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Analysis of Corporate Leadership Practices on Performance of Logistics Industry, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: Today's business environment demands systemic, forward-looking, and change-driven corporate leadership. Pragmatic leadership is vital in navigating the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous conditions of the 21st century. Effective corporate leadership is therefore a key factor for organizational success in this dynamic era. This study analyzed how corporate leadership practices influence performance of the logistics industry in Dubai, UAE. It examined how Dubai's logistics cluster applies transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and strategic leadership practices concurrently, to enhance performance. Hierarchical organizational structure was considered as a moderating variable, and treated as a dummy variable in the analysis. The study was guided by Fiedler's contingency theory, Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, and the Path-Goal leadership theory. A cross-sectional and descriptive research design was used, targeting 50 logistics companies, and a population of 700 employees. From this, 70 top, middle, and lower-level managers were selected through stratified random sampling. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and secondary sources. Reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach Alpha above 0.7. Data was analyzed using SPSS-29, through descriptive, inferential, and regression analyses. Results showed that the four leadership practices significantly influenced performance, with an R^2 of 0.805 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.770, confirming a strong positive relationship.

Keywords: transformational leadership practice; transactional leadership practice; laissez-faire leadership practice; strategic leadership practice; hierarchical organizational structure

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1. Introduction

Leaders motivate people through various approaches. When emphasizing rewards, leaders practice positive leadership, while negative leadership emphasizes penalties. This gives rise to three classes of

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controlling methods: autocratic, laissez-faire and participative or consultative. Similarly, four administrative practices (transactional, strategic, laissez-faire and transformational) align with these supervisory techniques. It is important to take note of the fact that managers may also be leaders. Inversely, leaders may also be managers. However, both roles demand distinct perspectives (University of Arizona, 2022).

Corporate leadership practice encompasses how employees perceive their leaders, including their actions, behavior patterns, philosophies, skills, and attitudes. Hence, it is essential to recognize the utmost appropriate corporate leadership practice approach for a particular organizational context. This underscores the importance of examining different corporate leadership practices to determine the appropriate one, or combination of practices to adopt, based on the situation and the nature of the followers (Chand, 2012). Accordingly, this research put emphasis on four types of corporate leadership practices. They include Strategic Leadership Practices (STL); Transactional Leadership Practices (TSL); Laissez-Faire Leadership Practices (LSF) and Transformational Leadership Practices (TFL).

1.1. Dubai's Logistics Industry

Historical accounts, dating back to 1580, like those recorded by Gasparo Balbi, a Venetian merchant who visited Dubai for pearl trading, depict the local population's livelihoods revolving around boat building, pearl diving, fishing, and offering sustenance and accommodation to traders engaged in textiles, gold, and spice trade (Visit Dubai, 2020). Towards the late 1800s and early 1900s, during the reign of the Shah in Persia (Iran), when Persian harbors remained profoundly taxed, Dubai's ruler, HH Sheikh Maktoum, strategically waived tax demands in Dubai's harbors to entice merchants. This decision resulted in a significant arrival of Arabian immigrants and Persian vendors to the Emirate of Dubai, leading to an extremely prosperous era characterized by increased local and international trade and the establishment of Dubai's prime souks, which are the major souks in the Arabian region (Emirates, 2022; Jahani, 2011).

At present, the UAE brags of being the fifth-largest economic powerhouse in the Middle Eastern region, as well as being the second-largest economic powerhouse among countries in the entire Arabian Cape. It boasts an overall GDP amounting to the tune of US\$448 billion (AED 1.62 trillion) recorded in 2022, indicating a growth rate of 7.9% (Nashar, 2023). The UAE's economy is highly open, with strong commercial affiliations dating back to the era of maritime trade routes connecting the Indian subcontinent, the Swahili coast, and countries like Mozambique. The UAE is recognized as one of the most vibrant global markets for trading with a significant presence among the top importers and exporters worldwide (Mosteanu, 2019).

Dubai, in particular, has emerged as a key global logistics hub and a critical node in the global supply chain. With a historical dominance in maritime trading, Dubai has globalized its influence by bridging the trade gap between the East and the West. Beyond its traditional trading partners, Dubai serves as an import and re-export hub, distributing goods to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and beyond (Gulf News, 2019). Consequently, a well-defined logistics and supply chain platform has become essential, solidifying the logistics industry as a vital part of Dubai's economy.

