

Examining the antecedents of career satisfaction: a fresh insight from the public sector of the UAE

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine the various antecedents of career satisfaction in the public sector of the UAE.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected randomly through a questionnaire from a sample of 290 respondents working in public sector organizations.

Findings – For analysis, measurement and structural models were evaluated along with the descriptive results. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction, commitment and empowerment, with high commitment leading to greater job satisfaction. A lower confidence level in the UAE public sector contributes to job dissatisfaction.

Research limitations/implications – Furthermore, the study results could aid future research in recognizing the significance of career satisfaction in the UAE government sector, identifying key determinants of career satisfaction among government employees and addressing areas where the government sector is lacking in promoting higher career satisfaction among its employees.

Practical implications – The research framework provided can improve decision-making capabilities for managers overseeing their workforce in the UAE government departments.

Social implications – Especially for those developing strategies to improve career satisfaction and success among employees.

Originality/value – A lower confidence level in the UAE public sector contributes to job dissatisfaction. According to the study's implications, the research framework provided can improve decision-making capabilities for managers overseeing their workforce in the UAE government departments.

Keywords Attitude, Empowerment, Trust, Work ethics, Career satisfaction, the UAE

Paper type Research article

Introduction

Both economic and social changes have significantly increased the volatility in career development. At the same time, many challenges are also seen in the labour market regarding job opportunities and career prospects development (GREŇČÍKOVÁ *et al.*, 2022; Jurien *et al.*, 2021). Many employees have reported negative job experiences due to insecurity and poor working conditions (Athanasiaides *et al.*, 2020). However, limited research studies have examined the underlying process by which the issue of dissatisfaction with their careers among employees can be analysed and revealed (Yen *et al.*, 2023). Another concept in the field of career outcomes is observed regarding career adaptability, as it is positively linked with the former (Haenggli and Hirschi, 2020). Job success and career adaptability are intricately connected. At the same time, good career adaptability can contribute to a positive outlook on life, better career decision-making, higher self-efficacy, and increased career optimism (Chui *et al.*, 2022). It is believed that career adaptability is also positively linked to performance ratings, hope and overall well-being



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(Tran *et al.*, 2022). However, the relationship between CS and career adaptability is not straightforward to determine.

Overall career success heavily depends on the skills needed for a job. It is believed that employees with these skills tend to perform better at their workplace and are more satisfied with their work (Yen *et al.*, 2023). However, among several key issues at a job, uncertainty is a notable one because it relates to the individual's perception of suspicion concerning self-evaluation, the environment, and value. According to uncertainty management theory, individuals at work are expected to predict their environment and manage many uncertain situations (van den Bos and Lind, 2002). Researchers also believe that CS acts as a signal of employee happiness. It explains how employees manage their careers and influences their decision to stay with the organization or not (Yen *et al.*, 2023). The title of the task performance indicates whether individuals within the organization are retained and promoted.

Both students and professionals find that a variety of factors influence career success/CS (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2025; Mensah Agyei *et al.*, 2025; Tee *et al.*, 2025). The claim is that career dissatisfaction significantly impacts various individuals, including those in medical careers. Whereas (Maniscalco *et al.*, 2024). They argued that gender differences and promotion significantly influence career success in CS, with human and social capital having a greater impact on men's careers than on women's. At the same time, personality traits and career strategies are also observed from employees' perspectives as factors that define their CS (Xueyun *et al.*, 2025).

The current study aims to examine several factors influencing career satisfaction in the UAE's public sector, with the main question: "To what extent is career satisfaction affected by empowerment, trust, attitude, commitment, and work ethics?" A questionnaire was designed, and data were randomly collected from a sample of 300 respondents working in 10 public sector organizations in the UAE (30 per organization). The study received 290 responses, which can be analysed.

