the welfare of followers who, in turn, offer their unwavering allegiance to their leader (Ali, 1992; Mir, 2010). Moreover, according to the Quranic text (Greaves, 2012) one of the Prophet Mohammed's most favoured leadership approaches was persuasion, which underscores his influential behaviour within the process-based views of leadership. However, in the cultural context of the UAE, the leadership attitude toward pursuing followers in achieving a common goal is mostly reflective of leadership power (Mathias, 2017). Hence, leader-follower relationships assume a passive stance as opposed to the dyadic interactions in Western cultures (Yukl, 2012). Relatedly, Neal *et al.* (2005) and Obeidat *et al.* (2012) claim that followers' participation in the *'in-group'* and *'out-group'* formations in the Middle East is expected to be more of a straightforward operationalisation of the leadership decision and followers closely follow the virtue of conformity with limited attempts to initiate change processes, as opposed to the opportunity to negotiate their participation in the dyad with the leader in the Western cultures (Graen and Cashman, 1975). Hence, *'in-group'* acceptance in the UAE illustrates the transactional orientation of relational leadership in the country (Heard-Bey, 2001). The distinctness of social integration along with *'in-group'* and *'out-group'* affiliation in the UAE exemplifies the fundamental divergence from the Western leadership paradigms. Whilst group membership in the West is discussed in relation to organisational performance (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975), in the Emirates, it emerges as a byproduct of family ties. This view is supported by Mathias (2017), who reported similar attitudes among public sector executives. According to the author, these individuals valued and prioritised long-term personal relationships within the peer's cohort, over the achievement of short-term organisational goals. Therefore, in addition to the authoritative leadership practices, interpretative Islamic and family values govern group membership orientation in the UAE context.

Essentially, followers' behaviours in the UAE are consequential to the ideological prescriptions and tribal legacy for acceptable behaviours and family obligations (Davidson, 2009; Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Aldulaimi, 2019). Hence, social integration for Muslims reflects an individual's interpretations and is

affiliated with cooperation and collaboration. According to Howell and Shamir (2005), social integration is embedded in the tribal organisation of the Arab settlements in the Middle East. Similarly, Sashkin (1988) states that social integration is the realisation of a vision through cooperation and coordination and affirms that both practices have been an essential part of life in Arabic society. Relatedly, some authors identify similar collectivistic social behaviour in work settings which has been transferred from the wider Muslim lifestyle (Obeidat *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, team cohesiveness is not only a leadership responsibility, but it is also understood as a moral obligation of employees to develop team and organisational unity. Nonetheless, since the Muslim community is collectivistic and fosters group conformity, employees are more likely to engage in behaviours that promote harmony and collectivism, thus the relational leadership processes are of utmost importance for the Middle East socio-cultural cluster (Ali and Al-Shakis, 1985). It is argued that social integration is not included in the Western conceptualisation of the leadership process (Shahin and Wright, 2004). Moreover, according to Shahin and Wright (2004), these practices have not been explored in-depth in Western literature, which widens the gap between the two academic schools.

As suggested by Adair (2010), every Muslim leader aims to achieve the personal virtues of Prophet Mohammed by demonstrating influence through processes associated with charismatic leadership (Shamir *et al.*, 1993; Almezaini, 2012). In Western literature, charismatic leadership is perceived as both a trait and a process (Howell and Shamir, 2005). However, as defined by the individualistic paradigms, the exertion of influence over the followers as a result of a leader's charisma (e.g. self-awareness), is not a necessity for the leaders in the Middle Eastern context. The affection, acceptance, and respect of leaders in the Muslim context are projected by the family and social formation. In this respect, Shahin and Wright (2004) claim that variations of personalised, rather than socialised, charismatic leadership are more commonly observed in the region. Whilst the agenda of the socialised model of charismatic leadership in the Western cultural context is focused on developing and stimulating followers' growth through empowerment and autonomy, in the Middle East the leader's requirements for trust, obedience, and submission by followers, results in dependence and conformity (House and Howell, 1992).

Based on the collectivistic cultural propositions in the UAE, where the community members hold their leader in high esteem, it is likely that indigenous UAE citizens will look at their leaders as charismatic, regardless of the evidence of whether they are or not. Therefore, the emergence of the notion that

charismatic leadership in the Middle Eastern context displays a higher degree of relativism, as opposed to the universalistic nature of the concept in the West. Moreover, Muslim leaders are bound to ethical decision-making, considering the overall good, and sustaining the moral beliefs of self and the community members, which is not an obvious behaviour in charismatic leadership style in North America and Europe (Balkundi, Kilduff and Harrison, 2011). Additionally, often in the Arabic culture, charismatic leadership is perceived as an individualised quality, establishing a reference to '*authoritative'*, and not '*social'* identification that is aligned with followers' empowerment and motivation in the Western culture (Howell and Shamir, 2005). These contradictions demonstrate the widening discord between Western and Middle Eastern perspectives on the relational processes defining the leaders-followers dyad.

Consequently, the analysis of the existing literature evidenced that the indigenous leadership model in Muslim countries, such as the UAE, is derived from two key motivators: (1) Islamic ideology, and (2) the powerful patriarchal and collectivist culture (Aldulaimi, 2019). Therefore, due to the rigid socio-religious framework, leadership style in Muslim society is prone to reduced flexibility and ability to adjust to situational contingencies (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Mir, 2010). These views are supported by Ali and Al-Owaihan (2008), as well as Yahchouchi (2009), who claim that Muslim managers are less willing to delegate authority; avoid risk-taking and responsibilities; are concerned with *'face-saving'*; are highly title-oriented; and prioritise personal relations over organisational performance goals. Similar behaviours are demonstrated by unilateral decision-making and *'wasta'* practices in the UAE (Neal, Finlay and Tansey, 2005). Furthermore, the leader's ethical behaviours and moral values are static, ideologically prescribed sets of individual and social behaviours shaped by Islam, as opposed to Western academics' notions of the developmental nature of these capabilities (Brown *et al.*, 2005).

Additionally, the Emiratisation strategies in the UAE reshaped the cultural composition of leadership in the country by defining two meta-representations of homogeneous (e.g. Emiratis) executives in the public sector, and heterogeneous leadership in the private sector (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; McCauley-Smith *et al.*, 2013;Williams *et al.*, 2013). This apparent divergence should not be overestimated, as the UAE government consistently influences private business (and vice versa). Although private entities have been managed by expatriate leadership, the ownership and control of major business holdings are bestowed upon Emirati citizens from the most prominent families in the country, including the ruling family (Hvidt, 2007). The appointed leadership in these semi-private organisations was appointed from

among the ruler's trusted group of people and expected leadership behaviours are situated within a highly hierarchical structure. In addition, many of these individuals have been appointed to federal positions. Relatedly, these appointments illustrate the neo-patrimonial leadership style of the state. This practice influenced the UAE government agenda in several aspects: (1) ensured that a significant part of the country's assets will be controlled by nationals; (2) ensured the transition of the UAE government's leadership vision and practices into private sector entities; (3) demonstrates partial decentralisation of the authoritative leadership style by encouraging greater direct communication between the authorities and private business, which in return ensures the timely and adequate federal response to emerging market contingencies (Hvidt, 2007).

Additionally, research from the UAE highlights the development of transactional and transformational leadership practices among expats in executive positions in the banking sector (Suliman and Al Obaidli, 2013), although the value of the transformational leadership scored less with public sector employees (Al-Obthani and Ameen, 2019). This divergence in government employees' and expatriates' perceptions is not a surprise, as Emirati women have also emphasised their preference for the traditional leadership model (Neal, Finlay and Tansey, 2005). Besides, the consultative leadership style is preferred by the expatriate senior leaders in the country (Mazrouei and Pech, 2015) which increases the complexity in defining the leadership framework in the UAE.

2.4 Gender-based Perceptions on Leadership, Authenticity and Authentic Behaviours in the Middle East

It is worth noticing that the UAE's outlook is biased towards gender segregation in understanding, favouring, and practising certain leadership behaviours (Neal *et al.*, 2005; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). Although scarce, academic research on the leadership approaches of women in the Emirates, and the wider Middle East, suggest the manifestation of a (1) person-centred, and (2) socially interactive authoritative style. The latter is defined as a Middle Eastern regio-centric customised behaviour, drawing a limited association with the Western participative leadership model (Al-Barghouthi, 2017), while the person-centred authoritative manner is founded on traditional conformity and orthodoxy rules. These types of leadership are common in the region as faith has been the key defining factor in the female leadership

behaviour. Additionally, Yaseen (2010) highlights the fact that women in the UAE exceed men in practising democratic leadership behaviours, and they assign higher value to transformational and contingency reward leadership, while males in leadership positions are supporters of transactional (e.g. management by exception) leadership behaviour. Thus, these findings from the context of the Emirates are aligned with the statements of Shahin and Wright (2004) who argue that by following a strict set of moral values and constrained behaviours, the leadership in the Middle East is less adaptable to the situational contingencies.

Another striking difference with Western and Far Eastern conceptualisations is gender-infused perceptions and interpretations of authenticity in the Middle East. Evidence suggests that *'authentic'* for both genders in the Far East could mean '*self-disclosure'* (Li *et al.*, 2014); while in the Middle East, women's understanding of authenticity suggests *'interdependence'*, as opposed to the men's definition of the word as an *'independence'* within the same cultural context (Karacay, Ertenu and Kabasakal, 2018). In theory, gender-based perceptions of authenticity expand the socio-cultural foundation of AL in the Middle East (Politis, 2013; Al-Barghouthi, 2017; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). For example, in relation to self-awareness and balanced processing, women separate '*feelings'* from '*ideas'*, while men highlight the importance of '*empathy'* and '*awareness of others' feelings'* (Marmenout, 2011). Additional evidence suggests that Arabic women's expectations towards leaders with superior cognisance of self-awareness, individualised consideration, relational moral values, and aspiration for innovation are greater in comparison with the male respondents, who emphasised a strong sense of purpose and mission, as well as ethical leader's behaviour founded on strong moral values (Yaseen, 2010). Despite the few similarities men and women share in their views about authentic leaders, publications from the broad Middle Eastern region demonstrate contrarian and gender-specific expectations of AL behaviours. Notably, women tend to perceive and value carrying and nurturing leadership behaviour as authentic, whereas men associate authentic leadership with autonomous behaviours (Karacay *et al.*, 2018). Although offering insights on the gender-centred perceptions of what constitutes authentic behaviours, the results in Karacay *et al.* 's (2018) study could not be generalised to a larger population as the data is influenced by 57.1% male's as opposed to 42.9% female's participation. Moreover, since only 3 interviews were conducted in the UAE, the findings do not provide a contextualised understanding of individuals' perceptions. Furthermore, the researchers did not attempt to ensure a matching number of male and

female participants which demonstrates additional methodological weaknesses of their research. Next, the last data collection from Syria was conducted in 2010, while the interviews in the other countries only continued until 2016. The extended duration of data collection may influence and potentially alter interviewees' viewpoints on the research topic, ultimately distorting the study's end results.

Although discussed in Section 2.3.1, it is worth re-emphasising the semantics of *'authentic'* in both Western and Middle Eastern contexts. While the interpretation from Arabic could mean *'original'*, and/or *'real'*, it can also be interpreted as *'dependable'* and *'authoritative'* (Ali, 1992; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). This is due to the fact that the meaning of *'authentic'* is presented by different words in Arabic. The Muslim interpretation of authenticity demonstrates behavioural inconsistency and leniency towards the misaligned leader's intentions and beliefs, and actions. Noticeably, the comprehension of *'authenticity'* in the Western and Far Eastern literature illustrates a significant divergence from the Middle Eastern outlook. While the Western viewpoint emphasises individualistic perceptions, and the Far Eastern views are associated with the features of the collectivistic culture, the Middle Eastern definition is founded on unique linguistic, religious and socio-behavioural antecedents. For example, the concept of *'niyyah'* (e.g. leaders' intentions) which is an intrapersonal and individualistic variable, demonstrating the person's independence from others and being faithful to Allah, signifies being genuine, real and true (Abdulahi, 2016). Alongside the views supporting the intrapersonal aspect, the accountability of a leader's actions towards others demonstrates the relational features of *'authenticity'*. However, according to Rafiki and Wahab (2014), there is a lack of clear definition of what qualities define an individual's intentions as authentic which raises concerns with the fluidity and uncertainty of Muslim interpretations. Hence, this suggests inconsistency between leadership intentions and actions in Arab society and prompted Shahin and Wright (2004) to argue the descriptive, as opposed to the practical, realisation of the ideological prescriptions. This dualism in the Muslim's cognisance of *'authenticity'* is supported by Abdulahi (2016) who claims that if the leader's moral system motivates the person to *'do good'* but fails to achieve the objective, the motive itself is counted as a moral (e.g., authentic) conduct. Furthermore, in line with the Prophetic citations, the moral property (either good or bad) of the leader's action is justified by the original intention of the person (Abdulahi, 2016). Additionally, in the broad Muslim cultural context, the leader is expected to demonstrate a powerful approach towards decision-making which signifies the *'authenticity'* in leadership care over followers and their opinions (Kabasakal

and Bodur, 2002; Karacay, Ertenu and Kabasakal, 2018). Nevertheless, the summary of key contextual factors highlights the socio-cultural and ideological constituents of leadership behaviour from a Middle Eastern perspective, as opposed to the organisation-centred contingencies in the Western environment (Walumbwa, Christensen and Hailey, 2011). However, the cross-cultural exploration of the constituents of the AL framework, and the associated taxonomy from the Middle East and the UAE is limited and therefore, the literature is unable to reveal a consistent model of AL behaviours in the region.

Nonetheless, despite globalisation, corporate expectations of leadership integrity are nurtured on distinct moral values which are congruent with the associated *'local'* culture (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993;House *et al.*, 2004; Whitehead and Brown, 2011). However, as evident in existing publications, most research has been focused on defining leadership in the Middle East through the lens of Islamic ideology (Ali and Al-Shakis, 1985; Beekun and Badawi, 1999; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, it is relevant to explore the AL behaviours in the unique socio-cultural context of the UAE. Even though a few authors have attempted to document the emergence of AL in the Middle East (Marinakou and Nikolic, 2016; Al-Barghouthi, 2017; Karacay *et al.*, 2018), the analysis of academic publications on AL in the UAE yields scarce data from which to draw any meaningful conclusions (Politis, 2013; Saeed *et al.*, 2016; Sabha, 2016; Karacay *et al.,* 2018; Al Samkari and David, 2019; Saleh and Shaker, 2020). Additionally, the limited evidence from the Middle East and UAE on the development of AL in the region yields contradictory definitions and disparate gender-based perceptions of the concept. Furthermore, traditional academic conceptualisations of the cultural variance in the UAE do not account for the rapidly changing heterogeneous dimensions of the socio-economic landscape in the country which causes a further widening of the research gap with the Western paradigms on AL. Therefore, the possibility of altered AL practices and behaviours in the UAE is a reasonable rationale for further exploration, notably because the few studies that emerge from the literature review, with two exceptions (Karacay *et al.*, 2018; Saleh and Shaker, 2020), focus on assessing the achievement of perceived organisational outcomes by testing the applicability of the Western-centered AL framework (Politis, 2013; Saeed *et al.*, 2016; Sabha, 2016; Al Samkari and David, 2019). Hence, the existing publications from the Emirates are unable to offer a comprehensive analysis of the emergence of AL in the country.

2.5 Summary of the UAE Context

As is evident from the academic research reviewed, the primary divergence in Western and Middle Eastern conceptualisation of leadership is consequential to the salient influence of diverse cultural contingencies depending on the theorists' paradigms. Hence, there exists a contrasting understanding of leadership between Middle Eastern and Western cultures, with the former presenting *relativist* perceptions while the latter emphasises *universalist* views. This is because the leadership consciousness within the Muslim community instigates by ideological beliefs and tribal legacy. The propositions of Islam guide not only the constitutional and justice system in the Emirates but also set up the expectations for leadership performance (Ali and Weir, 2005; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Mir, 2010), the decision-making process, and followership culture (Beekun and Badawi, 1999; Abdulahi, 2016). Along with this ideology, the tribal legacy influences the conservative state government organisation and leadership behaviour. Hence, the cognisance of leadership in the UAE presents a relatively unalterable model of the domain. However, given the authorities' openness to global market integration, leadership behaviour has also simultaneously adopted a neo-liberal orientation. While the relational orientation of the country's leadership can be observed in the generous social welfare initiatives, which also serve the purpose of maintaining the authority's credibility within the Emirati community and preserving the collectivist style of living, the neo-liberal strategies support globalisation. These changes necessitated major social and legislative reengineering that will continue to attract new investments and industrial expertise in the Emirates. The authorities' activities have resulted in the partial decentralisation of the state's governance and the establishment of two distinct leadership structures: (a) *homogeneous* (Emirati) in the public departments, and (b) *heterogeneous* (Emirati/Expatriates) in the private sector. Consequently, this notable division instigates possibilities for conflict between the contrarian (indigenous/imported) leadership ideologies and value systems.

Akin to the trend of importing foreign leadership into various business structures, tertiary education in the Emirates relies entirely on Western curricula. Notably, the influence of Western course content has resulted in increased confidence in the decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills of young Emiratis. Additionally, the growing number of Emirati students who have graduated in Western countries has prompted the alteration of traditional governance, juridical, and socio-behavioural

patterns. Some examples include the authorities' attempt to decentralise the governance structure by increasing the opportunities for public participation in decision-making processes, relaxed legislation concerning the cohabitation of unmarried couples, major infrastructure developments, as well as investment in properties and assets in Western countries. While these strategies facilitate smooth integration into global markets, they also subject the country's actions to international scrutiny and thereby indicate a partial shift in leadership behaviour towards Western values. However, considering the dominance of the Western curriculum, Researchers have highlighted the inadequacy of Western-based concepts of social and organisational behaviour introduced in the syllabus (Alsharari, 2018; Mahani and Molki, 2011). Relatedly, Alsharari (2018) argues that concepts such as inclusion, diversity, trade unions, and gender identification contradict the principles of Islam and could create a conflict with the traditional Emirati values. Therefore, academic leadership in the country faces the challenge of satisfying both Western-centered quality criteria for HE syllabi and quality control, as well as Emirati community expectations for preserving national values and beliefs. Furthermore, given that the HE sector is perceived as a major contributor to the country's GDP, the corporatisation of tertiary education is assumed to alter the purpose and objectives of academic leadership. This is projected to influence the interpretations of AL in the HE context in the country.

Additionally, gender-based perceptions and expectations of genuine leadership behaviours exert further influence over the cognisance of AL within the context of the Emirates. The discussion in section 2.4 above raises concerns over the interpretation of *'authenticity'* and AL behaviours in the UAE. While some of the key constituents of the domain (e.g., morality, transparency, trustfulness) are prescribed by the Muslim ideology, the review of research from the Middle East demonstrates diverse gender construals of *'authenticity.'* Furthermore, applying a Westernised set of AL behaviours may not be successful in the UAE because the leaders and followers do not necessarily share the same moral values and beliefs (Marinakou and Nikolic, 2016). Relatedly, Ather and Sobhani (2007) claim that leadership is associated with 'trusts' that are to be bestowed back to the followers. Therefore, the extent of the alignment of national and organisational cultural values could be a challenge for members of cultures with high levels of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism, where the leader's and group members' values remain implicit (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Al-Barghouthi, 2017; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). According to Kabasakal *et al.* (2012) and Slabu *et al.* (2014), individuals feel authentic when they behave in an

inimitable socio-normative manner, following up patterns outlined by their values. In addition, several scholars have ascertained that cultural variances among demographic locations may significantly impact AL attributes, practices, and organisational outcomes (Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). These views support the necessity for a contemporary exploration of the AL phenomenon from within the UAE, which is the aim of this study.

Besides, the outdated characterisation of the UAE's socio-cultural context is the key reason for the lack of a contemporary understanding of leadership behaviours in the country. For example, the visionary UAE agenda for diversified economic developments and neo-liberal strategies in all business sectors, including HE, demonstrates the changes in uncertainty avoidance and short-term orientation (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). The ambitious approaches of the federal government for transitioning into a knowledge economy draw similarities with the leadership processes necessary for encouraging innovation and risk-taking in the Western organisational environment where these outcomes have been a landmark of leadership behaviours (Yukl, 2013). The steadily growing visibility and participation of women in business, politics, and social life challenges masculine perceptions in the country. The increasing demographic heterogeneity and defining Key Performance Indicators (McAdam *et al.*, 2013; Bin Taher *et al.*, 2015) are reshaping collectivistic socio-cultural behaviours. Due to Western qualifications and assertive business skills, it is possible that the young Emirati generation will increase their participation in critical decision-making practices, which will influence the power distance cultural features in the country. Likewise, it is safe to assume that the rest of the cultural dimensions, such as assertiveness and indulgence, will undergo significant change. Therefore, the current cultural context in the UAE significantly challenges the orthodox perceptions of the short-term orientation of the country (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). However, these changes are still to be formally researched.

This chapter provides the essential foundation for contextualising AL within the framework of the nation's multicultural environment and foster an understanding of the dynamics of AL in the UAE. Notably, the outdated cultural classifications (House, 2004; Hofstede and Minkov, 2010) fail to offer a comprehensive outlook of the Emirates and its heterogeneous environment, therefore limiting their ability to substantiate an in-depth knowledge of AL in the Emirates. This highlights a critical weakness in the global awareness of the context of this research. Next, building upon the background information provided in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 further addresses the deficiencies in the existing theoretical

perspectives on the research matter and offers a comprehensive examination of the key theoretical frameworks and academic debates relevant to the research questions.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

According to Saunders *et al.* (2012), the value added by a research study is evaluated in relation to the existing body of knowledge. Therefore, in academia, it is vital for researchers to critically analyse the present understanding of the investigated concept and demonstrate how their particular inquiry could be positioned within the extant literature (Gill and Johnson, 2011). Besides, Petticrew and Roberts (2008) assert that making sense of the broad theoretical assumptions, and mapping the area of uncertainty, is possible only by systematically examining the existing literature on the research topic. Hence, Chapter 3 continues the discussion initiated in Chapter 2 by critically examining key theoretical frameworks and scholarly debates that highlight gaps in the current knowledge base and underpin the research questions, thereby further addressing deficiencies in the existing literature.

The sheer volume of research that has been conducted on leadership makes it an exceedingly difficult subject to review and potentially a very confusing area to research. Essentially, the focus of this inquiry is to understand AL, its theoretical underpinnings, and the relationship between AL and OR in HE in the UAE from a socio-behavioural perspective. Consequentially, the following review covers literature relevant to this inquiry, set against a backdrop of broad cultural contingencies. First, the contested nature of leadership is examined by differentiating it from the concept of management, followed by a critical analysis of diverse academic perspectives on the constituents of leadership, including globalisation and cross-cultural perspectives. Second, the AL phenomenon is discussed by reference to the associated physiognomy of authenticity, models of AL, leadership taxonomies, the relationship with followers, and cross-cultural viewpoints. Third, the challenges in the materialisation of the AL behaviours are analysed with reference to the neo-liberal reforms applied to the HE sector. Fourth, the review examines the relationship between AL and OR. Finally, the review is used to formulate the research questions (Creswell, 2009); thus, the critical literature review contributes to the thesis by justifying the research objectives of the study.

3.2 Leadership vs Management

The ongoing debate surrounding the distinction between leadership and management underscores the nuanced divergences between the two concepts. While an individual can exhibit leadership qualities without holding a managerial position, and conversely, can occupy a managerial role without demonstrating leadership capabilities (Murphy and Murphy, 2017), there exists significant disagreement regarding the extent of their overlap (Cabrera-Caban, 2016; Yukl and Gardner, 2020). Therefore, several scholars advocate for a qualitative distinction between managers and leaders. In their views, managers prioritise task efficiency by focusing on *'doing things right'*, while leaders prioritise decision-making in line with broader organisational objectives by focusing on *'doing the right thing'* (Zaleznik, 2004; Cabrera-Caban, 2016). The confusion is exacerbated when managers attempt to justify their actions by labelling managerial tasks as *'leadership'* (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). This criticism should be taken into consideration in the research on leadership behaviours and practices, as such interchangeable usage of management and leadership may foster misunderstanding, and result in unmet expectations across various levels of an organisation.

From an organisational perspective, leaders are recognised for employing mechanisms of social influence. Moreover, leadership theoretically stems from social interactions and necessitates the mobilisation of human resources to attain desired objectives (Northouse, 2013). Ultimately, it is the behavioural response of followers that delineates the leaders (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014). According to Yukl and Gardner (2020), a leader embodies proactive engagement and dedicates significant effort to cultivate followership for achieving organisational goals. Consequently, individuals gravitate toward leadership figures due to their proactive stance. In theory, the delineation of a leader is subject to variation contingent upon *perspectives* and *contextual factors*. While some may construe leadership in terms of authority, or hierarchical position, others may conceptualise it based on roles and responsibilities within a collective, or organisational setting (Yukl, 2013; Alvesson, 2019). Individuals tend to associate leadership with one's formal position within an organisation (Aronowitz, 2006; Duggal, 2024). However, leaders are recognised for establishing direction, inspiring, and motivating their team. Leadership necessitates possessing a vision to guide change. While managers concentrate on attaining organisational goals through process implementation, such as budgeting, organisational structure, and staffing, leaders are more focused on forward-thinking and seizing opportunities (Alvesson, 2019).

According to Aronowitz (2006), management entails executing predetermined tasks regularly with the assistance of subordinates and requires conducting day-to-day operations as anticipated. Relatedly, Duggal (2024) added that managerial duties are typically outlined in job descriptions, with subordinates adhering to directives due to the professional designations, or classifications. Additionally, along with the managerial title comes the authority and privilege to promote, hire, or reward employees based on their performance and conduct.

Additionally, leaders and managers are commonly distinguished based on their *focus* and *approach*. Managers typically engage in organising and coordinating resources to attain specific objectives in a structured and efficient manner, while leaders prioritise inspiring and motivating individuals to pursue a collective vision or goal. Leaders establish direction, align people and organisational systems, and empower followers to contribute optimally towards shared objectives. Conversely, managers are tasked with planning, organising, and controlling resources to fulfil predetermined goals. Furthermore, leaders underscore innovation, vision, and adaptability, whereas managers tend to prioritise stability, efficiency, and the execution of operational plans (Dechurch *et al.*, 2010).

In summary, the role of a manager typically denotes a specific position within an organisation's hierarchical framework, whereas the term leader encompasses a more multifaceted definition (Dechurch *et al.*, 2010). Leadership manifests through an individual's actions that motivate others to excel, irrespective of their job title or position within the organisation (Yukl and Gardner, 2020). Conversely, a manager is designated by a specific job title, which entails a predefined set of responsibilities, whereby leadership exists at various levels within an organisation, spanning from frontline leaders to top executives. Akin to the distinct levels of management, there are leaders in different positions within an organisation.

According to Jacobs and McGee (2001), leadership in organisations can be categorised into three main levels that align with the traditional organisational structure. At the *bottom level*, leaders oversee tasks, including hiring, firing, and task allocation. In the *middle layer*, leaders set operational goals and coordinate efforts to achieve them. At the *top level*, strategic leaders establish a vision and set broad objectives for the entire organisation. Zaccaro and Klimoski (2002) built on this framework, noting that while leaders at all levels perform similar functions such as direction setting and operational

maintenance, they do so differently, depending on their position within the organisation. However, there are several major drawbacks in understanding the leadership paradox from an organisational perspective (Aronowitz, 2006; Barnett, 2004; Dechurch *et al.*, 2010). *Firstly*, the traditional organisational structure has been criticised for its dense hierarchical framework, characterised by numerous layers of leadership (Talbot *et al.*, 2017). This setup poses challenges in identifying individuals in leadership positions and determining who constitutes their followers. Such a critique underscores valid concerns with the opportunities and limitations of followers to access the leadership in their organisation. With fewer leaders, the ratios of leaders to followers are higher, resulting in less direct links between leadership behaviours and their actual influence on followers. *Secondly*, the review of the existing literature has highlighted major deficiencies in understanding leadership from diverse cultural norms, organisational dynamics, and individual interpretations (Northouse, 2019; Yukl and Gardner, 2020). This criticism should be taken on board when looking at diverse interpretations of AL in the HE in the UAE. *Thirdly*, it is imperative to uncover the scope and reasons for potential conflicts between leaders with different ideologies and degrees of authenticity. This research is therefore crucial for addressing these gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

3.3 The Leadership Phenomenon

3.3.1 Approaches Defining the Leadership Phenomenon

According to Northouse (2013), the purpose of a theoretical conceptualisation of leadership is to inform research and direct practice through modeling certain empirical evidence. Conceptually, the prominence of the leadership frameworks has emerged based upon a growing focus on organisational performance outcomes, and their association with selective leadership ascriptions (Yukl, 2012). However, the extensive research efforts on leadership traits, behaviours, styles and processes in the Western-based schools of thought have produced a cumulative, yet non-coalescent, knowledge about the domain. Besides, academic paradigms employed in the West often over-emphasise an individual's quality and over-simplify the complexity of the construct (Yammarino *et al.*, 2005). Conversely, due to the abundance of conceptualisations, some theorists question the purposefulness of a specific leadership framework (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003), and point out definitional obscurities, lack of uniformity, an

incongruous locus, and other empirical deficiencies (Meindl *et al.*, 1985; Karmel, 2011; Mango, 2018). In line with this, Northouse (2012) argued that certain definitions became redundant, making leadership characteristics illogical, if not questionable. Moreover, many theoretical propositions are unable to inform leadership practices in organisational settings (Kouzes and Posner, 2012; Mango, 2018). Essentially, the objective of academics should be '*What*' the leaders have achieved or want to achieve, and '*How*' they achieve it. This simplifies the leadership taxonomies into the dyadic principles of *Content* vs *Process*. Although the concept remains elusive and enigmatic, with a proliferation of lexes surrounding it, Northouse (2012) ascertained four fundamental proponents of the leadership model which allowed for a more relevant approach to the phenomenon: (1) leadership is a process, which (2) involves influence, (3) occurs in groups, and (4) encompasses shared goals.

This chapter explores the trajectory of leadership research, from early trait-based approaches to the emergence of contemporary leadership theorisations, highlighting the shift towards more nuanced and context-dependent perspectives. The following sections illustrate the diversity of academic assumptions regarding the constituents of leadership and discuss key definitions, derived from the Western cultural context. Thus, in addition to providing the context and substantiating the emergence of the AL domain within the broad leadership research, the critical analysis of the leadership theories contributes to a common understanding of the leadership paradox.

3.3.1.1 Traits Approach

Early leadership theories, influenced by the Great Man theory, initially focused solely on the leader's innate traits, assuming that certain inherent qualities differentiate leaders from followers and predispose them to leadership roles (Maslanka, 2004; Yukl, 2013). Stogdill's seminal work in 1948 shifted the focus to understanding leadership traits as influences rather than dominion over followers, identifying key personality traits such as intelligence, initiative, and sociability as markers for leadership roles (Northouse, 2013). However, trait theory is criticised for carrying out over a century-long research and accumulating an endless list of personality traits without being able to link them to distinct leader's behaviours (Northouse, 2016). Besides, trait-focused leadership viewpoints hold limited diagnostic or predictive significance as they project distinct personality dynamics, as opposed to defining specific traits that are beneficial to individuals in a leadership position (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). Due to their static

nature, trait theories struggle to link an individual's traits to leadership behaviours and neglect the significance of a leader's self-awareness. Therefore, by attributing success to persons with leadership traits, or those considered "great men", the trait approach remains silent on leadership outcomes (Mango, 2018). Additionally, the earlier research was deficient in suggesting a process of aligning leadership behaviours with specific organisational situations, thus confining these behaviours to a descriptive realm (Fleishman, 1953). Furthermore, this approach lacks cultural and contextual substantiation (Yukl, 1998; Judge *et al.*, 2004; Northouse, 2016).

Noticeably, more progressive leadership frameworks denote the stigmatism and the low reliability of the individual's traits in defining the leadership phenomenon. Subsequent research has challenged trait theory, emphasising the importance of both traits and situational factors in leadership (Mann, 1959; Allport, 1961; Stogdill, 1974). In this view, Lord *et al.* (1986) argue that leadership traits are perceptions formed by followers, highlighting the moderating role of followers' interpretations. A major reconceptualisation of the leadership domain emphasised the relationship between the individuals in a business or social setting, and how this interaction defines the leader's behaviour with followers (Northouse, 2019).

3.3.1.2 Behaviour Approach

According to Ekvall and Arvonen (1991), by shaping organisational culture and followers' behaviour, leadership practices are critical for the success of an organisation. However, the authors accentuated the dependability of the leader's behaviour on the subjectivity of subordinates' perceptions in terms of the delivery of results and achieving OR (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007a; Teo, Lee and Lim, 2017). Realising that traits are insufficient tenets in defining the complexity of the leadership phenomenon, and in line with the dyadic concept (e.g. *Content* vs *Process*), academics recognised leadership behaviour as a major mechanism for influencing followers towards achieving desired outcomes. Pertinent to this is the question: *What do leaders do and how do they act?* (Northouse, 2012). This is addressed by two main studies on leadership behaviour: from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan. The analysis of the results obstinately categorised leaders' behaviour along a two-dimensional scale: Consideration (people-orientation) and Initiating Structure (task-orientation) (Fleishman, 1953; Stogdill and Coons, 1957). Despite continuing the research pattern of understanding leadership from an individualistic

perspective (e.g., the leader figure is central to the concept), the behavioural paradigm suggested considerate involvement of followers in decision-making processes. It also highlighted the relational aspect in defining the leadership construct. In this respect, the theoretical model of democratic (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939) and consultative leadership practices (Likert, 1961) promoted more decentralised leadership behaviour by including employees' input in discussions, and overall, in the decision-making process. Further progress in defining leadership was made by Blake and Mouton (1964). Attempting to define the domain from a practitioner's perspective, this self-assessment behavioural tool sought to contextualise the theoretical framework within the business environment and address criticism regarding the existing oversimplified interpretations of leadership behaviour. However, the validity and trustworthiness of this new assessment of leaders' behaviours were questioned in terms of the truthfulness of the participants and their cognitive consciousness for self-assessment, which often leads to self-deception.

In theory, the behavioural approach endorsed the assumption that leadership is a composite of behaviours that can be learnt (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). However, due to its individualistic orientation, the research does not acknowledge the followers' behaviour which remained reactive and passive to the influence of the distinct leadership style (Greenleaf, 1970; House, 1977; Hollander, 1992). Additionally, the behavioural leadership theorists presented a descriptive analysis of leadership behaviours, rather than developing a model that could be operationalised in business operations (Yukl, 2012, 2013). Further, researchers failed to consider the influence of individuals' distinct cultural backgrounds, or different contexts, on the construal of the task- and people-related behaviours. This gap motivated the exploration of specific properties of leadership situations affiliated with distinctive leadership behaviour.

3.3.1.3 Situational and Contingency Approach

A shift from static towards more comprehensive paradigms of leadership, and an acknowledgement of the influence of dynamic environmental factors, resulted in progressive academic theorisations, where the dominance of the individualistic nature of leadership behaviour is downplayed by situational contingencies. Relatedly, Northouse (2016) states that these paradigms prompted the applied conceptualisation of leadership style. Nonetheless, researchers recognised the potency of leader's interaction with the arrangement of situational variables, and the adaptation of leadership style to a

given situation for achieving organisational outcomes (Fiedler, 1964; Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; Hickson *et al.*, 1971; House and Aditya, 1997; Reddin, 1977; Vroom and Yetton, 1973). Moreover, according to these authors, leaders made conscious efforts to adjust their style and behaviours to match followers' commitment, cognitive capabilities, and job characteristics. In this respect, various models were instigated on the premises of the contingency approach, including Fiedler's contingency theory (Fiedler, 1967), the concept of situational leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969), and the Path-Goal theory (House, 1971).

According to Northouse (2019), developing followers' competencies and motivation are recognised as applied outcomes of the Path-Goal framework. Relatedly, House and Mitchell (1974) stated that contingent upon their role in the dyad, job performance competencies and personal cognisance, followers are active constituents in the leadership domain, alongside the wider organisational context. Therefore, the contingency approach initiated new constituents of the leadership phenomenon: leadership power (Fiedler, 1964), and organisational structure (French and Raven, 1968; Fiedler, 1978). According to the writers, the organisational structure acts to impose a formal authority system and power distribution; therefore, it is considered an integrative contextual factor, governing the leader-followers relationship in the organisation.

The situational and contingency theoretical frameworks demonstrate the conceptual progression towards a more decentralised modus of leadership behaviour (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). However, Northouse (2019) stated that the behavioural, situational and contingency leadership frameworks still address leadership behaviours rather than processes and critiqued the ability of the contingency theory to explain why a particular leadership style is a better fit to different situations (Northouse, 2012). In support of this view, researchers argued that followers' behaviours should be seen as a separate reality, and as an outcome of the leadership style, rather than two-way relationship (Hernandez *et al.*, 2011; Southwick *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, these academic approaches to conceptualising leadership had failed to expand beyond the centralised paradigm of a leader-followers hierarchy and did not provide an understanding of leadership outcomes in a unique cultural environment and complex business operations. Hence, these theoretical propositions could be criticised for the lack of predictive validity in diverse contexts. These arguments necessitated a major shift in conceptualising leadership, embracing a

process-centred methodology in defining the leadership mechanisms for motivating subordinates to achieve common goals.

3.3.1.4 Leadership Processes

Theoretical frameworks frequently assert that a foundational element of the leadership phenomenon lies in the leader's capacity to exert influence and foster collaboration amongst followers and guide them towards collective objectives (Yukl, 1989). To add, Burns (1978) perceived the role of leadership as a means to imbue followers with a common sense of purpose. Relatedly, Northouse (2016) argued that influence should be viewed as a process, as opposed to a leader's traits, which is consistent with the organisational vision. According to this perspective, leadership can be understood as a relational, transactional, and transformational process.

In Western schools of thought, the dyadic leader-follower relationship assumes a focal point in the leadership process (Northouse, 2019). Consequently, organisational outcomes are perceived by researchers as a continuum of the people-orientation model. In this view, the leader-follower relationship is understood as a bilateral exchange process (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975). Relatedly, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory rationalised the vertical (i.e., hierarchical) dyad relationship by upholding the included-excluded team membership outlook of followers and defined the transactional disposition of group interactions (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975). The distinct exchanges of the leader with each follower individually are guided by specific acceptance criteria. This selective relationship determines two main orientations of leader-follower relational exchanges: in-group and out-group. Consequentially, the quality of leader-follower exchanges influences various aspects of follower's behaviour, such as job performance, satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Low-level exchanges refer to completing daily tasks in exchange for an agreed salary. By contrast, in high-level relationship exchanges, followers can expect to be awarded more interesting and challenging tasks, a delegation of greater authority and responsibilities, involvement in decision-making processes, personal support from the leader and access to diverse information sharing options (Yukl, 2013). In addition, LMX theory highlights the negotiating opportunity in defining the leader's and followers' participative roles in the dyad (Graen and Cashman, 1975). Therefore, the value propositions of LMX theory uplifted the importance of

continuous communication between leaders and followers; relational exchanges which are established on mutual trust, respect and commitment (Northouse, 2019).

Noe *et al.* (2017) note, however, from an organisational management perspective, that the favourite group acceptance criteria, based on ethnic background, performance, contractual status, and/or minority cluster representation, could be associated with workplace discrimination. Nonetheless, the differential treatment of in- and out-group members by leaders can shape the organisational culture and climate. If certain groups consistently receive preferential treatment, while others are marginalised, it can lead to perceptions of inequity, divisiveness, and a lack of fairness within the organisation. This can erode trust, collaboration and morale among employees, ultimately undermining efforts to foster an inclusive workplace environment. Moreover, Stewart and Johnson (2009) state that categorising some employees as outsiders and not including them in the decision-making process and promotions, excludes the employability of potentially unique individual's capabilities. Furthermore, Northouse (2013, p. 241) defines the LMX concept as an entirely descriptive model which is projected to create privileged groups among employees. Besides, Yukl (2013) stated that high-exchange relationships develop more obligatory leadership behaviours in terms of demonstrating continuous attention to the followers and responsiveness to their feelings and requirements. Next, the author criticises the time-consuming characteristics of certain leadership behaviours for influencing employees, such as persuasion and consultation (Yukl, 2013). In addition, Avolio *et al.* (2009) critique LMX theory for its lack of consideration of social and cultural context that affects both followers and leaders. The above criticism should be taken into consideration when exploring the AL behaviours within the diverse socio-cultural environment of the UAE.

Similarly, social exchange theory recognises the formation of the leader-followers dyad within the parameters of a distinct social context (Sparrowe and Liden, 1997). The theoretical propositions demonstrate the reciprocity of leader-followers' interactions for satisfying self-interest (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017). In theory, the social exchange concept identifies influence through the leader's expert power and authority (Yukl, 2013). In this view, the power and authority granted to the leaders are sustained by the continuous demonstration of leadership competence and loyalty to subordinates and therefore, supersede the requirements for employees' evaluation of the leader's expertise. Therefore, leadership practices associated with the social exchange framework are

affiliated with transactional leadership (Bass, 1990). Furthermore, the assumptions of the social exchange theory have been frequently criticised for the lack of empirical validation of the academic concepts (Yukl, 2013).

Ultimately, due to intense changes in the business environment, researchers in the West acknowledged the followers' participative role in defining the leadership domain from various standpoints. These studies turned towards an alternative exploration of the leadership paradox, emphasising the dyadic interactions between the leader and the followers as an ongoing tacit social exchange. Hence, the progressive outlook reoriented the concept of leadership by highlighting the weight of the subordinates' value during the decision-making activities (Jacobs, 1970). In this view, the process-orientation of the leadership behaviours is demonstrated by transactional and transformational leadership frameworks (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990). In theory, Bass and Avolio (1993) claimed that authority granted to the leader and institutional regulations prompt transactional leadership behaviour. This relationship between the leader and followers is commonly demonstrated by reward distribution. Therefore, the cost-benefit value is the main determinant of the leadership practices for contingent reward distribution among employees for the work they do and their loyalty (Yukl, 2013). In this view, Bass and Avolio (1993) and Yukl (2013) state that self-interest and exchange benefits are key motivators of transactional leadership practices. Relatedly, the value system of transactional leadership behaviour, such as trust, fairness, accountability, and mutuality, is relevant to the trade-off with rewards. By contrast, transformational leadership behaviours trigger the moral value system of subordinates in their job performance for achieving organisational goals (Bass and Avolio, 1993; Yukl, 2013). Furthermore, transformational leadership assists followers to develop a sense of identity and become organisational citizens in the process (Yukl, 1998). Through affectionate and visionary practices, transformational leaders use targeted strategies to inspire followers to have the ownership of achieving the collective mission and organisational culture. In theory, this leadership model is positioned to respond to business demands for creative thinking and innovation and demonstrates the evolution of academic research on the leadership processes (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Bass, 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1993).

The updated approaches to explaining leadership practices are primarily focused on followers' empowerment and influence over leadership (Nelson, 1986; Hollander, 1992; Bass and Avolio, 1993). Hence, sharing power and control with employees emerged as a leading strategy for increasing followers'

self-worth, motivation and therefore, productivity. Moreover, to ensure business success, employers need to predict leadership outcomes in terms of achieving organisational goals, establishing high-achievement structures and teams, and motivating and inspiring people to attain the organisation's vision. This directed research towards the strategic and applied perspective of the leadership construct (Kotter, 1990; Stumpf and Mullen, 1991). However, according to Avolio *et al.* (2009), the extant literature fails to affirm the transformation of individuals and organisations as an outcome of transformational leadership behaviours.

In response to rapid industry changes, research has increasingly aimed to explore how various elements of leadership contribute to operational success from a practitioner's perspective, as well as to understand why subordinates of certain leaders are more willing to exert greater effort and perform at higher levels (Yukl, 2013). This prompted the emergence of integrative leadership models, such as charismatic leadership, which encompasses variables from more than one leadership framework. In theory, charismatic leadership is perceived as both a trait and a process Howell and Shamir, 2005). As defined by the individualistic paradigm, the exertion of influence over followers, as a result of a great leader's charisma (e.g. self-awareness), is considered a trait which some authors associate with 'heroic' leadership (Yukl, 1989). In this respect, Conger and Kanungo (1987), House and Howell (1992), and Howell and Shamir (2005) argued for the existence of a leader-centred, as opposed to the dyadic, realisation of charismatic leadership. On the other hand, charismatic leaders' practices for achieving followers' affection, acceptance, and respect define the procedural aspect of this leadership model. Furthermore, the agenda of the socialised model of charismatic leadership in the Western cultural context is focused on developing and stimulating followers' growth through empowerment and autonomy and thus, highlights the dyadic nature of the charismatic leadership framework. Therefore, the socialised (e.g., process) as opposed to the personalised (e.g., trait) features of charismatic leadership are more closely affiliated with individualistic societies (Northouse, 2016).

Broadly, charismatic and transformational leadership frameworks suggest maintaining the dyadic characterisation of the construct and empowering team effort to achieve organisational vision and outcomes. An additional contribution of these models is highlighting key behavioural change variables. However, despite the theoretical evidence of the increased leadership success, research into transformational and charismatic leadership has failed to substantiate the affiliated processes with moral

and ethical backgrounds (Bass, 1985; Badshah, 2012). Therefore, a major drawback of the applied leadership models is the lack of confirmation of a leader's integrity and moral-driven behaviour (Brown *et al.*, 2005; Yukl, 2013; Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, and acknowledging academic criticism, leadership research progressed towards defining value-driven ethical leadership.

3.3.1.5 Value-based Leadership

The corporate outlook on leadership is more concerned with legitimating business results, rather than the ethical behaviour and consistencies in moral principles surrounding leadership practices (Avolio, 1999; May *et al.*, 2003). This is a major concern in evaluating the leadership influencing processes as evidence suggests that followers are willing to follow leaders who share the same values and beliefs (Hmieleski, Cole and Baron, 2012). In response to the lack of moral values within debates on leadership behaviours, ethics-centred leadership frameworks encourage leaders' consideration of their ethical and moral responsibilities to subordinates and the community at large (Northouse, 2012). Some of the criteria defining ethical leadership include a leader's personal values and beliefs, conscious intentions, and maturity of the individual's moral development (Yukl, 2013, p. 341). Additionally, Brown *et al.* (2005) state that ethical leaders are recognised by their conscious efforts in doing the 'right' thing which could be a very changeable variable across different contexts. Within the context of the ethics-induced leadership concepts, servant leadership practices illustrate a leader's purpose to serve the followers and respond to the needs of the subordinates (Joseph and Winston, 2005; Yukl, 2013). Given the context of this study, criticism of Brown *et al.* (2005) raises valid concerns and holds particular significance for this research.

As evidenced in the existing publications, some researchers identified both ethical and charismatic leadership concepts as antecedents of the AL domain, where the operational outcomes are a result of the value-centered relationships between the leaders and the employees (House, 1971; Brown *et al.*, 2005). Relatedly, the AL model has been classified within the propositions of the ethical leadership domain (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). According to Brown *et al.* (2005), the descriptors of ethical leadership are closely correlated with AL in terms of trustful and honest relationships with followers. Although researchers define ethical leadership as a role modeling practice that is credible, and grounded on moral values, evidence of the synergy of personal and organisational values needs further exploration. As

discussed in Chapter 3 (below), such internal conflict is assumed to exist in the leadership domain in Arab countries where the leadership practices are strongly influenced by ideological and cultural norms (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). This highlights a further research gap, since the majority of scholars fail to evidence the ethical sensitivities of leadership across distinct cultural landscapes (May *et al.*, 2003).

According to Meuser *et al.* (2016), transformational, charismatic, strategic, and ethical leadership assume centrality among the leadership behaviours aiding organisational success. This is because these leadership behaviours are focused on achieving operational goals by inspiring team performance (Bass and Riggio, 2005). However, charisma, while effective, must be balanced with ethical awareness to prevent potential abuse of power. On the other hand, ethical leadership requires leaders to cultivate self-awareness and moral reasoning to ensure the responsible use of charismatic influence. Nonetheless, transformational and charismatic leadership, while motivational, may overlook cultural nuances and ethical considerations. Moreover, the earlier theorisations of leadership exemplify the individualistic nature of leadership and top-down approaches to influencing followers. Hence, these propositions fail to align leader's and employees' values and may foster dependency.

3.3.1.6 Leadership Proxies

In the last two decades, many academics and management consultants have deplored and criticised conservative leadership paradigms. Besides, current business developments have created a demand for individuals who are able to recognise that complex challenges can only be solved through collaboration, and diversity of workforce competencies, and cultural, and contextual variables (Metcalf and Benn, 2013; Nicholds *et al.*, 2017; Mango, 2018). Therefore, both researchers' and practitioners' interests shifted towards conceptualising a range of multi-dimensional leadership constructs. In a totally radical direction, leadership has been perceived as a: (1) *'collaborative leadership'*, highlighting the role of collaborative team efforts in achieving the organisational objectives and decentralised decision-making processes (Kouzes and Posner, 2003); (2) *'self-determined and motivated teams'* where the leadership functions and behaviours are shared among the team members, and much of the influence and decision-making processes are horisontal and lateral rather than hierarchical (Pearce & Conger, 2003); (3) *'system'* of organisational strategy, structures and social networks that promote responsible human behaviour and

enable employees' productivity and efficiency without a centralised leadership process (Heifetz *et al.*, 2004), (4) *'distributed leadership'* which emphasises the role of the followers, job design, system and organisational factors in substituting the leader's figure and moderating the leader-organisational outcomes relationship (Spillane and Diamond, 2007); and (5) *'complexity leadership'* where the leadership is perceived as a shared process, emerging within the interactions of individual's and social networks in the organisation, and a unity of adaptive, administrative and enabling leadership behaviours (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007). Whilst the recent leadership proxies underscored the dissemination of leader's power across organisational networks, these views also raised some compelling concerns with the validity of unconventional leadership models (Dionne *et al.*, 2002; Burke *et al.*, 2004; Spillane *et al.*, 2004; Avolio *et al.*, 2009).

According to numerous research publications, the new generation of leadership taxonomies reflects upon the procedural aspect of the leadership domain, or '*How'* the leaders practice their leadership styles for achieving organisational outcomes, and what is their responsiveness to the vibrant business environment and demands for learning, innovation, and adaptability (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 2006; Uhl-bien *et al.*, 2007; Avolio *et al.*, 2009). However, this research is yet to demonstrate confirmation of the proposition of the co-existence of hierarchical (administrative) and enabling (adaptive) leadership behaviour which are divergent (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009). Further shortcomings of these hypothesised models emerged in academics' concerns with shared responsibilities for goal achievement (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). Although the novelty of the contemporary paradigms breaks up the conservative two-tiered leadership typology by taking into consideration multiple performance constituents which, it is argued, it is a pre-requisite for eliminating reactivity and conflict and building collaborative responsibility (Heifetz *et al.*, 2004). The limitations of the empirical research and measurement instruments have, to date, failed to support the organisational applicability of these propositions (Yammarino *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, the perceived methodological instruments have yielded mixed and invalid analysis of subordinates' outcomes (Dionne *et al.*, 2002; Avolio *et al.*, 2009). Lastly, it is challenging to understand how shared leadership (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004), and ethical standards embedded in the organisational policies and processes will be applied to multicultural teams, as in the current business outlook in the UAE. Hence, the notions of decentralised leadership should be criticised for their lack of cultural substantiation.

3.3.2 Globalisation and Cultural Changeover of the Leadership

Alongside the process of globalisation, dominant cultures continue to infiltrate diverse demographics and export Western models of leadership expertise and behaviours across the globe. Consequently, the acceptability and applicability of the leadership frameworks defined in the Western cultural context have become an increasingly acknowledged concern among academics (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). Additionally, the alignment of leadership research with cross-cultural contingencies established contradictory perceptions in defining a 'universal' leadership model and its global transferability. For example, there are assumptions of similarities in corporate expectations of leadership achievements and outcomes across different socio-cultural settings (Schein, 2004a; Ayoko and Härtel, 2006; Balkundi and Kilduff, 2006; Wong and Laschinger, 2013; Alhadid, 2016). Yukl (2012) claims that organisational vision, change management, employee motivation, team performance, empowerment, integrity, OCB, diversity, innovation, and organisational success are attributional aspects of leadership behaviour in businesses across the globe. Similar views are shared by Jokinen (2005) who perceives the 'global' qualities of the leader as higher-level general competencies which enable the person to do the job and deliver the expected performance outcomes. On the other hand, Baruch (2002) argues that global leaders are individuals who have the capacity to understand and appreciate diverse cultures. Similarly, Kabasakal at el. (2012) state that the cultural sensitivity of the 'global leaders' is central to adapting the leadership style to diverse cultural environment for achieving personal and institutional success. However, the authors did not define the competencies associated with 'global' leaders, leaving these notions within the realm of conceptual assumptions.

The debates related to universal transferability versus cultural boundaries to distinct leadership skills and behaviour are growing. Correspondingly, Steers *et al.* (2012) presented a three-tier framework of the leadership domain which is analogous to the expansion of global industries. First, considering that leadership behaviours remain unchanged across diverse cultural contexts (e.g. general practice) and are therefore universal, the *universal approach* introduces the notion of the universality of the leadership phenomenon. However, Mittal and Dorfman (2012) denounced the applicability of this model across diverse cultural landscapes, citing considerable variation in the degree of endorsement of leadership components by nations in different culture clusters. Second, the *normative approach* adopted the

understanding that certain leadership traits and behaviours are transferable across national borders. In this regard, Jokinen (2005) argues that the free movement of technology and information across demographic borders enabled the transferability of distinct leadership competencies, traits, and behaviours, framing them as 'universal' (e.g., computer skills, self-awareness and self-regulation, optimism, social-awareness, and cognitive skills). Similarly, Steers *et al.* (2012) advocate for the universality of truthfulness, reasoning competence, intellectual curiosity, and emotional awareness of global leaders. By contrast, Duchatelet's (1998) theorisation of the cultural congruence of leadership behaviour disputes the applicability of the Western types of leadership practices in non-Western cultures. In addition, Kenneth and Dianne (2004) have warned against the dominance and replication of homogenous forms of leadership in foreign cultural contexts and predicted the failure of the imported leadership dimensions. Consequentially, research findings from the Middle East (Khan and Panarina, 2017), and Far East (Hsu, Woodside and Marshall, 2013) conclude the inadequacy of homogenous-instilled leadership archetype in high-context cultures. Third, the *contingency approach* argues the emergence of the leadership domain as a culturally influenced process as opposed to being solely dependent on an individual's personal qualities (Steers, Sanchez-Runde and Nardon, 2012). However, a subsequent study by Takahashi *et al.* (2012) emphasises the challenges in classifying the leadership theoretical paradigms into a simple three-fold scale.

Relatedly, the novel threefold anthropological model: *diffusion*, *acculturation,* and *transculturation,* rationalises the shift in researchers' outlooks around cultural change and demonstrates their attempts to bridge the gap between cross-cultural paradigms on leadership and the fast-paced global business environment (O'Neil, 2012). According to this model's dimensions, diffusion explains the processes for transferring traits and ideas between cultures. However, even though the trait may be adopted in another cultural context, its original meaning might not be retained. On the other hand, during the acculturation, a variety of new traits transition into and influence the traditional socio-cultural behaviours of the indigenous culture. Similarly, transculturation occurs in situations when an individual moves to and adopts the cultural patterns of the new context (O'Neil, 2012). This approach aligns with management research on decision-making in transnational corporations (TNCs) and multinational companies (MNCs) (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 2002; Perlmutter, 2017). For example, the model, introduced by Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002), defines two key pressures on the strategic options for senior

management in MNCs to manage their international operations: local responsiveness and global integration. Hence, the typologies developed by these authors offer a framework for in-depth exploration of how senior managers in MNCs manage the coordination and integration of their geographically detached branches, including the role of expatriate leadership in these processes.

During the last two decades, the process of globalisation has enabled the mobility of leaders across the globe. However, there are concerns that preset socio-cultural standards of acceptable behaviour could restrict these leaders in adopting a more flexible leadership style if working in a diverse cultural environment (Kenneth and Dianne, 2004; Dickson *et al.*, 2012). Most intriguing, however, are the academic claims that particular leadership behaviours (e.g., charismatic and participative) are bonded by cultural contingencies (House *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, in situations when a leader is functioning in a distinct cultural context, the question is: *Which cultural practices should the leader follow?* For this reason, a similar notion in relation to AL behaviours will be explored in this study.

3.3.3 Cross-cultural Exploration and Stereotyping of Leadership

According to Dorfman (1996), leadership style is contextually conceptualised on the premises of distinct history, ideology, political and social laws, and ethnic cultural diversity. Relatedly, Fairholm (1994) argues that leadership is a joint function of an individual's behaviour and a distinct cultural context. Therefore, there is an increasing demand in business for the practical application of theoretical concepts of effective leadership, aiming to enhance an organisation's economic performance and mitigate cultural shock among individuals assigned to global roles. In this view, cross-cultural studies recognise that the cultural context can influence an individual's performance and, therefore, narrow the research focus to understanding distinct features of cultural diversity. However, despite intensive efforts by academics and practitioners to establish prototypical leadership archetypes, during the past fifty years, cross-cultural perspectives of leadership have been lagging, with the latest cross-cultural research written in the early 2000s (House *et al.*, 2004; Schein, 2004; Lewis, 2006).

Table 1: Summary of Cultural Dimensions Models

Cultural Dimension	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961)	Hall (1976)	Hofstede (1976)	Schwartz (1992)	GLOBE (1993)	Fukuyama (1995)	Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997)	Nisbett (2001)	Steenkamp (2001)
High-context		*							
Low-context		*							
Monochronic		*							
Polychronic		*							
Holistic or Analytic Thinking								*	
High or Low Trust						*			
Human Nature (good/evil; changeable/ unchangeable)	*								
Social Relationships (individual, collective; hierarchical)	*						*		
Person and Nature Interactions (mastery; subjugation; harmony)	*								
Time Orientation (Past, Present, Future)	*				*		*		
Nature of Human Activity (being, doing, becoming)	*								
Individualism and Collectivism	*		*	*	*				*
Power distance	*		*		*				*
Uncertainty Avoidance			*		*				*
Masculinity and Femininity			*		*				*
Long or Short Term			*		*		*		*
Indulgence and Restraint (Happiness)			*				*		
Egalitarianism and Hierarchal Relationship	*			*			*		
Mastery or Harmony				*			*		*
Universalism and Particularism									
Neutral and Affective							*		
Achievement versus Ascription							*		
Institutional Collectivism					*				
Human Orientation					*				
Performance Orientation					*				

Despite the concept of culture being extensively studied, due to its complexity, academics and practitioners are still struggling to reach an agreement on a concise definition of the construct. In an effort to offer anthropological insights into the perceptions of distinct societal reactions to universal human problems, the methodological assumptions of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961, cited in Carter, 1991) generated 164 different cultural features. Although this seminal work has been acknowledged for introducing a structured framework for understanding diverse cultural value systems, their work has been criticised for categorising the cultural expressions without adequately capturing the complexity and

fluidity of cultural values in practice, as well as the lack of empirical support (Hofstede, 2011). Table 1 (above) presents the trend in cultural explorations. Subsequent studies attempted to classify various cultural dimensions in association with collectively constructed cultural practices, which are bounded by defined geo-political borders (Hofstede, 1976), management and organisational practices (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993), national and religious, but not behavioural, outlooks (Lewis, 2006), and marketing competitiveness strategies (Steenkamp, 2001).

Additionally, motivated to address key disagreements between academic cross-cultural paradigms of leadership and globalisation, the GLOBE study attempted to define the cultural dimensions in both national and organisational culture by analysing data from 62 countries and 951 organisations (House, 2004). However, the critical review of extant cross-cultural literature revealed two principal meta-categories of cultural classifications based on the: (1) cultural elements (e.g. values and morals), and (2) cultural configurations (e.g. individual, organisational and national). Table 1 (above) illustrates the most referred to single- and multi-dimensional cultural categories, which were selected from frequently cited authors in the research field.

As evident in Table 1, cross-culturalists' explorations of how diverse groups solve problems associated with human relations, time, and environment accumulated a multiplicity of similar cultural attributes. For example, Steenkamp (2001) highlights the similarities in the cultural frameworks developed by Hofstede (1976) and Schwartz (1992). At the same time, Kaasa (2021) proposes merging Hofstede's, Schwartz's, and Inglehart's cultural models due to obvious commonalities in cultural dimensions. However, the overlap in cultural descriptors has been frequently criticised by contemporary researchers who dispute the accuracy and relevancy of outdated conclusions to the current heterogeneous societal realities (Kaasa, 2021). Equally important is the considerable evidence that the field of cross-cultural exploration has been neglected in the past two decades (House, 2004). Besides, these views should be strongly criticised as they seek to stereotype cultural diversities in the West, Middle East, and other demographics into homogeneous and heterogeneous clusters. Particularly, the notion of homogeneity should be contested as due to the rise of borderless economies, the cultural profile of nations in recent years has been significantly altered. Hence, the previously generated data are perceived to be obsolete and their use risks creating confusion when defining leadership behaviour within the globalised markets and organisational cultures of the 21st Century.

Despite the insights on the cultural contingencies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) offered by the GLOBE study (House, 2004), the UAE's context was not explored by the project. The most common cultural characterisation of the country has been attributed to Hofstede and Minkov (2010), who classified the features of the Emirates within the high-power distance, uncertainty avoidance, short-term orientation, and collectivistic scale. In theory, Hofstede's theoretical rationalisation of the diverse national ascriptions and variances in social and organisational values, practices, and beliefs is constructed on four major properties of the national culture: *high-low power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity,* and *high-low uncertainty avoidance* (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011). An updated model of the framework includes a fifth (*long-term orientation*) and sixth dimension (*indulgence vs self-restraint*). However, the fifth and sixth dimensions are still at a developing stage.