2. Statement of the Problem

Previous research predominantly focused on investigating the roles and duties of leaders, neglecting the exploration of potential synergies that could arise from combining diverse corporate leadership practices within different organizational settings. In addition, by strategically applying the right combinations of corporate leadership practices to different followers based on their responsibilities, organizations could reduce bureaucracy, foster growth, enhance employee performance, and achieve their goals. Furthermore, having a solid grasp of the most effective corporate leadership practices for a particular organization lays the groundwork for being a competent leader. Additionally, possessing customized corporate leadership approach, and having the ability and flexibility to adjust to diverse practices based on specific situations, greatly augments a leader's efficacy and, consequently, boosts the performance of the organization (Chand, 2012).

The primary aim of this study was to critically examine the role that corporate leadership practices have played in influencing the performance of the logistics industry in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and to make appropriate recommendations to regional and global logistics industries. The study bridged the knowledge gap by examining corporate leadership practice synergy, created through simultaneous application of transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and strategic leadership practices to support and augment organizational performance.

3. Literature Review

To comprehensively examine the relevant literature in this study, this section is divided into theoretical review and empirical review.

3.1. Theoretical Review

Leadership theories have been developed by scholars and psychologists to understand the behaviors of effective leaders and to offer practical insights for predicting and applying successful corporate leadership practices (Javalagi et al., 2024; Oberer & Erkollar, 2018). This study was primarily anchored on the contingency theory, which emphasizes that effective leadership depends on the alignment between a leader's style and the specific situation. It also incorporated three related theories: Fiedler's Contingency Theory (1967), Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory (1969), and the Path-Goal Leadership Theory (1970). These scholars, as both proponents and critics of contingency theory, contributed to shaping a deeper understanding of how leadership effectiveness varies based on situational factors and leader-follower dynamics.

The theories adopted were relevant to this study as they guided the researcher in exploring the synergistic effects of implementing four corporate leadership practices - Transformational, Transactional, Laissez-faire, and Strategic - concurrently to enhance organizational performance. By utilizing these theories, the researcher established connections between the indirect and direct variables of the study. It should be noted that while these theories share similarities, they offer distinct insights into corporate leadership practices (Ahmed, 2022; Villanova, 2021).

3.2. Empirical Review

Samad (2012) conducted a study in the context of Malaysian logistics companies and found that innovation and transformational leadership practice were related to performance of an organization. The charisma feature of transformational practice, and service or product innovations emerged as particularly influential factors for performance improvement. Para-González, Jiménez-Jiménez and Martínez-Lorente (2018) investigated the mediating role of innovation, learning and human resource management (HRM), in the association between organizational performance and transformational leadership practices. Their findings emphasized the importance of developing specific schemes of HRM approaches, innovation, and learning, to enhance the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance.

Koech and Namusonge (2012) scrutinized the outcomes of corporate leadership practices on performance of organizations in Kenyan corporations owned by the state. Their findings indicated that transactional leadership behaviors, such as contingent rewards and active management by exception, produced average positive association with performance. They ascertained that the “carrot or a stick” approach was instrumental in followers’ “goal attainment.” This suggests that the use of rewards and close monitoring of employee performance can contribute to improved performance in the Kenyan state-owned corporations.

Linge et al. (2016) established a positive connection amid laissez-faire leadership practice and SME growth in Kenya. The study suggests that leaders utilizing laissez-faire leadership practice can positively influence performance and growth in SMEs. Pahi and Hamid (2016) found a significant impact of laissez-faire leadership on doctors’ commitment in public hospitals in their study. This suggests that in certain professions and work settings, laissez-faire leadership practice can be of paramount significance and positively influence employee and organizational outcomes.

Ojogwa (2021) discusses the title role of strategic practices of corporate leadership within public institutions in Nigeria. The analysis concluded that strategic leadership had a positive connection with organizational effectiveness and recommended that public organizations take heed of the fundamentally reshaping qualities of strategic leadership practice, to achieve desired changes. Mukhezakule and Tefera (2019) highlighted the importance of strategic leadership in the aviation industry, particularly in South Africa. They argued that strategic leadership was crucial for the industry’s competitiveness and growth, which in turn affected the tourism sector and the country’s economy.

4. Methodology

This study adopted a positivist research philosophy and used a mixed-methods approach that integrated both primary and secondary data. Purposive sampling was applied to select logistics companies that matched the study’s objectives and specific criteria (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). Primary data was gathered through a structured, self-administered questionnaire containing both open- and closed-ended questions, while secondary data was obtained from relevant literature and credible online sources, including company websites. By combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study aimed to explore key factors influencing performance using a descriptive research design for analysis. Data was processed using SPSS-29, with descriptive statistics such as means applied to summarize findings. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was then used to analyze

sample behavior, make inferences about the broader population, and test the null hypotheses, ensuring both statistical rigor and comprehensive insight into corporate leadership practices.

