

**ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE
PERFORMANCE: MODERATION EFFECT OF
SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AMONG
THE PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN UAE**

REEM ALI OBAID ALI AHLI

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2025

**ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE
PERFORMANCE: MODERATION EFFECT OF
SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AMONG
THE PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN UAE**

by

REEM ALI OBAID ALI AHLI

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Mohd Faiz Hilmi, my dedicated and perceptive supervisor, for his invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout the completion of this thesis. His experience, constructive input, and support helped shape the course of my research.

I am also grateful to the instructors and employees of the School of Distance Education at Universiti Sains Malaysia for creating a positive academic environment. The university's resources and facilities have significantly contributed to the success of my studies.

Furthermore, I want to thank my family and friends for their understanding, encouragement, and patience throughout this academic journey. Their support has been a constant source of inspiration.

This thesis is the culmination of the collaboration and support of these individuals and institutions, and I am truly grateful for their contributions.

.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
ABSTRAK	xii
ABSTRACT	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement	5
1.3 Research Questions	12
1.4 Research Objectives	13
1.5 Study Scope.....	14
1.6 Conceptual Definition of the Variables.....	15
1.7 Organisation of the Study.....	16
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.1 Introduction.....	19
2.2 Employee Performance	19
2.3 Abusive Supervision	27
2.4 Turnover Intention	31
2.5 Job Stress.....	36
2.6 Agile Leadership	40
2.7 Supportive Work Environment through Perceived Organizational Support..	47

2.8	Underpinning Theory: Job Demand-Resource (JDR) Model	55
2.8.1	Job Demand-Resource (JDR) Model in Identifying the Variables of this Study	58
2.9	Research Framework and Hypotheses Development (H1-H8).....	60
2.9.1	Abusive Supervision and Employee Performance (H1)	62
2.9.2	Job Stress and Employee Performance (H2).....	65
2.9.3	Turnover Intention and Employee Performance (H3)	68
2.9.4	Agile Leadership Employee Performance (H4).....	69
2.9.5	Moderating Role of Supportive Work Environment (H5, H6, H7 and H8).....	70
2.10	Gaps Identification	73
2.11	Conclusion.....	77
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		78
3.1	Introduction	78
3.2	Research Design.....	78
3.3	Population and Location of the Study	82
3.4	Sample Size and Technique	84
3.5	Unit of Analysis	86
3.6	Sampling Technique.....	89
3.7	Research Instruments	91
3.7.1	Employee Performance	91
3.7.2	Abusive Supervision	93
3.7.3	Job Stress.....	94
3.7.4	Turnover Intention	96
3.7.5	Agile Leadership	97
3.7.6	Supportive Work Environment	98

3.8	Pre-Test and Pilot Test	98
3.9	Marker Variable	99
3.10	Data Analysis Methods and Techniques	100
3.11	Statistical Analysis	102
3.11.1	Data Screening	102
3.11.1(a)	Missing Data.....	102
3.11.1(b)	Normality.....	102
3.11.1(c)	Common Method Bias (CMB)	104
3.11.2	Descriptive Statistic	105
3.12	Two-Step Approach	105
3.12.1	Measurement Model Assessment.....	105
3.12.2	Structural Model Assessment.....	106
3.13	Moderating Effects.....	107
3.14	Conclusion.....	107
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS		108
4.1	Introduction	108
4.2	Data Collection and Response Rate	108
4.3	Linearity	109
4.4	Homoscedasticity	110
4.5	Testing for the Collinearity	111
4.6	Demographic Analysis	113
4.7	Descriptive Outcomes	115
4.8	Common Method Bias (CMB).....	119
4.9	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test.....	121
4.10	Assessment of the Measurement Model	123

4.11	Analysis of the Structural Model	137
4.11.1	Direct Relationships	139
4.11.2	Moderating Relationships	142
4.11.3	Q ² of the Model	148
4.11.4	f ² of the Model.....	149
4.12	Hypotheses Remarks	152
4.13	Conclusion.....	153
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION		154
5.1	Introduction	154
5.2	Discussion of the Results	154
5.2.1	RQ1 How Does Abusive Supervision Affect Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	154
5.2.2	RQ2 How Does the Job Turnover Intention Affect Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	158
5.2.3	RQ3 How Does Job Stress Affect Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	160
5.2.4	RQ4 How Does Agile Leadership Affect Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	162
5.2.5	RQ5 Is There a Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on the Relationship between Abusive Supervision and Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	165
5.2.6	RQ6 Is There a Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on the Relationship between Job Turnover Intention and Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	169
5.2.7	RQ7 Is There a Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on the Relationship between Job Stress and Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	171
5.2.8	RQ8 Is There a Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on the Relationship between Agile Leadership and Employee Performance in the UAE Public Sector?	174

5.3	Contributions of this Study	176
5.3.1	Theoretical Contributions	177
5.3.2	Methodological Contribution	182
5.3.3	Practical Contributions	183
5.4	Policy Suggestions	186
5.5	Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies	189
5.6	Conclusion.....	191
	REFERENCES.....	193
	APPENDICES	

