



**The Impact of Leadership Styles on Improving Employee
Agility: The Mediating Role of Employee Incentives**

**تأثير أساليب القيادة على تحسين مرونة الموظفين: دور حوافز الموظفين
كوسيط**

by

EISA ALNEYADI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

**PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION (DBA)**

at

The British University in Dubai

August 2024



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Abstract

The interrelationship between the leadership style and employee agility has been a frequently discussed topic by industry and academia. Different leadership styles have different qualities that impact the employees differently. The core purpose of the present study was to explore the impact of three key leadership styles, namely, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, on employee agility through the mediating role of employee incentives and the moderating role of the years of experience. This study was underpinned by contingency theory, quantitative in nature, and based on primary data collected online from 384 respondents in the United Arab Emirates. Data analyses of this study were conducted through the structural equation modelling technique of SmartPLS. Analyses of the direct relationships suggest that transformational leadership style has a significant impact on employee agility. While analysis of the indirect relationships confirms that employee incentives is a significant mediator for the relationship of transactional and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility however, years of experience does not have a moderating role for any of the above relationships. The outcome of this study has identified many key elements that should be focused on by the organisations of various domains to enhance the agility of their employees and achieve the organisational objectives in the United Arab Emirates.

Keywords: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, employee incentives, employee agility, compensation, recognition, rewards, UAE

الخلاصة

العلاقة بين أسلوب القيادة ومرونة الموظفين كانت موضوعاً يناقش بشكل متكرر من قبل الخبراء والأكاديميين. كل أسلوب قيادة له خصائصه المختلفة التي تؤثر على الموظفين بطرق مختلفة. الهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة كان استكشاف تأثير ثلاثة أساليب قيادة رئيسية، وهي القيادة التحويلية، القيادة التبادلية والقيادة بأسلوب سياسة عدم التدخل، على مرونة الموظفين من خلال دور حوافز الموظفين كوسيط ودور سنوات الخبرة كمعدل وسيط. هذه الدراسة تعتمد على نظرية المواقف، وتعتبر كمية بطبيعتها، وتعتمد على بيانات أولية تم جمعها عبر الإنترنت ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من 384 مستجيباً في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. تم تحليل البيانات في هذه الدراسة باستخدام تقنية النمذجة الهيكلية للمعادلات باستخدام SmartPLS. يشير تحليل العلاقات المباشرة إلى أن أسلوب القيادة التحويلية له تأثير كبير على مرونة الموظفين، بينما يؤكد تحليل العلاقات غير المباشرة أن حوافز الموظفين هي وسيط مهم للعلاقة بين القيادة التبادلية والقيادة بأسلوب سياسة عدم التدخل ومرونة الموظفين، ومع ذلك، فإن سنوات الخبرة لا تلعب دوراً في أي من هذه العلاقات. نتائج هذه الدراسة قد حددت العديد من العناصر الرئيسية التي يجب أن تركز عليها المنظمات في مختلف المجالات لتعزيز مرونة موظفيها وتحقيق الأهداف التنظيمية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

Dedication

I offer this thesis as a heartfelt tribute to my family—my beloved mother, my supportive wife, my three precious daughters, and my son—along with everyone who played a part in helping me reach this significant milestone in my life. Most of all, I dedicate this work to my late father. I wish he could be here to witness this achievement, to share in the joy and pride I know would light up his face. His memory and spirit have been a guiding force throughout this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The interrelationship between the leadership style and employee performance has been a topic frequently discussed by professionals and scholars. Different leadership styles have different qualities that impact the employee differently and include the transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership styles, among others (Belrhiti et al., 2019). Each of these styles is associated with several factors that affect employee agility like motivation, communication style, incentives, relationship with employees, appreciation, compensation, motivation, and recognition, among others. All these factors determine employee motivation and agility at the workplace (Adnan & Valliappan, 2019). The impact of the leadership style on employee agility is crucial. Nevertheless, the role of the leadership style on employee incentives as a mediator for employee agility is ambiguous (Brand et al., 2019). As a result, there is a need to study the role of the employee incentives derived from the leadership style and how they impact the employee agility.

Employee agility describes how the employees are ready to adapt to the evolving workplace environment (Brand et al., 2019). The employees' ability to adapt to changing environmental factors is highly dependent on the leadership style and the organisational structure that the organisation adopts (Melian-Alzola, Dominguez-Falcon, & Martin-Santana, 2020). The agility of organisations depends heavily on the skills of the employees and those involved to adapt to different environmental demands. Important skills like responsiveness to change, flexibility to environment changes, speed of the response, and competence are key (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020). These skills are acquired, motivated, and inspired by the leadership

that the employees have. Research has shown that different leadership styles have different capacities to develop these skills among their teams. For example, transformational leadership makes use of internal resources as opposed to external standards to compensate the employees for relying on structures of personal value (Joiner, 2019). These leaders, described as agents of change, take the risk, trust people, and benefit from their experience in overcoming the uncertainties of change. Transactional leaders are associated with contingent rewards, pledge incentives for upholding the leader–worker agreements, and they facilitate change on order. The laissez-faire leaders do not easily take positions, avoid using force, and they may disappear. Each of these leaders thus has different capacities to model and impart the different skills necessary to build agility (Walter, 2020). Nevertheless, the impact of each of these leadership styles on promoting agility in the workplace is not clear. As a result, it is necessary to understand how each of these leadership styles will facilitate the development of responsiveness, flexibility, speed, and competence as important skills that are needed for organisational agility.

On the other hand, a study published by the US Bureau of Labour Statistics (2014) stated that in the United States, labour expenses constitute slightly over 70% of the overall costs incurred by organisations. Additionally, labour costs often dominate the total expenditures of many organisations. Consequently, the examination of employee incentives has been a subject of scholarly inquiry for centuries. Economists frequently explore the allocation of wages across organisations and throughout the economy, while psychologists typically investigate the influence of incentives on individual behaviour, encompassing performance, job satisfaction, and retention, among other factors (Ali & Sagsan, 2020;

Biswas, 2019; Chahar, 2020). Given the objectives of this study, the primary emphasis was placed on the psychological implications of compensation, recognition, and rewards. Both organisational leaders and researchers have maintained a longstanding interest in the motivational efficacy of employee compensation in its various forms (Magnus, 2020). Different employee incentives include compensation, recognition, rewards, and appreciation (Si, Wang, & Kong, 2020). Who gets promoted and who receives what rewards are the most powerful cultural signals for the corporation. The employees derive their motivation from the recognition that their efforts will be recognised by the leadership. Appreciation is also a valuable tool that is used to motivate employees. Nevertheless, not every leadership style supports some of these important drivers of performance. Some of the leadership styles are associated with more incentives than others. The transformational leadership style is associated with encouraging, inspiring, motivating, and trusting the employees more than any other leadership style (Arman, Wardi, & Evanita, 2019). Transformational leadership offers attention to individual employees, and this improves the way the employees feel about their work and workplace (Susilo, 2018).

On the other hand, transactional leaders seek to promote performance or work agility through rewards and punishments (Ali, 2018). As a result, this type of leadership style could have both intended and unintended impacts on employee agility (Hoxha, 2019). The laissez-faire leadership trusts that employees will choose their appropriate workplace solutions. The employees are empowered to make their own decisions, and they embrace the solutions and efficiency that they create at the workplace (Fiaz et al., 2018). Laissez-faire leadership is associated with praising accomplishments, rewarding success, and offering constructive

criticism when it is necessary (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020). Therefore, each of the leadership styles plays a significant role in improving employee agility.

Al Nuaimi et al. (2022) conducted research in Abu Dhabi's public sector, employing SmartPLS to evaluate hypotheses on digital transformation, revealing significant influences from transformational leadership and employee agility. Another study published by Alavi et al. (2021) explored the correlation between transactional leadership and organisational dynamics within the context of the United Arab Emirates, revealing a significant association between transactional leadership and decreased employee innovativeness, alongside a concurrent dedication to change within the UAE context. Likewise, congruent results from Thanh and Quang (2022) in both Vietnam and the UAE indicate an opposing relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee engagement. However, the exact role that each of these leadership styles plays in employee agility is unknown. As a result, there is a need to study the impact of the different leadership styles on improving employee agility.

1.2 Problem Statement

Various organisations need to understand the leadership style that can effectively help to achieve employee agility through staff incentives. This study aims to examine the leadership style among transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire that has the highest influence in achieving employee agility. It is evident that leadership plays a key role in the success of any private or public organisations. Staff motivation, appreciation, and the working environment are vital to the attraction and retention of staff. Organisations seeking to lead in their various industries have no option but to invest in the welfare of their employees. Several

studies have highlighted the impact of leadership on staff performance, a vital outcome of staff agility (Guhr, Lebek, & Breitner, 2019). Just like leadership, staff agility also plays a vital role in helping organisations achieve their established goals and objectives. Regardless of the sector, whether financial/banking or healthcare/medical, staff are key components of these institutions; they help in driving the operations of these organisations. Therefore, it is imperative for organisations to find ways of improving their staff working conditions with the aim of making them more productive. Leaders should cultivate compassionate and standard ethical environments as they positively influence the connection between ethical leadership and employee commitment (Ouma, K'Aol, & Sikalieh, 2018). This can be achieved through enhancing staff agility, leading to the realisation of the established vision and mission. Hence, managers at all levels of organisation management need to adopt leadership styles that not only motivate their employees to do more, but also make the employees feel valued.

One such study published by Al Dari, Jabeen, and Papastathopoulos (2018) emphasised the necessity for a comprehensive examination of leadership inspiration concerning rewards within the specific context of both the public and private sectors in the United Arab Emirates. This underlined the significance of investigating the complex relationship between leadership styles and incentive structures in fostering organisational success and employee motivation within the diverse landscape of the UAE's public and private sectors. Furthermore, Alavi et al. (2021) examined the efficacy of transactional leadership in promoting skill development and nurturing innovativeness, noting that its influence on idea generation in the UAE was statistically insignificant. Their investigation revealed that the impact of transactional leadership on idea generation within the UAE did not

achieve statistical significance. This suggests that, despite its utilisation, transactional leadership did not yield significant contributions to the generation of new ideas among employees in the UAE. In addition, the impact of laissez-faire leadership on employee agility has proved complex, as evidenced by studies producing contradictory findings (Zhang et al., 2023). Some studies may suggest that laissez-faire leadership, characterised by minimal guidance and intervention from leaders, may hinder employee agility by creating ambiguity and a lack of direction. Conversely, other studies might propose that laissez-faire leadership empowers employees with autonomy and flexibility, which could potentially enhance agility by encouraging independent decision-making and adaptation to changing circumstances.

Different leadership styles achieve different outcomes as far as staff agility and performance are concerned. Prior research has explored the role of leadership styles in influencing employee work performance or ethics, but there is currently no study that specifically examines how various leadership styles impact employee agility. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first of its type to examine the relationship between leadership styles and employee agility in the United Arab Emirates.

1.3 Rational and Significance of the Study

This study holds importance in aiding organisations to achieve their goals and aspirations by enhancing staff productivity through the motivation of employees. Employees are one of the important components of an organisation; they are the organisation's first stakeholders. They reflect the health of an organisation, and they also give an insight into what an organisation stands for. They are the organisations' brand ambassadors and customers rely

on them to get services from these organisations. Institutions interested in being leaders in their various sectors should ensure that the welfare of their employees comes first.

Understanding employee needs, concerns, and their source of motivation is crucial in fostering staff harmony that leads to improved productivity. According to Akkaya and Tabak (2020, p. 14):

Future studies might examine other consequences of organisational agility and multiple leadership styles in organisations (for example, quality improvement, firms' performance and improvements in relational capacity) and some other constructs, such as shared vision, teamwork or technology. Organisational agility and various behaviours of managers in organisations could also be explored in future studies (staff satisfaction, workers' productivity and enhancement in efficiency, company performance and organisational ability development). (p. 14)

This clearly shows there is a gap in the literature which this study will attempt to fill.

This study will function as a blueprint for effective leadership; it will assist managers seeking to improve their organisations' productivity to focus on appropriate leadership styles that will give an opportunity to their followers to incorporate and work in line with the organisations' vision and mission. Managers will use the findings of this study to improve on their leadership styles and be in touch with the needs of their employees. In the current world, significant changes require new types of leadership that will be instrumental in helping organisations attain their goals and enhance their ability. Leaders need to nurture development, generate innovative ideas, empower, and encourage their staff (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020).

Additionally, this study was intended not only for senior and middle-level managers overseeing policy and decision-making processes, but also for junior staff members aspiring to rise to positions of influence. The findings of this study further contribute to the fields of leadership and management in the UAE, where the research was conducted. The UAE is regarded as an emerging market, as research in this area was still in its early stages at the time of the study. Hence, this study also facilitated the generation of additional employment opportunities and was beneficial for guiding future research endeavours.

1.4 Research Gap

The proposed research is original, as it was the first study to collect data from the target population to examine the relationship between employee agility and different leadership management styles. Several pieces of research have been done to investigate factors affecting organisational agility; however, only a few studies have been effectively conducted to provide a relationship between leadership styles and employee agility. This thesis delivered an insightful way to understand the relationships between the specific leadership styles and employee agility as affected by several factors, such as compensation, recognition, and rewards, by not only contributing theoretically, but practically as well. The data collected from the study was reviewed and used to ensure original work that adhered to the necessary standards and offered a resolution regarding various leadership styles and employee agility in the context of the United Arab Emirates.

Despite referencing existing knowledge from previous research in this thesis, it serves as a guide for both the researcher and potential users of this study to recognise and appreciate

the contributions of other scholars in the field of leadership and its relation to employee agility. As a result of past research, the researcher was able to address the identified gaps. In addition, it also helped the researcher to not undertake a study that has already been done. Therefore, this research purely relied on data obtained directly from the field, with analysis and interpretation done without any bias or prejudice. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first of its type to examine the relationship between different leadership styles and employee agility.

Data were gathered directly from the field, focusing on the connections between leadership styles and its impact on employee agility. Emphasis was placed on originality in research, as it facilitated the creation of new data beneficial for advancing knowledge and devising improved approaches to address the challenges of the constantly evolving work environment. This not only aids managers in adopting more effective leadership styles but is also essential in ensuring that employees feel respected and valued. Moreover, these new results will assist future researchers by providing guidance as they aim to enhance the existing knowledge base.

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

The understanding of the relationships between the leadership style and employee agility can be used by the human resource department in putting in place measures that can be used to improve employee agility, as well as the development of leadership skills within the workspace (Menon & Suresh, 2020). Therefore, the main research aim of this study was to examine the relationship between leadership styles and employee agility.

The specific objectives of the proposed study include the following:

- To examine the impact of different leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) on employee agility and suggest the ideal leadership style to improve employee agility in general, in the UAE context.
- To examine if employee incentives mediate the relationship between the three leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and employee agility.
- To examine the moderating role of years of experience in the relationships of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the research significance, aim, and objectives, the following were the research questions formulated for this thesis:

- I. What is the impact of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee agility, and which leadership style is ideal to improve employee agility in the UAE?
- II. Does employee incentive mediate the relationships of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles with employee agility?
- III. Do years of experience moderate the relationships of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles with employee agility?

1.7 Contributions of the Study

This study contributed to the field by confirming the impact of leadership style and its effectiveness in the present corporate environment. Initially, the study provided research findings based on evidence about how different leadership styles impact employees' agility within organisations in the UAE. These findings may be applicable to various international corporations. This thesis presented findings that demonstrated the qualities of different leadership styles concerning incentives, and how they impacted employees' agility in the workplace. For example, the collected data showed how the different incentives in the transformational leadership style, such as compensation, rewards, and recognition, affected employees' agility or ability to adapt to the changing workplace environment.