5. Research Findings and Discussions

5.1. Impact of Transformational Leadership Practice on Dubai's Logistics Performance

Influence of transformational leadership practice was measured using three observable indicators - idealized influence, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation. The findings were presented using central tendencies, precisely standard deviations and means. The statements on the questionnaire (posed to respondents), with regard to transformational leadership practice, would herein be labelled and referred to as TFL1 to TFL10. Based on the overall mean of 4.797, it can be deduced that TFL practice indeed had significant positive influence on performance of LIoD – UAE. These findings inferred that, leaders must apply a wide range of unique corporate leadership skills and practices to ensure high employee productivity, leading to high organizational performance in Dubai's logistics industry. The average standard deviation 0.403 implied that most statements were closely related. In light of the findings, it is clear that transformational leadership (TFL) had a notable impact on the performance of LIoD in the UAE.

5.2. Impact of Transactional Leadership Practice on Dubai's Logistics Performance

Influence of transactional leadership practice was measured using three observable indicators - result oriented, defined structures and management by exception. The statements on the questionnaire (posed to respondents), with regard to transactional leadership practice, would herein be labelled and referred to as TSL1 to TSL10. Based on the overall mean score of 4.755, it can be deduced that respondents strongly agreed that TSL practice indeed had significant positive influence on performance of LIoD – UAE. The overall standard deviation of 0.464 implied that most responses were clustered around the mean response. The high mean implies that most managers of LIoD understood the need to adhere to set goals and objectives if they were to improve their competitiveness in the current era of increased global competition and commoditization.

5.3. Impact of Laissez-Faire Leadership Practice on Dubai's Logistics Performance

Influence of laissez-faire leadership practice was measured using three observable indicators - leader delegation, least oversight and ultimate trust. The findings were presented using central tendencies, precisely standard deviations and means. The statements on the questionnaire (posed to respondents), with regard to laissez-faire leadership practice, would herein be labelled and referred to as LSF1 to LSF10. Based on the overall mean score of 4.868, it can be deduced that respondents strongly agreed that LSF practice indeed had significant positive influence on performance of LIoD – UAE. The overall standard deviation of 0.358 implied that most responses were clustered around the mean response. The high average mean implies that most managers of LIoD believed their subordinates were trustworthy and they (managers) strove to empower them (subordinates) to achieve set objectives.

5.4. Impact of Strategic Leadership Practice on Dubai's Logistics Performance

Influence of strategic leadership practice was measured using three observable indicators – resource management, future oriented and change focused. The statements on the questionnaire (posed to respondents), with regard to strategic leadership practice, would herein be labelled and referred to as STL1 to STL6. Based on the overall mean score of 4.974, it can be deduced that respondents strongly agreed that application of strategic leadership practices at their respective workplaces indeed had significant positive influence on performance of LIoD – UAE. The overall standard deviation of 0.169 implied that most responses were clustered around the mean response. From the findings, it was evident that LIoD had attained the desired corporate leadership. This meant that respondents were aware of how they should handle their followers depending on their varied calibers.

5.5. Analysis of Dubai's Logistics Industry's Performance

Evaluation of performance was done through three measurable (observable) indicators – global logistics hub, world class business infrastructure and increased international sales. The statements on the questionnaire (posed to respondents), with regard to organizational performance of Dubai's logistics industry, would herein be labelled and referred to as PER1 to PER10. The overall standard deviation of 0.273 implied that most responses were clustered around the mean response. Additionally, from the findings, it was evident that LIoD had attained the desired performance. This was as depicted by high average mean of 4.885 which meant that performance of the various companies represented by the respondents, met their (company's) respective set goals, with respect to different performance parameters set by the individual companies.