Literature review

Career satisfaction

The idea of career satisfaction (CS) describes how happy a person feels about their career growth and accomplishments, based on specific career outcomes in performance (Ilham *et al.*, 2025). Within the organization, several factors significantly influence the CS. For example, authors like Ilham *et al.* (2025), challenging jobs, high performance, recognition awards, and increased responsibilities may lead to a higher level of CS in the organization. However, the subjective perception of career success is reflected through job satisfaction or CS (Jinbei *et al.*, 2025). Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including career choice, pay packages, job advancement, and developmental opportunities, are additional dynamics that shape the concept of career satisfaction (Kuril *et al.*, 2025).

Researchers believe that CS influences long-term satisfaction. Employees who are satisfied with their careers tend to stay longer with the organization than those who are less satisfied (Kuril *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, academic researchers believe that low performance is shown by individuals who are dissatisfied with their careers (Shahid *et al.*, 2024). This could lead to low productivity, intentions to leave, and high absenteeism, resulting in higher costs for the business organization. Another notion is that subjective career success is significantly associated with job satisfaction (Чайка, 2024).

Antecedents of career satisfaction

Empowerment

In both contemporary and historical literature, the link between empowerment and career satisfaction has received limited attention. Few studies have examined this relationship.

Around the middle of the recent decade (Llorente-Alonso *et al.*, 2024), researchers investigated how psychological empowerment affects trends in career satisfaction. Their study aimed to assess the level of psychological empowerment in terms of meaningfulness, self-determination, competence, and its influence on employee career satisfaction. They used a simple random sampling method, including 300 participants from both male and female groups in the profit and non-profit sectors. The study results show that psychological empowerment, across all dimensions, accounts for a 43% variation in career satisfaction. However, the individual effects of distinct factors of psychological empowerment vary significantly. Additionally, higher variation in career satisfaction is primarily explained by competence, followed by impact, meaningfulness, and then self-determination. Overall, the findings underline the importance of empowering the work environment to improve employee outcomes (Llorente-Alonso *et al.*, 2024).

Hashemi *et al.* (2025) analysed the role of psychological empowerment in determining the level of CS along with leadership characteristics. The results of multiple hierarchical regression show that employees will demonstrate a higher level of career satisfaction when psychological empowerment—such as competency, meaning, self-determination, and impact—is present in their work. Meanwhile, demographic factors like education level and the length of the leader-member relationship are also found to be significant.

Trust

There is solid support for examining the link between trust and career satisfaction. The research contribution by Balan and Jamaluddin (2024) examined the link between trust in peers and perceived career satisfaction. An empirical study was conducted using field research on a sample of 241 employees at Fortune 500 companies in the US. The findings indicate that building trust between employees and management hinges on fostering employees' trust in their peers, which in turn enhances their satisfaction with career advancement. However, this positive link between trust and career satisfaction depends on a good relationship between employees and their supervisor or manager. It means that if employees trust their peers more, they are also likely to have a strong relationship with their supervisor. Such employees tend to experience more success in their careers.

Khalifa *et al.* (2025) analysed the relationship between trust, organizational culture, and career satisfaction in the UAE's public sector through competing values. To achieve the study's objective, a self-administered questionnaire was created for data collection from 128 mid-level managers across 10 public sector organizations in the UAE. Additionally, their questionnaire included demographic questions along with three scales to measure the type of culture, trust in top management, and career satisfaction. According to the research implications, the findings are limited to middle-level managers in public sector organizations, which restricts how broadly the results can be applied. However, future studies should explore both public and private sector organizations within the UAE or other regions of the global economy. Meanwhile, this study has contributed to the literature in the fields of organizational culture and the relationship between trust and career satisfaction in UAE public sector firms.

Attitude

The connection between attitude and career satisfaction is also evident from both theoretical and empirical perspectives Mishra and Dey (2022) analysed the Career Attitude Scale to examine the relationship between career orientation, initiative-taking personality, career satisfaction, and career adaptability. Sathish *et al.* (2024) explained that the protean career attitude is a key factor in career success in today's landscape. Therefore, they evaluated a model analysing the relationship between career attitude, career self-management behaviour, career insight, and career success outcomes. Data was collected through a survey of 289 employees. Study findings indicate that a protean career attitude is

a significant predictor of career success. Meanwhile, the study's implications suggest a need to understand the relationship between career attitude and other variables, as observed.