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1 Employee Performance Items	92
Table 3.2 Abusive Supervision Items	94
Table 3.3 Job Stress Items.....	95
Table 3.4 Turnover Intention Items	97
Table 3.5 Agile Leadership Items	98
Table 3.6 Supportive Work Environment Items	98
Table 3.7 Pilot Testing Scores	99
Table 3.8 Measurement of the Marker Variable	100
Table 4.1 Response Rate	109
Table 4.2 Linearity Results	110
Table 4.3 VIF and Tolerance	112
Table 4.4 Age Distribution of the Respondents	113
Table 4.5 Gender Distribution of the Respondents.....	114
Table 4.6 Qualification of the Respondents.....	114
Table 4.7 Working Experience of the Respondents.....	115
Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics.....	117
Table 4.9 Total Variance Explained	120
Table 4.10 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test	122
Table 4.11 Reliability and Convergent Validity	126
Table 4.12 HTMT Ratio.....	131
Table 4.13 Fornell-Larcker	133
Table 4.14 Relative Loadings and Cross-Loadings	135
Table 4.15 R ² of the Model.....	138

Table 4.16	Direct Relationships between the Variables	142
Table 4.17	Moderating Relationships	146
Table 4.18	Q^2 of the Model.....	149
Table 4.19	f^2 of the Model	150
Table 4.20	Final Remarks about the Hypotheses.....	152

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 Research Framework	61
Figure 3.1 Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Suggestion for Sample Size Selection	86
Figure 3.2 Normal P-Plot of the Regression Standardized Residuals	103
Figure 3.3 Histogram of the Regression Standardized Residuals	104
Figure 4.1 Response Rate	109
Figure 4.2 Assumption of Homoscedasticity	111
Figure 4.3 Measurement Model Input	125
Figure 4.4 Factor Loadings of the Relative Items	127
Figure 4.5 Cronbach Alpha for the Latent Constructs	128
Figure 4.6 Composite reliability for the Latent Constructs	128
Figure 4.7 SEM input Diagram	140
Figure 4.8 Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support between Abusive Supervision and Employee Performance.....	147
Figure 4.9 Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support between Agile Leadership and Employee Performance	147
Figure 4.10 The Moderating Effect of perceived organizational support between job stress and employee performance.....	148
Figure 4.11 SEM Model Output.....	151

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A Survey Questionnaires

**ANTESEDEN PRESTASI PEKERJA: KESAN MODERASI
PERSEKITARAN SOKONGAN KERJA DALAM KALANGAN PEKERJA
SEKTOR AWAM DI UAE**

ABSTRAK

Prestasi pekerja telah diterima sebagai antara pemain peranan asas bagi kejayaan organisasi. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor seperti penyalahgunaan peranan penyeliaan, tekanan pekerjaan, kecenderungan pusingganti pekerjaan, dan kepimpinan '*agile*', yang mempengaruhi prestasi pekerja dalam sektor perkhidmatan awam di Emiriah Arab Bersatu (UAE), dengan persekitaran pekerjaan yang menyokong sebagai faktor penyederhana. Dengan berpandukan kaedah kajian kuantitatif yang menggunakan kaedah borang soal selidik, kajian ini telah mengumpulkan data daripada 396 responden daripada sektor awam di UAE. Kajian ini telah melakukan penganalisan data kualitatif seperti statistik deskriptif, ujian andaian multivariate, bias kaedah biasa, dan *Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin* (KMO) dan Barlett. Selain itu, kajian ini turut menggunakan model pengukuran dan penilaian model struktur menggunakan Smart PLS versi 4. Dapatan kajian ini menyokong lima hipotesis kajian iaitu H1, H2, H4, H5, H7 dan H8. Secara terperinci, kajian ini telah berjaya membuktikan kewujudan kesan faktor-faktor seperti penyalahgunaan peranan penyeliaan (H1), tekanan pekerjaan (H2), kepimpinan '*agile*' (H4) terhadap prestasi pekerja dalam sektor perkhidmatan awam di UAE. Kajian ini turut membuktikan kewujudan peranan persekitaran pekerjaan yang menyokong sebagai faktor penyederhana antara faktor penyalahgunaan peranan penyeliaan dan prestasi pekerja (H5), antara tekanan pekerjaan dan prestasi pekerja (H7) serta antara kepimpinan '*agile*' dan prestasi pekerja (H8). Namun, dapatan kajian ini menolak dua hipotesis kajian, iaitu

H3 dan H6. Dapatan kajian ini bukan sahaja tidak menyokong kesan faktor kecenderungan pusingganti pekerjaan terhadap prestasi pekerjaan (H3), namun turut tidak menyokong peranan persekitaran pekerjaan yang menyokong sebagai faktor penyederhana antara faktor kecenderungan pusingganti pekerjaan dan prestasi pekerja (H6). Kajian ini percaya bahawa dapatan kajian telah memberikan sumbangan dari aspek teori, metodologi dan praktikal serta penambahbaikan polisi yang berkaitan dengan prestasi pekerja dalam sektor perkhidmatan awam di UAE.

**ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: MODERATION
EFFECT OF SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AMONG THE PUBLIC
SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN UAE**

ABSTRACT

Employee performance has been acknowledged as one of the fundamental drivers of organizational success. Accordingly, this study aims to identify antecedent factors, namely abusive supervision, job stress, turnover intention, and agile leadership, that influence employee performance in the public service sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with a supportive work environment acting as a moderator. Guided by a quantitative research approach employing a survey instrument, data were collected from 396 respondents in the UAE public sector. This study conducted quantitative analyses including descriptive statistics, multivariate hypothesis testing, common method bias assessment, and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s test. Furthermore, this study also employed a measurement model and a structural equation model using SmartPLS version 4. The results support five study hypotheses, namely H1, H2, H4, H5, and H8. Specifically, the study demonstrates significant effects of abusive supervision (H1), job stress (H2), and agile leadership (H4) on employee performance in the UAE public service sector. It also confirms the presence of a supportive work environment as a moderator between abusive supervision and employee performance (H5), between job stress and employee performance (H7), and between agile leadership and employee performance (H8). However, this study rejects two hypotheses, namely H3 and H6. The results indicate that turnover intention does not exert a significant impact on job performance (H3), and the moderating role of a supportive work environment between turnover intention and employee performance

(H6) is not supported. This study contends that its results contribute to theory, methodology, and practice, and offer policy implications relevant to employee performance in the UAE public service sector.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's competitive environment, organizations regard employee performance as a central determinant of success or failure (Zurnizam et al., 2024). Performance encompasses the specific work activities employees undertake, the methods they use to accomplish tasks, and the extent to which their efforts contribute to organizational development. It reflects both an individual's capability to perform and the actual realization of work outcomes, shaped by leadership and the effective use of resources. Over the past few decades, leadership has been identified as a critical driver of organizational performance (Shafiu, Abdul Manaf, & Muslim, 2019), influencing strategic direction, resource allocation, and the realization of both financial and non-financial outcomes. The organizational outcomes partly reflect the actions of powerful actors within the organization; leaders' behaviors, choices, and allocation of resources shape performance both directly and indirectly. Related perspectives argue that leaders play a decisive role in formulating policies, guiding processes, and creating a competitive advantage through intangible assets such as leadership quality, competence, and skills (Khalilov, 2025).

Within this broad landscape, agile leadership has emerged as a pertinent yet relatively underexplored construct. Defined by the capacity to adapt to changing markets and organizational dynamics, to view the organization as an adaptive system, and to emphasize collaboration, problem-solving, and stakeholder inclusion, agile leadership promises to remove barriers to performance and enable rapid responses to change (Ncube et al, 2024). It embodies a mindset and set of practices that prioritize flexibility, learning, and cross-functional teamwork, all of which are crucial in times of transformation. However, the literature provides limited empirical guidance on how

agile leadership interacts with other performance determinants, such as job demands, workplace climate, turnaround pressures, and interpersonal dynamics, particularly in public-sector settings where rigid hierarchies and formal protocols can hinder agility. Moreover, there is a need to understand how agile leadership translates into tangible outcomes for public organizations (Hans, Basil, & Shettigar, 2025), including increased employee engagement, reduced burnout, improved retention, and enhanced service quality. As a result, the applicability and effectiveness of agile leadership in improving public-sector performance remain insufficiently evidenced.

Job stress is another central determinant of performance (Daniel, 2019). Conceptualized as the mismatch between workplace demands and available resources, job stress yields negative consequences for individuals and organizations. The Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model provides a widely used framework for understanding how job demands (e.g., workload, role ambiguity, supervisory pressure) and job resources (e.g., social support, autonomy, effective leadership) influence stress, engagement, and performance (Li, Chen, & Yuan, 2025). Transactional stress theories further illuminate how individuals appraise and cope with workplace demands, shaping outcomes such as burnout, turnover intentions, and productivity. Turnover intention, as the intent or propensity to leave an organization, has been studied extensively, yet its relationship with performance remains nuanced. Depending on the context, turnover can harm morale and productivity or, paradoxically, bring in new skills that enhance performance, underscoring the importance of context-specific investigations (De Winne et al., 2018).

Abusive supervision, characterized by hostile or demeaning behavior from supervisors, has been shown to undermine motivation, increase burnout and turnover intentions, and decrease productivity and service quality (Mdhlalose, 2025).

Conversely, a supportive organizational environment, including perceived organizational support, can buffer these adverse effects and foster engagement and performance (Chan et al., 2024). The literature consistently indicates that perceived organizational support serves as a key moderator, mitigating the adverse effects of high demands and mistreatment, thereby promoting well-being and performance. By providing emotional and instrumental support, recognizing employee efforts, and ensuring fair treatment, perceived organizational support helps maintain morale, reduces stress, and sustains motivation even when leaders exhibit challenging behaviors or when job demands are elevated.

This buffering effect is particularly salient in high-pressure contexts where workload, customer expectations, and reform pressures intensify daily tasks. When perceived organizational support is present, employees are more likely to perceive setbacks as manageable and remain committed to organizational goals, which in turn supports consistent performance, discretionary effort, and positive work outcomes despite adversity (Afridi, Afridi, & Asadullah, 2024). Thus, fostering a strong culture of organizational support is crucial for mitigating the deleterious consequences of abusive supervision and sustaining high performance (Dudija, Naibaho, & Wibowo, 2024).