Additionally, the research provided valuable insights into the importance of leaders in guiding employees to accomplish set objectives and personal growth through the appreciation of various leadership styles. As reviewed, influential leaders using the appropriate leadership styles play a significant role in implementing measures that motivate employees to adapt to change swiftly, work hard to achieve the set objectives, and contribute to their growth and that of the firm's. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrated, based on evidence, that among the three leadership styles examined, transformational leadership had a notable influence on employee agility in the UAE. It also highlighted that the years of work experience did not moderate any of the leadership styles studied. However, incentives such as compensation, recognition, and rewards functioned as mediators in the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility, as well as laissez-faire leadership and employee agility. Notably, there was no mediation observed in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee

agility in the context of the UAE. Therefore, it could be concluded that the transformational leadership style has contributed to the success of private and public organisations through staff motivation, appreciation, and the establishment of an ideal working environment that helps attract and retain focused and hard-working workers within the UAE.

In the context of leadership practices in the UAE, professionals would benefit from this study by acquiring additional insights into the attributes and behaviours necessary to achieve the desired organisational agility. This research also contributed significantly to the organisational agility practice, especially associated with development and measurement. Professionals and organisations will use this research to develop strategies for a competitive differentiation and establish consistent processes including planning scenarios to create desired changes in the contemporary business environment. This study also contributed significantly to the attainment of behaviours related to employee agility and the evaluation and development of behaviours often related to efforts that motivate employees to innovate doing business in a different way.

The findings of this study could be used to make numerous changes in the practical setting in the context of the UAE. One such way is the development of leadership in the workplace. If the role of the organisation is to improve employee agility, then they will have an idea of the leadership style and leadership qualities that they should build among the emerging leaders. The findings could also be used in the selection process for leaders as the organisations aim to recruit the right leaders to achieve the desired outcomes. Further, the findings of the study could be used to know the kind of incentives to extend to the employees to promote agility.

This research would further help managers polish their knowledge of various leadership styles and gain an understanding of the leadership styles and how they can incorporate them in their businesses. It will also help managers appreciate the role of staff participation and involvement in decision-making on matters affecting their welfare. In addition, they will be aware of the impact of their decision on employee agility. Through its contribution to effective management, the research will enable managers to come up with proper avenues for listening to their employees and open channels for fruitful engagements.

Therefore, when it is not clear how to enhance agility, an organisation needs to identify, map, and apply various organisational considerations. The organisation is likely to focus on the governance structures and view the entire organisation as a network of teams. The present study argued that fundamental elements of an agile organisation should be well aligned to enhance employee agility. These elements majorly arise from different leadership styles adopted by organisations within the UAE. Hence, the study addresses theoretical and empirical gaps in the existing literature on leadership and employee agility from a leadership paradigm perspective in terms of the continued debate regarding the respective efficacies of the heroic and post-heroic paradigms in leadership practice.

Specifically, it helps distinguish between the dynamic impacts heroic and post-heroic perspectives on leadership styles have on employee agility. In this case, the heroic perspective is the traditional perspective on leadership that encompasses all traditional and post-modern leadership theories and styles such as the participative leadership theory, transformational, laissez-faire, transactional, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles (Ryoma, 2020). It is found on the perception of a leader embodying the qualities of a hero in their managerial

leadership role within an organization. In this case, a hero is an active subject, who visualizes the future, defines and communicates the strategy, inspires and motivates those who are led, assigns roles, and evaluates and rewards according to performance (Ryoma, 2020).

In practice, the heroic paradigm undermines employee agility because it views leadership as a unidirectional, top-down influencing process, and draws a clear line of separation between leaders and followers (Ryoma, 2020). As such, employee agility and autonomy are limited to the levels permitted by leaders with differences in leadership styles determining these levels where employee autonomy and, by association, employee agility are least under autocratic leadership and highest under participative/democratic leadership. However, the post-heroic paradigm advocates for less hierarchical and more collaborative organizational arrangements (Ryoma, 2020). It emerged largely from the realization that no single leadership theory or approach could consistently manage evolving marketing and industry conditions sufficiently (Ryoma, 2020).

Under this paradigm, a leader wants others to take responsibility and gain knowledge, encourages innovation and participation even in ambiguous situations, seeks input and aims for consensus in decision-making, and wants others to grow and learn even at the expense of himself becoming dispensable (Ryoma, 2020). Consequently, it advocates for leadership styles that support such leadership qualities as transformational leadership due to its positive correlation to employee engagement by recognizing all workers regardless of position or department within an organization (Popli and Rizli, 2016). Transformational leadership under the post-heroic perspective nurtures a sense of positivity, commitment, and motivation amongst workers with a purpose to make them more effective and result-oriented thus

promoting employee agility (Aguilera et al., 2023). As such, this research strives to determine which of the two leadership paradigms provides the leadership style and associated elements that promotes and supports employee agility for the benefit of a company in terms of performance or innovation. Through such understanding, the inherent benefits of the post-heroic paradigm can become increasingly evident in research towards promoting a shared leadership approach in future companies.

For each element of leadership style, the study identified a set of emerging agile practices that helped agile organisations to accept their path to employee agility. The study highlighted that only transformational leadership was found to improve and create an impact on employee agility. Besides, the contingency approach was deemed to be appropriate to explain the relationship. Furthermore, the findings from the present study contributed to the body of knowledge concerning factors pertaining to leadership styles, incentives, and employee agility.

The findings reinforced Contingency Theory by highlighting that transformational leadership is effective in enhancing employee agility by managing contingency factors more effectively. By definition, a contingency factor is any relevant factor, element, or condition in a business or its operations within its business and organizational environment that is vital component of its structure or operations (Aguilera et al., 2023). This implies that leadership styles aligned with motivating and inspiring employees can adapt well to dynamic and changing organisational environments. On the other hand, the lack of support for transactional leadership suggested that the reward-based and performance-monitoring approach of transactional leadership may not be sufficient to foster agility among employees. This

indicates that flexibility and innovation, which are crucial for agility, may not be nurtured through transactional leadership. Furthermore, the finding that laissez-faire leadership does not impact employee agility supports the notion that a hands-off approach fails to provide the necessary guidance and support required for agile performance. This highlights the importance of active leadership in promoting agility.

Similarly, the results suggested that while transformational leadership itself fosters agility, adding employee incentives does not enhance this effect. It implies that intrinsic motivation driven by transformational leaders is more critical than extrinsic rewards. In addition, the findings also underscore the importance of employee incentives in the context of transactional leadership. It suggested that the effectiveness of transactional leadership in promoting agility is contingent upon the presence of appropriate incentives, aligning with Contingency Theory's premise that different situations require different leadership approaches. Despite laissez-faire leadership generally being ineffective, the presence of employee incentives can compensate to foster agility, as highlighted as an outcome of this study. This further indicated that even minimal leadership intervention, when coupled with proper incentives, can enhance agility.

As for the years of experience, the findings suggested that the impact of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez faire leadership on agility does not vary with employees' experience. It indicated that these three leadership styles are universally ineffective across different experience levels, as it does not amplify or diminish the influence of these leadership styles on agility.

These findings collectively contribute to the refinement of Contingency Theory by elucidating the differential impacts of various leadership styles on employee agility and the roles of employee incentives and years of experience. They emphasise that while transformational leadership directly enhances agility, the efficacy of transactional and laissez-faire leadership is heavily contingent on the presence of employee incentives. Additionally, the uniform influence of these leadership styles across different experience levels underscores the importance of the leadership approach over employee tenure in fostering agility.

1.8 Method

A quantitative research design was used in this study to achieve the stated research objectives and to answer the research questions. Quantitative research was preferred for this study as it was appropriate for collecting and analysing numerical data that was needed to understand the phenomenon of focus (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This research design was appropriate for gathering the data related to the leadership styles impacting the employees' agility, in the context of the UAE. A literature-guided questionnaire was used in this study.

The present study made use of a stratified sampling technique while conducting the survey. According to Mishra and Alok (2019), stratified sampling is a technique in which the researcher divides the population into separate homogeneous groups and non-overlapping subgroups, called strata. The samples were further stratified based on the *years of experience* category. The selection of samples from each stratum were based on a simple random sampling technique. That is why this type of sampling is referred to as stratified random sampling (Mishra & Alok, 2019).

Stratified sampling was more convenient for a community in which the population density varied significantly. Stratified sampling helped the researcher to obtain a sample population that best represented the community being studied. The questionnaire data were then analysed based on the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique of SmartPLS, which is widely used for the analysis of quantitative data in social sciences (Guenther et al., 2023).

The ethical considerations were also reflected, including the privacy of the employees who participated in this research. Their identities were protected to ensure there were no consequences for their participation. Finally, the consent of university's review board was also sought as a supporting document. This was important, especially because the research included human subjects.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis includes a total of 7 chapters. Chapter 1 highlights the introduction to this thesis, followed by the research significance, goals, and objectives. Chapter 2 emphasises the relevant literature reviewed in accordance with the topic under investigation. Chapter 3 highlights the hypotheses development and conceptual framework. Chapter 4 sheds light on all the methodological approaches employed for the purpose of this thesis. Chapter 5 demonstrates the data analysis and results of this thesis. Chapter 6 highlights the discussion and findings. Lastly, Chapter 7 sheds light on the conclusion of the overall thesis, with a focus on the implications, limitations, and future recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Leadership is a central theme concerning the adoption of agile working practices. The research's overall purpose is to explore the impact that different leadership styles have on employee agility. Understanding the relationships between the leadership style and employees' work agility can be used by the human resource managers to put in place measures that can be used to improve employee agility and the development of leadership skills within the workspace (Menon & Suresh, 2020). This chapter provides a conceptual foundation that determines the critical measurement of the research objectives. Section 2.2 defines the concept of leadership. The next one outlines the leadership characteristics in the context of traits, behaviour, and personality. The third section provides an overview of the existing leadership styles. The fourth section defines employee agility and outlines factors that are related to employee agility.

2.2 Defining the Leadership Concept

Leadership is a domain that has been the subject of many studies, both in academia and industry (Adams, 2018; Adams, 2020; Adekoya, 2020; Ali & Sagsan, 2020; Auslin, 2019; Baril, 2020; Becker, 2020; Bridges, 2019; Calvert, 2018; Chukwusa, 2018). However, the definitions of leadership vary. This term is often used imprecisely, and it is posited that there are as many leadership definitions as individuals who tried to define it. Given the broad usage of the term *leadership*, it is surprising that a significant number of papers tackling the subject do not appear to define the term at all. For example, Calvert (2018) established that 60% of

authors had not defined what they meant by leadership. Therefore, this section aims to define what is meant by leadership in the context of this study, drawing from the broader literature.

Definitions range dramatically from leadership as psychotherapy or support to a strong hierarchical–subordinate relationship (Fought & Misawa, 2019; McAuliffe, Bostain, & Witchel, 2019; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). Scheffler and Brunzel (2020) highlighted this, stating that leadership can be viewed as a structured authoritative role or an individual’s ability to motivate followers intrinsically or extrinsically. The motivational aspect of leadership was noted by other scholars, such as McAuliffe, Bostain, and Witchel (2019), who described leadership as an “influence process involving the determination of the group’s or organisation’s objectives, motivating task behaviour in pursuit of these objectives, and influencing group maintenance and culture” (p. 130).

Therefore, it appears that the ability to influence and motivate others is central to a leadership definition. A link between leadership and motivation and purpose can also be seen in the industry literature (Gallagher, 2020; Phong & Son, 2020; Srivastava & Joshi, 2018; Talley, 2020; Yaseen, Al-Janaydab, & Alc, 2018). For example, Phong and Son (2020) argued that people identify with things that resonate with their values and beliefs, and that tapping into this has the *emotional power* to shape behaviour. Gallagher (2020) considered leadership as the ability to bring people together, empower them, demonstrate shared beliefs, and create a relationship of mutual trust and understanding. Similarly, Talley (2020) believed that “People need to be heard. Great leaders ... grant [people] their space, give them their trust, allow them responsibility, and present them with opportunities and resources to do their jobs” (p. 2). In a recent review, Gallagher (2020) took a thematic approach to define leadership as belonging to

those who can transform their concepts, convictions, and vision into organisational changes through their influence over other people. These views suggest that leadership is not something that can be given by assigning authority through a position, such as making someone a manager. Instead, it is something more characteristic of an individual, requiring a conscious decision to lead.

Heyns, Eldermire, and Howard (2019) also argued that rather than using the term leadership as a nebulous signifier under which anything relating to organising exists, scholars should instead focus on the activities being referred to. They narrowed down key leadership activities from the literature and thematically grouped them under direction (influencing the ideas, values, meanings, and understandings of followers), support (cognitive and emotional), and inspiration (providing a moral example, as a role model). They also noted a distinction in the literature between leadership and management. The latter has more to do with formal authority and control and compliance rather than influence. The distinction between leadership and management resonated strongly with their research, including the characteristics of support, motivation, and inspiration. As such, definitions of leadership that included these attributes in their breakdown were drawn on to define leadership for this study (Brundy, 2018; Heyns, Eldermire, & Howard, 2019; Murray, 2018; Simoes, 2020). For the purpose of this study, leadership is considered as an individual's ability to influence others through direction, support, and inspiration. Leaders provide direction through uniting people around a shared vision. They support through empowering and trusting those they lead to do what is needed to achieve the shared vision. They inspire through providing followers with purpose, leading by example, and demonstrating shared values and beliefs.

2.3 The Leadership Perspective

2.3.1 Trait and Behaviour

One purpose of leadership effectiveness research is to identify and understand the traits and behaviours that lead to critical organisational outcomes. Leadership effectiveness is the extent to which a leader's supervisors, subordinates, and peers believe they are successful (Akparobore & Omosekejimi, 2020; Bartlett, 2020; Fought & Misawa, 2019; Kwanya & Stilwell, 2018; Moon, Choi, & Armstrong, 2018). Consequently, traits and behaviours related to leadership effectiveness can promote or degrade subordinate outcomes, which ultimately impact the organisation (Aslam, 2018a; Bodenheimer, 2018; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). This study aims to understand effective leadership to provide practitioners with the information and tools they need for leader selection and development. Research on effective leadership supports important leadership characteristics and how overdoing some of these characteristics can lead to appealing leadership (Akparobore & Omosekejimi, 2020). The first step in understanding the characteristics that define appealing leadership is identifying commonalities within existing leadership styles.

Identifying the traits that relate most to consideration will help differentiate leadership styles that vary on effectiveness. Leader traits are stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that foster a consistent pattern of leadership performance across the various group and organisational situations (Aslam, 2018a; Lo et al., 2020; Lombard, 2018). Generally, traits can be classified as interpersonal attributes or related to task competence. Traits associated with interpersonal attributes, or relational characteristics, influence how an

individual approaches social interaction (Adekoya, 2020; Jones & Davis, 2020). Task competence, or task-oriented, refers to leadership traits that influence an individual's approach and performance on tasks (Jones & Davis, 2020). The initial research on leader traits was difficult due to the discouraging results and overwhelming list of unique traits.