The cultural model posits the *power distance* dimension as a criterion for measuring social inequality and the relationship with higher authority; *individualism-collectivism* addresses the relationship between the individual and the group; *masculinity-femininity* measures the individual's development and progression in relation to the organisational goals, and the gender variances in displayed values as defined by the society; *uncertainty avoidance* is an index for the societal tolerance and acceptance of ambiguity; and *long term orientation* represents the country's orientation towards long and/or short term development and is founded in the past-future relationship (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Conversely, Kabasakal *et al.* (2012) warned against the framing of the GLOBE, and any other cross-cultural project's, results on the analysis of data on the societal norms and practices in the Middle East. The authors argue that such stereotyping would be inadequate to provide an in-depth understanding of the cultural distinctiveness of the countries in the region and capture the ideological governance of individuals' behaviour in their personal lives, social interactions and business practices. Hence, this resurrects concerns with the inadequacy of the existing cultural classifications in helping to comprehend leadership in the UAE.

Moreover, a few authors argue that the wide generalisation of cultural characteristics is not reflective of the regional dispositions across Arabic countries, and the differences in Muslim sects (e.g., Sunni and Shi'a) within the same national boundaries in the Arabic peninsula (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002; Yahchouchi, 2009; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). In addition to being outdated (Hofstede, 1976), and offering a Western perspective of the cultural dimensions (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961, cited in Carter, 1991), further problems with Western cultural models emerge from the analysis of followers' gender

interpretations of the leadership's constituents and the decision-making behaviour in the Middle East which has not been factored in the western cultural studies (see Chapter 2). This view is supported by the findings from the ethnographic research of Baskerville (2003), who noted the possibility of the existence of more than one society and culture in the same country, such as is the case in the UAE. Even Hofstede (2011) acknowledged that his framework is not sufficient to understand the organisational cultures of diverse companies in the same country as the national cultures are exonerated by values, while the organisational cultures are defined by the practices. Thus, the individualistic-collectivistic understanding is not relevant to cosmopolitan socio-cultural environments, such as in the UAE.

Given all that has been discussed so far, the existing cultural characterisations of the UAE can be criticised on multiple grounds. *Firstly,* in theory, the UAE has been defined as a collectivistic culture with short-term orientation, high power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity features (Hofstede, 1976). A major criticism of this dimensionalisation is its methodological foundation, which is inadequate for the UAE context. For example, Hofstede's study took place between 1966 and 1974, a period during which the UAE was still forming as a sovereign nation. Additionally, the study oversimplified and generalised the cultural characteristics of the Emirates, ignoring the heterogeneity within the researched context (Baskerville, 2003). Consequently, this presents a significant barrier to understanding the cultural typology of the country and may lead to misconceptions about its cultural attributes. Although Almutairi *et al.* (2021) attempted to update Hofstede's categorisation of the Emirates by utilising a 6-factor dimensional scale for exploring the cultural characteristics of several Arab countries, the findings did not demonstrate significant differences with Hofstede's propositions. Therefore, their research failed to present a contemporary outlook on the UAE's cultural landscape. *Secondly,* the cultural characterisation of the UAE and the broad Middle Eastern region lacks consistency, depth and a contemporary outlook (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012). As Aldulaimi (2019) suggests, *'Arabic countries are arguably Islam-based communities.'* Moreover, apart from the work of Hofstede (1976) and Almutairi *et al.* (2021), major research in the area, including Hall (1976), Schwartz (1992), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1993), and GLOBE (House, 2004) have not considered the UAE, which is the context of this research. *Thirdly,* earlier inquiries have focused on studying the cultural distinctness of Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, and Morocco, presuming these societies share common cultural characteristics. Hence, the understanding of the Emirates culture has been stereotyped as a general Arab and Middle Eastern culture. Nonetheless, as

explained in Chapter 3, such views fundamentally differ from the actual religious and socio-cultural configuration of the countries in the Middle East. Therefore, outdated theoretical assumptions fail to offer a thorough understanding of the cultural contingencies that support the perception of leadership in the Emirates. Besides, economic and social developments over the last decade enabled the influx of diverse ideological and socio-behavioural backgrounds into the UAE (Forstenlechner *et al.*, 2012; Williams *et al.*, 2013; Gates, 2015). Relatedly, the limitations of previous leadership studies arise from the focus on labelling leadership under excessively broad Americo-European, Middle Eastern and Far Eastern cultural contexts (Fu *et al.*, 2008; Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012).

Therefore, the objective of the researcher is to expand upon the theoretical assumptions discussed in the previous paragraphs, with a focus on the UAE. However, due to the lack of sufficient academic research in the Emirates between 1985 and 2020, and after an extensive review of sizeable academic inquiries on the leadership in the broad Middle Eastern region, the author substantiated the cultural perspective on the leadership behaviours in the country, by analysing 34 academic publications (23 empirical and 11 theoretical) from the Middle Eastern and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, offering insights on Islamic work ethics and socio-cultural distinctness of the region. The literature review search criteria involved a systematic process of selecting relevant articles based on specific keywords related to organisational leadership in the UAE and the Middle East. Key terms such as 'leadership + united arab emirates', 'organisational leadership + UAE', 'leadership + middle east', 'organisational leadership + middle east' were used in various databases, including Scopus and EBSCO, to ensure comprehensive coverage. The selection process focused on peer-reviewed, Scopus-indexed articles published prior to 2020. Articles were then evaluated for relevance to the research aims and objectives, with emphasis on empirical studies and contributions to leadership theory in the regional context.

The articles were generated by using variations of search words combinations in the EBSCO, ProQuest, Jstor, Emerald, and Google Scholar databases. Although, by searching a combination of the words 'leadership + UAE' Jstor produced 72 articles, the majority of the generated papers were focused on exploring the phenomenon in the political context in UAE (see Appendix A). Furthermore, as evident in Appendix A, EBSCO did not reveal any information, and Emerald listed only 4 studies using the word combination 'leadership + united arab emirates' which failed to offer sufficient data for a comprehensive analysis of leadership development in the Emirates. When searching for 'organisational leadership +

UAE', only three Scopus-indexed articles were retrieved. However, collectively these publications offer only limited academic contribution to the research aims and objectives due to several shortcomings. While they provide some contextual insights, each suffers from weak theoretical integration, limited methodological rigor, and a lack of UAE-specific empirical depth. Overall, the research fall short in advancing a robust academic understanding of leadership in the UAE context. Besides, the Scopus-indexed journals (e.g., The International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 2015; European Scientific Journal, 2017; The International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion, 2019) have been criticised for weak peer-review standards and low academic standing, and therefore have had limited impact within mainstream leadership research. Additionally, no relevant articles were found in EBSCO using similar keywords (e.g., 'organisational leadership + middle east') (see Appendix A).

Despite expanding the search parameters to include variations of the leadership construct, such as 'management styles', 'arts and management', and 'behaviour' in an effort to broaden the scope to the wider Middle East, peer-reviewed journals still did not yield relevant research articles. The search for 'leadership + middle east' in ProQuest presented 11 works, while Emerald identified 66 articles within the search period. However, the research was mostly focused on the public sector, and in countries like Iran and Turkey. Therefore, these publications were not included in the analysis due to the incomparability of socio-behavioural patterns in these countries with the UAE (Aldulaimi, 2019). The work of Khan and Panarina (2017) was considered relevant to this study as their research was conducted in Pakistan. Despite not being a Middle Eastern country, Pakistan is one of the 12 nations where Islam is the official state religion and therefore, the context is comparable to this inquiry.

Table 2: Academic Research on Leadership in The Middle East (1985-2020)

Author	Country	No of Surveys
Quantitative		
Ali and Al-Shakis (1985)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)	83
Ali (1992)	KSA	117
Ali *et al.* (1995)	Morocco	236
Yousef (2001)	UAE	143
Robertson *et al.* (2001)	KSA, Kuwait, Oman	365
Kabasakal and Bodur (2002)	Arabic Cluster	243
Abu-Saad (2003)	Israel	215
Shahin and Wright (2004)	Egypt	243
Neal *et al.,* (2005)	Oman, Lebanon, UAE	320
Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006)	Iran	814
Ali and Al-Kazemi (2007)	Kuwait	397

Sabri (2008)	Jordan	120
Yahchouchi (2009)	Lebanon	158
Boussif (2009)	Tunisia	215
Yaseen (2010)	UAE	100
Marmenout (2011)	KSA, UAE	237
Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012)	UAE	490
Suliman & Al Obaidli (2013)	UAE	150
Khalifa and Ayoubi (2015)	Syria	216
Alhadid (2016)	Jordan	143
Al-Sada *et al.* (2017)	Qatar	364
Litz and Scott (2017)	UAE	247
El Haddad *et al.* (2018)	Lebanon	364
Qualitative		
Ali and Al-Owaihan (2008)	KSA, UAE, Kuwait	
Hvidt (2009)	UAE	
Mazrouei and Pech (2015)	UAE	
Mathias (2017)	UAE	
Posthuma (2011)	Egypt, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey	
Mittal and Dorfman (2012)	Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey	
Khan (2014)	UAE	
Gates (2015)	Middle East (UAE)	
Al-Barghouthi (2017)	Bahrain	
Khan and Panarina (2017)	US, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia	
Aldulaimi (2019)	Middle East	

The rationale for selecting the final 34 articles was based on the merits of their value to this research. First, whilst the humanistic element of leadership was introduced when the ideas about workplace management started (Maslow, 1968), the UAE, and most of the GCC countries, did not have a formal state status until 1971. Second, from 1971 until 1985 there was only very limited interest in the academic literature on leadership behaviour in the UAE and the Gulf region (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). As demonstrated in Table 2 (above), research into the UAE, and the broad Middle Eastern cultural context, started to emerge more intensely after 1985. Third, the modification of the criteria for finding data that are relevant to the research objectives was prompted by the author uncovering a considerable amount of politically oriented, rather than organisational leadership papers. Fourth, since the academic interest in the Emirates is limited, the author had to consider research on leadership that has been investigated in surrounding Arabic countries which are sociologically and demographically analogous to the UAE cultural environment.

As evident in Table 2, due to its inconsistency and low-maturity level, analysis of the published research yielded fragmented results on leadership styles in the Middle East, and the UAE, in particular. Although

inspired by the preceding cultural theorisations of leadership, research in the region expanded the cross-cultural theoretical paradigms on leadership (House *et al.*, 2004; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002; Karacay *et al.*, 2018), it is assumed that the unique socio-cultural context of the Emirates may reveal significant variations of the egalitarian philosophical paradigm of leadership behaviours, including AL. This necessitates further investigation of the complex cultural context in the UAE, which has not been explored by existing cross-cultural studies (House *et al.*, 2004).

Besides, further expansion of leadership studies exposed the misconception of the global applicability of leadership styles as defined by the Western cultural perspective (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). These views are supported by research from the Middle East which exposed contradictory interpretations of certain leadership behaviours. For example, the transformational leadership behaviour of Tunisian managers is perceived as '*existential*' and '*egocentric'* (Boussif, 2009), while the employees in other Middle Eastern countries appreciate the higher levels of '*empathy'* and '*humility'* in the transformational leadership (Mittal and Dorfman, 2012). Furthermore, the findings evidenced a preference for the pseudo-consultative styles which are associated with the collectivistic manner of living in the Muslim community and the Islamic and tribalistic values and beliefs (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Greaves, 2012). Additionally, often in the Arabic culture, charismatic leadership is perceived as an individualised quality establishing a reference to the '*authoritative',* or *'relational'* leadership approaches towards increasing followers' empowerment and motivation*,* as opposed to the '*social'* identification in the West (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1996; Howell and Shamir, 2005).

Therefore, the widening gap in the existing research on the cultural contingencies of leadership behaviour has gained increasing interest among academics and requires revisions of the empirical validations of past perceptions (Lewis, 2006; Euwema *et al.*, 2007; Shahin and Wright, 2004; Slabu *et al.*, 2014; Khan and Panarina, 2017). Nevertheless, globalisation and changes in demographic compositions have led to the development of heterogeneous cultures across national borders, as is the case in the UAE. Thus, outdated cultural contextualisations of leadership fail to address the individual's cultural values and norms within the collective cultural context where this person operates (Whitehead and Brown, 2011). In theory, culture is realised on an individual's psychological level and therefore is subjected to constant change. Hence, the investigation of individuals' interpretations of the leadership domain is vital for understanding the cultural background of the phenomenon, including AL.

3.4 Authentic Leadership

3.4.1 Constituents of Authenticity

The evolution of AL and the realisation of the associated lexicon in the Middle Eastern context, are central to this research. Historically, the aphorism '*authenticity*', or '*know thyself*' as we know it, originated in ancient Greece (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). In theory, exploration of the moral and ethical dimensions of the leadership originated in the philosophical work of Plato (Howell and Shamir, 2005). In their works, Greek philosophers argued the importance of being in control of your own life through self-realisation, which is imperative for an individual's success (Kernis and Goldman, 2006). Hence, the commonly spread etymology of the word in the literature is '*genuine*', '*original*', '*not a fake*'. In addition, according to Trilling (2009) authenticity is defined through the translation of the Greek word '*authento*' which also means '*to have full power*' and '*authoritative*', thus exposing the dualistic nature of authenticity from an etymological perspective.

By contrast, in the Arabic language there is no substitute for, or equivalent to, authenticity. The Arabic words '*alasalah*' and '*asli*' (أصلي) mean '*original*' or '*real*', offering overlapping definitions of being genuine and having authority at the same time. The Arabic word '*mawthuq*' (موثوق) has a similar meaning, namely '*valid*', '*credible*', '*reliable*' and '*trustworthy*' in Arabic and Farsi, but also '*dependable*' and '*authoritative*' (Ali, 1992; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002).

Additionally, from a gender perspective, the meaning of the word authentic exposes contradictory interpretations across collectivistic and individualistic cultural clusters (George, 2003; Shahin and Wright, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2014). Evidence suggests that '*authentic*' for both genders in the Far East could mean '*self-disclosure*' (Li *et al.*, 2014); while in the Middle East, women's understanding of authenticity suggests '*interdependence*', as opposed to men's definition of the word as an '*independence*' within the same cultural context (Karacay, Ertenu and Kabasakal, 2018). In theory, gender perceptions of authenticity expand the socio-cultural foundation of the phenomenon in the Middle East (Karacay, Ertenu and Kabasakal, 2018).

In addition to its etymological foundations, the concept of authenticity shares similarities with the fundamentals of traits and situational contingencies from the theoretical perspectives examined.

Extended academic and practitioners' assumptions have defined authenticity as personality (e.g. 'trait') and as situational (e.g. 'state') (Slabu *et al.*, 2014). According to these authors, 'trait' authenticity is concerned with an individual's self-awareness and has been viewed as self-esteem, self-regard, self-consistency, self-congruence, self-knowledge, and self-determination (Slabu *et al.*, 2014); while several academics have defined 'state' authenticity in relation to diverse contextual contingencies (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). While the trait perspective suggests individuals' desire for sound self-awareness, state authenticity remains congruent with work-related situations and is irrelevant to demographic clusters (Slabu *et al.*, 2014). In addition, research carried out by Slabu *et al.* (2014) claims trait authenticity as a stable attribute, and therefore, universal, as opposed to state authenticity, which was defined as a changeable construct, positing the academic outlook within the *Universalist* vs *Relativist* categorisation. By contrast, the Muslim standpoint suggests consistency in traits and behaviours as prescribed by Islamic ideology (Ali and Al-Shakis, 1985; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). Further efforts to determine whether authenticity is a universal construct affirmed the perception of authenticity as a personal attribute within the individualistic cultural dominions, where people disclosed independent views of self-awareness. By contrast, in collectivistic perceptions, accredited to Eastern countries, authenticity is perceived as a relational outcome (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). Although there is insufficient empirical evidence to support this, researchers from the Middle East have highlighted the centrality of interpersonal relationships in the emergence and nature of authenticity in the region (Obeidat *et al.*, 2012; Marinakou and Nikolic, 2016; Al-Barghouthi, 2017).

Relatedly, Arabic perceptions of authenticity draw similarities with the culturally centred outlook in the Far East, where group members are highly concerned with the social interactions (Wang and Hsieh, 2013). Being categorised by Hofstede (2010) as a collectivist culture, individuals' interpretations from China disclosed the understanding of authenticity as a measure of self-abandonment for the betterment of others, which draws similarities with the expectations of servant-type leadership behaviour in the Middle East (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). Expanding on previous research claims that an individual's authenticity is contingent upon culture and society (Erickson, 1995), in their research in Germany and China Kokkoris and Kühnen (2014) further affirmed significant cultural differences in individuals' perceptions of authenticity. According to the authors, perceptions of authenticity are defined by the self-expression norms within a distinct cultural context. They argue that an individual's authenticity is

recognised only when one's self-expression aligns with the culturally valued norms within society. For example, Chinese participants presented behaviours that allowed them to fit into the social environment. Besides, they were willing to moderate their expressions only to those who were in-group members (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). Moreover, the authentic leader's ability to exhibit self-confidence, while at the same time questioning one's capabilities and knowledge, demonstrated low levels of self-centeredness, and scored high in the followers' definitions of authenticity in that country (Whitehead and Brown, 2011). Thus, the meaning individuals accredit to authenticity could mean very different things and suggest dissimilar evaluation of qualities across global socio-cultural clusters. However, it is unknown how individuals in the UAE define authenticity and what ascriptions they associate with the phenomenon as the concept has not been previously researched in this context. Interestingly, the Chinese participants easily accepted the dualism and complex paradoxes regarding AL practices, since the Chinese cultural context is a complex landscape which is influenced by multiple religious and cultural philosophies (Whitehead and Brown, 2011). While for Muslims, the consistency of the leader's behaviour is governed by fixed religious beliefs as presented by Islam (Shahin and Wright, 2004). Hence, the understanding of authenticity necessitates further exploration with insights from the Emirates.

Nevertheless, authenticity does not have to be explained only from an etymological perspective. Considering the above etymological background, we can interpret the concept of authenticity as being comprised of both linguistic elements and behavioural antecedents. As outlined in Figure 2 (below), authenticity can be projected by reference to the visible constituents of the concept which then leads to behaviours (the upper observable dimension of authenticity). However, some constituent parts of authenticity cannot be experienced or seen, and they form the lower and hidden core of the authenticity iceberg.

Authentic Behaviour Iceberg
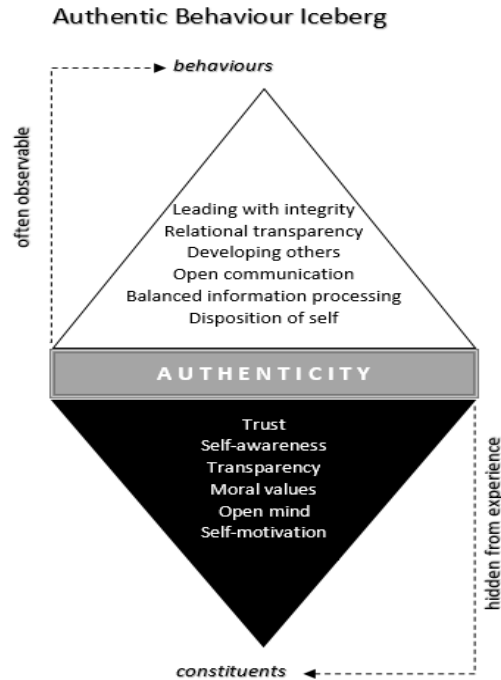
Figure 2: The Authentic Behaviour Iceberg

3.4.2 Models of Authentic Leadership

According to Northouse (2016), academic approaches to conceptualising AL can be categorised as: *intrapersonal* (e.g., self-awareness, self-regulation), *interpersonal* (e.g., relations with followers and their reciprocity), and *developmental* (e.g., lifetime experiences). In turn, these represent the two key research-evidenced methodologies: practical and theoretical.

3.4.2.1 The Practical Perspective

Instigated by George (2003), the practical approach towards defining the novelty of AL outlined the principal dimensions of the domain by matching each leadership virtue with the corresponding ascription. For example, purpose is aligned with *passion*, values correspond to *behaviour*, relationships are associated with *connectedness*, self-discipline is understood as *consistency*, and heart aligns with *compassion*. This framework emphasises the genuine sense of purpose of authentic leaders and the associated intrinsic inspirational and self-motivational drives for achieving their goals (George *et al.*, 2007). The social value of the complex model, developed from a practitioner's viewpoint, facilitates an in-depth understanding of leaders' own values, and highlights the required behaviours for sustaining and acting upon these values without compromising their moral compass in a challenging situation

(Northouse, 2019). According to George (2015) authentic leaders have a distinctive understanding of their personal and social identification, a clear idea of their purpose and goals, as well as knowing what the right thing is to do to achieve these goals. Further, these leaders can confront diverse situations as an opportunity to further develop their values and bounce back from personal adversaries.

While scholars have questioned a leader's authenticity, arguing authentic leaders depend on charisma and lack true personality (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010), George (2015) argues that the leader's authenticity transpires in the genuine leadership behaviour. Therefore, AL stands out as a leadership behaviour concerned with the development of followers, elevating the leader-follower relationship beyond the conservative hierarchal structure.

3.4.2.2 The Theoretical Perspective

Various academic approaches have attempted to validate the foundations of AL: (1) from the intrapersonal perspective, focused on the centrality of the leader and the individual's self-awareness (Shamir and Eilam, 2005); (2) as an interpersonal process, focused on the relational interactions with the followers and the reciprocal dyadic processes (Gardner *et al.,* 2005); and (3) from the development perspective, focused on the continuous development of positive psychological abilities and moral values through life experiences (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Northouse, 2019). Additionally, some researchers have proposed AL as a set of relatively stable traits, constructed around the self-psychological inter-subjectivism and interpersonal resilience (Sheldon *et al.*, 1997; Slabu *et al.*, 2014), while others defined the domain by emphasising the self-reflection and inner confidence (Luthans and Lester, 2006).

The *intrapersonal* perspective which originated in the work of Shamir and Eilam (2005) adopted the life-story approach of defining AL. According to the authors, the unique personal experiences of leaders in a distinct socio-cultural context are decisive for the individual's value system, the degree of self-knowledge and self-concept accuracy, and the blend of person-role features. Hence, the theoretical propositions of Shamir and Eilam (2005) conceptualised the authentic leader's performance as self-expression rather than position-driven and therefore, framed them as a genuine act. In a similar view, Pearce (2003) claimed that the unique personal encounters and development rationalise the person-role unification and validate the emergence of the authentic leader's vision and social purpose in the organisation. Thus,

authentic leaders are characterised with a high degree of self-efficacy and ownership of the leadership role in the organisation, and therefore, display genuine leadership behaviours.

Although the life-story dimension of leadership identifies a new academic approach to understanding AL, the ambiguity of the life-stories' impact on the leadership self-concept draws parallels with the trait theories of leadership and necessitates further exploration of the proposed paradigm. Additionally, criticism has focused on the fluidness of AL qualities and highlighted academics' concerns over the possibility of perceiving authentic leaders as possessing rigid and self-contained personalities (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). Heightened self-control suggests intensified self-centeredness which could constrict the individual's objective self-cognisance (Burke *et al.*, 2006; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). Therefore, some authors emphasise the importance of authentic leaders manifesting flexible and adaptable behaviour (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). Further critical feedback on the life-story concept, from the organisational performance perspective, highlights the centrality of the leader's personality over the leader's behaviours (Hoy and Henderson, 1983), and raises concerns with authentic leaders' efforts in developing authentic followers (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, Gardiner (2011) points out the lack of assessment of issues related to gender and power and warns against the privileges stemming from an individual's self-awareness of positional rank, over relationships in the organisations.

However, these arguments failed to acknowledge the fact that sound self- and social-awareness is not exclusive personality-centeredness, but a leadership behaviour developed on solid Emotional Intelligence (EI), which is an imperative quality for successful contemporary leadership (Goleman, 2000). Moreover, the integration of self-awareness with social awareness promotes greater knowledge of personal and social identity within the unique collective practices, as it is plausible to assume that leadership authenticity exists separately from the socio-cultural contingencies (Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2018). Finally, most academic debates have ignored the moral component of AL in their arguments (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). According to Avolio *et al.* (2004), although AL is a complex composition of personal traits and leadership behaviour, it goes deeper, exploring not only the behaviours linked to the leadership style but also the leaders' self-awareness and their ability to use this understanding to learn alongside and foster the development of their followers.

From an *interpersonal* perspective, Eagly (2005) claimed that AL is founded on the reciprocity of the leader-followers interactions, where the followers' response assumes centrality to the process. Relatedly, Gardner *et al.* (2005) perceive AL as an integrated leader's and followers' development. Further, the exploration of followers' participation in the leadership processes has directed academic inquiries towards discussing the outcomes of the leader-followers relational dyad. In line with this view, the relationship between AL behaviour and followers' attitudes, behaviours, and performance has influenced the conceptualisation of the dyadic realisation of AL (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). In addition, followers' authenticity has been central to recent academic studies, and AL practices for developing followers' authenticity have renewed the typology of the traditional dyadic structure (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014).

In theory, the *developmental* perspective of AL has been supported in several academic publications (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). These authors' propositions are underpinned by the assumptions of continuous development of AL qualities over a lifetime and, therefore, claim the nurturing nature of the AL behaviour (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). According to May *et al.* (2003), the ethical behaviour and moral capacity of authentic leaders is a developmental process, matured through individuals' life experiences. Hence, these leaders are able to recognise and react to moral dilemmas in the organisational setting in a genuine manner.

An additional model of the AL is proposed by Beddoes-Jones (2013), who focuses on the interaction of two meta-categories: the '*psychological-self*', which refers to self-awareness and self-regulation, and the '*philosophical-self*', which is found in leaders' moral virtues and behaviours and therefore, draws similarities with the conceptualisation by Walumbwa *et al.* (2008). Furthermore, the methodological perspective of Avolio and Gardner (2005) associates AL with positive forms of leadership. Similarly, Ilies *et al.* (2005), Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Luthans *et al.* (2007) all instigate the AL framework on the premises of positive psychological capital. This supports the assumptions of the ability of authentic leaders to promote followers' self-efficacy, optimism in future success, determination, and achievements, despite the challenges and adversaries (e.g. resilience). At the centre of this theorising is an analysis of the impact of AL behaviours on followers' well-being and happiness, and the authentic leader's genuine ability to inspire positive psychological capacity in followers (George *et al.*, 2007). Further research, which conceptualises AL processes in terms of motivating and increasing employees'

self-esteem for achieving business outcomes, affirmed the interlinkage between AL and the tenets of the psychological capital (Luthans *et al.*, 2007; Carolina *et al.*, 2010). Based on this alignment, Campbell (2005), Lloyd-Walker and Walker (2011), and van den Bosch and Taris (2014) all raise the notion of the global applicability and universal transferability of AL. Additional support for this view is offered by the reasoning of 'state' authenticity, which suggests a strong correlation between the person's true-self and performance when the organisational environment fits with the individual's core values and beliefs, and the individual is in agreement with the organisational environment. Therefore, although Slabu *et al.* (2014) argue that authenticity is a universal phenomenon, the authors emphasise the contingency of the concept upon distinct cultural norms.

The logic in the above theoretical and pragmatic models is to define AL as both (1) a sustainable leadership practice that originates in an individual's values and moral beliefs, and (2) a strategy for establishing trust and credibility with the followers (Avolio *et al.,* 2004, p. 806). Expanding on Bass (1990) and in an attempt to conceptualise the authentic leader's flexibility and ethical behaviour, while navigating through business ambiguity and leading the organisational change, some researchers frame the construct as transformational leadership with added ethical values (Lloyd-Walker and Walker, 2011). Both management consultants (George, 2003) and academics (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; May *et al.*, 2003; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004; Avolio and Gardner, 2005) aspire to provide an integrated theoretical framework, but to date, there is still no mature and agreed definition and theory of AL. Arguments around the varying intensity of distinct AL dimensions establish guideposts for diverse theorising, including the notions of AL being an *ethically neutral* behaviour. However, George (2003) strongly rejects such a notion, stating that the sustainable social value of AL emerges from genuine leadership behaviour and authentic relationships with followers. Relatedly, Avolio *et al.* (2004) and Liu *et al.* (2007) claim that by being flexible and adaptable, promoting trust and psychological safety in the relational dyad, authentic leaders facilitate a safe emotional environment for followers' creative ideas and innovation. Moreover, authentic leaders are engaged with followers' development towards achieving their own authenticity, which in turn, could promote the organisation's authenticity.

The academically defined model of AL suggests four constituents of the authentic leadership construct related to an individual's self-awareness, transparency of leader-followers' relations, balanced processing of information, and internalised moral values (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). This model was

subsequently enhanced by affiliating it with behavioural integrity (Leroy *et al.*, 2012), moral fundamentals (May *et al.*, 2003), and ethical behaviour (Zhu *et al.*, 2004; Shin, 2012). Meanwhile, some academics (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005), debate the ethical and moral foundations of AL behaviour. However, a major drawback in their arguments is the omission of sound moral grounds for the leader's self-awareness. Conversely, these researchers' definition of AL rejects the statement that AL is morally impartial (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Nonetheless, theoretical conceptualisations of the construct in from social psychology affirmed the association of AL with high levels of an individual's emotional, intellectual, and moral development (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Kernis and Goldman, 2006). According to George (2003) the comprehensive AL framework provides an innovative approach to operationalising leadership qualities into management practices which is celebrated by practitioners as employers realise the value of trust-based and authentic relationships with employees. Lastly, the philosophical propositions for the moral growth of leaders stem from the undeniable impact that leadership ethics have on broad social and business collaborations (May *et al.*, 2003; Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Zhu *et al.*, 2004).

As demonstrated in Figure 3 (below), despite academic efforts to introduce multilevel leadership models in the post-AL framework, these are ultimately built on the fundamentals of the relational transparency and moral internalisation dimensions of AL (Uhl-bien *et al.*, 2007). What makes AL a sustainable leadership model, and its applicability to the socio-cultural and business context of the UAE, is to be explored further in this research, but empirical data suggest that contemporary theories developed after 2003 are still conceptualised around the groundbreaking foundation of the AL framework (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009; Gillet and Vandenberghe, 2014). Therefore, the cognitive, relational, emotional, and social awareness, ethical and moral physiognomies of AL posit the domain as a reciprocal base point for defining the leadership paradox.
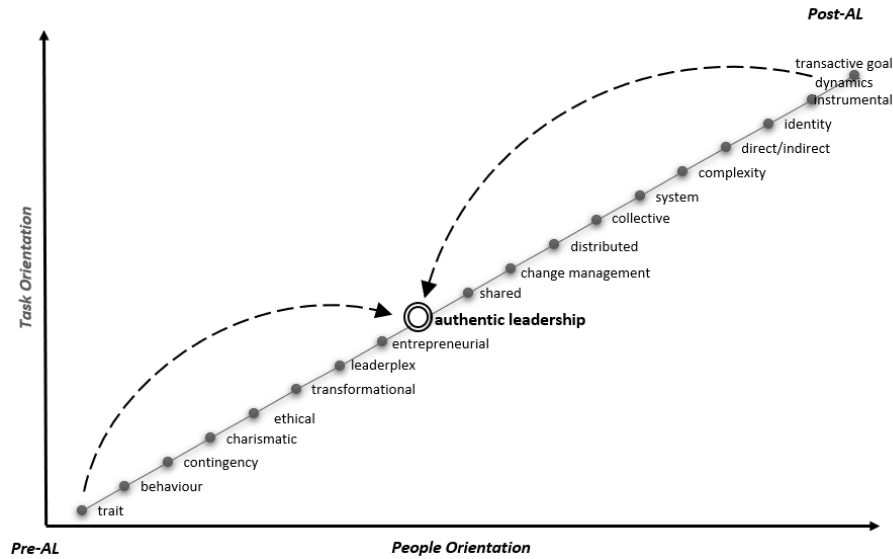
Figure 3: Reciprocity of Leadership Theorisation

As evident in Figure 3, all leadership models developed post-AL are constructed on the academic propositions for distributing and sharing leadership among organisational units; thus, establishing complex approaches to defining the leadership behaviours as a reflection of the demanding business operations of the 21st Century (Spillane *et al.*, 2004; Uhl-bien *et al.*, 2007; Pearce *et al.*, 2008; Heifetz *et al.*, 2009; Antonakis & House, 2014). What unites the contemporary leadership theory is the foundation of their key constituents, which underscores the importance of sound moral values and therefore, highlights the operational functionality of the AL taxonomy. Further research on the evolving taxonomy of the AL domain will validate the notion of reciprocity of the construct and will enhance the theoretical framework by providing evidence from the UAE.

3.4.3 Authentic Leadership Taxonomy

According to Yukl *et al.* (2002), the disagreement between researchers on the set of behaviours that are universal and meaningful to leaders does not allow for a cohesive leadership taxonomy. In theory, some leadership taxonomies are focused on the leader's traits and values (Allport, 1961; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1975; Weber, 1978), while others underline leadership practices for achieving organisational outcomes (Bass, 1985;Yukl, 2013). However, the distinctiveness of the AL taxonomy lies in its unique blend of: (1)

ownership of an individual's experiences, values, emotions, and beliefs; and (2) a genuine act on one's true self (Harter, 2002).

The review undertaken has discussed the evolution of the AL taxonomy as a convergence of several broad leadership dimensions. Kernis (2003) perceived authenticity as awareness, unbiased processing, action, and relational domain of one's true self. Further enhancements of Kernis's model framed AL as a composite construct of self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behaviour and actions, and authentic relational orientation (Ilies *et al.*, 2005). In an attempt to integrate various viewpoints and definitions, Gardner *et al.* (2005) established five key descriptors of AL: self-awareness, relational transparency, objective analysis of the information, internal self-regulation, and morally directed leadership behaviour. Building upon previous frameworks, Walumbwa *et al.* (2008) merged internalised regulation (e.g. authentic behaviour) with positive moral direction to establish the core dimensions of AL. Researchers rationalised their strategy with the overlapping conceptualisations of behaviour consistent with the individual's moral values and norms as defined by self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Therefore, the AL taxonomy suggests four distinguished features of the construct: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalised moral perspective (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). Relatedly, Walumbwa *et al.* (2008) defined self-awareness as an individual cognisance of one's self-understanding. Balanced processing addresses the leader's ability to make informed decisions based on objective analyses of data and soliciting diverse views. The distinct features of the relational transparency dimension promote leader-follower relationships, established on trust, positive emotions, open communication and information sharing. The internalised moral perspective defines the core values and beliefs guiding the leader's behaviour and enables ethical decision-making and relations with the stakeholders.

Some theoretical propositions on leadership developed before AL was established could be considered as precursors to the AL taxonomy, including Emotional and Social Intelligence (ESI) (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Harter, 2002). The ESI acumen of the genuine leaders governs leadership behaviour associated with positive conflict management and transforming it into an efficient organisational strategy (Boyatzis & Gaskin, 2015). In this view, personal competence is a unique combination of self-awareness and self-management, while social competence aids the individual's social awareness and relational processes (Goleman, 2000). Therefore, according to Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) AL behaviour demonstrates the

leaders' ability to reflect upon their own mistakes, and through objective reflection to self-develop and self-manage, while being transparent about it with their followers. Additionally, the strong correlation between social awareness capacity and relationship management is central to the relational transparency aspect of AL (Segal, 2008; Nadler, 2010). In this line of academic thought, the ESI aptitudes of authentic leaders are considered a great predictor of leadership success (Mayer and Salovey, 1993; Goleman, 2000; Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2018). Advanced research on AL augmented the AL lexicon by including altruism (Brown *et al.,* 2005), honesty (Brown *et al.*, 2005; Kouzes and Posner, 2012), self-expression and self-determination (Shamir and Eilam, 2005), and behavioural integrity (Leroy *et al.*, 2012).

Despite its positive outlook, Gardner *et al.* (2011) highlight the descriptive nature of the AL taxonomy and the lack of association with corresponding behaviours. This prevents direct measurement of associated practices and organisational achievements, such as OR, as outcomes of AL behaviour. Additionally, Northouse (2019), recommends more extensive theorisation on the moral aspect of the AL concerning the interaction between the leaders' ethical and moral guideposts, and the other AL constituents. Inevitably, the question would be whether there is an integration between moral behavioural features as well as the other dimensions of AL practices. Therefore, despite researchers' efforts to enhance the AL taxonomy, the topic is still in its initial conceptual stage. Besides, academics have failed to validate its applicability and relevance to different socio-cultural contexts. As per Hofstede and Minkov (2011), cultural values can significantly influence leadership practices. In this view, it is reasonable to assume that the distinct socio-behavioural standards will direct social behaviour in both informal and formal (organisational) settings, and thereby, influence followers' perceptions of AL constituents. The dearth of empirical research on AL in different cultural contexts demands further exploration of the phenomenon that will expand the existing taxonomy and establish a multilevel framework of the concept. Moreover, the unique personal values and beliefs, which are central to the AL taxonomy, may have a significant impact on the emergence of the AL style and function as criteria for the applicability of AL in distinct cultural landscapes.

3.4.4 Cross-cultural Exploration of Authentic Leadership

Diverse schools of thought have examined the leadership paradox in distinctive cultural settings and initiated the academic dialogue on the cross-cultural congruence of AL (Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Avolio and Mhatre, 2012; Politis, 2013; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). However, as evident in the following paragraphs, the interest in investigating AL in the Middle East did not appear to begin until 2013. Notably, the summary of scholarly publications on AL pre-2010 displayed in Table 3 (below) evidence the dominance of the Western socio-cultural perspective of the research: US (74.9%), followed by Canada (7.9%), Australia (4.4%) and the UK (3.4%) (Gardner *et al.*, 2011).

Table 3: Research on AL before 2010 by Country

Number of publications	203	%
United States	152	74.9%
Canada	16	7.9%
Australia	9	4.4%
United Kingdom	7	3.4%
Singapore	6	3.0%
Switzerland	3	1.5%
Israel	2	1.0%
Finland	2	1.0%
Trinidad and Tobago	1	0.5%
Spain	1	0.5%
Pakistan	1	0.5%
New Zealand	1	0.5%
France	1	0.5%
China	1	0.5%

Note. Adapted from Gardner *et al.* (2011)

Even though the evolving interest of scholars towards practice-oriented testing of AL theory in the organisational setting expanded academic interest into wider cultural contexts, it was still limited to North American, European and, partially, to the Far Eastern cultural environments as demonstrated in the following Table 4 (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Darvish and Rezaei, 2011; Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Nielsen, 2013; Roof, 2014; Miao *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, Table 4 (below) illustrates the emphasis on quantitative research and the increased interest in evaluating the AL framework, seeking empirical validation of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) between 2003 and 2012.

Table 4: Cross-cultural Empirical Testing of Authentic Leadership (2003-2012)

Study authors		Country	Number of Participants
George (2003)		US	125
Walumbwa (2008)	Study 1, population 1	US	224
	Study 1, population 2	China	212
	Study 2	US	178
	Study 3	Kenya	478
Caza, *et al.* (2010)		New Zealand	960
Darvish and Rezaei (2011)		Iran	80
Wang and Bird (2011)		US	917
Leroy (2012)		Belgium	252
Peus, *et al.* (2012)		Germany	306
Qian *et al.* (2012)		China	237
Wong and Laschinger (2012)		Canada	280

Note. Adapted from Roof (2014)

The rapid rise in academic efforts in practice-oriented testing of the AL's dimensions is not a surprise, as the ALQ is the earliest comprehensive instrument, developed to measure the AL construct. Its dimensions were inspired by the 16-item scale introduced by of Ilies *et al.* (2005) in their multidimensional framework. Since its development in 2008 by Walumbwa *et al.* (2008), researchers' efforts have been focused on assessing the instrument's validity and reliability, as well as measuring AL dimensions. In an attempt to improve the performance and cost efficiency of the ALQ, Neider & Schriesheim (2011) presented the 6-factor model of the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI), later followed by the development of the Authentic Leadership Integrated Questionnaire (AL-IQ), by Levesque-Côté *et al.* (2018). However, as highlighted in Table 4 (above), out of 4249 participants, only 80 were from Iran (2%), 972 (22%) were from other ascribed collectivistic cultures such as Kenya and China, while 3242 (76%) were from countries with individualistic-oriented behaviour cultures. The underrepresentation of data from the Middle East in these studies, and the lack of qualitative exploration of AL in terms of cultural variances is markedly noticeable.

Although some studies supported the ALQ's reliability and the transferability of measurement criteria in various cultural contexts, the inquiries failed to demonstrate variances of the AL taxonomy in different cultural domains (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Roof, 2014). This highlighted the necessity of further validation of the ALQ in diverse demographic clusters. Discernably, existing academic inquiries and practitioners' assumptions lacked an understanding of the dimensions of the cultural contingencies defining the AL

domain. For example, according to Li *et al.* (2014), there is still extremely limited knowledge of the materialisation of the AL in the Far Eastern environment. Therefore, to avoid Western cultural biases, Whitehead and Brown (2011) suggested utilising more diverse methods for understanding the concept, as opposed to empirical testing which is restricted to one instrument (e.g. ALQ). They recommended a qualitative methodology for exploring followers' perceptions and interpretations of the constituents defining the AL construct, particularly the self-expression dimension. Based on the key findings of their study in China, they claimed that the perceptions of authenticity are enhanced when there is an alignment of the self-expression with the default, culturally determined self-expression norms in the concerned context. This enables consistent substantive premises for defining authenticity from a diverse cultural perspective (Whitehead and Brown, 2011).

To add to the cross-cultural perspective of Gardner *et al.* 's (2011) and Roof's (2014) quantitative studies, an additional thirteen years of published research on AL between 2007 and 2020 has been reviewed. These publications have not been analysed by recognised academic experts. As demonstrated in Table 5, the investigative review of literature yield data from an additional 42 studies, focusing on the adequacy of the AL framework in diverse country contexts, and representing academic analysis from a wider cultural perspective. Based on the updated list of global studies on AL, presented in Table 5 (below), only seven (17%) researched AL in the wider Middle East region and just six (14%) in the UAE. Noticeably, quantitative analysis was the research methodology of choice in thirty-eight publications, contributing to 90% of data collection, while the qualitative research methods were utilised in only three (7%) of the studies. Lastly, there was only one publication based on a mixed research methodology.

Furthermore, out of 640 participants from the Emirates, only 4 contributed to the qualitative research (e.g., 3 in the research by Karacay *et al.* (2018), and 1 in the study of Saleh and Shaker (2020) which makes less than 1% (0.6%) of the total data collected on AL in the UAE. This critical analysis of publications on AL exposes a significant gap in the exploration of unique features of AL in diverse demographics, which would enable a cohesive cross-cultural cognisance of the phenomenon not only in the UAE but also in wider cultural contexts. Additionally, this academic research lacks any substantive evidence to support the theoretical claims of a positive correlation between AL behaviour and organisational outcomes, such as OR.

Hence, the results from the UAE are insufficient to demonstrate the adequacy of the application of the Western-centered AL behavioural model to the local context. This is because the primary focus of the researchers has been to assess the application of an established model of AL behaviour as opposed to exploring the constituents of AL, as perceived by the employees, and these individuals' interpretations of their personal experiences with AL practices in the UAE. It is evident that the research from a cross-cultural perspective, specifically focusing on the Middle East, has not matured yet and there is a need to fill the gap with further exploration of the emergence and operationalisation of AL in the region.

Table 5: Cross-cultural Research of Authentic Leadership (2007-2020)

Study authors		Countries studied	Number of Participants	Research Methodology
Liu *et al.* (2007)		China	725	quantitative
Wong and Laschinger (2013)		Canada	280	quantitative
Lloyd-Walker and Walker (2011)		Australia	10	qualitative interview
Whitehead and Brown (2011)		China	200	quantitative
Hassan and Ahmed (2011)		Malaysia	395	quantitative (ALQ)
Darvish and Rezaei (2011)		Iran	80	quantitative
Hmieleski *et al.* (2012)		US	181	quantitative
Robinson *et al.* (2012)		US/UK/Russia	628	quantitative
Nielsen (2013)		Norway	594	quantitative
Wang and Hsieh (2013)		Taiwan	386	quantitative
Černe *et al.* (2013)		Slovenia	312	quantitative
Nielsen *et al.* (2013)		Norway, Sweden	293	quantitative
Politis (2013)		UAE	181	quantitative
Steffens *et al.* (2014)	Study 2	China	338	quantitative (ALQ)
Zhou *et al.* (2014)		China	388	quantitative (ALQ)
Li *et al.* (2014)	Study 1	China	199	quantitative
	Study 2	China	170	quantitative
Kokkoris and Kühnen (2014)	Study 1	Germany	73	quantitative
	Study 2	China	87	quantitative
Pavlovic (2015)		Serbia, Montenegro	227	quantitative
Ahmad *et al.* (2015)		Pakistan	302	quantitative
Kiersch and Byrne (2015)		US	187	quantitative
Datta and Gupta (2015)		India	324	quantitative (ALQ)
Steffens *et al.* (2016)	Study 1	Australia	73	quantitative
	Study 2	Australia	254	quantitative
Gatling *et al.* (2016)		US	236	quantitative
Peus *et al.* (2016)		Germany	306	quantitative (ALQ)
Marinakou and Nikolic (2016)		Bahrain	447	quantitative (ALQ)
Saeed *et al.* (2016)		UAE	189	quantitative (ALQ)
Akhras (2016)		Lebanon and MENA	90	mixed method
Sabha (2016)		US/UAE	42	quantitative
Xu *et al.* (2017)		Taiwan	491	quantitative
Erkutlu and Chafra (2017)		Turkey	1193	quantitative
Azanza *et al.* (2018)		Spain	130	quantitative

Karacay *et al.* (2018)	10 ME Countries, incl. UAE	105	qualitative (interview)
Fotohabadi and Kelly (2018)	US	65	quantitative (ALQ)
Elrehail *et al.* (2018)	Jordan	173	quantitative
Lux and Mao (2019)	Australia	285	quantitative
Mira and Odeh (2019)	KSA	212	quantitative
Samkari and David (2019)	UAE	245	quantitative
Saleh and Shaker (2020)	UAE	1	qualitative (case study)
Novitasari *et al.* (2020)	Indonesia	231	quantitative (ALQ)

3.4.5 Authentic Leadership-Followers Dyad in Organisations

As evident in the extant leadership literature, the influence of followers' experiential interpretations of the constituents defining AL behaviours is fundamental to the conceptual framework of AL (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). Initially, defined as passive receivers, reactive to the leadership style, the characterisation of followers' participation in the leadership domain gradually progressed to a dyadic relationship (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Hernandez *et al.,* 2011), an integrative union (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008), and as an independent enabler of leadership behaviour in organisations (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2007). Noticeably, despite attempts to rationalise leader-follower interdependency, the limited research into this relationship is palpable, as the leader is still considered the focal point of research. Due to this shortcoming, leadership research fails to reflect upon the dynamic influence of employees' individual cognitive maturity, and cultural and behavioural characteristics (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014). According to some authors, the theoretical evidence on the correlation between leadership qualities and processes, and how these mechanisms promote positive behaviour in followers has not been sufficient to justify the perceived relational outcomes (Kuratko and Hornsby, 1998; Antonakis and Day, 2011; Fitzsimons *et al.,* 2016). For example, charismatic, ethical, and transformational leaders can influence followers' behaviour and empower them to follow leaders' vision, but the leadership practices may not reflect the moral values of the followers and the leaders. Another argument could be that although these leaders are self-aware, and in control of their personality traits, there is no evidence that their management styles are altruistic, that the relationships with followers are genuine and built on trust as is the case with AL behaviour (Brown, 2003).

From the Western school of thought, the dynamic properties of AL influence followers' positive behaviour and develop authentic followers by encouraging and supporting them in their self-discovery

and self-determination (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014). In addition, AL is said to enable horizontal leadership behaviours across employees' teams that generate inclusive leadership processes, encompassing all organisational components (Leroy *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, followers feel integrated into leadership processes and empowered towards innovation when they share the same values as the leader which is a main quality of the AL (Eagly, 2005). According to Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) authentic leaders openly communicate the organisational vision, share information, demonstrate values related to the wider community, and therefore inspire follower's participation in the organisational agenda. In this view, it is argued that AL behaviour enables collective learning and greater OCB. Thus, AL behaviour is concerned with employee development as a strategy for motivating higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance rather than the perceived outcomes (Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Within this outlook, Avolio and Walumbwa (2014) assert that empirical investigations indicate that authentic leaders and followers engage in reciprocal interactions that facilitate the cultivation and maturation of authenticity in both parties. Consequently, these interactions foster the establishment of authentic relationships, characterised by reinforced authenticity within and between leaders and followers. Hence, distinct leadership behaviours define the dyadic nature of the leader-followers relationship (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017). AL processes are perceived to promote intrinsic motivation, invoking the followers' internalisation of the leader's and organisation's vision and values. This creates an iterative environment for inspiring innovation which could be associated with the reinventing and rebounding processes of OR.

Ultimately, the essential constituent of AL is the genuine concern with the legitimate internal causes of employees' performance which is mandatory behaviour in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century; thus, placing AL in the resonance category of leadership behaviour (Boyatzis and Gaskin, 2015). Additional academic data suggest a higher value of organisational outcomes when employees trust the leaders (Brynard, 2018). However, some scholars argue the mediating role of trust as an enabler of productive employees' behaviour (Brown, 2003; Joseph and Winston, 2005; Northouse, 2012). Therefore, measuring the trust-value among employees and the leader will establish if that leader's behaviour is genuine. Furthermore, additional inquiries into the subject must validate how trust in followers, and trust among them, can facilitate the success of AL in developing an authentic organisation (Kernis, 2003).

Given the transparent relationships that AL fosters between leaders and followers, authentic leaders serve as role models within the organisational settings (George, 2003). Consequentially, followers' behaviour adopts gradual modelling of genuine and positive leadership behaviour (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Furthermore, authentic followers believe in the authentic leader's behavioural integrity and moral values which, in return, promote followers' identification with the organisational culture, and ensure coherent social networks and stability of outcomes (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014). Developing followers' authenticity is essential to the harmonised AL model that is able to balance the dynamics of the leader-followers' relations and navigate through complex situations in a multicultural environment (Černe, Jaklič and Škerlavaj, 2013). However, despite positive practitioners' findings on the AL practices within the inter-relational dyad, and associating them with the organisational outcomes, research into the relationship between a high degree of leadership integrity and employees' trust and work engagement (Hassan and Ahmed, 2011) remains at the theoretical stage. According to Gardner *et al.* (2011) despite the volume of academic research, theorists have failed to establish a cumulative comprehension of the leader-followers relationship as an interactive constituent in the AL framework.

3.5 Academic Leadership

3.5.1 Neo-liberalism and Academic Leadership in Higher Education

Higher Education (HE) has been perceived as a hub for generating new knowledge and empowering intellectual contributions (Barnett, 2004). The sector plays a pivotal role in the societal and economic advancement of a nation. It fosters a culture of research and intellectual curiosity. Academic leadership, within this context, is tasked with establishing efficient systems for the management of intellectual endeavours within HE institutions (Yerzhanov *et al.,* 2016). Traditionally, HE institutions have a long-lasting history of serving as communities of scholars and researchers with collaborative governance and self-direction (Altbach, 2014). Therefore, academic leadership in the HE institutions, such as rector or vice chancellor, were often elected from within the senior academic staff (e.g., professors) (Altbach, 2014). However, the recent reevaluation of the HE's sector's purpose as a vehicle for fostering economic competitiveness has prompted significant discussion and analysis within academic circles (Barnett, 2004; Aronowitz, 2006; Giroux, 2009). What is important in contemporary education in the 21st century is the positioning of HE enterprises as *'corporate brand'* and *'power'* institutions. While HE enterprises remain

complex organisations, they have started to share many traits with large businesses which ultimately has reshaped recruitment practices for academic leaders. The development of corporate universities, the integration of digital technologies leading to the establishment of virtual universities, the evolution of HE as a 'market', and the establishment of global alliances are swiftly altering the landscape of the field, intensifying diversity and competitiveness among the institutions (Barnett, 2004). Nonetheless, securing grants and large-scale funding from governments and private corporations have become permanent key requirements for the academic leadership role (Aronowitz, 2006). Ultimately, corporate branding defines the administrative structure of the HE institution. Consequently, the university or college president is increasingly recruited from a corporate background and is designated as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Likewise, Deans are often recruited from the business community (Giroux, 2009). Furthermore, the demand for digitising the curriculum frequently attracts individuals with technical expertise from the professional IT sector. Aronowitz (2006) notes that senior academic administrators, enticed by the attractive benefits accompanying their positions in academia, have transitioned into the professional managerial class. Consequently, despite their initial recruitment from faculty ranks, these individuals often opt for future career prospects in corporate sectors rather than returning to faculty positions in HE. On the other hand, administrators assume the role of 'personnel officers' of corporations which creates a substantial gap between the roles of academic leadership, administrators, and faculty (Aronowitz, 2006). To exacerbate this disparity, administrative control over time, power and decision-making has intensified, sidelining traditional HE concerns with academic freedom, tenure, and intellectual integrity in favour of financially driven concerns. This critique warrants consideration in the discussions related to the integration of HE within neoliberal imperatives.

Correspondingly, the assessment criteria for the competencies expected from senior academic leaders have shifted away from academic research and intellectual contributions. Instead, the performance of Presidents, CEOs, Deans, and even Faculty members is evaluated based on their capacity to secure external funding. As observed by Giroux, (2009), a distinguished professorship is granted to academics who have successfully secured significant grants, irrespective of their limited theoretical or research contributions. Furthermore, the globalisation of tertiary education has increased the demand for more assertive business acumen from academic leaders, requiring a diverse range of technology, emotional intelligence, and business management skills (Abdulla *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the new aim of the HE

sector in terms of achieving global market competitiveness places emphasis on both academic leadership skills and abilities, and institutional performance benchmarking and international accreditation which have undoubtedly become synonymous with neo-liberal reforms (Zahran, Pettaway and Waller, 2016).

In theory, neo-liberalism originated as a composition of economic policies and processes promoting private interests over institutional ones and was founded on a market-centred philosophy, postulating that either everything could be sold or could be used as a means for generating profit (Giroux, 2009, p. 31). Hence the free-market perspective advocates profit maximization, which ultimately is the key criteria for economic and social transformation. Neo-liberal influence over the HE sector has induced explicit commercialisation and commodification of the curriculum (ElKaleh, 2019). However, researchers have warned against the uncritical adoption of business-driven strategies which can reshape the teaching and learning methodology and diminish the value of the cultural substantiation of the curriculum, in particularly in the GCC region and the UAE (Barnawi, 2017; Alsharari, 2018; ElKaleh, 2019). Essentially, HE is viewed as a key contributor to both the economic development of the Emirates and building Emirati nationals' confidence to compete in the global marketplace (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). Relatedly, the Emirates has invested in imported Western curricula, academic leadership expertise and knowledge workers, which could create tensions with the local values and beliefs, given Western theories and frameworks are based on the Anglo-American context. Therefore, tertiary education institutions are challenged by the scarcity of theoretical paradigms and frameworks founded on the UAE's national socio-cultural distinctness. Furthermore, the authorities' view of HE as a profitable contributor to the nation's economy has prompted academic leaders to swiftly adopt quality assessment standards derived from the West. Consequently, the transition of academic leadership towards a more corporate, neoliberal model may introduce tensions between the evolving HE landscape in the Emirates and the unique socio-economic framework of the country.

3.5.2 Authentic Leadership in Higher Education

The contextually derived complexity of academic leadership is an outcome of the co-existence of corporate and academic drivers for achieving organisational outcomes. According to Ahmad *et al.* (2015), the achievement of an organisation's mission and goals is contingent upon a leadership vision, integrity and behaviour that allows for innovation, quality-of-life for faculty and staff, and an inspiring learning

environment for students. Therefore, the leadership role in the HE sector is perceived to be central to the sustainability of tertiary institutions (Jones and Holdaway, 1996). Yet, this pivotal position exposes leaders to potentially conflicting expectations for both administrative and academic performance which, in the UAE, is aggravated by the rapidly changing milieu of HE (Litz and Scott, 2017). This includes constraints that arise from the fixed, short-term parameters of expatriate assignments, nationalisation initiatives, and regulatory frameworks governing immigration which raise concerns with the limited timeframe the leadership has to achieve the organisational goals.

Askling and Stensaker (2002) associate the infusion of academic institutions with industry leadership practices with confusion, creating operational challenges and inconsistencies with the purpose of post-secondary education. In addition, the global shift towards a knowledge economy creates demand for individual and organisational entrepreneurship, which ultimately changes the traditional paradigm of the role of HE leaders (Askling and Stensaker, 2002). In general, the objectives of educational institutions are knowledge innovation and sustaining human creativity and development. Therefore, learning relationships are central to the uniqueness of organisational operations. Relatedly, academic leadership is assumed to be governed by both self-knowledge and intellectual capacity to comprehend complex and ambiguous situations and react in a sensible manner (Bolman and Gallos, 2010). However, the fact that academic (teaching, research) and business management functions (facilities, technology, and performance measuring) are simultaneously directing leadership behaviours raises concerns associated with the ambiguity and confusion this relationship creates, or may create over time, in terms of expected outcomes within the academic entity. Hence, due to the duality of leadership in HE (e.g. business vs academic), there is a legitimate issue over mutual trust and transparency in the leadership-faculty-student relationship which ultimately may influence the decision-making practices (Rowley and Sherman, 2003;Ahmad *et al.*, 2015; Srivastava *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the demands of corporate academic leadership could alter the operationalisation of AL behaviours in the tertiary education sector.

Although the phenomenon of AL is relatively new, due to the positive pro-social and trust-centred people orientation, AL has gained considerable interest among academics, exploring its emergence in HE (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2013; Ahmad *et al.*, 2015; Kiersch and Peters, 2017). Researchers view AL behaviour as essential for the achievement of academic excellence in the education sector and uphold the concept as an organisational solution to enhance innovation, promote positive psychological capacities of faculty

and students, as well as develop authentic student leadership (Pavlovic, 2015; Kiersch and Peters, 2017). More specifically, academic literature on AL in HE has established a positive correlation between the AL tenets and the achievement of sustainable education (Srivastava *et al.*, 2020). However, Tomkins and Nicholds (2017) warn against this, highlighting the vulnerability and elusiveness of authenticity within the dynamics of the leadership-faculty-student triangle. During the last decade, research has attempted to conceptualise the AL construct in the HE domain in relation to leadership-faculty relations practices, curriculum innovation, and organisational achievements. However, this research has failed to provide an affirmative analysis that is substantiated by individuals' experiential interpretations arising from a diverse cultural context. Thus, there is a growing demand for further exploration of the matter which will expand the existing cross-cultural academic paradigms on the AL domain by providing insights from the HE sector, and in the case of this research from the tertiary education field in the UAE.

3.5.3 Authentic Leadership in Higher Education in the UAE

Due to the specificity of the HE sector, research on academic leadership is assumed to provide additional nuance to the AL concept. Recently, research conducted into academic leadership in the wider Middle Eastern region has witnessed an increase in studies focused on leadership behaviours for achieving educational success (Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2015; Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016; Al-Sada *et al.*, 2017; Arar and Nasra, 2019; Akanji *et al.*, 2019). Although some authors have explored the operationalisation of diverse leadership styles within the broad education sector structures, the research focuses on showing evidence of the transactional and transformational academic leadership styles in Syria and Israel (Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2015; Arar and Nasra, 2019), and participative-supportive and directive leadership in Qatar (Al-Sada, Al-Esmael and Faisal, 2017). Only two studies on AL in academic establishments in the UAE offer some insights on the adequacy of AL behaviour to the educational operations (Al Samkari and David, 2019; Saleh and Shaker, 2020), but both failed to substantiate meaningful evidence. This is because: (1) they have been conducted in a school environment, and (2) are lacking in-depth exploration of the employee's experiential interpretations of the AL behaviours. Therefore, these inquiries are not sufficient for establishing a positive and comprehensive correlation between AL and OR in the HE sector in the UAE. Moreover, the research did not seek to explore the emergence of AL behaviours in HE in the region but rather attempted to evaluate the application of Western-developed AL dimensions within the

unique cultural context of the GCC region. As discussed in Chapter 1, until 2006 most institutions in the UAE, including academic ones, were managed by expatriates. However, due to Emiratisation policies, this situation has changed, which might well mean that the application of AL has been adapted.

Up until now, the findings demonstrate the ambiguity of AL behaviour within the broad education sector in the Emirates. As stated by Saleh and Shaker (2020) the relational transparency dimension has not been adopted by academic leadership in the UAE. Similar findings were reported by Al Samkari and David (2019) who identified the lack of mutuality in leader-subordinates relationships, which are presently predicated upon a strict hierarchial structure and rigid organisational policies. What is more, concerns were raised with the ethical judgement and moral standards of leaders in the UAE. In particular, leaders tend to be more resistant towards adopting AL behaviour (Al Samkari and David, 2019). Moreover, the research included a question about the legitimacy of the leadership appointments. It is unknown how AL could emerge within the paradigm of positional power which is one of the constituents of the leadership domain in the UAE (Saleh and Shaker, 2020). Hence, the transferability and adaptability of AL behaviour in HE structures are not eminently evident in academic research in the UAE. Therefore, this research will explore the application of AL behaviour in the Emirates, as academic leadership has been regarded to be essential to the success of educational innovation by influencing and moderating the entire process (Godwin, 2006; Pavlovic, 2015; Abdulla *et al.*, 2022).