Turning to the specific context of the UAE public sector, it is essential to recognize the unique working conditions, policies, and challenges that shape employee performance. The UAE public administration operates within a distinctive governance framework, characterized by rapid reform, digital transformation (e.g., e-Government initiatives), and a diversified workforce drawn from local and expatriate labor markets (Abuzanjali & Bashir, 2024; Nasir, 2023). Government initiatives aimed at modernization, such as public-sector efficiency programs, performance governance,

and talent development schemes, influence job design, workload distribution, compensation, and career progression. Workforce demographics in the UAE reflect high expatriate representation, youth-heavy cohorts, and varying educational backgrounds (Al Oraimi, 2020), all of which affect attitudes toward leadership, stress, and retention. Sector-specific challenges include coping with ambitious reform agendas, the demand for high-quality customer service, workload intensification under New Public Management (NPM), style reforms, and the need to balance traditional public administration norms with innovation-driven expectations (Maesschalck, 2004). These conditions create a distinctive environment in which leadership agility, supportive climates, and well-being initiatives are likely to play pivotal roles in sustaining employee performance.

In this context, this study seeks to clarify how abusive supervision, job stress, agile leadership, and turnover intention influence employee performance within UAE public-sector organizations, and how perceived organizational support moderates these relationships within the JDR framework. By situating the analysis in a public-sector context, this study acknowledges the distinctive governance structures, reform pressures, and workforce composition that differentiate UAE ministries from those in the private sector. Integrating a UAE-specific lens on working conditions with the JDR model (Blignaut, 2025) enables a nuanced examination of how high job demands, such as intensified workloads, interact with available resources, including agile leadership, supportive climates, and perceived organizational support, to shape performance outcomes. This approach aims to identify not only direct effects but also the buffering roles of organizational support in mitigating stress and reducing the adverse impact of abusive supervision on performance. The overarching goal is to generate rigorous, contextually grounded insights that can inform practical interventions, ranging from

leadership development and workload design to well-being programs and resource allocation tailored to the realities of UAE ministries and agencies, thereby enhancing overall public service effectiveness.

1.2 Problem Statement

The performance of public-sector employees in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a critical driver of public service effectiveness, citizen satisfaction, and the successful implementation of reform initiatives across ministries (Khalifa et al., 2025; Al-Suwaidi et al., 2024). In the context of rapid governance changes and digital transformation, understanding the factors that shape employee performance within UAE public organizations is essential for ensuring efficient service delivery and public value creation. The introduction of New Public Management (NPM) has created issues directly affecting employee performance (Indahsari & Raharja, 2020). With the increased focus on customer satisfaction, employees, especially managers, are facing heavier workloads, which have disrupted their work–life balance (Al Hebsi & Wilkins, 2023).

As a result, employee performance has suffered. It is essential to understand how NPM is negatively impacting employee performance in the UAE public sector to find ways to improve it. Moreover, results suggest that low employee performance is associated with poor workplace conditions, including burnout and emotional exhaustion (Avr & Bandaru, 2024). A report by Qualtrics reveals that 36% of workers feel burned out, and 43% are emotionally drained due to toxic work environments and inadequate compensation. This workplace stress is negatively affecting employee performance, as workers struggle to maintain productivity (Salman, 2023). Addressing these issues

through improved work-life balance and fair compensation is critical for boosting performance and retaining talent in the UAE region.

More specifically, it has been found that organizations face several challenges, including employee retention, higher seasonal work demand, employee theft, employee safety, and employee productivity, among others. Moreover, it has been found that employee's retention is among the key challenges for organizations operating in the UAE (Startup HR Toolkit, 2023). Additionally, one of the latest results, as published by Gulf News (2023), states that employee retention is considered one of the most significant issues faced by various organizations in the UAE. The report further reveals that employee turnover intention is a significant concern that is prevalent in the UAE, which consequently impacts their performance and output.

In addition, employees' turnover intention is also observed as a determinant of organizational performance, both in public and private organizations, as expressed by Zeffane and Melhem (2017). Meanwhile, the studies linking employee turnover and turnover intention remain a significant topic of interest in the fields of human resources, management, and social sciences (Mihajlov & Mihajlov, 2016). However, studies linked with the turnover intentions have shown some mixed. More specifically, over the last couple of years, it is believed that public employees tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and have a lower intention to leave (Kumari & Pandey, 2011; Steel & Warner, 1990; Koch & Steers, 1978).

On the other side, Wang (2012) observed that public sector employees are less satisfied, which may lead to a higher level of turnover intention as well. A detailed literature review reveals that turnover intention (TIN) and organizational performance in the UAE region have not received significant attention. In this context, further research is warranted, as expressed by Zeffane and Melhem (2017). They have taken a

sample of 311 employees from both public and private organizations working in the UAE and show that there is a lower level of employee turnover intention in public sector firms. At the same time, their turnover intention is primarily linked to their perception of organizational performance. This suggests that both employees' turnover intention and organizational performance are linked to each other. However, no recent evidence has been found specifically for the public employees working in the UAE regarding their turnover intention and its influence on employee performance.