Current research on leader traits has primarily focused on the relationship between traits and the overall leadership effectiveness, leader emergence, and leadership styles, or with few exceptions, leader behaviours (Aslam, 2018a; Lo et al., 2020; Lombard, 2018). For example, research on creativity supports a positive relationship with managers' organisational level, entrepreneurial leaders, and leader performance (Lombard, 2018). Puccio et al. (2020) further debated the similar trend. Their study has also indicated that creativity is a trait that can positively affect leadership effectiveness. This study has further gone on to state that creativity training in organisational settings can result in not only effective leadership, but the overall process of idea generation and solution creativity can also be boosted through such organisational applications. Bennet et al. (2020) have proved a similar positive relation through the implications and practical application of heroism theory. Their study emphasises the fact that heroic creativity can not only boost the qualitative measures of employee performance, but that the overall leadership effectiveness is also significantly boosted through such creativity. This study has further gone on to state that future research can focus on the evaluation of the presence of heroic leadership qualities such as heroic creativity for career development. A study has found a direct and positive relation between such heroic traits on the leadership effectiveness and the overall creativity of workers. A recent research paper has indicated through a systematic review that leadership affects creativity and innovation, and

that a relation in a vice-versa direction also exists (Hughes et al., 2018). The systematic review further yields that creativity and innovation through the help of a few mediating factors can result in an organisational environment which leads to more productive ground for effective leadership. The variables like creativity and innovation are found to be positively affecting the regime of leadership in an efficient and effective manner. Traits such as courage, aggressiveness, persistence, self-confidence, social skills, and leading change have also been linked to leader success (Bussell, 2019; Jones & Davis, 2020). However, the extensive list of possible leader traits impeded early researchers' ability to investigate which traits were most important. Therefore, researchers embraced the development of a personality taxonomy, which facilitated trait research.

2.3.2 Personality

Personality research supports the existence of specific personality traits that vary within individuals. The most supported personality model is the Five-Factor Model (FFM), initially proposed by Tupes and Christal (Capdarest-Arest & Gray, 2020). The FFM proposes that personality is composed of five factors, called the Big Five, which include an individual's tendency to be organised, dependable, have self-control, and follow the rules (Gomà-i-Freixanet, Ortega, & Arnau, 2021). Extraversion is an individual's tendency to be social, assertive, active, and seek excitement. Agreeableness is a person's disposition towards trust, compliance, and empathy. Openness to experience refers to an individual's imagination, autonomy, and curiosity. Neuroticism tends to have a negative effect, including anxiety, insecurity, and high levels of stress. Both extraversion and agreeableness are interpersonal

attributes. For instance, agreeableness affects an individual's disposition to cooperate and influences how individuals interact (Gomà-i-Freixanet, Ortega, & Arnau, 2021).

Conversely, conscientiousness and openness to experience are task competence traits. For example, conscientiousness impacting an individual's work style has been linked to the overall job performance and leadership effectiveness (Fought & Misawa, 2019; Jones & Davis, 2020). Understanding and categorising personality into five dimensions facilitated early research on personality and job performance, and renewed researchers' interest in personality within leadership research (Gomà-i-Freixanet, Ortega, & Arnau, 2021). Although some researchers refer to personality dimensions by different labels, such as sociability and interpersonal sensitivity versus agreeableness, the dimensions are generally like those of the FFM (Jones & Davis, 2020). The Big Five allows researchers to organise personality traits in a standard format, enabling the integrating of personality traits across studies.

2.4 Leadership Styles

2.4.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership details the mechanism through which leaders can elevate employee motivation and effort. Transformational leadership has been linked with increased task performance, organisational citizenship behaviours, subordinate job satisfaction, follower satisfaction with the leader, leader effectiveness, organisational commitment, and trust in management (Aldholay, Abdullah, Isaac, & Mutahar, 2020; Boamah & Tremblay, 2019; Lo et al., 2020; Oyerinde, 2020; Phong & Son, 2020; Ugwu & Okore, 2020; Wilson, 2020; Yaseen et al., 2018; Ytterstad, Olaisen, & Jevnaker, 2020). Moreover, transformational leadership was

associated with reduced job-related stress via individualised consideration (Ytterstad, Olaisen, & Jevnaker, 2020). Another study found that followers of transformational leaders experienced increased happiness and overall satisfaction in addition to reduced stress (Tayal, Kumar Upadhya, Yadav, Rangnekar, & Singh, 2018). Using an experience sampling, within-person design, Oyerinde (2020) tracked healthcare employees' perceived levels of stress and satisfaction when interacting with supervisors, who were measured for levels of transformational leadership. The followers experienced increased optimism and reduced stress when interacting with supervisors with high as opposed to low levels of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership is a commonly applied style within many organisations focused on success and continued growth. Experienced transformational leaders possess efficient leadership skills that facilitate employee motivation and development. The leaders inspire and influence work teams through their actions while motivating them to work hard and achieve set personal and organisational goals (Ugwu & Okore, 2020). They collaborate with teams to increase their morale and help unleash their true potential through living by example in their operations. These positive changes affect employee and business performance. Transformational leaders with years of experience apply critical leadership methods to ensure successful organisations with skilled workers. These leaders maintain strong relationships between team members through honest and transparent communication. Forging strong relationships between workers helps reduce conflicts while developing unique talents among employees. Transformational leaders also live by example to influence employees' actions (Isaac & Mutahar, 2020). They model the behaviours that they want the

workers to personify while gaining the trust and respect of their employee teams through their actions. The leaders also understand the team's needs and help them achieve their objectives, enhancing personal and business growth.

Experienced transformational leaders facilitate employee motivation or incentives through many ways that influence employee agility. These leaders create a working environment with goals and a mission that influences workers to improve performance and implement different strategies to achieve the goals personally and as teams. They also establish a reward system to compensate hard-working employees and encourage further performance (Lo et al., 2020). They develop attractive, challenging, and achievable goals that enable the workers to attain their skills, confidence, and expertise in solving problems. Transformational leadership allows employee agility by facilitating creativity, problem-solving, and establishing motivated workers.

AlNuaimi et al. (2022) conducted their investigation within the realm of public sector organisations located in Abu Dhabi. The utilisation of SmartPLS facilitated the evaluation of hypotheses pertaining to digital transformation in these organisations. The study revealed that transformational leadership and employee agility exerted a significant influence on digital transformation. Furthermore, the positive correlation between transformational leadership and digital transformation was discerned to be mediated by employee agility (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the conducted moderation tests indicated a lack of significant impact of the digital strategy on the relationships between transformational leadership and digital transformation, or between employee agility and digital transformation (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). The subsequent multiple group analysis (MGA), comparing organisations with a shared

and non-shared digital strategy (DS), validated the absence of significant differences in these relationships between the two groups, underscoring the limited moderating effect of a digital strategy (AlNuaimi et al., 2022).

Huang et al. (2023) underscore the pivotal role of leadership in navigating the challenges of digital transformation. They advocate for the efficacy of both transformational leadership and adaptive leadership (ADL) in facilitating behavioural change and swift adaptation. The survey results from their research indicate that while transformational leadership positively influences project dynamic capabilities and employee agility, its impact on adaptive capability is constrained (Huang et al., 2023). Furthermore, their interview-based exploration delves into the connection between ADL and adaptive capability, revealing insights that suggest its negligible effects on innovative and absorptive capabilities. This implies the necessity for integrating two distinct leadership styles to advance employee agility (Huang et al., 2023). On the contrary, Das et al. (2023), in their study encompassing 225 IT firms, discovered that workforce agility, propelled by both financial and non-financial performance, exerts a positive influence on corporate reputation. Transformational leadership and talent management, mediated through workforce agility, were identified as contributors to enhanced firm performance (Das et al., 2023). Additionally, their study disclosed that workforce agility functioned as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership, talent management, and firm outcomes, excluding the impact of financial performance on corporate reputation (Das et al., 2023).

There are four dimensions of transformational leadership, including idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and idealised consideration.

Idealised influence consists of the attributes the followers point out to their leaders, such as excellent abilities, determination, and persistence. Also, idealised influence involves a leader's behaviour being described as a role model with outstanding ethical and moral standards.

Transformational leaders focus on a common mission, and are respected, trusted, and admired by their followers. Another dimension is the inspirational motivation that includes the traits of a transformational leader that inspire and motivate the followers. An example is the focus on offering challenge and meaning in the workplace. This dimension concentrates on inspiring followers via optimism, enthusiasm, and team spirit. It also focuses on the clear communication of goals and giving a vision about the anticipated future status. Intellectual stimulation is the third dimension linked to a leader's capability to trigger followers to question assumptions. It also relates to viewing issues in different perspectives and displaying a significant creativity level. In this dimension, the leader focuses on providing new means of thinking, encouraging new approaches and ideas. Finally, individualised consideration explains how transformational leaders focus on every individual's needs and concentrate on developing them to full capacity in a supportive environment.

Bass's theory of transformational leadership consists of four components, often referred to collectively as *the four I's of transformational leadership* (Mayowa-Adebara & Opeke, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2020; Yaseen et al., 2018; Ytterstad et al., 2020). These are individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealised influence (charisma) (Ytterstad et al., 2020). Yaseen et al. (2018) suggested that information system success can be enhanced by transformational leadership through these components, for example, idealised influence – instilling pride, faith, respect, inspirational motivation –

articulating an appealing vision and optimism, individualised consideration – coaching and mentoring, and intellectual stimulation – challenging the users’ creative problem-solving skills. Ugwu et al. (2020) describes a similar set of criteria, stating that a transformational leadership style involves idealised behaviour – charisma and inspirational motivation – stimulating optimism about the project, intellectual stimulation – promoting new ways of thinking and solving problems, and individualised consideration – providing individualised care and consideration. These facets were found to effect followers in three ways: focusing attention on the importance and value of work being done, emphasising team goals over individual interests, and activating higher-order needs (Ugwu et al., 2020).

2.4.1.1 Aspects of Transformational Leadership. What follows is a summary of the definitions for each of these four components and a discussion of how each dimension is portrayed in the literature. Ugwu et al. (2020) argue that leaders elevate followers to take on greater responsibilities through individual consideration. A sizeable proportion of the reviewed literature considered coaching and mentoring as integral to the individual consideration dimension, suggesting that this allows leaders to help followers grow and personally develop (Aldholay et al., 2020; Kautzman, 2018; Yaseen et al., 2018; Ytterstad et al., 2020). Kautzman (2018) include *showing concern* and *respect* for followers as integral facets of individual consideration, with Yaseen et al. (2018) going further to include caring for followers’ welfare and expressing appreciation and support for them. In line with this, Aldholay et al. (2020) propose listening effectively and establishing a supportive climate as behaviours demonstrating individual consideration.

Yaseen et al. (2018) incorporate identification with the leader in their discussion of individual consideration, suggesting that it reduces the role relationship uncertainty between the leader and follower with positive effects. Ugwu et al. (2020) also recognise identification with the leader; however, they attribute this to the idealised influence dimension, which will be discussed later. Across the literature, each study's behaviours, traits, and principles when discussing individual consideration share much common ground. Individual consideration hinges on the understanding that followers have individual needs that may differ from their colleagues and may change over time (Aldholay et al., 2020; Kautzman, 2018). Leaders demonstrating individual consideration understand this and seek to treat followers as individuals based on their differing needs, skills, and aspirations (Aldholay, Abdullah, Isaac, & Mutahar, 2020; Boamah & Tremblay, 2019; Lo et al., 2020; Oyerinde, 2020; Phong & Son, 2020; Ugwu & Okore, 2020; Wilson, 2020; Yaseen et al., 2018; Ytterstad, Olaisen, & Jevnaker, 2020). The literature suggests this may be approached by the leader personally coaching or mentoring followers, creating a supportive and open climate, showing empathy and support not only for work-related affairs but also for a follower's family and personal life, and showing a keenness to listen and share the followers' concerns and needs (Aldholay et al., 2020).

In much of the literature, the discussion regarding transformational leadership's intellectual stimulation aspect revolves around empowering individuals to problem-solve (Adams, 2018; Bakardjieva, Felt, & Dumitrica, 2018; Lo et al., 2020; Singh & Widen, 2020; Ytterstad et al., 2020). In conjunction with problem-solving, encouraging followers to challenge assumptions, beliefs, and traditions is often discussed. Singh and Widen (2020)

argued that this stimulates and encourages the expression of ideas and new ways of working, enabling more effective problem-solving. Aldholay, Abdullah, Isaac, & Mutahar (2020) emphasise the importance of challenging existing assumptions and fostering an environment where creativity, intuition, and innovation are used for problem-solving. Bakardjieva, Felt, and Dumitrica (2018) add that they encourage followers to question their values and beliefs, and those of the leader when confronting organisational problems.

Creativity is also frequently discussed as part of intellectual stimulation, with Bakardjieva, Felt, and Dumitrica (2018, p. 5) stating that transformational leaders "promote creativity by encouraging followers to question critical assumptions underlying the established framework of thoughts and routines and to look at old problems and situations in new ways". (p. 5) Intellectual stimulation, therefore, is grounded in the notion that leaders "inspire followers to develop their innovative strategies" (p. 5) by encouraging the expression of new ideas, challenging assumptions, and empowering followers to be creative in problem-solving based on reasoning and evidence. This is seen to positively impact employee motivation as they feel their opinions matter and their voices are heard; this, in turn, leads to more faith in the leader.

Inspirational motivation is defined as the extent "to which a leader articulates an appealing vision to followers, communicates optimism about future goals, and provides meaning for the task at hand" (Lo et al., 2020, p. 4; Shao, 2019, p. 7). This definition was shared across the literature, with Kautzman (2018) suggesting that uniting followers around a sharp vision and mission created a sense of collective purpose. Kautzman (2018) added that leaders who demonstrate inspirational motivation express high levels of expectation and

optimism. There was also an element of example-setting given by Shao (2019), who suggested leaders inspire motivation through *pep-talks* and seek to relieve the burden of their followers by striving for creative work methods to lessen the load.

Idealised influence is defined as communicating an inspiring vision and high-performance expectations (Lo et al., 2020). In the literature reviewed, charisma was frequently given as a descriptor of idealised influence (Ashiq, Ur Rehman, & Batool, 2019; Schultz, 2019; Temiz, 2018; Temiz & Islam, 2019). Temiz and Islam (2019) noted that idealised influence and inspirational motivation are often combined into a single *charisma* factor due to the overlap between the vision, mission, and a collective sense of purpose. Shao (2019) had similar observations and suggested that “Idealised influence is, to a large degree, a culmination of the other three I’s coupled with a strong emotional attachment to and identification with the leader. Such leaders are emulated by followers and often labelled “charismatic””. (p. 23) Temiz and Islam (2019) suggested that followers were seen to identify more closely with their leaders through idealised influence and consequently worked harder to achieve optimal performance. Temiz and Islam (2019) suggested that identifying with the leader was achieved by demonstrating admirable behaviours that tapped into followers’ emotions. Schultz (2019) added that a critical aspect of idealised influence was the leader appearing to be above self-interest, thereby demonstrating the values and behaviours essential in followers to fulfil the organisational mission.

There was also a theme of instilling a sense of the *greater good* for the group rather than the individual reward (Lo et al., 2020; Shao, 2019). Li et al. (2018, p. 232) go as far as defining idealised influence as “the degree to which a leader shows charisma and emphasises

the importance of purpose, commitment, and the ethical consequences of decisions”. Leaders who demonstrate idealised influence or charisma motivate their followers to emulate and follow them. This is done by identifying more closely with followers, demonstrating and embodying the values and behaviours expected to achieve the vision, and shaping a mission through which positive outcomes are perceived for all rather than the few.

