

## **An Analysis of the Role of Motivation in Leadership Styles Utilized by Today's Leaders in the "SMART" Organizations in the United Arab Emirates**

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Leadership plays an important role in the success of organization and employee motivation. The culture of leadership in this region has been shaped over centuries through a variety of factors, such as reputation, family, and religion, which continue to influence decision-making. Unlike many other regions in the world, a diverse range of nationalities and different cultures characterize the Middle East and particularly the United Arab Emirates. Official estimates suggest that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosts some 200 different nationalities. In such a context, diversity becomes an enormous challenge for organizations to choose the right leader with the appropriate leadership style to assure their success. Human Resource functions need to ensure that they choose the right people, management practices, and processes that will develop the right leaders who can lead and motivate employees to achieve the organization's vision and mission. Tackling the leadership crisis is now increasingly a question of what constitutes an appropriate leadership style to augment the motivation of employees. Thus, the purpose of the study is to explore the intriguing question of the most pragmatic leadership style and its potential impact on employees' motivation. Therefore, the paper attempts to measure the level of motivation and align it with one of the three specific leadership styles: the Democratic; the Autocratic; and the Laissez-Faire. Data is collected via a survey, based on a closed-ended Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), from a sample of 100 senior level and middle level managers working at various private and public sector organizations in the UAE. Descriptive Analysis was conducted in order to define the correlation between motivation and the leadership style. The present study posits that an understanding of these factors, and how they work, is crucial for intelligence analysts, policy and decision makers, strategists, and scholars who must find their way through a very unfamiliar cultural landscape in the Middle East. It is hoped that this discussion will in some way assist in understanding the right leadership styles and qualities for effective management and motivation of employees in this region.

*Key Words:* Middle East culture, leadership style, employee morale, motivation

### Introduction


The purpose of this study is to explore the intriguing question of the most pragmatic leadership style and its potential impact on employees' motivation in the United Arab Emirates. The concept of leadership and its related factors that would come together to provide a leader with a successful experience of influencing others to follow and act accordingly to achieve specific goals, still continue to be a source of debate and discussion, with books and articles being written and presentations, like this one, being made at conferences and similar venues worldwide. In the developing nation of the United Arab Emirates, the concept is a significant one, as leaders in organizations in this part of the world continue to promote best practices in the light of cultural norms and above all specific demands being made by governmental leaders to achieve visionary goals as set forth and outlined in national documents such as the Vision 2021 and 2030 of Dubai and Abu Dhabi respectively. Leaders in the tourism industry, for example, have been directed by

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai and UAE Vice President and Prime Minister that that must lead effectively and in order to accomplish our goals, they must harness the collective power of public and private stakeholders and focusing on three key objectives:

- Maintaining market share in existing source markets
- Increasing market share in markets we've identified with high growth potential
- Increasing the number of repeat visits (Tourism, Vision 2020 –2021, Presented in 2010).

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From the theoretical perspective, the subject of leadership continues to be an intriguing one, particularly as various pieces of information related to best business practices and the role of technology continue to be addressed by the experts, researchers as well as consultants. The latter group continues to bring forward very current and timely information from very contemporary cases that shed new light and at times unique pieces of information which provide guidance on how to attain leadership success and sustain it in the aggressive and highly competitive environment that is today in the world of business and industry. The reason that leadership has gained more importance recently is because of the competitive and active state of the world. More change always need more leadership (Sotirofski, 2018).

In this introduction, we have conducted a review of the theoretical facts that we have learnt about leadership and the role that motivation plays in the pursuit of effective and efficient leadership. The two terms can certainly be considered independently, yet they are quite interrelated, so much so that it is almost impossible to consider one without mentioning or including the effects of the other. A simple definition of leadership states that it involves getting others to do things, that under normal circumstances, they may or may not wish to do, and even more importantly, to get them to firmly believe in the accomplishment of these goals. (Champoux 2011) In addition, subordinates will more than likely go one step further to align the accomplishment of these goals with the attainment of their own personal goals. On the other hand, motivation has been defined as in a simple and straight forward way as an inner psychological/physiological force that stimulates the personal drive, will, or wanting, (however we chose to define it), that forces that person to act in a particular manner (Covey, 1992).