Commitment

A substantial body of literature exists both in recent and past times when examining the relationship between commitment and CS among various organizations. One of the earlier contributions to exploring the connection between commitment and career satisfaction is provided by [Ross et al. \(2020\)](#). They gathered data from 164 protégés holding various managerial and professional roles in both public and private sector organizations to examine the relationship between work commitment attitude and career satisfaction. For analysing career monitoring, 15-item scales were used, which reveal a five-factor solution. Such career-oriented roles were assessed through job involvement, organizational commitment, and career satisfaction. The *t*-test results show a significant relationship between the study variables. [Patton \(2025\)](#) examined the link between employees' perceptions of diversity training, organizational commitment, and career satisfaction. Their analysis covered the period from 2006 to 07, using data from over 11,000 managers, executives, and professionals working in large organizations in Canada. The study results show that employees who see diversity training as more effective tend to be more committed to their organizations and are more satisfied with their careers compared to those who view it as ineffective. Therefore, the study provides a strong link between diversity training, organizational commitment, and career satisfaction. In terms of originality and value, their research found higher levels of organizational commitment and career satisfaction. In the first half of the recent decade, [Bandura \(2023\)](#) explored the concept of career commitment, career success, and career satisfaction. However, they have contributed by examining the relationship between career commitment and career success, with career satisfaction as a key moderator.

Work ethics

The literature supporting the examination of the relationship between work ethics and career satisfaction is limited; therefore, few studies are available. In recent times, ([Çelik et al., 2022](#)), we analysed the relationship between employee beliefs about organizational ethics, career commitment, and career satisfaction, which had not been observed before. Data were collected from 2014 executive and middle-level managers in India's insurance sector using a questionnaire. Structural equation modelling was used to examine the relationships among the study variables. The SEM analysis results indicate that there is a significant perception among executives regarding organizational ethics, commitment, and CS. ([Le, 2023](#)). Meanwhile, career commitment plays a mediating role between ethics and CS. [Hamzaa et al. \(2025\)](#) Explore ethical values and altruism while analysing the mediating role of career satisfaction. Analysing data from individual members employed at the regional health science centre, it is believed that career satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceptions of corporate ethical values and self-reported altruism. Additionally, it is believed that companies are focusing on developing positive corporate ethical values along with higher levels of career satisfaction.

Each of the cited studies supports the themes underlying the current study. Furthermore, the current study agrees with [Mishra and Dey \(2022\)](#), [Joo and Nam \(2019\)](#), [Nath et al. \(2025\)](#), [Stauffer et al. \(2019\)](#), [Bandura \(2023\)](#), and [Çelik et al. \(2022\)](#). While it surpasses previous cited studies by including a sample from multiple government agencies in the United Arab Emirates, it sets itself apart in its field of application from those studies.

Study hypotheses

Based on the above literature, the hypotheses shown in [Table 1](#) have been formulated to analyse the relationship between career satisfaction and its antecedents in the UAE public sector.

Research methods

This study employs a primary data collection method, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire distributed to employees in the public sector of the UAE. For this purpose, items related to attitude, commitment, empowerment, trust, and work ethics are adapted from existing literature. Similarly, support from existing literature is utilized to define the selected items for career satisfaction. Data collection involved survey research, and a total of 290 responses were collected over six weeks. Additionally, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to analyse the data. Furthermore, the overall study is based on a deductive approach, where hypotheses are formed to test the relationships between variables.

Results and discussion

Testing for Multicollinearity

Initially, the issue of multicollinearity is empirically examined through the variance inflation factor (VIF), which indicates the tolerance level to determine whether the correlation between the variables is problematic or not ([Jiang et al., 2024](#); [Ristić Cakić et al., 2025](#)).