3.6 Operational Resilience

3.6.1 Definitions of Operational Resilience

Operational resilience has been recognised as: an individual characteristic and trait (Masten and Reed, 2002; Fredrickson *et al.*, 2003); a critical resource in turbulent times for the organisation (Rutter, 1987; O'Leary, 1998; Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003); and an organisational phenomenon (Hoffer *et al.*, 2005; Teo *et al.*, 2017). Resilience has been theorised by psychiatrists (Werner, 1995), organisational psychologists (Barnett and Pratt, 2000) and management practitioners (Powley, 2009). In management studies, the concept of resilience has been discussed as a fluid outcome of organisational aptitudes and abilities not only to return to a steady state after economic, environmental or business turbulence and operational discontinuation but also to transform an adverse environment into future growth (Bhamra, Dani and

Burnard, 2011). As stated by Fiksel (2006), the objectives of resilient organisations are developing innovative knowledge and social structures, signifying new sustainable equilibriums. Thus, leadership behaviour is a decisive factor in developing supportive human networks, organisational culture and structures for enabling a consistent flow of information and resources (De Dreu and Beersma, 2005; Powley, 2009; Posthuma, 2011). However, the correlation between the resilience theoretical framework and AL behaviours has been only partially recognised in the studies conducted by Luthans *et al.* (2007) and Teo *et al.* (2017), which do not provide a comprehensive understanding of this relationship. Authentic leaders are said to promote authentic behaviours among employees, which establishes an iterative organisational process for encouraging innovation and, thus, achieving OR (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). However, academics perceive the dynamics of OR differently: as a process, competency, and a measure of operational success (Hamel and Valikangas, 2003; Akgün and Keskin, 2014). In their work, Elmhamedi *et al.* (2016) and Southwick *et al.* (2018) position it as an impassive organisational feature. Therefore, as per Powley's (2009) statement, the dilemma of how to relate theoretical attributes to actual business challenges to achieve OR remains.

3.6.2 Operational Resilience in Higher Education

OR should take into consideration an organisation's ability to prepare for threats, to absorb impacts, and to recover and adapt after disruptive events by generating new knowledge (Elmhamedi *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the process necessitates developing mechanisms for future responses to adverse circumstances. As a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on global economies, the topic has been resurrected, and this has warranted a renewed outlook on OR (Al-Karaki *et al.*, 2021; Ashour, 2021). In relation to HE operations, the discussion has highlighted the students, IT systems, and curriculum resilience as criteria for assessing tertiary institutions' capabilities to respond and continue evolving during adversity (Brewer *et al.*, 2019; Bento *et al.*, 2021). Additional criteria for measuring academic resilience include the teaching and learning methodology (Brewer *et al.*, 2019), learning management systems (LMS) (Bento *et al.*, 2021) and quality of curriculum and institutional practices (Wilkins, 2010). Relatedly, Shaya *et al.* (2022) define OR in the HE sector as a three-fold process of anticipation, coping, and adaptation, supported by five antecedents: knowledge, resource availability, social resources, power relationships and innovative culture. In support of their views, research has highlighted the centrality of the ability of an HE

institution's leadership to anticipate and withstand crisis by ensuring the continuity of knowledge, and social and resource systems and processes. Correspondingly, OR is perceived as an outcome of decentralised leadership power. This is demonstrated by the flexibility of leadership practices in directing, delegating, and including subordinates' participation in the decision-making during the process of achieving OR in HE (Shaya *et al.*, 2022). However, despite being the first and only phenomenological research on OR in HE in UAE, the recommendations of Shaya *et al.* (2022) are mostly prescriptive as the research focused on investigating the contributions of two generalised leadership traits (e.g. empathy and communication) and does not provide reliable measurement criteria for each of the above-mentioned leadership behaviours.

On the other hand, the vision of the government of the UAE, and the remarkable achievements of the educational institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic, established the country's academic sector as a global frontier of sustainable online education (MOE-UAE, 2020). In 2020, His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and Ruler of Dubai confronted the pandemic by saying that continuity of education and health should be assured under any circumstances (Gulf News, 2020). Therefore, to accomplish the goal by sustaining the continuity of the learning process, ensuring institutional resilience in terms of teaching methodology, and maintaining employees' and students' mental health, HE institutions in the Emirates rapidly transformed their content by digitalising the curriculum and transitioning from the traditional classroom environment into virtual education (Abdullatif Al Shamsi, 2020). These directives are aligned with the UAE vision for the digitalisation of all economic sectors in the country by developing intelligent learning systems and processes (see Chapter 2). However, the literature does not offer immediate evidence on the contributions of particular leaders in the HE sector, raising questions about the human, as opposed to systems, response to the adversity of Covid-19. Additionally, the top-down federal directives imply the presence of hierarchical leadership behaviour within the HE structures.

Although academic analysis yields some progressive contemporary viewpoints, extant literature does not offer in-depth empirical evidence on the pragmatic relationship between new behaviours (e.g., Authentic Leadership) and OR. Additionally, existing data does not provide empirical evidence to establish a correlation between variations in leadership styles and innovative operations management strategies in HE institutions in the UAE that support the achievement of OR (Ajayan and Balasubramanian, 2020; Shaya

et al., 2022). Therefore, this further justifies exploring the propensity for achieving OR through AL behaviours in HE in the UAE, as offered by this research.

3.6.3 Authentic Leadership and Operational Resilience

Examining the relationship between AL behaviour and OR is the overarching objective of this study. However, reviewing the literature has demonstrated a considerable conceptual gap in assessing any positive relationship between AL and OR (Gardner *et al.*, 2011). Despite an extensive literature review, the researcher did not find any immediate evidence in existing publications on the sequence of the words 'AL + OR'. The search module yielded a marginal number of publications in the academic databases that broadly theorised but failed to establish a link between AL and OR, and certainly not in the UAE. For example, a search in EBSCO and Emerald produced 0 publications, while ProQuest generated only 2 articles. On the other hand, while Jstor listed 15 studies in the field of management and organisational behaviour (see Appendix B), these inquiries were broad, and the definition of resilience was mainly focused on the psychological understanding of the concept from a health sciences and environmental viewpoint. Besides, the research focus was on hypothesising resilience as a personal attribute as opposed to a conceptual model linked to AL practices. These were insufficient in providing theoretical foundations to draw any meaningful conclusions on the practical association of OR with AL. Thus, most of these publications were not considered by the author and were excluded from the analysis. The exception is one article from Jstor which revealed indirect reference to the research topic (Jensen and Luthans, 2006). Finally, based on their implied relevance to the relationship of 'leadership + OR', 'AL + OR', and 'AL + positive psychological capital development', only seven articles were utilised in this section's analysis (Christopher and Peck, 2004; Fiksel, 2006; Powley, 2009; Elmhamedi *et al.*, 2016; Teo *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the current theorisations demonstrate a considerable conceptual and methodological gap in both academic and practitioner papers, especially from a Middle Eastern cultural perspective, which could unmask very different leadership styles in the region, in comparison with the present practices in the Western cultures (Posthuma, 2011; Al Wekhian, 2015).

From an organisational behaviour perspective, creating OR involves leadership's ability to influence the formation of new connections among people and systems. In return, these interactions are projected to

enable processes that generate new collective knowledge (Gallopı´n, 2006; Teo, Lee and Lim, 2017). From this perspective, the theoretical propositions of Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) could be perceived as an endorsement of AL behaviours as a means for achieving OR. According to the authors, AL behaviour empowers collective sense-making of adversity, and mindful communication via human networks within the organisation, which in return promotes positive emotional relationships between the employees (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2007). Additionally, several authors recognise AL as a social, emotional, and cognitive enabler of generating new knowledge in both traditional and virtual contexts which offers a distinctive outlook on the link between AL and OR (Lloyd-Walker and Walker, 2011; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011; Li *et al.*, 2014). These notions are supported by the work of organisational behaviour theorists who acknowledge the positive impact of AL behaviour on team and organisational performance towards innovation (Wang and Hsieh, 2013). Likewise, Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) argue that organisational progress is a relational outcome of the AL practices relevant to the current knowledge economy developments.

Fundamentally, several scholars claim that value-centred AL behaviour with followers should be the primary criterion in measuring an organisation's success in attaining OR (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Hassan and Ahmed, 2011; Brynard, 2018). According to Ilies *et al.* (2005) trust and transparency within the leader-subordinates dyad, in terms of open communication, honesty, information sharing, and meaningful distribution of resources, motivates employees' self-determination and commitment to organisational goals. These academic claims have been validated by a number of recent studies, establishing a link between trust and employee engagement and job satisfaction (Roux and Dannhauser, 2010; Hassan and Ahmed, 2011; Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Teo *et al.*, 2017). Relatedly, researchers have reached a common conclusion that the desire to be a genuine leader and promote transparent interactions with subordinates are mandatory indicators for positive organisational outcomes as ultimately human resources define organisational existence and success (Kernis, 2003; Yukl, 2012; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2015). In the extant publications on this topic, authentic leaders are said to be role models for integrity, self-reflection, team identification and voluntary commitment founded in their personal moral values (George, 2003). Therefore, AL practices are able to elevate employees' intrinsic guiding rationale for self-discovery to the organisational vision (Ilies *et al.*, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). In addition, higher self-awareness, attributed to authentic leaders, facilitates the recognition of the value of individual differences and appreciation of subordinates' talents. Therefore, authentic

leaders are able to employ this knowledge into building high-performance teams (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Thus, the relational transparency tenet of AL highlights the relatedness of the theory to a consistent and operationally sustainable leadership model. In view of this, the authentic leader's ability to withhold and ensure operational continuum in novel situations and volatile times can be viewed as an achievement of OR.

Research also confirms the centrality of the balanced processing virtue for objective analysis of information and informed decision-making which, in return, aligns the dimensions of the AL domain with the proactive and balanced risk assessment process in organisations (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; George, 2007; Avolio and Mhatre, 2012). This relates to management studies' perceptions of leader competence where OR is associated with anticipatory risk evaluation of organisational systems and resources for enabling their flexibility, agility, and continuous information flow (Christopher and Peck, 2004; Elmhamedi *et al.*, 2016). In the context of organisational learning, OR highlights the positive organisational adaptation as a collaborative index of innovation and generating new competency (Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003). Similarly, Smith and Elliott (2007) rationalise corporate learning as an integral proponent of the organisation's strategy that occurs prior to, during and after the crisis, and as a proactive system for acquiring new capabilities that will enable OR. In support of this view, Hoffer *et al.* (2005) highlight the contribution of positive social connectivity during the learning process for avoiding crisis and developing resilient organisations. Furthermore, as argued by academics and management practitioners, AL practices are genuinely concerned with employees' development, invoking innovation and generation of new knowledge at individual and team levels. Both are pre-requisites for achieving OR (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008).

Moreover, analysis of the literature suggests that AL is the only methodologically recognised leadership style that combines market competitiveness with trust-centred collaboration for promoting further innovative developments (Gardner and Schermerhorn, 2004; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Kouzes and Posner, 2012; Fotohabadi and Kelly, 2018). However, most of the above academic publications are descriptive assumptions and are not founded on substantive evidence of a link between AL and OR. Hence, Luthans and Lester (2006) recommend further theoretical and empirical validation of the resilience construct in terms of continuous operational processes governed by AL behaviour.

3.7 Summary of the Literature

Within the existing literature on leadership, organisational success has been attributed to distinct leadership behaviour. However, despite researchers' efforts to define a universal leadership model based on shared traits (Slabu *et al.*, 2014), competencies, and behaviours (Duchatelet, 1998; Stone *et al.,* 2004), the abundance of theoretical propositions only serves to highlight the ambiguity surrounding the concept of leadership. Additionally, Yammarino *et al.* (2005) claim that leadership research remains overly descriptive and demonstrates scholars' interest in individual-level analysis and thereby lags behind industry advancements. Further challenges with theoretical substantiations of leadership are primarily attributed to the dominance of Western literature and the lack of nuanced cross-cultural validation of the leadership paradox. Notably, outdated cultural profiling of global demographic clusters, as evident in the case of the UAE, is inadequate to support leadership research in diverse contexts. Hence, limited cultural awareness of the Emirates is insufficient to offer a comprehensive foundation for leadership theorisations. Furthermore, leadership exploration relies heavily on quantitative survey-based research, with limited empirical research to support the many leadership models and their variations. Hence, while the debates have moved forward and looked at diverse constituents of the domain, it falls outside useful analysis of leadership, particularly in the context of exploring AL.

In theory, AL presents a novel framework that is grounded in moral values and therefore, rebuilds trust in genuine leadership behaviour (George, 2003). In addition, the notions of the normative nature of the novel framework, introduced in the work of Pioli *et al. (2020),* distinguish AL from the other leadership concepts. These assumptions also justify why AL has been instantly embraced by professionals in organisational settings. Consequently, along with the rapid globalisation of various economic sectors, Western-based leadership ideologies, including AL, transitioned into diverse cultural contexts (Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Whitehead and Brown, 2011). However, several authors (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Mittal and Dorfman, 2012) cautioned about the possibility of conflict between indigenous and imported AL behaviour across varied demographic contexts. This review of existing publications demonstrates contrarian linguistic and anthropological perceptions of authenticity across global demographic clusters, which may expose different cognisance of AL and the interplay between AL and followership behaviours.

Ultimately, the inclusion of context-based research on AL, and followership, defines the presence of AL behaviour.

The critical review of leadership literature undertaken in this chapter highlights several conceptual and methodological deficiencies in the exploration of AL. Firstly, given that most research into AL originates from Western culture, the existing publications fail to substantiate the adequacy of the Western-originated AL framework across diverse cross-cultural settings. Therefore, this raises questions about the applicability of the Western-based framework of AL in the UAE context, as the interpretation and practice of AL in the Emirates may expose an entirely different realm of the phenomenon. Secondly, the academic awareness of AL is derived based on testing various dimensions of the domain as defined by the Western-originated ALQ questionnaire. Thirdly, there is limited research on AL from the UAE, especially a lack of phenomenological studies conducted in the Emirates and the broader Middle Eastern region. This fact highlights significant weaknesses in the exploration and theorisation of AL, as the reviewed literature presents diverse meanings of *'authentic'* and *'genuine'* behaviour from a cross-cultural perspective. Next, the cultural profiling of the UAE fails to provide an updated understanding of the cultural diversity in the country and thereby an awareness of the individuals' perceptions of AL in the UAE context. Hence, this necessitates a broader scope of AL research and a need to support the theoretical propositions with distinct socio-behavioural contextualisation.

In terms of the HE sector in the UAE, the corporatisation of academic leadership and the shift towards neo-liberal approaches may alter the purpose of HE institutions. Moreover, traditional academic leadership behaviours, which focus on empowering intellectual contributions and generating new knowledge, are projected to transform into economically driven strategies in the country. This shift is assumed to alter AL behaviours and the associated outcomes in tertiary education. Besides, the existing literature fails to substantiate OR as an outcome of its positive relationship with AL in HE in the Emirates and worldwide. Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring the AL phenomenon and its role in achieving OR in HE within the culturally diverse context of the UAE.

As evident from the comprehensive analysis of academic studies relevant to this research, presented in the first three chapters, the review highlighted significant conceptual and methodological gaps in the existing body of knowledge. Specifically, Chapters 2 and 3 provide the contextual and theoretical basis

for the development of the research methodology and thereby, setting the groundwork for the methodological approach outlined in the following chapter. Consequently, the methodological framework adopted in this research aims to bridge these gaps and offer a novel understanding of AL from the UAE context. A detailed account of the research methodology is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework of the research and the research process which are defended by the paradigmatic assumptions substantiating this study. To rationalise the objectives of the research, the researcher is required to ascertain the research philosophy, methodology, and approach for collecting, analysing and making sense of the data (Creswell, 2009; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The relationship between AL and OR in the UAE is central to this research, along with the broader objectives of exploring how AL behaviour is defined in the cultural context of the UAE. This relationship necessitates methodical analysis, through in-depth investigation and gathering cross-cultural information relevant to the research locus. Therefore, the research methodology adopted in this study is associated with the nature of the research problem and the conceptual framework as defined in Figure 4: *Conceptual Framework of the Research* (below) and represents the theoretical and practical approaches adopted by the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

The literature review carried out in chapter two and chapter three revealed six major methodological weaknesses in the field of AL studies, as follows: (1) the majority of the previous studies on the AL phenomenon have been located within the Western (e.g. American, European), and Far Eastern (e.g. Chinese) environment; thereby, neglecting equally important Middle Eastern countries, such as the UAE; (2) previous research on AL has to a large extent been polarised into either quantitative or qualitative research, with a greater emphasis on quantitative inquires; (3) earlier studies have been focused on testing the contextual transferability of the ALQ rather than exploring how individuals from diverse cultural settings are interpreting AL behaviour; (4) the validity and reliability of quantitative research instruments such as ALQ is yet to be confirmed; (5) phenomenological studies of AL involving hermeneutics have never been conducted in the Middle East region, including the UAE; (6) Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) has never been applied before to study the meaning and application of AL in the distinct cultural context of the Emirates. Hence, this chapter explores and explains how the researcher addressed these weaknesses by determining the research methodology, clarifying the researcher's philosophical stance, and outlining the steps in the research process. The chapter is organised in five key sections covering the conceptual framework, the philosophical paradigm of the

researcher and methodology, the research design, data collection methods and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the research. The final section discusses the ethical considerations of the research.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

In the literature, AL is perceived as a composite concept defined by both the leader's self-cognisance and followers' perceptions of leadership qualities and practices (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Avolio and Gardner, 2005a; Gardner *et al.*, 2005). For this reason, scholars explain the emergence of AL behaviour within the socially constructed leader-followers dyad (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Originating in the Western social and business environment, the theoretical framework of AL has been recently updated with varied cultural context imprints (Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). These academics recognised the merits of socio-cultural contingencies and acknowledged the diversity of individuals' articulations of AL across broad cultural dominions (Fu *et al.*, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2014; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, exploring AL necessitates understanding of the followers' voices and the meaning they attach to their lived experiences of AL, in the distinct socio-cultural context within which these relationships exist and are enacted.

Correspondingly, Figure 4: *Conceptual Framework of the Research* (below) illustrates the primary research question, highlighting the relationship between the two main concepts in this study: AL behaviour and Operational Resilience. The model suggests the moderating influence of followers' perceptions, and the cultural context (in this case the UAE) on AL behaviour. Additionally, the research grid acknowledges the possibilities of altered AL practices and outcomes, as opposed to the Western-centered AL framework, for attaining Operational Resilience.
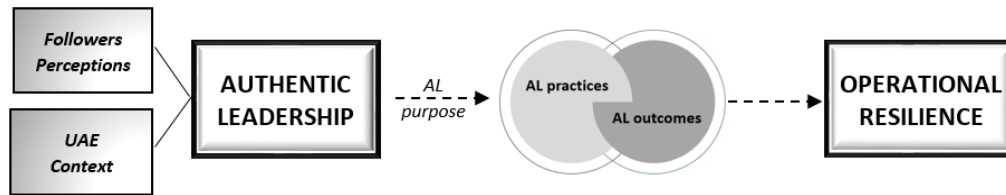
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of the Research

Notes:

1. Followers' perceptions and UAE context define the concept of AL in UAE
2. AL through its purpose affects AL practices and AL outcomes
3. AL practices and AL outcomes on the other hand aid OR

Therefore, the broad purpose of this study is to: (1) explore employees' perceptions of traits and behaviours defining the concept of AL; (2) understand how and in what way the UAE context influences the adoption of AL behaviour and practices; and (3) investigate the propensity of AL practices to promote or aid OR in HE in the UAE. As both AL and OR have been defined as socially constructed domains (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Ilies *et al.*, 2005), for an in-depth understating of AL and associated behaviours, the research adopted a social constructivist paradigm (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). The social constructivists' philosophical beliefs correspond with the researcher's view of the world and the research objectives. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the iterative approach recommended by Creswell (2013, p.113) allowed for in-depth investigation and analysis.

4.3   Research Philosophy (Social constructivism paradigm)

According to Saunders *et al.* (2012, p.129), a researcher's philosophical views of the world are guided by personal beliefs and practical experiences. Consequently, one's distinct philosophical paradigm serves as the primary motivator in the choices of research methods. Moreover, as an expression of the subjective assumptions of what constitutes knowledge, and how it is acquired, the researcher's paradigm influences the foundation of the research framework (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). In theory, the research paradigm informs the theories, assumptions, and ideas that contribute to the researcher's worldview and approach to engage with the participants in this research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Turner, 2010). Essentially, the research paradigm is fundamental for reflecting on and justifying the inquirer's philosophical choices

(Johnson and Clark, 2006). Hence, in this study, the researcher's paradigm provides an awareness of the beliefs and philosophical assumptions that inform the design and conduct of the inquiry.

Highlighting the need to understand the AL phenomenon in qualitative terms (Gardner *et al.*, 2011), the guiding philosophical paradigm in this research is *social constructivism*. A social constructivist approach seeks to understand behaviours through the meanings individuals attribute to them, drawing from their own experiences. According to Creswell (2014), this yields an abundance of subjective and diverse meanings, prompting the researcher to explore the complexity of perspectives as opposed to reducing them to a few categories or concepts. Besides, the author argues that these meanings are created through social interactions and shared understandings within a distinct community or culture the individual lives in (e.g. social constructivism) (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Further details on the philosophical basis that defined researcher's social constructivist paradigm encompassing the nature of reality *(ontology)*, what is knowledge, who created it and how it was shaped *(epistemology)*, the values related to one's beliefs and practices *(axiology)*, and the choice of research practices *(methodology)* are provided in the following sections.

4.3.1 Social Constructivism

Each research philosophy is partially mandated by the practical considerations of the research (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, since the concept of AL is not derived through a scientific experiment but is socially constructed knowledge, it is problematic to statistically quantify the phenomenon. Rather, AL can be informed by exploring and analysing the subjective human meaning of diverse realities as shared by multiple social actors (Smith, 2017). Therefore, the relevance of *social constructivism* to this study is highlighted by the nature of the research phenomenon, which is the emergence of AL within a unique context. Despite being criticised for not acknowledging the essential values of practical experience (Liu and Matthews, 2005; Klenke, 2016), these critics fail to acknowledge the value of the social constructivist's view of truth as a unique individual belief system contingent to a distinct context. Nonetheless, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that knowledge and truth can be developed, rather than discovered as an independent reality, and emphasise the significance of the social actors' characterisations of their world of experience. Consequently, the researcher's social constructivist beliefs motivated the explorative and inductive nature of this study, which is instituted on interpreting complex

socially constructed practices, and therefore, establishing the meaning of multiple realities (Creswell, 2014). These realities emerge from the sense-making of individuals' lived experiences with AL. Lastly, the adopted social constructivist stance is rationalised by the relevant ontological and epistemological philosophical beliefs that guide the understating of AL.

4.3.1.1 Ontology

Ontological views represent the dualism in perceptions of the nature of reality as an objective (e.g. independent, singular, and concrete) or as a subjective realm (e.g. constructed on human interactions) (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). The ontological position adopted in this research regarding the nature of the truth is supportive of the social constructivist paradigm of the researcher, as the focus is on meaning, and not the truth (Killam, 2013). Furthermore, Saunders *et al.* (2012) argue the congruence of the individual's values, beliefs, and behaviour in both the social and organisational context, with the collective social practices, which explicate the subjective and adaptable meaning of reality. Thus, social constructivists are concerned with the social, historical and cultural context in defining reality as a process, and not as a static universal existence. These views highlight the blend of situational factors and perceptions of multiple social players (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Correspondingly, the meaning of reality in this research is constructed on the understanding of the shared social practices in the UAE, and in line with this ontological position, the researcher believes the nuances of AL can only be understood by studying the interpretations of the stakeholders involved in the process. Therefore, ontological views of reality as a subjective domain are fundamental to this inquiry.

4.3.1.2 Epistemology

Consequential to the researcher's views on the nature of reality, the epistemological stance directed the process of gathering and interpretations of the knowledge (Klenke, 2016). Fundamentally, epistemological inquiry is concerned with the collection of evidence for knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Relatedly, the relationship between the nature of knowledge and the process of acquiring an understanding of this knowledge is essential to this study. In line with social constructivists' view of reality as a collective practice, the interactions between the researcher and the interviewees during the information gathering could be discussed as a meaningful social exchange of knowledge. As the researcher was a participant in the process of gathering information and interpreting meaning, the

epistemological paradigm recognises the possibilities for the influence of the researcher's personal beliefs and assumptions during the inquiry (Klenke, 2016). Nevertheless, social constructivism acknowledges the fact that the researcher's and participants' beliefs of the nature of knowledge, and the context within which it has been created, could mutually influence each participant during the data collection and analysis process (Creswell, 2009).

However, as argued by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), the research goal is of utmost importance, and therefore flexibility is required in choosing the appropriate research methodology. Given the focus of this study is on AL, which is a social phenomenon, this study adopted the Phenomenological inquiry approach which guided the research design and enabled a breadth of possibilities to include, explore, and make sense of multiple perceptions and assumptions.

4.3.1.3 Methodology

The methodology is a logical continuation of the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs that outline the principles and structure of the research. Academics define it as a consequential reasoning of the philosophical assumptions of the social science researcher (Klenke, 2016). Additionally, Mcgregor and Murnane (2010) regard methodology as a blend of logic, the nature of reality, values, and what constitutes acceptable knowledge that informs the research. Equally, the research methods (e.g., research questions, sampling, data collection and analysis, findings, conceptual framework, and research focus) are determined by the methodology. According to Klenke (2016), methodologies are a progression of the epistemological stance and define how the study will be conducted, how the researcher finds out about reality, and how the knowledge is created. In this respect, methodologies could be defined as narrative systems of theory and practice.

Due to the nature of the research objectives and the philosophical views of the researcher, the exploration of AL was approached from a phenomenological perspective (Smith and Osborn, 2007). The phenomenological paradigm is constructed around interpreting multiple subjective descriptors of reality and an individual's experiences within a unique context (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016). Therefore, the phenomenological methodology directed the research design, data collection and analysis.

Husserl (1931, cited in Creswell, 2013) theorises phenomenology as a means of understanding individuals' (e.g. research participants) lived experiences and making sense of the phenomenon through

the interpretation of their shared practices. He advocated studying the *'essences of a phenomenon'* (e.g. Transcendental Phenomenology) which will in return represent the true nature of that phenomenon. According to Husserl, by deeply delving into consciousness and purposefully setting aside a researcher's own prejudices and beliefs (e.g. an epistemological orientation), the transcendental reduction (e.g. bracketing) will enable in-depth investigation and, therefore, a clear understanding of the essence of the research phenomenon. Contrary to Husserl's interest in the descriptive nature of knowledge, Heidegger (1962) emphasises the nature of being (e.g. an ontological orientation); with Hermeneutics Phenomenology interested in a human being as the *'knower of the phenomenon'* (Heidegger, 1962, 1988). Expanding on Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology, the Hermeneutic Phenomenology introduced by Heidegger focuses on an interpretative approach to understanding the phenomena. Diverging from the principle of transcendental phenomenology, the hermeneutics approach advocates researchers immersing themselves in the process, including the impact of one's own beliefs and presuppositions, for making sense of and interpreting the meaning the individuals attach to their lived experience. Besides, Gray (2016) argues that the meaning of the world or phenomenon is 'constructed and not discovered'. Moreover, from an epistemological view, the relationship between the researcher and the inquiry is impossible to separate. As noted by Kafle (2013), hermeneutic phenomenological research is founded on the ground of subjective knowledge; thus, epistemology is established on the belief that knowledge-making is consequent to subjective experience and insights. Therefore, hermeneutics phenomenology has great relevancy to the investigation of AL behaviour in the UAE.

Further academic research aligned the theoretical propositions established by Husserl and Heidegger with the practicality of qualitative research methodology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016). IPA, as defined by Smith and Osborn (2008), is a qualitative approach aimed at examining personal lived experiences. According to the authors, 'lived experience' in IPA refers to the subjective, embodied, and interpretive reality of how individuals engage with and make meaning of specific events or life situations, situated within their personal and social worlds. This could include personal trauma, illness, leadership behaviour, and career transitions. Originating in 1990s (Smith, 2007), IPA is widely used in fields like health psychology, education, and leadership studies. The key components of IPA include (1) phenomenology, or the study of lived experience, and (2) hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation. Fundamentally, IPA is concerned with the way individuals

personally perceive, feel, and make sense of events or situations as they occur in their lives — from their own first-person perspective (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022).

The foundation of IPA is derived from the work of Husserl (1931, cited in Creswell, 2013) and Heidegger (1962). While Husserl advocates for examining the experience in its own terms by avoiding interpretative subjective influences (transcendental phenomenology), Heidegger recognises the exploration of the meaning of individuals' experiences as an interpretative attempt by both participant and researcher (hermeneutical phenomenology). Therefore, IPA is acknowledged as *'double hermeneutics'*, reflecting the researcher's endeavour to make sense of participant's efforts to make sense of their experiences. As an interpretive inquiry, the phenomenological methodology in this research was able to: (1) provide for the textual and structural interpretation of participants' experience with the studied phenomenon, and (2) offer an understanding of their common experience (Moustakas, 1994). However, Creswell (2018) highlights the possibilities of potential challenges to identifying participants in the inquiry process with the same lived experience. These concerns are addressed by the researcher in Section 4.4.1.

4.3.1.4 Axiology

Axiology illustrates the researcher's view of the effect of values on the academic inquiry and influences the choice of the research topic, philosophical paradigm and methodology (Klenke, 2016). Moreover, because social constructivists define reality and knowledge as human constructs, values and ethics are essential to the social constructivism paradigm (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). In this view, the value-based nature of this research is defined by the research question. This means establishing a platform where the researcher adopts a dual objective-subjective role while interpreting the results (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, from the epistemological perspective, social constructivist researchers and participants are equally manipulating the research by introducing their distinct values in all steps of the process. Therefore, through this interactive process and the interplay of roles, the researcher and the participants are able to generate meaningful knowledge about the research topic (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). A further illustration of the researcher's values is demonstrated in the choice of data collection methods as explained in Section 4.4.2.

To summarise, due to the variety and complexity of paradigms, the debate among academics on the categorisation of research philosophies is enduring. Therefore, attempting to frame the research within

a generalised paradigmatic concept would be unrealistic for researchers and beyond the scope of this study (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Fundamentally, the researcher's paradigm influences the research design in this study. Therefore, the previous discussion on the choice of research methodology highlights the importance of understanding the researcher's paradigm and its philosophical underpinnings. The key philosophical considerations address the nature of reality, the creation and acquisition of knowledge, and the researcher's values and beliefs. Relatedly, the social constructivist foundation of these concepts (ontology, epistemology, axiology) informs the research methodology. Because this study is exploratory and interpretative in nature, the adopted hermeneutics phenomenology facilitates a deep understanding of individuals' interpretations of their lived experiences with AL behaviours in the context of the UAE. Consequently, the following section on research design demonstrates the integration of these methodological principles and explains how these principles ensure alignment with the research objectives and philosophical stance.

4.4 Research Design

The research design of this inquiry operationalises the researcher's philosophical view of the world and informs the technicalities of the research process. According to Creswell (2014) the research design is the actual plan for data collection and analysis in relation to the research questions of the study. As discussed in the preceding sections, this study is broadly defined as exploratory. Therefore, the objectives are to: (1) construe new knowledge and understand AL and associated practices within the UAE context, and (2) address the academic research gap on this topic (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2018). The primary research question, '*Can operational resilience be achieved through Authentic Leadership behaviours in Higher Education in the UAE?*' was investigated by several supporting research questions helping to understand AL and its relationship with OR:

1. *How do employees' experience of leadership approaches help define AL in the UAE?*
2. *What UAE contextual factors influence AL behaviour and practices?*
3. *How does AL behaviour influence operational resilience in the UAE?*

Therefore, the choice of the research method reflected the researcher's beliefs about the nature of knowledge, epistemological positions, and the values acceptable to the adopted paradigm (Klenke,

2016). As an individual's experiences with the social phenomenon and perceptions deviate from one society, and from one institution to another, the researcher adopted a *qualitative research approach* which offered the required flexibility to deal with the exploratory nature of this study (Smith and Osborn, 2007; Creswell, 2009). In general, qualitative research methods are inductive, and context-reliant, enabling the researcher to generate key meanings and define common themes for interpreting the data (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). As defined by Klenke (2016), a qualitative research approach is positioned to capture the richness of participants' experiences of the social phenomenon, such as Authentic Leadership. Additionally, in support of the researcher's philosophical views, the phenomenological methodology granted the freedom to define the related research methods as ultimately the research topic is central to the academic inquiry. Since the objective of this study is to investigate a phenomenon, knowledge is to be constructed from the ground up and this could be done only by the application of phenomenological epistemology. Nonetheless, the epistemological viewpoint directed the research design and provided the framework for understanding individuals' interpretations of leadership authenticity, and the effect of AL behaviour on OR in HE. The choice was to conduct face-to-face interviews with individuals living and working in the UAE who shared their lived experiences. Since there is no existing data to support the research question, the knowledge was generated by listening to people's voices as they have experienced the phenomena of AL in the UAE. Thus, IPA was the most appropriate method to construe new knowledge as it emerged from the double hermeneutics analysis of the data (Smith, 2017).

Consequently, semi-structured interviews were selected for collecting data on the principles of an interview schedule with open-ended questions (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Hence, the researcher was able to probe participants' meaning of their experiential encounters with AL behaviour. However, the questions were used only to guide the research agenda and not to direct respondents' articulations of experiences. Furthermore, the interview questions were broad and general, so the participants were able to freely construct their understanding of reality. Semi-structured interviews are chosen as the most purposeful data collection method in this study because they allow for in-depth probing into specific areas of interest which support the inductive nature of the study. Their flexibility enables the collection of rich data, which is later transcribed and subjected to idiographic qualitative analysis. The approach allows for the identification of experiential themes on a case-by-case basis, followed by the exploration

of patterns across these themes. Despite the academic criticism of the subjective aspect of the semi-structured interviews, this method enables diverse primary data collection where participants' articulations of the reality add unique value to the richness of the data, which was the primary objective of this study. In support of this, Smith and Osborn (2008) state that other qualitative research methods would not be suitable for hermeneutic phenomenology.

Sequentially to the research methodology of this study, the researcher adopted the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework for analysing the data (Smith, 2004; Alase, 2017; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). Smith (2017) identifies three key theoretical physiognomies of the IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. First, IPA is committed to offering an idiographic analysis of each individual's encounter(s) with the researched phenomenon for an in-depth understanding of the essence of the person's experience. Second, IPA engages double hermeneutics for interpreting participants' sense-making of the reality and the world they live in. Although Sutcliffe (1999) views the subjectivity in the participants' interpretations as a negative aspect of interviews and suggests that the data are influenced by the participant's biased understanding and knowledge of the researched topic, the value of the IPA is measured by the diversity of subjective interpretations of reality. IPA recognises that there always will be a certain degree of interpretation of reality based on how people think and act, and how their responses are influenced by unique contextual factors (Smith, 2017). Moreover, in this research the flexibility of the IPA allows for in-depth interviews with employees, offering diverse interpretations of the AL phenomenon. Additionally, in the UAE, time is of the essence and access to employees and leaders is a constraint. Therefore, the IPA method helps researchers overcome these challenges and potential frustrations, by facilitating in-depth analysis of the information. Additionally, it supports the dynamics of the research process and justifies the researcher's involvement in the process (Smith and Osborn, 2007; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022).

Figure 5 illustrates the logical inter-relatedness between the philosophical paradigm, research methodology, research approach, data collection and data analysis methods adopted in this study.

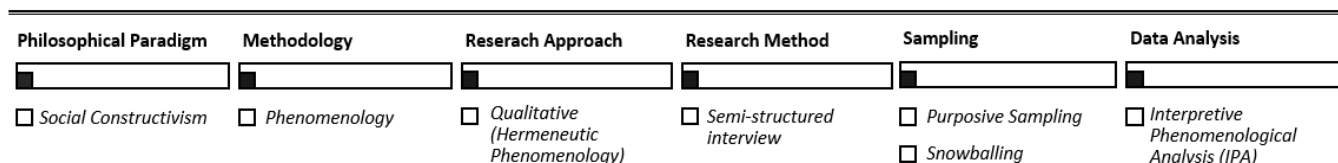| Philosophical Paradigm	Methodology	Reserach Approach	Research Method	Sampling	Data Analysis
☐ Social Constructivism	☐ Phenomenology	☐ Qualitative (Hermeneutic Phenomenology)	☐ Semi-structured interview	☐ Purposive Sampling ☐ Snowballing	☐ Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Figure 5: Research Path

Finally, due to the investigation of a social phenomenon in exploratory research, Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest that for developing meaningful explanations of the phenomena, the researcher should approach the exploration with minimal prior assumptions. Therefore, to ensure the aim of this study is met (e.g. making the unknown known), the researcher assumed the role of an explorer with an open mind and few preconceptions (Creswell, 2009). However, as argued by Heidegger (2005) and Klenke (2016), the researcher's prior knowledge inevitably influences the interpretation of participants' efforts to make sense of their experiences in hermeneutic phenomenology. Additionally, Klenke (2016) stated that the epistemological perspective recognises the potential influence of the researcher's personal beliefs and assumptions during the process of gathering data and interpretation. Moreover, the constructivist perspective acknowledges the mutual influence of the researcher and participants during the data collection and analysis, as both share similar beliefs on the nature of the knowledge and the context within which it has been created. In this respect, the possibility of the researcher's influence has been addressed in Section 4.3.1 and Section 4.4.2.2.

4.4.1 Sampling Criteria and Rationale

The criteria for selecting the study sample for this academic inquiry has been defined primarily by the phenomenon under investigation (Hycner, 1999), and secondarily, by the researcher's philosophical paradigm, key research question and the adopted phenomenological methodology. As described in Section 4.3 (above), this research adopted phenomenological methodology with the IPA technique. A key recommendation in IPA is to collect a small and homogenous sample size that treats the phenomenon under investigation in detail and whose participants are able to offer 'thick' data for in-depth analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2007; Smith, 2017; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). To do this, a purposive sampling technique was utilised in recruiting twenty-one participants from the HE sector in the UAE. In support of this approach, Smith and Osborn (2007) recommend that data for IPA should be obtained from a purposive, homogeneous sample as this allows for selecting participants by using a subjective, as

opposed to random, method. Similarly, other researchers (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006) perceive this technique as 'the most commonly used form of non-probabilistic sampling'. Additionally, purposive sampling enables the selection of participants who have experience with the researched phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). Besides, using purposive sampling enables greater efficiency in reaching data saturation as the method focuses on obtaining rich, detailed, and contextually relevant data that provide valuable insights and contribute to achieving the research objectives (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Creswell, 2018).

In addition, Silverman (2016) states that the outcomes of purposeful sampling enable better representation of the population in comparison with alternative forms of sampling. The following criteria guided the selection of the sample: (1) sample size included academics working in HE in the UAE; (2) employees rather than leaders were deemed a better fit for the interviews; (3) the participants were recruited as representatives of different age groups, gender, cultural background, educational qualifications, type of organisation, and discipline; (4) the selected individuals had more than three years' experience in the UAE; (5) participants had an excellent level of English in order to ensure that the interviews were conducted entirely in English and there were no issues of translation and interpretation; (6) the interviewees were subject to various faculty assignments in the UAE or worldwide; (7) the sample size was adequate and aligned with considerations related to logistics, Covid-19 regulations, and interview permissions. Such constraints would have been more challenging to manage with a larger sample from the concerned population. Based on the above criteria, the researcher anticipated that participants would possess the necessary knowledge and experience to understand the complexity of the research topic and would be able to sufficiently convey their interpretations and perceptions of AL.

Following the Covid-19 social distancing rules in place at the time of the research and challenges with approaching a larger number of the population for sampling, the supporting sampling technique this study has adopted is snowballing, or chain-referral sampling. As posited by the proponents of the linear snowball sampling (Etikan, 2016) an email was sent to Heads of Departments in both private and public HE institutions in the UAE whose contacts were obtained from LinkedIn and the institutional directory (See sample Email in Appendix C). The email provided information on the research objectives, sampling criteria and duration of the interview. Additionally, the participants were given the option to contact the researcher directly if they chose to participate in the research. To reassure participants, following

approval from the Ethics Committee at Staffordshire University, each interviewee received a Participant Information Sheet detailing the purpose of the research, selection criteria, and assurances of their confidentiality. Additionally, participants were provided with contact details for both the researcher and the researcher's supervisor (see Appendix D).

The researcher recruited an initial participant with due consideration to the criteria, which resulted in a second nominee to recruit the third participant, and so on. According to Etikan (2016), the respondent-driven expansion of the network of participants allows for reaching and exploring the perceptions of diverse representatives of a socially connected hidden population. The choice of secondary sampling method stemmed from the aim of this research, which is to offer insights on the propensity of AL practices in promoting, or aiding, OR in the HE sector in this country. Therefore, it was vital to uncover individuals' interpretations in relation to the research objectives. Furthermore, Noy (2008) argues that snowball sampling sits well within the constructivist-qualitative paradigm of social sciences and enables a distinctive locus for generating social knowledge.

According to Palinkas *et al.* (2015), snowball sampling is normally used to identify hard-to-reach study samples and conveniently falls under purposive sampling or can be used together with it. In theory, purposive sampling answers the question about *'who'* to target in the sample, and snowball helps to *'locate'* the participants for the sample. As the goal of this research was not to generalise the findings to a wider population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon which will aid awareness of AL within the diverse cultural dynamics of the UAE, the purposive sampling scheme, aided by snowballing technique, was appropriate and is ratified by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005). Additionally, the researcher aimed to achieve homogeneity of the sample as the IPA method prefers homogeneity as a way of ensuring the validity of individual experiences (Smith and Osborn, 2007; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). According to Smith and Osborn (2007), homogeneity of the sample pertains to a closely defined group for whom the research question holds significance. They emphasise that the specificity of a sample is determined by the study itself, as in certain cases, the research topic may inherently define the boundaries of the relevant sample. In this study, the context (e.g. HE in the UAE) determined the homogeneity of the sample.

Although initially, quite many potential participants expressed their willingness to contribute to the data collection, when they were approached with a request for confirmation of an interview, many sent emails declining with excuses for not being able to participate due to their busy schedules. These challenges are also addressed by Smith and Osborn (2007) who stated that the sample size is defined by the individuals who are willing to participate. Consequentially, the list of volunteers for the interview was vetted, whereby five of them were deemed inappropriate due to them not working in the HE sector (threatening sample homogeneity). Additionally, some potential participants did not possess satisfactory conversational English language skills and therefore were excluded from the sample. Hence, in this research, the sample size represents both (1) a homogenous group of academics, and (2) a diverse group of cultural backgrounds, age, gender, educational qualifications, specialisations, years of academic experience, and type of HE institution. Nonetheless, the sample size of ten participants has been justified by research experts as an IPA strategy for an in-depth examination of similarity, differences, convergence, and divergence of the data (Smith and Osborn, 2007). A sample size of 10 participants is generally considered appropriate for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) studies as the IPA emphasises an idiographic approach, focusing on the in-depth exploration of individual experiences rather than seeking broad generalisations (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). Furthermore, the authors argued that there is no definitive answer to the ideal sample size in IPA research. However, they suggest that a sample size between 4 and 10 participants is advisable as this range allows for a detailed and nuanced analysis of each participant's account, which is central to the IPA methodology. According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022), the goal of IPA is to produce an in-depth understanding of certain phenomena, rather than to generalise findings across a larger population. Therefore, a sample size of 10 participants aligns well with the methodological principles of IPA, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

This approach was equally endorsed by some of the respondents who, on reflection, seem to enjoy the process of data collection as evidenced by the quote below:

> I'm enjoying this. You're actually making me think - like deep. This is a deep, deep conversation, deep talk *(Fatma).*

In total ten participants, representing public and private HE institutions across the Emirates were interviewed. Their demographic information is presented, using pseudonyms, in Table 6 (below), followed by a brief written characterisation of each participant.

Table 6: Research Participants' Backgrounds

Pseudonym	Age Group	Education	Nationality	International Experience	Type of Organisation	Discipline
Anand	46 - 50	PhD	Indian	India, Bahrain, UAE	public	Marketing, Statistics, Business Information Systems
Boris	41 - 45	PhD	Ghanaian/British	UK, Vietnam, Africa, UAE	private/public	Finance, Economics, Human Resources
Hesham	61 - 65	PhD	Jordanian/ American	US, Mexico, UAE	private/public	Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Business Law
Gerry	51 - 55	PhD	Philippines	Far East, Gulf countries	private/public	Quality, Finance, Human Resources
Stefan	41 - 45	PhD	Montenegro	Montenegro, UAE	public	Marketing, International Business, Management
Priya	36 - 40	PhD	Indian	India, Middle East	private/public	Human Resources Information Systems, Accounting, Organisational Behaviour
Melissa	56 - 60	PhD	Canadian	Canada, Australia, UAE	private/public	Accounting, Operations Management
Lisa	31 - 35	MA	South African	South Africa, UAE	private	Special Needs
Fatma	51 - 55	MA	Palestinian/ Canadian	US, Canada, UAE	public	Computers and Information Systems, Computer Engineering
Shamma	25 - 30	BA	Emirati	UAE	private/public	General Education, Human Resources

4.4.1.1 Demographics Characteristics

Anand

Anand has an MBA and a PhD in Econometrics from India. At the time of the interview, he had been in Dubai for nine years teaching Marketing, Statistics, and Business Information Systems courses. Prior to his academic career, Anand had more than fifteen years of business management experience in the engineering, marketing, distribution and logistics industries. He has taught various business, economics, and marketing courses in public educational establishments in India, Bahrain, and UAE.

Boris

Boris has been teaching in Higher Education since 2006. He has a PhD from the UK. His teaching experience spans across the UK, Vietnam, Middle East and Africa. Additionally, Boris has held managerial positions in Higher Education in Vietnam, the UK, and Mauritius. Although he is not currently experiencing conflict at the workplace, he had previously experienced cross-cultural conflict whilst working abroad. Boris has taught in both the public and private education sectors in the UAE, UK, and Far East, mostly in Finance, Marketing and Human Resource Management. His industry experience is in HR Services and the Hotel Industry in Africa, the UK and the UAE.

Hesham

Hesham holds a PhD from an American University. His international career in HE includes teaching in the USA, Mexico, and the UAE. In his teaching experience of more than twenty-four years, Hesham has implemented an American-style learning methodology. He has taught Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Business Law courses in private colleges in North America and in federal educational institutions in GCC. Hesham has also worked in public administration units in the USA. During the interview, he was actively looking for new job opportunities due to frustration with the volume of administrative duties he had to perform in his current position.

Gerry

Gerry has a PhD in Business Management from the Philippines. Additionally, Gerry has five years' experience working in financial institutions, particularly banks and insurance organisations in the Philippines. He was also a consultant for small and medium enterprises in his home country. Overall, Gerry has acquired twenty-five years of teaching experience in private and public educational institutions in the Far East and GCC. At the time of the interview, he was teaching Quality, Finance, and Human Resources courses in undergraduate programs.

Stefan

Stefan has a PhD in Economic Sciences in Marketing and International Business Management from Montenegro. He has worked in Senior Leadership positions in non-for-profit organisations, and as an academic in Montenegro and Dubai, in the UAE. Stefan's experience includes assignments at the World Trade Center and as a Program Manager in the United Nations for the UN Development Program. He has

also served as a Director of Exports for nearly 12 years for a company in the area of international sales and marketing in Montenegro. Since 2008, Stefan has transitioned into academia. He has been teaching Marketing courses in a federal educational institution in the Middle East for the last seven years. At the time of the interview, Stefan was considering resigning from his current position due to his frustration with the leadership behaviours in his institution.

Priya

Priya has two Doctorates, in Accounting and Education. She has worked in a government educational institution in the Middle East for the last eight years. She has ten years of industry experience as a chartered professional in the UAE. Prior to relocating to UAE, she taught various business, organisational behaviour, human resources analytics, and accounting courses at Australian and Indian universities. Additionally, Priya has recently applied for a promotion to an Assistant Professor.

Melissa

Melissa has a PhD in Education from Australia. Her career began as a Canadian Chartered Accountant at Deloitte where she worked for four years and then moved on to college teaching in Canada for eight years. She moved to the UAE in 1996. Since that time Melisa has occupied various teaching and Academic Leadership positions within private and public educational institutions in the country. At the time of the interview, she was teaching the accounting major at a branch of a private Australian college in the UAE. The interviewee's career progression has been driven by her desire for recognition and appreciation.

Lisa

Lisa has been teaching in private Australian and French Higher Educational institutions in the UAE for the last eight years. She has a Master's in Special Needs Education from South Africa. She has lived and studied in Dubai since the age of 14. Although she graduated from South Africa and taught a couple of courses there, six years ago she decided to come back to Dubai which she considers her home. During the time of the interview, Lisa was concerned with the most recent change in her institution's academic leadership which was apparently a regular occurrence for that establishment.

Fatma

Fatma obtained her Master's in Computer Engineering from the US, and she has been teaching Computer Information Systems courses ever since. Although the interviewee is originally Palestinian, she has never had the opportunity to live in this territory. She was born and brought up in the UAE. Fatma has built her personal life and professional career in Dubai, except for the time when she studied for her PhD, and qualified for Canadian citizenship. Fatma's job security and confidentiality of personal information were major concerns during the interview. She has been teaching in a federal educational institution in the UAE for the last 20 years. Fatma was recently promoted to Senior Lecturer.

Shamma

Shamma is a high school graduate from the UAE national school system. Later she completed her Bachelor's in Human Resource Management at a private British University based in the UAE. Since August 2020, she has been a faculty in a public HE institution in the UAE. Prior to that, Shamma was a part-time teacher at a private college in the country. Shamma's teaching portfolio includes HRM and general education courses. Before embarking on her academic career, she worked for five years at Dubai Airport, and in the Ground Services Department at a major airline in the UAE, where most of the team members were male employees. At the time of the interview, Shamma was in her first year in a Master's program at a British-owned private university in Dubai.

The aforesaid sample size provided diverse, rich data. However, the data saturation signalled to the researcher that data collection should cease to avoid repetition and redundancy of information.

4.4.1.2 Data Saturation

According to Creswell (2013), saturation occurs when the interviewer is unable to find any new information from the subsequent respondents. Although Braun and Clarke (2021), argue the possibility of data saturation in interpretative study, in this research identification of new information related to employees' experiences of AL stalled at the eighth interview. However, the researcher continued to the tenth respondent to ensure that there was no further new information. What was detected in the ninth and the tenth interviews was not new but identical information which had been presented in different voices and cultural contexts. For example, Shamma and Fatma (both of whom share an Arab background) echoed Stefan's and Gerry's perspectives on leadership power and paternalistic leadership; however,

these viewpoints were just presented in an Arabic context where direct reference to paternalistic leadership is avoided because that is inconsistent with their religious beliefs.

Once all the data were collected, the researcher revisited all the transcripts to ensure that they were identical in volume but unique in content, and rich in individual articulations of AL. This was done by applying Johns' (2006) model of reflection and knowing (see Section 4.4.2.2).

4.4.2 Data Collection Method

Smith and Osborn (2007) define research methods as meaning-giving instruments of individuals' perceptions of reality. In this explorative research, interviews could provide in-depth comprehension of the social phenomenon and therefore, were the most appropriate data collection technique, where there is limited information on the studied domain and detailed insights are needed by individual participants. In phenomenological research interviews are regarded as the primary means for exploring an individual's inclusive account of lived situations (Gill *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, interviews were particularly appropriate for this study for exploring sensitive topics, where participants might be hesitant to share their accounts in a group environment (Gill *et al.*, 2008). This research utilised semi-structured interviews to enable participants to talk openly on the research topic, without being restricted by a pre-determined set of interview questions (Klenke, 2016; Creswell, 2018). Although Gill *et al.* (2008) express concerns over a lack of specific guiding questions, which may result in deviation from the research agenda and produce a large amount of information that is not related to the inquiry and obstruct the achievement of research objectives, semi-structured interviews are able to capture the diversity of interpretations of similar lived experience, produced richer data, and explore new dimensions of the research. According to Smith and Osborn (2007) and Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022), because IPA researchers are focused on analysing the essence of the investigated construct by interpreting the meanings participants assign to their lived experiences, semi-structured interviews define the participants as experiential experts on the researched topic. Therefore, semi-structured interviews offer the freedom and opportunity to respondents to freely make sense and tell of their own experiences during the data collection.

Although the researcher had a list of indicative interview questions derived from the literature review and main research question, in line with the IPA design, and to achieve the objectives of this study, the semi-structured interviews followed the interview schedule format as opposed to adhering to a pre-

defined set of questions (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Thus, this type of interview provides a greater opportunity for uncovering novel aspects of the research subject, a greater understanding of the complexity of AL, and captures the ambiguity in participants' responses. Besides, semi-structured interviews enable the dialogue between the researcher and the participant, as well as offer a flexible platform for adjusting interview questions according to participants' responses. Moreover, this form of interviewing allows the researcher to probe new and important areas raised during the interview.

4.4.2.1 Interviews Settings

In practice, the interview process involved logistical and social challenges that need to be addressed to achieve participants' trust and rapport with the researcher for openly sharing their lived experiences. According to Ryan *et al.* (2009), to avoid potential issues of rigour and to gain the interviewees' confidence, interviewers need to be supportive throughout the data collection method. Therefore, the researcher remained cognisant of potential sensitive obstacles that may impact data collection. For example, all participants were informed of the nature and main objectives of the research and provided with the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix D) and Participant Consent Form (see Appendix E) prior to the interview. The participants were also made aware of any possible ethical considerations pertinent to the study, such as the location of the interview, time, and confidentiality; information on the data storage and use before undertaking the interviews. By signing the abovementioned forms and returning them to the researcher preceding the interview, all participants were given a choice to indicate whether they would participate in the data collection process. In this study, all participants decided to take part in a voluntary capacity. Additionally, the content of the Ethical Statement was verbally repeated at the beginning of each interview (see Appendix F). To avoid participants' concerns and suspicions over the confidentiality of the information shared during the interview, and to maintain the Covid-19 social distancing rules, all interviews were conducted, and audio recorded, using Zoom. Nonetheless, all recorded data was stored by the researcher in a secured folder that was accessible only by the researcher and was protected by a password.

By having prepared the interview schedule in advance, the researcher was able to anticipate to a certain level the different ways the interviews could evolve, to consider how to react and respond to sensitive areas, and to focus more confidently on interviewees' responses to discover novel avenues of AL and its

influence over OR in HE in the UAE. It should be noted that in accordance with the sampling criteria, all interviews were conducted entirely in English, thereby eliminating the need for translation and interpretation (see section 4.4.1).

4.4.2.1 Developing Interview Questions and Piloting

Due to the idiographic commitment of IPA studies and the explorative nature of this research, interviews were guided by open-ended questions (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Moreover, according to Smith (2004), phenomenological research is based on in-depth, individual interviews for collecting data, using open-ended questions. In line with the IPA framework, the data in this inquiry were collected using open-ended questions that offered the participants freedom and flexibility to share their lived experiences of leadership behaviours in the UAE. The development of the interview questions went through two stages. Firstly, the draft of the initial twenty-five questions was developed based on the review of the literature and in consideration of the research aims, objectives, and questions. After the pilot study, at the second stage, some of the questions were removed, while others were merged and modified for clarity.

4.4.2.2 Pilot Study

Pilot interviews are fundamental for interview implementation as they highlight flows, clarify deficiencies, and other methodological issues during the research design, and guide the researcher in making necessary revisions prior to the formal interviews (Creswell, 2009; Turner, 2010). According to Malmqvist *et al.* (2019), a pilot study is particularly recommended for novice researchers as it will prepare them to confront unaccounted challenges that may occur in the formal inquiry and will increase the researcher's confidence in data collection methods. In this respect, two pilot interviews were carried out to re-calibrate the interview questions. Initially, Guest *et al.* (2006) argue that the pilot sample could be entirely different in qualitative studies, where the entire research sample can be a very small number of participants in homogeneous groups, and thus the impact of the final sample size is not expected to be very large. However, Connelly (2008) claims that, according to the literature, a pilot sample of ten percent of the sample size planned for the final study will suffice. Therefore, the participants in the two pilot interviews shared characteristics resembling close similarities to those of the interviewees in the main study (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Turner, 2010). The interviews lasted 45 minutes and were audio

recorded using Zoom software. After listening to the audio recordings, the researcher revised some of the interview questions to improve clarity and neutrality. For example, Q1 was added to explore participants' cultural background and to provide more details on the influence of different demographic variables (i.e. nationality, gender, age, level of experience, HE institution where employed, residence status, etc.), Q14 was rephrased to be more consistent with the transparency of communication, and Q7 and Q 23 were merged. Four questions were eliminated because they duplicated information already covered by other questions, while five questions were identified as suitable for follow-up inquiries. Additionally, some of the questions had to be re-written to reflect and accommodate the different levels of English language skills from non-native speakers. A final list of sixteen questions was utilised during the primary study (see Appendix G). However, as noted above, the interview questions were utilised solely as a strategy to guide the research agenda during the interviews and achieve the research objectives, rather than directing the participants' responses.

4.4.2.2 Reflection on Data Collection and Analysis Process

According to Johns (2006), it is important for the qualitative researcher to reflect inwardly and consider their own thoughts and feelings during the research process. This is particularly of interest when carrying out phenomenological analysis. Therefore, as recommended by Mack and Woodsong (2005), Johns (2006), and Gough and Madill (2012), the researcher had to account for three key factors during the data collection process: (1) subjectivity, (2) ethical impact, and (3) data reporting. Consequently, in this research subjectivity guided the questioning and personal biases; ethical impact framed the level of equity and treatment of interviewees; whilst the data reporting helped to keep in mind the end results of the data collection and analysis.

In theory, the distinctive value of phenomenological research emerges from the rich and diverse narratives of the phenomenon studied. Therefore, during the data collection process, the researcher consciously took breaks between the stages of the research. To keep an open mind during the interviews and listen in a receptive manner to the interviewees' descriptions of their encounters with AL, the researcher included a three-week cooling off period between the literature review writing and the beginning of the interviews. Part of this time was also spent on vacation with the family. Thus, the interviews were approached with (as much of) an unbiased and receptive attitude towards the social and

psychological standpoint of each respondent, which enabled new interpretations of the researched phenomenon to be uncovered during the dialogue with participants.

Additionally, the researcher used '*bracketing*' to distance herself from what was read in the existing literature, so the interview process and data analysis could be approached with fresh eyes. Bracketing is acknowledged as a key attitude of the phenomenological reduction process and refers to the suspension of researcher's lived experience. According to Husserl (1931, cited in Reiners, 2012), who perceived the phenomenon as 'natural' and 'original' prior to critical or theoretical influences, the researcher should attempt to 'reduce the world as it is considered in the natural attitude to a world of pure phenomena' (Valle, King and Halling, 1989; Van Manen, 2007). Therefore, Husserlian phenomenology advocates phenomenological reduction, which results in understanding the phenomenon as it shows itself in the participants' experiences (Bednall, 2006; Dowling, 2007). The process of phenomenological reduction involves suspending a researcher's personal prejudices and striving to reach the core or essence through a state of pure consciousness. Ultimately, transcendental (e.g. Husserlian) phenomenology emphasises applying phenomenological over natural attitudes, as the primary focus of this school of phenomenology is to uncover and describe the 'lived world' (Dowling, 2007; Van Manen, 2007). However, there are varying views on how to enact this suspension. Although the terms bracketing and 'epoché' are used to describe this process, scholarly opinions differ regarding the integration of personal biases during the study of the phenomenon. In theory, bracketing involves setting aside one's own beliefs and assumptions to accurately represent a subject's intended meaning or experience, while epoché is perceived as a continual mode of thinking that persists throughout the study, both before and after empirical data collection (Kafle, 2013).

On the other hand, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with creating a rich and deep account of the studied phenomenon where researchers aim to uncover meaning through intuition rather than accuracy (Dowling, 2007; Van Manen, 2016). Therefore, this methodology recognises the challenges with bracketing and avoidance of prior knowledge. Relatedly, scholars acknowledge the influence of a researcher's implicit assumptions during the research process. Both social constructivists and IPA advocates (Smith, 2017; Smith *et al.*, 2022) recognise the possibility of the researcher's prior knowledge influencing the interviews by guiding the exploratory agenda and in the data analysis by attempting to make sense of diverse meanings. Additionally, social constructivists argue that while researchers are

trying to minimize bias there is always going to be some (Bednall, 2006; Kafle, 2013). As a novice researcher, it is hard to argue that it has been possible to completely bracket myself off despite the efforts to purposefully distance myself from any prejudice that may affect the explanation of the studied phenomenon. However, there is an argument even from a constructivist perspective that the researcher's knowledge does help frame the research (Heidegger, 2005).

In this study, because the social constructivist and phenomenological approach accepts bias and subjectivity, the researcher's experience served as a source of knowledge used to guide data collection and analysis. This is due to the nature of this inquiry, where the primary objective is to make sense of the meaning attached to the interviewees' narratives. Recognising that the researcher is a participant and therefore brings some, or all, of the own experience and biases with them, these gaps were addressed by ensuring that conversations with participants were open. Moreover, the researcher remained conscious not to influence the discussion, and thereby, assumed the position of a participant but not a directive participant in the research.

The researcher tried to ensure, as much as possible, that the way the interviews were conducted was as objective as possible, letting the participants drive the interview, and only be guided very gently. Since the researcher is familiar with the nature of the HE system, she could sympathize and empathise, as well as probably steer interviews, based on her knowledge. In this view, prior knowledge could be considered a strength as it helped shape the interviews, ask the right questions, follow-up on participants' perceptions and prompt for an expansion of their views to collect rich interview data. Otherwise, making sense of participants' interpretations would prove to be a challenge during the data analysis process. Understandably, and despite being conscious that the researcher's knowledge and experience remained hidden to the interviewees, the researcher tried to detach herself from the research and tried to ensure that the questions asked were not leading, so participants could freely and openly talk about what they wanted to. However, it must be recognised that the researcher was guiding participants and some interview questions spilled from the literature and my own expertise working in HE. Additionally, since the collected data were rich in subjective meanings, it is assumed that prior experience working in HE in UAE has influenced the data analysis, in terms of deciding what information should be kept and what is excluded. Besides, while that could lead to a different interpretation than another researcher would

apply, this analysis could also be a better interpretation because the researcher is familiar with the cultural complexities.