Job stress is also regarded as another significant indicator of poor performance dynamics in both public and private organizations (Magesa & Mtey, 2024; Jamil et al., 2023). From the context of the UAE, it is observed that half of the employees working in the country have expressed interest in changing their jobs over the next 12 months, which is higher than the global average of about 13 percent (Cigna 360 Wellbeing Survey, 2021). At the same time, stress among the UAE workforce is considered the highest, with an overall percentage of 88 during recent times. More specifically, *“People have consistently suffered from overwork, which has led half of the UAE’s working population to consider leaving their jobs,”* said Jerome Droesch, CEO at Cigna MEA and SEA.

Additionally, the young generation with an age range of 18-34 years is more willing to leave their current occupation at 55 percent, respectively. Furthermore, during the recent pandemic, approximately half of the employees worked longer hours when working from home, mainly because of a higher workload and excessive employer workload as well (Kooli, 2023). The above-stated facts have made it evident to explore the trends in job stress among public employees in the UAE and their ultimate influence on employee performance.

In addition, according to Tepper's (2000) definition, when a leader manifests abusive supervision, their employees are mistreated by their hostile behavior, whether it is verbal or non-verbal. However, it does not include physical contact. This abuse towards employees would lower their performance and attitude, resulting in higher costs (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). It also damages other beneficial outcomes for leaders, employees, and organizations as well (Johnson et al., 2012). According to Johnson et al. (2012), in comparison with transformational behavior, abusive behavior is relatively inconsistent daily and has a variance of 61% within a person. Thereby, leaders who exhibit abusive supervision today may not exhibit the same behavior in the future. Such behavior from leaders is observed to harm employee performance.

Likewise, it has been found that abusive supervision also significantly and adversely determines the level of employee performance, for which both theoretical and empirical evidence have been presented (Harris et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2023). This is because when employees are subjected to mistreatment and hostile behavior from their supervisors or managers, it creates a toxic work environment, which ultimately affects the employee's performance negatively. Moreover, such behaviors tend to decrease employee motivation, increase job burnout, turnover intention, job stress, and lower productivity, while reducing the level of innovation among employees and leading to negative customer interactions. These facts suggest that employee performance is low due to the abusive work environment created by supervisors.

Although the adverse effects of abusive supervision, job stress, and turnover intention are key factors that negatively influence employee performance and productivity, Rasool et al. (2021) believed that a supportive organizational environment can be regarded as a panacea for mitigating such workplace harmful outcomes. In this regard, Akgunduz et al. (2023) claim that perceived organizational support is positively

related to employee happiness and job dedication, which are key indicators of promoting employee performance in a fruitful direction. It means that entities like public sector in the UAE need to create a supportive work environment to reduce the levels of stress, turnover intention, and abusive supervision.

At the same time, leadership agility, in the form of collaboration with employees and coworkers, empowerment, and servant leadership, can also create a positive impression among employees, thereby boosting their performance levels (Arifin & Purwanti, 2023). However, it has been found that the available literature till date is unable to provide a comprehensive research framework where the impact of job stress, abusive supervision, agile leadership, and turnover intention towards employee performance would have been moderated by the supportive work environment, hence a significant knowledge and literature gap as present till date specifically from the context of public sector employees in UAE.

The public sector in the UAE is particularly relevant for this line of inquiry because it operates under distinct governance structures, labor market conditions, and policy imperatives that differentiate it from the private sector. Understanding the drivers of performance in this context informs targeted public administration reforms and workforce planning. Policymakers and agency leaders in UAE ministries can benefit from results that pinpoint where interventions such as leadership development, workload management, and workplace climate improvements will most effectively enhance performance and retention. Practically, this study offers actionable guidance for designing work climate improvements, leadership development programs, and resilience-building initiatives. The results support evidence-based HR decisions, including workload distribution, compensation strategies, and wellness programs, to sustain high performance amid organizational change.

The study is framed within the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model. Job demands (e.g., workload under NPM, job stress, abusive supervision) are expected to deplete employees' energy and hamper performance. In contrast, job resources (e.g., agile leadership, supportive organizational climate) are anticipated to buffer the adverse effects and promote engagement and performance. Perceived organizational support serves as a key moderator, potentially mitigating the impact of demands on outcomes such as turnover intention and performance. By integrating agile leadership, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support within the JDR framework, this study extends the model's applicability to the UAE public sector. It assesses how resources can sustain performance under demanding conditions.

This study identifies several interlocking gaps that necessitate investigation in the UAE public sector. First, a population gap exists. There is a paucity of research on how abusive supervision, job stress, agile leadership, and turnover intention affect employee performance among public-sector employees in the UAE. This gap is not only about missing knowledge but also about whether these drivers function similarly or differently across UAE ministries, with implications that could extend to other Arab populations. Second, an empirical gap persists because, although employee performance has been studied extensively, the UAE remains underrepresented in research on job stress, interpersonal mistreatment, turnover intention, and agile leadership within public organizations. This lack of context-specific evidence limits the external validity of existing models and hinders the formulation of targeted public management strategies. Third, a methodological gap characterizes prior work, which often relies on simple regression or correlational designs.