It is believed that a reasonable VIF score should not exceed 5. The VIF scores for the study variables are shown in [Table 2](#). The results indicate that the VIFs are 1.47 for attitude, 1.35 for commitment, 1.21 for empowerment, 1.50 for trust, and 2.13 for work ethics. All these values demonstrate that there is no threat of high correlation among the exogenous constructs. Therefore, these variables provide sufficient justification for including them in the study's structural model.

Descriptive Analysis

In the second phase of descriptive analysis, descriptive statistics for various items across all variables are calculated and displayed using SPSS-24. The purpose of providing these descriptive statistics (i.e. mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, kurtosis, and skewness) is to give the reader an overview of data trends. This offers an overall understanding of the dataset for further analysis. For attitude, the mean scores of all three items (A1-A3) are 3.05, 3.14, and 3.19. These items show higher standard deviations compared to other items under descriptive statistics, which are 1.36, 1.36, 1.33, and 1.34, respectively. This indicates greater variation in the data points of these attitude items. Additionally, employee commitment is assessed through four items, ranging from C1 to C4. Their mean scores are 4.08, 4.02, 4.21, and 4.00, respectively, suggesting

Table 1. Study hypotheses

Study hypotheses

- | | |
|----|--|
| H1 | A significant relationship exists between attitude and career satisfaction among employees of the UAE government entities |
| H2 | A significant relationship exists between commitment and career satisfaction among the employees of the UAE government entities |
| H3 | A significant relationship exists between empowerment and career satisfaction among employees of the UAE government entities |
| H4 | A significant relationship exists between trust and career satisfaction among employees of the UAE government entities |
| H5 | A significant relationship exists between work Ethics and career satisfaction among the employees of the UAE government entities |

Source(s): The authors

Table 2. VIF of the study variables

Variables	VIF
Attitude	1.475
Commitment	1.338
Empowerment	1.213
Trust	1.506
Work Ethics	2.136

Source(s): The authors

that respondents agree with all four commitment items on a five-point Likert scale. These items also exhibit less deviation in their means compared to the attitude items. Career satisfaction is measured through four sub-items, CS1 to CS4, with mean values of 4.09, 4.07, 7.04, and 4.13, respectively. For empowerment, five items (E1 to E5) show mean values of 4.06, 4.08, 4.08, 4.17, 4.00, and 4.06. Lastly, work ethics are assessed through six items (WE1 to WE6), all of which have mean scores above 4 and standard deviations below 1. The data's normality is evaluated through kurtosis and skewness, with their values for each item also shown in [Table 3](#).

Measurement Model Assessment

The present study applied the PLS-SEM approach to examine the relationships between variables based on developed hypotheses. First, the assessment procedure was used to analyse

Table 3. Descriptive results

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
A1	290	1.00	5.00	3.0588	1.36423	-0.099	-1.235
A2	290	1.00	5.00	3.1453	1.33840	-0.181	-1.122
A3	290	1.00	5.00	3.1938	1.34777	-0.203	-1.125
C1	290	1.00	5.00	4.0862	0.65197	-0.540	1.472
C2	290	1.00	5.00	4.0276	0.72470	-1.360	4.650
C3	290	1.00	5.00	4.2138	0.65700	-0.846	2.772
C4	290	2.00	5.00	4.0034	0.73705	-0.371	-0.139
CS1	290	1.00	5.00	4.0931	0.64568	-0.866	2.774
CS2	290	1.00	5.00	4.0759	0.83672	-0.929	1.152
CS3	290	1.00	5.00	4.0483	0.82631	-0.609	0.047
CS4	290	1.00	5.00	4.1345	0.71985	-0.599	0.668
E1	290	2.00	5.00	4.0655	0.74350	-0.564	0.232
E2	290	2.00	5.00	4.0862	0.76887	-0.424	-0.439
E3	290	2.00	5.00	4.1759	0.74414	-0.600	-0.025
E4	290	2.00	5.00	4.0034	0.70342	-0.425	0.252
E5	290	2.00	5.00	4.0690	0.70249	-0.277	-0.369
T1	290	1.00	5.00	4.0034	0.90938	-1.035	1.133
T2	290	1.00	5.00	3.9345	0.91083	-0.506	-0.434
T3	290	1.00	5.00	3.9276	1.01456	-0.795	-0.015
T4	290	2.00	5.00	4.0621	0.88212	-0.548	-0.607
T5	290	2.00	5.00	4.2379	0.75465	-0.717	0.022
WE1	290	1.00	5.00	4.0621	0.94280	-0.798	-0.028
WE2	290	1.00	5.00	4.0483	0.91380	-0.753	0.041
WE3	290	1.00	5.00	4.0103	0.97542	-0.697	-0.337
WE4	290	2.00	5.00	4.0276	0.91087	-0.608	-0.499
WE5	290	1.00	5.00	4.0483	0.88690	-0.814	0.487
WE6	290	1.00	5.00	4.0517	0.86897	-0.706	0.333