4.4.3   Data Cleaning and Analysis

The interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents from the audio files recorded during the face-to-face interviews and saved on the Staffordshire University-protected OneDrive server in compliance with the university's Data Classification, Handling and Disposal Policy. Each recording was played numerous times to ensure an accurate transcription of the interview before the data cleaning process was undertaken. The multiple replays of each interview for capturing the correct verbal expression of each participant's interpretation of his or her lived experience was of particular relevance to this study, since the majority of the respondents were non-native English speakers. Moreover, the video recording offered the additional advantage of watching the body language and expressions as well as listening to what is said. The non-verbal communication cues provided by the participants added an additional layer to support data analysis, one that reflects their emotions. Next, as recommended by Smith (2017), each transcript was cleaned of irrelevant comments, in this sense those not related to the research subject.

In addition, this method was balanced by applying the rules of horizontalisation (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), horizontalisation is a key step in the data analysis process which enables irrelevant and repetitive statements about the phenomenon to be removed and ensures equal value is assigned to each account. Therefore, the process of horizontalisation meant including only relevant and concise textural meanings of the constituent elements of the phenomenon in the verbatim transcripts and removing ones that were out of the scope of the investigation (Yüksel *et al.*, 2015; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). For this reason, the researcher had to read the transcripts numerous times and immerse herself in the data collected during the interviews. Relatedly, data cleaning provided answers to the question of reliability (see Section 4.5 below). Consequently, the key objectives of data cleaning could be defined as: (1) guaranteeing the error-free presentation of non-verbal and verbal elements in the transcripts; and (2) ensuring that data files were accurately named and the content matched the file names. For this reason, the transcripts were printed, read through, and matched with the digital versions of the interviews.

Each of the ten interviews took between one and a half and two hours. Overall, the ten participants generated 151 pages (and 83,261 words) of interview transcripts. A detailed account of the transcribing process is provided in Table 7 (below).

Table 7: Duration of Transcript Processing

Name of Participant	Duration of Transcription (in Hours)	No of Days Spent on Each Transcript
Anand	5:30	3
Boris	6:00	4
Hesham	5:45	3
Gerry	6:15	5
Stefan	5:00	2
Priya	5:30	2
Melissa	6:30	5
Lisa	5:00	3
Fatma	4:50	2
Shamma	4:30	2

i.   *Double Hermeneutics*

In alignment with the research design, this study employed the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework to guide both the collection and analysis of interview data. Following the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology and IPA, a dual approach was adopted during data analysis to define key themes. This involved engaging in a double hermeneutic process, wherein the researcher interprets participants' interpretations of their own experiences (Smith *et al.,* 2009; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). The first stage featured a traditional manual process for identifying common patterns. During this process, Smith *et al.* (2009) recommend a close line-by-line reading of the transcripts to understand the experiential claim and stance of each participant, followed by a double hermeneutics analysis. The double hermeneutics analysis was accomplished through annotation of the individual transcript (see Appendix H). The Right Hermeneutics (RH), where theoretical phrases were generated as a summary of the Left Hermeneutics (LH), demonstrates the common patterns in interpreting the participants' sense-making of their live experiences. The RH represents the superordinate themes, while the LH demonstrates the subordinate themes. Additionally, LH demonstrates the process of identifying common patterns and finalising the superordinate themes. Consequently, final hermeneutics was concluded using

Microsoft Word where handwritten notes were converted into computer texts, whilst adding new themes and patterns that emerged during the typing process.

Hermeneutics analysis empowers the IPA researcher to acknowledge, investigate and make sense of the subjective articulations of situations the participants have lived through. In the context of the UAE, it is important to note that interviewees' responses, which are consequential to the personal interpretation of the question, were influenced by the participants' cultural background. Such situations are more pertinent when interviewees are answering in their second language as is the case with most of the participants, as expatriates in the UAE. As most participants were not native English speakers, the researcher had to be alert that the interviewees may answer according to their linguistic abilities and understanding of the question, which could be different than the meaning the researcher had attached to the question. This possibility further highlights the participative role of the researcher in the data collection process and aligns it with the principles of the double hermeneutics analysis, as the researcher is required to interpret the meaning participants attach to their experiences with AL (Hetherington, 2009). However, to ensure the credibility of the analysis, by utilising the epoché technique (Husserl, cited in Moustakas, 1994) the researcher distanced herself from any personal and preconceived ideologies of AL and focused on the factual meaning the interviewees attached to their reflective articulations of experiences with the phenomenon in HE in the country. Additionally, to minimise the ambiguity of the participants' responses, they were prompted to provide examples related to their experiences. Thus, the researcher avoided using leading questions during the interviews.

ii.   *Coding and Hermeneutic Cycles*

To give purpose and structure to the analysis, Smith *et al.* (2009) recommend the following hermeneutics framework (see Figure 6).
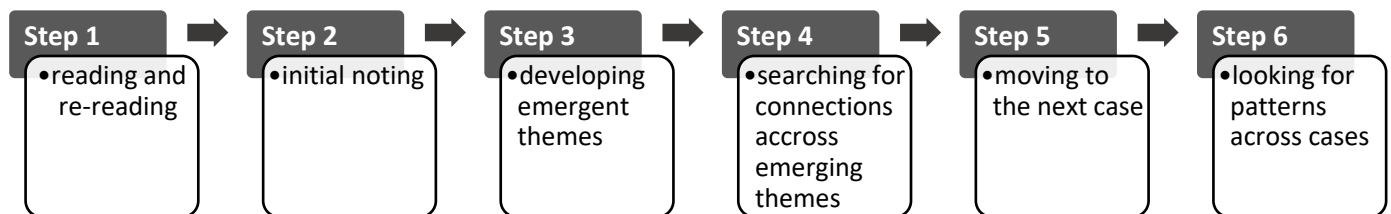

Figure 6: Hermeneutics Framework

The above steps were followed by the researcher with some level of flexibility which aligns with Smith *et al.* (2009). Despite this flexibility, the key epistemic innovation in this research was to focus on Step 6, which allows clear and detailed patterns to be sourced from all the transcripts using Nvivo 12 software.

iii.   Nvivo 12 cross-coding

Nvivo qualitative data analysis software allowed for computer representation and structuring of the themes that emerged from the manual double hermeneutics analysis by assigning specific codes (see Appendix I). Additionally, the coding assisted the researcher in identifying the most significant pieces of information and the strength of each theme communicated by the data as well as establishing associations between different parts of the dataset. Nvivo has become increasingly popular among researchers for categorising large volumes of transcripts and interview notes (Hoover and Koerber, 2009; Dollah *et al.*, 2017). Some of the key advantages of using this software have been assessed with reference to the efficiency, multiplicity, and transparency of the research data. However, according to Richards (1999) there is an increasing possibility that during the coding phase, the researcher can be distanced from the data and warns against falling into a coding trap. Therefore, Dollah *et al.* (2017) recommend that the analytical process should not be framed and rely solely on making connections between different data sets defined by the pre-determined associations offered by Nvivo, but to remain fundamentally reliant on the interpretative skills of the researcher. Therefore, in this study, Nvivo was considered a complementary tool to the, manually executed, double hermeneutics analysis to enhance the visual representation of the data analysis and demonstrate the associations between the Superordinate and Subordinate themes (see Figure 7 below).

The following steps were followed for drawing patterns and finalising the Superordinate and Subordinate themes in this study:

> Step 1: Familiarisation with the data
> Step 2: Manual coding using double hermeneutics (manual and MS Word)
> Step 3: Importing data into Nvivo 12
> Step 4: Coding the data
> Step 5: Querying the data
> Step 6: Reflecting and comparing data with the initial memo using double hermeneutics
> Step 7: Developing coherent patterns
> Step 8: Producing the report

The data yielded six Superordinate, and twenty-eight Subordinate themes presented in Figure 7 (below). The order of the Superordinate and Subordinate themes follows a logical presentation based on the weight and emphasis that participants awarded to each topic. The Superordinate (SP) themes are illustrated within the shapes with the dark background, while the Subordinate (SB) themes are respectfully listed in the corresponding shape with a clear background.

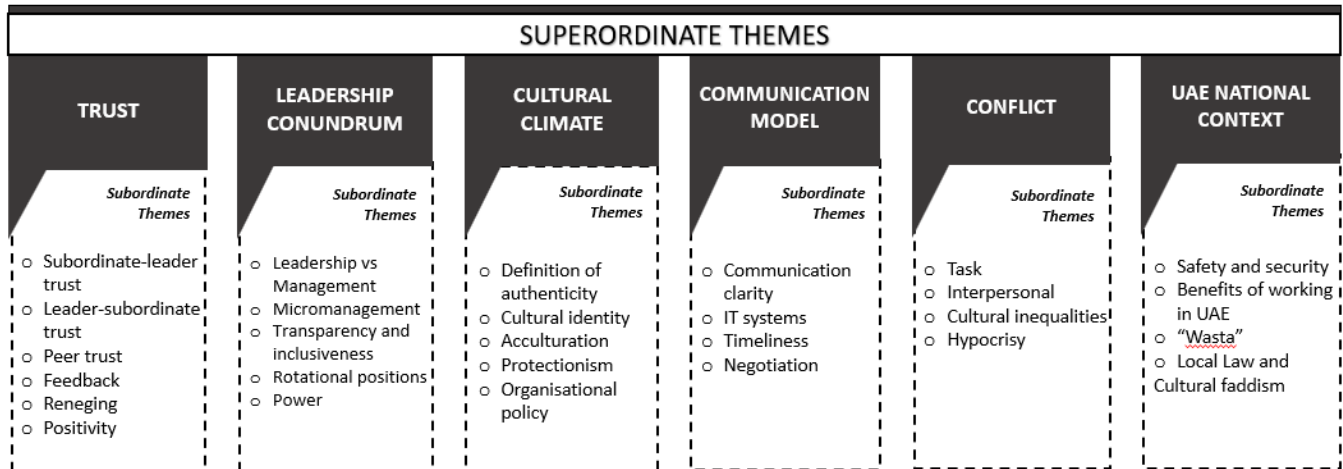| SUPERORDINATE THEMES					
TRUST	**LEADERSHIP CONUNDRUM**	**CULTURAL CLIMATE**	**COMMUNICATION MODEL**	**CONFLICT**	**UAE NATIONAL CONTEXT**
Subordinate Themes	*Subordinate Themes*	*Subordinate Themes*	*Subordinate Themes*	*Subordinate Themes*	*Subordinate Themes*
o Subordinate-leader trust o Leader-subordinate trust o Peer trust o Feedback o Reneging o Positivity	o Leadership vs Management o Micromanagement o Transparency and inclusiveness o Rotational positions o Power	o Definition of authenticity o Cultural identity o Acculturation o Protectionism o Organisational policy	o Communication clarity o IT systems o Timeliness o Negotiation	o Task o Interpersonal o Cultural inequalities o Hypocrisy	o Safety and security o Benefits of working in UAE o "Wasta" o Local Law and Cultural faddism

Figure 7: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

The sequence of the Superordinate themes illustrated in Figure 7 demonstrates the intensity of participants' interpretations of their lived experiences and evidences the construal of the Subordinate themes. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

4.4.4 Reflection on the Role of the Researcher

Finlay (2002) and Berger (2015) define reflexivity in research as a process of reflecting on the influence of the researcher's background, worldviews, and actions on the study. The authors highlight the value of reflexivity in qualitative research in terms of ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings. Although the concept has been often used interchangeably with 'reflectivity' and 'critical reflection,' reflexivity demonstrates one's mental 'stance' and an individual's ability to situate oneself in the picture, as well as to recognise and appreciate how one's own self can influence the research (Johns, 2006; 2011). Similarly, Berger (2015) defines reflexivity as the ability of a researcher to turn back the lens onto oneself and acknowledge one's personal positioning within the academic study.

As discussed above, during the research process, the researcher had to fluidly navigate between the roles of insider-outsider (Berger, 2015). The complexity and tension in the researcher's positionality and its influence on qualitative research have been acknowledged (Berger, 2015; Wilson *et al.,* 2022). According to their propositions, positionality refers to being aware of how aspects like race, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and personal experiences shape the researcher's perspective and their interactions with the research topic, participants and data (Wilson *et al.,* 2022; Yip, 2023). Moreover, the researcher is advised to consider the personal influence on the research process, including the formulation of the research question, study design, data collection, and data analysis (Berger, 2015). Next, the ethical implications of the research process and actions are evaluated by how the researcher's presence and actions may impact participants and the evidence of maintaining transparency about the researcher's reflexivity process in the research reporting. To examine and address this influence and possible concerns with the trustworthiness of the research (Pezalla *et al.,* 2012; Berger, 2015), the reflexivity framework adopted in this study is derived from the propositions of Finlay (2002). This relates to the researcher's positionality, the recommendations for critical incident analysis of Johns (2006), and the claims of Berger (2015) about the dual role of the researcher. Therefore, the reflexivity framework in this study supports a structured and systematic way for reflecting upon the researcher's positionality in terms of recognising and acknowledging the researcher's own social and personal identity, background, and worldview, and how these factors influence the research process (Finlay, 2002).

With reference to positionality, the researcher has a history in the sector and has very good knowledge of HE in the UAE, having worked in it for more than a decade. Additionally, as a female who was born and brought up in Eastern Europe but, as a result of career growth opportunities, has assumed various academic roles in HE in Canada and the Emirates, this helps to explain the personal circumstances that have shaped the researcher's distinct values and beliefs, and which have influenced the formation of the research questions and methodology. The majority of the researcher's career has progressed in the HE sector in a country where both government regulations and economic freedom shape the distinct socio-economic environment. Therefore, it is not surprising that the research question in this study is defined within the framework of a monarchical governance with a free market disposition (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, the distinct values, beliefs, and experiences have shaped the researcher's social constructivist paradigm and, relatedly, the research design.

The researcher's influence in the data collection and analysis, addressing the concerns raised by Pezalla *et al.* (2012) and Berger (2015) regarding potential bias due to the human interaction between the interviewer and interviewees and the relationships between the interviewer and the research topic, have been addressed in previous sections. Additionally, Saunders *et al.* (2007, pp. 318-319) highlight two key potential biases: (1) interviewer bias, and (2) interviewee response bias. The first type of bias includes tone of voice, non-verbal behaviour or comments that the interviewer may have made that will influence the respondents in the way that they answer a question. Such a problem is strongly associated with semi-structured interview questions as is in this study. Occasionally, researchers may risk imposing their own views and perceptions on an interview or express bias during the interpretation of responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 318). Therefore, the researcher was very cautious of such issues during data collection, as similar bias could have arisen due to the researcher's knowledge of the HE sector and some of the matters being discussed. Hence, the researcher took great care to remain impartial, behaving as though she had no prior familiarity with the topics under investigation.

The second type of bias, discussed by Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 318), is interviewee bias, also known as response bias. This is where bias arises from the interviewee's perceptions of the interviewer, or where respondents' answers are tempered by concerns that they may have about discussing certain themes. This was the bigger concern for the researcher: participants being hesitant to openly share their lived experience with the AL phenomenon. To mitigate this, the researcher emphasised confidentiality and created a safe space for sharing sensitive experiences as well as asked probing questions to expand on the answers given, demonstrating the importance of having chosen the semi-structured interview method. This type of bias might have also arisen from respondents wanting to please the interviewer by giving answers they believed the researcher preferred. However, the interviewer's experience in the field proved beneficial; when the researcher sensed this could be happening, she asked follow-up questions to clarify responses while remaining mindful of potential interviewer bias, or the perception of it.

Consequently, this study has largely adopted epistemological approaches for understanding how knowledge and reality are viewed and created through the voices of people who work in HE in the country. This means appreciating multiple and diverse interpretations of individuals' lived experiences with the researched phenomenon. Since the knowledge of AL in this thesis is derived through the lens of culture, which is diverse in nature, the author felt that the voices of all participants matter. It is

particularly important for the research context, as in this region such voices did not count in the past (Davidson, 2009; Forstenlechner *et al.,* 2012). Due to the social constructivist paradigm of the researcher and the nature of the research objectives, this study adopted a phenomenological methodology. Therefore, the researcher had to demonstrate empathy and, on occasion, refer to her own experience in order to guide the interview agenda during the data collection. This approach assisted in avoiding situations during the interviews when participants would be inclined to deliver socially desirable outcomes, such as saying "yes" when they felt that "yes" would be accepted and saying "no" when they felt that "no" would be accepted. This research risk has been annulled by approaching the phenomenon by exploring the voice of people through in-depth interviews that are interpreted using IPA as a standard epistemology. Besides, the objective of this interpretative study is not to generalise but to understand what the participants specifically think of AL and, if it exists in the first place, to form a framework that seeks to understand as opposed to predict. Additionally, concerns with the researcher's positionality and the possibility of the researcher's influence over the data collection and analysis, including the interview settings, participants, interview questions, and their interpretation (Mack and Woodsong, 2005; Johns, 2006; Gough and Madill, 2012) have been addressed throughout this study.

Furthermore, the researcher has followed the Ethical Guidelines as outlined by the Staffordshire University Research Ethics Policy. All participants have been made aware of issues related to consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, and therefore were comfortable in sharing their experiences. Additionally, the data collection observed the University's Data Protection Policy under GDPR.

In theory, the academic discussion on reflexivity extends to a broader debate about the ontological, epistemological, and axiological components of the self and the role of the researcher in the creation of knowledge (Fox and Allan, 2014; Berger, 2015; Wilson *et al.,* 2022). Having discussed issues related to the researcher's positionality and reflexivity and the impact of biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on the research, the next section explains how the trustworthiness of the research has been achieved.

4.5 Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

Demonstrating reliability and validity is fundamental for substantiating the rigour of this research. Although in theory, evaluating and justifying trustworthiness is a key objective in qualitative studies,

there is a lack of any general agreement in the existing literature on the suitability of one criterion over the other (Flick, 2009). However, the framework introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for assessing the quality of qualitative research has assumed popularity among qualitative researchers. According to the authors, trustworthiness in qualitative research is dependable upon the researcher's ability to demonstrate rigour in the data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. They identified four key criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research (e.g., credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) that also represent the alternatives to the conventional positivist criteria of validity and reliability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 1986). Relatedly, Johnson and Duberley (2000) claimed that the criteria for trustworthiness should be aligned with the epistemological foundations of the study and the research paradigm. Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (2005), argue that the positivist method, which is recognised for utilising techniques from the natural sciences, is not appropriate to the social sciences approach and the philosophies of qualitative inquiry. Therefore, in addressing the question with trustworthiness, this work adopted the framework defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) (see Table 8).

Table 8: Qualitative Criteria for Assessing Research Rigour

Criteria	Parameter	Application in this Research
Credibility	Confidence in the 'truth' of the finding	Signed Participant Consent Form/oral confirmation obtained to proceed after reading the Ethical statement prior to the commencement of the interview. Richness of participants' responses and relevant examples.
Transferability	Showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts, and are applicable to similar situations, populations, and phenomena	The diverse backgrounds of respondents, multiple higher education institutions
Dependability	Showing the consistency of findings and that they could be repeated	Pilot study, Double Hermeneutics, Nvivo 12 cross-coding, and Superordinate themes
Confirmability	The degree of neutrality, or the extent to which the research findings are an outcome of the respondents' expressions and accounts rather than being influenced by the researcher's bias or interest	IPA – semi-structured interviews, following the interview schedule. Bracketing (Epoché) during data collection and analysis

Note. Adapted from Amankwaa (2016, pp. 121-127)

However, the quality claims formulated in Table 8 may not fit appropriately with hermeneutic phenomenology. The following paragraphs discuss the activities applied in this research to address each of the above criteria and validate the trustworthiness of the study.

i. Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1986) consider credibility as a key factor in establishing the trustworthiness of research. This criterion evaluates how congruent the findings are with reality. The adopted phenomenological research design in this study is not positioned to produce generalisable but rather 'thick' data (Smith, 2017). Thus, the question of credibility was answered by the variety of respondents' voices and experiences, and the richness of participants' articulations, supported by the diverse personal examples the interviewees provided to illustrate their encounters with AL behaviour. As a result of the detailed interviewees' responses, the research method was considered a valid and reliable approach for future studies. Furthermore, to ensure the credibility criterion has been met in this inquiry, interviews were conducted only after confidentiality statements were agreed upon, and with the confirmation that the respondents did not have any inhibitions or were compelled when they were interviewed.

ii. Transferability

Despite the inductive nature of the IPA methodology, the findings suggest their transferability to a similar multicultural HE context. Therefore, this research method could be applied to a study in a different context which will enable the collection of a diverse dataset but achieving or confirming similar objectives. Furthermore, according to Hofstede and Minkov (2010), countries that share cultural resemblances tend to exhibit analogous patterns of thinking, which influences the meanings people attribute to various aspects of life and their personal experiences in the distinct cultural environment. Thus, the findings of this study can add value to GCC and Middle Eastern countries as they share comparable cultural values and beliefs with the UAE. In a broader cross-cultural context, these findings could be applicable to collectivistic countries that demonstrate high power distance and uncertainty avoidance features but have also experienced a transfusion of individualistic leadership style due to business and HE globalisation.

iii. Dependability

Since this study aims to explore the meaning participants attached to their lived experiences with AL, the researcher has made every effort to ensure that the findings accurately represent the participants' viewpoints. For this purpose, the main study which proceeded after a pilot, has adopted double hermeneutics and utilised Nvivo 12 software for cross-coding which generated Superordinate themes. Thus, the results are consistent and repeatable, provided a similar approach is adopted by another research study.

iv. Confirmability

In addition to the epoché technique utilised during the data collection and analysis, the neutrality of the findings is justified by the IPA and semi-structured interviews, following the interview schedule format. In addition, the researcher has not used any pre-emptive, or suggestive questions to create a biased response. Besides, the respondents were not given any pre-briefing to avoid creating pre-conceived ideas or perceptions. Furthermore, the time and location of the interviews were also chosen during less busy days according to the respondents' preference, thus trying to avoid even recent events to influence any responses.

However, in addition to the quality of data and trustworthiness, the value of a research study is strengthened by its ethical considerations and procedures which are discussed in the following section.

4.6 Ethical Procedures

Drawing upon hermeneutics methodology and compared to quantitative research, the ethical concerns in this qualitative research were amplified due to the intense human interactions (Kafle, 2013). Although there were no vulnerabilities, or potential dangers to the respondents, because all the respondents were adult males and females, without any compromised mental and physical abilities, the ethical requirements from Staffordshire University necessitate a standard procedure for all research. To ensure the integrity of the study, the researcher followed the ethical process outlined in the post-graduate handbook and the Staffordshire University Ethical Review Policy. This meant that at the beginning of the research process, the required Proportionate Review Form, Participant Consent Form, Participant

Information Sheet and Indicative Interview Questions (see Appendix H) were approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix D and Appendix G).

According to Ryan *et al.* (2009), to avoid potential issues of rigour and gain interviewees' confidence, the interviewer needs to be supportive throughout the data collection method. Therefore, the researcher remained cognisant of potentially sensitive issues that may impact data collection. For example, all participants were informed of the nature and main objectives of the research, and provided with the Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form prior to the interview (see Appendix D and Appendix E). Additionally, all interviewees were informed in advance about the ethical aspects associated with the study, such as the location of the interview, time, and confidentiality; information on the data storage and use before undertaking the interviews. By signing the informed consent forms and returning them to the researcher preceding the interview, all participants were given a choice to indicate whether they would participate in the data collection process. In this study, all participants took part in a voluntary capacity.

Additionally, the content of the Ethical Statement was verbally repeated at the beginning of each interview as a disclaimer (see Appendix F). Lastly, all recorded data and data analysis were stored by the researcher in a secured folder that was accessible only by the researcher and was protected by a password. By having prepared the interview schedule in advance, the researcher was able to anticipate, to a certain level, the different ways the interviews could evolve, to consider how to react and respond to sensitive areas, and to focus confidently on the interviewees' responses for discovering the novel avenues of the AL and its influence over OR in HE in the UAE.

4.7. Summary of the Research Methodology

This chapter offers a comprehensive narrative of the research philosophy and paradigmatic motivators underpinning the methodological choices adopted in this study. Ultimately, the research design, process for collecting data, and data analysis method were guided by the research objectives and the conceptual framework presented in Figure 4: *Conceptual Framework of the Research* (see Section 4.2 above). Besides, the research methodology addressed several methodological flaws in the extant literature, including the limited research into AL in the UAE, the dominance of quantitative approaches, and the

lack of phenomenological and interpretative studies in the Emirates. Relatedly, the methodological framework draws upon the principles of social constructivist philosophy and hermeneutics phenomenology and supports the inductive nature of this qualitative research.

To achieve the study's objectives, data were collected from faculty who interpreted and made sense of their lived experiences with leadership behaviours in HE in the UAE. The selection of the study's sample was defined first and foremost by the phenomenon under investigation (e.g., AL), and secondly, by the philosophical paradigm of the researcher, the key research question and the adopted phenomenological methodology. Therefore, the fieldwork employed the purposive sampling method which was supported by snowballing as a secondary approach. The sample size of ten faculty members from various HE institutions in the country is aligned with the IPA recommendations for collecting 'thick' data from a small group of participants (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022). In this respect, the semi-structured interview method was appropriate for hermeneutic phenomenology and balanced the required interview structure with flexibility, supporting the interpretative goals of hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 2016). Further, the double hermeneutics technique of IPA facilitates the manual analysis of transcripts, enabling patterns to be established, identified in the Superordinate (SP) and Subordinate themes (SB) (see Figure 7 above). Nvivo software provided the means for organising and storing interview data.

Finally, this chapter outlined the ethical procedures followed by the researcher and explained how issues related to the trustworthiness of this qualitative research have been addressed throughout the study. Additionally, the reflexivity section elaborated on the role of the researcher throughout the various stages of the research.   While this chapter explains how the research was approached and conducted, the following chapter presents the findings of the study, grouped around the SP and SB themes to address the central research question.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the interview data. The alignment with the methodology facilitates the clarity and coherence of this segment of the study and offers a better understanding of the fluidity of the presentation in the following paragraphs. The key objective of this research is to determine the degree to which Authentic Leadership (AL) influences the attainment of Operational Resilience (OR) within the Higher Education (HE) sector in the UAE. Therefore, this chapter is structured around the qualitative analysis of data obtained through face-to-face online interviews and provides a narrative account of the respondents' lived experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. The ten interview transcripts were vetted for length, audibility, and similar, yet diverse, rapportage of participants' interpretations of their encounters with existent leadership practices in the tertiary education institutions in the Emirates.

Considering the complexity and experiential nature of the data, and to mitigate the risk of analytical generalisation, the analysis was accomplished by using IPA (Smith, 2017). IPA uses double hermeneutics which, in this case, was conducted by inscribing notes on either margin of the interview transcripts to denote the Superordinate and Subordinate themes (see Appendix H). Following the manual summary of key patterns in the participants' narratives, the data were further analysed using Nvivo 12 which confirmed emergent themes and identified a few additional common topics aligned with the research objectives. Consequently, the analysis yielded six Superordinate (SP) and twenty-eight Subordinate (SB) themes which are presented in Figure 7 (chapter 4 above). Thus, Chapter 5 follows the sequential presentation of these themes. While this section presents the general findings, a more detailed discussion of the results is provided in Chapter 6.

5.2 Thematic Screening

The thematic variables in this study are defined based on their proximity to the primary and secondary research questions. The Superordinate (SP) and Subordinate (SB) themes emerged from textural descriptions of participants' experiences with leadership during their employment in the UAE. Each SP

theme is discussed individually in the subsequent paragraphs. The sequence of presentation is determined by: (1) the significance ascribed to each theme by the participants, and (2) the richness in evidence found within the transcripts (Smith, 2017).

5.2.1 Superordinate Theme (SP) 1: TRUST

Some of the critical findings of this study are related to the concept of trust. Theoretically, both the socio-behaviourist and ideological perspectives recognise the centrality of trust in defining AL behaviour (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; B. George, 2007; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012b). On average, each respondent spent approximately ten minutes elaborating on their own perception of what constitutes trust within their organisational environment. To make sense of the importance of trust in the subordinate-leader, leader-subordinate, and peer-to-peer relationships, participants collectively made 285 references to expressions such as *'trust', 'trustworthy', 'trustful',* and *'believe'.* Additional interpretations of trustful relational exchanges referred to leadership practices demonstrating genuine feedback seeking, reneging, and fostering positivity.

i.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 1: Subordinate-Leader Trust*

In the UAE, unlike other countries, defining what constitutes a subordinate's trust in the leader is a challenging endeavour. In this study, the diversity of participants' cultural backgrounds resulted in generating a plethora of interpretations related to behaviours that foster trust. Without exception, all respondents claimed transparency is a key factor in inspiring trust in their leaders. However, their accounts generated a multiplicity of contradictory viewpoints. Whilst the respondents from collectivistic cultures emphasised the importance of transparency in the leader's support for their contract renewal, others, such as Boris and Melissa who are from individualistic cultures, highlighted the centrality of transparency in communicating the organisation's vision. For example, Melissa expressed her concerns as follows:

> OK, for me building trust is very important and I think the first thing is transparent communications. I really, really think that you need transparency all the way through the organisation, right from the top…I think to build trust, that's the first thing - transparent communications about the direction, about mission, about decisions.

Melissa's view is echoed in Hesham's interpretation, who also has an individualistic cultural background. He shared the following experiences:

> There are some problems that there are just no actions. Some complaints and emails [were sent to faculty and staff] but we do not know who is going to address those issues. And for me that is worrisome. Maybe the top leadership is cautious that they do not have the answer yet, but at least they should communicate that "At this time we don't have that answer yet". So, for me, I need really an action and that action is not necessarily an action that they will do this, or do that. At least they have to tell you why they cannot commit to the answer to a question. But also, there are many actions that they really did well.

In the above reflection, Hesham associated his leadership behaviour with the collectivistic culture which makes it challenging for the participant to align his personal values with his leadership's. The interviewee's words indicate the inconsistency in the leadership behaviour in his organisation which aligns with the ascriptions of a collectivistic culture (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010) and therefore, creates internal conflict for the teacher. In his words, the faculty member also acknowledged the positive outcomes of the leadership's actions, but he did not specify if he referred to the current leadership which demonstrates behaviour associated with the ascriptions of collectivist culture, or the earlier leadership who had an individualistic culture behaviour as in a few occurrences during the interview, Hesham highlighted the change in the leadership and their cultural background during his employment in his HE institution. Hesham has repeatedly voiced his appreciation for leadership with western ideology during the interview when reflecting on his experiences with another matter.

Additionally, for Melissa and Boris who come from an individualistic cultural environment and are therefore habituated to Western leadership style, the obvious exclusion from strategic communication over the organisation's direction is unacceptable. For example, Boris shared that:

> Transparency could be in terms of how they communicate, in terms of the decisions that they make. In terms of how they treat me in relation to other people. So as a genuine leader, I would expect them to also have a vision. If a leader doesn't have a vision, then.. they really cannot be seen as a genuine person.

Thus, the respondents argued that the communication of the organisation's vision is a key variable in developing subordinate-leader trust. Additionally, both Boris and Melissa's voices indicated respondents' disappointment with the lack of consistency between leadership vision and actions, and indirectly associated leadership behaviour with organisational outcomes. In a similar view, Hesham attempted to

make sense of what inspires trust in his leader by directly relating faculty-leader trustful interactions with the tangible outcomes of the leader's behaviour:

> My leader should be my vision, and … the vision is a visualised outcome. I should be able to see this outcome. Leadership would be more applicable. The leader should be able to show me a vision of my future, to give me more information.

Boris, Melissa, and Hesham perceived the realisation of *'applied vision'* as a direct outcome of the leader's vision and corresponding actions. Moreover, the interviewees claimed that transparency in communication is a primary criterion in assessing the consistency of leader's actions. In addition, participants' reflections revealed the influence of individuals' cultural background in defining leader's accountability and highlighted one's moral values and beliefs in directing leadership consistency of actions. This behaviourist view is further accentuated by Anand's interpretation of trust:

> Yeah, consistency of actions. You need to be consistent in what you do. When I say consistent, consistent in dealing with the people, in exercising your authority and power, so it needs to be consistent. In the same fashion, the outcome or the response that you give needs to be the same for everybody at all times.

Furthermore, Anand's reflective account highlights the presence of cultural preferentialism in leadership behaviour when communicating with subordinates, which associates the leader's self-awareness with the demonstration of personal and positional power. It also indicates a lack of trust in his leader due to culturally subjective interpretation of organisational policy, selective information dissemination, and different levels of support provided to employees. This view echoes in Boris' voice as well:

> The policies in this organisation are very stable. They are the same despite who is in the leadership position. But the interpretation of the policy matters. The interpretation of a particular policy by a Bulgarian, or a British would be different from the interpretation of the same policy by someone, say from Jordan or India.

Boris' extended interpretation of his experience (below) offers an additional affirmation of the influence of the inherited cultural individuality on interpreting the organisational policy by the middle-level management. The interviewee's reflection emphasises both the interviewee's confusion in defining his leadership and the cultural congruence of the leadership behaviour in his HE institution. Besides, during the interview, the participant was so frustrated with the differences in interpreting organisational policy that he passionately shared the following lived experiences:

Yes, there were times when there was an email. I think that was about 2 or 3 years ago. The email came all the way from the top, from the leadership, I think, from the President, that had asked that Faculty [members] should be asked to go home because the weather wasn't nice. On certain campuses, the interpretation was "Go home and go and rest." But on our campus, the interpretation was that "Only staff can go home, and the faculty [members] have to stay." So these are different interpretations. Not only that, but there were other circumstances where we may be asked to do a particular activity... It could be an advising exercise. Yeah, and you find differences across campuses; Sharjah is doing it in a different way, we're doing it in a different way. Class observation is done in a different way. For the current class observation, I have used a template from the UK, and I know that template very well. But for the past three and a half years, a different template has been used. Now the mandate from the top is "Do class observation," and I believe the institution had a template for this. But then you see their interpretation. It boils down to the individual and what they think they're doing.

Notably, for Boris, who comes from an individualistic culture, such a culturally subjective interpretation of organisational policies and processes is unacceptable. These occurrences gradually eroded the participant's trust in his leadership. However, for the most part of his reflection, the participant refers to the middle-level management and clearly differentiates their role from that of the leadership, whom Boris identifies as the "President", issuing directives in an inclusive way to all employees.

As evident from the shared experiences above, all interviewees agreed on the centrality of transparent communication for building trust in subordinate-leader interactions. On the other hand, in the views of Fatma, Melissa, and Lisa, trust in their leaders is closely correlated to transparency in supporting faculty during the contract renewal process. For example, Fatma shared her indirect experience with leadership support in the contract renewal of her peer:

> I saw how in one particular example they supported a faculty who was not renewed, and she was actually told, verbally, "this is what you have to do to try to get renewed", and I thought that was so nice of that leader. She wasn't supposed to do that. They weren't supposed to actually give out that information, but they did because they felt that person, that faculty was not wrong, and they shouldn't be like terminated or not renewed. So this is leading by example. This is leading by showing empathy to your employees and support when they need it. And that's very important and I actually was trying to think "why that, my manager did what they did?" I mean she had her job at the line, and I mean there if the word came out, that would have been a problem for them. But I think because they do know that when people feel good, and you must be knowing how people talk and these things can travel, it will give the impression that that person is fair, which is favorable to everyone, you produce more. Because then you are more productive if you feel safe in a work environment, and that you know that your manager has your back, and they will support you if you need support.

In the above story, Fatma reflected on several issues. First, she praised the leader who was not afraid to stand up to the higher-ranking leadership in support of the faculty contract renewal. Secondly, Fatma's words indicate the high-power distance features of her organisational structure as well as organisational culture. Third, the participant clearly noted the culture of fear present in her HE institution. Obviously, Fatma was referring to a leader with an individualistic cultural background, as her extended interpretation of her own contract renewal process demonstrated the cultural shift in leadership behaviour. This was also supported by the change in Fatma's voice and the emergence of disappointing notes. The following is Fatma's reflection on her experience with the leader's behaviour during this process:

> And we do have transparency, we do. We do have support. We are given the opportunities to be proactive, creative…..Yeah, I do feel because I know that they will, they would give a positive feedback about me. Well, I hope…

Although the initial sentence illustrates Fatma's positive feelings and firm belief that her leader is supporting the extension of her employment contract, the reflection gradually transitions into concerns and doubts about her leader's transparency and supportive behaviour. Thus, the unfinished sentence, followed by a moment of silence suggests that Fatma had begun to question her own perceptions during the interview, which then prompts her to depart from her collectivistic cultural standpoint. The concerns raised by Fatma about the transparency in communication and support for the continuity of employment are also highlighted in Melissa's reflection on her experience with the contract renewal process:

> I remember, being on probation that first year and asking my manager at that time, how will I know if I'm going to pass probation and he said: "If you're still here on the last day of the semester, then you can assume you're coming back in September" and I'm like, "but that's not acceptable."

The cultural shock in Melissa's words is not exclusive only to participants from individualistic cultures. Gerry, who comes from a collectivistic society, also reported his disappointment with the lack of leadership support in his contract renewal. In his words below, the participant explains why he felt the trust in his leadership has eroded over a time:

> …the previous supervisors have said that "I recommended you", but how we will know? OK, so it's not transparent. He says: "No, I recommended all of you". We do not know all this and so inside, I still believe "yes", but then we don't have evidence to support …unless we are also shown "OK, this is my recommendation.

Since trust is an individual and therefore unique experience, the cultural diversity of the interviewees prompts conflicting definitions of the concept. For example, Gerry emphasised his expectations of leadership behaviour that is "paternalistic, like a good father who runs our family...it is also about a caring hand." This perception is aligned with both the collectivist and Muslim ideological perspective of leadership which are dominant in the UAE culture (Obeidat *et al.*, 2012). In contrast, Melissa and Boris who come from an individualistic culture, but have lived and worked in UAE for more than seven years, claimed that they would trust a leader who is "humble" and "protective". These contrasting viewpoints further expand the discussion on the contextual foundation of the concept of trust in HE in the country.

The cultural background of their leadership assumes centrality in all participants' efforts to define and understand what constitutes trust. Since there is no singular culture in the UAE context and within the HE workforce, the interviewees' interpretations of trust align the considerations of faculty autonomy in job performance with the cultural background of the individual in a leadership position. This trend unfolds in Lisa's account and continues to evolve throughout all interviews as is shown in the following paragraphs:

> Hmmm...I don't know how they become the Director, but first of all they will be French Nationals for sure...They don't come and observe you ... They put you in that position. They trust that you're going to do what you need to do... So yeah, it's again very different to what the typical UAE management style is.

Clearly, Lisa's perception of trust is biased to the leader's cultural characteristics which faculty view as crucial in shaping leadership behaviour that fosters trustworthy exchanges with the subordinates. In her perception, leaders from egalitarian cultures are better able to inspire trust in their relationship with faculty as opposed to the indigenous leadership style prevalent in Muslim communities. Therefore, the respondent's voice differentiates trustful leadership practices based on the features of individualistic and collectivistic cultures, highlighting the contrast between Western and UAE leadership. Similar sentiments are echoed in Hesham's reflection:

> My preference is that, if I have the preferences, I would choose leaders who are from certain cultures to manage me or to be my bosses. I would have a preference. You know, I would prefer to have, for example, an American or Canadian or somebody who's a Western mentality, because they tend to give you more space. They respect you more, they trust you more. They don't really *get in your hair*. They don't want to micromanage you. They don't have that control freak mentality, you know, so I would rather work for people like that. Absolutely, I'm not shy about it.

By repeating 'preference' and 'prefer', Hesham strongly voiced his mistrust of non-Western leaders, emphasising the culturally bound foundation of the concept of trust. Further affirmation of the socio-cultural antecedents of trust is offered by Boris, Shamma, and Anand who expressed concerns about how they are treated "….in comparison to other people." Likewise, Boris voiced his frustration with the presence of cultural preferentialism by reflecting on his experience as follows: "The in-group are the people who are from your culture, your country, or your background. So, the way we operate here is immediately there's someone outside from your in-group." Boris' frustration with his leader's behaviour is echoed in Hesham's interpretation, who stated that he trusts a leader "who doesn't give preferences to other people in the team", which is not the case in his HE institution. The prevalence of leadership behaviour manifesting as preferential treatment based on the demographics of the subordinates transpires in most participants' accounts, indicating a widespread lack of trust in their leader's behaviour.

Building on the above perspectives, Shamma offers a gender-specific view on what defines trust, highlighting the importance of gender differentiation in making sense of the variable of trust.

> So, for me, there are more like close-minded girls, like the men are Superior, she listens and obeys them, and this is 'cause I know many girls who go by what their parents tell them, they tell them what they did think.

Thus, the respondent's words suggest a transition of the UAE indigenous cultural characteristics into the work environment which, in return, alters the perceptions of trust of both expatriates and Emirati nationals. Her expanded interpretation of trustful relations with the leader supports Hesham and Boris's earlier statements regarding the existence of in-group and out-group membership and cultural preferentialism. Shamma's words are as follows:

> So, this is just one of the things that I noticed from my own experience. When I was with these managers, these higher positions, they tended to be more than friendly, more than colleagues to me, and it was in order for them to impress me. I guess what will happen is that they would offer me a higher position. They will change a course, or a major for me. Like I used to work in a General Education department, but then I was transferred to business. However, the course I was teaching, it wasn't fit with my skills. But because I know the managers and they know me, they basically created a new course schedule for me just to stay in the business major, which was funny for me because I should not be exactly there. This is how things work in our company. If we know somebody, then you are good. If you don't…. that's the thing.

In reflecting on her actual experience, Shamma raised several concerns with leadership behaviour influencing trust with subordinates. First, she highlighted the possibility for in-group belonging based on faculty cultural identity (e.g. Emirati). Second, she noted the benefits of "wasta" in her teaching allocation. Third, Shamma raised concerns about the emergence of preferential leadership practices within the academic institution.

Further nuances in the definition of trust emerged from Anand's reflection, where he expressed concerns about the ways in which trust is impacted by leadership behaviours that undermine employee contributions.

> So, I get involved. Invoke your creativity. Exactly, yeah, my innovation with my creativity, my ability to, uh, you know, take challenges or resolve issues. I don't need the credit. I don't need the credit, you can get it used, but you know when you start involving people into it, they give their opinion and sometimes you can implement that too. Then they feel like "I'm a little valuable". So, then you develop that trust. OK, the person listens to what we say.

Anand's interpretation of a trustful relationship with the leader echoes the expectations of the rest of the participants for recognition and appreciation of their valuable input to the success of their academic institution. Reciprocally, the lack of genuine consideration and acknowledgement of faculty input erodes the level of trust in the leader. Furthermore, in the following statement, Boris establishes a reference for trust based on his leader's reliability in maintaining confidentiality, an adequate concern given the multicultural and multilingual environment in the UAE.

> If I were to tell him my personal issues and if I were to go to him for help, would he receive that information? Contain that information, or would he dispatch that information to other people? And that is a confidentiality issue. Here, where if he cannot be trusted to keep my confidence, then that becomes an issue which will affect our relationship in the long run.

To justify his statement, Boris recalled his experience:

> So if you see all the Indians working together and often I hear in the office people speak in Urdu or Hindi. Whereas the lingua franca in the organisation is English. I hear people speaking even in meetings, they switch to start speaking in their language…I have seen my previous leader several times speaking to an individual who was sharing my workspace and speaking to them in Urdu.

Hence, the culturally centered definition of trust is evident in Boris' words, as he is frustrated with being repeatedly excluded from discussions between the leader, subordinates and faculty peers due to language differences. Therefore, due to the notable presence of cultural preferentialism and in-group,

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and out-group formations, Boris' level of trust in his leader has diminished over time.

On the other hand, Fatma feels she can trust a leader who leads by a personal example of moral integrity as it aligns with Fatma's values. Fatma was particularly passionate when emphasising that the leaders should be role models and "should walk the talk".

> The transparency and the way they deal with us. Not micromanagement, having the managing by leading by example and if they say something they should walk the talk.

Next, Priya, in her interpretation, summarised the key leadership behaviours that promote trust among faculty:

> Transparency, and honesty. Supportive. Respectful. Ummm, someone who would provide an autonomy. You know, that academic freedom that I need to carry on my practice effectively. These are the basic things. Like someone who would value my work. Someone, who would record my achievements, someone who would at least notice what I'm doing… And support my input of course. That's what I need. That would make me trust them if that is happening…

Although faculty made efforts to maintain a positive outlook, Priya's interpretation of trustworthy leadership behaviour indicated experiences that breached subordinate's trust. Besides, her words illustrated the influence of cultural individuality on leadership behaviour, particularly in terms of accepting personal accountability, ensuring consistency of actions, and promoting, or decreasing the intensity of trust with subordinates and among the faculty. However, it remains unclear in Priya's words whether she refers to the senior leadership in her organisation or to the middle-level management, a distinction that is more clearly made in Boris' reflection:

> Over here … also I believe the leader of the organisation has good intentions. And I'm talking of the President of our organisation. He may have very good intentions because I can see that in the policies that are created….. That's the kind of environment I want to work with, and I want to work in. But in terms of the people who are directly responsible for my day-to-day activity, I don't really see the connection. I don't see how effective they are, except that if it's within their power they will do it.

Therefore, the above statements are interpreted as reflecting the middle management style rather than the actual senior leadership in the organisation. Furthermore, all participants have completed more than two three-year contracts, indicating that leadership appreciates and recognises their valuable contributions to the company's success. Overall, the variations in the trust levels, as demonstrated by the respondents' stories, are reflective of the heterogeneous expatriate workforce and culture in the

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country. Although Hofstede and Minkov (2010) perceived the culture as a distinct 'programming of the mind', in the context of the UAE the perception of trust, as an antecedent to organisational culture, has been reframed in a way that differs significantly from what is typically established in the literature.

ii.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 2: Leader-Subordinate Trust*

Although in HE people might expect intellect to override cultural and personal management ideologies, the evidence from the data suggests that leadership-subordinate trust is heavily dependent on cultural and personal interpretations. For example, Stefan views trust as a "two-way street", while Boris sees it as "…mutual. If he [leader] can trust me, I will trust him." Although like Stefan's interpretation, in his expanded view, Boris further elaborates that trust between leader and subordinate in his organisation is extended only to "…people that are closer to them rather than the people who are qualified." Thus, Boris' statement reveals disappointment with his experiences in the HE institution and shifts the discussion back to culturally subjective leadership behaviour which instigates in-group and out-group social formations within the UAE's HE system. As Priya has also observed: "…maybe some leaders would like to like people from their own countries." These articulations indicate that faculty have frequently witnessed ethnically biased leadership behaviours, and they express frustration at not being part of the in-group members. In this context, all respondents interpreted the cultural subjectivity in leader-subordinate interactions as a reflection of the leader's inherited socio-cultural behaviour.

This trend transpired in faculty members' sense-making of leader's behaviour demonstrating his or her trust in subordinates, which in respondents' perceptions were associated with task assignment and course allocation. In every organisation, workload is defined by strategic goals, and within the context of the UAE, the same criteria appear to be applied. However, interviewees' experiences reflect a different understanding of workload, often shaped by leader's practices demonstrating perceived preferentialism and favoritism. In the transcripts, faculty attribute these issues to both the culture and the individual leader. As Anand reflected, "…they favoured them in terms of giving them more work. And that's a different thing. That's a different thing. That is, the people who work get more work, and those who don't work get an award." Anand's account reveals his confusion in finding the right words to express his disappointment with the leader's practices. By repeating twice "that's a different thing", he wanted to accentuate the fact that the leader's style is subjective and rooted in their position of power over

subordinates. In a similar view, Priya shared that her promotion was a result of reverse favouritism and reciprocal commitment by her leader:

> I think I was made earlier program coordinator because of the favoritism. And that favoritism is not the cause of any other reason, but because the person who nominated me knew that I would work like a donkey… If some people get favoritism in that they are given reduced work hours or comfortable work schedules with less accountabilities, and then there are other people who are favoured so that they work hard and comes with additional responsibilities. It could go in either direction.

The above factual story illustrates Priya's frustration with the misalignment between her leader's personal values and organisational values, as the individuals should be promoted based on their qualifications and achievements. This experience is unacceptable to the respondent, given her individualistic cultural background. Furthermore, Lisa and Anand also agreed that individuals who perform well are given more responsibilities. Besides, Anand observed that the leader's trust reflects the work the faculty has done, and promotion opportunities in his organisation are considered to be a "trophy deal" rather than an outcome of objective performance evaluations. Anand further articulated his experience as follows:

> OK, you were asked to do some favour as a part of your role, or a task, or something. You finished and you're done. Because I asked you to get it done, now I feel like I must give this trust something in return. So I say: "OK, the next chance is hmmm who's the next when it comes to becoming a PC [program coordinator] or something?" I say: "OK, let's make this trophy deal." That will be possible only when I have personal contacts or the wasta which I say does happen in some way or the other. Yeah, it is happening here.

The disappointment in Anand's words clearly points to the leader's preferential treatment and transactional behaviour, reinforcing Priya's earlier perception of misalignment between the leader's personal values and organisational values. Similar sentiments are echoed by Hesham, Boris, and Melissa. For example, Hesham shared the following:

> When you realise that there is a leader who no matter what you do, no matter what you say, no matter how you act, there is always somebody who's…..they will give somebody else more preferential treatment because of one reason or another.

To this observation and notable frustration among faculty with such preferential leadership behaviour, Boris added that: "On a number of occasions I felt that a decision, a decision was made to ummmm select people for certain activities, and I wasn't selected." Similarly, Melissa shared that in her HE institution,

the leader's trust in subordinates is transactional. According to her words, "There was a sense of 'what have you done for me lately'".

The statements made by the three participants indicated inconsistency in leadership behaviour in the treatment of people in the organisation and reaffirmed the existence of in-group and out-group practices. The pauses made by the participants during the interviews highlighted their deep disappointment with such leadership style. Besides, Boris and Hesham had to pause on a few occasions to find the right words to express their frustration in a professional manner. Thus, their universalist-centered perspective ultimately links leadership behaviour to reverse and culturally subjective favouritism.

By contrast, the work Gerry was asked to do by his leader on Friday night, which is his weekend, made him feel recognised and appreciated for his expertise. When reflecting on his experience, Gerry shared it as follows:

> I was being asked to, on a Friday evening, to review the paper that is in law and correct everything to the best I could. And the woman is just praying: "Gerry you're the only person to do that".

Although being asked to perform additional duties which are not in his area of specialisation, the leader's trust in Gerry's capabilities and the quality of work he could produce made the interviewee happy. Similarly, though expressed in different words, Fatma observed: "I'm fine, I'm happy even if I do more work as long as I'm appreciated." According to their accounts, some participants perceive the additional duties as a sign of their leader's trust. However, the participants' interpretations suggest that individuals with certain cultural backgrounds (e.g. high-power distance, and collectivist) may not be able to negotiate their responsibilities and, thereby, accept additional tasks without objection. This contrasts with Boris and Hesham, who come from countries with low power distance characteristics. On the other hand, for interviewees with individualistic cultural traits, such as Hesham, the autonomy of job performance is a key criterion for measuring the leader's trust in faculty:

> You know, you hire somebody who's qualified, he's educated. Now let them do their job, don't interfere with their daily routine. Don't micromanage them… I feel that if you micromanage somebody too much, I think there is a lack of respect. There is a lack of trust.

Hesham's words raised concerns about leadership's trust in the legitimacy of academic credentials. This mistrust was perceived by Hesham as unjustifiable since he was hired based on his qualifications. Thus,

the interviewee questioned the quality of the leader's trust in him, which highlighted a sense of uncertainty about his job. Hesham's concerns with his continuation of employment were further elaborated in his interpretation of rigid control systems within his organisation:

> The manager should believe in his people. Rather than managing the faculty, they should believe in them, they should trust them. Still, we have a check-in/checkout system. My day is a ticket-in and ticket-out. Why is there a check-in/check-out system? It is because the system does not believe you. Yeah, exactly! So people use that system because the leadership does not believe you. Actually, why do you need to teach more, or stay 35 hours in the college per week? Because in the case of teaching, we have 15 credit hours, right? So they think our preparation is only 1 hour and they want you to feel all those 14 hours with tasks, and tasks, and tasks. So at the time, all of us are doing is only our class. Just trying to fulfil 14 hours. But if it was a system trust, you can write a paper. Rather than one, writing one paper, you can write 2 papers, or 10 papers. But with working 80 hours a week, you can't do that. [Moreover] because your publication is publication of [the university]! So you contribute to the organisational success.

In his words, the participant links leadership trust to the cultural context of the country, and by extension, the HE institution. He emphasises the importance of mutual trust for the success of the educational process. Heshams' frustration with the lack trust in the teachers by the leadership in his HE institution was observed by him raising his voice and use of several questions during his reflection. He also extended the interpretation of his experience as follows:

> Education industry is a subsector of services industry, in where employee is the main resource. The services operations management is built on the trust. So, they should know the characteristic of education industry is a set of words. The leadership should understand the characteristics of the education industry. So, the university should not get the contribution based on contract. We should get more contribution while trusting faculty.

Notably, Hesham's disappointment in the leadership behaviour in his tertiary education enterprise has accumulated throughout the years of his employment and the participant was not hesitant to vent all his frustration during the interview.

iii. *Subordinate Theme (SB) 3: Peer Trust*

The in-group and out-group preferentialism is seen as a key determinant of peers' trust. Most of the participants made sense of the variables defining a trustful relationship with their colleagues in relation to native language, culture, gender and the degree of leaders' trust in subordinates. For example, Boris struggles with the language barrier:

> If they [peers and leader] really want me to understand what they're saying, and they will speak English. But if they switch to another language, there are two explanations: either they want to make it easier for the listener to understand, or they want to keep their information secret from the rest of the people.

The concern expressed in Boris' words regarding in-group and out-group membership, which is established on demographic characteristics, and therefore, excludes faculty from the day-to-day and strategic communication channels in his HE entity is also echoed in Priya's observation:

> Because even because of the food that they eat or the language they speak. You are drawn to certain people naturally.… Geographical area, or same building or same compound then naturally they know families and they spend more time together. There will be closer association with them as opposed to others.

What differentiates the above viewpoints is the criteria determining the acceptance of such behaviours. While for Boris, who is a British national, this behaviour is unacceptable, for Priya, who is from India, peer trust established on demographics is a normal occurrence and does not raise concerns. Tierney (2008) defines trust as a social exchange of cultural characteristics. However, based on the respondents' accounts, this transactional rapport proves challenging for faculty with an individualistic cultural background. The notable complexity of the relations with colleagues suggests the existence of culturally driven selective exposure of trust between the team members. However, according to Gerry's interpretation, the fragmented trust between peers is downplayed by the high level of maturity and intellectual cognition of his colleagues. According to the participant:

> Diversity is not anymore an issue, plus the fact that we are well educated... 'cause my understanding is we have already reached such level of maturity or adaptability in working with the team and despite it is diverse, despite the fact that our orientation comes in different way when it is a work centered job - we go with it.

Gerry's view is supported by the fact that most of the interviewees have been working in their HE institution for more than seven years, meaning each individual has adjusted to the culturally diverse environment and behaviours. However, the participant later comments on the gender-specific demonstration of peer trust as follows:

> I don't know about the female actually, because female sometimes are very, very serious. But for us men, we can just simply go up against themselves.

In the above reflection, Gerry addresses two critical motivators of peer trust and teamwork: cultural context and gender differences which correlate with the high-power distance culture and Muslim customs in the country. Being from the Philippines, and therefore part of a collectivist community, Gerry finds it easy to adapt to the unique socio-cultural reality in the UAE. Additionally, his perception indicates the possibility of acculturation as an outcome of diverse ethnicities, languages and customs in the Emirates, and his workplace. Similarly, the gender-specific relationship is also noted in Shamma's account below:

> I didn't face any challenges, but I guess the only challenge is for girls. It's OK with me, but for the men, there was like they felt like there is a warning: "she is local", and I'm a woman. Usually, it's gonna be considered as a harassment, or like something, but it's not. And even for the girls, some of them, they are afraid of me 'cause I'm local. I'm gonna like snitch on them, or tell the higher positions that I saw this and that.

Shamma is an Emirati national and according to her experience, gender and nationality are major obstacles to developing peer trust in the organisational context. Supporting this view, Priya emphasised her heightened levels of trust towards peers from Western cultures:

> When I joined we had large Business Department, and people were mainly from UK, Canada, people from India, and I had so much to learn from these people, whether it's their slang, uh whether it was their food, whether it was the way they treat others….This was very peculiar to that that particular culture, especially people coming from West.

The participant's words draw strong correlation towards trusting peers from the West which faculty justified by the demonstration of individualistic cultural behaviour by her peers and leader(s). Priya's account also indicates that cultural diversity in her HE institution has diminished, with her peers currently being mostly from non-Western demographics. She feels that certain nationalities are not positioned to contribute to her personal and professional advancement. The reference to India in the above quote is insignificant as the Indian population in the UAE is prominent in all industry and community structures. Moreover, India has been identified to carry almost equal characteristics of both individualist and collectivist culture (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Despite all participants expressing a desire to work collaboratively and supportively with their colleagues, in a few instances, cultural diversity has impacted open and trustful cooperation. For example, in agreement with Priya's account, Melissa recalled an experience where:

...there was another professor who was kind of, I don't know, trying to prove that he was wonderful and the rest of us were not. So he, although we were all teaching the same course, he was teaching it in a different way and not sharing any resources with us.

However, according to her, to secure her employment, she adapted to the diversity of teaching methodologies and culturally centered behaviours of colleagues. For most participants, who are expatriates in the UAE, collaboration and teamwork are possible due to the individuals' acculturation, but this does not necessarily suggest trustful relationships between colleagues.

iv.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 4: Feedback*

With the exception of two participants working under Western management, all interviewees indicated the absence of structured feedback mechanisms in their HE entity in the UAE. According to faculty members' experiences, the acceptance and appreciation of feedback is largely determined by the leader's personality and demographics. For example, Lisa, Gerry and Fatma shared positive experiences where they provided feedback and reached a positive outcome, with their voice and concerns being heard and the leader correcting behaviour. Lisa specifically highlighted her French leader's openness to feedback, noting that the leader welcomed employee input and made adjustments based on it. The following is her reflection on the same:

> Like I mentioned earlier, because the director is, he's not that very much hands-on, we need to make a lot of decisions. We need to do a lot of extra things that we wouldn't normally do. Uhm, and even some of the other French coordinators, whenever he has to send out notices to parents, they need to continuously go back to him and say: "But you need to change this."

Apparently, Lisa's leader is conscious and aware of his shortcomings and values faculty feedback and recommendations. Faculty also pointed out that her peers are predominantly French and thus, share an individualistic cultural background. On the other hand, Fatma echoed Lisa' views but offered a different understanding of the importance of feedback:

> I always share my feedback but I'm very outspoken and if I feel comfortable with my manager, my line supervisor, which I am, and I think we're lucky to have such a line supervisor. He's open to hearing our opinion and I'm the type I don't have a hidden agenda. I will not hide how I feel. Sometimes it's not a very good thing, but I will say it for a reason. Because it could help the leader if they're not on the right track. For that I see that they're not, or because I feel I can contribute through my opinions. So, we have an open enough atmosphere for me to be able to say what I feel.

Fatma's reflection highlighted the importance of a trustful relationship with the leader and transparent communication. The interviewee considers providing feedback as part of her personal responsibility and an indication of her organisational citizenship behaviour which contributes to the success of her leader, and overall, her own performance. In this respondent's view, the leader's ability to receive, accept and reflect on feedback from subordinates is congruent with the leader's personal moral values. This view was also shared by Gerry, whose leader listened and acted on the recommendations made by him, before implementing punitive action towards a faculty member.

However, three interviewees, whose leadership represents the indigenous culture of the UAE, expressed a desire for more opportunities for feedback. According to their views, the lack of formalised feedback mechanisms in their institutions limited their ability to communicate openly with their leaders, leading to a sense of frustration. Below is the view of Shamma, who is a young Emirati, and studied in a Western BA curriculum:

> I'm not saying for him to stand there and say like: "My door is open", but at least send an email. "If anything, let me know. My ears are open".

The expanded reflection of Shamma demonstrates the participant's deep frustration with the lack of accessibility to her leadership and open feedback mechanisms:

> First of all, I don't know anything about religion. I'm sorry, but because I'm not a very religious, kind of girl… But I'm going to link that to work. I feel that to make this a successful company, as a leader you should be there. Have a meeting at least in a year. One time, just one time a year..." My door is open if you come and talk to me", not go through it by the secretary, or like by other people. Let's say, even in the [HE institution] though the environment wasn't that good, but at least the manager… his door was open. It was never closed, or he would always have a meeting at the beginning of the week, sometimes even twice in a week. If anything you know as a leader, it is that you should listen to your people. What they have to say and that is how we gonna improve. For example, like in the previous month, or [in the month] before, many people from the administrative area resigned, all locals [Emiratis], because they put a lot of pressure. Where people would be like: "I'm done. I rather go back to my country, or I rather stay jobless instead of doing this job". So if you have this, most employees resign, you put pressure on more employees, and then you cancel leave. So basically put pressure on pressure on pressure.

The passion in Shamma's voice, when she shared her actual story, demonstrates faculty frustration with her leaders who are representing the Arabic model of leadership. She openly voices the decline of trust in the leader in her current HE institution. Since Shamma is Emirati and aware of the community's socio-

cultural context, she interprets her experience with the non-Western leadership behaviour she has been subjected to with the associated cultural characteristics of her leader.

Similarly, Anand and Boris stated that their organisation lacks mechanisms for "serious feedback…, or a proper systematic feedback…It's just on an informal basis that they sometimes ask you, that's it." However, it is unclear from the participants' opinion whether they refer to the executive management, or to the middle-level management who are sometimes seeking feedback on an informal basis. However, both participants were cautious about giving feedback due to the fear of losing their jobs, as demonstrated by Boris' words below:

> Generally, there is no opportunity for feedback. It's the fear factor, you know that you, even as an employee, you have the fear of even providing feedback to anyone because you don't know what the repercussions are going to be. You might give very good feedback, but then the next time you are due for renewal, you are out of the door. So, I think it's not necessarily the fault of the leaders, but also of the system. The system makes it impossible for individuals to provide feedback because you wanna keep quiet to keep your job. Yeah, if you speak too much, you are not likely to keep your job. So, the only way this can be resolved is if the leaders could encourage feedback, but that doesn't happen. Even in appraisal, we don't do 360 feedback.