Furthermore, the theoretical gap concerns the limited application of the JDR model in explaining how agile leadership and turnover intention predict employee

performance, with perceived organizational support as a moderator, in UAE public-sector contexts. This limits our understanding of how demands and resources interact to shape performance under the pressures of reform in public administration. Finally, a practical knowledge gap highlights the scarcity of actionable guidelines on fostering a supportive climate that moderates the relationships between job stress, abusive supervision, turnover intention, and agile leadership and performance.

Thus, based on the discussion above, there is a pressing need to investigate employee performance among public-sector employees in the UAE. The following section narrows down the primary aim and specifies the research questions and objectives of this study.

1.3 Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to identify the antecedents of employee performance among the public sector employees in the UAE, with the effect of a supportive work environment as the moderator. Following that, this study intends to answer the following research questions.

1. How does abusive supervision affect employee performance in the UAE public sector?
2. How does the job turnover intention affect the employee performance in public sector entities of the UAE?
3. How does job stress affect employee performance in public sector entities of the UAE?
4. How does agile leadership affect employee performance in the UAE public sector?
5. Is there a moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between abusive supervision and employee performance in the UAE public sector?
6. Is there a moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between job turnover intention and employee performance in the UAE public sector?
7. Is there a moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between job stress and employee performance in the UAE public sector?
8. Is there a moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between agile leadership and employee performance in the UAE public sector?

1.4 Research Objectives

By referring to the primary aim and eight research questions outlined in the previous section, this study aimed to fulfill the following research objectives.

1. To study the impact of abusive supervision on employee performance in the UAE public sector.
2. To study the impact of Job Turnover intention on employee performance in the UAE public sector.
3. To study the impact of job stress on employee performance in the UAE public sector.
4. To study the impact of agile leadership on employee performance in the UAE public sector.
5. To study the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between abusive supervision and employee performance in the UAE public sector.
6. To study the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between Job Turnover intention and employee performance in the UAE public sector.
7. To study the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between job stress and employee performance in the UAE public sector.
8. To study the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between agile leadership support and employee performance in the UAE public sector.

1.5 Study Scope

The scope of any study specifies the horizon of research, taking into account the study variables, regional coverage, nature of the research, methodological context, and various other factors. In this regard, the present study considers five exogenous constructs: agile leadership, job turnover, job stress, turnover intention, and abusive supervision. On the other hand, the scope of this study, in terms of the main endogenous construct, is based on the consideration of employee performance in the public sector of the UAE. Additionally, the scope of this study, in terms of the moderating variable, specifies that it examines the supportive work environment as a moderator of the relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs of the study.

In addition, the regional scope of this study indicates that it is primarily applied in the UAE, specifically to public sector, as it is working in a similar region. Furthermore, this study employs quantitative methods, where primary data was collected through a questionnaire approach, as developed based on literature support. Another scope of this study is in terms of research approach, which is deductive, where existing theories were tested using quantitative analysis.

Additionally, this study outlines a two-step approach for the scope of data analysis. The title of the two-step is expressed as measurement model assessment and structure model assessment. More specifically, empirical analysis also expresses that this study examined the data trends through descriptive statistics and demographic analysis. The scope in terms of policy making encompasses this study as a valuable support to those working in public entities, such as managers, regional representatives, and others responsible for achieving higher performance in both financial and non-financial perspectives. This study enables these stakeholders to examine the role of

leadership agility, job turnover, job stress, and abusive supervision in determining the development trends in their respective public sector. Thus, it is inferred that all the above points have reasonably expressed the study scope from various perspectives.

1.6 Conceptual Definition of the Variables

This section provides the conceptual definitions of the variables used in this study.

1. Omar et al. (2022) refer to employee performance as how employees complete their assigned work and perform required responsibilities. Silitonga and Sadeli (2020) believed that employee performance is frequently interpreted as representative of the organization's performance and has a direct impact on the organization's image.
2. Tepper (2000) refers to abusive supervision as sustained displays of hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior by a supervisor, while explicitly excluding physical contact.
3. Lazzari, Alvarez, and Ruggieri (2022) refer to turnover intention as an employee's expressed intention to leave their organization within a specified time frame. In other words, they stated that it is an employee's reported willingness to leave her organization within a given period and is often used for studying actual employee turnover.
4. Efeoğlu and Sanal (2015) refer to job stress as a state of tension resulting from the interaction between an employee and their environment.
5. Akkaya et al. (2022) refer to agile leadership style as a style of leadership that seeks to remove barriers to success, enabling employees to be more successful and productive in their work.

6. Bocarnea et al. (2021) refer to a supportive work environment through perceived organizational support as employees' beliefs that their employer has a vested interest in their well-being.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study was integrated into five chapters. Chapter One, as the introductory chapter, covers the background of the topic, focusing on the main variables of interest. Through a range of conceptual arguments, it is stated that employee performance, along with abusive supervision, agile leadership, turnover intention, job stress, and supportive work environment, plays a substantial role in both public and private sector organizations. Furthermore, Chapter One addresses the problem statement, focusing on public sector organizations in the UAE region. After covering a comprehensive discussion under the problem statement, a range of research questions and objectives have been explored, examining the direct and indirect nexus between employee performance, moderators, and exogenous variables of the study. Meanwhile, the chapter outlines the study scope in terms of regional context, the variables selected, and the methodology employed for empirical estimations and subsequent policy suggestions. Additionally, Chapter One provides the definitions of key terms.