2.4.2 Transactional Leadership

Burns first introduced transactional leadership in 1987 to describe a leadership approach where leaders attempt to exchange with the employees to create positive emotions (Yaseen et al., 2018). These types of leaders evaluate their employees, determine what factors may motivate them, and seek means to support improved performance. The literature describes transactional leadership as a leader–follower dynamic focusing on reward and punishment to elicit the desired behaviours (Okere & Olorunfemi, 2018; Oyerinde, 2020; Ugwu, Onyancha, & Fombard, 2020; Yaseen et al., 2018). Yaseen et al. (2018) argue that transactional leaders focus on relationships and processes rather than changing their future. Scheffler and Brunzel (2020) agree that these leaders’ main motive is to become effective managers that the subordinates can depend on. Clarke (2013) conducted a study, using the theoretical model of safety leadership, which incorporated both transformational and active transactional styles and was tested using meta-analytic path analysis, whereby the final transformational model had a positive relationship with both the apparent safety climate and safety participation, with the findings suggesting that active transactional leadership is imperative in certifying defiance with rules and regulations, whereas transformational leadership is predominantly associated with inspiring employee contribution to safety. In

general, transactional leadership is categorised in the literature as a leader–follower relationship emphasising reward and punishment, and bargains and exchanges, to elicit the desired behaviours (Okere & Olorunfemi, 2018; Oyerinde, 2020). Okere and Olorunfemi (2018) consider the transactional style a more traditional form of leadership than more contemporary outcome-based approaches such as transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership is one of the traditional leadership styles still applied in organisations. Leaders with more experience in applying transactional leadership use different characteristics to facilitate work operations and employees' motivation. For example, these leaders focus on achieving results and a company's mission, which influences them to conform to the firm's existing culture, including measuring success based on the existing system of rewards and penalties (Okere & Olorunfemi, 2018). The leaders delegate work and responsibilities to the workers based on their skills and experience. A transactional leader maintains a company's routine for worker motivation by managing individual and group performances based on the defined requirements. Performance reviews help evaluate and judge employee efforts that are either rewarded or punished based on performance. For example, a well-performing worker can be rewarded through increased compensation or promotion and recognition. Poor performance can result in extra training in the specific field and repetitive tasks that improve a worker's performance (Oyerinde, 2020). Transactional leaders collaborate well with skilled employees motivated by the reward–penalty system.

The transactional leadership style implements different strategies that motivate employees' motivation or incentive. The leadership type provides rewards such as funds, promotions, and recognition to the workers motivated by self-interest to follow instructions

and meet set goals. It also enables the achievement of short-term goals swiftly because it provides a system that requires repetitive tasks and reproducible environments (Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). Further, the rewards and penalties are clearly defined, motivating the staff to work to achieve the rewards and avoid the penalties. Such a structure is ideal because it contributes to worker incentives and agility.

The current study aims to understand how various characteristics of transactional leadership improve employee agility. The literature describes two attributes of transactional leadership: contingent reward, and management by exception. Contingent reward describes leaders as individuals who work towards attaining specific objectives on a reward basis. This factor describes how the overall status quo allows transactional leaders to achieve their desired outcomes (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019; Lim, 2018). Boamah and Tremblay (2019) argue that transaction leaders participate in the constructive path-goal transaction of rewards for performance. The transactional dimensions of contingent reward can be categorised as task-oriented behaviour (Lim, 2018). A leader's objective in performing task-oriented behaviours includes increasing the efficiency and reliability of the process, resources, and personnel (Lim, 2018). For example, contingent rewards include being clear about goals and rewards, and are linked to leaders' job performance (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019). Overall, transactional leadership is characterised by more concrete behaviours. The leader uses rewards to motivate employees to take either preventative action before a problem escalates, or to address a problem when it arises. It will be interesting to determine how the transactional dimensions of contingent reward improve employee agility.

In their recent investigations, Alavi et al. (2021) delved into the relationship between transactional leadership and dynamics within the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research conducted by these scholars unearthed a noteworthy link between transactional leadership and a reduction in employee innovativeness, yet a simultaneous commitment to change within the UAE setting (Alavi et al., 2021). The effectiveness of transactional leadership in facilitating the development of new skills and fostering innovativeness was questioned by Alavi et al. (2021), supported by the observation that its impact on idea generation in the UAE was statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, the studies conducted in the UAE spotlight a prevailing emphasis of transactional leadership on augmenting efficiency and fortifying existing practices, indicating a dedication to reinforcing resilience within established frameworks (Alavi et al., 2021). Notably, the cumulative results of these investigations hint at the notion that, despite its limited contribution to innovation, transactional leadership maintains a positive correlation with employee agility in the UAE.

Nevertheless, when adopting a global perspective, the complexity of the scenario becomes more apparent. In Egypt, transactional leadership demonstrated a substantial positive correlation with employee agility; however, the mediation of trust and ambidexterity played a pivotal role in establishing this connection, as highlighted by Khairy et al. (2023). Similarly, Mekonnen and Bayissa's (2023) investigation in Ethiopia revealed a noteworthy and positive link between transactional leadership and employee agility. The intricate nature of transactional leadership is manifest in its involvement in delineating clear expectations, underscoring stability, advocating for procedural adherence, and prioritising short-term goals. This approach proves efficacious in specific contexts where well-defined guidelines, close

monitoring, and the adherence to protocols are imperative, ultimately bolstering employee agility. Nonetheless, the overall impact hinges on mediating or moderating factors, underscoring the necessity for a nuanced, context-specific comprehension of leadership dynamics.

2.4.3 Laissez-Faire Leadership

Although previously conceptualised as *non-leadership*, more recent research supports that laissez-faire leadership is not just negatively correlated to leadership effectiveness criteria but also leads to adverse organisational outcomes (Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). A study by Skogstad et al. (2014) challenged previous beliefs and proposed that laissez-faire leadership was destructive. These authors hypothesised that having an immediate supervisor with laissez-faire leadership behaviour would increase the subordinates' role in conflict, role ambiguity, and conflict with coworkers.

Despite the adverse effects of laissez-faire, the leadership style has significant characteristics that motivate the employees to continue working hard towards personal goals. Laissez-faire leaders provide little guidance to the employees. They delegate tasks to skilled workers and observe them perform their duties. In this type of leadership, the workers can make significant decisions and solve problems based on their experience and tasks (Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). Leaders provide constructive criticism and take charge where necessary to help workers complete their assignments and improve. The style also requires leaders to take responsibility for overall actions and decisions. It is an effective leadership strategy that allows employees to apply their skills and experience to complete tasks, meet targets, and make

critical decisions. Laissez-faire leaders provide their employees with every tool they require to solve problems themselves. They do not direct the workers or teams towards a decided direction, but they allow them to determine their goals, improve their problem-solving skills, and make the right decisions (Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). These factors facilitate employees' motivation at the workplace, resulting in improved performance and employee agility.

Laissez-faire can be associated with employee incentive and agility through its benefits. First, leaders with years of experience in this leadership style encourage personal growth. The leaders are hands-off in their approach, which allows the employees to be hands-on in their activities, establishing an environment that facilitates growth and development (Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). The style also encourages creativity and innovation as workers collaborate and develop new strategies to solve problems and meet goals. It also allows employees to adapt to change and act proactively to make critical decisions swiftly without waiting for approval.

Furthermore, the effects of laissez-faire leadership on psychological distress were mediated by workplace bullying, but there was no significant direct link between laissez-faire leadership and psychological distress (Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). In other words, leaders' laissez-faire behaviour increases workplace bullying, which causes subordinates' psychological distress. Overall, the authors conclude that organisations should manage abusive and aggressive leaders and laissez-faire leaders who create work environments that cause negative effects.

An additional significance of this study is that it highlights the importance of understanding the mechanisms in which a passive leadership style is causing adverse effects. For example, if the authors only evaluated the effect of laissez-faire leadership on subordinates' psychological distress, the results would have been non-significant. It is essential to understand that passive leadership may lead to adverse subordinate outcomes through different mechanisms than an abusive leader. Consequently, the authors could unpack and reveal the significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and subordinates' psychological distress. Similarly, it is crucial to unpack the different mechanisms that lead to passive leadership to understand and reveal destructive styles, such as appeasing leadership.

In line with the previous results, research also supports similar passive leadership relationships with behavioural incivility and experienced incivility. Specifically, passive leadership had a significant direct effect on increasing employees' behavioural incivility. Higher levels of passive leadership strengthened the positive relationship between employees' experienced incivility and behavioural incivility. Research on workplace incivility shows that it is negatively linked to various subordinate outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, commitment, and psychological well-being (Aslam, 2018b; Lynch et al., 2018; Singh & Widen, 2020). Thus, these studies present the destructive consequences of passive leadership behaviour. Understanding that failure to perform leadership tasks causes adverse outcomes is the first step. It is also essential to identify the patterns of characteristics that lead to types of passive leadership.

Investigating passive leaders' characteristics will help differentiate between disengaged leaders (i.e., laissez-faire) and leaders unaware of the harm caused by avoiding

leadership tasks (Henninger, 2020; McGurn, 2020; Saliu et al., 2018). For example, the appeasing leader fails to perform leadership tasks because he or she avoids decision-making and conflict due to excessively important levels of bright relational characteristics. However, appeasing leaders are not aware that they are causing more harm by avoiding decision-making and conflict. Thus, the inaction of appeasing leaders is driven by wanting to do the right thing (i.e., not upset anyone by avoiding conflict), yet it is perceived negatively (i.e., the leader does not exercise their authority). This is different from laissez-faire leaders who just avoid decision-making and conflict because they cannot be bothered.

Nevertheless, the laissez-faire leadership definition fails to address why the leader avoids leadership tasks. The importance of this distinction is seen in effective leadership literature. For example, Saliu et al. (2018) altered aspects of transformational leadership theory to account for leaders who are authentically interested in the greater good versus inauthentic leaders and use personal style gain or immoral causes. Some definitions of destructive leadership specify that it is intentional negative behaviour (Henninger, 2020; Saliu et al., 2018). Nevertheless, Scheffler and Brunzel (2020) propose that destructive leadership is characterised by causing harmful outcomes, including passive leadership types. The intent of leaders who avoid leadership tasks could vary by purposefully being passive (i.e., disengaged or laissez-faire) or unknowingly causing adverse effects (i.e., appeasing) due to individual motivational differences. Specifically, appeasing leaders may avoid leadership tasks to circumvent any negative backlash from performing leadership responsibilities. For example, appeasing leaders may fail to resolve the conflict between two subordinates to avoid upsetting either party (Openo, 2019; Scheffler & Brunzel, 2020). The relational characteristics pattern

that defines appeasing leadership may contribute to identifying these leaders as *destructive* within the workplace.

Aldhaheeri's (2021) exploration of leadership styles in the UAE unveils a widespread embrace of both transformational and transactional leadership, diverging from the laissez-faire approach. Parallel findings by Thanh and Quang (2022) in Vietnam and the UAE point to a negative correlation between laissez-faire leadership and employee engagement. Emphasising the significance of employee engagement, Huang et al. (2023) and Das et al. (2023) underscore a positive association between transformational leadership and employee agility in the UAE. However, the influence of laissez-faire leadership on employee agility remains intricate, marked by studies yielding conflicting results (Zhang et al., 2023). Despite the potential for autonomy in fostering creativity and rapid decision-making, the effectiveness of laissez-faire leadership hinges on individual skills, motivation, and self-discipline, introducing the possibility of role confusion and performance declines, as noted by Thanh and Quang (2022). Personality traits emerge as critical mediators, with studies asserting that the outcomes of laissez-faire leadership are contingent on these traits and significantly impact employees' preparedness for change. Akkaya and Tabak's (2020) comprehensive global study, covering 31 managers, discerned an inconsequential negative association between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility, underscoring the nuanced and context-dependent nature of laissez-faire leadership's influence on organisational dynamics.

2.4.4 The Gaps Associated with Leadership Styles

Overall, these studies on leadership styles and behaviours support two conclusions. First, relational elements are crucial in leadership. Transformational leadership consistently emerges as the better predictor of leadership outcomes compared to other leadership styles. There are various transformational features that associate directly to change at the employee level and staff agility. Transformational leadership concentrates on emotions and values, and its traits include inspiration that encourages followers, the capability to treat followers with own contemplation, logical stimulation, and optimism.

Furthermore, the literature supports that consideration is a better predictor of leadership criteria than transformational leadership (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2020; Wilson, 2020; Yaseen et al., 2018; Ytterstad et al., 2020). Thus, when comparing the impact of characteristics on leadership criteria, the more relational element emerges as the most important. Second, the current concept of leadership styles does not truly capture leaders. For example, theoretically, the leadership styles described above define different types of leaders. However, these leadership styles only account for behaviours. This elucidates the fact that although current leadership styles seek to understand leaders, the reality is that leadership styles only capture the relationship between behaviours and outcomes. A better and more realistic approach would incorporate leader traits and behaviours since characteristics coexist and do not manifest in isolation (Ytterstad et al., 2020). Consequently, a complete description of a leader includes traits related to employee agility.

Currently, a growing number of scholars advocate for the empirical integration of leader traits and behaviours. Past scholars have pointed out the lack of integration of leadership constructs within the literature; however, few attempts have been made to close the gap (Aslam, 2018a; Bell, 2018; Lombard, 2018). For example, Lombard (2018) states that the vague understanding of how leader behaviours relate to employees' productivity is due to the:

great deal of semantic confusion regarding the conceptual and operational definition of leadership behaviours. Over the years, there has been a proliferation of leadership behaviour terms, and the same term is often defined differently from one study to the next. (p. 414)

To help integrate and organise the literature, scholars have proposed that traits be organised into three kinds: interpersonal attributes, traits associated with task competence, and demographic (Lombard, 2018). Furthermore, Bell (2018) proposed that leader behaviours could be categorised within four dimensions that were either (a) task-oriented, (b) relational-oriented, (c) change-oriented, or (d) passive.

To integrate the leadership literature on traits and behaviours, Lombard (2018) proposed and assessed an integrative leadership effectiveness model. The model includes all the variables the authors believe are relevant to leadership effectiveness; however, the authors only assessed traits and behaviours that had sufficient empirical evidence to include in their meta-analysis. Furthermore, these authors categorised leadership effectiveness criteria into three dimensions: (a) content, (b) level of analysis, and (c) target of evaluation. The content of leadership effectiveness refers to whether leadership effectiveness is evaluated as task

performance, affective/relational criteria (e.g., follower satisfaction), or both (i.e., overall).

The analysis level relates to whether leadership effectiveness is conceptualised at the individual, group, or organisation level. For example, the individual level of analysis may refer to leadership emergence or perceived effectiveness.