Nonetheless, Boris' egalitarian perception illustrates the major challenges in navigating the culturally diverse work environment in the UAE. He perceives mutual trust with the leader as a key factor in fostering continuous and constructive feedback. However, the absence of feedback mechanisms is damaging subordinates' confidence in their leader's self-awareness abilities. Similarly, Anand's reflection on his experience with giving feedback to his leadership highlights the participant's fear of revengeful reciprocity by the person concerned:

> So, let's say, for example, if, uh, uh, I have a situation where I need to go home. On, let's say, an emergency or something like that. What and how would I react to it? How would I do that particular process? Will I be calling up my line manager, informing when going out, taking a business out, or personal-out and then go out? Or will I just go and then come back and explain myself? So if you feel like, "Oh my subordinates must do the procedure while I can, you know, skip the procedures" then that's not right. I have had those experiences once, yes. And when you point it at them, they feel bad about it, and it can have bad prescriptions on you. And I do that, I do point it out immediately. And how the critic was accepted? I mean the feedback, no critic. Everybody just kept quiet and just stared at me when I made that comment. And they just ignored it. Yeah, but it was reflected later on me by blocking out of some privileges that I had to be offered. That's where I feel the difference is made... in the way people in a powerful position are interpreting the policies.

Notably, Anand was very upset while sharing his story. His body language and voice demonstrated how deeply disappointed he is with the exercise of position power by his direct manager. However, Anand did not refer to the leadership in his organisation but to the culturally bound actions of his middle-level manager.

v. Subordinate Theme (SB) 5: Reneging

Most participants directly linked trust in their leaders with the leader's personality and their ability for reneging. However, only two interviewees working under Western-style leadership described their leaders honestly reflecting on their behaviour and acknowledging any breach of promises made to faculty as a result of their behaviour. Both Lisa and Gerry interpreted reneging in relation to the leader's demographics and the organisational culture. For example, Gerry recounted his experience as follows:

> I think once when he hired me… he put a lot of promises. He told me: "Reading your qualifications, most likely you will be the program lead, or the program coordinator equivalent to because I can see very good credentials in you". Either he tried to market himself that he's a good leader, but for me, that is already a promise… Along the way somehow, somewhere this did not happen…. There's so many things before I transferred here….

In Gerry's words, he has been misled by his leader during the recruitment process and the participant still feels cheated although this leadership behaviour was exclusive only to his previous employment. During the interview, the respondent relived his disappointment and frustration with the unfortunate situation he had experienced, which is evident through numerous pauses, unfinished sentences, and fluctuations in his tone. Thus, the participant has lost trust in his leader and requested a transfer to another branch of the HE institution. Similarly, Priya and Lisa perceive leader's ability to reflect and acknowledge mistakes and breaking promises as a personal strength. In Priya's story, her leader would:

> …not clearly say that, "Hey, I'm sorry. I did that", but then he would, he would have those gestures where you could see that he's apologetic. But it wouldn't, it never came out of his mouth, except for once, that "I'm sorry". I think when that moment came…it must have taken a huge courage on his part to say that. Because, I think it was not his personality too, or it was not his way of operating.

Thus, the above accounts associate the leader's reflective behaviour with distinct individual demographics. This perception is similarly echoed by Hesham, Stefan and Shamma, who accentuated the leader's cultural background as a key determinant of their ability to acknowledge and admit their mistakes.

Yeah, here people are concerned about the image yes, and they think these kind of actions like admitting mistakes or apologising will tarnish their image, or will look bad and will reflect badly on their image and that's it.

Hesham's interpretation of a culturally driven leadership style establishes direct reference to the collectivist socio-cultural behaviour. This perception suggests that, for Muslim leaders, admitting mistakes is perceived as a display of personal weakness, potentially harming their standing within the community. However, most participants accepted mistakes as part of human nature. As Hesham further shared:

As long as you admit your mistakes and you come forward and you know and just be honest, not just like believing in yourself as you are a person who is above making mistakes, you know or above making any errors. As long as you come forward then just be honest about it. I'm fine with it. I don't have any problem with it whatsoever.

To make sense of the practices demonstrating his direct manager's reneging behaviour, Anand explains is as "…interpreting and the implementation, uh, approving of things which fall within [his/hers] scope of power and authority." His articulated disappointment reflects Anand's past experiences where commitments that could have been fulfilled within the leader's authority were ultimately unmet. Furthermore, the interviewee indicated that the manager did not consider it necessary to admit failure to meet Anand's expectations. Therefore, the trust in his leader eroded over time and was replaced by the respondent's sense of self-reliance, a view which is also shared by other participants.

I know the limitations and the bounds my leaders have, and I know that even if they make promises they don't have the power and authority to fulfill those promises. So I think I don't even go to them expecting any kind of promise... And if I know that the other person doesn't have power, doesn't have resources or authorities or any say in keeping the promise, I don't even ask them to do anything.

According to Anand's words, positional power and organisational policies take precedence over the leader's personal abilities and willingness to interfere in support of faculty members, and honour commitments made to employees. Nonetheless, the above reflections indicate the fear of middle-level management in interpreting and implementing existing policies and procedures, revealing the dominance of centralised decision-making processes in HE institutions in the country.

Despite expressing concerns about the genuineness of their leader's behaviour, some interviewees reported positive experiences working in their institution. For instance, Gerry acknowledged the strategic role of leadership in ensuring the continuity of educational processes during Covid-19 stating the following:

> Now another quality that I would like to see in a leader is one that promotes positivity. This is really very important. If you have a leader whose behaviour is already defensive, negative, and not forward-looking, you will really be affected by that. But when he exudes positivity in his actions, we can accomplish this and that; there's no problem that has no solution. The issue can be tackled by us. We can overcome it. And just lately I am really very happy to see that our leadership has somehow overcome this pandemic problem that impacted our educational system. Can you imagine? Just imagine other universities. They almost had a meltdown during Covid-19 because they were not prepared for that, but our leadership has prepared us. The training that we have just taken for granted has been of great use. And then, despite the problem [Covid-19], our leadership is still bringing in positivity.

In reflecting on the impact of the pandemic and the strategies his leadership proactively applied to mitigate negative adversaries, Gerry commended their vision and genuine concerns for maintaining the resilience of the teaching and learning process. Thus, he feels happy he has been well-prepared to continue teaching his students, particularly when many schools and HE institutions globally were unprepared for the immediate transition to online learning. Moreover, the participant appreciated the opportunity to work for his organisation, recognising the positive contributions to his personal growth and the institution's overall success. In her reflection below, Priya echoed Gerry's perceptions about the professional development strategies in her HE institution:

> Yeah, and then if we look at professional development. The biggest thing that has been for me is the rapid advancement. The educational platforms and being able to learn things by the seat of my pants. Because of our IT support during the emergency response to online teaching. I told lots of people: " This is thank God, [our college] had educational officers and we had these mandatory PD [professional development] workshops that everybody cursed." Everybody hated it but guess what - saved me. You know what I was doing? I was training my colleagues how to do things in Blackboard. That's where I look at it, especially with the rapid changes that we need to keep up to date…so this is part of the professional development. You need to keep your current workforce up to date with what's going on out there if we look at the educational field, especially higher colleges of Education. [Our college] was already well set up for online teaching, yeah. We have the infrastructure. We have the educational officers 'cause we did prepare faculty with pre-Covid online learning…. Many, many HEIs didn't have it.

Notably, Priya was happy and proud that she had the skills to continue her teaching during Covid-19. Her voice and words hinted at the participant's feelings of personal resilience and overall, operational resilience. Priya was appreciative of the leadership's efforts and investment in upskilling and preparing her and other teachers for such unexpected adversaries. Priya's reflection highlighted the positive influence of her HE institution's leadership behaviour on increasing faculty members' trust in the leadership. Similarly, Fatma shared her satisfaction with proactive leadership behaviour in her workplace, stating the following:

> I think I was lucky to be able to work in this environment. I can see myself how I have grown from the day I started here 16 years ago until today. There are a lot of negatives, I mean some negatives, but the positives I think outweigh the negatives. The opportunities that were made available for me as an employee and a teacher – it's where I think we're amazing in terms of professional development. Uh, professional development.

However, due to her nationality, Fatma has not had the opportunity to work outside the UAE, and therefore, her views are constrained by the personal and professional freedom the country has offered her and her family.

In the same line, Stefan acknowledged the support he received from his leadership when he joined his HE enterprise:

> Oh, OK, I will just give you a very recent example. When I came from my previous institution, I was used to working with Blackboard which I learnt there, and when I came here the systems were all very different, and obviously, I did not know them. So hmmmm, my bosses, they made sure that I am aware of all these systems, so they have organised several trainings for me. They appointed a mentor for me for the whole semester. This person was my mentor and was very helpful. I could talk freely with this person. And then, there was an agreement, so there was a system and a process. There was a policy supporting it, and at the same time, my leadership ensured that there was some kind of a plan for me, including the areas in which I didn't feel comfortable, how I could improve…So they encouraged me because if I couldn't use those systems and was not able to perform my duties, it would affect them.

In an attempt to make sense of his experience, Stefan reflected on several outcomes consequential to his leadership behaviour. He was happy that the leadership was concerned with and supported him in learning new skills. He has been made aware of the value of his task performance and was appreciative of the inclusiveness processes in his tertiary education entity. However, by speaking in the past tense, and lowering the tone of his voice the participant indicated these practices have changed since the time

he joined his organisation. Consequently, Stefan's extended reflection on the professional development opportunities in SP2/SB1 confirmed the leadership behavioural change in his institution which decreased employees' trust and positive outlook of his leadership. Furthermore, by consistently using the pronoun "they" when referring to his "bosses", the experiential story, shared by Stefan above, revealed the interviewee's confusion in defining the leadership figure, as the participant's direct supervisor could also be perceived as a "boss" which does not necessarily means leadership.

In addition to the professional development opportunities, Stefan stated that diversity is what makes him happy to work for his organisation. Moreover, he felt that the faculty members "definitely have more freedom compared to other occupations." Stefan's perspective demonstrates the disparities in corporate and academic leadership he has encountered during his employment in the UAE and overseas. However, Hesham feels that only leaders with a Western cultural background can foster greater employee happiness in the workplace:

> You know, I would rather work for somebody who is from a Western background, to be honest with you, because it will make everybody's life easier and it will also have a positive impact. I believe 100% it will have a more positive impact on the workplace.

Hesham's views highlight the significant influence that the distinct cultural characteristics of his leader have on fostering a positive work culture, emphasising the participant's preference for individualistic leadership behaviour. This perception is partially echoed in Melissa's reflection:

> I think where I'm currently working, we have a better environment in that school. There's much more of people thanking each other, or, saying like "Hey, well done. That was a great event that you organised". And we're more into thinking and praising each other, and I think you can never have enough of that.

Since Melissa is currently working in a franchise of an Australian college, her account clearly differentiates the positive organisational culture in her new job from her previous experience, where she was reporting to a management with a collectivistic cultural background. In a similar vein, Lisa who works under French management, reflected on her leader's behaviour as follows: "Well, he respects his staff. He treats you well. He normally approaches things in a positive manner." The contrarian voices of the respondents emphasise how organisational outcomes are heavily influenced by leadership style, highlighting the dependency of both on the distinct cultural characteristics of the leadership figure.

5.2.2 Superordinate Theme (SP) 2: LEADERSHIP CONUNDRUM

Yukl (2013) defines managers as individuals who occupy middle and upper-level management positions, while Datta and Gupta (2015) argue that in addition to the position the person occupies, each individual can perform managerial or leadership functions at certain times and therefore could be perceived either as a leader or manager by the followers. Relatedly, Northouse (2016) states that leadership is a process whereby a leader influences subordinates to achieve a common goal. However, many of the interviewees were not aware of the above definitions of management and leadership, therefore, both concepts are used interchangeably in this study.

i.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 1: Leadership vs Management*

Drawing on the debate in academia, most of the employees were confused in differentiating between 'leadership' and 'management'. The apparent difficulties with understanding the two concepts, espoused by most of the interviewees, stemmed from the diversity of considerations. For example, according to Priya:

> Because there is this huge high-power distance between the ground workers, like us, and the top management, hmmmm so the layers of middle management are so thick… that even if you complain the complaint would not reach to the top management.

The pauses in Priya's interpretation are suggestive of the interviewee's puzzlement in making sense of the different layers of management (e.g. middle and top) due to the defined hierarchy in her institution. Such perplexity also transpires in Shamma' sense-making of the leadership figure in her HE organisation:

> I guess the manager is basically. Because…there are two types of managers, the higher and the lower…You know it's like a pyramid…from down it goes up. You cannot go from the first level to the second level. Then how I'm gonna take it to the next 10 levels? …We don't have specific leaders. We have a supervisor who supervises our training program that I am in, and the supervisor of the Business department. But leaders - we don't usually meet with them. We don't talk to them, you know… but the ones who were making decisions, or work like let's say from 7 [am] to 2 [pm], or like from 8 [am] to 2 [pm], we don't usually go to them. We basically just communicate with them by email. We don't usually meet them.

The uncertainty in Shamma's voice suggests confusion in determining the leadership figure in her HE institution. From her perception, leadership is congruent with the organisational hierarchy and has assigned specific working time. Therefore, the accessibility to the leader is limited, which accentuates the powerful influence of contextual factors on faculty's views. Notably, the participants' sense-making

attempts to define the leader in their organisation reveal the presence of a multilayered hierarchical structure. Besides, the repetition of the statement 'we don't usually meet them' underscores the centrality of the organisational structure and cultural context in defining the leadership figure, including well-defined working time, which, according to Shamma, is associated with the leadership positions. From Shamma's account, it appears that the UAE culture, which is paternalistic and historically highly structured (Heard-Bey, 2001) has influenced employees' perception of what leadership is.

The cultural context was further emphasised in Stefan's view of leadership as follows:

> But like I said, leadership is definitely influenced by the culture, and only if we understand certain barriers in the culture which need to be changed, then definitely we can provide a better environment or improvement in leadership.

Note the statement 'but like I said', which demonstrates that his strong belief in the influence of cultural characteristics in comprehending the concept of leadership has been expressed more than once during the interview. A similar sentiment was also expressed by Gerry linking leadership cognisance to the concept of Hall (1976) (e.g. high-context, low-context framework and time orientation):

> Leadership is cultural context. It is not just about your will. It is not just about what you really want to do, but you have to look at the external factors in which your behaviour as a leader is being governed. You look at the norms, you look at the standards. The means of living, the availability of technology, or maybe because also of time.

On the other hand, some interviewees alluded to the individual's immediate responsibilities and decision-making power as key factors in differentiating leadership from management. In support of these views, Boris reflected on his experience as follows:

> Here I made a simple request to go for a research visit to London and the policy is quite well laid out. The policies state you cannot take, he cannot take leave without losing money. But then my leader here told me: "Well, I would do something about it"...And then I waited for a couple of days and he came back to me and repeated the same information that "I'm sorry. The only thing you can do is to take unpaid leave".

In the above quote, Boris seems to be referring to middle-level management rather than leadership because he is talking about approvals and decision-making power, whereas he should be talking about his development and mentorship, which is more in line with leadership behaviour. His confusion further transpired in faculty attempts to make sense of the high-ranking positions in his institution, which he

associated with the senior leadership. Thus, Boris called the top leader of the university a "President," as he clearly is confused in differentiating between his immediate supervisor, whom he earlier called "leader," and the actual leadership of the organisation. Although he acknowledges the leadership vision and power in terms of developing organisational policies, Boris is unable to define the leader and manager in his organisation.

Likewise, Fatma's interpretation clearly tries to differentiate the roles of leadership and management:

> Again, it goes back to like our Direct Line supervisor. He doesn't have so much power to do much because it's not very easy. It's confined, limited to what he can allow and not allow because everything now is coming from above. Ah, so, but if I go up even like look up a little bit at higher management, I've seen how they support that.

Although Fatma is aware of the multiple levels of management in her HE institution, similarly to Boris, she is not able to define the leadership. Therefore, she uses expressions such as "coming from above" and "they", which increase Fatma's confusion in determining leadership.

On the other hand, for Melissa, the leadership figure is articulated by neutral lexis:

> We were in our 4th year, just with the students finishing their 4th year ready to graduate when some new leadership came in and said this program is not good. And, uh, we're like based on what? Well, based on feedback from the community, it's like, but none of our students have graduated yet. You haven't seen them graduating, the community has not seen yet the result of this. So how can you possibly say it's not good? "Oh well, you know everyone's saying it's not what everyone want!" What surveys, what data do you have? There was no evidence there. There was no proof. It was just …..There was a new person with a new philosophy saying "You know she didn't like it".

There are a few messages conveyed by Melissa's account: (1) the respondent's hurt feelings and disagreement with the shift in the leadership vision; (2) the participant's inability to trust the person in a leadership position; (3) avoiding referring to the new appointee as a leader due to the single-sided decision-making process, which has not been informed by factual evidence; and (4) gender differentiation in interpreting the individual in a leadership position. This cultural change management and consequential shift in leadership behaviour caused the employee to look for employment in another HE institution in the country.

Another observation in almost all respondents' accounts is relating leadership with 'managerial acumen.' This is inconsistent with definitions in academic literature, where management is responsible for the

bottom line of the operations, whereas leadership is about having a vision and dealing with people effectively (Avolio, 1999; Yukl, 2013). Most participants linked their understanding of the leadership figure with responsibilities and personal accountabilities, generating diverse individual considerations. For example, for Anand:

> Leadership doesn't mean 'I hold a big power.' No, I am here to actually serve the others, the public at large. So is the position of a leader. So, when you become a leader now, it becomes your responsibility to make sure others also move up to your level.

Thus, the participants' experiences and reflections on the manager versus leader role direct the understanding of leadership towards the practices for employee professional development. In HE, due to the nature of operations, the focus on professional development is congruent with the organisational goals (Srivastava *et al.,* 2020). This perspective is also emphasised in the interviewees' shared experiences. However, their views expose contrasting encounters with existing leadership practices. As voiced by the interviewees, for faculty with research focus like Boris and Stefan, the professional development opportunities are inadequate to their academic interests. For example, Stefan feels that his professional development is "not really something which is based on experience or specific areas of specialisation. So professional development in this organisation is more about how many hours you did of professional development, but not really, it's not really content-wise." Similar dissatisfaction is sensed in Boris' reflection below:

> The professional development definition in my current organisation is different. The professional development here is about doing Ummmm, learning management software activities. It's not about learning about Software that will help me to do my research as an academic… I've never known of any opportunity where I'm asked to train for SPSS or in Nvivo or any of the software that is either using qualitative or quantitative research - none.

The above views indicate the contextual congruence of professional development practices as they have emerged from the centralised organisational structure and leadership practices in these HE institutions in the country. For example, both Boris and Stefan kept reference to the originator of the faculty development process as neutral, without naming a specific position or individual, which suggests a system rather than a leader's decision. Both accounts demonstrate the disconnect with leaders and the inability of faculty to negotiate their personal involvement with professional development. By contrast, Fatma, who is an Information Technology teacher, is completely satisfied with the professional and personal development opportunities offered by her organisation:

> The opportunities that were made available for me as an employee, as a teacher, when I think, were amazing in terms of professional development… Both in working and lifestyle, in the work lifestyle.

A similar sentiment is revealed by Priya whose specialisation is Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS). She disclosed her positive feelings about the professional opportunities in her organisation:

> Yeah, they communicate the kind of professional development options available, and they approve the professional developments that I have done on the portal, and then I get hours for that.

However, by repeating "they," Priya maintains the neutral stance which confirms that she is unclear whom she is referring to - a leader, or a manager. This demonstrates the participant's confusion and inability to clearly define the leadership and management in her organisation. Additionally, her words point towards a rather centralised process, and not the personal involvement of the leader in her professional development, aligning Priya's reflection with Boris' and Stefan's. Moreover, it is not clear the value the training activities have on job performance. Relatedly, Stefan and Boris voiced similar concerns. Herein lies the crux of the idea that leadership and management have different objectives, which further expands the respondents' confusion in defining these two very different realities.

ii.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 2: Micromanagement

Most of the participants' interpretations associated the leadership style with the cultural antecedents of the leaders. For example, Lisa, who is working with a leader from an individualistic culture, enjoys job performance freedom. As the participant shared: "I feel our management is run in the French style again. And so again, you feel like they completely leave you to it." However, in reflecting on her previous experience in other HE institutions in the UAE, her narrative highlighted major cultural differences in leadership styles:

> In the first few colleges that I worked in the UAE there was very much there but typical UAE leadership style where you, they like to micromanage and you don't have much to say. You are the employee, you do what they have to say, you do it. They say if you don't do it, you can go…you're not treated necessarily as an adult, but rather as "you're my minion and you shall do what I say." So, I have experienced that in the UAE.

The obvious lack of autonomy in the job came through in most of the transcripts. For example, Hesham voiced his concerns with micromanagement in HE as follows:

It has adversarial results on....whatever you are teaching, or you are doing anything else. You will get adversarial results because, especially in University level, you are a teacher. You perform, you go to the classroom, and you perform, and you prepare and you go do a good job, and you feel good. But if you, if you micromanage that process, you kind of kill it. You gotta kill the fun in it, you know. And that all goes to their leadership style and management.

The pauses in Hesham's passionate sense-making of his experience clearly demonstrate the participant's concern and frustration with micromanagement in relation to creativity and professional independence. In addition, his words draw an association with the definition of trust as earlier discussed in SP 1/SB 1.

On the other hand, Melissa and Gerry expressed an agreement with and understanding of the necessity of micromanagement practices in their organisation. Gerry interpreted heightened management control as a necessity due to some incidents when his peers misused the freedom of the existing academic procedures. He shared that "...what happened is all of a sudden we become structured because others abuse it." Similarly, Melissa expressed a willingness to adapt, to some extent, to new management interference in her work, as she saw some reasoning in the increased management supervision, as she personally witnessed "that there were some teachers actually at that time that were maybe not behaving as professionally as they should." However, carrying the individualist culture characteristics that have shaped her values and beliefs, she later objected to this practice and added that "...the senior management should not be interfering in what the teachers are doing." The meaning in Melissa's views raises concerns with the centralised power and apparent influence of administrative operations practices on academics, which may cause conflict with the objectives of the two very different operational structures in the HE institutions in the Emirates. Besides, the apparent contradiction in the participant's account is consistent with the problematic comprehension of the concept of leadership and management, as in her statement Melissa made reference to "senior management," which may not necessarily be the leadership of the HE institution, but the person who is Melissa's direct manager.

The issue with a lack of job autonomy in the participants' reflections has established a direct reference to the management style and the cultural background of both the immediate supervisor and the leader, thereby differentiating the leadership styles on the tenets of the high and low power distance cultures (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011).

iii.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 3: Transparency and Inclusiveness*

During the interviews, most of the participants expressed their concerns with transparency in decision-making processes, promotions, contract renewal and performance evaluation processes in their educational institution. For example, for Hesham transparency and inclusiveness are seen as appreciation of the value faculty brings to the organisation. Unfortunately, his words clearly demonstrate his disappointment with not being included in the decision-making process:

> Even they will not adopt your opinion or your ideas, but the fact that they just asked you your opinion: "What do you think about this? What do you think about that?" That makes you feel really important. You are really part of the organisation.

Since Hesham has previously discussed the recent shift in the cultural composition of his leadership and emphasised his disappointment with this change, it is safe to assume that in the above statement, faculty referred to leaders with a collectivist cultural background. Additionally, Hesham's words indicate that his leadership prefers to maintain anonymity when making decisions as opposed to having transparent communication and including the teachers in the process which further highlights the collectivist nature of his leadership. Furthermore, the participant used the pronoun "they" when speaking about his leadership, demonstrating his confusion in determining the leadership figure. Besides, he raised his voice while passionately sharing his experience as Hesham, who comes from an individualistic culture, was upset with such leadership behaviour. Therefore, his values and beliefs conflict with present leadership behaviour in his HE institution. Likewise, Melissa's reflection on her past and present experiences echoes Hesham's frustration with the change of leadership behaviour which she associates with the leader's inherited collectivistic cultural background. Initially, Melissa shared her positive experiences with the inclusive practices of her leadership, as follows:

> We had so many meetings back in the day, so certainly I would be, you know, giving my feedback at different levels. I mean from as a Chair up to the Deans and as a Chair of one college into the whole group of colleges. In management meetings too, directly to the Director. I mean many times I gave my feedback, and you know it was heard. Yes, I guess it was heard. Was it listened to that would depend. I mean sometimes "Yes". Yes, and again this changed over time but there was a time when the chairs of all the different colleges would meet as a system of chairs and we, for example, underwent a huge project of revising the curriculum. And in, in those meetings, we had a lot of agency. I mean, we had the power to make those changes.

By saying, "…and again this changed over time…" the participant clearly indicates the shift in the cultural background of the leadership and her disappointment with this change. Melissa's frustration continues to evolve and becomes even more pronounced in her extended account of her lived experiences. Initially, she felt appreciated and empowered to add value through her performance and sharing ideas for the strategic development of her HE institution. However, the change in the leadership's cultural background led to a less constructive environment, which was consistently reiterated by the interviewee. The following quote captures Melissa's attempt to make sense of the altered decision-making process within her organisation:

> They have to hear what you have to say. They have to tell you what they're thinking, where they're going and when decisions are made. It needs to be transparently communicated. How were the decisions made? Why were they made? ... I think that my organisation didn't do very well. It is starting to make decisions in "black boxes" and I've seen that in other circumstances too, where people are afraid to be accountable for a decision, so they make it a secret committee. And so you don't know who's deciding, and why are they deciding, what criteria are they using? And I think that destroys trust because you have no idea that you don't know what they're up to and there have been examples over the years. I mean, in terms of contract renewals, in terms of deciding on rankings for faculty, in terms of deciding on hiring or promotions, it's like being done in a "black box"…But there seems to be a kind of hesitancy or reluctance from the top to explain how decisions are being made because they didn't want people to be able to come back to them and question these decisions.

The above reflection clearly highlights the influence of the leader's cultural background (e.g. collectivist or individualist) on their leadership behaviour. The frustration in Melissa's voice with the current lack of transparency in making decisions is accentuated by repeating the words "black box" and "they." In contrast to her previous experience, when faculty were able to personally share feedback and participate in making strategic decisions, the new practice of hiding behind committee formations allows for nameless and anonymous decision-making and therefore avoids the possibility of questioning the accountability of the person who has made the decision. According to Minkov and Hofstede (2011) Minkov and Hofstede (2011), such behaviour is consistent with cultures that demonstrate masculinity and strong uncertainty avoidance characteristics. As voiced by Melissa, this leadership behaviour does not align with the participant's own individualistic culture-bound values and beliefs. Additionally, Melissa perceives such practices as a major source of conflict in HE. Some other participants openly discussed the value of transparent decision-making processes in relation to the legitimacy of outcomes, such as

promotions and appointments to leadership positions. When asked to comment on how he feels about the eligibility of his leader to be in this position, Boris shared the following:

> I don't know if I can say that the same fear factor, but I think the legitimacy is questionable…If you elect a leader, or you appoint a leader without following due process without making it competitive….. So, to select a leader in such an environment it has to be the most qualified. The most experienced person. It should not be just any '*John by the roadside',* so the legitimacy to me borders on what criteria was used and the unfortunate thing in my organisation is no one really advertises the criteria… We don't know their requirements… We are not invited to apply… The appointment is made independent of us. And so you, even if you aspire to apply for such positions, you cannot… Because it's the hand-picking exercise. So, then that might link to a reason why...

The doubts in Boris' reflection and unfinished sentences demonstrate the interviewee's difficulties in comprehending and accepting such a highly subjective selection process, which contrasts with the objectivity of similar processes in the Western culture where Boris comes from. The ambiguity of the promotional criteria as a key cause for employees' demotivation and job dissatisfaction is further highlighted in Gerry's perception:

> You know, it still troubled me at this time. Because: number one, we do not have open criteria. If there is, I do not know what those criteria are, or how these people are being put in these positions… It worried me because we know too well that there are some people who are not even consulted and then they are in that position. And then I don't know really that process above we don't know really… We do not know… So it's very, very important that they should have a process and I think this is what is absent, or if there is none, I just do not know if there is, I just do not know how that is done.

The numerous pauses and repetition of "I do not know" and "We do not know" demonstrate Gerry's deep reflection and strong feelings towards the lack of transparency with the promotions in his HE entity. In support of his statement that "…we know too well that there are some people who are not even consulted, and then they are in that position [promoted]…" Priya recalls that her promotion to an Academic Coordinator was made without consulting her, or obtaining her agreement:

> I had been the program coordinator I didn't even know who chose me and I didn't even know why they chose me, and when I expressed that I was not interested in this position I was told that: "You accept, or then rather send your resignation to the highest management position here." So, when that happens, when you become a leader without even wanting to be a leader, then there is no extra qualification required. It is just someone picking you up.

In addition to the surprised promotion, Priya's voice indicated faculty fear of losing the job if not accepting the new role. Noticeably, the new appointment has been made not on the merits, but on the vagueness of leadership subjectivism. This was later affirmed by the interpretation Priya made of her leader's behaviour associating it with reverse favouritism, and transactional trust.

All the above participants who experienced the lack of transparent leadership behaviour alluded to centralised hierarchy and disconnect in the top-down and bottom-up communication channels, which participants collectively agreed are major obstacles to transparency in operations in the concerned UAE tertiary institutions. However, only Melissa has resigned from her previous job in the UAE, as being a representative of low power distance and individualistic culture, she could not work with leadership manifesting collectivist cultural characteristics and is currently working under Australian leadership. Hence, the continuation of other participants' employment in their current organisation for more than 3 years (e.g. the duration of one contract) demonstrates faculty members' voluntary behavioural adjustment to the cultural context of the Emirates. The diversity of contrasting interpretations was expanded by Fatma's recollection of her positive experience regarding faculty promotion:

> I'm not interested in going up the ladder. I'm happy being a faculty [member], so I never actually looked into this. Uh, but I think there is transparency in that aspect. Promotion, for example, I applied for a promotion, and it was a rigorous procedure. And I believed I deserved it and I got it, and the terms of the promotion, and the online application process were very clear and easy to follow. Then they turned great yeah.

Fatma's words evidenced the centralised, but also diverse leadership behaviour in HE in the country. The participant's interpretation of the events surrounding her application for promotion differentiated between the subjectivity of the administrative processes managed by leaders with culturally diverse backgrounds, and the objectivity and inclusiveness of the organisational policy and online application process enabling transparent decision-making. However, it is not clear if Fatma refers to the middle-level management or the leadership in her organisation. Likewise, Melissa expressed her satisfaction with the IT systems' support of the performance management process in her HE institution:

> I think, when your performance appraisal by the IT-enabled systems is there it's nice that they actually reflect what you've done. It's nice if your manager actually sits with you and says nice things about your work… but it has never happened.

While making sense of her experience, Melissa highlighted the objectivity, transparency and inclusiveness of both organisational policy and IT systems in her tertiary education entity, establishing a reference to the leadership in her organisation. She clearly emphasised how upset she was with the culturally subjective behaviour of her manager, which was one of the reasons she resigned from her job. However, Melissa's and Fatma's interpretative accounts differentiate between the role and the authenticity of leadership behaviour (e.g., organisational policy, process, IT systems) and the middle-management practices in the HE institutions in the country. Similarly to Fatma and Melissa, Shamma's perception is that in her organisation:

> Everybody will be evaluated based on their performance, based on their attendance, based on things that will make them go to the next level. Not just by because "I know you, I like you."

Thus, the participant accentuated the fairness of the data generated by the existing IT systems in her HE institution. Likewise, Priya shared that: "When it comes to contract renewal…he would present the report. The correct [IT systems generated] report is stating that yes, I have accomplished what I have accomplished…" What Priya meant is that the report generated by the IT-driven performance management system in her organisation will offer an objective overview of the respondents' accomplishments. This will guarantee a fair performance evaluation rating of faculty performance and rewards distribution. This view was also shared by Anand who interpreted his experience with the contract renewal as follows:

> On the other hand, the IT systems' support with the performance appraisal and contract renewal process is in the transparency of achievements they provide. IT systems have 2 parts: subjective and objective. The objective part is focused on operations, how you work and is aligned with your job specifications, tasks to be completed, the scope of these tasks, the ability to learn and deliver ahead and being proactive. The technology tools in my educational institution report on my intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities, which demonstrate the degree of attainment of these goals. The subjective part is defined by the organisational KPIs and the goals of the institution, including attending conferences, publications, field trips, industry collaborations etc.

By beginning his reflection with "on the other hand", Anand emphasises the transparency and objectivity of the IT-systems reporting tools regarding the annual performance appraisal and contract renewal processes in his HE entity, clearly differentiating their fairness from the subjectivity in the decision-making practices of the leadership. Notably, Hesham supported Anand's view by expressing a similar perception in different words:

> In my opinion, the value of the IT systems in the performance renewal process and appraisal is in their ability to provide unbiased and straightforward and consistent evaluation of my performance instead of my boss' personal subjectivity according to his culturally biased opinion on my job performance.

Evidently, faculty's satisfaction with the IT-driven employee performance data surpasses the trust in their leader. The duality in interviewees' perceptions of transparency, fairness and inclusiveness highlights the supportive role the IT systems have adopted in tertiary education in the UAE, which is also aligned with the government's efforts to promote smart, technology-driven operations in the HE in the country (see Section 3.1.3).

iv.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 4: Rotational positions

Several participants admitted they have the tendency to mistrust their leaders and expressed doubts about the promises and assurances made to them by their leadership. The shared reflections of interviewees attributed this mistrust to the dependence of the employment continuity in the country on the UAE's immigration and labour law, which directly impacts contract duration and the rotation of individuals in leadership positions. This uncertainty has promoted a culture of fear of losing the job at any given time and has intensified protective behaviour among faculty. According to interviewees' interpretations of their lived experiences, such behaviour is manifested in the practices of job protectionism within their organisational context.

For example, in Melissa's words, "…you always had to have a Plan B in your back pocket because you couldn't really say that 'OK, I know this is a job for life.'" On the other hand, in Lisa's words, the rotational positions are directed by the franchise regulations. She explained that "…because in the French system, the directors are not allowed to stay more than five years. After five years they change. …After five years, they are sent to another college where they have gone to complete missions." To add to this, Boris noted that "in the Middle East, particularly, expatriate contracts tend to be short in the UAE. They don't last any longer than three years, and whatever I do within the three-year period might define my renewal." Therefore, according to the interviewees, the rotational system reduces trust and creates a culture of fear among expats, which ultimately affects both leaders' and faculty members' behaviour. For example, Anand had eight different supervisors since the beginning of his employment in the UAE. He further expressed his feelings about the rotations of leaders as follows:

So, then you know it became kind of a seasoning for me. OK supervisors keep leaving, so your dependency and your interaction or requirement from the supervisors reduces you know. That's one thing I felt, and I said: "OK, they will just keep leaving so know not to bother about it."

In the above reflection, Anand shared his deep disappointment with the rotational leadership practices in his HE institution. The participant also introduced an additional variable in understanding the leadership conundrum. His words highlighted the dependability of a leader's consistency of actions and decisions on the duration of the individual's contracts. This was further emphasised in Boris' view below:

Lots of people under such a leadership would question whether that is really the best person to be elected to the office. No wonder most of the time such leadership positions are rotational. People don't keep it for long. Because people don't keep it for long, that also explains the reason why the criteria is wrong in the first place. If the criteria was right, then you keep these people for long. Maybe that people are not really leaders. Maybe they're just Managers … I would expect the leader to have a vision, and a vision is not just two years. A vision is not one year. Vision should go beyond at least three years. So, if you're going to be rotating your leaders every one year or every two years, then what is the element of vision? What is the element of value creation, and you know, the overall strategic goal for the Department?

The deep passion and frustration in the voice of faculty, particularly in Boris' interpretative account, indicates the growing concerns with his leader's eligibility to be elected to this position. These doubts are further stimulated by the lack of transparency of the promotional criteria. For participants like Boris and Melissa, who come from individualistic cultural contexts, it is particularly frustrating to experience the lack of consistency in leadership vision and trustworthy leadership behaviour. Both interviewees were very passionate when speaking about that, accelerating their speech and raising their voices. The above reflections demonstrate not only faculty frustration and disagreement with the rotational leadership practices but also their fear over uncertainty with their employment.

v.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 5: Power*

In their interpretative accounts, several participants emphasised their annoyance with the manifestation of leadership power by individuals who come from cultural contexts scoring a high masculinity index. For example, Fatma, Hesham and Shamma directly referred to individual distinct cultural characteristics when interpreting their understanding of leadership power and personal experience of such behaviour within organisational settings. For example, in Hesham's view, the necessity for exerting leadership power is founded on one's cultural background:

It's all about control, it's all about power. They would assert their power. You know some people from some cultures, they associate power with their masculinity. So, if they don't exercise their power, it will be… we will look at them as less masculine or something, and they have to prove that masculinity on the daily basis.

In the above statement, Hesham expressed his disapproval and frustration with leadership behaviour he has been subjected to. He is not hesitant to explain his leader's use of power with the features of socio-cultural behaviour attributed to communities with masculinity features, such as Arab countries. His perception that leaders from high power distance and masculinity cultures are expected to display personal power is also echoed by Fatma who made a direct reference to the Middle Eastern cultural context as follows:

Again, it's a power struggle. Again, it's the Arabic mentality. Hmmm, I don't know if I can share it… I don't know…Uh, well it's a power struggle and it was an Arabic guy who came into this leadership position, and he was trying to enforce a leadership style that I actually said: "You can't do that. That won't work".

In the beginning, Fatma's reflection was ambivalent as she wasn't sure she could trust the interviewer, and after living in the UAE all her life, she was hesitant to speak her mind openly. However, Fatma's factual story illustrates the influence of the culture, especially masculinity, over leadership behaviour in an academic environment. She further expanded her reflection towards interpreting the gender-specific leadership behaviour below:

And let me mention also, it was a woman leader, and I think women in leadership, especially Arabic women, they have a lot to prove and that ends up being not very conductive to a friendly environment because they feel they're in competition with males for that position and the female would have to show her leadership in whatever ways. And it backfires because she doesn't feel secure in her position because she has to prove herself as a leader.

Although disapproving of it, being an Arabic woman herself, Fatma was able to understand the women's leadership behaviour by positing it within the framework of the masculinity-femininity cultural classification proposed by Hofstede and Minkov (2010). However, both participants clearly indicated the incompatibility of the authoritative leadership style with the educational environment, which aims to create new knowledge and innovation. Additional interpretation of leadership positional power is shared by Anand who noted that:

Yeah, I've observed some people who are, you know, very… very position conscious and they're

only position conscious, not action conscious. They just want to make sure that you know they are being recognised as the person in that place.

In the above reflection, the participant repeated "very" a couple of times, pausing in between to highlight Anand's frustration with his leadership's behaviour. Since he is used to individualistic leadership behaviour, defining leadership by demonstrating its positional power is unacceptable and highly disappointing. This leadership behaviour which Anand perceives as modeling the way, demonstrates that the image and not the action is central to his leadership. In support of Anand's views, Lisa and Melissa shared similar experiences. According to participants' stories, the way faculty are treated and the progress of new projects in their HE entities are congruent with both leaders' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses assigned to this higher rank and enacting the corresponding positional influence. For example, Melissa shared her encounter with the exertion of a leader's authority as follows:

> There was a time when that was going really well and a couple of years when we had some great events, and we followed the protocols, and we did all the things we're meant to do, and it all happened and we had some really wonderful successes then. Then it moved on to even though you followed all the protocols, something else, some other person … would come in and it would just derail your whole plan. And when that started happening more regularly, then the interest in doing such risky extracurricular projects started to dwindle. It's like if you follow all the protocol and you still can't get your trip happening. Then you give up, I mean it. It is you can't control it. It's like if you can understand the rules and you could follow them, then it is great. But if some other random … person can suddenly object to whatever is going on, then that's really disheartening. So I've seen it.

The frustration in Melissa's voice and in-depth reflection on her experience illustrate the negative influence of the leader's authority over the organisational culture and institutional success. By comparing the past and present organisational context, faculty demonstrates the culturally subjective understanding and use of positional power in HE in the UAE.

In addition to her cultural and gender-subjective interpretation of leadership behaviour, Fatma relates the emergence of a leader's decision-making power with the organisational hierarchy. According to her, the middle-level leaders have very "prescriptive" directions from the senior leadership, and "they're told what they have to do specifically." This interpretation highlights the centrality of organisational structure in defining the intensity of leadership power. Similar perception is shared by Priya, who stated that "I know that recognition is not solely in their hands. I understand that they are, at the end, middle-level managers. They're not the ones taking decisions. I know that." In contrast, Anand and Boris perceived

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power as an individual characteristic of the leader, associated with the maturity of self- and social awareness of the person in the leadership position. For example, Boris reflected on the information dissemination practices as follows: "Give some inside information to some selected people because you want them to be the ones who get the opportunity." This reflection clearly indicates both the cultural favouritism in his leader's behaviour and the leader's realisation of the authority assigned to rank. These statements highlight faculty disappointment with the inability, or unwillingness, of their leadership to differentiate themselves from the organisational context.

Similar frustration transpires in Anand's words, who made sense of his leader's power in relation to the policy interpretation:

> Uh, say for example, if you had applied for a conference and somebody else was also applied, and then they said "Oh no, only one person can go. You cannot go now." So, they immediately say I follow the rulebook and the policy.

The above view clearly illustrates both leaders' cultural preferentialism and use of leadership power, which is perceived by the respondent as unethical leadership behaviour. Although each participant reflected on different aspects of the manifestation of a leader's power, they agreed on the centrality of a leader's cultural individualism and organisational context in defining these occurrences within the HE sector in the UAE.

5.2.3 Superordinate Theme (SP) 3: CULTURAL CLIMATE

Unlike in Western countries, cultural pluralism in the UAE defines the uniqueness of the interactions and cultural exchanges within the leadership-followers dyad in HE in the country. Thus, according to the data, the richness of cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours of expatriates shapes the organisational climate in their tertiary education enterprises.

i.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 1: Definition of authenticity and genuineness*

Given the plethora of definitions that exist hitherto, it would have been consistent if respondents had agreed that AL is a synergy of leader behaviours that demonstrate self-awareness, balanced processing, internalised moral perspective, and high levels of relational transparency (Kernis and Goldman, 2006; (George *et al.*, 2007); Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). For example, although Anand viewed his leader's

behaviour as an inconsistent approach to managing employees, and favouring some employees over the rest, it appears that at the same time he is unable to clearly articulate what his definition of authentic behaviour is:

> Authenticity is being the original self...I understand authenticity as being the same for everybody at all times. Uh, now how do we understand that? OK, let us put it like, uh... You have a particular rule or a particular clause like... OK, somebody can take only one day or two days of sick leave. And the third day can be approved by the manager if it is considered to be a genuine reason or whatever it is... So let's say ...... [employee] goes and ask, the manager: "See I'm really sick and I need it", so he just approves it. So, in another location, let's say [employee] goes and says: "See I took two [days], but you know, I'm not feeling well now, I need one more day. Can you just approve it please?" And if he [the manager] says, "No no, the rule says what the evidence is?" Why so?

The lack of a clear perception on the concept of AL behaviour is exemplified in the number of pauses presented in the above excerpt from the transcript. Additionally, his words, "Authenticity is being the original self or, I understand authenticity as being the same for everybody at all times..." draw the attention towards the consistency of leader's actions with one's moral values, which is considered as a genuine behaviour by the faculty community. Relatedly, Boris' account below demonstrated a similar confusion about what exactly his perception of AL is:

> He has self-awareness and he could reflect about the mistakes that he made, or he had made. He had values, he had, you know, human values that he kind of put into the organisation.

Further confusion in defining AL is apparent in the interpretations of Arab participants. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is no equivalent in Arabic to the word 'authentic.' This was confirmed by Fatma's interpretation below:

> I don't know the exact translation of genuine, true is often used by Arabs. We use genuine in different contexts. A 'genuine' person is someone who is well mannered, good to other people and to their family members. Genuine people are perceived as good people who follow tradition especially when it relates to family affairs. A genuine person in the Arab culture could also mean a person you can trust and count on when in need. 'Authentic' is used more when it relates to products and goods meaning they are real and not counterfeits.

An analogous view is echoed by Hesham, who reflects on the word authentic as "...something really original with a touch of tradition or older, like an authentic document that was written 200 years ago, an authentic painting."

Additionally, participants with a collectivist cultural background were disappointed that their leader did not demonstrate interest in their personal life. Moreover, they thought and expected that the leader's interest in their personal life would go beyond the work environment. For example, Stefan expects his leader to be "…interested in their [subordinates'] lives as well, because you know you have to have a so-called work-life balance." A similar view was expressed by Hesham as follows:

> Somebody who comes to me and said: "You know, you're not doing anything. Let's go have a coffee, you know. Let's go have lunch. I'm buying you lunch. I'm buying you coffee." Uh, we used to have that. But nobody will ask us to what does happen to you. Happiness is not just an email and a funny face. It's a way more than that, you know. So yeah, I would say a rapport, and individual relationship between the bosses and the troops is very important.

Noticeably, for Hesham, as a Muslim, the relational connection with his leader is extremely important in terms of developing trust and making faculty valued as a person, not only as a subordinate. In addition to the interpretation of AL behaviour, the above viewpoint of Hesham confirmed that the previous leadership he was referring to was from the Western countries. He later clarified that with the following reflection:

> I was impressed with their international management. I noticed that the management was kind of a very diversified. American, Canadian, European…

In his words, the interviewee shared an interesting experience, highlighting the fact that the previous leadership, who had a Western cultural background, demonstrated higher relational behaviour and concern with employees' lives than the current leaders, who are from a collectivistic society. Therefore, his statements express Hesham's deep disappointment with the current relational disconnect with his current leader. The participant's voice highlighted the importance of the interpersonal dimension of authenticity. Likewise, Fatma and Shamma affirmed the Muslim's faculty expectations for closer personal relations with their leader, as it gives employees a sense of inclusiveness and belonging in the organisation. The above interpretations offered a contrarian understanding of the concept of authenticity and AL behaviour, as provided by Arab (e.g., relativist) and non-Arab (e.g., universalist) viewpoints. While non-Arabs underscored the consistency of actions, the Arabs highlighted the relational concerns with the leaders' behaviour.

On the other hand, participants from individualist cultures, such as Lisa, Melissa, and Boris, accentuated the intrapersonal nature of authenticity. The following quote from Melissa illustrates the combined perceptions of the three respondents:

> … well authentic to me, the word authentic means to be true to yourself, so I think an authentic leader is honest, open, can admit to mistakes even…or… [he/she] can admit to not knowing things. I think so.

In his words, Boris further supported the Western-culture views on the AL model:

> What kind of service do they deliver to me and the Department as a whole? Do they provide a service that is of value to me? Or do they provide a service that they will use for their own KPI's?

However, as evident from the above views of Hesham, Fatma, and Shamma, participants from collectivist cultures emphasised the interpersonal aspect of the authenticity and, broadly, the authentic behaviour of their leader. For example, in Shamma's views, the collective image of the UAE community is a key descriptor of authenticity as opposed to individual traits and behaviours:

> You know, we think about presenting ourselves before our representing our country, but the authentic people - they are more like about representing the image of the country more than represented the image of themselves.

Although, in this study, most of the participants from collective-oriented cultures associated authenticity with paternalism and trustful interpersonal relations, Arabs equally acknowledged 'authority' as a virtue of authentic behaviour. Additionally, Muslim faculty perceived being genuine as a leader as a care for community and family while at the same time maintaining self, or one's cultural values and beliefs. Besides, Muslims in particular, referred to well-established community traditions and customs, highlighting the originality of one's behaviour as an outcome of the collective practices. By contrast, interviewees from individualistic cultures perceived authenticity as an outcome of the consistency of a leader's behaviour with an individual's moral values, thus highlighting the intrapersonal aspect of the concept. Interestingly, Melissa described authentic leadership behaviour as 'humble,' which is mostly associated with the Far East cultural perspective (Tsui *et al.*, 2007); thus, indicating the interviewee's acculturation. Therefore, based on the interviewees' articulations, authenticity could be defined as both an interpersonal and an intrapersonal construct that demonstrates the multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon in the UAE.

ii.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 2: Cultural identity

Heidegger (1962, cited in Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019, p. 94) emphasises the centrality of an individual's cultural background in understanding and constructing a meaning of the word. According to hermeneutic phenomenology, the dissoluble unity between the individual and the world is founded on one's cultural background (Kafle, 2013). However, the willingness and readiness of participants to describe their cultural background revealed interesting reactions and striking disparities in interviewees' articulations. For example, interviewees from individualistic countries, such as Melissa and Lisa, identified their cultural backgrounds without hesitation:

> Alright, so I'm a Canadian chartered accountant. I was started by working at Deloitte for four years and then moved on to college teaching in Canada for eight years.

Similar was the introduction of Lisa:

> I came from South Africa, and I left South Africa I was 14.

Others, Boris for example, hindered their ancestry, which is different than Western culture, without elaborating on more details, indicating hesitation with disclosing their inherited cultural identity:

> I have a background mainly in England, but I have ancestry together as well.

Boris' words indicate fear and hesitancy in sharing cultural origins due to being treated differently based on his demographics. Similarly, participants from collectivistic societies avoided commenting on their inherited culture but preferred to discuss their academic qualifications and achievements. Such was the case with Anand and Stefan, who disclosed their cultural background at the end of a long introduction of their academic and career accomplishments:

> Uhh, I wasn't prepared for that… So, then I basically did my graduation in engineering and then proceeded to work as a junior engineer for about a year and a half and what I realised is that I need to get into management to go up the ladder of succession in any organisation. Uh…well, then I immediately quit my job... Took my full time Master's in Business Administration. I completed my business administration, and along with the Diploma in Financial Analysis. So, I got the basic first level diploma from CFA. So, once I finish that I got into another multinational company where I was in charge of a complete product range to be positioned and marketed. It was an industrial product in the Southeast Asian countries… We were based in India.

The long pauses and emphasis on qualifications and career progression revealed Anand's fear of disclosing his inherited cultural background, which he indirectly did at the end by stating the location of

the company. The analysis hinders the presence of a cultural inferiority complex, which, according to other participants, is common among the expatriates in the UAE. For example, Lisa recounted an experience shared by her colleague, which was suggestive of discrimination toward employees from particular demographics:

> She is from Tunisia and she often said that yeah, they treat the Tunisians different, or Algerians, or some of the African nationality is a bit different.

Lisa's viewpoint, although not firsthand, is supported by the observations of Boris, who has a Western cultural background. He was saddened that an individual's cultural background is a key factor defining group membership and team collaboration in his HE institution. He reflected on this as follows:

> I think to start with, human beings operate within the out-group and in-group premise, so the out-group is the people who are not from your culture, or your country, or from your educational cycle. So those are people who are from other places. There is a little bit of discomfort in the sense that you perceive them as someone external to your values and your interests. So whether that is real or not. Hypothetically, it affects your thinking about them.

In his reflection, Boris has repeated "your" several times emphasising the importance of one's cultural identification and group belonging in the UAE. Such statements highlight interviewees' frustration in witnessing and experiencing cultural discrimination as instigated by the leadership behaviour in their HE institution. Furthermore, Boris's words demonstrate his concerns with the negative influence of such behaviour on the organisational culture.

The meaning of the above reflections indirectly suggests the presence of cultural preferentialism within tertiary education in the UAE. Moreover, some of the participants shared their direct experience with such management practices in relation to the talent acquisition process. For example, Fatma recalled her encounter with cultural favouritism when she applied for her position:

> But I remember when I was interviewed here. I was told you're most unlikely to get in because you're not Canadian. That was the perception. Or, because you're not foreign, Western educated. Yeah, yes, and I don't believe that was the case. Then they were hiring more Western people than Arabs, and over the past ten years it's changed where now you have Asians. Philippines, India, Arab world, etc. It used to be law - 90%, I would say Westerners.

However, since Fatma has been working in the UAE for 20 years, her statement referred to past management practices in the Emirates when senior management in most organisations was mainly

imported from Western countries. Therefore, the participant's past experience was consistent with the country's earlier strategies for attracting western-educated leadership, which had supported the development of HE since the establishment of the nation (Godwin, 2006). According to most of the participants, until recently, the leadership style in HE in the country represented a Western model. In this respect, both Fatma and Boris referred to the recent changes in the leaders' cultural diversity during their interviews. For example, Boris shared that:

> With the new management, and I think it's the direction of the country because [the HE institution] I think was under, well it was, all the higher positions were with the non-Arabs, non-Emiratis but later on these positions, they're Emiratised.

Fatma's impression of the cultural transition was initially ambivalent, but her further comments identified her disappointment with the cultural change in leadership positions:

> In fact, and I have to be frank, the Arabic leadership - I kind of have a negative opinion of it. Because of so many reasons.

However, being Palestinian, Fatma is hesitant to expand on the reasons for her view as she fears she may lose her job. In a similar manner, Priya indicated the lack of trust she has in leaders who are not Western:

> I worked with a leader from Canada. I worked with a leader from India and there was hardly any difference in their leadership style. Both were very respectful. Both were very friendly, both had open door policy. Both were in if the feedback is to be given both were very good at giving constructive feedback. Both were very supportive. So one was from Canada, another one was from India. Different languages different colour, different age groups, but they were both having same leadership style. Then I had another leader from who was I think with American passport, but Arab origin. Um he was supportive, but his counterpart was someone with the Australian passport but Asian.

By saying, "Then I had another leader…" Priya clearly highlights the change in leadership behaviour and hinders the manifestation of cultural preferentialism by the new non-Western leadership. She also emphasises "Arab origin" and "Australian but Asian" to support her disappointment with the new leadership, suggesting major differences between the leaders from individualistic cultural backgrounds and the new leaders who have collectivistic cultural inheritance. Echoing the above frustrations, Boris further highlighted the impact of such changes on job satisfaction:

> A very short time Patrick and then Sarah so you can see. Patrick in particular. His approach was very different, very respectful to his staff. Very cordial and a team player. That's what I'm used

to, but then there are times that you see another leader from another culture and they pick and choose who they even say "Hello" to… Not that I really care because I have a lot on my plate anyway.

In the above reflection, Boris differentiates between the earlier universalist and the current relativist culture-bound leadership behaviour in his organisation. This change notably upsets the participant and indicates a decline of his trust in the leadership. This was also observed by the passion in his voice and body language when sharing his experience. Additionally, Boris' words suggest the presence of in-group and out-group social networks and cultural preferentialism in his HE institution.

As transpired from the interviewees' transcripts, indifferent to their cultural background, all the participants were concerned with the behavioural consequences associated with the personal demographics of their leaders. Most interviewees collectively emphasised their preferences with the Western orientation of leadership behaviours rather than Middle Eastern. However, considering most of the expatriates have been working in the UAE for longer than three years (e.g. one contract), their words also indicate the acceptance and adjustment to the leadership practices in the country, which address the question of acculturation. Besides, in the interviewees' statements, most refer to their immediate supervisors (e.g. "manage me") when reflecting on their experience, which means their encounters with the senior leadership behaviour are limited.

iii.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 3: Acculturation

A subtheme prominent during the discussions with Hesham, Priya, Stefan, and Shamma was acculturation. In the literature, acculturation has been directly linked to anthropology and social sciences and not much explored by leadership studies (Khan, 2014; Khan and Panarina, 2017). In this research, most of the participants demonstrated clear self-awareness of their inherited culture and acculturation process when discussing their cultural transformation arising from continued education and career assignments in different countries. For example, Hesham defined his background as multicultural:

> Um? I, yeah sure, sure, uh. I lived in so many countries. It started in the Middle East. I was born in Palestine and West Bank. And my father was used to work in Africa, so when I was born, my father was living in Kenya at that time. Then we moved to Jordan because of the war then after high school I decided to go to school in the in the United States. So, I went to school in America. And during my years in America I travelled, I travelled in Central America in South America, in Mexico and that gives me a chance to see totally different world from what I'm used to. Learned

a little Spanish… then I travelled in Europe. I used to make visits to the Middle East from the States, and I will always make a few stops in Europe and I would visit, you know for two, three days. So, I find myself richer every time I visit a new country. I find myself richer, more informative. My horizons is wider and you know, so it is when I realised that I'm really a multicultural person.

For Priya, Boris, Gerry, Melissa and Stefan, the key factor for their successful immersion in an organisation's culture and meeting the job performance standards was the conscious effort to adapt to the sharp changes in leadership culture and practices. As Gerry described his experience:

Actually, over the course of time you will really have to be able to adapt yourself.

Similarly, for Fatma, adaptability is a key to the continuity of her employment in UAE:

Yeah, if you're not adaptable you can leave. Exactly, yeah, maybe if you want to stay here, you'll become adaptable. Put it this way.

In the above accounts, irrespective of the participants' individual cultural ascription, most made a concerted effort to accept and adjust to their leaders' behaviour and practices. An interesting viewpoint was presented by Shamma who is an Emirati national and representative of the young generation. In sharing her experience below, the interviewee's articulation of her cultural background indicated more similarities with the Western-centered rather than traditional Emirati:

However, there was a new guy … So, this man he came into the room, and saw my friend smoking. So, he should go to the one who's above him, but he didn't go to the one above him. He went to the higher position which is wrong! And then when we had the meeting 'cause I was in the room too, it was like "this is the first time I'm seeing a girl smoking. I feel like we are at the end of the world. I got a headache because I saw that!" And to me that was so like sexist. So, basically what you're saying is if a man did it - that's fine, but because you saw a girl - it's the end of the world and that it caused a headache for you? It's not like it is [the] end of the world…And then the way that he was sitting and talking to us, it's like it wasn't as much as gentle kind of way of talking.

This interpretation is not a surprise, as Shamma studied a Western curriculum. From her reflection on the encounter with an Emirati superior, it is obvious that acculturation in the UAE is a dynamic and continuous process, affecting not only expatriates but also Emiratis who adopt Western cultural behaviours. Additionally, according to the participants, the diversity of cultural characteristics infiltrates organisational culture. For example, when Gerry was asked by his peer, "What is your good name?" he felt confused, as prior to coming to the UAE, the participant never assumed that the name could be 'bad'.

Subordinate Theme (SB) 4: Protectionism

Since its inception, the UAE has been recognised for the tax-free personal income the country offers, thus attracting a large number of expatriates within the HE sector. However, according to most of the participants, the rotational manner of leadership appointments and lack of transparency in decision-making processes create a culture of fear of losing the job. As Anand noticed: "...even my manager has the same problem. Three-year contract". Relatedly, Hesham gave up on voicing his concerns in any matter and suggested that "no need to rock the boat" would be a more effective approach to preserve his job in the long run. His words indicate faculty acceptance of the hierarchical structural model and pseudo-loyalty due to a fear of losing the benefits the job has to offer. The frustration with the inability to voice one's opinion openly is also echoed in Anand's statement below:

> I feel that there is fear sometimes to even express your opinion. Or say something out loud, although everybody knows it. Sometimes the leader has to express it, and they don't because they're afraid for their position.

The above interpretation of faculty lived experiences is an illustration of the immediate fear factor in this participant's organisation. However, it is implausible to believe that Anand was referring to the leader. Rather, his words pointed out the middle management as he noted that these individuals are concerned with upsetting someone who is in a higher-level position within the HE institution, which does not necessarily mean the senior management but the next higher rank within the organisational hierarchy. On the other hand, Melissa was explicit in her view that the fear factor governs the organisational behaviour in her HE institution:

> Yeah, it could be one mistake, one, you annoy one person, it could be, that could be the end. So, you always had to be careful...I often said you always had to have a Plan B in your back pocket because you couldn't really say: "OK, I know this is a job for life."

The above statement is an affirmation of the interviewee's deep fear and frustration with the possibility of losing her job over a simple mistake. By repeating "one" a couple of times in relation to performing a task or dealing with a higher-rank individual, Melissa voices her experience with unethical leadership practices, which she further confirmed in the extended reflection below:

> So, I didn't think that people were evaluated based on their contributions and values as much as personalities, and whether you fit in. So, you could be a very good teacher, but *not fit the mold*. Not understand the context and be out on your ear. I mean over the years that I was there, I saw

many examples of very good people, teachers, and managers and so on, who were really very talented teachers, but couldn't fit in. Just in the wrong fit, didn't fit politically, didn't fit the system. Didn't say the right things to the right people and ended up out, you know. And sometimes quite quickly. I lived through a lot of sort of firings of people that were quite dramatic. Quite overnight type things. And these were all really good people. I mean, these were. So, I think we also came to realise that being fired from the university is not an indication of some lack in your ability, but it's more of a political issue.

The respondent interprets these upsetting and unethical instances in relation to the corresponding culturally subjective leader's behaviour. In voicing her deep disappointment with such occurrences, Melissa affirmed that protecting one's job shapes the individual's behaviour in maneuvering the organisation's hierarchy. Thus, according to the interviewee's words, the fear factor instigates complex, politically driven relationships and is one of the major obstacles in developing trustful interactions in the HE entity. For someone like Melissa, who is from Western culture, such behaviour and practices deeply conflict with her values and beliefs. Thus, Melissa's words reveal the presence of leadership behaviour that is more closely related to the collectivist culture.

The next fear issue emerges from the interviewees' cultural self-awareness. Whereas some nationalities do not really care whether they lose their job or not, there are other nationalities that might feel intimidated, or they will be scared that if they lose their job, going back to their home country is not going to be comparable to what they have in the UAE. For example, Anand, Priya, Gerry, and Fatma, who have Indian, Filipino, and Arabic backgrounds, have managed to secure continuous employment in the UAE and GCC for more than fifteen years. Therefore, as demonstrated in the above paragraphs, some of the interviewees were hesitant to disclose their cultural background.