Chapter two covers the literature review of this study. It encompasses the discussion of variables such as employee performance, abusive supervision, job stress, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support. More specifically, the separate discussion related to these variables has provided a good understanding of the conceptual layout of the variables, as discussed in recent and past studies covering different regional contexts and industries. After discussing the underpinning theory, the Job Demand-Resources (JDR) model, this chapter also presents the research framework

and the hypotheses. Lastly, Chapter Two covers the key gaps being identified in the existing body of literature.

Chapter three discusses methodology, where the initial sections outline the research process being followed. More specifically, the research process focuses on steps such as defining the research objectives, followed by research design, sampling, data collection procedure, data analysis, conclusion, and report writing, respectively. Meanwhile, the research design incorporates both deductive and inductive research, as well as qualitative and quantitative methods, accordingly. This study employs a deductive research design, which is quantitative, as data were collected using a survey questionnaire technique.

Additionally, several research philosophies and approaches are explained in Chapter Three, where it is noted that the current research adopts a positivist perspective for hypothesis testing. Chapter 3 then presents the research framework, which covers the direct and moderating relationships between the variables. It is stated that the roles of abusive supervision, job stress, turnover intention, and agile leadership have been identified as key explanatory variables related to employee performance. Moreover, the direct and indirect hypotheses are also provided in Chapter Three of the study.

Chapter four focuses on the results and discussion. Initially, the data collection and response rate have been reported, indicating that a valid sample of 396 respondents has been finalized for empirical estimations using a range of statistical approaches. Afterwards, the debate focused on testing various assumptions, such as normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, which are regarded as prerequisites for empirical results. Meanwhile, the demographic profile of the respondents, in terms of relative age, gender, qualification, and work experience, has been discussed using the frequency distribution and bar chart approach.

It is found that there is a substantial diversification in terms of respondents' profiles when explored through selected demographic factors. Afterwards, Chapter four aimed to examine the common method bias in the data, which indicates that there is no issue related to CMB. On the other hand, the trends in the descriptive statistics, using measures of central tendency and dispersion, indicate that there is no concern related to the central or midpoints of the study data when examined through selected items of the latent constructs. Moreover, the measure of dispersion also determines the kurtosis, skewness, and standard deviation, respectively. After examining the descriptive statistics, Chapter four determines the trends in the measurement model of the study.

Finally, Chapter Five covers the conclusion of the study, summarizing the entire study, the empirical results, and the contributions and policy suggestions, respectively. Moreover, it also addresses the limitations associated with the present study, while the subsequent debate outlines future directions for upcoming studies.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to this study. This chapter begins with the variables: employee performance, abusive supervision, turnover intention, job stress, agile leadership, and a supportive work environment. Then, this chapter discusses the underpinning theory, which is the JDR model, before presenting the research framework and the development of hypotheses. This chapter concludes with the identification of gaps that motivate the study to be conducted.

2.2 Employee Performance

Employee performance is a key area of focus for managers, policymakers, and Human Resources practitioners in organizations, both domestic and those participating in international initiatives on UAE soil. Performance is often considered one of the key indicators of an organization's success or failure. Omar et al. (2022) refer to employee performance as how employees complete their assigned work and fulfill their required responsibilities. Silitonga and Sadeli (2020) believed that employee performance is frequently interpreted as representative of the organization's performance and has a direct impact on the organization's image. In the modern literature on organizational behavior, job performance is a multidimensional concept that encompasses both behaviors related to tasks (task performance) and extra-role behaviors (organizational citizenship behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors). It is particularly relevant in the public sector in the UAE owing to its governance context and high standards of accountability, as well as the highest expectations around service delivery to a large and diverse citizenry and resident population.

Historically and in current practice, employee performance can be categorized into three broad dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive behavior (Noordin et al., 2024).

1. Task performance encompasses the core duties and responsibilities that directly contribute to the delivery of public services. This includes effectively converting inputs to public outputs within the UAE public sector, as well as providing appropriate oversight and transparency, which is the heart of a functioning government. Frontline work involves the timely release of permits, licenses, and approvals, as well as the accurate implementation of policy, while ensuring that citizens receive services through digital portals, call centers, or in-person coordination. Task performance encompasses the regular implementation of established processes, compliance with regulations, and maintaining ongoing service quality across multiple points of contact with the public. This dimension is often documented in job descriptions, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and performance standards, which detail what will be produced, when it is expected to be completed, and high-level quality expectations. The task-based outcomes are measured using several objective indices, including service turnaround, processing timeliness and accuracy, error rates, and compliance with statutory regulations, to normalize the task outcomes. Supervisory assessments and performance appraisals supplement these.