In contrast, the group and organisation level of analysis may refer to the group- or organisation-level performance (Bell, 2019; Kautzman, 2018; Kwanya & Stilwell, 2018). Lastly, the evaluation target refers to whether the evaluation is based on the leader or other individuals. To capture a diverse range of criteria, Lombard (2018) focused on (a) individual leader effectiveness, (b) group performance, (c) follower satisfaction with the leader, and (d) follower job satisfaction. Lombard's (2018) study is an excellent example of the merits of combining leader traits and behaviours. The author further proposes that future leadership behaviour theories should include empirical tests to demonstrate which traits contribute to each behaviour. Ytterstad et al. (2020) state that their "results indicate that transformational leadership has a significant relational component to it and overlaps conceptually and empirically with both initiating structure and consideration" (p. 38). Therefore, it is essential to explore further the contributions of initiating structure and consideration for leadership effectiveness criteria. Kwanya and Stilwell (2018) urge an integrated trait-behavioural model to better understand the process in which these variables affect leadership outcomes. Encouraged by other leadership scholars' pursuit of a process-type model, the authors propose that an integrated model would consist of leader traits, leader behaviours, follower effects, follower traits, and multilevel outcomes. The authors also caution against the proliferation of leader traits and instead recommend testing existing traits to extrapolate the traits that

genuinely have incremental validity over others. Thus, with multivariate models of individual differences, it is possible to determine which leader traits are essential (Aslam, 2018a; Bell, 2018). Additionally, another study argued that with methodological advances such as latent profile and class analyses, it is possible to evaluate profiles of traits and behaviours to identify individuals as a *whole* (Ytterstad et al., 2020). This is especially important since everyone is conceptualised as a unit of analysis, which allows individuals to be grouped like a series of variables (Ytterstad et al., 2020). This, of course, yields more realistic and applicable results since individuals do not have just one trait at a time but instead a combination of traits making a complete profile.

2.4.4.1 Relevant Literature in the UAE and the Gap in the Literature. A literature review concerning the leadership styles in the UAE shows an important gap in understanding these leadership styles and their effect on the organisation's performance in the country. Recently there has been a growing body of research on leadership styles worldwide, especially in the context of the UAE, which has unique characteristics in its economic, cultural, and historical factors that have gained so much attention.

One key gap that has been recognised in the literature is the unavailability of studies and materials that delve into the UAE framework and context regarding the impact of leadership styles on the performance of the organisation. Most existing research concerning leadership styles is conducted in Western countries (Abu-Tair et al., 2020, pp. 100–201). They found that these Western countries are not directly applicable to the UAE, which possessed a challenge leading to a scarcity in literature. Western countries have distinct economic and cultural landscapes which limit them to this kind of research. The UAE is characterised as a

multicultural society that has a substantial workforce that presents and brings about a unique environment that can positively influence organisational dynamics and leadership styles (Warner & Moonesar, 2020, pp. 41–63).

Additionally, there is a noticeable lack of in-depth exploration and study into the relationship between organisational performance and leadership styles, especially within the UAE. The worldwide studies have examined and evaluated how leadership styles impact job satisfaction and employee performance, but there is a lack of in-depth research that focuses mainly on the UAE context (Alice, 2024, p. 98). This gap is so evident, considering that the UAE has rapid economic growth and the advancing significance of the effective leadership that enhances this growth (Crupi & Schilirò, 2023).

However, the literature proposes a limited understanding of the predominant leadership styles in the UAE, especially when it comes to making decisions. There is a need for more research that will address the UAE's unique economic and cultural context rather than just the general context. Understanding the leadership styles that are employed in the UAE, like those used in decision-making scenarios, is important in promoting employee satisfaction and organisational performance within the country (Chambers, 2023, pp. 56–100). To sum up, the literature review highlights a crucial gap that exists in the understanding of these leadership styles and their impact or influence on organisational performance in the UAE. This shows that there is a need for more research which should be tailored to the UAE context to bridge the gap, thus giving insights into how leadership styles can be enhanced to drive organisational achievement in the country's specific economic, historical, and cultural framework.

2.4.4.2 The Dominant Leadership Style in the UAE. Research shows that leadership in the UAE is much influenced by the country's religious and cultural orientations, which might lead to consultative and participative approaches (Ahmad, Al Hammadi, & Jameel, 2021). Various studies have indicated that UAE administrators and managers often prefer consultative leadership styles that require their subordinates in decision-making (Chuen, 2020, pp. 201–250). Their study also aims to examine the decision-making styles of UAE managers reveals that the consultative style is predominant. This proposes that the UAE leaders prefer to pursue input and feedback from their employees' points of view before making their own decisions, rather than seeking a more autocratic approach.

Moreover, the literature also underscores the frequency of participative leadership styles in the UAE context. Participative leadership entails empowering the employees by allowing them to participate by taking an active role in the process of making decisions (Wang, Hou, & Li, 2022). This example aligns with the UAE's cultural values which highlight communal ownership and a more decentralised method of management. This suggests that the option of the participative and consultative leadership styles in the UAE is majorly influenced by the county's diverse workforce, which entails a significant quantity of expatriate workers. This multicultural environment may lead to a more collaborative and inclusive approach when it comes to leadership intending to motivate and manage the workforce (Darmawan, Tata, & Abdullah, 2021). Therefore, the dominant style in the UAE tends to be a combination of participative and consultative approaches that are influenced by the country's religious, demographic, and cultural factors (Mazroui et al., 2020). This type of style underscores the

employee's engagement and collaborative decision-making, and it is more of a decentralised method of management.

2.4.4.3 Reasons for Focusing on Leadership Styles. For the most part, the underlying reasons for focusing on transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles centres on their contrasting capacity to support or hinder elements that contribute to employee agility such as employee autonomy, creativity, and motivation. Research on these elemental features of employee agility differs relative to their focus and relation to leadership factors, particularly the influence of leadership styles (Yesuf et al., 2024). In their research, Yesuf et al. (2024) developed a framework for employee creativity comprised of three factor levels: intra-personal, inter-personal, and organizational levels. In this case, intra-personal level factors are personal or individual-specific factors that determine or influence creativity such as knowledge, feelings, thoughts, intentions, and abilities that nurture/support creative dispositions, problem-solving, and knowledge application (Yesuf et al., 2024).

On the other hand, inter-personal level factors are those associated with quality of interactions between individuals such as the merging of feelings and thoughts surrounding specific subjects, knowledge sharing in conversations to nurture creative climates, empowerment, transformational leadership, and leader-member exchanges (Yesuf et al., 2024). Lastly, organizational level factors are those associated with shifts in relative autonomy to relative control as well as shifts from relative independence to relative interdependence among members of an organization to advance and support innovative creativeness in organizational activities and performance (Yesuf et al., 2024). In their study, Nwachukwu and Hieu (2020) argued that leadership development programs, personality, and workplace

environments nurture creativity with the organizational culture that leaders nurture supporting individual and team creativity.

The three leadership styles under focus in this study influence creativity factors within intra-personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels differently. Specifically, transactional leadership promotes creativity through intra-personal and organizational factors as workers compete for rewards and avoid actions that lead to punishments, essentially fuelling innate employee agility. On the other hand, transformational leadership promotes creativity through interpersonal and organizational factors by fostering a workplace environment that encourages individual and team collaborations that lead to innovative solutions to prevailing challenges and issues. Lastly, laissez-faire leadership promotes creativity mainly through intra-personal, interpersonal, and organizational factors by creating a liberal workplace environment where workers with similar ambitions and skills can engage any kinds of innovative solutions as long as they achieve preset organizational goals and objectives while enhancing overall organizational performance.

Similarly, the three leadership styles were chosen for their respective influences on employee motivation. Research shows that there are five Rs of motivation for employees: responsibility, respect, recognition, relationships, and rewards (Gunderman and Willing, 2002). According to Gunderman and Willing (2002), these five Rs outline the reasoning behind differences in job outcomes and benefits among employees relative to the perceived support gained from organizational policies in work environments and the associated rewards to be gained for highly motivated employees. Under transformational leadership, relationships and recognition underscore employee motivation through the shared and participative

leadership practices endorsed where workers are encouraged to participate in decision-making to enhance organizational performance and resilience as custodians of organizational health and wellbeing. Under transactional leadership, rewards and recognition influence employee motivation as they strive for specific outcomes as individuals or teams to acquire/receive desired rewards. Under laissez-faire leadership, responsibility and respect influence employee motivation as they strive for self-serving ideals while meeting organizational obligations without much consideration of the leadership provided.

Contrastingly, Papathanasiou et al. (2014) identified four factors of motivation relative to leadership from management, confidence, and employee empowerment: autonomy, time, communication, and complexity. The authors argued that these factors determine “the excellent levels of time that workers have for delivering quality work, autonomy given to make decisions, open communication, and the ability to manage the complexity of their work” (Papathanasiou et al., 2014, p.407). Under transformational leadership, autonomy and communication influence employee motivation as workers strive for desired outcomes while participating in decision-making. Under transactional leadership, time and complexity influence employee motivation as they work to realize desired outcomes to receive rewards relative to the time investment required and associated complexity of tasks. Under laissez-faire leadership, autonomy and communication influence employee motivation as they seek outcomes most beneficial to themselves while meeting organizational obligations regardless of goals.

Comparatively, Yesuf et al. (2024) argued that employee motivation depends on their respective motives as drivers or goals where motives as drivers evoke intrinsic employee

motivation to fulfil tasks, roles, or obligations within the workplace environment thereby enhancing organizational performance and motives as goals stem from an individual and collective adoption of preset organizational goals and objects as personal goals and objectives. Under transformational leadership, motives are both drivers and goals while under transactional leadership, they are primarily goals as workers strive for rewards from achieving goals (Yesuf et al., 2024). On the other hand, motives are drivers under laissez-faire leadership as the impetus to achieve organizational goals is self-motivated regardless of leadership (Yesuf et al., 2024).

2.5 Employee Agility

It is critical to investigate employee agility, since employees significantly determine the agility of an organisation. Studies describe employee agility as the human dynamics of agility within an organisation (Grieves, 2018; Janssen & van der Voort, 2020; Marcinkowski & Gawin, 2019). To demonstrate employee agility, employees should respond to uncertain, changing opportunities, and contribute to the organisation's bottom line that consistently appreciates its technological and human resource capabilities (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020). Most studies on employee agility focus on determining the employees' behavioural characteristics instead of establishing the underlying cause of such behaviours (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020). The literature focuses on leaders' perspectives to outline leadership practices to ensure a more agile employee. However, little is known about the employees' views and how these leadership styles influence their agility (Werder & Maedche, 2019). The current research fills this gap by investigating employee agility from the employees' perspective and how leadership styles influence their agility.

According to Bala et al. (2019), employee agility is a newly introduced concept in the business world. The benefits, and challenges associated with employee agility have not been studied properly yet. Employee agility refers to the ability of employees to cope with external changes, which requires the acquisition, interpretation, and utilisation of appropriate information (Bala et al., 2019). To develop agility, employees should have access to sources of information and the ability to process information (Bala et al., 2019). As pointed out by Pitafi et al. (2018), workplace conflicts can negatively affect employee agility. At the same time, better psychological conditions of the employees have the potential to improve employee agility in organisations (Cai et al., 2018). Agile employees are more flexible, fast, and effective in establishing collaborations with others compared to non-agile employees (Bala et al., 2019).

Organisational performance has a direct relationship with employee agility (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020). Agile employees help organisations improve their competitive power and survive in the heavily contested business world (Pitafi et al., 2019). Moreover, it has the potential to improve product or service quality, customer service, and learning in organisations (Wei et al., 2020). As noted by Kanwal et al. (2019), the current competitive global business environment made it inevitable for organisations to provide ample importance to information or data analysis. Agile employees may have better information-processing capabilities compared to others. Pitafi et al. (2020) conducted a study to learn more about how enterprise social media (ESM) usage in organisations is related to employee agility. They collected data from 306 employees in different Chinese organisations and found a positive relationship between ESM usage and employee agility. Another finding of this study was that work

expertise strengthens the positive relationship between ESM usage and employee agility (Pitafi et al., 2020). Table 1 shows the prior studies conducted in the UAE based on agility. For instance, Mohammed, Fadi, and Omya (2020) highlighted in their study that employee agility is improved in individuals once they participate in job shaping. Similarly, managers should assign employees with strategic roles to increase their agility (Munteanu et al., 2020).

Table 1*Prior Studies Conducted in the UAE*

No.	Article	Summary	Findings	Reference
1	Examining the impact of organization learning and job crafting on organizational agility: An organizational analysis study in UAE	The aim of this study is to analyse the theoretical views and report the findings of a study examining the impact of organisational learning and job crafting on organisation agility.	The study showed that involving employees in job crafting improves their individual agility as boredom is removed. As such, employees find doing their work easy and enjoyable, which increases productivity.	Mohammed, G., Fadi, S., & Omya, S. (2020). Examining the Impact of Organization Learning and Job Crafting on Organizational Agility: An Organizational Analysis Study in UAE. <i>International Journal of Management Reviews</i> , 11(10), 2091–2105. https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.11.10.2020.200

2	Analysis of practices to increase the workforce agility and to develop a sustainable and competitive business	Companies must constantly identify creative and environmentally friendly solutions. The emphasis on employees and workforce agility has become an attribute of sustainable and competitive organisations simultaneously.	The main conclusion is that if managers intend to develop a sustainable and competitive business, they should attribute a strategic role for employees and adopt practices to increase their agility.	Munteanu, A. I., Bibu, N., Nastase, M., Cristache, N., & Matis, C. (2020). Analysis of practices to increase the workforce agility and to develop a sustainable and competitive business. <i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i> , 12(9). https://doi.org/10.3390/SU12093545
3	The relationship among leadership commitment, organizational performance, and employee engagement	The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the relationship among leadership commitment, organizational performance, and employee engagement via their effects on a set of mediating variables of employers	The analysis finds that leadership commitment directly affects organisational performance and employee engagement. The study also finds that employers branding, strategic alignment, organisational agility, and human resource practices are an intervening factor between leadership commitment, organisational performance, and	Nasomboon, B. (2014). The Relationship Among Leadership Commitment, Organizational Performance, and Employee Engagement. <i>International Business Research</i> , 7(9). https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v7n9p77

	branding (EYB), strategic alignment (SGA), organisational agility (ONA), and human resource practices (HRM).	employee engagement.	
4	The role of organisational learning in creating an agile workforce in Dubai	The study explores the phenomenon whereby today's business environment, particularly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is better described as being volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. The study reveals a significant consistency between the Western standards of agile attributes and those required among Dubai SMEs. Also, the findings show that SMEs in Dubai incorporate learning interventions without a targeted focus on agile attribute developments.	Abdelhamid, M., & Sposato, M. (2019). The role of organisational learning in creating an agile workforce in Dubai. <i>Int. J. Work Organisation and Emotion</i>, 10(3).

5	The role of organizational agility and transformational leadership in service recovery prediction	The main goal of this research was to develop a conceptual model for defining the relationship between organisational agility and transformational leadership in personnel service recovery among governmental organisations.	The findings indicated that (1) transformational leadership and (2) organisational agility have a positive impact on service recovery. Moreover, the findings indicated that the suitable application of organisational agility and transformational leadership may lead the organisation to better and suitable service recovery.	Khoshlahn, M., & Ardabili, F. S. (2016). The Role of Organizational Agility and Transformational Leadership in Service Recovery Prediction. <i>Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences</i> , 230, 142–149. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.09.018
6	An empirical study of oil and gas value chain agility in the UAE	The aim of this research paper is to investigate the agility of oil and gas value chains in the United Arab Emirates, and to understand the impact of implementing supply disruption strategies, outsourcing strategies, and management strategies on oil and gas value chain agility.	The findings indicate that oil and gas value chain managers in the United Arab Emirates have in place a good combination of supply disruption and outsourcing strategies that are synchronised with management strategies. The implementation of these strategies has a positive and significant effect on the agility of the value chain and	Shqairat, A., & Sundarakani, B. (2018). An empirical study of oil and gas value chain agility in the UAE An empirical study of oil and gas supply chain agility in the UAE.