Interestingly, Shamma's interpretation of job security and faculty protectionism offers a fresh outlook for understanding the factors threatening job continuity in HE in the country. In her words below, she highlights that being an Emirati woman, her presence is perceived by expatriate faculty - among all non-Emirati nationalities and by both genders - as a potential threat:

> I didn't face any challenges, but I guess the only challenge is for girls. It's OK with me, but for the men, there was like they felt like there is a warning: "she is local", and I'm a woman."

Shamma's articulation of her experience and sharing her feelings that her colleagues avoid her because they fear she will take over their assignment clearly highlights the influence of gender and cultural

differentiation drives in expatriates' job protectionism. According to her words, Emirati, and more specifically, Emirati women are granted preferential treatment in terms of employment continuity and job security. Therefore, their appointments create fears of losing their jobs among other nationalities in the organisation and alter interpersonal interactions and quality of trust across all job levels.

v.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 5: Organisational Policy

The interpretations of participants' encounters with leaders' distinct behaviour and practices, which are congruent to their leader's personal characteristics, continue throughout faculty attempts to make sense of the role of organisational regulations in shaping the working climate in HE in the Emirates. For example, Boris is comfortable with the organisational policies but is concerned with the leader's interpretation of them, citing cultural differences. He expressed his doubts as follows:

> The policy is quite well laid out…the very policies in this organisation are stable. They are the same despite who is in the leadership position. But the interpretation of the policy matters. The interpretation of a particular policy by a Bulgarian, or a British would be different from the interpretation of the same policy by someone, say from Jordan or India.

Boris clearly associates the balanced processing abilities of leaders with their individual cultural attributes. However, his words could be understood as a reference to the middle-level management as opposed to the senior leadership. A similar opinion is echoed in Anand's account, who recognises the genuine form of his company's organisational policies but raises unspoken concerns with the personal characteristics and positional power of the individual who is implementing them:

> Empathy in the organisation is built on its policies and procedures. So if you know the policies and procedures, they always have a clause. Says that exceptional cases are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Now that immediately shifts the balance from the organisational empathy to the current positional holder, whoever the person is, and his powers.

What is interesting in the above statements is that both participants emphasis the degree of the leader's subjectivism and the influence of this individual's cultural background in understanding his or her positional power. Both Boris and Anand, whose values come from individualistic cultural contexts, voiced their disappointment that such factors govern the selective interpretation and implementation of the written policy. Similar feelings of disappointment were shared in Gerry's account:

He give me approval. He had one request and he said: "Gerry, I hope what you see and what you learned, and what you have experienced - just leave it here. There are other ways of doing things that should not be discussed in [your next job] because it is only our own.

Notably, Gerry's reflection on his experience accentuates the centrality of a leader's personal qualities in the decision-making and actions taken in implementing the organisational policies, as clearly the policy in his HE institution may stipulate different practices. In this line, Hesham stated that "still we have a check-in/check-out system. My day is ticket-in and ticket-out", which means the working time is stipulated in the policy, but the decision on implementing specific controlling mechanisms is consequential to the leader's individualised understanding of the regulations and the authority granted by the positional power. This leadership behaviour causes Hesham's frustration with the culturally subjective interpretation and implementation of organisational policy, as it contradicts the participant's own values and beliefs.

While Anand, Hesham, and Boris felt that the operationalisation of the policy disadvantages them, Fatma is comfortable with centralised control over organisational performance:

Now we have one umbrella, one management supervising everyone. Centralised. Which is not a bad thing in some aspects, especially the financial aspect, where I think they have more control now.

However, as evident in Fatma's account, the participant was referring to the organisational system rather than the involvement of the individual in a leadership role. As such, her view demonstrates faculty contentment with the objectivity of IT infrastructure in her establishment. Overall, all participants implicitly expressed their satisfaction and ease with the organisational policy and, therefore, with the senior leadership, as ultimately the individual in the highest rank is setting up the vision of the institution and organisational policies, as opposed to the mediating role the middle management assumes in the process of implementing leadership directives.

5.2.4 Superordinate Theme (SP) 4: COMMUNICATION MODEL

    i.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 1: Communication clarity*

Communication between individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds, who speak different languages and dialects, proved to be a challenge in the multicultural and multilingual HE institutions in the UAE. For

example, in Lisa's experience, communicating with a non-native English-speaking colleague could be an obstacle to hers and the other person's job performance:

> Well, I think he didn't understand everything that really needs to be done. So, I have tried to communicate with him and explain to him the work that we need to be sending, and in the manner that is supposed to be done. But again, I think a lot of things get lost in translation sometimes…I really need to start learning French so we can communicate better.

Similar challenges are voiced by Melissa and Boris, whose native language is also English. For these two participants, communicating with non-native English speakers daily could be a challenge not only because of the cultural differences but also due to the individuals' English language proficiency. Therefore, it is not a surprise that many of the participants shared experiences of situations when people from the same country, or ethnicity, switch to speaking in their own language and dialect during meetings and informal discussions. This left some of the respondents feeling isolated and uncomfortable when communicating with their colleagues. In this respect, Shamma shared her expectations of a high level of English proficiency of her peers and leader, highlighting its importance in enabling social connectivity and inclusiveness within HE institutions:

> English is basically the only language that connects between everybody. And I mean it. Like it's a language I know, and you know. If you don't know English, would we find a way to speak?

In Shamma's views, even though the participant is Emirati and a non-native English speaker, the unsatisfactory ability to speak, write and communicate in English could have a serious negative impact on the clarity of communications in the workplace. Reflecting on her experience, Shamma passionately advocates for high English proficiency, as she would otherwise feel isolated from the discussions and information sharing in her HE entity. Furthermore, faculty considers these language skills as a key factor enabling the functionality of human and system networks in the organisation. Expanding the scope of understanding the communication patterns by providing an example from his HE institution, Boris passionately voiced his concerns with the manner individuals communicate on operational issues and the clarity of messages sent to him. According to his experiences, the cultural circumstances influence the way people communicate in his institution, which makes him feel confused and, on some occasions, frustrated. Consequently, Boris shared his feelings as follows:

There are times that I receive email and I don't really understand what the email is talking about. Like this morning, I got an email from a colleague and the email said that: "Dear doctor Boris. I need some help about FWA process"... So I was wondering why you don't explain this further to say: "I need help in a particular thing", or what is it, the email is too vague. I couldn't interpret it, so I haven't yet replied.

The above request from a peer who is a non-Western national created confusion in his role. Boris pointed out the additional time and effort he must spend to follow up on his colleague's request in order to respond accordingly, wasting valuable time that could have been utilised more productively. However, it is easier for people who are native English speakers and belong to low-context societies, such as Boris, Lisa, and Melissa, to master the written communication skills, as these cultures are typically used to concise expressions. Boris' account implies a communication manner that is typical for his colleagues who are either from Arabic, South-eastern Asian, or Indian subcontinent countries that carry high-context cultural characteristics. Therefore, Boris struggles in understanding a message where the information is implied as opposed to explicit (Hall, 1989). Similar viewpoints were echoed in Shamma's account in the preceding paragraph. Being a representative of the young Emirati generation, Shamma has obviously adopted low-context communication patterns that have been introduced by the English curriculum across the country. Despite the participant being from a high-context culture, she was quite straightforward in her opinion on English communication requirements and her expectations align with those of Lisa, Melissa, and Boris.

In addition to language barriers, the story below illustrates participants' reactions and feelings to the communication message in the emails with task requirements or instructions:

The kind of email that I get on Monday, and the email asks you to do XYZ, on Tuesday, I get another email which is in contrast to that Monday email. There's no sense of awareness to say: "Hey, the person receiving all these three emails will feel confused, and it might be a mistake that I'm sending multiple emails that have different requests or requirements"

The voice of Boris in the above account highlights the cultural differences in terms of understanding and acting upon the multiple requirements for the same task, which leaves Boris feeling perplexed and ineffective in his job performance. This reality was echoed also by Gerry, who thought that "...your voice, your communication, is not only on a face-to-face... You must have a good command of the use of technology to communicate with them [peers and subordinates]." In his view, the faculty reflected upon his own unsatisfactory level of written communication skills and accentuated the prevalence of IT

systems' led communication behaviour in his organisation, which, according to the respondent, demands different levels of message and clarity transmitting competence. Therefore, Gerry felt that this could be a difficult task for people from non-English speaking countries such as himself. As a result of the lack of clarity in written communication, individuals are facing challenges accomplishing their tasks on time, which Gerry described as follows: "Lapses will likely happen, so you are not able to meet your tasks. Emails are running." Thus, communication clarity in email instructions is central to the respondents' efficiency and can significantly influence the emergence of both interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict in HE in the UAE.

On the other hand, Stefan related the clarity and accuracy of communication to the leader's cultural individuality. He interpreted the communication behaviour he has experienced as follows:

> Definitely with the leadership style, the way how we can basically communicate with each other definitely depends on the leadership style. So yes, if the leadership style is more, let's say autocratic or authoritarian, then it is much more difficult to work with those people. On the other hand, if the leadership style is, regardless of the culture where that specific leader belongs, if their leadership style is more participative then definitely, it is easier to work with those types of leaders. But yes, absolutely, uh leadership, working with leaders who come from various cultures is more challenging, compared to peer-to-peer communication.

According to the above reflection, there are two important outcomes from the demonstration of culturally subjective leadership behaviour in the HE sector: (1) establishing congruence of the communication mode with the distinct cultural background of the leader and (2) the possibility of inciting task and interpersonal conflict. Although Stefan explicitly voiced his concerns with existing communication behaviour in his university, the participant's response suggested that stronger self-awareness of the leader on his purpose and behavioural integrity will have a positive influence in developing an inclusive organisational culture. Collectively, participants agreed in their expectations for leadership behaviour that will role model transparent, concise, timely, and inclusive modes of communication.

ii.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 2: IT systems*

By sharing his experience of being "...on a virtual reporting system", particularly since the beginning of Covid-19, when faculty had to work from home, Anand further accentuated the importance of email communication clarity. Additionally, by reflecting on his current reporting model, the participant directed

attention to understanding the value added by the IT systems to his task performance and continuity of employment contract, especially performance management and the contract renewal process. These points support the observations of Anand, Hesham and Priya regarding the objectivity and transparency of IT-generated performance data in previous sections. For example, Priya shared that in her case:

> The correct [IT] report is stating that: "Yes, I have accomplished what I have accomplished", and there were times when I had doubts about my leader's intentions, or probably I didn't even know what was going on in his mind because there was no open communication.

According to Priya, the accuracy of information on her achievements captured by the IT systems is of utmost importance for sustaining her job contract. This respondent's words demonstrate the strong differentiation faculty make between the trust in the positive contributions of IT reports and the leader's support for her job continuation. However, it is unclear in Priya's words if the level of support she is expecting from the leader is possible, or if the leader's influence is restricted by the technology overhaul of the key employee management processes in her institution. Nonetheless, trust in the IT system's objectivity is also highlighted in the accounts of Gerry, Hesham, and Stefan. Below is Hesham's reflection on the positive influence of technology utilisation in his HE institution:

> Also, the way they are utilising technology, we're always up to date. We are up to date. Involvement with a technology tool to use in the classroom and all that that sort of thing attracted me to work in this organisation.

The emphasis on "up to date" in the above statement confirms Hesham's satisfaction with the positive impact of the learning management systems on his job performance. Similarly, Fatma, Anand, Gerry and Stefan have highlighted their positive experience with the support of the IT systems on their job performance. Overall, recognition of the contributions of the IT tools was expressed by Fatma, who values the transparency and fairness of the existing IT communication model. The championing of IT systems-driven communication and job evaluation mechanisms is also emphasised by Anand, who referred to the Covid-19 regulations and assessed the IT advancements in his organisation as follows:

> The Pioneers - like how they are still...I mean honestly, I still say we are far ahead of the world. We are, that's true.

The strong feelings of pride Anand expressed with the state-of-the-art IT infrastructure in his organisation are echoed in Gerry's words. He also agreed that his organisation has a "...very good IT infrastructure."

However, the respondent highlighted the importance of human judgment in the faculty management processes and questioned the ability of IT software to capture the collegiate support during the performance evaluation process as follows:

> Helping you, helping me. This cannot be seen in the job performance criteria… mutual help, supporting each other cannot be seen in the job performance formula, and it's of course difficult to contextualise.

Thus, Gerry's reflection raises concerns with certain limitations of current IT systems in processing and assessing information on human behaviour that is not quantifiable. In a similar view, Boris shared his frustration with the disconnect the IT systems create between him and the leadership in his HE institution:

> My leader is who communicates with me without fear or favour, a leader who is able to motivate me even in difficult situations, the one that is going to motivate me. The way it's done in this organization is very different. It is computer driven. It is IT related. And I'm not that kind of person. I have led teams before, but it wasn't leadership through IT or systems. It was leadership at the human level so that element is what is missing here.

Although, throughout the interview, the participant has been appreciative of the progressive utilisation of IT systems in his organisation, he feels the technology could have a negative influence on the relationship between the leader and the employees. His reflection, however, adds to the other participants' viewpoints that highlight the transition of leadership behaviours into intelligent systems in the HE sector in the UAE.

Overall, eight of the participants were favourable to the IT system's objectivity, inclusiveness and support in faculty management processes in their HE institutions emphasising the transparency they offer in the contract renewal and performance management process as well as enabling faculty members inclusiveness in the decision-making processes.

iii.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 3: Timeliness

Because the UAE is a multicultural community, it was not a surprise that participants shared diverse experiences with the way individuals understand time (Hall, 1989). In Boris's experience, individuals' ethnicities influence the manner of communication within his organisation. For example, he shared the following factual story:

But, on another hand, I do see apology. Something like I'm sorry for sending so many emails on the weekend… but that's just a food for thought.

In relation to communication patterns, Boris pointed out a strong cultural polarisation when it comes to understanding time. A similar view was echoed by Gerry, who describes the communication behaviour in his organisation as "emails are running". The participant expressed strong feelings of disappointment by emphasising his concerns with the leader's ability to process information in a balanced manner and act upon that in a responsible way. As an example, he shared that he had been asked by his leader to review and revise a project on Friday night for the next morning, which was quite surprising to him.

Additionally, Boris' extended reflection below highlights two key issues with communication in his HE institution: timeliness and the strong cultural congruence of the email communication manner:

> I definitely have seen differences in the approach by way of email communication. How forceful the email is. The culture I'm used to is… we're very, very polite and professional in how we write emails. But then in other cultures, you get an email that says, "Do this by 4:00 PM." There's no excuse not to do it! And those are cultural issues because such an email could have been written in a way like, "I appreciate it if you could do this by 4:00 PM". You get the same outcome. But it's a different approach, so I guess.

Notably, the participant, who comes from an individualistic culture, is frustrated with having to put up with such communication behaviour. This transpired from the pauses in his narration while attempting to make sense of his lived experiences and by repeating "very" several times. Boris' words accentuated the difference between universalist and collectivist cultural behaviours. He also indicated that this manner of communication is a cause for interpersonal conflict in his organisation.

Other respondents reported receiving numerous emails with the same instructions from different people at the same time. According to Priya: "You are like reporting to endless numbers of people. So, when the task comes, it comes from all these people at the same time." Thus, in her words, the participant questions the leader's understanding of the coordination of time and context in communicating with subordinates. In addition, the meaning of Priya's words suggests fear of losing the job, job protectionism, and the presence of a hierarchical communication model:

> Today, they are the communicators. They are the mediators …they are just transferring the information because they're supposed to complete their task on time. Because they have got orders from a number of people.

In her interpretation, the faculty member clearly refers to the middle-level leaders, who are her direct leaders. Priya also indicates her concerns with the time the immediate supervisors take to process the task requirements and questions whether these requirements have been forwarded to teachers in a timely manner. This is evident by her expanded reflection on the timeliness of the emails. According to the interviewee, "...when that happens, you get this conflict of managing yourself. And conflict with which task to prioritise, which deadline to adhere to first, and in that process ... like the quality of your work may get compromised." Echoing Boris' views, her words suggest a strong possibility of instigating a task and internal conflict. Thus, the communication timeliness may directly impact Priya's job performance and relations with peers and indirectly the continuity of her employment.

Therefore, the interpretations of the timeliness of the communication made by participants demonstrate both cultural sensitivity in this matter and the underlying fear of losing the job. According to faculty voices, this fear compromises an individual's ability to process information and act upon it in a balanced manner.

iv.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 4: Negotiation*

Some participants reflected upon the negotiation opportunities in their enterprise as a key component in the communication model and strategy for feedback from subordinates. Anand expressed his view as follows:

> No, I don't think there is a serious feedback mechanism in place or a proper systematic feedback that's available. I don't think that's there.

Relatedly, Priya articulated her experience below:

> The tasks are assigned to you and the timelines are given. There is no, there is no negotiation on that. And you can't even negotiate because there is no opportunity. There is this management by fear you negotiate means you are a problem maker.

The disappointment with the lack of negotiation mechanisms in their HE institution is obvious in both participants' reflections. In her experience, Priya has noticed a couple of potential issues that could arise should she negotiate over the instructions: (1) losing the job, (2) possibilities of interpersonal conflict with the leader, and (3) possibilities that her competencies for doing the job will be questioned. Priya also indicated that the tasks that are cascaded to faculty by centralised email are non-negotiable, and

the system does not allow for a discussion with higher-level authority. Similarly, Boris shared his frustration with the lack of two-way communication as follows:

> I feel that the leader here. Um? Operates in a way that is extremely forceful. And is one way communication in most cases as well. So forceful in a sense that I have no way of negotiating my way. I have no way of negotiating my way. No way of demonstrating an alternative view.

Because openly sharing feedback may create an interpersonal conflict, and due to the fear of losing his job, Boris had to pause and rethink what the right words are to express his frustration with the communication patterns in his workplace. The repetition of the words "no way" a couple of times demonstrates the lack of interest from the leader to discuss the tasks with the faculty, which is again suggestive of strong hierarchical leadership behaviour.

> I cannot express my opinion. I have to just say "yes" every time. And that is frightening. It's not only frightening. It has an impact on my commitment has an impact on my um?... my contribution to the organisation that I might just be operating as someone who is not highly qualified.

In this reflection, Boris highlights the issue of receiving only partial information from his manager and not being aware of the full details accompanying the task requirement. His feelings while speaking surpassed the factual story, and thus, the unfinished sentence demonstrated deep frustration with such occurrences. This behaviour is considered by the participant as an outcome of the leader's authoritative manner of decision-making and a criterion for evaluating the manager's ability to assess the value of the information and, consequentially, decide what information should be upheld from the subordinates. Therefore, Boris' reflective account raises strong concerns with the leader's ethical behaviour and integrity. His views are supported by Melissa, whose experience with a leader from a collectivistic background was extremely disappointing for the same reasons:

> So, I think when you don't hear the whole story, like when you feel there are things happening and you're not aware, like if you're kept out of the communication link. If things are happening behind the scenes and you're not aware, that adds stress and stress leads to conflict, because if you're not all clear about what's the rules of the game, for example, then more conflict can happen.

The lack of mechanisms for negotiation are obvious from the above statement. Melissa is accustomed to western leadership practices and the existing leadership behaviour is incompatible with her professional and personal values and beliefs. Thus, growing frustration caused her to resign and look for another job.

5.2.5 Superordinate Theme (SP) 5: CONFLICT

i. Subordinate Theme (SB) 1: Task

Most respondents reported task assignment as a primary reason for conflict in their organisation. For example, the disconnect between task and benefit transpired in Boris' account below:

> Even if I thought that a particular task is overly detailed, the process is heavier than the outcome. The ultimate benefit of what I'm doing and my connection to my daily task is completely um, separated.

There are two main concerns the participant raised in his reflection: (1) there are no mechanisms for negotiation, and (2) he has been asked to operate as someone who is not qualified. These views are echoed by Gerry, who felt that "...there are so many tasks that are repetitive. The data is already there. We have a very good IT infrastructure...". Thus, the respondent also feels that his expertise has not been effectively utilised. Hence, his perception aligns with Boris' reflection on the disconnect between tasks and benefits to his job performance. In addition, Gerry questions the leader's ability to generate and analyse the available data, as the faculty has repeatedly been requested to provide the same details. Gerry's words reveal his concerns with his leader's competence in balancing the processing of information and making informed decisions. Boris' and Gerry's feelings were also echoed in Hesham' and Priya's views. Additionally, Hesham feels that the value of his academic credentials and expertise is diminished by the daily tasks he has been assigned:

> What bothers me the most is it is when we are hired. We'll have to do teaching and do research and all that, but further and further we [are] moving away from that into more administrative kind of work. And that will take you away from your core competency, which is the teaching, or disseminating knowledge to others, OK? But I think now it's on the negative side from these two angles.

It was obvious that during the interview the participant tried to make sense of the adequacy of the new job requirements, which he perceived as incompatible with his core competence. Hesham's voice suggests a major change in the leadership vision, and being from an individualistic culture, he would like to be informed of this shift prior to receiving new job requirements. Thus, the faculty member feels frustrated with the need to perform tasks for which he is not equipped with the matching skill set. He slightly raised his voice when saying, "...but further and further we [are] moving away from that..." However, due to the benefits his contract offers, he has adjusted to the new realities, although

this increases his job dissatisfaction and intrinsic demotivation. Furthermore, because of hierarchical task assignment and change in the leaders' understanding of the purpose and objectives of the teaching role, Hesham felt he was being deskilled for his primary job. In a similar way, Priya perceived the abovementioned tasks as a major reason for creating tacit conflict.

> This is top-down management approach… So, there is maybe a silent conflict. A tacit conflict, which is never expressed with the people assigning tasks on the deadlines short notices. And these are conflicts, which are not individual person conflicts. This is more of a conflict with the way of working.um… How would I say? With the way the structure has been developed, where you are getting structured.

The pausing and the passion in the participant's words reflect Priya's frustration with the top-down task assignment process. In addition, as discussed in preceding paragraphs, Priya viewed the task conflict as an outcome of the timeliness of distinct communication behaviour, and repetitiveness in email instructions forwarded by numerous senders. However, the fear of losing the job overcomes the employee's consciousness while at the same time, it suggests the growing possibility of inciting intrapersonal conflict with the participant's moral values. A similar position was expressed by most interviewees, irrespective of their cultural diversity. For example, Anand's voice offered an expanded understanding of the reasons for task conflict. In addition to the centralised approach of assigning tasks, the respondent reported the centrality of the leader's personality in the task allocation process. According to this interviewee's words: "Say, for example, I would like to teach a particular course, but the leader says, 'No. You gotta teach something else…'". In his example, Anand relates the task conflict to the leader's self-awareness and positional power. Therefore, his account establishes a reference to the leader's personal demographics. However, it is not clear in Anand's interpretation if he refers to the leader or the immediate management, as the university's course assignment systems are governed by the vision of the senior leadership while the course timetable is managed by the immediate supervisor.

Gerry is also concerned with the role of the leader in managing the task conflict and preventing its escalation to a personal conflict. His views are as follows:

> That is, there is just a task conflict. Gonna see your member disagreeing with each other, and then me as SCTL [system course team leader] disagreeing with you…It's a good conflict and this task conflict, but because it is not solved from someone who has a power over those things. Sometimes it proceeds into a personal conflict, and we do a lot of that.

Being from a collectivistic society, for Gerry, personal relationships are vital for his job performance. This is not the case with Boris and Hesham, for whom individual efficiency has downplayed the relational paradigm of the task conflict. Moreover, as discussed in the previous subordinate theme, for Boris and Melissa, both from a low power distance culture, the clarity and comprehensiveness of information provided by the leader in relation to the task performance requirements is vital for avoiding conflict in the workplace. Therefore, the difference in cultural backgrounds generates contradictory interpretations of the discussed topic. However, Gerry, Boris, and Fatma assume that due to faculty education and intelligence, the cultural context conflict is downplayed in HE institutions in the country. As Gerry noted:

> So, I do not have so far a bad experience on teamwork. 'cause my understanding is we have already reached such level of maturity or adaptability in working with the team and despite it is diverse, despite the fact that our orientation comes in different way when it is a work centered job - we go with it. I don't see any issues in that one.

Gerry's interpretation of his experience highlights the acculturation process he and his colleagues went through (see SP3: SB3) and demonstrates how this process alters individuals' values and influences job performance. According to Gerry, by enabling greater cultural awareness, acculturation could have a positive impact on diminishing work-related conflicts.

ii.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 2: Interpersonal

Participants collectively agreed that working in a multicultural workplace has contributed to their personal and professional growth. They felt they had learned a lot through interaction with colleagues with diverse cultural backgrounds, academic qualifications, and experience. However, some interviewees referred to the diversity of languages and dialects spoken in their organisation which could result in favouritism and interpersonal conflict (see SP 1, SB 1). For example, finding himself among his leadership and colleagues who spoke in Urdu in formal and informal settings made Boris feel frustrated and an out-group member. In his view, it is considered normal behaviour for people from collectivistic cultures to communicate in their own language and exclude other nationalities from the conversation. However, this made Boris and other faculty who do not speak the same language feel isolated from social networks. Therefore, Boris claims the leader's cultural self-awareness and self-identification behaviour as a major cause of interpersonal conflict with, and between, the subordinates. Furthermore, this suggests the emergence of cultural favouritism which is established on language and demographic differences. In his

perception, this leadership behaviour is unethical across several management practices, which in return incites interpersonal conflict among peers. A similar view was shared by Priya when the interviewee reflected on her experience working with a leader from a different cultural background:

It must have taken huge courage on his part to say that. Because I think it was not his personality. Therefore, in her view, the individuality of the leader is a key factor in instigating or diffusing interpersonal conflict. Furthermore, when Priya was trying to make more sense of her experience with a leader from a different cultural background, she claimed that repeating the same mistakes is exclusively associated with the leader's personality.

While for Priya the leader's character and cultural characteristics influence the ability of this individual to apologise to faculty, for Melissa interpersonal conflict is associated with individuals' concerns for employment security and from the fear of losing the job. She shared her perceptions in the following factual story:

> There was kind of a 'zero failure' expectation, which was not really communicated to me, and so my first assessment that I had for the students had a very high failure rate... So, as the students went to the director, I went to my manager and said: "Look there's a problem", and then I began to understand what the problem was... I understood that the assessment was far beyond what the students were capable of, but I was relying on my colleague who claimed that this was doable for the students in the first place.

As Melissa pointed out, job protectionism is a key factor in withholding information and demonstrating an uncooperative attitude, which ultimately leads to an inter-relational conflict. In addition, according to Gerry's viewpoint, if not managed efficiently by leaders, task conflict could escalate to a personal conflict. However, respondents have learnt how to navigate through the complex interpersonal challenges in their workplace, which is also evidenced by their long-term employment in the UAE.

iii. *Subordinate Theme (SB) 3: Cultural inequalities*

In answering the question, "What is it like working with a leader from a different culture than your own?", most participants shared that because of their previous experience working in multinational organisations, they are comfortable working with people from different countries. For example, Anand said that:

> Well, I don't think I have any specific conflict because of nationality. Uh, because I've always worked with multiple nationalities, so I've worked with Japanese, I worked with. Chinese. I have worked with Americans, Australians, Africans, South Africans, Americans, South Americans, Europeans, so I know how each uh nationality perceives different things, so I don't find any difficulties.

Likewise, Priya perceives the multiculturalism as a rich platform for self-development, and she "…rather found it full of opportunities." To these statements, Boris added his opinion: "I think I'm privileged to work with people from different cultures." Therefore, all interviewees collectively agreed that multiculturalism in their HE institutions enriches them personally and professionally.

The only concern was expressed by Shamma, who felt that "…some negative stereotypes about certain cultures are the biggest hurdle" in her workplace. Her analysis corresponds with the universalist perception of leadership behaviour to which she is accustomed due to her Western qualification and being a representative of the new generation of Emirati women. Since Emiratisation is a relatively new strategy in the country and is still a work in progress, it is not unusual that Shamma felt Emiratis, in particular females, have been stereotyped. She feels this is the main reason why some companies are resistant to offering employment to young UAE nationals. On the other hand, Anand, who previously claimed that he had developed substantial intercultural intelligence qualities, stated that he has no issues with leaders from a different nationality as long as "…they don't perceive themselves to be of that particular nationality". Therefore, Anand's words indicated stereotyping perceptions of cultural backgrounds and the existence of salient interpersonal conflict at his workplace. A similar interpretation was demonstrated in Boris' words in the previous sections as well as in his reflection below, who insisted that some leaders continue behaving according to their cultural individuality. Boris shared that:

> They decide who they put around them. They decide who to invite to a meeting and who not to invite to a meeting… People making staff decisions then you can see culture is playing a role.

Notably, Boris is upset with the change of the earlier universalist with the current relativist leadership behaviour in his organisation. The pauses between the sentences and the lowering of his voice when speaking about his lived experiences demonstrate participant's frustration with such leadership behaviour. Additionally, Boris' words highlight the presence of leadership behaviour inciting cultural preferentialism which is a key instigator for inter- and intra-personal conflict in the HE in the UAE.

On the other hand, from her indirect experience, Lisa shared her colleagues' perceptions of cultural preferentialism, which was discussed in the previous paragraphs. Hesham echoed Lisa's perception but from a different angle. The respondent cited budgetary constraints as the reason for the shift in diversity orientation in his organisation:

> Maybe there is some financial issues involved, or they want to have more harmony in the organisation because they wanna have, you know, because cultures, each culture have certain traits and all of that, and so maybe they are moving away from cultures where they are outspoken. Uh, they make their opinion heard, they are opinionated. Now they have moved into more of people who are just, just go with the flow… and also it's financial maybe… Maybe they're bringing people from some areas where they will accept lesser lucrative financial packages.

Sense-making of the recent changes in the leadership vision for promoting diversity indicates the budgetary constraints the private HE institutions might be facing in the country. At the same time, the participant who is American-Arab is able to offer an unbiased outlook on Muslim leadership behaviour from the universalist standpoint, which again emphasises the cultural subjectivism and power distance features of existing leadership behaviour in his tertiary HE institution. Thus, the participants' accounts revealed the possibility of cultural inequalities associated with culturally subjective leadership decisions. These assumptions emerged also in Boris' words as follows:

> But then when you have a very structured organisation, a very complex organisation, and everyone is fighting for their interest, then you start seeing problems in terms of culture, or in terms of nationality.

Expanding on Lisa's and Hesham's accounts, Boris ultimately perceives the organisational policies and leadership's top-down approaches as key reasons for instigating culturally centred conflict in his institution, which operates in a hierarchical and centralised decision-making manner.

iv.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 4: Hypocrisy

The respondents' interpretations of the alignment of their leader's personal and organisational values revealed contradictory views. For example, Melissa, Anand, Boris and Priya perceived the misalignment of the leader's personal values with the organisational as a major factor for instigating conflict. According to Melissa, aligning personal with organisational values is a must:

> So, if you have a set of corporate values that you all kind of agree to that, this is how this Corporation is going to run. Then those leaders should stick with those corporate values, and they

should use those to guide their decisions and say: "Well, you know this Corporation believes in this type of value. So, this is how we're going to make our decisions".

Melissa's words illustrate an encounter she had with a leader whose actions were not aligned with organisational values but rather demonstrated a subjective interpretation of the same. Therefore, she further argued that "...they need to have a set of values that they stick to. They shouldn't. They shouldn't be hypocritical." By repeating "they shouldn't," she reveals her frustration and lack of trust in such leadership behaviour which creates conflict by instigating inconsistency in the faculty's, leader's, and organisation's values. Similarly, Anand reflects on the alignment of personal and organisational values as a key indicator for genuine leadership behaviour. He further expanded his interpretation by justifying the irregularities on the premises of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the leaders:

> OK I'll put it like this - as long as they [leaders] don't perceive themselves to be of that particular nationality, then there is no problem... [because] there are some specific characteristics, actions and thought processes that are seen in different parts of the world... but the moment you put in your personal ideas and the personal value systems into the requirements for the organisation or your team - then that's where the problem starts.

Anand's voice clearly demonstrates the disappointing experience he had in his workplace, where the leader's cultural characteristics influence the interpretation of the company's policies and procedures. This ultimately led to eroding trust in his leadership. Besides, a leader's integrity has been a concern for a few other respondents. For Boris, the value system of his leader is questionable:

> If there is any information coming that is positive, and they need only three people out of 30. Are you gonna tell everyone? Are you gonna tell all the 30 people or will you tell your favorite about the information?

Notably, Boris' concerns suggest the emergence of culture-driven leadership behaviour in his organisation. Similarly, to make sense of her experience, the importance of alignment of subordinate's and leader's values was also highlighted in Priya's views. The respondent stated that: "I can't live with dishonesty, so if you are dishonest, it would be very difficult for me to respect you. I will accept you as my manager, but I would not accept you as my leader." On the other hand, Gerry questioned the leader's prospects of 'being yourself' and acting on his or her own values within the organisational context. According to him:

In leading the organisation, at times we are not true to ourselves. We do things we do not want to do. We are not in our comfort zone, but we have to do or behave differently... In the organisation, we are stressed because we are not true to ourselves as we are hindered by culture, rules, and other constraints that alter our natural behaviour. This is the pain especially if one takes a lead role.

It is not surprising that the major concerns with the leaders' integrity have been highlighted by Melissa and Gerry, as both participants have performed more senior academic assignments during their contract and therefore were able to share their personal experience with higher-level leadership practices as opposed to the middle-level managers. However, as Lisa stated, the leaders can change their behaviour in the UAE because they are aware there are no corrective mechanisms, and HE organisations are dominated by hierarchical power structures. Thus, a western culture-originated leadership behaviour could easily be altered within the collectivistic cultural environment and prompted to adopt new cultural characteristics. Such challenges have been echoed by Stefan and Fatma who recognised the difficulties of 'being true to yourself' and respecting your individual values while at the same time working towards achieving the organisational goals "in a life/work environment that has made potential difficulties in respecting those values" (Stefan).

5.2.6 Superordinate Theme (SP) 6: The UAE National Context

i.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 1: Safety and Security*

When discussing the UAE context, all participants were appreciative of the personal safety and security they have enjoyed in the country. For example, compared to South Africa, Lisa is certain that Emirates offers a better living environment than her own country:

Even though I love South Africa, it's a better environment to work in here and live in in the UAE than back home.

While reflecting on her lifestyle in the UAE, Lisa highlighted economic and political stability:

It's an easy, comparatively easy lifestyle...And I think also now the culture has changed from people that moved here 20 years ago with their children that grew up here. They want to actually come and set their roots here, so I think it's a different culture from 20 years ago where it was more still. The UAE is emerging and it's not anymore unknown, its people feel more settled now. People are able to buy property and actually make a life here. So I think yeah it becomes more of a society where people want to be part of...[this country].

According to Lisa's words, the prosperity of the country is a key reason motivating expatriates to permanently settle and contribute to the future developments in the Emirates. Other interviewees echoed similar sentiments, while for some faculty, relocating to Dubai was seen as an adventure. For instance, Melissa reflected on her decision to move to the UAE as follows:

> We didn't know much about the country, but we thought: "Well, it's an adventure." We thought we were coming for three years. Um, and now it's been more than 24 [years].

As evident in Melissa's words, the safety and security the country offers made it a home to all respondents. Similar views were echoed by Fatma and Priya. However, the reflection on their internal motivators revealed different perspectives: one that emphasises the political and economic stability (Fatma) and the other that highlights the interviewees' expectations of job stability (Priya). While Fatma's words are focused on the political situation in comparison to her country (e.g. Palestine), Priya felt comfortable with living for more than 18 years in the UAE and working for a highly reputable organisation that is "the largest higher education provider in the UAE [and is] supported by [the] government..." Thus, the sense of security participants have developed is established on the support of the UAE government.

ii. *Subordinate Theme (SB) 3: Benefits of working in UAE*

As discussed by the interviewees, financial and socialisation factors, along with multiculturalism and innovative teaching, are among the key benefits of working in HE in the UAE. For example, for Boris and Melissa, both with individualistic cultural backgrounds, the economic upgrade and quality of life were central to their decision to relocate to the Emirates. As Boris shared below:

> But then he went back and he said to me that because I have kids, and, uh, he believes that the quality of life in the UAE was going to be better. Compared to where I was at the moment at the time... Now, at that stage I started reading about the country and reading about the city, and you know all the positive things that go on here, so I then compared those things with where I was at the moment and I felt that it was much better.

In addition to the financial income the new position offered, quality education opportunities for the children motivated Boris' acceptance to teach in the UAE: "...because my kids were growing up, and then I made a decision. Above all, that the financial remuneration was attractive." In this line, Fatma's decision to join her organisation was also motivated by the financial benefits her contract offered. Similarly,

Anand, who has two children, after re-evaluating his current compensation, recognised the new personal income and family welfare as the main factors influencing his choice to join his HE institution:

> Because I had my two kids when I was in Bahrain, so my expenses were getting higher, so a 20% increase was a natural jump for me. So that was the first thing.

In addition, for Anand, who is from a collectivistic culture, the opportunity for his family to socialise with individuals who come from the same ethnicity was another major reason for relocating to the UAE:

> My wife was not very happy with being in Bahrain. She wanted to move into UAE because there were some of her relatives so she could socialise much more.

According to the participant, in addition to financial rewards, the value of the community ties precedes other considerations surrounding his choice of employment. However, after being in the country for more than fifteen years, Anand stated that the innovative teaching and learning practices in his HE institution are the main cause of faculty decisions to continue renewing his employment contract. He further pointed it out as: "The Pioneers, like how they are still." The strong emphasis on the respondent's appreciation of his leadership that supports IT advancements in his organisation is highlighted by the word "Pioneer." Thus, his choice to continue his employment in the country is motivated by the leadership initiatives promoting the development of innovative systems and learning methodologies in tertiary education during his tenure in the Emirates. This leadership behaviour aligns with Anand's values.

The alignment of personal values with the leadership behaviour in the HE institutions in the country continues to evolve throughout the reflective accounts of other participants. For example, Gerry and Stefan, who demonstrate a diverse research focus in their publications, saw the opportunity to contribute to the applied education offered by their new HE employer and to engage in the multiculturalism of the HE sector in the Emirates and in the country overall. They considered these as key reasons that attracted them to seek employment in the UAE. Therefore, they are appreciative of their organisational leadership, which supports and motivates research on broad management, technological, and educational topics as it aligns with their personal values and career objectives. Additionally, Hesham's words, "I was impressed with their international management," demonstrate the vision of the previous leadership for developing the postgraduate enterprise by promoting the value of

multiculturalism and innovative organisational culture. Therefore, Hesham felt that this leadership aligns with the values of the faculty. However, the change in cultural composition of his leadership altered this alignment and eroded Hesham's trust in his leadership behaviour. Consequently, the security and financial benefits took precedence over other personal and professional reasons the respondent had when relocating to the UAE.

iii.   Subordinate Theme (SB) 4: 'Wasta'

Participants offered two interpretations of widespread 'wasta' behaviour within the indigenous and expatriate community in the UAE. While some of the interviewees expressed very strong feelings against this practice, others accepted a more moderate outlook and articulated it as a justifiable procedure if it is related to Emiratis. Some participants, including Anand, understood the personal use of 'wasta' in relation to acquiring difficult-to-obtain job-related information or approval from another institution, which is not always justifiable. He described his experience with 'wasta' as follows:

> So let us say you are a member of a [professional accreditation organisation] and [your institution] wants approvals [from this organisation] or something like that, and then we find you, and then they say "OK, can you get this done?" You do it. Use my wasta, … knowledge, ability, whatever it is, we use that, so your contributions are taken, and it gets done.

However, the participant's feelings were very negative towards this behaviour which was also adopted by expats in his institution. Moreover, according to his interpretation, this practice may be used to avoid legal channels of obtaining approval and reverse favouritism, which was against Anand's moral principles. Thus, his views raise concerns about the morality of the individuals involved and the legality of such a process. Besides, Anand's viewpoint suggested the presence of transactional trust with the leader. Furthermore, Anand's reflection on his experience highlights the relational nature of HE operations in the country. Notably, Shamma's account confirmed the above practice as she witnessed it within the Emirati community to which she belongs:

> In UAE culture we go a lot by knowing people, and like if you know someone, your things will go through, will be done. If you don't know somebody, your things won't go. Like 'wasta' we call it in Arabic… Well, what I learned from my own experience is [that] if you are good with the managers, if you are good with everybody, your things will go smoothly, like without flaws. But who am I to judge? I mean, at the end of the day, my things can get done.

Being Emirati, Shamma perceives 'wasta' as a common behaviour within the indigenous community and although she is not necessarily appreciative of such practices, the participant is accustomed to using 'wasta' when required to achieve her goals. In this view, her words affirm the relational nature of leadership behaviour in the country.

Similar to Anand's viewpoint, Hesham had very negative feelings towards using 'wasta' for promoting a person based on friendship or as a pay-off of favour, as opposed to performance and merit. He compared this practice with the socio-behavioural leadership style in the US, where such practice is unacceptable. According to Hesham, 'wasta' leadership style "…is kind of segregation when it comes to certain organisational and leadership practices; Emiratis get promoted faster than the others." On the other hand, the participant is willing to justify the 'wasta' practice when it is used for hiring Emiratis, considering the UAE context:

> Nepotism and favouritism should be discussed considering the different proportion of nationalities in UAE. Population, as you know that in UAE, just a 10% are Emirati, right. This 10% should control the other 90% of expatriates. So, I was expecting some kind of cultural domination and control. For example, the promotion, it was a rapid promotion of Emiratis and it is acceptable, because it's their country…So in here it should not be accepted, but in UAE, where that minority is present, it is a normal that they should control over the 90%.

The above reflection highlights the conflicting feelings the respondent has towards the 'wasta' behaviour. Realising his first interpretation is offering a negative perception of the opportunities for Emiratis' career growth and the legitimacy of appointments, he was more tolerant in his second statement on the utilisation of 'wasta' for Emiratis who are a minority in the country. Besides, considering he is an expat in this country, he has accepted the authority of the indigenous culture and has easily adapted to the existence of such practice within his organisation. However, it is not clear if 'wasta' is a common process for hiring faculty or if it is used only for employing administrative and senior management staff. Nonetheless, in any case, such practice would raise the question about the legitimacy of these individuals' academic credentials and appointments. Similarly, Gerry and Fatma, who are from a collectivistic society, have adjusted to the favour-based culture in their organisations as it emerges from the government agenda of securing job opportunities for nationals.

On the other hand, Boris offered a different interpretation of 'wasta' behaviour regarding the nepotism practices in his HE entity:

I think Emiratisation policy is very different, but within the framework of Emiratisation it is likely that nepotism could happen. But also in the external context of Emiratisation. Um, hardly ever would you find two people from the same family working in this organisation … What I tend to see more in terms of nepotism, hovers around culture or nationality, so it seems to me that people from the same country, the same culture people who speak the same language, tend to gather together.

Reflecting upon his experience, Boris once again pointed out the emergence of cultural preferentialism in leadership practices in his organisation. According to his experience, the influence of 'wasta' culture is understood as a transactional trust and reverse favouritism behaviour as opposed to nepotism. Thus, the common perception shared by seven of the respondents may not demonstrate the actual situation within the organisational practices in the HE in the country.

iv.   *Subordinate Theme (SB) 2: Local Immigration Law and Cultural Faddism*

The richness of diverse skills and expertise in the UAE was acknowledged by participants in a number of discussions. For example, for Gerry, Boris, Stefan and Hesham, diversity is a major driver of innovation in their HE organisation. As Gerry shared below:

Because we can learn from each other. We can learn from different experiences from different cultures. So, from my personal experience [it] was absolutely very positive. In Dubai we have more than 200 cultures and the yeah I believe in the organisation where, where I work we probably have more than 70 different cultures, so definitely that is a great source for innovation, for new ideas.

The above perception shared by Gerry has been echoed in the accounts of all respondents. The presence of a multicultural academic workforce is perceived by interviewees as a key factor for generating new knowledge and achieving the HE institutions' objectives. However, employment decisions on academic expatriates in the UAE are governed by the country's security concerns within the regional context. The hiring process is directly linked to the immigration approvals for residency permissions for foreigners. These guidelines change according to the UAE's national security matters. Relatedly, the authorities may introduce a temporary hold on the entry permissions for certain nationalities that will balance the influx of refugees and immigrants. The influence of these additional contextual factors have impacted cultural dynamism in HE institutions in the UAE and was highlighted by Hesham:

It's becoming less diversified. It used to be more diversified, richer… there is a concerted effort on recruiting people from certain backgrounds, so I don't see the diversity as it used to be. So,

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the challenges I would face right now is, I'm not, I am not being enriched. I'm not learning as much.

His reflection indicated the dominance of a particular cultural group over another for a certain period, after which expatriates from new demographics might take over. Similar views were also shared by other respondents when they made sense of fear factors in the organisational culture, communication behaviour and trust in their respective HE institutions. Thus, due to the changeable nature of the country's regulations, people are afraid of losing their positions. Hence, it is not unusual that participants reported heightened levels of protectionism. Further to the interviewees' words, the analysis uncovered the presence of cultural faddism in the country, which ultimately will affect leadership behaviour and organisational outcomes.

In the literature, cultural faddism, also known as "fads", is defined as a contemporary phenomenon used to explain the sudden popularity of various societal, cultural, and consumer behaviour trends (Parker and Philip Ritson, 2005; Erdal and Bülent, 2021). The concept has emerged to address the rapid rise and fall of short-term fashion trends in areas of consumer culture and marketing, education and workplace culture, societal structures and group behaviours, digital culture, as well as cultural appropriation and globalisation (Mercure, 2016; Piazza and Abrahamson, 2020). It is associated with marketing terminology and social media platforms promoting new products in technology, lifestyle and fashion. Researchers have applied the aspects of cultural faddism in analysing the implementation and lifespan of the newest trends in educational methodology and leadership practice (Slavin, 1999; Nettle, 2004; Thomas, 2023). In this research, the concept of cultural faddism is adopted to explain how the frequent changes and reforms in immigration and labour law regulations in the UAE facilitate the entry of certain nationalities in a short period of time until the authorities implement new rules and permit other nationalities to enter and find employment in the country (Gulf News, 2018; UAE Government, 2024). This short-term inflow-outflow of individuals, from demographies approved by the UAE immigration authorities, into the multicultural HE sector, mirroring cultural waves, is viewed as cultural faddism. This is posited to challenge the understanding and practice of AL. As demonstrated by the findings, leadership ideologies transitioning into academic leadership and rotational leadership practices are aligned with the dynamics of cultural faddism in the Emirates. This is highlighted in participants' interpretations, as all interviewees reflected on their lived experience with cultural change management in their HE institutions. Therefore,

culturally subjective interpretations of AL in this research reveal the presence of often conflicting socio-cultural behaviours and communication styles.

5.3 Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the key findings from the hermeneutic analysis of the interview data gathered from faculty members working in various HE institutions in the UAE. The narratives highlight participants' sense-making of their lived experiences with leadership behaviours in the country. The detailed accounts of the individuals' life stories generated six superordinate and twenty-eight subordinate themes (see Figure 7, Chapter 4). The chapter presents the findings according to each theme capturing the participants' reflections on their experiences with behaviours associated with AL as well as the outcomes of the IPA method employed in this research. The qualitative analysis revealed diverse perceptions of AL constituents, reflecting the culturally heterogeneous and contextually specific environment of HE in the Emirates. The stories shared by faculty members introduce new elements that influence an understanding of AL in the UAE, including cultural preferentialism, rotational leadership, and cultural faddism. These findings provide the foundation for a broader interpretation of AL in underrepresented contexts. They will be critically analysed in relation to the existing literature in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Findings

Chapters 2 and 3 revealed a significant gap in the existing literature on AL. Although some studies have explored the phenomenon in the Middle East, a large proportion of this research is focused on Egypt and Bahrain, largely excluding the UAE, which is the focus of the current study. Unlike earlier findings that sought to describe AL as consistent with the version established in Western academic work, this research found that employees in the UAE interpreted AL quite differently. Therefore, the understanding of AL in this inquiry is based on interpretating individual experiences within the HE sector in the Emirates. This synthesis of views is shaped by the unique socio-cultural landscape of the Emirates, which blends multicultural influences with the indigenous, homogeneous culture of the country, thereby offering a novel interpretation of the AL phenomenon. To address the key objectives of this study, this chapter provides a critical evaluation of the findings presented in Chapter 5, framed within the context of the evidence from the extant literature reviewed. The chapter emphasises the extent to which the study's findings align with, or differ from, previous research reported in the literature. It begins by outlining the theoretical requirements for an IPA discussion and then connects the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of AL with the key findings derived from the data.

According to Smith (2004), IPA is committed to exploring personal lived experiences to uncover novel aspects of the subject under investigation. Thus, the phenomenological approach adopted for interpreting participants' self-reported experiences, aided the researcher's efforts to offer an in-depth understanding of the investigated phenomenon. Besides, this methodological approach facilitated the process of integrating existing theories while also offering evidence to expand theoretical frameworks and open new possibilities for further exploration (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A key outcome of integrating the findings from IPA and reflecting on how employees made sense of the leadership phenomenon was the identification of themes that combined both rational statements (e.g. responses based on objective factual anecdotes or narratives describing individual real-life experiences) and emotional statements (e.g. responses reflecting personal feelings, beliefs, attitudes, or subjective perceptions).

Consequently, the discussion in this chapter is structured around the six Superordinate themes: trust, leadership conundrum, cultural climate, communication model, conflict, and UAE national context. The

critical review of the key findings in Chapter 5 follows the significance of the superordinated and subordinated themes identified in participants' narratives in the previous chapter. The integration of these themes is subsequently discussed in this chapter, in the context of existing theories and models of AL, along with expected organisational outcomes, offering a unique cross-cultural perspective. Hence, Chapter 6 offers a hermeneutic understanding of AL and its role in facilitating OR in HE in the country, which ultimately answers the main research question.

Trust in the UAE context

As discussed in Chapter 2, the concept of AL emerged from stakeholders' longings for 'bona fide' leadership they can trust. Similarly, participants in this study expressed more passion when reflecting on their lived experiences with leadership practices that promote trustful relationships across organisational networks.

In theory, trust is a nebulous idea with long-standing value in Western literature. According to Tierney (2008) the concept of trust in HE is imbued with interpretative features that are subjective to cultural influence. In this study, the diversity of participants' socio-ethnic backgrounds generated a multiplicity of viewpoints on what leadership behaviours inspire subordinate-leader, leader-subordinate, and peer-peer trust. All participants endorsed honesty and transparency as key virtues that substantiate the leader's trustworthiness and thereby authentic behaviour in the tertiary institutions in UAE. These views are consonant with western paradigms of AL (George, 2003; Gardner *et al.,* 2005). In theory, the closest definition of the subordinates-leader relationship built on trust is offered by Walumbwa *et al.* (2011), who state that trust is sustained on transparent processes and reflects a leader's honest behaviour with followers. In substantiating this, the authors identified leadership practices to achieve high-quality subordinate-leader trust, including the leader's self-appraisal, transparency in communication, and involvement of employees in the decision-making process. These assumptions suggest that, to some extent, trust judgments are generalised across cultures (Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). The above academic definition has been accepted in this study and has been associated with the research data in two areas: contract renewal and legitimacy of appointments. Both criteria are new to the literature and illustrate the contradictory perceptions of interviewees on what constitutes trustful relations with the leader.

Although western literature advocates transparent processes, the discussion is limited to general management practices that are associated with openly communicating the organisation's vision and including followers in the decision-making processes (George, 2007; 2015). This was partially affirmed in this study by the statements of respondents with individualistic cultural backgrounds. In contrast to the Universalist outlook in existing publications, honesty and transparency in this study have been discussed and redefined through multiple cultural lenses. For example, according to the data, transparency in communication and decision-making processes in the UAE has been strongly associated with job security, legitimacy of appointments, cultural preferentialism, and reverse favouritism, which has not been reported previously. First and foremost, in interpreting their lived experiences, most participants highlighted the expectations of a leader's honest and transparent behaviour during the contract renewal process. In addition, faculty voiced strong expectations for a leader's personal accountability in ensuring transparency in the process and thereby, partially aligned their views with western theorisations of the relational transparency dimension of AL (Gardner *et al.,* 2005, Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011).

In contrast to the findings evidencing the lack of transparency in decision-making processes, several respondents emphasised that the organisational policy on contract renewal and promotions demonstrates the leader's authentic intentions and therefore, has been regarded and accepted by faculty members as an expression of AL. Furthermore, the richness of reflective accounts on the constituents of subordinate-leader trust in educational institutions in the UAE uncovered a new dimension in the discussion: trust in the existing technology-based reporting tools and broadly with the organisational context. These views are current and affirmative of the conversation in Section 1.2 and Section 3.2 on the vision of the country's government for the future development and utilisation of IT systems across all business sectors in the UAE. While interviewees are aware of, and trust, the IT system-generated job performance evidence due to its objectivity and transparency, participants voiced their lack of trust in the direct leader's support in the process. Thus, the interviews underscored the conflicting perceptions of participants on the centrality of relational trust versus trust in organisational systems and highlighted the organisational context as a new variable in defining trust in the academic institutions in the country. These findings present major discrepancies with the existing western-biased understanding of AL practices that promote trust solely through encouraging relational transparency within the leader-employee dyad in the organisation (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011).

Additional disappointment with the lack of transparency in their HE institution was voiced by the majority of respondents with reference to the promotion process. In support of these reflections, the research data reveal that leaders' appointments are dependent on top-down decisions. The lack of transparency in leadership appointments and promotions further erodes subordinates-leader trust, due to faculty concerns with the legitimacy of such appointments on merit, as opposed to favouritism and cultural subjectivism. Besides, some of the individuals' accounts demonstrate the existence of reverse favouritism, and in-group and out-group leadership practices in the process, which negatively affected subordinates' trust in their leader. Such occurrences are regarded as manifestations of transactional trust by respondents. On the other hand, the respondents agree that organisational policy offers equal opportunities for promotion to all academic staff members, which again posits the organisational context as a key element in promoting authentic and trustful relationships in HE in the UAE.

Further distinctive findings emerge in relation to existing theorising over trustful relationships (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011). The participants' experiences highlight the influence of culture-based motivators in leadership behaviour and suggest an alternative understanding of AL practices in the UAE. For example, HE systems in the country are characterised as rigid and hierarchical, reflecting the high-power distance socio-cultural realities in the region (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Besides, Muslim perceptions of AL behaviour do not consider participation in decision-making processes by subordinates but expect loyalty to decisions already made by the leader (David, 2005). Such behaviour could be associated with authoritative decision-making (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Boussif, 2009). However, although the final decision is authoritative, the consultation with other parties is evident, which draws partial similarities with the consultative leadership concept of Likert (1967). Additionally, as transpired in respondents' stories, making a final decision after consulting middle-level managers is also one of the democratic and participative features of leadership behaviour prescribed by the Islamic ideology (Kabasakal *et al.,* 2012; Obeidat *et al.,* 2012). These contradictory views emerged from cultural subjectivism in respondents' interpretations and reveal the dualism in leadership behaviour in the Emirates. Therefore, although previous researchers argue the balanced processing dimension in the AL framework as an expression of authentic behaviour that is inclusive of multiple views and sources of information (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008), the pseudo-consultative leadership style in the UAE significantly differs from this, which in return offers a different outlook of what constitutes trustful interactions

between leaders and subordinates. Even though the contract renewal process collects information from multiple sources (e.g., middle-level management feedback, recommendations and IT systems-generated job performance data), the final decision is not an inclusive decision-making process as defined by Western academics (Gardener *et al.,* 2005). Moreover, the ultimate decision in HE in the Emirates, which is made solely by the senior leadership, does not guarantee agreement with consulted individuals in the process. Similar behaviour of Muslim leadership in other Middle Eastern countries has been previously discussed in Chapter 3 (Kabasakal *et al.,* 2012; Shahin & Wright, 2004). Thus, the virtues of honesty and transparency in leadership behaviour in the UAE are moderated by the influence of power distance features and the leader's inherited cultural background.

It is argued from the findings that the breakdown of trustful relations with the leader is predominantly due to the top-heavy organisational structure and centralised decision-making process which results in a lack of transparency in the institution's processes. Furthermore, the power distance features of the UAE socio-cultural realm have been identified by faculty across leadership practices which uncovers a new variable that moderates the mutual authentic trust between the organisational context and subordinates: leader-subordinate trust. Such dependency has not been previously recorded by researchers (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011; Yukl and Gardner, 2020). Moreover, most publications exemplify the single-sided way the concept of trust is explored—by focusing on the subordinates' perspective. The participants' experiences in this study concerning the demonstration of leader-subordinate trust include micromanagement, control over working time, reverse favouritism, and cultural preferentialism in sharing information, assigning tasks, recognition, and promotions. While existing publications investigate subordinates' viewpoints on a leader's behaviour that promotes a trustful relationship (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011), this study constructs a new outlook of AL behaviour regarding the relational transparency dimension by unravelling the leaders' perception of a trustful relationship with followers, as interpreted by faculty. In this respect, the research data suggest an alignment of respondents' understanding of the quality of trust in their organisations with the high-context and high-power distance features of the region (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

The cultural classification of Hall (1976) offers the framework for labeling the 'Arab culture' traits as carriers of high-context features, where trust between 'out-group' and 'in-group' community members is low, and individuals rely on their personal relationships in seeking information and making

decisions. Therefore, according to cross-cultural studies by Hofstede and Minkov (2010) and Kokkoris and Kühnen (2014), for high-context and high power-distance societies, transparency in information dissemination and accessibility to it by all community members is congruent with culturally bound networks. In this respect, the research findings support existing theoretical paradigms which argue that people tend to socialise with individuals with identical or similar ethnicity and customs, or with whom they have developed close relationships over a period (Hall, 1989; Tierney, 2008). This study's findings also demonstrate similarity with the arguments made by Tierney (2008) and Srivastava *et al.* (2020) who define the concept of trust in the HE sector as a social exchange of one's inherited cultural characteristics. Consequently, the transition of unique UAE cultural features into the workplace and the exchange of individual ethnic characteristics trigger the formation of 'in-group' and 'out-group' social networks in HE. Such findings, emerging directly from the interviewees' interpretations of their lived experiences, strongly suggest the existence of cultural preferentialism. However, the interview data suggest that this behaviour is associated with middle-level leaders' cultural individualism in interpreting and enforcing organisational policy, as opposed to the senior leadership. Such behaviour largely moderates the establishment of trustful exchanges between leader-subordinates, subordinates-leader, and peer-peer. Notably, the research data uncovered the emergence of a new variable, middle-level leadership behaviour, which promotes transactional trust and alters authentic relationships between organisational contexts and subordinates. This is not a surprise, as the GCC region and UAE have been classified as high-power distance cultures (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). The above evidence is, however, a new contribution to existing Western and Far Eastern studies on AL as, to date, the phenomenon has been predominantly studied within a homogenous culture (Li *et al.*, 2014; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Whitehead and Brown, 2011) and thereby, cultural subjectivism and preferentialism in the relations of faculty with the organisational context, and with the immediate leader, have not been a concern of researchers.

Thus, the low quality of trust from leaders, as demonstrated by the interviewees' factual stories, is reflective of the cultural context in the UAE. According to respondents' voices, existing leadership practices have influenced similar behavioural patterns between colleagues, where people develop interpersonal networks with peers with similar ethnic backgrounds or on the premises of reciprocal commitment. Therefore, in contrast to the literature (Tierney, 2008), the reciprocated drivers of leader-subordinates' trust found in this research govern the intensity of variables for developing trustful peer-

to-peer relationships. Moreover, new leadership behaviour is noticeably moderating transparency in communication and features of the AL domain presented by organisational policy and context.

Essentially, the findings contradict claims that highlight the centrality of the bottom-up manifestation of trust between followers and leaders (Tierney, 2008; Avolio and Walumbwa, 2014; Saeed *et al.,* 2016; Qu *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the findings affirm the interpretative nature of the concept of trust, associating it with individuals' distinct cultural backgrounds. Therefore, earlier research exploring the constituents of trustworthy leadership behaviour in the organisational culture in HE (Srivastava *et al.*, 2020) could be characterised as a single-dimensional approach.

In contrast, the research findings provide evidence of divergent viewpoints and expose the multilayered outlook on the concept of trust by uncovering new variables in defining it. Furthermore, the study emphasises the understanding of two key factors that govern the quality of trust within the organisational structures: (1) the relationship between the new variable (organisational context) and the subordinates, and (2) the cultural individuality of middle-level leadership in determining the presence and intensity of trust within the leader-subordinates dyad. Besides, the shared perspectives on trust in the two vertical axis in Figure 8 (below) (e.g. leader-subordinate and organisational context-subordinate) are key moderators of the horizontal axis (e.g. peer-to-peer), demonstrating their influence on the emergence of honest and trustful peer-to-peer relationships within HE institutions. Consequently, the degree of middle-level leader-subordinates trust is posited to determine the formation of trustful peer-to-peer interactions, which in return influences the organisational performance, and attainment of OR.
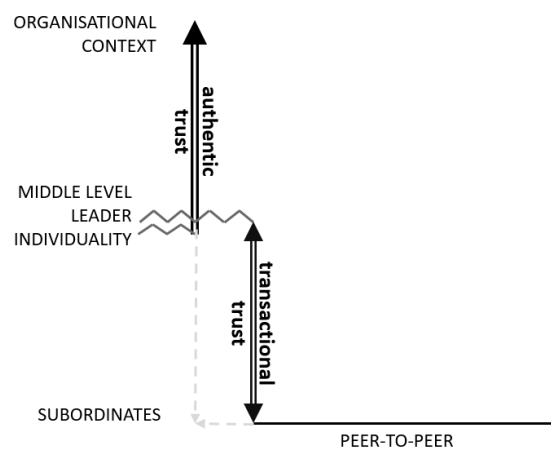
Figure 8. Constituents of trust

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Figure 8 presents the multilayered perceptions of trust in HE in the country. The first vertical axis presents authentic trust within the organisational context-faculty relationship, which is more of an abstract, as opposed to a relational variable. This axis is longer as this relationship emerges throughout all organisational structures. The second parallel vertical axis illustrates the influence of the cultural individuality of the middle-level leader (e.g. the direct manager of faculty) in altering the consistency of authentic organisational context-faculty trust. Additionally, the shorter axis demonstrates the transactional features of joint leader-subordinate interactions. It is shorter due to the limited span of time in establishing transactional trust, as it is dependable upon the duration of the middle-level leadership appointments, which has been identified as 'rotational' in this research. Consequently, the middle-level leader-subordinate trust overpowers the authentic organisational context-faculty trust and becomes the key variable that moderates the quality of peer-to-peer trustful exchanges (horizontal axis) in HE in the UAE. Therefore, the novelty of this research is in constructing an understanding of trustful relationships in academic institutions in this country based on diverse perceptions of a heterogeneous cultural environment, which also offers a new understanding of relational transparency and, therefore, the AL concept.