Source(s): The authors

the reliability and validity of the constructs. For this purpose, Smart-PLS was employed, as supported by the literature. (Gorai et al., 2024) In the path models, overall composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha values were calculated to evaluate the reliability of the variables. The results showed a high level of honesty and consistency, indicated by a Cronbach’s alpha ratio of 0.882. Additionally, (Huang et al., 2022) found that the measurement model is handy for establishing the validity and internal consistency of the items, as observed in the scales. (Xu et al., 2024) Figure 1 provides an overview of the measurement model used in our study.

As per the above model, we have achieved the factor loadings of A1; 0.85, A2; 0.92, A3; 0.92, C1; 0.74, C2; 0.82, C3; 0.71, C4; 0.52, CS1; 0.66, CS2; 0.76, CS3; 0.77, CS4; 0.70, E1; 0.83, E2; 0.78, E3; 0.78, E4; 0.73, E5; 0.68, T1; 0.83, T2; 0.67, T3; 0.76, T4; 0.78, T5; 0.60, WE1; 0.83, WE2; 0.86, WE3; 0.80, WE4; 0.80, WE5; 0.78, and WE6; 0.54. Meanwhile, Table 4 provides evidence that the values of Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and AVE also demonstrate good relative scores. Hence, all the indicated variables are considered suitable for inclusion in the structural model and hypothesis testing of the study.