7	Dimensions of agility capabilities organizational competitiveness in sustaining	The uncertain global changes in the market industry can unfold potential opportunities and risk. It thus becomes vital for organisations to be agile to sustain their market position and be able to face challenges and maintain the success journey ultimately.	therefore the company's competitive position. The paper addressed a case study on the impact of deep learning on organisational agility	Zainal, A. Y., Yousuf, H., & Salloum, S. A. (2020). Dimensions of Agility Capabilities Organizational Competitiveness in Sustaining. <i>Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing</i> , 1153, 762–772. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44289-7_71
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Note. Self-developed for the study.

2.5.1 The Three Dimensions of Employee Agility

Alavi et al. (2014) have identified three major dimensions of employee agility. They are adaptability, resilience, and proactivity. While adaptability indicates the ability of employees to adapt to environmental changes, resilience refers to the positive attitudes possessed by employees and the level of acceptance of such changes. On the other hand, proactivity refers to the readiness shown by employees to resolve change-related problems that may arise in the workplace (Wei et al., 2020).

2.5.1.1 Adaptability. As per the views of van Dam (2019), many researchers have the habit of using the concept of employee adaptability without defining it properly. Essentially, employee adaptability can be defined as the capacity to change. Adaptable employees will have the competence and the motivation to deal with any unfamiliar situations. Adaptability can be divided into two broad segments: organisational adaptability and individual adaptability. While organisational adaptability refers to the ability of an organisation to adapt to the employee characteristics, individual adaptability refers to the ability of the employees to adapt to an organisational climate that includes competitiveness, and performance (van Dam, 2019). Park and Park (2019) have reviewed 34 empirical studies on employee adaptive performance published between 1999 and 2016 and found that individual characteristics play a pivotal role in controlling the capabilities of employees to adapt well to the organisational setting. They found that the nature of the job as well as the characteristics of the organisation also play significant roles in controlling employee adaptability (Park & Park, 2019).

Apart from organisational adaptability and individual adaptability, there are many other adaptabilities such as career adaptability and managerial adaptability (Ocampo et al., 2020). While career adaptability indicates the ability of individuals to adapt to changes when they face the transition from one career to another, managerial adaptability refers to the ability of managers to adapt to the changing needs of the employees and the organisation (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018). As per the views of Ocampo et al. (2020), career adaptability is a psychological resource that makes an employee capable of managing challenges in his career. Career and managerial adaptability appear to be challenging tasks during COVID-like pandemic situations. These adaptabilities are a double-edged sword that may affect both the managers and the employees in multiple ways (Lee et al., 2021). Ocampo et al. (2020) collected data from 339 hotel employees in the United States and found that a proactive personality plays a pivotal role in controlling an employee's career adaptability. Another finding of this study is that managerial adaptability and social support significantly moderate the relationship between career adaptability and turnover intentions (Ocampo et al., 2020).

2.5.1.2 Resilience. Employee resilience refers to the capacity of employees to positively cope, adapt, and thrive in response to dynamic and challenging environments using support from organisations (Prayag, 2018). For the promotion of individual competence, responses to stressful circumstances, and improving job performance, resilience plays a vital role (Cooper et al., 2019). Resilient employees will not show any frustration or dejection when their workload increases. Such employees help organisations in achieving more competence over other organisations.

As per the views of Cooper et al. (2019), social processes and leadership style play a vital role in promoting employee resilience. As pointed out by Yang et al. (2018), leadership can function as a salient contextual stimulus in promoting employee resilience. Effective leadership will cultivate a self-regulatory focus in the minds of employees (Yang et al., 2018). Effective training is necessary for employees to understand the leadership behaviours properly and develop resilience (Tonkin et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018).

Zhu et al. (2019) conducted a study in mainland China, based on social information processing theory, to know more about the mechanism through which humble leadership facilitates employee resilience. The study has identified multiple pathways that humble leadership catalyses employee resilience. The major finding of this study was that humble leadership enhances employee resilience through increases in work-related promotion focus and perceived insider identity (Zhu et al., 2019).

2.5.1.3 Proactivity. According to Parker and Bindl (2017), employee proactive behaviours can be defined in terms of three core attributes: self-starting (i.e., taking the initiative), anticipatory (i.e., acting in advance), and change-oriented (i.e., challenging the status quo) (Parker & Bindl, 2017). Proactive employees may not wait for instructions from the top when they face an emergency (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020). Such employees will anticipate problems and take remedial measures before they materialise. Such employees will challenge the status quo and work hard to bring changes in the organisation (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020). Employee proactivity can be better explained with the help of Sternberg's balance theory of wisdom. As per the arguments of this theory, wisdom comes from balancing one's interests with the interests of others. Based on this theory, there are three ways to become

proactive: managing yourself, considering others, and aligning with the organisational goals (Parker & Wang, 2019).

Researchers analysed 95 studies investigating when employee proactivity leads to positive or negative outcomes.

The demand for proactive employees is increasing every day because of the potential of such employees to increase the competitive power of an organisation. Such employees will be self-starters, and they may not waste even a second while working in an organisation. Moreover, proactive employees perform, contribute, and innovate better than other employees. The demands in organisations are changing day by day because of the rapid advancements in the market. Only proactive employees will be able to keep pace with such rapidly fluctuating demands in the organisation (Liu et al., 2019).

The literature has developed many terms like agility, such as resilience, adaptability, and proactivity (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020; Kir & Erdogan, 2021; Marcinkowski & Gawin, 2019; Werder & Maedche, 2019). Fiksel et al. (2015) argue that employee agility demands two kinds of employee behaviour: adaptive and proactive agility. Table 2 outlines employee agility from the literature as conceptually associated with adaptive and proactive agility. As such, employee agility entails adaptive and proactive aspects. Fiksel et al. (2015) describe proactive agility as the anticipation of the challenges associated with change, developing solutions, and assessing solutions for change-related challenges. Also, adaptive agility changes employees' behaviour to increase their response to the changing environment. To achieve the study objectives, the focus will be on four main characteristics of adaptive

agility and three main attributes of proactive agility, drawn from the literature, and as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Measures of Employee Agility from Previous Studies

Research 2010–2020	Common theme	Adaptive agility
Makinen (2018); Miguel-Stearns (2020); Sohrabi et al. (2014); Al Saeed, Renukappa, Subashini, Algahtani, & Sarrakh (2018)	Responding to change, switching from one task to other tasks, and adaptability	Adaptive agility
Bodenheimer (2018); Emueje, Olannye, & Olanye (2020); Rozema & Schanzenbach (2020); Young (2020)	Professional flexibility and resilience	Resilience
Mooghali et al. (2016); Sohrabi et al. (2014); Makinen (2018); Miguel-Stearns (2020); Al Saeed, Renukappa, Subashini, Algahtani, & Sarrakh (2018)	Problem-solving ability	Decisiveness
Mooghali et al. (2016); Sohrabi et al. (2014); Makinen (2018); Miguel-Stearns (2020); Al Saeed, Renukappa, Subashini, Algahtani, & Sarrakh (2018)	Responsiveness to external change, change agility, a new idea, and being comfortable with change	Coping with change
Mooghali et al. (2016); Bickley (2019); Lim (2018); Makinen (2018); Miguel-Stearns (2020); Al Saeed, Renukappa, Subashini, Algahtani, & Sarrakh (2018); Werder & Maedche (2019)	Sharing ideas, interpersonal adaptability, and teamwork	Teamwork

Mooghali et al. (2016); Bodenheimer (2018); Emueje, Olannye, & Olanye (2020); Rozema & Schanzenbach (2020); Young (2020)	Change initiation, proactiveness, and the ability to make innovative ideas	Proactive agility
Mooghali et al. (2016); Bussell (2019); Odili (2019); Saliu et al. (2018); Srivastava & Joshi (2018); Tayal et al. (2018)	Coping with uncertainty and openness to experience	Courage
Mooghali et al. (2016); Pulakos et al. (2000)	Taking the initiative in meetings	Independence
Mooghali et al. (2016); Sohrabi et al. (2014); Olannye & Olanye (2020); Rozema & Schanzenbach (2020); Young (2020)	Generative behaviour, speed of skill development, learning, and creating new knowledge	Eagerness to learn

Note. Self-developed for the study.

As outlined in Table 2, proactive agility entails courage, independence, and eagerness to learn. Mooghali et al. (2016) describe courage as a proactive strategy employees use to generate changes rather than waiting for things to happen. Studies also consider independence as proactive agility that demands employees achieve tasks with limited guidance and preference for responsibility (Bodenheimer, 2018; Emueje, Olannye, & Olanye, 2020; Rozema & Schanzenbach, 2020; Young, 2020). The literature's common theme is that eagerness to learn is an employees' approach towards their individual development. The adaptive agility measures considered in this study include decisiveness, coping with change, teamwork, and

resilience (Bickley, 2019; Lim, 2018; Makinen, 2018; Miguel-Stearns, 2020; Saeed Al, Renukappa, Subashini, Algahtani, & Sarraikh, 2018; Werder & Maedche, 2019). The literature describes decisiveness as an approach that employees use to exploit opportunities in the changing environment. The concept of coping with change entails dealing with and adapting to the implemented change (Bussell, 2019; Odili, 2019; Saliu et al., 2018; Srivastava & Joshi, 2018; Tayal et al., 2018). Studies describe teamwork as employees' ability to coordinate with workmates, share information, and generate group processes. Studies consider resilience as the employees' approach to handling setbacks associated with the changing environment.

2.6 Factors Related to Employee Agility

In the United States, labour costs for organisations total just over 70% of the economy's total costs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Besides, many organisations' total expenditures are dominated by labour costs. For these reasons, it is not surprising that employee incentive has been studied for hundreds of years. Economists often focus on the distribution of wages between organisations and throughout the economy. At the same time, psychologists typically study the impact of incentives on the individual through performance, satisfaction, and retention, among many others (Ali & Sagsan, 2020; Biswas, 2019; Chahar, 2020). Given this study's goals, the psychological impact of compensation will be the primary focus of this review. Both organisational leaders and researchers have long been interested in the motivational potential of employee compensation (Magnus, 2020). While organisational leaders aim to get the most *bang for their buck* when paying employees, researchers have often focused on the potential positive and negative ramifications of compensation decisions. In any case, employee incentive is an essential topic in both research and practice that

consumes a large portion of organisational budgets and can potentially mediate the effect of different leadership styles on employee agility.

2.6.1 The Role of Rewards in Improving Employee Agility

Rewards refer to all forms of benefits, and are financial returns received by the employee as part of the employment relationship (Almeida et al., 2021). It is an outcome of performing a task outstandingly well or taking responsibility without instructions from the top. There are two types of rewards: intrinsic and extrinsic (Almeida et al., 2021). Intrinsic rewards refer to psychological and intangible rewards that are given in the form of recognition that boosts employees' intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic rewards refer to financial rewards such as pay, interpersonal rewards, benefits, and bonuses (Almeida et al., 2021). The reward package has an impact on the employee's performance. It helps to improve the performance of an organisation by enhancing the employee's skills, abilities, and knowledge to obtain the organisational objectives. Many researchers have determined that employee rewards are directly attached to employee performance (Özçelik et al., 2016). They also indicate that in organisations that do not reward employees, the employees' performance may decrease. Leaders play a vital role in distributing rewards to employees (Özçelik et al., 2016). Some leaders are reluctant in recognising the outstanding performance of employees by providing them with rewards. Such leaders demotivate the employees (Michiels, 2017). On the other hand, leaders who are ready to recognise the employee performance will boost the employee morale through rewards. In the case of employees, problems such as internal conflict, high turnover, lack of commitment or loyalty, lateness, and grievances relate to rewards in one way or another (Michiels, 2017).

2.6.2 The Role of Compensation in Improving Employee Agility

Scholars such as Lehn (2018) have concluded that an effective compensation system would help improve employee agility considerably. The judicious use of compensation and rewards would help employees to stimulate the psychological complements as well as the working motivation. Moreover, employee output, the realisation of the organisational goals, and the productivity will be significantly improved once an organisation implements an effective compensation system (Lehn, 2018). Friedman et al. (2018) mentioned that an effective compensation system can influence the motivation of the employees and thereby enhance their performance. Mumford (2012) supported the findings of Friedman et al. (2018). The author has conducted a study to evaluate the key relationship between compensation and employee performance and concluded that an effective compensation system would help the organisation not only in motivating the employees, but also in enhancing employee loyalty and retention. In his opinion, compensation and reward systems stimulate motivation, and motivation stimulates creativity (Mumford, 2012).

2.6.3 The Role of Recognition in Improving Employee Agility

Only recognised employees will become more agile than other employees. To recognise employees, leaders often use rewards and punishment. According to Afsar et al. (2016), recognition is getting widely recognised to improve employee agility, as it helps the employees in improving their position. More employees are looking to be recognised nowadays to get promoted (Afsar et al., 2016). Recognition is defined as appreciating one's effort in improving the workplace performance (Afsar et al., 2016).

According to Menon and Suresh (2020), recognition is one of the crucial enablers that has a high driving force for the employees. It not only helps in improving the employee agility but also enables and empowers the employees to perform better under different scenarios (Menon & Suresh, 2020). It further serves a great motive to function as an employee incentive when it is related to improving employee agility. According to Caverio-Rubio, Collazo-Mazón, and Amorós-Martínez (2019), recognition not only provides a competitive advantage, but also positively influences the image and efficiency of an organisation. As a result, it leads towards improving the overall employee agility (Caverio-Rubio, Collazo-Mazón, & Amorós-Martínez, 2019).

Moreover, Mamiseishvili and Lee (2018) argued that recognition influences the workplace satisfaction of the employees. This, in turn, makes employees more agile with their work, hence improving the overall performance of the organisation (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). Even though motivation is considered important for the employees to be more agile, recently the trend has shifted towards employee recognition that has enabled the employees to be more agile (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). In the case of employees, the needs could be related to better compensation, rewards, and working climate.

The employees under transformational leadership will strive only to achieve the negotiated level of performance on which their rewards or punishments would be decided (Rea & Parker, 2012). They know well that they will not get any additional rewards or benefits if they innovate something using their hard work. While operating under demanding conditions, psychological empowerment will not take place for the employees (Wang et al., 2011). Furthermore, transformational leaders are more effective in increasing the discretionary

and innovative work behaviour of employees (Afsar et al., 2014) compared to transactional leaders. A study by Si and Wei (2012) showed that highly empowered employees under less flexible systems and strict reward and punishment contingencies display greater feelings of respect. Such employees may exhibit more self-determination, a sense of values, and a more harmonious work climate, leading to more recognised and innovative behaviours (Si & Wei, 2012).

2.6.4 Psychological Perspectives on Employee Incentives

From its earliest beginnings, the field of psychology has focused on motivation when addressing employee compensation. Despite a lack of empirical support, early work addressing the psychological effects of compensation laid the foundation for more modern and empirically supported theories (Ameri, Keeling, & Salehnejad, 2020; Marwick & Hargittai, 2019; J. M. Murray et al., 2019). One of Maslow's (1943, as cited in Suyono & Mudjanarko, 2018) earliest psychological theories applied to compensation was formulated, which suggested that compensation may not be motivational (. His original hierarchy suggested that individuals have an innate hierarchy to fulfil needs in a particular order, starting with physiological and safety (e.g., food, housing, and sleep), and moving up the hierarchy to love (e.g., belongingness), esteem (e.g., achievement and competence) and self-actualisation (e.g., being all that I am ever capable of being). Maslow (1943) posited that compensation helped individuals meet their most basic physiological and safety needs, and therefore was much less motivational than other aspects such as work engagement and identity (Chahar, 2020; Saliu et al., 2018). Later, Herzberg (1959) also questioned the motivational nature of compensation when he proposed his two-factor theory (cited in De Vito et al., 2016). Two-factor theory

suggests that job satisfaction is driven by motivational (factors of the work itself that contribute to the achievement and psychological growth) and hygienic (one's *animal nature drives basic needs*) factors (De Vito et al., 2016). Herzberg's (1959) primary assertion regarding compensation is that money is more likely to serve as a hygienic factor that can reduce dissatisfaction but cannot improve satisfaction (De Vito et al., 2016). This perspective suggests that compensation can suppress adverse reactions in the workplace but fails to produce positive reactions. Although these theories are mostly unsupported by empirical research (Saliu et al., 2018), they have positively impacted the field by contributing to the development of more modern perspectives such as job characteristics theory (Saliu et al., 2018). These modern perspectives attempt to improve job design and thereby appeal to the higher order needs of individual employees.