In the UAE, task performance is consequently driven by operational capabilities, such as the speed and effectiveness of maintaining national-level initiative efficiencies in service delivery, which are woven into the

national agenda. This agenda emphasizes customer-centric service delivery and a vision to be digitally led. These initiatives include targeting frontline and back-office systems to broker better, more efficient processes aimed at improving integrated workflows, cross-departmental collaboration, and continuous improvement by leveraging tools such as e-government platforms, streamlined licensing processes, and centralized data systems.

Given the greater emphasis on efficiency and regulatory enforcement resulting from, for example, austerity measures supported by the public sector, this requires employees who can harness technology, data analytics, and operational pipelines to promptly resolve issues, ensuring consistency and a positive employee experience. Workers in this context should be swift yet accurate, while controlling compliance amidst shifting laws, harnessing service expectations amid modernization efforts and vision priorities, and ensuring that task performance continues to act as a key indicator of organizational efficiency and legitimacy in the UAE.

2. Contextual performance refers to discretionary, pro-social, and extra-role behaviors that support the organizational climate and public service ethos, beyond formal job duties. For the UAE public sector, contextual performance relates to shared expectations regarding integrity, teamwork, innovation, and a customer focus that fosters government trust. Employees involved in contextual performance may participate in cross-departmental initiatives to address complex public service problems, share their knowledge to improve service delivery, or mentor

junior colleagues, thereby strengthening the government's workforce. They can also help improve processes, run pilot programmes, or work on civic initiatives, improving public trust and satisfaction. These initiatives go well beyond their remit, yet serve to demonstrate a proactive approach to the health of an organization and enable it to be resilient and adaptable in a changing governance landscape.

Contextual performance is closely tied to public service motivation and more distantly to organizational citizenship behaviors, as manifestations of the type or quality of a “public ethos” that emphasizes transparency, accountability, integrity, and ethical behavior. Operating within a high-demand, multicultural, and diverse work environment in the UAE underscores the importance of discretionary cooperation, as well as effective communication and collaborative problem-solving, incorporating these elements as part of service excellence. By amplifying those discretionary efforts through healthier organizational climates, recognition systems, and supportive leadership, employees can act proactively within their performance context to benefit themselves and support the change to citizen experiences, interdepartmental cooperation, and overall quality for citizens.

3. Counterproductivity includes intentional, harmful, or disruptive actions that undermine public service objectives. In the UAE public sector, counterproductive work behaviors may manifest as sabotage, hindering others' success, theft, and the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information that could compromise the quality and efficiency of public services. They also jeopardize the timely and accurate delivery of

necessary government services, erode public trust, and pose a danger to safety and regulatory compliance. These counterproductive behaviors can range from subtle, such as fudging data or passing off a project, to outright misconduct, including fraud, cronyism, or corruption. The identification of counterproductive work behaviors becomes crucial in a scenario marked by high public visibility and stringent compliance requirements, alongside solid anti-corruption frameworks established in national strategies and regulatory agencies.

The UAE, in reality, implements such practices through several layers of control systems and reinforces them with clear codes of conduct, ethics training, whistleblower mechanisms, internal audits, performance appraisal systems, and consequence management to prevent recurrence. One of the primary factors that facilitates modeling ethical behavior is the leadership role, which fosters accountability and a culture where any deviations are promptly detected and addressed. An appropriate balance must be struck between supportive supervision and enforcement of sanctions to uphold high standards of service, sustain public trust, and ensure that the workforce is aligned with both national development aims and the strategic objectives in UAE governance.

Beyond these dimensions, performance is often described as a stage of realization resulting from an individual's work within the organizational context. In the public sector of the UAE, while competencies do have an influence, this realization is also influenced by various systemic factors, such as effective organizational structures, the efficiency of internal processes and systems that support those skills, quality in leadership, and the alignment of individual roles with national development priorities.

For instance, the implementation of e-government platforms, performance dashboards, and data-driven decision-making introduces new interval objectives as well as measurement modes that can directly motivate or demotivate both task and contextual performances. In the UAE, employee performance guidelines focus on legal compliance, fair and objective assessments, and continuous improvement. Organizations should establish clear objectives, provide regular feedback, and utilize data to drive performance and development, while also aligning with UAE Federal Law No. 33 of 2021.

Several factors are at play that impact work performance, including the context of the UAE public sector. Foremost among these are the support structures provided by the organization (e.g., training and development programs, opportunities for career advancement, managerial availability), process improvement tools, managerial capability, and the institutional context (federal ministries, emirate-level departments, and regulatory agencies). In the UAE, public sector employees often operate within multi-layered governance systems. They must navigate complex cross-sectoral requirements, in addition to managing cultural considerations and a diverse workforce comprising both local citizens and international workers. This set of conditions can shape motivation, engagement, and performance outcomes in very different ways than they might in private sector environments.

In addition, performance legitimizes the abilities, skills, and competencies of a public servant, and they are also used in implementation contexts. There is undoubtedly a strong focus on human capital development, learning culture, and performance accountability in the UAE, which also plays a significant role in how employees start to expect to measure their contribution when they finalize what the outcomes of their roles are. Recognizing all these factors, it is clear that the performance of public