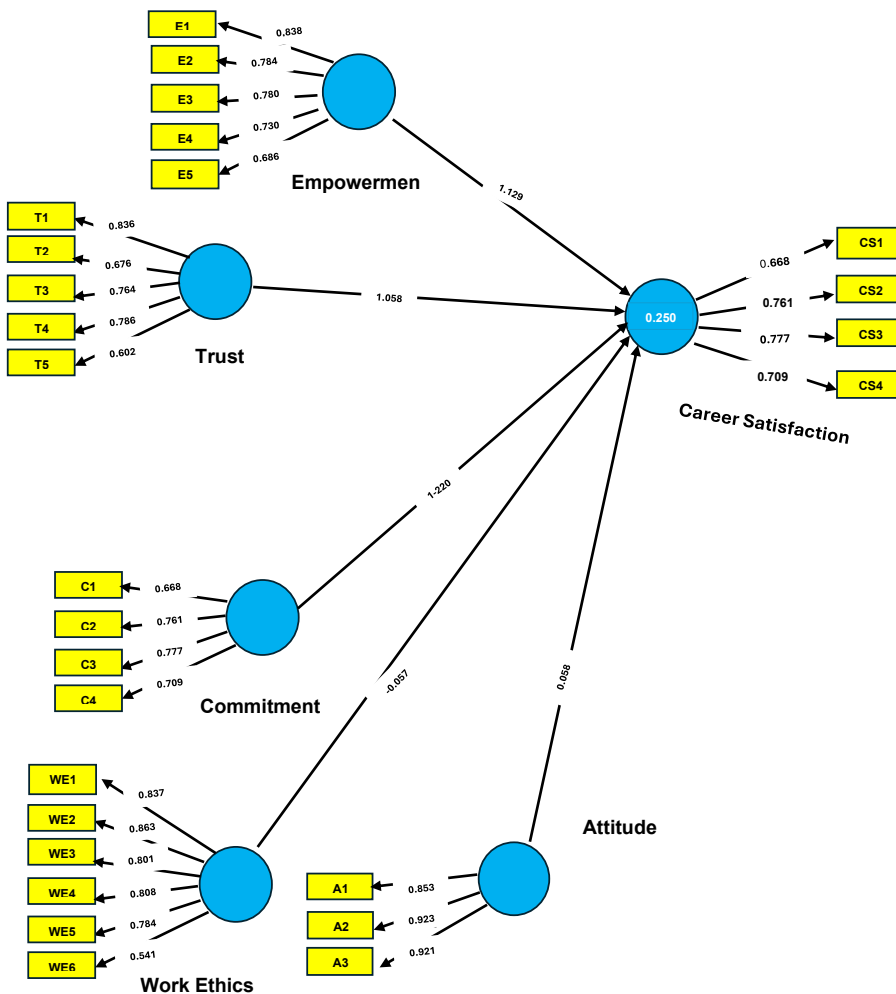


Figure 1. Provides an overview of the measurement model of our study. The authors

Table 4. Measurement model assessment results

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Attitude	A1	0.853	0.882	0.927	0.809
	A2	0.923			
	A3	0.921			
Commitment	C1	0.744	0.761	0.799	0.504
	C2	0.825			
	C3	0.712			
	C4	0.524			
Career Satisfaction	CS1	0.668	0.708	0.82	0.533
	CS2	0.761			
	CS3	0.777			
	CS4	0.709			
Empowerment	E1	0.838	0.826	0.876	0.586
	E2	0.784			
	E3	0.780			
	E4	0.730			
	E5	0.686			
Trust	T1	0.836	0.787	0.855	0.544
	T2	0.676			
	T3	0.764			
	T4	0.786			
	T5	0.602			
Work Ethics	WE1	0.837	0.87	0.901	0.608
	WE2	0.863			
	WE3	0.801			
	WE4	0.808			
	WE5	0.784			
	WE6	0.541			

Source(s): The authors

Analysing the Structural Model

For examining the structural model, findings are presented in [Table 5](#) showing beta coefficients, standard deviation (STDEV), T-values, and P-values. Finally, overall remarks indicate which relationships are supported based on the results. The cutoff points for supporting the relationship between variables are a t-score of 1.96 or higher and a p-value less than 0.05. The results for the direct relationship using the structural equation modelling (SEM) approach are shown below. The findings reveal a direct and positive impact of attitude on the

Table 5. Direct relationship between the variables

Hypotheses	Variables and directions	Beta	(STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Remarks
H1	Attitude → Career Satisfaction	0.153	0.066	2.32	0.021	Supported
H2	Commitment → Career Satisfaction	0.203	0.068	2.989	0.003	Supported
H3	Empowerment → Career Satisfaction	0.141	0.05	2.821	0.005	Supported
H4	Trust → Career Satisfaction	0.027	0.06	0.447	0.655	Not Supported
H5	Work Ethics → Career Satisfaction	-0.03	0.061	0.553	0.581	Not Supported

Source(s): The authors

career satisfaction of the selected employees in the UAE region. This effect is reflected by a beta coefficient of 0.153, representing a unit change in career satisfaction due to the employees' attitude. This means attitude directly influences the career satisfaction of the participants in this study. The standard deviation of the relative coefficient of attitude to career satisfaction is 0.066. Based on the beta coefficient and standard deviation, a T-statistic of 2.32 was calculated (i.e. $0.153/0.066$). Additionally, the p -value for the relative coefficient is 0.021. This indicates a significant and positive effect of attitude on employees' career satisfaction. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Additionally, the coefficient of career satisfaction as defined by commitment is 0.203, indicating a positive effect. It suggests that higher commitment results in greater career satisfaction and vice versa. The standard deviation for B2 is 0.068, yielding a T-score of 2.98. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant and positive impact of commitment on career satisfaction based on the full sample findings. This means that H2 is supported, confirming a meaningful relationship between commitment and career satisfaction.