In addition, existing leadership practices raise concern among the interviewees over the leader's reliability, which is a new dimension to the AL taxonomy. The preceding arguments on high-context and high-power distance features of leadership behaviour in HE in the Emirates associate the reliability of the leader with participants' culture-centred interpretations of transparency in existing communication patterns. According to participants, transparency in communication is directly related to a leader's reliability in four aspects: misinterpretation, reinterpretation, under- or over-interpretation (Hall, 1989) which are suggestive of a leader's strong influence over the communication process with subordinates. Therefore, in speculating about ways to increase or decrease trust in a person, it is prudent to take the person's culture into account, which affirms the influence of a leader's individual cultural background in developing trust within the social networks of the HE organisation. These findings are partially consistent with Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) who argue the AL congruency with the leader's individual style. However, this research further expands existing theoretical claims by exemplifying the influence of inherited socio-cultural features of the leader on the establishment of AL in the UAE. This view is particularly relevant to the multicultural environment in the UAE for the following reasons: (1) in this study participants reflect

on the leader's reliability in relation to a number of leadership practices: dissemination of information, email communication, recognition, and favouritism; (2) a number of interviewees constructed their understanding of trustful relationships on the reliability of their leader to genuinely recognise faculty achievements and contributions; (3) in multiple ways, faculty expressed concerns with their leader's reliability in relation to maintaining confidentiality. Thus, individuals' perceptions of reliable leadership behaviour highlight the heterogeneous features of the organisational culture in the tertiary institutions in the country. Consequently, the understanding of a leader's reliability necessitates distinct cultural contextualisation which, in return, influences the quality of trust in HE in the Emirates. Furthermore, the leader's distinctive cultural background is a strong moderator in constructing the AL taxonomy by faculty in the UAE.

Despite the obvious contradictions between existing western research into AL and these research findings, all participants associated leadership behaviour that promotes positivity with the AL domain. As discussed in Chapter 5, proactive senior leadership practices, demonstrated by the organisation's policy for providing faculty with equal opportunities to further develop their job skills, have been reported and regarded by interviewees as AL behaviour. In this view, the findings align with Gardner *et al.* (2005) and Ilies *et al.* (2005) who perceive leadership strategies for followers' development as a key feature of AL. Thus, the findings directly back the discussion around the authenticity of leadership vision and trust in subordinates. While these views will be further discussed in the next paragraphs, it is important to identify that the means were interpreted differently by the participants. For example, respondents with individualistic cultural backgrounds considered top-down, centralised performance development approaches ineffective, which altered their trust in the leader. However, people from collectivist cultures appreciated the directed processes, which they acknowledged as a strategy for preparing faculty for adversaries, such as Covid-19, and ensuring the institution's OR during the pandemic. These views support the authentic government vision and strive for further expansion of HE in the UAE through technological innovation (see Section 1.2). Thus, despite the contradictory reflections on leadership behaviour that constitutes honest and trustful relations, participants agreed that leadership in their educational institution demonstrated the ability to prepare the organisation to withstand and continue evolving during the pandemic through proactive employee development

practices and utilisation of advanced technological platforms. However, the quality of trust, revealed by the findings, failed to demonstrate the dependability of OR on the tenets of AL behaviour.

Noticeably, the tenets of trust in HE in the UAE assume distinct cultural features of the Middle East and GCC region. Relatedly, the research data reveal respondents' beliefs that the quality of subordinates-leader trust is moderated by the differentials in power that are reflective of the high-power distance features of the UAE context. Thus, this relationship exemplifies very limited, or a lack of trust. In addition, the cultural context influences feedback and reneging practices in the tertiary education sector, which ultimately alters elements of trust. In line with high-power distance characteristics, the participants reported the lack of relevant mechanisms for providing feedback to their leader. Furthermore, the interviews exposed the leader's perceived ability to breach the psychological contract with faculty without justifying their behaviour. Such behaviour is congruent with low trust within the leader-subordinate interactions that is commonly associated with high-context and collectivist communities (Hall, 1989; Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). Additionally, the influence of legislative regulations on organisational processes is highlighted in all accounts. Thus, the fixed-term contract is a key factor moderating the concept of trust in the Emirates. This contradicts the work of Tierney (2008) and Srivastava *et al.* (2020) who claim the development of trustful relations in the organisation on the premises of extended time, which allows for the exchange of diverse cultural characteristics. Although the UAE context will be discussed in the following paragraphs, the country's rules for renewing contracts every three years should be highlighted as an impact of contextual factors on AL behaviour in the country. Thus, the Emirates' context in terms of immigration rules and regulations reshapes the constituents of trust in HE and AL overall, which has not been of concern for research conducted in a homogenous environment (Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Ling *et al.*, 2016).

Upon reviewing several studies, Gardner *et al.* (2011) affirm the concept of trust as a key outcome of AL and a motivator for an individual's sustained performance. Additionally, from an educational perspective, Srivastava *et al.* (2020) claim the centrality of subordinate-leader trust in achieving sustainable higher education. Trust in academia is a socially constructed concept incorporating both involuntary (e.g. contractual obligations) and voluntary relational processes (e.g. research, collaboration) (Tierney, 2008). From these researchers' perspectives, it is assumed that the social context in HE adopts human resources models that rely on collegiality and encourage long-term involuntary relations that support intrinsic

motivation and innovation (Ashour and Fatima, 2016; Bento *et al.,* 2021). However, the rich data in this research prompts the construal of a new understanding of trustful relationships in HE, which reflects the multicultural context in the UAE as opposed to the homogeneous research locus of existing literature. In summary, the findings reveal a novel concept of trust that incorporates the following elements: (1) new variable (e.g. organisational context), (2) new dimension (e.g. reliability on the leader), (3) new leadership behaviour (e.g. cultural preferentialism; reverse favouritism, bottom-up feedback), (4) top-bottom perspective on trust (e.g. leader-subordinates); and (5) new conceptual modeling of trust as a multilayered vertical and horizontal progression. Additionally, the establishment of trust comprises both the abstract and the transactional nature of the concept. While in western arguments, the concept of trust is constructed on the Universalist viewpoints, the construal in this research stems from collective reflections of lived experiences with leadership practices in HE in the UAE.

Leadership Conundrum

One of the main features to arise throughout the interview responses is the role of cultural subjectivism in defining leadership HE in the UAE. Northouse (2019) theorises leadership as a process that influences group performance to achieve shared goals. This view has been reshaped in this study by the multiplication of context-bounded interpretations offered by the interviewees, with leadership varying significantly depending on the context, time and positional power. While some of the respondents' viewpoints are vague, as they define leadership through abstract relationships with organisational vision, others made sense of it through systems, rules, and organisational structure. Others articulated personalised definitions according to cultural context and gender, which inevitably led to comparative definitions. For example, some interviewees associate the leadership figure with working time and task allocation undertaken by a higher rank position, while others relate their understanding to the originators of organisational policy, rules or ranks within the hierarchical structure. Nonetheless, respondents interpreted the concept in consideration of the fixed-term contracts and rotational appointments of leaders, accentuating the influence of organisational context in their attempts to define tenets of leadership. For instance, several reflections introduce rotational leadership practices as a new dimension the understanding leadership within HE in the country. In this respect, the presence of rotational leadership challenges the high uncertainty avoidance index assigned to the Emirates (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

Furthermore, the transition and governance of power distance socio-cultural organisation into organisational systems has been markedly reported in all accounts. These findings align with existing high power distance cross-cultural characterisations of the region (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010; House, 2004; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2004). Relatedly, some respondents made sense of the leadership figure in relation to assigned rank in the organisational structure and positional power associated with higher-level appointments. In addition, as discussed in the previous theme, cultural preferentialism established the transactional nature of the leader-subordinate trust relationships. Thus, the findings are to some degree relatable to contingency (e.g. LPC theory, Fiedler, 1978) and transactional leadership theories (Bass, 1990). However, although limited similarities can be found with existing conceptualisations in the western literature, the flexibility of leadership style in the UAE is very much constrained by the high-power distance features of the organisational context, while the theoretical assumptions in the literature advocate for individual flexibility in adjusting leadership style according to the situation (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009b). Furthermore, previous leadership research, including AL, has argued about a leader's self-cognisance and thereby, ability to adjust their style according to contextual factors, on the premises of the individual's self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, while in this study the intrapersonal dimension is founded on the leader's awareness of the assigned organisational rank. Thus, the discussion is more relevant to the collectivist cultural conception of leadership realisation as transpired in Middle Eastern studies (Karacay, Ertenu and Kabasakal, 2018) as opposed to the egalitarian paradigms in Western schools of thought (Northouse, 2019). As evidenced by the interviewees' accounts, these findings demonstrate one of the key discrepancies with the Universalist paradigm of AL.

Besides, participants' reflections on the lack of transparency in promotions and decision-making processes raise concerns over the legitimacy of leadership appointments and offer conflicting understandings of leadership. These views suggest the presence of individualistic culture paradigms in defining the leadership paradox in HE in the UAE, one that questions leadership decisions and seeks individual accountability (George, 2007; 2015). Such findings align with western perceptions of the AL domain (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). Thus, the data indicate the presence of subordinates' behaviour that contradicts the power distance culture where loyalty and acceptance of leadership decisions is an indisputable reality. However, the reflections of participants also highlight confusion in defining the

leadership phenomenon in academic operations in the UAE. Besides, in contrast to western viewpoints on the cultural features of the UAE, the findings affirm the strong presence of masculinity features in leadership behaviour, while in the literature, the Emirates has scored almost equally on the masculinity and femininity dimensions' scale (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). This further demonstrates the contribution this research makes to cross-cultural studies by updating the existing assumptions on the UAE's cultural context.

According to findings, the leadership structure in tertiary education mirrors the customs of the Muslim community, which is hierarchical and follows centralised governance (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). In this respect, participants voice strong dissatisfaction with the negative impact of top-heavy and multilayered organisational context on all leadership practices in the educational institutions in the country. Similarly to Northouse (2019), interviewees attempted to interpret their understanding of leadership concept by reflecting on their distinct experiences with organisational processes. The key standards voiced by all participants while making sense of the leadership figure were honesty, transparency, and inclusiveness in the decision-making. Such criteria are analogous to the ideals of Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) who highlight the centrality of process transparency in developing subordinate-leader trust. As evidenced in the shared stories, leadership style in HE institutions in the UAE is consultative but not necessarily inclusive and appreciative of diverse views and feedback, which is analogous with the indigenous socio-behavioural patterns in the country (see Chapter 2). According to respondents, the decisions made in 'black boxes' are preferred by the senior management and are a regular occurrence in their establishments. This affirms the manifestation of authoritative leadership behaviour. Besides, this style is an expression of low leader-subordinate trust in the education sector in the country. Thus, this leadership behaviour is culturally congruent with power distance and masculinity features of the indigenous societies in the Middle East due to several reasons: (1) the anonymous decision-making avoids personal accountability, and thus avoids seeking feedback; (2) the process ensures the leader's *'face-saving'* behaviour; (3) the direct implementation of organisational decisions has transitioned from the undisputed authority of the leadership figure in the Muslim cultural context (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Obeidat *et al.,* 2012).

For some respondents, leadership represents company vision, policy, and organisational structure, thereby illustrating vagueness in the understanding of the leadership construct in tertiary education in the UAE. This is not a surprise, as the data revealed limited or abstract, as opposed to actual interactions

with the senior management, who some interviewees perceived as the leadership of the organisation. However, the interviews show that participants acknowledge the existence of multilayered organisational structures in all instances. It should be noted that according to the data, leaders' power in the UAE is governed by time and context. Thus, in addition to high power distance features, the understanding of the leadership phenomenon is guided by the low-, high-context cultural realm, and thereby, knowledge of leadership within HE is fluid, which conflicts with wider literature (Northouse, 2019). In support of this view, the data identifies a link between the understanding of leadership to cultural faddism that transpires in the country. Additional justification for this finding is offered by participants' reflections on their experience of having to report to numerous managers and evidence of the rotational nature of leadership. In addition, rotational leadership has been highlighted by participants as one of the key obstacles in developing trustful relations with the leader due to a lack of time in implementing the leader's vision and demonstrating consistent leadership behaviour. Thus, the findings reiterate the moderating influence of time in developing trust between individuals who shared a common history and beliefs in HE in the Emirates. This aligns with the views of Tierney (2008) who states that individuals develop trustful relationships over time, which will allow them to realise their sense of common purpose. Furthermore, the lack of consistent leadership behaviour has altered the understanding of relational transparency and internalised moral dimensions of the AL domain in the UAE context.

Issues such as rotational leadership have not been reported in the previous research in Western, Middle Eastern, and Far Eastern contexts. Nonetheless, according to this study, the ability of leaders to implement their vision and consistently sustain their integrity is limited due to contractual time constraints. Again, the significance of the organisational context in defining leadership has not been utilised to date by researchers in different demographics (Ling, Liu and Wu, 2016; Khan and Panarina, 2017; Karacay, Ertenu and Kabasakal, 2018). Therefore, to make sense of the current leader figure, respondents define the concept through the policy and control mechanisms in place at a given time. These findings have implications for operational sustainability and OR, concerns with the rotational vision, inconsistency of leadership actions, influence of power distance and uncertainty avoidance culture-centred behavioural patterns, and reliability on power structure and micromanagement practices. Furthermore, the uncertainty in defining their leadership is likely to affect the realisation of AL

in the UAE, as it is contradictory to the dimensions assigned to AL behaviour by western researchers, in particular, behavioural integrity and relational transparency (Gardner *et al.,* 2005).

Interestingly, although decisions in HE in the country are centralised, and cascaded top-down throughout multiple management layers, some respondents reported more inclusive and constructive outcomes by highlighting the influence of the leader's personality and background in the process. These findings demonstrate some similarities with the balanced processing dimension of AL behaviour and again highlight an individual's cultural upbringing. Such occurrences are congruent with the argument of Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) that leadership style is governed by the inherited personality of each leader. Therefore, the leadership figure is defined by the leader's ability for balanced processing of information and behavioural integrity, which are core dimensions of AL (Gardner *et al.,* 2005). However, most reflective accounts of the interviewees reveal that the guiding posts of a leader's behaviour in HE in the UAE are modified by the power configuration and authority assigned to the occupied rank within these structures. According to the findings, most respondents define their leader based on hierarchy and positional power. However, the findings also highlight the significance of a participant's background to the individual's interpretation and use of positional power, which partially aligns these views with AL through self-awareness and an internalised moral perspective.

The findings on the influence of cultural predispositions on a leader's abilities for balanced processing of information and social awareness direct this discussion to the emergence of 'position conscious' vs 'action conscious' leadership behaviour. According to respondents, the inability of leaders in academia in the UAE to look beyond their indigenous culture is noticeable across management practices such as cultural preferentialism, reverse favouritism, and micromanagement. In this respect, the findings confirm previous research by Ali and Weir (2005) and Obeidat *et al.,* (2012) on the leadership behaviour of Muslims. Obeidat *et al.* (2012) argue that even though managers in the Middle East region apply some Western techniques, they simultaneously retain some of their traditional values, which further expands academic confusion on the adequacy of Western-centered leadership behaviour to the UAE's organisational settings. Thus, in a similar manner, the findings confirm these authors' views on the emergence of a leader's 'position conscious' behaviour by the (1) manifestation of positional power within the organisational hierarchy and (2) enactment of the leader's individual value system. This is another major discrepancy with western approaches to AL (George, 2003; Avolio and Walumbwa, 2014).

While in AL literature, a leader's value system transpires in moral behaviour (e.g. action conscious), in HE in the UAE a person's values and beliefs are demonstrated by the display of power (e.g. position conscious).

This research addressed leadership segmentation in a new way. As evidenced in the data, the understanding of leadership is imbued with individualised interpretations. The key differentiators with western paradigm include one's cultural background and organisational contextualisation which reflect the high-context, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity features of the region (Hall, 1989; Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Some researchers argue that business organisations are culture-bound and that leaders are inseparable from their indigenous cultures (Hofstede, 1976; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993; Steenkamp, 2001). Accordingly, research on Arab organisations (Ali and Weir, 2005; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Yahchouchi, 2009) suggests that Arab managers are reluctant to delegate authority, avoid responsibility and taking risks, prefer a stable lifestyle over rewarding but challenging work, and give priority to friendships and personal considerations over organisational goals and performance. Besides, *'face-saving'* and 'status-consciousness' are also commonly said to be important values in the traditional Arab culture, especially within the tribal cultures (Mir, 2010).

In this research, the leadership figure is associated with heightened control mechanisms, lack of transparency over decision-making, and the manifestation of positional power. In addition, the leader's inherited cultural distinctness and ability for balanced processing of information has been highlighted by all participants as principal criteria in defining leadership in the academia in the country. Therefore, contrary to Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) and Northouse (2019), HE faculty in the UAE constructed leadership as a triad of process, organisational context, and leader's inherited ethnic individuality, which emphasises cultural subjectivism in interpreting the leadership conundrum in the country.

Cultural Climate

Alsharari (2018) asserts that discussion of the cultural climate in HE in the UAE is shaped by interpretations of the internal integration of human resources and the external adaptation of tertiary institutions in the country. Relatedly, the findings indicate that the cultural climate is influenced by participants' feelings about the organisation and their performance, which is a key factor in determining the operational outcomes, including OR. In this view, the findings reflect the model of organisational

culture presented by Schein (2004), where organisational culture is perceived as a demonstration of the shared values, beliefs, and assumptions of interrelated patterns of human behaviour and operational decisions. Furthermore, Schein (2004) and Tierney (2008) claim that existing relationships within internal social networks are reflective of the nature of time and space in the distinct context, reflecting assumptions about the centrality of time in developing trust in the organisation promoted by several authors (Zahran *et al.*, 2016; Burns & Mooney, 2018; Hassan *et al.*, 2018). These views relate to the finding in two ways: (1) the high-context cultural characterisation of the UAE supports the arguments for time, space, and context (Hall, 1989); (2) in contrast, the influence of high uncertainty avoidance features of the country predicts different outcomes. In theory, the common history, built together by the individuals and systems, is the key factor defining the organisational culture (Akanji *et al.*, 2019), while the reality in the UAE is totally different due to the rotations of leadership appointments and fixed contract durations. Such findings significantly challenge the uncertainty avoidance dimension of the cultural context in the UAE as defined by Minkov and Hofstede (2011).

The major discrepancies with western-centered theoretical assumptions, discussed in chapters 2 and 3 and demonstrated by Figure 2, are exemplified in this research by findings identifying a dynamic cultural climate in tertiary education in the Emirates. For example, cultural sensibility in constructing the understanding of authenticity and being genuine in this research is highlighted in the ethnologically subjective interpretations reported. Besides, the paradox in defining authenticity and key contradictions with the literature, instigated from the interpretations of Arab participants, is one of the most striking results of this study. Notably, the research findings on the dualistic character of authenticity, which is presented by Figure 9 (below), align with the work of Musah (2011), who argues the Muslim perspective of authenticity as both individualistic and collectivistic, both coexisting in union and equally completing each other.
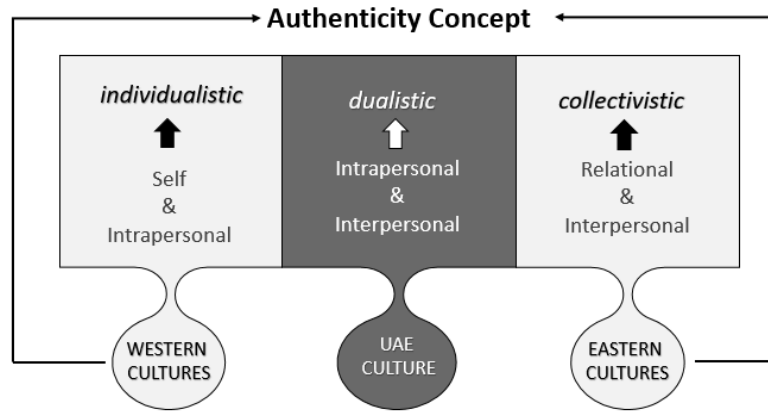
Figure 9. Authenticity in the UAE Context

Figure 9 (above) illustrates the novelty of the dualistic nature of authenticity in the culturally pluralistic UAE context, as uncovered in the diverse respondents' reflections. The evidence of the dualistic nature of authenticity in the UAE context could be argued in comparison to existing theoretical views and semantics. For example, western approaches promote the individualistic nature of the concept (George, 2003; Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008), while the research from the Far East advocates for collectivistic orientation (Whitehead and Brown, 2011; Wang and Hsieh, 2013). In addition, as established in Chapter 2, the Arabic equivalent of the word 'authentic' could mean both original (e.g. *alasalah*), and reliable and trustworthy (e.g. *mawthuq*) (Ali, 1992; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). Thus, the semantics of *'alasalah'* indicate the intrapersonal orientation, while *'mawthuq'* suggests the interpersonal nature of authenticity in the Arabic community. Furthermore, the self in Islamic ideology and culture is founded on two key concepts: (1) a person's motives and accountability to God and (2) ethical behaviour with the group members, which illustrates the collectivist features of authenticity from an Islamic standpoint (Mir, 2010). Therefore, the accounts of the Muslim participants reveal a new understanding of authenticity as a two-dimensional concept (e.g. intrapersonal and interpersonal) in the Emirates, which is discordant with both western and far eastern viewpoints. However, there is limited research associating authenticity with faith and religious beliefs, including Muslim, so further research in this direction is recommended. Therefore, the findings highlight the multidimensional novelty of this research.

Additionally, the two-dimensional nature of authenticity is expanded in non-Muslim, but multicultural, perspectives of respondents as they are constructed on their individualist values. In this respect, the interpretations of faculty from individualistic cultures highlight the importance of a leader's self-

awareness associated with independence, while for participants with a collectivistic cultural background, authenticity is discussed as a relational outcome in terms of (1) the leader's personal involvement in subordinates' lives and (2) an assigned rank within the organisational hierarchy. For example, two of the respondents with a collectivist culture background relate their understanding of leadership to the extent of the leader's concerns with their personal life (see SP 3, SB 1). Such perceptions can be associated with the 'Specific' versus 'Diffuse' dimension in Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) cultural scale. This concerns the extent to which people separate their different roles in life. In this view, Middle Eastern communities have been understood as diffuse cultures, meaning that different roles are commonly integrated into the Muslim way of life. For example, individuals may enjoy quality relationships with work colleagues outside of work time which is a common behaviour in the region (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012) and thereby, it is not a surprise that Arab participants voiced similar expectations from their current leader. Thus, the richness of individuals' interpretations generated a new way of defining AL in a multicultural context.

Such diversity in respondents' views is only partially addressed by cross-cultural studies. The lack of a multicultural understanding of authenticity is acknowledged by Kokkories and Kuhen (2014), who assert that very little research has explored authenticity outside western viewpoints and outdated cultural classifications, including in the UAE. For example, the statements made by Robinson *et al.* (2012) associated authenticity with the power distance features in the USA, UK, and Russian context. Consequently, the UK and USA scored very low on power distance but high on authenticity, whereas the results from Russia demonstrated high power distance and low authenticity. This prompted the authors to argue that a high-power distance culture will be low in authenticity. However, it would be wrong to generalise from this research, and more studies need to be undertaken to clarify the association between power distance and authenticity, as the findings in this research contradict established academic research.

For example, the cultural context of the Emirates has scored very high on the power distance scale established by Hofstede and Minkov (2011) but also, owing to the existing research on Islamic leadership, the elected leader is perceived as authentic and guaranteed loyalty by the followers based on positional stance (Ali, 1992; Aldulaimi, 2019). Hence, these findings demonstrate that high authenticity is possible in a high-power distance culture, contradicting the statements made by (Robinson *et al.*, (2012) These

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assumptions transpired in the views of most respondents with a collectivist culture background who defined the manifestation of AL through the organisational hierarchy. They also felt the concept of genuine behaviour, as established in western literature, to be confusing. On the other hand, the findings revealed similarities in lived experiences when faculty reflected upon their conscious efforts for adaptation to the leader's distinct behaviour, demonstrating an altering of the persons' values. This includes adjustment to leadership behaviour instigating cultural preferentialism and reverse favouritism.

According to research findings, a leader's behaviour associated with cultural preferentialism is often demonstrated by switching to a native language or requesting assistance from individuals who share the same cultural background. Relatedly, interviewees' reflections indicate the existence of in-group and out-group membership in the tertiary institutions. In return, this prompted greater self-sufficient and independent faculty behaviour and job performance. Furthermore, rotational leadership reduces subordinates' interactions with the leader which motivates greater self-efficacy of faculty. However, rotational role assignments decrease faculty trust and overall dependability on the leader's support. Thus, the respondents' stories suggest an intentional adaptation and, consequently, the development of a voluntary normative followership culture among expatriates in tertiary education in the Emirates, while in the literature AL invokes involuntary followership, in particular in the HE sector (Tierney, 2008; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014).

The participants' life stories illustrate the real organisational culture in academia in the UAE, challenging existing western literature. Hence, the findings confirm the expectation of voluntary followers' allegiance and thus, the high-power distance features of academic leadership in the country. This is a key controversy with the definition of AL behaviour established in the literature with reference to the relationship of the leader with the followers. However, it is partially justified by the collectivistic and Muslim cultural context in the country. This finding is not a surprise, as research on AL has mostly focused on exploring the phenomenon in a homogeneous cultural environment as opposed to a multicultural landscape, such as the UAE. Thus, the findings suggest a possible adaptation of participants' individual value systems, which increases the possibility of internal conflict. This view is supported by Slabu *et al.* (2014), who argue that the concept of authenticity should be understood in congruence with a person's value system. In this respect, the hermeneutic analysis of interviewees' experiences highlights the

individuals' acculturation to the UAE context and its influence on altering faculty members' personal values and beliefs.

Acculturation in the UAE is an involuntary outcome of the co-existence of multiple cultures and religions in the country (O'Neil, 2012). Implicitly, the individuals' acculturation was apparent in all respondents' reflective accounts when making sense of their experience in the country and was evidenced in the findings by the following: (1) all interview participants have completed more than two contracts (e.g. 6 years) and have been appointed to various teaching positions in public and private HE establishments in the UAE for between 7 and 15 years, demonstrating their adaptation to the UAE's culture; and (2) the insights into the UAE context, provided by two participants who were born and brought up in the Emirates, highlighted their adjustment to the transformation of the cultural context in the country. Additionally, although the Emirati respondent represents the national culture, being educated in a western curriculum has reshaped the interviewee's perception of authenticity by including a more individualistic orientation. Evidently, she was comfortable using words such as *'cocky'* and *'sexist'* in describing her experience with her leader's behaviour in SP3, SB 3. Furthermore, the interviewee voiced strong disapproval of being *'judged'* by the leader due to her Emirati social ties and gender characteristics. This altered cognisance of self-awareness and relational transparency dimensions is not a surprise, as the acculturation of young Emiratis has been accelerated by western curriculum and organisational behaviour concepts taught in HE, as well as applied in business operations across the country. The respondents' perceptions of acculturation are illustrated by Figure 10 (below).
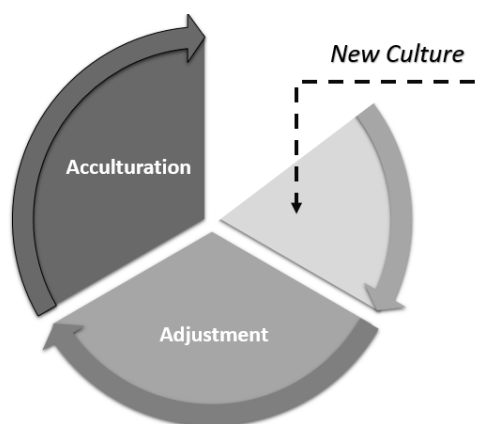
Figure 10. Acculturation

Figure 10 illustrates the continuous infiltration of new demographics into the Emirates which, after a period of adjustment, adopt the socio-cultural characteristics of the UAE context. As demonstrated in Figure 9, the cultural climate and acculturation processes in the UAE are continuous and fluid because they are strongly influenced by the most current country's national interests, as further discussed in the Superordinate theme related to the UAE National Context.

Overall, the findings provide evidence for challenging many popular American-European assumptions on the constituents of AL. This includes the universality of the 'trait' authenticity (Slabu *et al.*, 2014). According to the researchers, it is possible that 'trait' authenticity may not differ across cultures as it is founded on a person's sound self-awareness and thereby, presents a stable attribute, while the 'state' authenticity is contingent and therefore, changeable upon contextual congruencies(Slabu *et al.*, 2014). In contrast to these authors' understanding of 'trait' (stable) and 'state' (adaptable to the context) authenticity, the participants' accounts provide evidence of consistency in demonstrating the leader's stable 'state' authenticity, rooted in the inherited cultural characteristics of the individuals, as opposed to 'trait' authenticity. Therefore, the findings on 'state' authenticity in this research demonstrate behaviour consistent with one's cultural individuality, while 'trait' authenticity is changeable and dependent on the individual's acculturation to the UAE context. Hence, the findings suggest the universality of 'state' and not 'trait' authenticity. This leadership behaviour is identified in the shared stories that emphasise the leader's culturally subjective behaviour. Furthermore, the findings evidence voluntary cognitive and behavioural adaptation (e.g. 'trait' authenticity) among faculty in HE, suggesting the 'trait' and 'state' authenticity framework, established by Slabu *et al.* (2014), exists in reverse to the western perspective has been moderated by the acculturation processes in the UAE.

These arguments direct the discussion back towards a leader's self-disclosure and self-awareness in defining AL. The fact that participants feel they are not connected to the leader directly left a vacuum, which then affected their definition and interpretation of authenticity in the construal of AL. Although, in extant literature, a leader's self-awareness has been acknowledged as a core dimension of authenticity, there was no reference to the Western-centered outlook of the concept in the interviews. The research findings challenge the views of Kernis (2003), who argues the trustfulness of AL behaviour on the premises of open and transparent information sharing and self-disclosure to the group members,

including one's true feelings and thoughts. By contrast, there is very limited evidence in the findings on leaders' self-disclosure in the UAE. This could be explained by the presence of (1) centralised organisation's structure, (2) cultural inferiority, (3) rotational leadership, and (4) culturally congruent communication patterns. According to respondents, the organisational hierarchy and policies that are *"written on the wall"* (Fatma) are the key factors governing the (corporate) academic leadership behaviour in the Emirates, downplaying the individual's self-cognisance. Furthermore, rotational leadership practices in HE pose a major challenge for leaders to demonstrate the quality of personal self-awareness as time is of the essence, and the fixed-term appointment does not allow for leaders' self-disclosure.

In addition, while some literature endorses more comprehensive understanding of the self-awareness dimension (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Kernis and Goldman, 2006), it is not clear from respondents' accounts the degree of a leader's self-awareness and disclosure of one's emotions and desires. In this respect, respondents' voices established reference to the *'restraint'* cultural attributes of UAE society (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2004). According to Hofstede and Minkov (2010), 'indulgence' measures the extent to which individuals control their desires based on their socio-cultural customs, and the UAE has been classified with strong control in this dimension. Besides, the findings align with the expectations of demonstrating masculine behaviour by the leaders in the Muslim community, including females, and disclosing one's true feelings would be considered a weakness, which may confuse followers' behaviour (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, the lack of openly expressing feelings and desires has influenced and altered the understanding of the self-awareness dimension of AL in the UAE context, which could significantly moderate major leadership practices in HE. Furthermore, the lack of feedback mechanisms and evidence of leaders reneging support the high-power distance features of the organisational culture in the academic context.

A leader's humility and ability to reflect upon and admit mistakes have been regarded as a demonstration of deep self-awareness and behavioural strength in western research (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) argue that authentic leaders are cognisant of their impact on the followers' behaviour, with seeking honest and constructive feedback being the most cited leadership practice. By contrast, such behaviour is perceived as weakness in the UAE, and the broad Middle Eastern organisational culture, where *'face-saving'* and masculinity dominate leaders' and community members'

views on AL behaviour (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). In theory, Arab cultures are high power distance societies in which, according to Hofstede and Minkov (2010), followers expect to be told what to do. Therefore, leaders in high-power distance cultures, such as the Emirates, are not expected to seek feedback or acknowledge their mistakes. In addition, high power distance societal organisation implies unequal power distribution and a tendency for individuals to accept their place in the hierarchy and demonstrate loyalty to the leader. These claims are confirmed by Muslim respondents in this study who perceive a leader's demonstration of power as a sign of masculinity and a leadership strength that leaders are required to exercise daily. Furthermore, participants specifically emphasised the expectations of elevated levels of masculinity (even) in female leadership. While these findings draw similarities with previous research on leadership behaviour in the Middle East (Al-Barghouthi, 2017), they also unraveled a distinctive outlook on self-awareness as part of AL. From the Arab female participants' gender perspective, masculinity is a demonstration of gender inclusiveness in the collectivistic society in the UAE. Therefore, the study reveals a new understanding of masculinity/femininity criteria which demonstrates the novel contribution of this research to cross-cultural studies. However, despite these viewpoints, the participants clearly feel that a genuine and honest leader who admits mistakes and accepts feedback is practising AL, even though this behaviour is not the cultural norm in the country.

Not surprisingly, the research findings identify that self-awareness as part of leadership behaviour is founded on the tenets of the organisational rank and the positional power. All interviewees associated a leader's self-awareness ability with the positional power and an individual's cultural background when enacting the control mechanisms assigned by rank. Therefore, the findings emphasise the personality-based establishment of power and highlight the presence of authoritative leadership behaviour in the UAE. Consequently, these views draw attention back to the discussions in Chapter 2 on the understanding of leadership as a *Content* vs *Process* dichotomy (e.g. it is not as much what you do, but who you are and how you do it). In this respect, some participants reported positive experiences working with leaders from a western cultural background. However, participants, whose leaders are not western, reflected on their experiences with the misuse of positional power as a manifestation of a leader's strength. In addition, most accounts indicated the abuse of the positional power in the interest of the leader, sustaining the power distance foundation of the self-awareness concept in the country.

It should be noted that the lack of a leader's self-awareness, as conceptualised in the western literature (Avolio and Gardner, 2005), and the substitution of this dimension with the strength of positional power are noticeable in all participants' accounts. A leader's self-awareness and self-regulation ability are central in defining AL in the western framework and differentiating Al from all other leadership models (Kernis, 2003). However, the self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses in the UAE context is directly associated with positional power that is facilitated through the centralised top-down approach. As a result, such occurrences define the AL dimensions as both contextual as well as individual attributes. For example, according to interviewees, middle management is aware of their weaknesses in terms of their inability to make conclusive decisions or influence the decision-making practices of the top management. While in theory, self-awareness is associated with intrapersonal cognisance, in the UAE this dimension is defined by the hierarchy of ranks and cultural backgrounds of individuals in leadership positions. Thus, it defies western theoretical paradigms arguing self-awareness as an intrapersonal dimension as opposed to a contextual variable in the Emirates.

These discrepancies increase the difficulties in constructing AL from the UAE perspective. Gardner *et al.* (2005) argue the development of AL is based upon deep self-awareness in understanding one's moral guideposts and acting on one's unique internal regulatory standards. However, respondents' perceptions over moral integrity differ significantly in the Emirates' context. Moreover, interviewees' responses uncover a major inconsistency with western understanding of cognitive and behavioural authenticity (Slabu *et al.,* 2014). According to Beddoes-Jones (2013), an individual's self-awareness (e.g. psychological-self) is associated with both cognitive authenticity and self-regulation, which is reflected in a leader's behavioural authenticity and integrity. However, the findings from this research in the UAE do not replicate and, thus, support these aspects of AL. This is because the perceptions of both self-awareness and self-regulation are derived from the principles of the country's religion, cultural context, national policies, and organisational structure. Consequently, other elements of the model, which are ethical virtues and ethical actions, are barely found as characteristics of AL in the UAE. Although senior leadership might want to implement ethical decisions, they are constrained by power differentiators, middle-level managers' fear of losing their jobs, and the potential repercussions of the immediate supervisor's own perceived ethical decisions.

The above discussion highlights the dualistic nature of authenticity in the UAE context, where intentions and actions do not necessarily translate into consistency of actions taken by leaders. Similar misalignments between intentions and actions have been reported in research into the leadership concept in Arab countries (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Yahchouchi, 2009). These publications highlight the influence of power distance elements on the organisational culture in Egypt and Lebanon. For example, AL behaviour in tertiary institutions in the UAE is built in the policies and procedures, but operationalisation is dependent upon middle-level leaders' discretion, which ultimately shifts the balance from the organisation to the current leadership position holder. This has been highlighted in the interpretative accounts of all participants, emphasising once again the centrality of cultural background and personalised behaviour of individuals in leadership positions in understanding and utilisation of the positional power. Therefore, this is a key difference found in this research in the UAE perspective of AL in comparison with existing research (George, 2003; Kouzes and Posner, 2012; Yukl, 2012). Thus, the confusion in defining leadership in the UAE challenges western theorising about AL. This is clearly demonstrated in the findings through the clear disconnect between self-awareness and internalised moral perspective in HE.

AL is promoted as a leadership approach due to its unique blend of: (1) ownership of an individual's experiences, values, emotions, and beliefs; and (2) genuine acts based on one's true self (Harter, 2002). Being honest and leading by example are regarded as a demonstration of self-regulation and AL behaviour and often associated with role modelling in the organisational environment (George, 2003; Gardner and Schermerhorn, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008), with Srivastava *et al. (*2020) commending leadership that encourages role modelling of AL behaviour in HE. For interviewees, role modelling means faculty are encouraged to act in ways that are influenced by their leader's positive behaviour. Relatedly, three of the respondents from individualistic cultures reflected on their experience with *'interactive'* and *'applied'* leadership, which demonstrates consistency between moral values and behaviour. Besides, a positive work culture, which is established on *'leading by example'* practices, can encourage faculty to sustain the institutional brand promises and increase motivation and innovative behaviour which supports the attainment of OR. Such AL practices can promote the integration of organisational values with individual values and the creation of new knowledge for achieving OR in HE institutions in the UAE.

Furthermore, role modelling can further improve intra-group cohesion, cooperation and altruism among faculty.

The research findings suggest some similarities between the UAE and Western-centered model of AL in terms of developing followers' skills. According to Walumbwa *et al.* (2008) and Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2014), one of the most valuable outcomes of AL is developing authentic followership through genuinely developing subordinates' skills and abilities and rousing their intrinsic motivation. In return, such practices inspire dyadic leader-subordinate relationships. Similarly, Gardner *et al.* (2005) and Avolio (2007) advocate for a dynamic interplay between leader and follower through positive role modelling, where followers will enact AL behaviour that ultimately develops authentic followership. Although directive in nature, the faculty members' reflections illustrate that professional development activities offered faculty the opportunity to improve their technological skills, and this ensured continuity of the learning process during the pandemic. In return, this created a positive organisational culture. In addition to the alignment with western paradigms, the authentic intentions of the senior leadership confirmed Muslim perceptions of AL behaviour where the leader's main goal is *'to do good for people'* irrespective of nationality and religion. It is evident from the findings that top management is continuously investing in faculty development. However, the approach does not align with the expectations of faculty from individualistic cultures who advocate rather for activities that are tailored to their career objectives. Therefore, this research once again established the necessity for further exploration of the AL concept from a socio-ideological perspective, which may uncover new aspects of AL in the UAE.

During the interviews and from the transcripts, it appears that several respondents have 'let go' of their individual cultural orientation, partly due to the *'fear factor'*, and subsequently embraced a new cultural position. The fear factor was interpreted by participants' accounts in relation to feedback, negotiation, job protectionism, cultural inferiority, and withholding benefits. Besides, the sense of cultural inferiority, the fear that faculty may *'not fill the mold'* (Melissa), was apparent in the findings. Fear also significantly altered the scope for genuine feedback opportunities and mechanisms, contrasting with opportunities to openly share feedback with the leaders being regarded as a positive outcome of relational transparency and balanced processing in the western-centred AL framework (Luthans and Lester, 2006). Similarly, a number of researchers in the HE sector in both western and UAE contexts acknowledge regular faculty feedback as a constructive contribution to improving curriculum, learning methodology,

assessment, and research profile, as well as sustaining institutional excellence (Rowley and Sherman, 2003; Hassan, Gallear and Sivarajah, 2018; Al Samkari and David, 2019) and thereby, OR. Regrettably, only one respondent (Shamma), who is Emirati, shared her experience with the *'intentions'* of the leader to hear employees' feedback, while other two faculty members (Fatma and Lisa) initiated the process of giving feedback to their direct managers. This brings back the discussion to the ideological and distinct socio-cultural foundation of AL behaviour in the UAE context. Thus, in this research, the evidence of a lack of feedback and negotiation mechanisms is directly related to addressing the key research objectives and supports the understanding of the influence of aligning individuals' and organisational values.

As transpired in the interviews, the alignment of personal and organisational values in individuals' work-life stories is modified by a multifaceted sense of fear from higher ranks. In this research, faculty were fearful in relation to contract renewal and job security issues. Individuals' reflections on the possibility of being denied work-related privileges such as attending conferences, being assigned challenging tasks, and seeking approval for personal requests by immediate supervisors epitomise micro-level fears associated with the leader's ability for balanced processing of information and demonstrating relational transparency in HE in the Emirates, while the fear of not having the contract renewed established reference to the macro-level reciprocity. These issues relate to the previous discussion over personalised power, which correlates with authority and power-distance features of leadership behaviour. This is because seeking feedback is not associated with leadership behaviours in Muslim communities (Sidani and Thornberry, 2010). Therefore, feedback in tertiary institutions is defined by respondents as a bottom-up-driven practice, as opposed to the top-down process in the western organisational culture (Schein, 2004; Kernis and Goldman, 2006).

The above findings underscore a different aspect of AL behaviour that is not reported in previous research. According to Walumbwa *et al.* (2008), seeking feedback from followers is a means for continuous development and improvement and is considered a core behaviour of authentic leaders. Furthermore, that demonstrates authentic leaders' ability to contemplate and openly share their own mistakes with followers. In this respect, all participants voiced strong expectations of the leader's ability to admit mistakes and displayed equally strong disappointment with the lack of such behaviour. Noticeably, faculty members' experiences with leader's reneging behaviour were central in the interviewees' interpretation of self-awareness and relational transparency aspects of AL. However, the

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obvious lack of admitting mistakes and not taking responsibility for reneging demonstrated a weak self-cognisance of the leadership in HE and raised the question of how important self-awareness is in the UAE context. Thus, further research in a different sectoral or demographic context is required for addressing this concern.

Therefore, it is not surprising that a leader's enactment of personal values and beliefs is a central discussion point for all participants. AL is founded on internal moral standards and values, and it results in pronounced decision-making and behaviour that is consistent with these internalised values (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, *et al.*, 2005). As AL characteristics include transparency, trust, support of followers, consistency of actions, and inclusive decision-making, authentic leaders' behaviour is predictable in Western settings (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011), which is not the case in the UAE context. Most respondents reflected upon the moderating influence of various cultural, legislative and organisational contextual factors in shaping leaders' behavioural consistency in the country. For example, elevated power-distance difference, rotating leadership appointments, personalised power and cultural preferentialism were among the most cited influencers of cognitive and behavioural disconnect in leadership practices. Ultimately, these variables prompt inconsistent AL behaviours. Nonetheless, while western literature adopts the intrapersonal perspective in defining AL's moral integrity dimension, the interviewees highlighted the interpersonal (e.g. independent of self-cognisance behavioural) aspect of a leader's self-regulation and the dominance of the relational orientation of the concept. These findings significantly reshape existing perceptions of the internalised moral dimension of AL and, relatedly, the predictability of the AL behaviours.

However, according to the findings, an individual's' ability to navigate 'organisational politics' has been regarded as modeling of greater intrapersonal cognisanse, and an outcome of the person's adaptation to the organisational context. To some extent, such behaviour is not a surprise, as (1) people across the globe tend to socialise with their own ethnicity (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003; Marmenout, 2011), and (2) in theory, a leader's social identification with the salient group members and engagement with a group's customary behaviour by demonstrating adequate practices define the leadership effectiveness (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Similar assumptions are supported by researchers who offer an Islamic perspective on leadership (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Ali and Weir, 2005; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012). However, there is no evidence from the interviews that a leader's social identification rests on the alignment of

personal values and beliefs with group members or organisational values (Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). On the contrary, the participants' reflections underscore the fear-driven adaptation they undergo to secure the continuation of their jobs. These findings are novel in two ways: (1) highlighting the transactional features behind adaptation to organisational culture; and (2) associating middle-level leadership strengths and weaknesses with the ability to build conscious relations within the organisational hierarchy through reciprocal commitments and expectations of reverse favouritism, as opposed to the merits. Thus, the findings emphasise fear and job protection-driven leader's behaviour which significantly alters the realisation of AL. Hence, social identification adopts superficial behavioural, but not necessarily cognitive adaptation, which is a new finding from the HE in the UAE that affects the trust, relational transparency, and moral integrity aspects of AL.

The interviews repeatedly highlight the lack of demonstration of leader self-cognisance, and largely the intrapersonal dimension of AL, which modifies the materialisation of the rest of the tenets of the phenomenon in the Emirates context. Thus, this research provides insights into the concerns of Walumbwa, Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Northouse (2019) who recommend a comprehensive investigation into the behavioural association of AL dimensions in the organisational context. Furthermore, this research positively contributes to updating the existing theorisation of AL features and their relationship within the AL framework. Consequently, this is a novel discovery in the research field, as cognitive dissonance in AL behaviour lacks exploration in different demographics.

Besides, the centralised practices in HE in the UAE demonstrate the influence of the collectivistic and high-power distance cultural moderators on the organisational climate. In addition, leadership behaviour in academia demonstrates a shift towards incorporating practices analogous to the business environment, where group performance and achieving strict KPIs are key factors in measuring leadership success. Such a strategy has been criticised by Alsharari (2018) and Nuzhat (2020) as it contradicts with the main purpose of the HE institutions in the Emirates, which is innovation and developing new knowledge.

Communication

In this research, organisational culture antecedents are key variables influencing communication patterns in HE within the country. Due to the influence of high-context and power distance features of

the cultural climate, communication processes bear the characteristics of timeliness, repetition, vagueness and centralisation, and, therefore, negotiation between the stakeholders is avoided. Such communication behaviour instigates feelings of frustration among participants with individualistic cultural backgrounds, who are accustomed to communication messages that follow structured processes, focused on achieving the organisational goals (Bass and Riggio, 2005; Yukl, 2012). Furthermore, the findings indicate that gender and cultural subjectivity are discordant with technological objectivity in academia in the Emirates.

Interviewees interpret communication as misinterpretation, reinterpretation, under-interpretation or overinterpretation, which emphasises the influence of the leader's individuality and cultural background in the process. This understanding is partially associated with the balanced processing dimension of AL, as evidenced in respondents' reflections. These include instances where a leader interfered and offered a more detailed interpretation of an impassive centralised message to employees, as well as situations where a leader's interpretation of task requirements and policy stipulations resulted in greater confusion. Additionally, all interviewees recount similar experiences with their leader's personalised communication style, governed by cultural preferentialism and display of power. Relatedly, faculty members raise legitimate concerns over open access to factual, relevant, and current communication by all academic staff members. The centralised communication manner that is identified throughout the respondents' reflections, aligns leadership communication behaviour with the power distance features ascribed to the UAE cultural context (Hofstede, 2011). The findings are analogous to the views of Aldulaimi (2019), who argues that individuals in high-power distance and hierarchical Muslim societies are not expected to interpret senior management information and make their own decisions. Therefore, according to interviewees' accounts, middle-level management lacks the authority to question or challenge top management directives, or to make and act on their initiative. Furthermore, leadership communication behaviour does not accommodate opportunities for negotiation. Thus, communication channels in tertiary education in the Emirates reflect the power distance features of the context and autocratic leadership behaviour.

Gardner *et al.* (2005) and Walumbwa *et al.* (2008) argue for the centrality of transparency in communication and information dissemination as prerequisites for realising AL in organisations based on two criteria: relational transparency and balance processing. However, the implicit nature of

communication behaviour establishes a reference to the cultural framework of Hall (1976) and is compatible with the high-context cultural characteristics of the UAE. This has been noted by most participants and contradicts western theoretical approaches. Thus, the discussion highlights the influence of a leader's cultural individualism in ensuring clarity and consistency in communication across organisational networks. Furthermore, the authority given to email communication has been reported by interviewees as a major obstacle to adequate dissemination of information. Like decision-making practices, electronic communication channels assume a top-down approach and anonymity and further expand the hierarchical ladder for subordinates' interactions with the leader. These practices are identified by a number of interviewees who attempt to make sense of them by reference to the presence of "virtual reporting" and the complex matrix organisational structure in their HE institution. Therefore, respondents are very critical when reflecting on the lack of opportunity for direct and open communication with the leadership. By being impassive and impersonal, existing communication patterns are congruent with the leader's behaviour as *'face-saving'*, which is characterised by reluctance to admit mistakes and demonstrate personal accountability. This is not a surprise, as such behaviour has been attributed to the Muslim model of leadership by researchers on Islamic ethics (Yousef, 2001; Shahin and Wright, 2004; Ali and Weir, 2005).

According to the findings, communication behaviour directs the development and quality of trust among the HE structures in the country. Tierney (2008) argues that the development of trustful interactions between subordinates and leaders, as well as among faculty, evolves over time through open and transparent communication. According to Hall (1989) and Steenkamp (2001), in low-context cultures, trust emerges through explicit communication. Notably, the findings reveal distinctive communication behaviour, aligned with the socio-religious and high-context framework of the Emirates. In a high-context culture, trust is in the context, or history of personal relations. Furthermore, according to Hall (1989), in high-context communication, little is to be said in words, because much of the meaning of the message is in the context of the relationship history, tone of voice, gestures, postures, and even status. Therefore, high-context communication tends to be more formal and more indirect. Similar communication characteristics are noted by several participants, in terms of using flowery language, elaborate apologies, and humility. Furthermore, respondents from low-context cultures expressed their dissatisfaction with the implied meaning conveyed by emails, unnecessary repetition of information, glorified addressing of

emails, and emotional pleas. Moreover, one of the key findings is that the explicit meaning of words is expected to be ignored on the account of exchanging emotional meanings. This causes internal conflict for interviewees from low-context cultures who appreciate the explicit meaning in the words and concise instructions on task requirements.

The findings in this research are analogous to existing intercultural studies relating to communication methods across diverse Americo-European, Central Asian, and Far Eastern demographics, which reveal the similar influence of an individual's cultural background over the promptness, formalness, and preciseness of the communication (Holtbrügge, Weldon and Rogers, 2012; Park, Jeon and Shim, 2021).This is supported by Hall's (1989) characterisation of communication styles associated with high-context cultures. Thus, the cultural context ultimately alters communication practices in the country and, relatedly, the quality of trust.

Additionally, the interviewees highlight how organisational variables, notably fixed-term contracts, rotational leadership strategies and the disputable legitimacy of leadership appointments, have a negative impact on both trust and communication. They had greater trust in the job performance-related data generated by IT systems than in their direct leader's recommendation for contract renewal.

Nonetheless, the gender-biased communication behaviour that is found in the interviews uncovers a novel dimension of culture-influenced verbal and non-verbal interactions and relates back to the discussion of the quality of trust and organisational adaptation of employees. Gerry's interpretation of his interactions with other faculty is noteworthy, as he had to adjust his communication style when interacting with female colleagues:

> Actually, over the course of time, you will really have to be able to adapt yourself…I think each one of us has already adapted. We are already on a level of maturity that….um, diversity is not anymore an issue, plus the fact that we are well educated. We are exposed to many things so you can hear it from X, Y and Z that we make jokes and we pull each other's legs. But then we don't see anybody. I don't know about the females actually, because females sometimes are very, very serious.

Although these limited findings should not be generalised, the reflection of two participants (e.g. Gerry and Shamma) highlight the influence of gender-prejudiced communication styles on reshaping the perceptions of trustful relationships among subordinates and between subordinates and leaders. It should be noted that both participants belong to collectivistic cultures, which again highlight the high-

context dimensions of these cultural contexts. Such findings are unique and have not been reported by researchers on AL in Western, Far Eastern, or Middle Eastern demographics.

As previously discussed, the leader's and subordinates' social identification in the UAE is largely founded on similarities in ethnic background and customs. Relatedly, the findings emphasise the influence of individuals' cultural backgrounds in setting up the communication mode in HE institutions. Consequently, deviation from expected, as opposed to actual communication behaviour, as reported in this study, posited the individual's communication style as a major factor contributing to low quality peer-to-peer trust as well as potential task and personal conflicts. Ultimately, the findings uncover the pronounced influence of power distance over the communication model in the HE in the country.

Conflict

Conflict has been conceptualised as a necessary stepping-stone towards achieving organisational maturity and endurance, and managing conflict is a key issue for each organisation (De Dreu and Van Vianen, 2001; Ayoko and Härtel, 2006), Crucially, avoiding conflict is argued to be implausible, with conflict in business operations evident across all organisational structures. Generally, its emergence is congruent with task-, people- and resource-management practices (Kolb and Putnam, 2016). Western researchers on leadership have identified the failure to adequately explore the materialisation of conflict as an outcome of implicit cultural exchanges in the organisational environment (Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Darvish and Rezaei, 2011). Therefore, one of the novel contributions of this research is to provide insights into conflict located in a heterogeneous cultural context.

Noticeably in the findings, leadership communication instigates conflict on multiple levels, which is consistent with the centralised understanding of conflict in the literature (De Dreu, 1997; Fiksel, 2006; Lewicki and Sheppard, 2018). The culturally and contextually congruent interpretations in this study reveal the emergence of conflict at both a macro- and micro-level. Macro-level conflict is prompted by the tensions between corporate management style and academic leadership behaviour. As discussed in Section 3.2, this 'shared' leadership behaviour is reflective of government directives and occurs in organisational processes and practices such as accreditation audits, job performance reviews, contract renewal and achievement of institutional targets. According to respondents, this materialises through

control mechanisms and centralised direction of professional development in the tertiary establishments. These practices have been highlighted by most faculty as key reasons for reduced levels of trust and job motivation, as well as creating conflict over the subordinates' understanding of their teaching and administrative roles. Further controversy and potential macro-level conflict is observed in deviations from faculty career objectives, which are grouped by (1) individualised motivation for advancing as scholarly academics, or (2) achieving instructional excellence. Therefore, for most participants, the alignment of their inner motivation and actual job performance with the organisation's objectives has become an issue that affects the quality of subordinate-leader trust and alignment of personal with organisational values.

However, the ambidexterity of academic leadership practices in the country is necessitated by the UAE government's agenda for internationally recognised accreditations. Thus, there is pressure on the senior management in tertiary institutions to adopt business-like management strategies (Askling and Bjorn Stensaker, 2002; Litz and Scott, 2017). Comparable practices have been reported by research in other regions as a newly adopted strategy by leadership in HE in response to the economically driven efforts for global expansion of the educational sector (Rowley and Sherman, 2003; Bolman and Gallos, 2010). However, the complexity of leadership behaviour in the UAE is additionally affected by the collectivistic cultural landscape in the country. In this respect, and similar to findings from the Far East, corporate expectations are focused on the group as opposed to individual achievements (Chen *et al.*, 2005; Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Al Wekhian, 2015). In line with this research, respondents reflected on the limited occurrences of individual recognition in their organisation, which in return caused internal conflict. The key reason for this is the misalignment of respondents' professional cognisanse of the distinctness of the academic role and corresponding recognition for creating innovation and new knowledge, and their actual experience with being recognised for performing administrative tasks, which hold insignificant value to them. In this respect, the findings reveal interviewees' disappointment with receiving *'fake'* recognition. Thus, the disconnect between organisational and personal values emerges again as a key factor for inciting conflictual situations in HE in the UAE.

However, the reported leadership behaviour of offering unappreciated awards is analogous to the Muslim beliefs that the leader should not harm the followers' feelings (Ali, 1992). There are several possible reasons from cultural studies as to why such behaviour exists in the UAE. The first justification

is offered by the '*Neutral*' versus '*Affective*' categorisation in the cultural model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1993), which discusses how people deal with their emotions. The authors argue that Middle Eastern culture is '*affective*' which means that people like to express their emotions even in formal contexts such as the workplace. Therefore, to create a positive organisational climate, leadership offers awards for maintaining good relationships with faculty and keeping them content, which are not necessarily merit based. In this view, leadership behaviour in the UAE underscores the *relativist* as opposed to *universalist* understanding of AL. The second explanation could be found in the practice of '*wasta*' which justifies the relational foundation of information seeking, which in return translates into reciprocal recognition in the socio-cultural environment in the Middle East. Third, since the legitimacy of appointments is unclear in tertiary education in the Emirates, there is a possibility of hiring and promoting individuals on the premises of reverse favouritism or nepotism, and thereby, senior management would not want to honestly evaluate and critique these individuals' performance. Similar practices have been reported by research on leadership styles in other Middle Eastern countries (Sabri, 2008; Kabasakal *et al.,* 2012). Fourth, an alternative understanding is offered by the dimension of '*assertiveness*' which was introduced in the GLOBE study of House *et al.* (2004). According to the most recent research, assertiveness is the degree to which people are assertive and aggressive in relationships with others and has a strong realisation in the Muslim societies in the Middle Eastern region (Kabasakal *et al.,* 2012). Generally, in the Arab world people demonstrate low assertiveness, as categorised by GLOBE, and leadership publications from the GCC (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). This means that leaders in the UAE tend to have more sympathy for the low performer and value cooperation and warm relationships, as opposed to Western practices for recognition of an individual's merits (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011; Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014). This is consistent with collectivist socio-behavioural patterns in the Emirates (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). In this view, being less assertive justifies the unauthentic recognition of faculty by academic leaders in HE and allows them to avoid confronting and criticising faculty in cases of weak performance (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002).

On the other hand, micro-level conflict occurrences are related to communication ambiguity, repetitive task requirements and cultural subjectivism in the formation of internal 'in-groups' and networks. As discussed above, the clarity in email communication, switching to a native language during meetings, repetition of task instructions and lack of negotiation on performance requirements are among the main

causes reported by respondents for task conflict, which then transitions into interpersonal conflict. This relationship is demonstrated by Figure 11 (below).
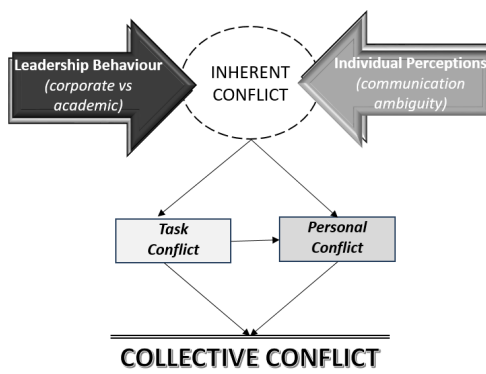

Figure 11. Communication conflict

As presented by Figure 11, inherited conflict in centralised communication to faculty is founded on both the ambidexterity of leadership behaviour and cultural subjectivism in the leader's message. Thus, conflict progresses to a task- and personal conflict. Moreover, according to study findings, task conflict instigates personal-level conflict. Consequently, the outcome is a collective conflict, which can negatively impact the attainment of OR. In addition, the findings provide evidence that including corporate practices within academic leadership processes throughout HE operations expands the scope of administrative tasks faculty face. Such occurrences highlight the conflict over leadership expectations over job performance and reshape the construction and cognisance of the AL/OR relationship in the UAE.

The above illustration of the influence of ambidextrous leadership behaviour and distinct individuals' cultural factors is consistent with the findings in this research, suggesting a disconnect between leaders' and faculty members' moral values and thereby identifying hypocritical leadership behaviour in respondents' reflections. Crucially, there is a noticeable disparity between the authenticity of the organisational vision and policy and how middle-level management operationalises the authentic intentions of the senior management. Generally, the participants' views establish that the intentions are good, but the people implementing them and the cultural background of these individuals are mediating the process, which may initiate multilevel conflict within educational establishments in the Emirates. Thus, the cultural background of the leader, once again, assumes a leading role in moderating individuals' experiences with conflict.

The concept of AL is established on consistency in demonstrating one's moral values and words matching one's behaviour. The realisation of AL hinges on the intensity and the degree to which such values as integrity and transparency are widely shared by other group members and thus demonstrates the benefits of both the leader's and collective credibility (George, 2003; Walumbwa, Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Such behaviour has been central in studies on AL. For example, May *et al.* (2003) and Avolio (2007) state that an authentic leader's ability to confirm claims through adequate action increases subordinates' perceptions of the leader's integrity and credibility. However, the western understanding of the internalised moral dimension in the AL framework, which is defined by a leader's behavioural consistency, has been modified by the power distance and uncertainty avoidance characteristics of the indigenous cultural context in the UAE. Relatedly, Al-rasheed (2001) perceives a limited future orientation as one of the key features of Arab entities. Likewise, the rotational practices in HE in the Emirates influence short-term leadership appointments. This challenges consistency in implementing the academic leader's vision and actions in the long run. Additional obstacles to sustaining consistent leadership behaviour and practices as well as aligning faculty and leaders' values are created by the legislative context in the UAE, which will be discussed in more detail below. Therefore, the realisation of the internalised moral perspective of AL in HE has been underscored as a key factor for avoiding, or instilling, conflict in the education sector in the Emirates.