It is in these two simple definition that a high degree of relatedness becomes very apparent. Some of the clear messages of relatedness are:

- Leaders need to embrace motivation
- Motivating subordinates has to be one of the leader's priorities
- Comprehension of the leadership role in the workplace
- Motivation is critical to the success of the leadership role
- Leadership strategy must include aspects of motivation
- It is important to make an alignment of work/company goals with goals of the employees
- A leader's non-comprehension of either sets of goals may and can lead to failure

- Both definitions directly and indirectly underline the importance of the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities in understanding the aspect of motivation in the workplace
- The extrinsic and the intrinsic proportions can serve as the foundation for a conceptual; model of Motivational Synergy (Teresa Amabile)
- Extrinsic motivation is most likely to combine synergistically with intrinsic motivation when the initial level of intrinsic motivation is high. (Teresa Amabile)
- Clearly, there is great synergy between the two concepts
- The aspect of organizational change, so common-place today can impact heavily on employee motivation.
- The key question of are they compatible or functioning separately in the work environment is quite significant especially since there is evidence to support both assumptions

Another very relevant factor in this study is the role of leadership development that has surfaced in this study and has been researched more generally in the overall field. What then is this new related concept and where does the motivational factor fit in? Leadership development is described as different from the broader field of leadership theory and research. It focuses on enhancing leadership capacity and related topics, like motivation and the 360-degree feed-back processes. It also focuses on developing individual leaders as opposed to a process that of development that inherently involves multiple leaders. (Leadership Quarterly, Vol 25, 2014).

The subject becomes even more intriguing as the study of leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the age of Digital Transformation promotes a new version of leadership referred to as Strategic Leadership in which there are models such as Servant Leadership and other skills-based models. Is the aspect of motivation and how to influence employees still a challenge for the new vogue of leadership?

## Literature Review

The major question to be asked is what changes, if any, have taken place with the practice of leadership in light of the reformation that has been taking place in organizations. Research is declaring that the changes and movements that are taking place in the corporate environs are immense and at times almost revolutionary. The dramatic and intense changes in the world economy and in technology are particular forces that are driving these changes and, in turn, are

forcing us to consider novel approaches to leading in these ever-evolving scenarios. Leadership today requires those in charge to maintain quality and performance, but at low cost; productivity has to be increased but again at low cost; organizational efficiency must be enhanced. A researcher has concluded that to achieve this, “the only way is to get empowerment through high-trust organizational cultures and through an empowerment philosophy that turns bosses into servants and coaches” (Greenleaf, 1970).

The concept of “Servant Leadership” has been developed by the researcher, Robert K. Greenleaf, who spent the major part of career researching, developing and educating prospective leaders in the science of management at major corporations in the United States of America. Robert Greenleaf proposed a new approach to leadership. This new model or theory of leadership required that leaders “put serving others-including employees, customers and community- as the number one priority.” He proposed what is called the “Servant-Leader Model” which highlighted the concept of leadership as a “service to others, a holistic approach to work promoting a sense of community and the sharing of power in the decision-making process.” Interestingly, he emphasized that his model was not to be used as a quick fix in cases where there might be issues requiring leadership adjustments and as such to be quickly adopted and implemented. He described his model as one that is transformational in its methodology and one that will lead long-term to positive change in organizations and ultimately in society as a whole. (Insights on Leadership, 1998). The latter factor is very evident in the contributions that Greenleaf’s work, at AT&T in the U.S, afforded the advancement of women and minorities in leadership positions in corporate America. This ground-breaking, most valuable piece of literature clearly defines and differentiates between the naturally strong leader and the naturally strong servant.

Are the dimensions of Stephen R. Covey’s Principled-Centered Leadership also applicable in this period of dynamic change for organizations and the business industry? Theoretically, Covey has identified four levels of his principled model: Personal Trustworthiness; Interpersonal Trust; Managerial Empowerment and Organizational Alignment. Very much in sync with the Trait Approach to Leadership, Covey identifies a number of traits that principled-centered leaders exhibit. They are perpetual learners who are gaining knowledge from their experiences. They are highly service-oriented which requires exceeding levels of responsibility and dedication. Their enthusiasm and optimism are contagious and thus influence others to be likewise. This results in

advanced levels of synergy which allow them to be catalysts for change and increased creativity. On the personal side these leaders are balanced in their lives, are able to renew their beings and thinking and believe in the ability of others. It is the combination of these discernible principles and energies that produce quality leaders who are catalyst for creativity in this so called “wilderness” of change that we are experiencing in organizational life today. In response to the question posed, then most certainly Covey’s principles are very applicable and viable. (Covey, 1970). Covey evaluates the changes that we are continuing to experience from three perspectives: The Economic; the Technical; and the Social/Cultural.

In this unfamiliar and at times unpredictable landscape in the Middle East, are these concepts applicable; are they being practiced directly or indirectly; are they even being considered? These are some of the questions that our survey will hopefully assist us in comprehending.