Meanwhile, the SEM findings on the direct relationship between empowerment and career satisfaction show a positive and significant association (beta = 0.141, standard deviation = 0.05, T-score = 2.82, p -value = 0.005). This supports the argument that higher empowerment leads to greater career satisfaction among UAE citizens working in various government agencies. Therefore, our study confirms that H3 is supported, indicating there is a significant relationship between empowerment and career satisfaction.

However, the study results, as shown in Table 5, indicate that there is a negligible relationship between trust and career satisfaction, as well as between work ethics and career satisfaction. The direct coefficients of trust and work ethics on career satisfaction are 0.027 and -0.034 , respectively. Both coefficients have low t-scores and, therefore, insignificant p -values. Consequently, neither H4 nor H5 is supported when examining the direct relationship between trust and career satisfaction, as well as between work ethics and career satisfaction.

Conclusion

In the present study, to evaluate all the research hypotheses, structural equation modelling was used to examine the direct relationships between variables. For this purpose, data were collected from 10 public organizations operating in the UAE. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, but only 290 responses were considered valid for the study results. This sample of 290 questionnaires represents a response rate of 96.60%.

Meanwhile, for evaluating the hypotheses, the significance level was set at less than 0.05 in a two-tailed test. The findings from PLS-SEM indicated that there is a meaningful relationship between career satisfaction (H1), between commitment and career satisfaction (H2), and between empowerment and career satisfaction (H3). However, no meaningful relationship was found between trust and career satisfaction or between work ethics and career satisfaction. After discussing the theoretical and methodological contributions, this section provides a detailed review of the study's practical contributions. As we know, the UAE market has strong growth potential, with notable opportunities in both the public and private sectors. However, a dramatic shift has been observed in public sector organizations.

- (1) The study confirmed a positive relationship between job satisfaction and commitment, with higher commitment leading to greater job satisfaction. This aligns with Oyewobi (2024) and Kim and Sohn (2024).
- (2) The study confirmed that a positive relationship exists between job satisfaction and empowerment, and that empowerment results in higher job satisfaction in the UAE's public sector, which aligns with Lyu and Luo (2024) and Nassani *et al.* (2024).

- (3) There is a lower confidence level in the public sector in the UAE, which results in job dissatisfaction, and this is reflected in a study [Saboor and Ahmed \(2024\)](#) and [Aljawarneh et al. \(2025\)](#).
- (4) It turns out that commitment, empowerment, trust, and work ethics have all been justified by the fact that there is no threat of high correlation between external constructs affecting job satisfaction in the UAE public sector, which aligns with this [AYODEJI and OGBU \(2023\)](#).

Based on the contribution, this study offers several key insights:

- (1) The study's findings will help human resource departments in various public sector organizations across the UAE better understand employees' perceptions of career satisfaction. This can be achieved by improving study variables within organizations, conducting training sessions, or gathering feedback from employees.
- (2) The provided research framework can enhance managers' decision-making skills in UAE public sector organizations by providing them with accurate data about the study variables.
- (3) The findings may also have practical value, especially for those developing strategies to increase career satisfaction and success among employees. It can support the development of motivational strategies or benefit and compensation plans that improve employee satisfaction.
- (4) Based on the study results, future research can play a crucial role in emphasizing the importance of career satisfaction within the UAE government sector, identifying the main factors that influence career satisfaction among government employees, and pinpointing areas where the industry can improve to foster greater job satisfaction among its workforce.

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