In line with the previous discussion on cultural climate, interviews highlight employee behaviour driven by fear and job protectionism which manifests as obedience, as opposed to confronting and resolving conflict in a constructive manner. Hence, the findings highlight respondents' awareness of the lack of corrective mechanisms, which, in addition to cultural inferiority complex, prompts faculty to adopt conduct inconsistent with their own morals. In support of these findings, analogous behaviour for avoiding conflict has been reported by research in the Middle East (Al-rasheed, 2001; Yahchouchi, 2009). Nonetheless, the avoidance of conflict and obedience are associated with high-power distance and collectivistic organisation of Muslim society and are instigated by the leader's intentions to avoid upsetting the subordinates (Datta and Gupta, 2015; Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2015; El Haddad *et al.*, 2018). Besides, research highlights the correlation between cultural variables and conflict management styles in the region, accentuating their implicit locus (Gates, 2015; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). In addition, researchers agree that the leadership style in the Middle East is more of a negotiating and third-party

management of conflict, due to the perceived contradictions between socio-collective values and behavioural norms (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002; Limbare, 2012; Lewicki and Sheppard, 2018). Again, this brings the discussion back to the role of middle management (e.g. third party) in mediating conflict in tertiary education in the UAE.

Whereas in Western and Far Eastern cultures conflict is embraced as a constructive enabler of organisational development and success (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003; Liu *et al.*, 2007), in the context of the UAE, conflict instigation and management is congruent with *'give and take'* transactional trust and relational interactions (Rahim, 1983; Yahchouchi, 2009; Saeed *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, neither acknowledging the emergence of conflict nor recognising it as a positive drive for improving HE sector performance has become a norm for corporate and academic leadership in the country (Litz and Scott, 2017; Hassan *et al.*, 2018; Srivastava *et al.*, 2020). What is absent, however, in existing research is the acknowledgement of faculty adaptation to the high-power distance and uncertainty avoidance characteristics of leadership behaviour, reflecting academic staff's cognitive intelligence and maturity.

Additionally, the reflections on conflict and its management in this research could be associated with the balanced processing of information and transparency in communication patterns assigned to AL, which ultimately highlights the leader's cultural individualism in HE in the UAE. Furthermore, the novelty of this study lies in offering a distinctive outlook on the conflict phenomenon as an outcome of AL behaviours, especially by revealing the alignment of leadership and subordinates' values as a potential source of conflict. This contributes to the wider exploration of AL and conflict. Notably, the lack of an adequate cross-cultural exploration and understanding of conflict variables has been addressed by researchers in the Western and Far Eastern context (De Dreu and Beersma, 2005; Liu *et al.,* 2007; Fitzpatrick, 2007). However, the new reflective interpretations offered by this study's participants expose the strategic influence of existing power structures and inter-functional relationships in HE on mediating conflict and sustaining OR. Therefore, the findings contribute to multicultural academic cognisance of implicit reasons for organisational conflict.

Context

The cultural liberalism of the UAE exemplifies the government's vision for diversifying the country's economy and increasing its global business confidence index. Besides, the shared feelings and views of

participants in this study confirm the continuity of the UAE's cultural and industrial transformation. Hence, due to its liberal business landscape, for the last 50 years, the Emirates has accommodated a multicultural workforce from all continents. These strategies enabled the transition of multiple ideologies and customs into the indigenous fabric of the country, as presented by Figure 12 (below).
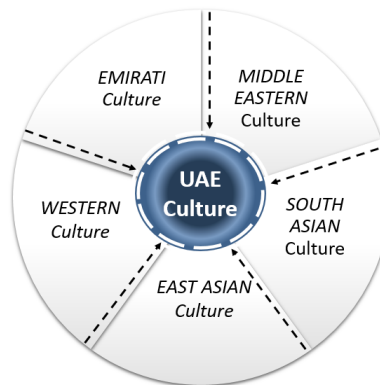

Figure 12. The UAE multicultural context

The formation and composition of the UAE context is dominated by expatriates' cultural backgrounds, creating a heterogeneous milieu. As a result, indigenous socio-behavioural patterns have been influenced by multiple cultural variables from relatively consistent ethnographic locations (House *et al.*, 2004; Minkov and Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, to illustrate its changeable nature, UAE culture is presented (in Figure 12) as a circle with interrupted lines, which allows for the infiltration of multiple ethnicities.

Consequently, the culture of the UAE is no longer necessarily a typical Arabic culture. Furthermore, this phenomenon has permeated into social and administrative structures in HE institutions, where leadership is no longer perceived through a singular cultural lens but is instead understood in consideration of multiple cultural viewpoints. Ultimately, the Emirates exemplifies a unique context as a key feature of its culture is that it is no longer static, as employees transition through the labour market over time, allowing new joiners to come constantly. Fluctuations in immigration and labour law regulations are justified by the government's concerns with the political and economic stability of the region. Thus, as demonstrated in the interviewees' accounts, UAE culture is changeable, fluid, and dependent on the transfer of multicultural dimensions into the country's landscape. Contingent to the

nationalities of each wave of employees, UAE culture can change rapidly or remain the same, causing cultural faddism. Such cultural dynamics have not been reported in another demographic context, and this represents a new contextual factor contributing to understanding AL. Analogous to demographic shifts at a national level, all research respondents report a cultural change in leadership behaviour in their HE institution over the last decade. They justify their perceptions by reflecting on increased anonymity in decision-making, intensified power distance features of the organisational culture, and reduced transparency in communication. These findings reflect the influence of the Emiratisation strategies for employing Emiratis in various positions in the HE sector which alters the interpretative cognisance of AL and its relationship with the OR.

Further contextual factors, such as safety and diversity in the country have been appreciated by all participants. In support of these views, most recently, Gallup's 2021 Global Law and Order Report recognised UAE as one of the safest places on the earth (Gallup, 2021). In addition, other reasons attracting faculty to work in the Emirates include technological advancements and pioneering hybrid education, financial benefits, the location of the country, and the opportunity to socialise with one's own ethnic group. Besides, respondents perceive cultural diversity as a means for innovation and, consequently, the attainment of OR.

Besides, the voices of faculty with both collectivist and individualistic cultural backgrounds confirm the findings of earlier Islamic-focused research, which argues the intention of *'doing good'* for the community members as a core intrinsic motivation for genuine leadership behaviour in the Muslim ideology (Mir, 2010; Aldulaimi, 2019). For example, faculty appreciated the leadership vision in developing state-of-the-art IT systems and implementing strategic training that will enhance faculty skills and ensure the continuity of teaching and learning through adversities. Thus, the findings suggest an acculturation of respondents from western countries. Besides, the centrality of intentions and motives in Islam are the key pre-requisites for authentic behaviour as they signify an individual's intrapersonal commitment to God to do good (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). According to Ali and Al-Owaihan (2008), one's intentions are of utmost importance to Allah as opposed to the actual deeds, which are secondary to the internal aims. In this respect, it is interesting to note that a few participants with individual cultural characteristics define leadership in their tertiary institution on the foundation of the leader's intentions. These views notably indicate altered cultural interpretations that are more closely related to a Muslim understanding

of the leadership domain, as opposed to the Western paradigms. In another instance, two respondents, both from a collectivistic society, perceive their leader's request to perform additional tasks differently. While for one interviewee such a request was normal and faculty followed it without objections, the other saw it from a universalist perspective and addressed it as a demonstration of the leader's transactional trust. Furthermore, an Arab-American participant, who has Middle Eastern origins but also has adopted individualistic cultural behaviour, was very vocal in advocating for both (1) job autonomy and individual recognition based on merits and, at the same time, (2) extending the personal relationship with his leader beyond working hours, which is an example of a joint universalist and relativist viewpoint. Additionally, for two respondents with Western cultural backgrounds, it was important that the leader is *'protective,'* which demonstrates their acculturation and the influence of the UAE's heterogeneous context over their individual perceptions. Besides, their views are consistent with faculty from collectivistic cultures who shared their expectations of *'paternalistic'* leadership behaviour. Such findings are in line with the research of Tierney (2008), who states that expatriates let go of their inherited cultural qualities while working in a different demographic context. Besides, the possibility of behavioural change should be expected as people in the UAE are taken out of their comfort zone and must act, look, talk, and behave differently in an international environment. It should be noted that the reflective accounts of the interview participants also highlighted the alteration of individuals' moral values and beliefs, which demonstrates a significant disparity with extant literature but aligns with the intentional acculturation and voluntary normative behaviour discussed in the paragraphs above.

The dialogue on the existence of cultural waves in the previous paragraphs explicates how this new cultural faddism phenomenon indirectly affects the leadership, along with Emiratisation strategies. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the mandatory renewal of contracts is mandated by the immigration requirements for renewing UAE residency every 3 years. Ultimately, these regulations have a significant impact on corporate leadership practices and, consequentially, on the academic leadership of HE institutions in the country. According to the data, the regular rotation of leadership appointments could be discussed as an outcome of the existing cultural faddism and is projected to consistently influence the leadership composition in academia in the Emirates. Therefore, the country context is a powerful moderator of leadership behaviour. This influence is intensified by targeted Emiratisation across all

economic sectors in the UAE, which reciprocally increases the dependability of leadership behaviour upon the *'wasta'* culture.

In the UAE context, the meaning of *'wasta'* has been altered and is loosely used as a transactional behaviour associated with favouritism and nepotism. As discussed in Chapter 3, *'wasta'* is a unique socio-behavioural practice in the Middle East region demonstrating the relational support between the same group community members (Mir, 2010; Neal *et al.*, 2005). However, this practice has been associated by respondents with unethical leadership practices, the most cited being information seeking, task performance, reverse favouritism, promotions, and cultural preferentialism. On the other hand, the participants did not link *'wasta'* with nepotism as understood in the western organisational culture (Kaushal *et al.*, 2021). Besides, for some of the participants, having preferentialism in hiring Emiratis is expected since the nationals are the least represented group in the country, and Emiratisation has been mandated by the UAE government. Therefore, the understanding of indigenous *'wasta'* practice in this research has been reshaped by multicultural interpretations and adopted for discussing unethical leadership behaviour and practices in higher education in the country.

6.1 Summary of the Discussion

As discussed, this phenomenological research aimed to explore followers' perceptions of AL and ultimately provides evidence that addresses the main research question: *Can operational resilience be achieved through Authentic Leadership behaviours in Higher Education in the UAE?* The comprehensive discussion of the findings in this chapter, drawn from hermeneutic interpretation of participants' life stories, offers a critical review of interviewees' reflections and highlights several weaknesses in existing literature on the research topic. Beginning with explaining the theoretical requirements for an IPA study, the analysis was structured around the six superordinate themes (see Figure 7) that emerged from the interview participants' narratives and IPA. In doing so, the discussion integrated the findings from Chapter 5 with the theoretical frameworks and research evidence presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

The discussion of each of the six superordinate themes presented in this chapter contributes to answering the main research question. It highlights the influence of Islamic ideology on the perceptions of AL behaviours and, overall, the distinct socio-cultural contextualisation of AL in the Emirates. For

example, culturally subjective leadership behaviours significantly alter the concept of trust, which is a cornerstone of understanding AL, by identifying new elements that constitute trustful leader-followers relationships (SP 1). Additionally, a leader's cultural individuality, placed along with rigid organisational structures, creates contradictions and tensions in defining the leadership conundrum (SP 2). Consequently, these behaviours provoke a cultural climate that aligns with cultural preferentialism, rotational leadership, job protectionism, and voluntary normative followership (SP 3). Furthermore, critical analysis of the findings related to cultural climate reveal major disagreements with the existing cultural characterisation of the Emirates, challenging academic awareness of the research context. Relatedly, for communication models (SP 4), which are considered a critical determinant of OR, the research exposes culturally subjective and often misaligned communication styles. A trend of culturally subjective and organisational structure-driven leader-followers dynamics was also highlighted in discussions relating to conflict (SP 5). Finally, when viewed from the heterogeneous cultural perspectives in this research and participants' lived experiences, faculty members' voluntary adjustment to cultural and hierarchical inequalities in the Emirates is evident in all accounts. This is because the UAE's context was perceived as a positive foundation for the materialisation of AL behaviours and achieving OR in HE (SP 6).

Brought together, these six themes offer a new cognisance of AL from an underexplored context and address the question of whether AL behaviours can aid the attainment of OR in the HE sector in the UAE.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

This chapter encompasses the conclusions of the study and discusses their implications for future research. It begins with a review of the research aims and objectives, outlining how the study addresses the key research questions. The next section highlights the value of this work to the existing body of knowledge in terms of theoretical, methodological and contextual contributions, followed by a discussion on the study's limitations. Finally, recommendations for future research are outlined.

7.1 Relationship between Al and OR in HE in UAE

The primary aim of this research was to explore the relationship between AL and OR in HE in UAE. By investigating the ontological and epistemological dimensions of AL and situating it within the UAE's cultural context, the study effectively addressed the main research question. Although there is an academic definition of what AL is on the ground (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008), the IPA offered a novel construal of AL which reflects the participants' lived experiences and the heterogeneous cultural context of the country. Hence, this phenomenological study provides nuanced insights into the conceptualisation, adequacy and applicability of a western AL framework in the UAE context, disputing the notion of its presumed global applicability.

Considering the intensified relationship between a neo-patrimonial leadership culture and the neo-liberal reforms adopted in recent years, the influence of AL on OR in the Emirates cannot be fully understood without adopting a hermeneutic perspective. These constructs are further influenced by critical variables such as the ideological foundations of authenticity (*'niyaah'*) and indigenous construction of, and reverence for, hierarchy. Additionally, the tendency to prefer sub-optimal decisions in team situations (e.g. the invocation of the supernatural in the form of '*inshallah'* as a divine intercessor on decision-making) exposes the interplay between rationality and traditional beliefs. Notably, the findings highlight the conflicts between (1) IT-driven systems that tend to be less patriarchal and culture-bound and therefore are perceived as genuine, and (2) the socio-religiously motivated AL dimension, where decisions that are informed by rationality can be overridden by powerful leadership behaviour.

These tensions influence the participants' cognisance of AL and underscore the dualistic nature of the domain within the HE in the Emirates.

This section addresses the secondary research questions that supported this research, and each one is presented and analysed as follows.

i.   *How do employees' experience of leadership approaches help define the AL domain in UAE?*

The analysis of data establishes that the conventional definition of AL has been prejudiced by Western philosophies. The discrepancy between what was observed in this study based upon faculty members' experiences and academic publications from Western, Far Eastern and the broader Middle Eastern regions, was not necessarily based on the merits of AL but on the interpretative cognisance of the actual emergence and practice of AL behaviour in the country. This tension was evident throughout participants' reflective accounts of their experiences with leadership behaviour while working in the HE sector and challenges a concrete definition of the four AL dimensions (e.g., self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalised moral perspective) which has hitherto been presented (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). For example, while authenticity is viewed as an intrapersonal virtue in Western literature (Harter, 2002; Van den Bosch and Taris, 2018) and an interpersonal quality in Far Eastern literature (Whitehead and Brown, 2011), in the UAE the perceptions presented an unalterable unity of both. Thus, by encompassing both intra- and inter-personal features, authenticity in the UAE assumes a dualistic nature. This novel finding is an outcome of the mediating role of three key factors: (1) cultural subjectivism in interpreting the concept, (2) the influence of the Islamic ideology, and (3) language dichotomy. The divergence in linguistic semantics, uncovered by this research, demonstrates the novelty of the findings and their impact on an overall understanding of AL.

The conception of self-awareness as a contextual variable in this study demonstrates the most striking disparity with the existing theory in both Americo-European and Far Eastern literature. In the West, intrapersonal intelligence is associated with deep self-knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses (Gardner *et al.,* 2005), feelings (Kernis and Goldman, 2006), and self-improvement behaviour (Ilies *et al.,* 2005); while in the Far East, the centrality in comprehension is assumed by the leader's relationship with the group. In contrast to both viewpoints, the features of the self-awareness dimension in the UAE context are associated with the leader's rank and positional power within the hierarchical HE

organisational structure. Besides, the leader in Muslim communities is unable to exhibit self-awareness due to the presence of rigid control systems, which are instigated by the ultimate authority (e.g., Allah). Thus, comprehension of the variable is consistent with the Islamic model of leadership and resonates with the power distance socio-behavioural environment in the country. Furthermore, the implicit nature of UAE culture, where showing affection and feelings is perceived as a leadership weakness, influences leadership behaviour that is impassive and neutral. These findings contradict both: (1) the western affirmation that leaders are likely to adopt a distinct behaviour and exert pressure to parade positive emotions and attain happiness (Slabu *et al.,* 2014), and (2) the far eastern expectations towards leaders for achieving balance between positive and negative emotions (Li *et al.,* 2014). Therefore, the scale of these disparities with existing literature arising from the research moderates the self-awareness axiom of the AL framework and ultimately, the experiential cognisance of AL in the Emirates.

Nonetheless, the research data are inconclusive on how important self-awareness is for faculty members, as they expected this to be demonstrated by explicit AL behaviours, as opposed to self-disclosure, which is commonly perceived as a leader's weakness by Muslims (Aldulaimi, 2019). Leadership behaviour in HE in the UAE is predominantly system-driven. In addition, considering the presence of the reversed model of 'trait' and 'state' authenticity (see Chapter 6), there is very limited opportunity for the actual materialisation of self-awareness and behavioural consistency with the leader's inner moral values and beliefs. These findings could be affiliated with the Islamic model of authenticity, which tolerates the misalignment of a leader's intentions (e.g. *niyyah*) and actions (see Section 3.4). Moreover, according to Islamic ideology, the authenticity of the leader's actions transitions from the individual's intentions, which are perceived to be consequential to one's moral beliefs and therefore genuine (Abdulahi, 2016). Ultimately, the research outcomes support a Muslim-influenced construction of authenticity, which is acceptable to followers.

The exploration of cultural sensitivity in interpreting the constituents of trust between faculty and leadership, and between peers, uncovered new variables influencing the process, which are organisational systems and policies. Noticeably, the data provides evidence of the mutuality of authentic trust between subordinates and the organisational context, which is a novel feature in the relational transparency dimension of AL. Thus, trust, as a key motivator of AL behaviour, has adopted multilayered vertical and horizontal dimensions in this study. The vertical dimension is moderated by the quality of

trust between the middle-level management and subordinates, which is affected by cultural subjectivism in policy interpretation. Moreover, while in western literature, the level of trust is measured by subordinates' perceptions, the emphasis in this study falls on the leader's trust in subordinates, contradicting earlier studies on AL behaviour. This is a unique occurrence in the organisational culture in the HE sector in the UAE, and there is very limited evidence of this in other studies, regionally and internationally. This novel discovery highlights the cultural (e.g. Islamic and hierarchical) congruence of the tenets of AL in the Emirates. Furthermore, these findings are relevant to the new system-driven leadership and initiate a discussion on the authenticity of the organisational systems and context that has not been discovered by previous research.

Nonetheless, taking into consideration multiple culture-bonded interpretations evident in the interviews, the findings conflict with the characterisation of the balanced processing dimension in western research (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008). Noticeably, leaders' decision-making practices in HE are authoritative and pseudo-consultative (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Boussif, 2009), partially demonstrating consultation, but not necessarily inclusive, on taking in broader views and perspectives in the process. Hence, the decision itself remains within the power and authority of the leader as prescribed by Islam (Kabasakal *et al.*, 2012; Aldulaimi, 2019). Additionally, in the collectivistic Muslim community, followers are not expected to make strategic decisions on their own but to follow the leader's authority (Aldulaimi, 2019). Hence, anonymity and centralised decision-making processes in HE in the UAE are reflective of power distance and Islamic proponents of leadership practices. These approaches could be defined as means for enacting AL behaviour without descending into the leader's weakness. According to the Muslim leadership prototype (Mir, 2010), unilateral decisions over the future of the group reaffirm the leader's expertise and authentic power over the strategic vision for the community's well-being.

However, in the HE context, this style is associated with a lack of trust and avoiding personal accountability. Thus, the balanced processing component in the AL framework is infused with masculinity and is dependent upon the individual leader's cultural background (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008). Besides, masculinity has been acknowledged by Arab participants as a demonstration of a female leader's self-confidence and gender inclusiveness. Although the UAE has scored low on the individualistic scale in both the GLOBE (House, 2004) and Hofstede and Minkov's (2010) studies, by highlighting masculinity and individualistic features in the leadership behaviour, the findings of this research challenge the existing

cultural characterisation of the country. Moreover, the study exposes the gender-prompted cultural shift in the individuals' behaviour towards an individualistic context, which is a new contribution to existing cross-cultural research. Hence, the phenomenological exploration of AL in the Emirates necessitates updating the old-fashioned cultural dimensions scale. Partially, this divergence may be attributed to the influence of western curriculum and qualifications attained abroad, as well as the consistent influx and influence of western management practices in the country over the past fifty years.

The lack of evidence from the followers' experiences of the behavioural operationalisation of a leader's moral values and beliefs highlights a key disagreement with the commonly accepted conceptualisations of AL (George, 2003; Gardner *et al.,* 2005, Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008). Firstly, the findings may be explained by the multilayered hierarchy and influence of middle-level leaders' cultural individualism and, secondly, explained in relation to the presence of cultural faddism and the inconsistent UAE context. Although AL in HE is established through organisational policies and systems, the mediating influence of middle-level management style influences followers' perceptions of moral integrity and consistency in AL behaviours. Thus, the moral internalisation perspective in the AL taxonomy has been reshaped through diverse cultural behaviours and viewpoints in this study. Compared to the main body of literature which links the authentic leader's behavioural integrity with increased follower trust, motivation, and organisational outcomes (Leroy *et al.*, 2012; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014), the findings in this research slightly deviate from earlier assertions in the sense that in the UAE context, trust is also dependent on structure, systems, and policy.

This research pioneers the exploration of cultural variability in AL by capturing the phenomenological experiences of authentic and inauthentic leadership behaviour through the participants' narratives. This leads to an altered understanding of the dimensions of AL, caused by the influence of diverse contextual circumstances. Most respondents identify two aspects of AL: (1) the salient variables, which include the element of trust, cultural preferentialism, communication habits, and reverse favouritism; and (2) the visible attributes, which were presented by the company vision, faculty professional development, management control mechanisms, decision-making style, and organisational systems. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the data provides evidence of the inadequacy of the western-centered AL framework for the UAE context and contradicts the notion of the universality of AL behaviour across diverse socio-demographic regions (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Slabu *et al.,* 2014). In this respect, the research supports

the concerns made by researchers in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Far East with regard to the transferability and applicability of the conventional AL dimensions to a broad, distinct cultural context (Robinson *et al.,* 2012; Slabu *et al.*, 2014; Al-Barghouthi, 2017). Although over the past decade academic discussion on AL in the West has progressed through phases of understanding, definition and practice, the cognisance of the domain in this study emerges within a power distance culture and also reflects the unpredictable and fluid UAE context. Hence, cultural mischaracterisation of the country serves to occlude the influence of heterogeneous cultural settings over the articulation and appreciation of the AL construct in the literature.

ii.   What UAE contextual factors influence AL behaviour and practices in UAE?

The interpretive subjectivity in defining AL constituents in this research highlights the distinct socio-cultural contextualisation of the domain. This demonstrates the key inconsistency with the existing theorisations of AL in Western literature (George, 2007; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). The discrepancy is due to the culturally pluralistic context and hierarchical nature of the indigenous Muslim leadership model in the UAE (Davidson, 2005; Heard-Bey, 2005). In support of these findings, a similar association between the leadership style in the UAE and the cultural context has been reported in research into leadership conducted in various corporations in the UAE (Neal *et al.*, 2005; Bin Taher *et al.*, 2015; Al-Obthani & Ameen, 2019). While the nature of these corporations is not the same as the HE context, that research has identified the same dependency of a leader's behaviour upon cultural individualism. Therefore, the actuality of the UAE context presented by this research stands in contradiction to earlier preconceptions, although partial similarities could be traced to renowned cultural classifications (House, 2004; Hofstede and Minkov, 2010; Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). For example, this research illustrates the projection of elevated gender-centered masculinity traits and behaviours, as well as the long-term orientation of the authorities' leadership practices. Furthermore, the structured performance management process across all private and public entities emphasises individuals' merits, as opposed to collective achievements, which in return offers an updated outlook of the Emirates cultural context in terms of the individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance dimensions.

Cultural pluralism in the Emirates is motivated by the infusion of diverse ethnicities and ideologies into the indigenous Arabic culture. Additionally, the western curriculum and qualifications offered by HE

institutions moderate cultural individualism in the UAE. Essentially, the process of acculturation led some research participants to 'let go' of their native cultural identity and adopt new culturally influenced positions. In this view, the discovery of the presence of reversed 'trait' and 'state' authenticity model (Slabu *et al.* 2014) is consistent with the uniqueness of the heterogeneous socio-cultural and economic circumstances in the Emirates. In addition, the safety and financial benefits offered to faculty have been beneficial irrespective of the variety of beliefs, behaviours, and expertise. Hence, the economic benefits indirectly support the emergence of a voluntary normative followership culture within HE institutions in the country.

These findings are distinct and demonstrate the uniqueness of this research, as such discovery has not been associated with AL behaviours in HE in the UAE and the global HE context. However, they are congruent with patriarchal and transactional leadership behaviours in the former sheikhdoms and the values of Islam (Heard-Bey, 2001). Furthermore, fixed-term contracts and the presence of immigration policy-induced cultural faddism in the Emirates have influenced rotational leadership practices in the HE sector which, in turn, are impacting the clarity of communication, transparency of organisational vision, information dissemination on strategic decisions, and trust. Besides, cultural faddism and government-driven Emiratisation have instilled a sense of cultural inferiority within the organisational culture, and, therefore, influenced the operationalisation of the Western-centered AL framework within the HE sector. Nonetheless, since the UAE context is unpredictable, so is trust and leadership integrity, which contradicts the western arguments for behavioural consistency in the AL model (Walumbwa, Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

Conversely, advanced technological developments and their utilisation are appreciated by the participants in this study. Therefore, the analysis of the interview identified the transition of authentic behaviours into IT system-driven leadership processes, which demonstrates the UAE's genuine vision for the future development of the country (see Section 1.3).

However, it should also be noted that faculty participants changed their values because they realised they do not have opportunities to change the system. Thus, systems take precedence over abilities. Following systems and policies can override an individual's moral values and behavioural integrity. In the HE context in the UAE, the ultimate authority is the next person above the leader and the next above

that leader and so on until top leadership is reached. So therefore, in the country, the definition of self-awareness should incorporate reliance on the system and on power. Hence, a person's ability to detect who they are is also in congruence with who people are aware they really are. Therefore, moral values are changeable. Although the literature indicates that cultural values are consistent over the long term and personal work values are long-lasting, the UAE has a coercive and abstract management mechanism, that forces everyone to adapt. Although ethical behaviour is a core value in AL, the meaning is obscured by centralised decision-making processes and individuals' fear of losing their jobs. Hence the features of power distance in the native culture govern the emergence of the AL behaviours in HE. Moreover, the influence of neo-patrimonial government directives on the operations of HE institutions, which are associated with global neo-liberal reforms in the sector, enable the simultaneous transition of authentic (government) and market-driven (corporate) leadership models, which has influenced conventional academic and AL practices. Thus, the corporatisation of the leadership in HE is the key challenge to realising AL behaviours.

It is not a surprise that in contrast to the western model, AL behaviour in the UAE is associated with an Islamic perception of AL (Shahin and Wright, 2004; Karacay *et al.*, 2018). Measured in western terms, the findings indicate the emergence of a partial AL model (e.g. vision, intentions, policy, systems), with consultative (e.g. decision-making), and transactional (e.g. trust) behaviour in HE in UAE, and thus an altered AL framework, which reflects the cultural heterogeneity in the country, will suit the UAE context in the future.

The literature indicates that the cultural value orientation of followers has an impact on how AL is received and perceived by followers, highlighting the potentially culturally sensitive nature of AL (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008). Thus, the AL framework in HE in the Emirates assumes the position of a dependent variable, which is subjected to multiple contextual and cultural influences. Ultimately, despite its fluid cognisance, according to participants' beliefs, practicing AL behaviour can be significantly enhanced in the UAE with two key modifications to be applicable to the distinct cultural context of the country: (1) restructuring the high-power distance hierarchy, and (2) leaders relinquishing their cultural restraints. This will reduce the organisation system's control over leadership behavioural consistency and increase relational transparency and trust levels within the leader-faculty dyad.

How does AL behaviour influence operational resilience in UAE?

The main objective of this phenomenological research was to establish a comprehensive understanding of AL and its propensity in attaining OR in HE in the UAE. The richness of research data demonstrates the experiential understanding of AL and, consequently, establishes the relationship of the AL domain with OR. In theory, OR is an exogenous variable (Fiksel, 2006), challenging academic leadership with attaining innovative ambidexterity (Shaya *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, OR in tertiary education has been perceived as a three-step process that includes anticipation, coping, and adaptation of physical and human resources systems (Shaya *et al.*, 2022). Relatedly, leadership practices in each of these stages have been defined as directive (anticipation), delegative (coping), and participatory (adaptation) (Shaya *et al.*, 2022). In this respect, and as evidenced in this study, the altered model of AL, which encompasses features of power distance and distinct socio-behavioural patterns in the Emirates, is situated to be a better enabler of attaining OR as opposed to a western-defined AL model.

According to current statistics, seven HE institutions in UAE have been listed as AACSB members (AACSB, 2020), and six HE enterprises have been accredited by ACBSP (ACBSP, 2022). In addition, a government federation of seventeen colleges has become the World's First HE institution in the Emirates to achieve QS ESG 5-Star ranking in the Environment, Sustainability, and Governance (ESG) category (HCT, 2022). Furthermore, in a study published by the French Consultancy Emerging and Times Higher Education, according to the Global Employability Ranking and Survey 2020 (GEURS), Abu Dhabi University has been ranked best for employability in the UAE and third in the Arab world. Furthermore, the sector sustained continuity of the learning and continues to reinvent the HE through IT and methodological innovation during and after Covid-19 (Ashour, 2021; Shaya *et al.*, 2022) which has also been acknowledged and appreciated by interview participants. Thus, the participants' observations highlighted positive outcomes from the authentic efforts of both government and academic leadership in terms of inspiring the evolvement of the HE entities by creating new knowledge and thereby achieving OR. Similarly, the vision of both public and academic leadership and investments in (1) IT advancements (systems resilience), (2) developing regulatory frameworks (organisational infrastructure resilience), (3) ensuring faculty preparedness (employee resilience), and (4) encouraging innovation have been acknowledged in this study as key factors in attaining organisational human and IT systems' resilience, and therefore institutional OR.

However, the extent and value of leadership practices in this process demonstrate only partial association with western criteria in relation to AL behaviours (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). Hence, the achievement of OR in the tertiary education sector in the Emirates could be perceived as an outcome of partial human (leadership) and partial system-driven contributions. As discussed in chapters one, two and three, advanced developments and utilisation of IT-driven leadership processes in HE have been mandated under the UAE authorities' agenda for digitalising teaching and learning methodology and administrative services across all business sectors. Relatedly, the research participants acknowledged their trust in the wider organisational context.

Despite successes in the international academic arena and the growth of the sector in the UAE, faculty members voiced their concerns with unethical leadership behaviour in their institutions. This is due to the participants' hermeneutic association of leadership behaviours with the distinct individual's cultural inheritance and the power distance of the academic leadership. In respect, the findings differ from Shaya *et al. (*2022), who argue for the attainment of OR in HE in the UAE on the foundations of decentralised leadership power. By contrast, the features of AL practices in this study are explained by the power distance foundation of the indigenous culture in the UAE. Besides, earlier research by Shaya *et al. (*2022) explores the value of two generalised leadership traits (e.g. empathy and communication) for OR, as opposed to a comprehensive exploration of AL behaviours which is presented by this study. Relatedly, the academic participants perceive several issues with the definition and utilisation of AL as a tool for achieving OR, due to the continuing expansion of HE in the UAE. Growth in the sector is significant, even during the adversities due to Covid-19, presenting a reverse relationship between AL and OR.

Essentially, it can be assumed that AL partially contributes to the attainment of OR, and there might be other factors responsible for the nature of OR in HE, as the research findings indicate the lack of the operationalisation of the western-based AL behaviours. In this view, the findings align with earlier arguments on the lack of affirmative correlation between the AL framework and OR (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Antonakis and Day, 2011; Chan and Cheung, 2012; Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Luthans *et al.*, 2007). However, such assumptions do not consider the development of this relationship (e.g. AL-OR) within diverse socio-cultural circumstances, as is the context of this research. Moreover, there is a need

to investigate if there is an altered model of AL in other demographic contexts, similar to the evidence from this study, which contributes to the attainment of OR.

7.2 Contributions to Theory and Practice

This research makes several significant contributions across theoretical, methodological, empirical, and contextual dimensions. The study provides insights into both the theoretical understanding and practical application of Authentic Leadership (AL) and Operational Resilience (OR) within the context of Higher Education (HE) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

i. Theoretical Contributions

The study fills a notable void in the existing literature by exploring the interplay between AL and OR in a non-Western, culturally rich environment. It challenges the prevailing Western-centric narratives by highlighting the importance of socio-cultural factors, particularly Islamic values and collectivist traditions, in shaping perceptions and practices of AL in the UAE. Additionally, the research critiques outdated cross-cultural studies, highlighting contradictions in the understanding of 'authenticity' between Western and Middle Eastern contexts. The study tackles the scarcity of research on AL within the context of OR in HE in the UAE and offers a more holistic understanding of leadership dynamics in the Middle East, contributing to the global discourse on AL.

ii. Methodological Contributions

This work is pioneering in utilising both phenomenological methodology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) within the UAE's HE sector to explore AL. Employing IPA within a hermeneutic phenomenological framework enables the nuanced exploration of participants' lived experiences and provides rich, context-specific insights into AL behaviors in the UAE's HE landscape. This dual-layered interpretative process allows for a deeper understanding of how AL behaviors are perceived and enacted in the UAE's HE sector, offering a model that can be adapted to similar contexts. Besides, by adopting a constructivist approach, the research captures diverse experiential interpretations of AL, bridging methodological gaps in predominantly quantitative Western studies.

iii.   *Empirical Contributions*

This study offers significant empirical contributions to the understanding of AL and OR within the context of HE in the Emirates. *Firstly*, the research identifies the emergence of a two-dimensional model of AL influenced by Islamic leadership principles, highlighting the coexistence of Universalist and Relativist ideologies. This finding underscores the interplay between global leadership concepts and local cultural values in shaping leadership behaviors in the UAE's HE sector. *Secondly*, the study uncovers new dimensions of AL, such as reliability, a reversed model of 'trait' and 'state' authenticity, and the presence of hierarchical authenticity. These insights reveal how cultural, linguistic, and gender-specific factors influence perceptions of authenticity and leadership behaviors, offering a nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics in a collectivist society.

Furthermore, participants' narratives highlight the role of Information Technology (IT) systems in mediating AL behaviors. This indicates a transition towards system-driven leadership processes, emphasising the evolving nature of leadership in technologically advanced educational environments. Additionally, the research sheds light on leadership dynamics within the UAE's HE context, particularly the limited accessibility of academic leadership by faculty and communication challenges within leadership dyads. These findings are particularly valuable for HE institutions in the UAE and similar regions aiming to enhance OR through culturally congruent leadership practices.

iv.   *Contextual Contributions*

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, this research is the first to utilise phenomenological methods combined with IPA to explore AL's role in achieving OR within the UAE's HE sector. Therefore, it provides context-based definitions of AL, addressing conceptual ambiguities in existing literature. Furthermore, the research offers an updated overview of the UAE's distinct political, social, economic, and religious environment, arguing for the ideological and cultural congruence of leadership concepts. By capturing the unique socio-cultural and religious dynamics of the UAE, the study offers a framework for developing leadership models that are both culturally sensitive and effective in promoting OR within HE institutions.

Lastly, the timing of this research aligns with the UAE government's vision to transform the HE sector into a strategic stakeholder in the knowledge economy. By capturing the internal and external pressures

on the HE sector, the study offers timely insights into how AL can contribute to achieving organisational ambidexterity and resilience, aligning with national strategic objectives.

In summary, this research enriches the theoretical landscape of AL, introduces methodological innovations through IPA, and provides practical frameworks for enhancing OR in culturally diverse HE settings.

7.3 Limitations of the research

While the findings of this research are novel and valuable, the study does suffer from several limitations, as is the case with many studies. First, due to the adopted phenomenological methodology, conclusions and insights may not be replicable or generalisable (Laverty, 2003; Smith, 2017). This is because social constructivist researchers aim to get closer to understanding a certain phenomenon in its own context (Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019), but in doing so, the generalisability of the research findings is sacrificed. Therefore, although the participants' views produced rich qualitative data, the observations of ten respondents are insufficient to be representative of followers in the HE sector in the UAE and generalised within the larger corporate population in the country and across diverse demographics. However, the principle of IPA is not to draw predicative conclusions; rather, it is meant to explore and understand a particular phenomenon, in this case AL, so the question of depth has been achieved in this research.

Second, the fear factor, in terms of job security and low level of trust by the participants, as well as their proficiency in the English language, limited the researcher's access only to faculty in HE institutions in the larger emirates. Despite being one of the biggest educational hubs in the country, the researcher feels that the richness of data could have been expanded if faculty from the smaller Emirates were able to contribute to this study by interpreting their lived experiences with leadership behaviour in a more traditional cultural environment.

7.4 Implications for future research

In several ways, this study paved the way for new research exploring AL and the relationship between AL behaviour and OR in the HE in both the UAE and more widely broadly, in a similar heterogeneous cultural environment. At the same time, this research has raised several questions in need of further investigation.

From the research findings a new socio-demographic phenomenon was discovered, reflecting both 'cultural faddism' and 'cultural inferiority' in the UAE, which is 'rotational' leadership. This emerges due to the distinctness of the cultural context of this study. This study established that the heterogeneous ethnic landscape of the country differentiates the UAE context from both: (1) the homogeneous cultures in West and Far East, and (2) outdated and limited cultural characterisations of the Emirates. Thus, further cross-cultural research will help to revise this mischaracterisation and update the understanding of the UAE context.

By exploring the cognisance of AL in culturally pluralistic enterprises, this study uncovered new dimensions of the phenomenon that reflects the complexity of the UAE environment. Therefore, further exploration of the meanings assigned to AL in another sector in the UAE, or in a similar multicultural environment in a different demographic, will test the assumptions of congruence of trust, authenticity and the AL framework with the power distance features of the indigenous cultural context. Nonetheless, future investigation may focus on offering insights into the ideological foundation of authenticity and AL, as this research indicates the proximity of current perceptions to Islamic ideology.

As this study reveals the presence of a reverse model of 'trait' and 'state' authenticity in HE in the Emirates, and superficial behavioural authenticity, further research is needed to explore if, and how, 'trait' and 'state' authenticity vary across demographics, as the current literature on this issue is lacking both in quantity and clarity.

Additionally, this study identified the importance of IT and organisational context-driven AL behaviour in the HE sector, which is relevant to the government's vision for accelerated technological developments and digitalisation of operations across all businesses. Therefore, these findings suggest new avenues for

future research in exploring the transition of AL behaviours into organisational systems' infrastructure in the UAE and diverse contexts.

Moreover, structuring future research on AL by considering individual value systems might assign new dimensions to the existing AL taxonomy and will deliver supplementary evidence on the relationship between dimensions of AL. Besides, the operationalisation of AL's corresponding leadership behaviour might differ in another (multi)cultural setting. Thus, enriching cross-cultural cognisance of AL with variables from different demographic contexts and taking into consideration the linguistic semantics will help identify which leadership behaviour is perceived as authentic or inauthentic by the followers in another unique cultural context.

In terms of methodology, advancing qualitative research using IPA is recommended, as to date, the IPA approach has been critiqued by several researchers (Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Pringle *et al.*, 2011). The arguments are related to critiquing the use of small sample sizes and dubious bracketing traditions. However, the successful application of IPA in this research serves as reassurance for future researchers who might be discouraged by the criticism of IPA or be skeptical regarding the utility of IPA. The current study has confirmed that each individual respondent's voice should be heard in the exploration of the AL model to capture the diverse experiences and understandings of followers. Only by speaking to participants directly, and interpreting what their experiences are, will researchers be able to understand what employees really mean by AL behaviours, and how they make sense of the contribution of such behaviours to achieving OR.

To conclude, the hermeneutic perspectives gained in this research address the main research question by offering an experiential understanding of AL and its influence in fostering the attainment of OR in the HE sector in the UAE. Although the expectation is that the variables that define AL are universal, the participants' voices in this study challenge these assumptions and highlight the cultural influence in how AL and OR should be paired, correlated, or associated. The adopted phenomenological approach and the richness of the data enabled the construal of an altered model of AL and revealed a partial contribution of AL behaviours towards achieving OR. Moreover, the exponential growth of the sector during adversaries, such as the Covid-19 health pandemic, indicates the possibility of a reverse relationship between AL and OR. Hence, further cross-cultural exploration of the dependence of OR on AL behaviours

will expand the understanding of whether there are other exogenous variables that contribute to the sustainability and expansion of the HE in the Emirates.

Additionally, the ideological and distinct socio-cultural contextualisation of AL in the Emirates challenges the western cognisance of the domain and addresses concerns with the lack of quality and clarity on understanding the adequacy and applicability of AL in diverse contexts. The findings suggest that previously defined dimensions of AL are incongruent with the leadership behaviours and definitions in the country, as they fail to reflect the unique cultural underpinnings of the AL framework. Therefore, as evidenced by this study, an altered model of AL may be better situated to achieve OR in diverse cultural and demographic contexts. Ultimately, this research contributes to addressing the gaps in the global cross-cultural exploration of AL and offers a new perspective to the academic discourse on the role of AL in aiding OR.

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Appendix A: Database Search Results (Leadership and UAE, Leadership and Middle East)

leadership+middle east

11 results

Applied filters

Clear all filters

Scholarly Journals ☒
leadership ☒ NOT (arts
management ☒ AND
management styles ☒ AND
behavior ☒)

☐ Select 1-11

☐
1

Scholarly
Journal

Soekarno's Strategic Leadership For The World
Kristiyanto, Hasto; Yusgiantoro, Purnomo; Octavian, Amrulla; Midhio, Wayan.
Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education; Trabzon Vol. 12, Iss. 11, (2021): 3462-3470.

Abstract/Details   Full text - PDF (197 KB)

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Search results 1 – 10 of 66

Per page 10 20 50   Sorted by relevance

☐ (0)   ❝ Citations: download RIS

☐   ✔ Content available

Book part   Publication date: 15 July 2009

Leadership assessment and development in the mid-East

Val J. Arnold

I remember talking with Hugh Stephenson some time in the early 1980s after he

🗎 HTML

🗎 PDF (146 KB)

🗎 EPUB (71 KB)

🔗 LINK
Check for full text

Access

☐ Only content I have access to
☐ Only Open Access

Year

From 1985 until 2020 ✖

327

Appendix B: Database Search Results (AL and OR)

EBSCO

Research Databases

Full Text

Archive

authentic leadership+operational resilience

Clear All Filters ×   Archive ×   Full Text ×

No results found.

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Search results

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No Search results

Access
☐ Only content I have access to
☐ Only Open Access

Year
From 1985 until 2020 ×

ProQuest   Access provided by
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authentic leadership+operational resilience

2 results

Modify search   Recent searches   Save search/alert ▾

Applied filters
Scholarly Journals ×

☐ Show results outside my library's subscription.

Sorted by
Relevance ▾

Limit to
☐ Full text

☐ Select 1-2

☐ 1   Arching from Function to Form—Important Design Elements of Simulation Exercises (SimEx) in Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Management   Full Text ❽
Covaciu, Andra Iustina; Abrahamsson, Marcus; Beck, Albrecht; Rai, Shivani; Sapkota, Niroj; et al.
Education Sciences; Basel Vol. 11, Iss. 11, (2021): 718.
...leadership, operational teams deployed, etc.), the organizational culture, and...
...technologies, i.e., integrating audio-visual components, green screens authentic...
...resilience stakeholders. In order to make sure a long-lasting improvement is...
Abstract/Details   Full text   Full text - PDF (2 MB)   Show Abstract ▾

☐ 2   An Examination of the Relationship between Some Aspects of Workplace Spirituality and Job Satisfaction among Female Nurses in India   Full Text
Iyer, Ramajanaki Doraiswamy.
South Asian Journal of Management; New Delhi Vol. 25, Iss. 2, (Apr-Jun 2018): 167-188.

Access provided by **Higher Colleges of Technology**

JSTOR

All Content   Images

authentic leadership operational resilience

Search ▾   Browse ▾

Refine Results

SEARCH WITHIN RESULTS

ACADEMIC CONTENT:
☐ Journals (15)

DATE:
Enter as YYYY, YYYY/MM, or YYYY/MM/DD

FROM
[   ] CE ▾

15 results

Sort by: Relevance ▾   Export Selected Citations ▾

☐ JOURNAL ARTICLE

Relationship between Entrepreneurs' Psychological Capital and Their Authentic Leadership

Susan M. Jensen, Fred Luthans
Journal of Managerial Issues, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 2006), pp. 254-273

...JOURNAL OF MANAGERIAL ISSUES Vol. XVIII Number 2 Summer 2006: 254-273 Relationship between Entrepreneurs' Psychological Capital and Their Authentic Leadership Susan M. Jensen Assistant Professor of Management University of Nebraska-Kearney Fred Luthans George Holmes Distinguished Professor...

328

Appendix C: Email to Heads of Departments

↩ Reply all ⌄   🗑 Delete   ⊘ Junk   Block   ⋯

Kind request for nomination of research participants

BB   **BOUKAREVA Bistra**   👍 ↩ ↩ → ⋯
Wed 6/2/2021 8:44 AM

To: ~~████████████████████████████████~~

Dear Chair/Head/ Programme Leaders,

I am writing to seek your help in identifying members of your team that are willing to be interviewed for approximately 90 minutes. My PhD studies requires me to interview employees working in Higher Education in the UAE and I would very much like to get input from your team on the topic I am studying. The selected individuals should have completed at least one 3 years contract in UAE, and have excellent level of English.

Please see below for the full title of my study and contact details should your team prefer to contact me directly:

Title: Role of Authentic Leadership in Achieving Operational Resilience in Higher Education – UAE Context

Thank you very much and I look forward to sharing the output of my study with anyone who would like to be part of the research!

Bistra Boukareva

056-6159103
b029892h@student.staffs.ac.uk

↩ Reply all ⌄   🗑 Delete   ⊘ Junk   Block   ⋯

Re: Kind request for nomination of research participants

~~████████████████████~~   👍 ↩ ↩ → ⋯
Fri 6/4/2021 3:45 PM
To: BOUKAREVA Bistra

Dear Bistra,

There is a chance some of my colleagues will be willing to support your research. You will need to call me to arrange a suitable meeting with the team.

Best of luck

~~████~~

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research Project

The Role of Authentic Leadership in Achieving Operational Resilience in Higher Education in the UAE Context

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you are happy to take part, it is important that you understand what the project is about, why I am inviting you to take part, and exactly what is involved. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the project about?

The main research objective to be explored is the relationship between authentic leadership and operational resilience in UAE. The research will therefore investigate how authentic leadership behaviour is defined and operationalized in the cultural context of the UAE. By including, exploring, and interpreting individual's perceptions and assumptions of leadership behaviours, as experienced by the participants, this research aims to analyse the relationship between the authentic leadership behaviour and the organisational outcomes in the Higher Education in the UAE.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been selected to participate in this study as you are a seasoned professional and have been a subject to various local (UAE) and international assignments and have also, therefore, experienced to various leadership practices.

What does it involve?

Taking part would require participating in an individual interview, approx. 1 hour, with the researcher.

Are there any risks or benefits?

There are no personal risks or disadvantage involved in taking part in the research. The research has been approved by the Business School's Ethics Committee at Staffordshire University, UK.

There are no personal benefits for the people who take part, but any knowledge that is gained as a result of the research will be made available to the participants.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and the collected data will be completely anonymised. The participants in the interviews will also be anonymised, and you would be able to withdraw from the session at any point.

Will I be identified in the report?

No. None of the information that you provide will identify, or be attributed directly to, you in the final report. The anonymity of everyone who takes part will be protected in the final report.

Any personal information that you provide will be confidential and accessed only by the researcher. Transcripts of the individual interviews will be stored securely whilst the research is being undertaken, and will be destroyed in accordance with University procedures that are in force when the project is completed.

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This research is being undertaken for the purpose of completing a research report as part of my studies toward a MPHIL/PHD BUSINESS. If you have any queries or questions related to this research, please contact me on +971566159103, or by email: b029892h@student.staffs.ac.uk. If you have any concerns about this research, please feel free to contact my supervisor: Dr. Steve French, Stephen.French@staffs.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Individual Interview

Project Title: The Role of Authentic Leadership in Achieving Operational Resilience in Higher Education in the UAE

Please read each statement, and tick the box next to it to indicate that you are in agreement with the statements.

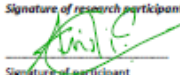| Statement	
I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	☑
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	☑
I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.	☑
I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.	☑
I agree for this interview to be recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.	☑
I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.	☑
I confirm that quotations may be used in the report, provided that the quotations are anonymised and do not reveal my identity.	☑
I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.	☑
I understand that my data, signed consent form and original audio recording will be securely stored and retained in accordance with Staffordshire University protocols and current data protection guidelines.	☑
Should I wish to receive a copy of a summary of the study findings I will provide my contact email in the address box below	

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk.
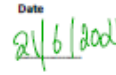
Page 1 of 1

Signature of research participant
Signature of participant
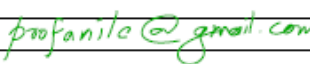
Date
21/6/2024

Signature of researcher
I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Date

Signature of researcher

* Participant Email Address (optional)	profanile @ gmail.com

Appendix F: Ethical Statement

Ethical Statement (To be read at the start of each interview)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research which seeks to understand the different aspects of leadership in the UAE. As this is an entirely voluntary interview, you are free to withdraw from participating or stop the interview at any time. Please note that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. However, your name will not be used directly in any part of the work. I would like to seek your agreement to proceed with the interview

Participant: YES/NO.

NB

In addition to this, the researcher will email each participant the "Participant Consent Form". This form will go to each participant ahead of the interview. However, during the Covid-19, paperless confirmation in an email format would be acceptable as an approval.

Appendix G: Indicative Individual Interview Questions

Guide Questions for the Interview

According to Smith (2004) phenomenological research is based on in-depth interviews for collecting data, using open ended questions. Additionally, Smith and Osborn (2007) defined the research methods as meaning-giving instruments of individuals' perceptions of reality. Thus, it is important to investigate the detailed personal accounts of employees towards the distinct meaning-action relationship. Furthermore, the objective of this study is to rely on interviewees' interpretations of the context being explored, to understand what leadership qualities they perceive as authentic, and the outcomes of authentic leadership (AL) behaviour in the HE in the UAE. For that reason, the researcher will use semi-structured interviews utilising the interview schedule format (Smith and Osborn, 2007b). However, the questions for the interviews will be used only to guide the research agenda, and not to direct respondents' interpretation of experiences. The interview questions are broad and general so the participants will be able to freely construct meaning of the reality.

1. How would you describe your background?
2. Tell me about when you joined this organisation - what was the main reason for you to seek employment in this organisation?
3. What does "being true to yourself" mean to you?
4. How would you compare your experience of a leader in the UAE with your own country?
5. In your community, what do you consider to be a 'genuine' behaviour when leading others?
6. What is it like working with a leader from a different culture than your own?
7. What set of behaviours will make you trust your leader?
8. Tell me about a time when your leader followed through a promise he/she made to you or your team.
9. Tell me about a time when your leader admitted that he/she made a mistake? How does that make you feel as an employee?
10. What leadership practices make you feel supported by your leaders(hip)?
11. Considering UAE contracts are not any longer than 3 years, describe how your manager supports your contract renewal.
12. Tell me about a time when you received recognition and how did that make you feel?
13. How would you describe the role of your leader in your professional development?
14. Tell me about a time when you confidently shared your point of view and your feelings with your leader?
15. Tell me how you feel about the suitability of your leader to be in this position.
16. Tell me about the main issues you are facing at work and how your leaders(hip) assist you in solving these issues.

Appendix H: Example of Double Hermeneutics Analysis

Handwritten annotations surrounding the transcript:

Top margin: Subordinate (left), Superordinate (right)

Left margin annotations: Disclaimer / participant / approval; Cultural identity / acculturation / sation; protection / self-doubt; Definition / self / others

Right margin annotations: CULTURAL CLIMATE; proof of self-culture not disclosed; TRUST CONTEXT; TRUST; Leader-Subordinate / Subordinate - Leader

Boris Transcripts

1 00:00:00 Researcher OK, so good morning. Thank you very much for agreeing to
2 participate in the interview. This is a research which seeks to understand the
3 different aspects of leadership in UE. As this is an entirely voluntary interview and
4 we discussed that already earlier, you are free to withdraw from participating or
5 stop the interview at any time. Please note that the interview will be recorded and
6 transcribed, however, your name will not be used directly in any part of your work,
7 so I would like to seek now your agreement to proceed with the interview. Please
8 state your response for the record.

9 00:00:20 Boris

10 Yes, I agree.

11 00:00:25 Researcher

12 Thank you, OK, thank you very much. So I would like to start our conversation first
13 with giving you the opportunity to introduce yourself. And how would you describe
14 your background.

15 00:00:35 Boris

16 Well, I teach business and I teach business because I have qualifications in business
17 management at the Masters level. I have a degree in economics and my PhD is in
18 Organizational psychology and over the past 15 years or so I have been teaching
19 in higher education across UK landscape, Vietnam and the Middle East. I have had
20 some appointments also in Africa on a visiting professor basis. So that's just about
21 me. I have a background mainly in England, but I have ancestry together as well.

22 00:01:16 Researcher

23 Would you please describe what does it mean to be "true to yourself"?

24 00:01:25 Boris

25 If you are true to yourself you are, from an interpretative point of view, you are
26 reflecting on what' is happening around you and making the right decision without
27 a fear of failure. So this means you are making the decision to either take yourself
28 out of trouble or make a decision that does not take the interest of other people
29 into consideration.

30 00:02:20 Researcher

31 So you already have acquired quite substantial experience in UAE. Can you tell me
32 what sort of behaviors will make you trust your leader?

33 00:02:27 Boris

34 Well, trust is a big thing and you know the set of behaviors that might help in trust
35 in my leader, there are so many variables I can think of at the moment. And I
36 suspect that if my leader can trust me, then on the other hand I can also trust him.
37 So to me it's kind of mutual. If he can trust me, I will trust him. Also kind of

(handwritten right margin: 80, 81)
(handwritten right margin top: LEADERSH? benefi... a...)

(handwritten left margin: Rotational positions)

38 exchange, but at the same time, if my leader can protect me and then I'll, I would

39 tend to believe that there is trust from this leader.

40 In the Middle East, particularly. Expatriate contracts tend to be short in UAE.

41 They don't last any longer than three years, and whatever I do within the three

42 year period might define my renewal. And so if along the way I feel that my leader

43 supports me. Within the three years such that I get a renewal if I so wish to get

44 a renewal, then that is a trust issue. But in addition to that, how? How does my

45 leader treat me in comparison to other people? If I were to tell him my personal

46 issues and if I were to go to him for help, would he receive that information?

47 Contain that information, or would he dispatch that information to other people?

48 And that is a confidentiality issue. Here, where if he cannot be trusted to keep my

49 confidence, then that becomes an issue which will affect our relationship in the

50 long run. But at the same time, I believe that if my leader supports my work, you

51 know we work in a very difficult terrain. It's a very fast moving organization, so if

52 my leader can support me such that I succeed or all the things that I do. Not only

53 that I tick the right boxes in terms of my KPI achievement. Then I can rely on him.

54 So here I'm trying to equate trust to reliability. If you can support me to do my

55 work, so that's what comes to mind immediately, but I'm not sure if I've answered

56 your question, but that's what comes to my mind immediately. There are so many

57 other factors also.

(handwritten left margin: trust, inclusiveness, trust, context)
(handwritten right margin: CONTEXT)

58 00:05:04 Researcher

59 OK, thank you very much. Plustell me about when you join this organization. What

60 was the main reason for you to seek employment in this organization?

61 00:05:18 Boris

62 That's an interesting question. Also, I have to say in summary that I actually

63 didn't seek to join this organization. I was headhunted by a headhunter from

64 England. And that was back in. Uh, I think that was back in 2014, to 1015. I was

65 still in Vietnam and this headhunter came to Vietnam. I think to form some

66 collaboration with our University and other universities. So he told me about. This

67 organization I'm currently working for and asked me if I was interested and I told

68 him "not really" because I didn't know much about the region and in the past I

69 haven't really. Then I read much about the advantages of the region, particularly

70 the country, and so I wasn't keen on joining. But then he went back and he said

71 to me that because I have kids, and, uh, he believes that the quality of life in the

72 UAE was going to be better. Compared to where I was at the moment at the time.

73 I considered that I could give it a try, so then he sent me the application pack and

74 we went through back and forth.

(handwritten left margin: self aware, benefits)
(handwritten right margin: context)

75 Now, at that stage I started reading about the country and reading about the city,

76 and you know all the positive things that go on here so I then compared those

77 things with where I was at the moment and I felt that it was much better. But the

78 key decision point was the distance from here to England. It was much shorter.

79 In comparison to the distance between Vietnam and UK from Vietnam to UK would

2

(handwritten left margin top: ...ip)

80 take 13 hours from Dubai to UK would take about 7 1/2 hours, so that was a

81 decision point as well, but I have to say at some point having gone through all the

82 application process. And I got shortlisted and made an offer. The offer was quite

83 attractive at the time. And on the face value. So. As someone who knows and

84 teaches economics, I have to make a decision based on financial remuneration.

85 But at the same time what I didn't think about immediately was the social aspect,

86 and constraints there, the psychological problems as related to my work. Now I

87 was not in a position to know how my work was going to be. Was it going to be

88 intense or whether it was going to be. Uh, the state of school. So. That would be

89 something we can talk about later on, but I made a decision based on the Distance

90 to UK. Made a decision because my kids were growing up and then I made a

91 decision. Above all, that the financial remuneration was attractive.

(handwritten left margin: benefits, adapt)
(handwritten right margin: CULTURAL CLIMATE CONFLICT)

335

Appendix I: Nvivo 12 Cross-coding

Name	Files	/ References	Created By	Created On	Modified By	Modified On
TRUST	0	0	BB	27/11/2021 12:29	BB	27/11/2021 12:30
Positivity	6	8	BB	12/02/2022 09:30	BB	12/02/2022 09:49
Leader-subordinate trust	7	17	BB	27/11/2021 13:50	BB	16/01/2022 14:47
Subordinate-leader trust	7	11	BB	27/11/2021 13:50	BB	12/02/2022 08:39
Peer trust	7	14	BB	27/11/2021 13:50	BB	10/01/2022 13:24
Feedback	7	17	BB	27/11/2021 13:50	BB	15/01/2022 11:46
Reneging	8	14	BB	27/11/2021 13:50	BB	16/01/2022 10:39
LEADERSHIP CONUNDRUM	0	0	BB	27/11/2021 12:30	BB	27/11/2021 12:30
Micromanagement	4	10	BB	27/11/2021 13:52	BB	09/01/2022 13:46
Rotational positions	5	9	BB	27/11/2021 13:53	BB	14/01/2022 14:34
Transparency and Inclusiveness	7	13	BB	27/11/2021 13:52	BB	15/01/2022 13:37
Leadership vs Management	8	24	BB	27/11/2021 13:52	BB	14/01/2022 13:51
Power	9	36	BB	27/11/2021 13:53	BB	15/01/2022 13:37
Favouritism and Nepotism	9	20	BB	31/12/2021 13:08	BB	20/01/2022 17:13

Name	Files	/ References	Created By	Created On	Modified By	Modified On
CULTURAL CLIMATE	0	0	BB	27/11/2021 12:29	BB	27/11/2021 12:29
Definition of authenticity and genuinen	0	0	BB	30/11/2021 12:13	BB	30/11/2021 12:13
Acculturalisation	4	6	BB	09/12/2021 10:44	BB	15/01/2022 12:41
Protecionism	5	9	BB	27/11/2021 13:34	BB	20/01/2022 17:11
Organisational policy	5	6	BB	09/01/2022 15:06	BB	16/01/2022 14:41
Cultural identity	9	25	BB	09/12/2021 10:44	BB	09/01/2022 16:28
COMMUNICATION MODEL	0	0	BB	27/11/2021 12:31	BB	27/11/2021 12:31
Timeliness	2	2	BB	28/11/2021 15:43	BB	10/01/2022 13:24
Negotiation	3	6	BB	28/11/2021 15:43	BB	10/01/2022 13:24
Email Instruction and Communication cl	6	12	BB	28/11/2021 15:43	BB	11/02/2022 11:06
IT systems	8	18	BB	28/11/2021 15:43	BB	12/02/2022 09:20
UAE NATIONAL CONTEXT	0	0	BB	27/11/2021 12:31	BB	27/11/2021 12:31
Infrastructure	0	0	BB	28/11/2021 15:44	BB	28/11/2021 15:44
Benefits of working in UAE	0	0	BB	28/11/2021 15:44	BB	28/11/2021 15:44
Adapt to leadership style	0	0	BB	28/11/2021 15:44	BB	28/11/2021 15:44
Peace and security	2	2	BB	28/11/2021 15:44	BB	09/02/2022 15:20
Wasta culture	3	4	BB	02/01/2022 12:54	BB	09/02/2022 15:04
CONFLICT	0	0	BB	27/11/2021 12:31	BB	27/11/2021 12:31
Personality	5	7	BB	28/11/2021 15:45	BB	11/02/2022 12:36
Culture	4	6	BB	28/11/2021 15:45	BB	12/02/2022 09:41
Task	6	7	BB	28/11/2021 15:45	BB	11/02/2022 11:00
Moral values	8	14	BB	09/01/2022 14:07	BB	12/02/2022 09:27