## Research Methodology

To conduct our initial research, we designed a survey that would be non-complicated in format, with questions intended to facilitate eliciting the specific information necessary for analysis and to outline the findings. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: Section I accumulating biographical data of the respondents; Section II eliciting information regarding the tools and mechanisms utilized by managers to effectively lead their employees and team members; and Section III attempting to identify the theoretical approaches and practices, if any at all, that current managers and leaders follow, maybe learnt in their professional training and exercise and the consequential effects. A survey approach was selected because of its positivistic approach to research in which one takes samples of the group and would draw conclusions about the nature of the group based on samples that have been chosen. The survey can be classified as descriptive since it is more concerned with identifying and counting the frequency of attributes to particular styles of leadership of those who are being surveyed.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis process is divided into three parts: Data Preprocessing, Descriptive Analysis, and Correlation finding

*Data Preprocessing* lays the groundwork for data mining. Before the discovery of useful information/knowledge, the target data set must be properly prepared. Survey data is highly susceptible to noise, missing values, and inconsistency. The quality

of survey data effects the analysis process results. In order to help improve the quality of survey data, the data is pre-processed which is one of the most critical step in data analysis process which deals with missing data (respondent who missed questions or intentionally skip answering specific questions), data inconsistency (incorrect answer format). For the aim of dealing with respondent’s data, data is normalized, missing values are dealt with, inconsistent values are formatted to have the same base line, normalization is done to have the same range of values for each of the inputs, this process lays the ground for the next stage which is descriptive analysis.

**Descriptive Analysis:**

Descriptive Analysis is the term given to the analysis of data that helps describe, show or summarize data in a meaningful way such that, for example, patterns

might emerge from the data, and some correlation might be detected between different research elements. Descriptive Analysis however, does not allow us to make conclusions beyond the data we have analyzed or reach conclusions regarding any hypotheses we might have made. It is simply way to describe our data. For the purpose of defining a potential correlation between motivation and the leadership style, twenty questions are designed covering different motivation aspects; each question extracts information about different mechanisms utilized by managers to highly motivate, and effectively lead their team members. Each question has five answers: *not at all, to a small extent, to moderate extent, to a great extent, and to a very great extent.*

Independently, each question is labeled into one of the leadership styles: Democratic, Autocratic, and Laissez-faire based on researchers’ opinion as shown in the following Table 1:

Question	Low	Med	High
1	Autocratic	Democratic	laissez-faire
2	Democratic	Autocratic	laissez-faire
3	Autocratic	Democratic	laissez-faire
4	Democratic	laissez-faire	Autocratic
5	Autocratic	Democratic	laissez-faire
6	Democratic	laissez-faire	Autocratic
7	Democratic	laissez-faire	Autocratic
8	Democratic	Autocratic	laissez-faire
9	Democratic	Autocratic	laissez-faire
10	laissez-faire	Democratic	Autocratic
11	Democratic	laissez-faire	Autocratic
12	Autocratic	Democratic	laissez-faire
13	Democratic	Autocratic	laissez-faire
14	Democratic	laissez-faire	Autocratic
15	Autocratic	Democratic	laissez-faire
16	laissez-faire	Democratic	Autocratic
17	laissez-faire	Democratic	Autocratic
18	Autocratic	Democratic	Autocratic
19	Autocratic	Democratic	laissez-faire
20	Democratic	Autocratic	laissez-faire

In order to measure the motivation degree that is covered by the survey’s question and its correlation with leadership style, each question is given a weight. This weight reflects how much this question would

contribute to the leadership style categorization, then all answers are re-calculated according to the new weight using the Equation 1 and according to the below rank as shown in Table 2

$$Total\ weight = \frac{question\ answer * weight}{total\ number} \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

Table 2

Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
1	2	3	4	5

Thereafter, the average number is calculated which is the sum of all the accumulated scores (weights) divided by 100, gives the below table, each cell in the

Average column represents the question’s rate according to the previous ranking shown in Table 3

Table 3

Question Rank / Question No	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
1	5.1	10.1	118.2	202.0	0.0	3.4	3.4
2	0.0	44.0	66.0	156.0	85.0	3.5	3.5
3	11.0	44.0	84.0	156.0	0.0	11.0	3.0
4	0.0	0.0	54.0	212.0	145.0	0.0	4.1

Accordingly, each calculated weight is given a rank from High, Medium, to Low as shown in the below table, then each question is linked to one of the

leadership styles and categorized as High, Medium, and Low according to the below rank Table 5. The result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Question	Average	Range	Attribute
1	3.4	M	Democratic
2	3.5	M	Democratic
3	3.0	M	Democratic
4	4.1	H	Democratic

Table 5

High	Medium	Low
>3.5	3.5>x>2	<=2

Using the previous method, the below diagram shows that 50% of the respondents who took Section 2 questions are categorized into the Democratic style,

30% into the Autocratic style, and 20% into the Laissez-faire style as shown in Figure 1