5.6. Impact of Concurrent Application of the Four Corporate Leadership Practices on Performance of Dubai's Logistics Industry

The findings indicate a strong consensus on the positive influence of concurrently applying the four corporate leadership practices on key performance metrics in Dubai's logistics industry. This alignment reflects the sector's growing complexity and the necessity for an integrated corporate leadership approach to navigate global market dynamics effectively. The 86.2% agreement on the impact of these practices on performance indicators such as a global logistics hub, world-class infrastructure, and international sales underscores the importance of synergizing corporate leadership strategies (Al-Tamimi et al., 2023). The distribution of specific impacts (7.7% for increased sales, 4.6% for world class business infrastructure, and 1.5% for global logistics hub development) highlights varied corporate leaderships' priorities based on organizational goals. Additionally, the mention of other outcomes like market dominance, innovation, and enhanced employee skills reveals a broad spectrum of benefits, affirming the relevance of adaptive corporate leadership frameworks (Kamal & Ahmed, 2022). These findings suggest that corporate leadership harmony fosters a competitive edge, enhancing sustainability and global standing (Cedar-Rose, 2023).

5.7. Relationship Between Corporate Leadership Practices and Dubai's Logistics Industry's Performance

The results of the regression analysis demonstrate a high level of explanatory power, with an R^2 value of 0.805 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.770. This indicates that approximately 77% of the variability in the performance of the LIoD – UAE can be explained by the corporate leadership practices examined in this study. The adjusted R^2 provides a more accurate reflection of the model's goodness-of-fit, particularly when multiple independent variables are involved. The slight reduction from R^2 to adjusted R^2 accounts for the potential overfitting caused by including additional predictors. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.770 suggested that the model's fit to the data was strong, and the corporate leadership practices included in the analysis had a substantial impact on organizational performance. These findings highlight the importance of corporate leadership practices in shaping organizational outcomes and provide a robust foundation for further research and practical applications in the field of organizational performance (Frost, 2017; Investopedia, 2022).

5.8. Analysis of Variance

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall P-value was 0.025, which suggests that the regression model was effective in predicting Performance of LIoD - UAE at a 95% confidence level. This result suggests a meaningful relationship between corporate leadership practices and the performance of LIoD – UAE (Field, 2018; Montgomery, 2020).

5.9. Coefficients

The hypotheses tested on differentiation posited that transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and strategic corporate leadership practices had no statistically significant influence on the performance of the logistics industry in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (LIoD-UAE). However, the study findings contradicted this assumption, revealing that transformational corporate leadership practice ($\beta = 0.792$, $t = 2.019$, $p = 0.023$), transactional corporate leadership practice ($\beta = 0.813$, $t = 2.812$, $p = 0.000$), laissez-faire corporate leadership practice ($\beta = 0.556$, $t = 1.973$, $p = 0.042$), and strategic corporate leadership practice ($\beta = 0.708$, $t = 1.994$, $p = 0.035$) each demonstrated significant positive relationships with the performance of LIoD-UAE.

6. Conclusion

The data analysis revealed that 86.2% of respondents agreed that the concurrent application of the four corporate leadership practices—transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and strategic—significantly influenced the performance of Dubai's logistics industry. This strong consensus highlighted that the integration of these leadership practices generated synergy, a critical factor contributing to enhanced organizational performance. The synergistic approach not only fostered operational efficiency and adaptability but also strengthened strategic alignment across the industry. As a result, Dubai emerged as a global logistics hub of choice, supported by the development of world-class business infrastructure and a notable increase in international trade. The findings demonstrated that when diverse leadership practices are effectively combined, they complement one another, balancing strengths and mitigating weaknesses. This outcome corresponded with the

assertions of Jiao et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of leadership integration in driving success within global logistics sectors. The study thus established that the interplay of multiple leadership styles can produce cumulative effects beyond those achievable through individual approaches.

7. Recommendations

The study recommended promoting gender balance in corporate leadership positions within Dubai's logistics industry, aligning with global trends that recognize inclusivity and diversity as essential drivers of organizational success. Research by McKinsey and Company (2023) revealed that companies with diverse leadership teams outperform their peers in profitability, innovation, and adaptability, while Carter and Greer (2013) emphasized that inclusive leadership enhances decision-making by integrating varied perspectives and experiences. Increasing women's representation in leadership roles would therefore enable logistics firms to benefit from broader insights, creativity, and stronger strategic alignment.

Moreover, empowering women through managerial appointments could help dismantle stereotypes and inspire more young females to pursue careers in logistics and supply chain management. To support this, mentorship programs, scholarships, and internships targeting aspiring female leaders in logistics should be developed collaboratively between UAE authorities, industry stakeholders, and educational institutions (Kaliannan et al., 2023). Such initiatives would build a pipeline of skilled female professionals while promoting a cultural shift toward inclusivity and equal opportunity within the industry. Ultimately, gender balance in leadership was identified not only as a matter of equity but as a strategic imperative that fosters innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth in Dubai's logistics sector.

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