Despite the lack of support for both Maslow's (1943) and Herzberg's (1959) theories, cognitive evaluation theory (CET) provides the opposition for the motivational nature of compensation and enjoys more empirical support than earlier perspectives (De Vito et al., 2016). They suggested that extrinsically motivated behaviours create a psychological tie between extrinsic motivators and their behaviour, which reduces the individual's interest in the behaviour (De Vito et al., 2016). CET's primary premise is that workplace motivation should be subdivided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is a result of factors outside of the individual, such as compensation and benefits.

On the other hand, intrinsic motivation is produced inside the individual and based on an individual's need for competence and self-determination (Rana & Singh, 2016). This over-justification effect suggests that increasing the prominence of extrinsic motivators can have a

detrimental effect on intrinsic motivation due to a focus shift from the enjoyable aspects of work to effort's financial outcomes (De Vito et al., 2016). Hanaysha and Majid (2018) suggest that the over-justification effect can be avoided if individuals do not perceive compensation as behaviourally controlling.

Most researchers at the time accepted the propositions contained within CET, given its logical internal consistency as well as early empirical support. However, later work called into question the utility of CET. For example, De Vito et al. (2016) performed a meta-analysis to evaluate extrinsic compensation's detrimental effect on intrinsic motivation. Using 83 studies, they found that reward conditions did not significantly impact either the participant's free time or overall satisfaction, while the results provided more support for extrinsic motivation's detrimental effect on intrinsic motivation. Saliu et al. (2018) also found that performance-contingent rewards did not significantly impact intrinsic motivation. In total, this accumulation of evidence seems to suggest that there may be a motivational component to compensation. In support of this assertion, several theories explore the motivational benefits of compensation and enjoy a considerable amount of empirical support.

Employee incentives is the mediating variable in this study (as mentioned in the conceptual framework). A mediating variable or mediator explains how two variables are connected. The inclusion of mediators and moderators in research helps understand how different variables affect others to influence different results and occurrences. A mediating variable or an intervening variable links the independent and dependent variables. It allows researchers to hypothesise that the independent variable impacts the mediating variable, which affects the dependent variable.

The independent variables impact the mediating variable in this study. For example, the independent variables for transformational leadership include significant leadership style characteristics such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and idealised consideration, which influence the mediator variable, employee incentive, achieved through compensation, rewards, and recognition (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019). The independent variables in other leadership styles also impact the established mediator variable. The independent variables for transactional leadership include active and passive expectations by management. In contrast, the laissez-faire leadership independent variables are trust for workers and the number of tasks a worker conducts alone without supervision. These independent variables influence employees' incentive or motivation achieved through their continuous compensation, rewards for their efforts, and recognition at the workplace (Sageer et al., 2012). Organisational leaders seeking to facilitate employee incentives in their workplace must implement the significant characteristics or independent variables in each leadership style. The mediating variable also impacts the dependent variable. The dependent variable is the variable being measured in a study. In this research, the dependent variable is employee agility which involves adaptability, proactivity, and resilience. Therefore, from the investigation, the mediating variable of employee incentive facilitates or influences the dependent variable of employee agility, all subject to the type of leadership style implemented within a workplace (Ashutosh, 2016).

2.7 The Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of a study gives the basis for understanding the research problems and directs the collection, analysis, and development of the research. In this part,

theories play an important role in informing and shaping the study's framework in the research process. To discuss this theory in general, it is important to give an overview of the different theories that are linked to this study. The following subsections explain each theory in detail, underscoring their importance, impact, and their application. This approach provides a comprehensive evaluation of the theoretical landscape and its effect or implication for the study. The three theories explored are reinforcement theory, equity theory, and underpinning theory (contingency theory).

2.7.1 Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory posits that behaviour is the function of its outcomes and can be regulated through external reinforcement approaches (Martono, Wulansari, Putri, & Khoiruddin, 2018). Behaviour manipulation is implemented by creating a reinforcement schedule that delivers a reinforcer according to a well-defined rule (Martono, Wulansari, Putri, & Khoiruddin, 2018). Recent research has shown that positive reinforcers may be better motivators of human behaviour. They are less likely to induce an inadequate response and less likely to be deemed as controlling by the recipient (De Vito et al., 2016). When considering continuous and intermittent distribution schedules, research suggests that situational factors influence each method's utility. For example, the intermittent distribution might be better in a sales context in which employees are given positive reinforcement for selling an item at the time of the sale. On the other hand, managerial employees may show more improvement due to continuous distributions such as annual bonuses for meeting financial goals. These rewards address long-term performance and the principal-agent problem.

Finally, the stability of the outcome appears to impact the motivational utility of compensation. This is typically manipulated in an organisational context by choosing either a fixed incentive value for reaching a specified level of performance or instituting a stepped incentive system for increasingly higher performance levels. Recent studies have shown that tiered systems typically result in higher performance for production workers (Basu, Foland, Holdridge, & Shelton, 2018), but less evidence exists surrounding managerial and non-production employees. In all, reinforcement theory may not appear regularly in recent journal publications, but it plays a significant role as a foundation for subsequent theorising in employee motivation (De Vito et al., 2016). The primary limitation of this theory is the potentially adverse effects of incentive systems when they are deemed to be overly controlling. Subsequent theories address this issue and place added emphasis on the individual's perceptions of incentives, rather than objective incentive levels.

2.7.2 Equity Theory

Another motivational perspective regarding employee compensation is equity theory, which states that individuals desire to achieve a state in which their inputs in the workplace are equal to the outcomes that they receive (Rajiah & Bhargava, 2021). Within this paradigm, individuals are less concerned with the absolute levels of outcomes (e.g., compensation), but instead, they focus on changes in compensation and differences between their compensation. As a construct, this effect is typically termed distributive justice (Martin, 2018). The literature addressing distributive justice is well developed, and the results are relatively consistent. Empirical evidence supports the salient nature of compensation changes (even in incentive compensation cases) and the detrimental effect of social comparisons in which one perceives

underpayment inequity (Kohli et al., 2018; Savolainen, 2018). Also, meta-analytic evidence has tied distributive justice to essential factors such as job satisfaction, commitment, organisational citizenship behaviours, withdrawal, and task performance (Rajiah & Bhargava, 2021). Equity theory has several limitations that impact its applicability to compensation-related issues.

First, equity theory does not provide an easy way to infer predictions regarding individual levels of distributive justice. For example, internal factors such as an individual's choice of comparison standard or the input and outcome factors deemed to be most important to the individual make it challenging to predict external factors' impact on distributive justice perceptions (Kohli et al., 2018; Savolainen, 2018). Second, Rajiah and Bhargava's (2021) conceptualisation of equity theory states that there are potentially negative ramifications of underpayment inequity and overpayment inequity. While the effects of underpayment inequity have been well documented, there is little empirical support for overpayment inequity. In essence, this suggests that individuals react negatively to being underpaid, but they have no problem with the overpayment. Third, little is known about the type of corrective mechanisms individuals choose to correct the inequity. However, these corrective actions most certainly would negatively impact the organisation (Rajiah & Bhargava, 2021; Savolainen, 2018). In total, the literature addressing equity theory seems to suggest that individuals engage in social comparison to determine whether their inputs are adequately rewarded through organisational outcomes (Zhang, Zhang, Liu, & Du, 2019; Rajiah & Bhargava, 2021). When individuals perceive inequity, it appears that they engage in destructive behaviours such as effort

withholding, undermining, and social loafing as a means of balancing the input–outcome relationship.

2.7.3 Contingency Theory: The Underpinning Theory

The proposed study will make use of contingency theory as the underpinning theory. According to Harney (2016), the main argument of contingency theory is that the optimal course of action is contingent or dependent upon the internal and external situation. In other words, this theory believes that it is difficult to develop a universal organisational theory to organise a corporation in a better manner. In other words, a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate for organisations working in different contexts. The theory reminds leaders of the need to become more flexible while choosing or adapting to strategies (Harney, 2016).

According to Morgan (2006), the main ideas of the contingency theory can be summarised as follows: (1) organisations are open systems which require careful management to maintain a balance between its internal needs and the needs of the environment in which it operates; (2) there is not a universal way of organising, and leaders need to select the appropriate organisational approach based on the kind of task or environment in which they deal; (3) leaders should give priority to achieving alignments and good fits; and (4) different types of organisations need different types of leadership style for their success (Morgan, 2006).

The proposed study will use contingency theory since it underscores the need for using different strategies by leaders and organisations for improving employee agility. As mentioned earlier, the United Arab Emirates is a country in which plenty of people from various parts of

the world are working. The needs of these diverse employees could be different. Moreover, the motivating factors for these employees need not be the same (Northouse, 2007) Leaders working in such organisations need to employ different strategies to motivate the employees and improve their agility.

The researcher selected contingency theory because it assumes that the efficiency of a leader is contingent on the suitability of their leadership style in a certain situation.

Contingency theory is applicable in this thesis because it states that a person can become a successful leader in a particular situation and ineffective in another situation. To become an effective leader, contingency theory indicates that an individual must assess every situation and select the leadership style that will fit efficiently. There are several factors that influence a leader's efficiency, including the team's size, the project's scope, and the projected deadline for the outcome. Different leaders with distinctive leadership styles will manage the factors in various ways. According to contingency theory, even though a leader is successful, there are specific circumstances that are challenging. Thus, leaders must acknowledge that their effectiveness relies on their situations and personal skills. Various studies have been conducted regarding leadership styles, but none have used contingency theory to indicate the effectiveness of the model (Smith et al., 2019). There are various factors that affect the contingency theory of leadership within an organisation. Some of the factors include the work pace, connection between workers, and employees' maturity level. Also, management style, the objective and styles, work flexibility, company's policies, working culture, and employees' motivation affect contingency theory (Harney, 2016). Therefore, contingency

theory is suitable for this thesis as it further depends on the organisational outcomes to decide how this theory can be effectively used.

2.8 Incentive Structure and Distribution

It is important to also consider the optimal compensation structures and distribution schedules that increase incentive systems' effectiveness. Several of the major topics addressed in this area include awarding behaviour-based versus results-based incentives, individual versus group rewards, merit pay versus individual incentives, and cash versus corporate-sharing incentives (Gillani, Iqbal, Akram, & Rasheed, 2018; Jing, Jin, & Liu, 2019; J. M. Murray et al., 2019; Senft, Butler, & Everson, 2019). Each of those policy decisions directly impacts the utility of the incentive programme, the ease with which it is administered, and employee motivation. One of the most crucial decisions that must be made when designing a pay-for-performance plan is using behavioural and results-based outcome measures.

Behavioural outcome measures are often based on a supervisor's subjective decisions and are typically developed through performance management systems (Prasetio, Agathanisa, & Luturlean, 2019). On the other hand, results-based outcome measures are directly linked to a quantitative production level. For example, a results-based outcome measure for a sales associate might correspond to a given total sales amount for a quarter of the fiscal year.

Many organisations prefer results-based performance measures, given that they appear to be objective (equity theory), and they draw a clear link between performance and outcomes (instrumentality). However, objective results-based measures may not always be available, and they may not direct employee efforts towards the organisation's best interests (e.g.,

improving output while sacrificing quality). The primary benefit of behaviour-based incentive systems is that they allow for the consideration of contextual performance in addition to task performance (Prasetio, Agathanisa, & Lutuilean, 2019). Behaviour-based measures are also able to be used in any type of job; they can account for variance in the performance that is out of the rates' control, and they can focus on the process behind the results rather than simply the outcomes of the process (Jing, Jin, & Liu, 2019). The primary drawbacks of behaviourally based rating systems are the potential for inaccuracy and bias in the rating process, and the weaker link between behaviour and results (expectancy). There are benefits and drawbacks of choosing either results-based or behaviour-based incentive systems. As a result, subsequent research considered the possibility of including both results and behaviour-based components in compensation systems. Mayowa-Adebara (2018) shows that the combination of these two systems can result in increased expectancy, instrumentality, and employee performance. Given this evidence, it appears that situational factors, such as the availability of objective performance measures, impact the utility of both results- and behaviour-based measures and performance. However, the combination of the two might provide the best results.

The issue of merit versus individual incentives primarily addresses the timing and duration of incentive distribution. For merit incentives, participants receive a raise in base pay for achieving the desired level of long-term performance. On the other hand, individual incentives are one-time bonuses that do not impact the base salary (Mayowa-Adebara, 2018). Merit raises are typically combined with behaviour-based rating systems, which allows a manager to reward his or her subordinates for long-term performance (Mayowa-Adebara, 2018). This practice is beneficial to the organisation because incentive compensation can be

distributed based on subjective contributions to the organisation's goals, and merit plans are typically more flexible in terms of cost based on the organisation's ability to pay (Magnus, 2020). One of the primary flaws of merit plans is that the perceived linkages between effort, performance, and outcomes (expectancy and instrumentality) are weak. Also, incentives are distributed on a check-by-check basis and do not provide immediate psychological reinforcement to change behaviour (Karia & Omari, 2015). On the other hand, individual pay plans are more directly linked to expectancy and instrumentality (Senft, Butler, & Everson, 2019). They are better for directly reinforcing positive behaviour when given as a one-time lump sum. Incentive plans may cause difficulties in the workplace. They are primarily based on results-based measures, and that the sole use of objective performance measures can discourage quality and contextual performance (Mayowa-Adebara, 2018). Another potential drawback is that performance goals for incentives may be set too low, reducing the motivational impact of the incentive, and encouraging employees to reduce their performance to avoid the future escalation of incentive thresholds (Gillani, Iqbal, Akram, & Rasheed, 2018). In all, this evidence suggests that individual incentives are more advantageous for rewarding short-term behaviour. Simultaneously, merit pay seems to be more advantageous for rewarding a long-term body of work. However, managers should be aware of the potential drawbacks of setting inappropriate goals and the need to show direct links between effort, performance, and rewards to reap the motivational benefits of incentive compensation.

Empirical evidence shows that organisations using gain-sharing and profit-sharing plans have more productive employees, higher customer service, and higher profit margins (Gillani, Iqbal, Akram, & Rasheed, 2018). On the other hand, empirical evidence has also

questioned the causality in this relationship (e.g., more profitable ventures might be more likely to use profit-sharing), as well as the actual motivational benefit gained from corporate-sharing incentives given the distant relationship between lower-level employees and the organisational outcomes (De Vito et al., 2016). However, evidence abounds showing the utility of corporate-sharing incentives at the executive level, including several meta-analyses (Senft, Butler, & Everson, 2019). This total body of evidence suggests that corporate-sharing incentives are highly motivating at the executive level, but their utility is questionable at lower levels of the organisation. Given these benefits and drawbacks, it is widely considered that high-intensity incentive programmes are *high-risk, high-return* strategies (Gillani, Iqbal, Akram, & Rasheed, 2018). Supporting this statement, Senft, Butler, and Everson (2019) suggested that the optimal incentive intensity depends on the incremental profit obtained from the increased effort, the ability to precisely measure the activities that contribute to profitability, risk tolerance, and the employee responses to incentives. Under these conditions, strong incentives should increase employee effort (and subsequently, performance) while controlling the organisation's risk level.