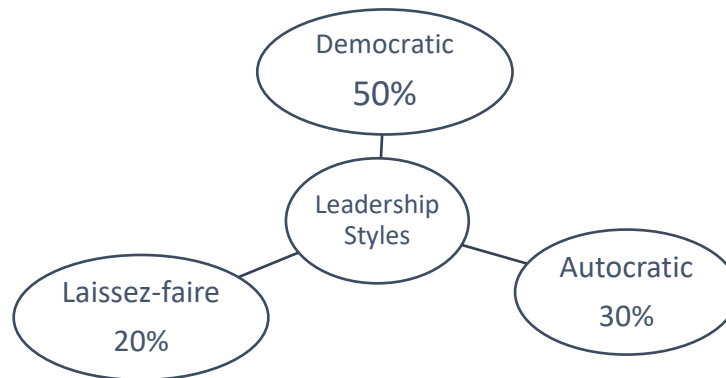


Figure 1. Leadership styles

### Correlation Findings

In Section 3, we asked eight questions related to the motivational tools that managers in the UAE would integrate into their approaches to leadership directly or indirectly. In order to identify any correlation between leadership style and motivational mechanisms, and to get an understanding of the data collected, the following was revealed:

- From the results of Question 1, we have found that 100% of managers and leaders incorporate motivational tools in their approach to leadership regardless of style. This demonstrates that there is no direct correlation between style and motivation as measured by specific tools of motivation
- The results of Question 2 show that 88% of managers and leaders utilize motivational tools as part of their personal approach to leadership and that these tools are not developed out of or are related to corporate policy in any way. Observing that 50% of our respondents fall under the category of the Democratic style, this demonstrates that there is no direct correlation between style and motivation as measured by the utilization of specific tools of motivation
- The results of Question 3 indicate that 53% of respondents were knowledgeable of theories of motivation and utilize it. This would promote a high degree of the Democratic style of Leadership which corresponds with the outcome of a higher percentage of leaders adopting the

Democratic approach and thus a high correlation is detected here between style and motivation measured by theory influence possibly acquired in training or formal education.

- Question 4 reveals that style has no bearing on this motivational factor. All leaders, 95% of them, encouraged work life balance and recognize it as a motivational tool.
- In Question 5, 79% of leaders felt that money is not a main motivational factor. Again this indicates that, for the most part, there is correlation between style and money as a motivational tool. Money as a motivator presumes a more autocratic approach and it therefore is in sync with the 30% of leaders identified as being autocratic from the survey.
- In Question 6, 26% of the respondents believe that familiarity with the personal lives of subordinates is not significant indicating a correlation with leadership style. Again, it aligns with the 30% of leaders identified as autocrats.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the intriguing question of the most pragmatic leadership style and its potential impact on employees' motivation in the United Arab Emirates. Internationally, organizations are trying to achieve their aims and objectives through their employees. At this point, motivation gains importance. It is one of the most important functions

of management to motivate employees and direct them toward the goals and objectives of the organization. (Sotirofski, 2018) Thus, the paper measures the level of motivation and aligns it with one of the three specific leadership styles, the three being the Democratic; the Autocratic; and the Laissez-Faire. The data has revealed the following findings:

The Democratic style is the most predominant in the research sample accounting for 50% of the responses. This signifies that there is a shift away from the directive approach which would be more in sync with the cultural background and legacy traditions of the region. In addition, it might also account for the vast amounts of formal educational training that has saturated the region in the last twenty-five years.

Finding a direct correlation between motivation and leadership style shows that there is no direct relation between the two factors, when we superficially measure it without identifying any specific tool of motivation such as money, balance of work life etc. This justifies the high percentage of affirmative responses from question one of the motivational section of the survey.

Further investigation, however, revealed that there is a hidden correlation between leadership style and motivation measured by a variety of factors such as money, work-life balance, and non-corporate related policies and they are ranked, according to their highest degree of correlation, as follows:

1. Utilizing motivational approaches researched and developed by theorists and acquired through formal education is ranked the highest since approximately 100% of the individuals who practice the democratic leadership style are inspired by theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory.
2. Familiarity with the personal life of employees as a motivational tool, is ranked as the second highest since approximately 87% of the autocratic leaders do not believe that this is a factor to be considered when motivating subordinates,
3. Money is seen as a motivator by 66% of those who are identified as practicing an autocratic style of leadership.
4. Believing in work life balance as a motivational tool has no correlation to

leadership style and is ranked as the lowest since 95% of all respondents, regardless of their leadership style, view this factor as important in motivating employees.

In conclusion, there were other motivational tools mentioned by respondents to the survey that play a role in the leadership style that they exercise to achieve organizational goals and objectives such as aligning employee personal goals with the corporate goals; leaders as role models; open door policy; team building; support from top management. There are elements of leadership that will certainly be considered in future study.

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