Employee incentive plays an important role in mediating different variables in the relationship between various leadership styles (transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire) and employee agility because of its role in enhancing employee behaviour, engagement, and motivation (Hafiz, 2020, p. 45). Employee incentives function as a mediating variable that affects the level at which leadership styles influence employee agility.

Laissez-faire and transactional leadership are linked to employee agility through the mediator of employee incentives. The transactional leadership's nature promotes

organisational agility by enhancing trust within the organisation. When the workers trust the organisation and its leaders, there is a high chance of quick adaptation to changes, innovation, and risk-taking, thus leading to organisational agility (Dian et al., 2022). Laissez-faire leadership, on the other hand, entails less supervision and guidance, which also enhances employee agility through the mediator of ambidexterity. This refers to the organisational capacity to balance the exploitation of the current capabilities with the discovery of new opportunities.

With laissez-faire leadership, workers may have more freedom and autonomy to discover new approaches and ideas, leading to enhanced agility in responding to opportunities and challenges ("Different Types of Leadership", 2023). The employees are in a position to discover and exploit their existing knowledge and skills, and also participate in the exploration of new possibilities, which is an important feature of ambidexterity (Ferreira, Potgieter, & Coetzee, 2021). When the employees experience the freedom to innovate and adapt to the changes, they demonstrate effective ways that will help enhance organisational agility.

Therefore, the relationship between laissez-faire and transactional leadership with employee agility is interceded by organisational ambidexterity and trust. The organisational trust is developed through transactional leadership which facilitates the employee's responsiveness and adaptability, whereas ambidexterity is enhanced by laissez-faire leadership that enables employees to exploit and discover new opportunities and ideas, thus promoting organisational agility (Ferreira, Potgieter, & Coetzee, 2021). This also increases their responsiveness to the changing market conditions.

2.9 Previous Empirical Studies

Mirayani et al. (2019) conducted research on the influence of leadership style on staff performance in religious-based schools; this study was conducted in Gadin Sarpong, Indonesia. The researcher sought to find out how different leadership styles affected the institutional culture, motivation, and employee performance. The study focused on three leadership styles, namely, authoritarian, authentic, and transformational; the research was designed to evaluate these styles in relation to work performance. The researcher was also interested in finding out if an indirect relationship existed between organisational culture, employee motivation, and leadership style, and the impact on staff performance.

The researcher used both the quantitative and explanatory survey methods. The study sample size was 33 and questionnaires were used as the primary data collection instrument. To find out the impact different variables in the study such as leadership style, institutional culture, or staff motivation had on staff performance as an independent variable, the researcher used descriptive statistics. To evaluate the hypothesis, inferential statistics was used with a focus on simple regression and multiple regressions.

Authentic leadership was the most preferred style of leadership, as it influenced staff performance. In addition, organisational culture was also found to have a significant influence on staff performance (Mirayani et al., 2019). The preference of authentic leadership and staff motivation stood at 91% and 80%, respectively. Therefore, the researcher concluded that proper leadership and employee motivation were key drivers of staff performance.

In research on the influence of trust on staff performance in microfinance institutions in Kenya by Gathondu, Nyambegera, and Kirubi (2018), the researcher sought to find out how the performance of microfinance institutions in Kenya was impacted by trust as a transformational style of leadership. The researcher employed a descriptive research design that enabled the researcher to characterise the dependent and independent variables that were being studied. Open-ended questionnaires were used to collect information in the study sample; however, in-depth interviews were conducted with the organisations' CEO and senior management.

A positive and significant increase in staff performance was brought about by trust, as an outcome of transformational leadership (Gathondu, Nyambegera, & Kirubi, 2018). In addition, the researcher found out that trust accorded staff members with goodwill and inspired them to perform better in their duties. As a result of this inspiration, staff members remained committed to achieving the organisation's goal.

Munteanu et al. (2020) conducted a study on the practices that increased workforce agility and led to sustainable business. The study was conducted in Western Romania and only focused on companies that had more than 250 employees. In addition to the requisite number of employees, the companies also had to be independent and not members of any international subsidiary. The companies were selected from the Ministry of Public Finance database through the Ministry's website. The study targeted 137 companies, but only 60 companies participated in the research. To conduct their studies, the researchers used survey-based questionnaires.

The researchers acknowledged that human resources played an important role in companies; therefore, managers needed to change their approaches to these resources. The researcher also noted that companies needed to look at human resources as a strategic resource for a company and not a mere expenditure. According to experts, human resources should be considered as an asset, something of value, and relatively irreplaceable. The researcher also found out that there was competition between financial resources and human resources. However, the researcher established that human resources still ranked first in the managers' priorities.

According to Natapoera and Mangundjaya's (2020) research on how workforce agility was affected by employee involvement in Indonesia, the researchers employed convenience sampling techniques to collect data; both online and offline data collection methods were used. The researcher availed written questionnaires and allowed the participants to fill in the questionnaires over the Internet. The sample size focused mainly on staff who worked in heavy equipment manufacturing companies. In addition, all participants were required to have worked in those facilities for a period of not less than a year. A total of 154 participants were enrolled in the study.

The researcher noted that the research findings supported his hypothesis that stated that there existed a significant connection between employee participation and staff agility. He noted that staff agility would be beneficial for organisations that seek to adopt and implement recent technologies. The researcher added that agile staff were more receptive to change and could easily welcome and adopt new policies or regulations. In addition, he added that

organisations would promote more agility among their staff by offering more training opportunities.

Basit and Sebastian (2018) undertook research on how employee performance in private organisations in Malaysia was impacted by leadership style. They used an explanatory research design to conduct their research. The researchers also employed quantitative methods to measure the performance and variations of different leadership styles. The researchers used questionnaires as a method of data collection; their questionnaires were designed using a Likert scale that looked at the degree of agreement from a scale of 1 to 5. The researchers had a sample size of 150 respondents but only 130 questionnaires were filled.

Since the research was sensitive, the researchers reached a consensual agreement with the management that no employee would suffer retribution. The researchers concluded that of all the styles of leadership, the democratic leadership style had a significant impact on employee performance. while the laissez-faire leadership style also had a positive impact on staff performance. However, autocratic leadership was found to have a significant negative impact on employee performance (Basit & Sebastian, 2018).

2.10 Years of Experience

A moderating variable or moderator affects the strength and direction of the relationship (Allen, 2017). Moderating variables in an investigative study affect the size or nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. A moderator variable is a variable that can strengthen, weaken, disprove, or change the connection between the independent and dependent variables (Allen, 2017). These variables can also change the

direction of the relationship. Moderator variables are categorical or continuous and are exclusively used in quantitative research. They are considered helpful in explaining the connections between independent and dependent variables. The moderator variable in this study is the years of experience, which affects the nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Jorg & Fassott, 2010). Therefore, the study will establish how the years of experience affect or influence the relationship between the different leadership styles and employee incentives (Jagannathan, 2014). As a moderator, a corporation leader's years of experience in specific leadership styles influence their capability to apply efficient leadership strategies, including employee incentives. For example, a transformational leader meets the goals of an organisation and its employees while providing rewards, compensation, and recognition to hard-working personnel, which leads to employee agility in the workplace (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020). Further, years of leadership experiences among transactional and laissez-faire leaders influence their capability to employ work strategies and environments that contribute to employee incentives, leading to employee agility.

As reviewed, the moderator variable can strengthen, weaken, or change the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. For example, fewer years as a transformational leader or a transactional leader can establish poor or ineffective leadership strategies that hinder the achievement of employee incentives, which will affect the achievement of employee agility (van Assen & Marcel, 2018). Suppose the leadership style does not involve measures that motivate workers to increase their efforts, such as adequate compensation, rewards, and recognition. In that case, it is most likely that the workers will

lack the motivation to implement environmental changes, accept and adapt to the changes, or deal with change-related problems occurring in the workplace.

2.11 Summary

The chapter has explored the conceptual foundation that determines the key measurement of the research objectives. Although there are various definitions of leadership, this study considers leadership as an individual's ability to influence others through direction, support, and inspiration. Leaders provide direction through uniting people around a common vision. They support through empowering and trusting those they lead to do what is needed to achieve the shared vision. They inspire through providing followers with purpose, leading by example, and demonstrating shared values and beliefs. Based on this definition, the literature review has identified leadership traits, behaviours, and personalities that lead to important organisational outcomes. One purpose of identifying traits related to leadership styles is to understand how leaders affect subordinate outcomes to select or develop leaders. Research supports significant relationships between leadership styles and organisational outcomes; however, there remain a lot of unknowns. Specifically, the literature is unclear about the characteristic patterns that distinguish types of leaders. This is partly due to the vague description of behaviours included in leadership styles and a lack of understanding of the underlying influence of traits.

The chapter has also outlined leadership styles such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. Research on transformational and transactional leadership consistently demonstrates how leaders' relational elements

significantly impact leadership outcomes. For example, transformational leadership has been shown to significantly predict subordinates' satisfaction with leaders, organisational commitment, work motivation, and leader effectiveness beyond any of the transactional leadership dimensions. Exploring how these leadership styles improve employee agility will allow the study to fill the existing gaps. The chapter has also identified the key measures of employee agility. To achieve the study objectives, a focus will be on four main characteristics of adaptive agility and three main attributes of initiative-taking agility as drawn from the literature. Proactive agility entails courage, independence, and eagerness to learn. The adaptive agility measures considered in this study include decisiveness, coping with change, teamwork, and resilience.

Finally, contingency theory is tasked with discovering how different incentives associated with the leadership style affect the employees' agility. Based on the literature review, this study will use contingency theory since it underscores the need for using different strategies by leaders and organisations for improving employee agility. The literature review demonstrates contingency theory as a cluster of energetic forces derived beyond and within individuals' being that trigger work-associated behaviour and define its duration, intensity, direction, and form. These clusters of forces have been described in the context of reinforcement theory, equity theory, and contingency theory. Reinforcement theory posits that behaviour is the function of its outcomes and can be regulated through external reinforcement approaches. Equity theory states that individuals desire to achieve a state in which their inputs in the workplace are equal to the outcomes that they receive.

Chapter 3: Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the hypotheses development, leading to the conceptual framework. The development of all the different hypotheses, based on the previous literature and their relation to the current research, are explained below.

Bass's theory of transformational leadership consists of four components, often referred to collectively as *the four I's of transformational leadership* (Mayowa-Adebara & Opeke, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2020; Yaseen et al., 2018; Ytterstad et al., 2020). These are idealised influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Ytterstad et al., 2020). Idealised influence refers to the belief of leaders in morals and ethics. While inspiring motivation indicates the encouragement given to the followers, intellectual stimulation refers to help given to the followers to make them creative and innovative. On the other hand, individualised consideration refers to the special attention given to the followers (Avolio & Bass, 2001).

Transactional leadership operates on three components: contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive) (Avolio & Bass, 2001). Contingent reward refers to the incentives given to the followers based on previous agreements, whereas management by exception (active) indicates the supervision of the leaders enforced on the followers to make sure that followers perform in the right track. On the other hand, management by exception (passive) refers to the waiting period taken by the leaders to correct the anomalies, mistakes, and failures of followers (Avolio & Bass, 2001).

According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), laissez-faire leaders are reluctant to take positions, to act, and to avoid problems before they materialise. Such leaders disappear from the scene whenever a problem occurs in the workplace. They trust the employees very much and see no danger in employees taking the initiative for solving problems. They are inactive, and inefficient compared to transformational or transactional leaders (Avolio & Bass, 2001).

Based on the discussions and the previous chapter (literature review), the conceptual framework for the proposed study was developed, as shown in Figure 1. This framework was designed to explore the effects of different leadership styles on employee agility, where employee incentives functioned as a mediator. This study further explored if there was any moderating effect of years of experience in the relationship between different leadership styles and employee incentives (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020).

The idea behind using this framework was to know how different leadership styles assisted in achieving employee agility, and which leadership style will be the best fit to achieve it (the outcome of this research), based on the research gap to be filled (Si, Wang, & Kong, 2020). Past scholars have pointed out the lack of integration of leadership constructs within the literature; however, few attempts have been made to close the gap (Aslam, 2018a; Bell, 2018; Lombard, 2018). Moreover, although previous studies have looked at the role of leadership in promoting staff agility, no known study has looked at the role of different leadership styles and how they influence staff agility (Grieves, 2018; Janssen & van der Voort, 2020; Marcinkowski & Gawin, 2019).

3.2 Development of the Research Hypotheses

Based on the discussions made above, the proposed study will evaluate the validity of the nine hypotheses mentioned below.

Different leadership styles have different power levels on controlling employee attitudes (Adnan & Valliappan, 2019). Transformational leadership is a leadership style in which leaders and their followers work together, keeping the norms of morality and motivation at a higher level. It is a leadership style in which integrity and fairness are valued and respected (Khan et al., 2020). According to Cehbon et al. (2019) and Ytterstad et al. (2020), idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual drive, and individualised consideration are four of the major components of transformational leadership. While inspirational motivation refers to the encouragement given to followers to improve their awareness about and elicit their commitment to the mission and vision, idealised influence refers to the behaviours of a leader that stimulate among the followers the sense of trust, admiration, respect, and the desire to emulate the leader. On the other hand, intellectual drive refers to the intellectual abilities of the leaders to achieve extraordinary outcomes from the followers, while individualised consideration refers to the special attention given to the followers (Avolio & Bass, 2001; Cehbon et al., 2019). While following this type of leadership style, leaders will have a definite vision about the goals to be achieved. Moreover, transformational leaders encourage others to function in a particular manner by providing support and necessary instructions (Khan et al., 2020). Only satisfied employees will think about staying long in an organisation. If the leadership of an organisation fails to provide adequate incentives for its employees, the turnover rate in that organisation will be increased

drastically. In return, it improves the employee's agility. Organisations design employee incentive programmes mainly to retain talent. The existing leadership in an organisation plays a vital role in improving the employee retention rate in that organisation (Ahammad et al., 2020). Leaders who follow transformational leadership styles are particular in improving the retention rate by providing incentives to the employees as much as possible (Daskin, 2016). According to Khan et al. (2020), the performance of employees has a positive relationship with transformational leadership. In other words, employees feel more comfort and ease while collaborating with transformational leaders since these leaders can understand the problems of employees properly. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Transformational leadership has an impact on employee agility.

According to Taylor (2021), transactional leadership operates on the exchange of productivity of workers against rewards. In other words, transactional leaders are keen on providing incentives and rewards to employees based on their performance. They will make sure that better-performing employees always get better incentives compared to underperforming employees. Transactional leaders give ample importance to good communication because of their belief that the quality of communication plays a vital role in achieving outstanding outcomes from the employees (Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Two distinct dimensions of transactional leadership are management by exception - active (MBE-A) and management by exception - passive (MBE-P) (Hasija & Kushwaha, 2019). While a leader who follows the MBE-A model keeps check on the performance of his workforce and directs them as and when needed, a leader who follows the MBE-P model will wait for mistakes to happen and then act (Hasija & Kushwaha, 2019). In other words, transactional leaders who

follow the MBE-A model will opt for a proactive approach, and those who follow the MBE-P model will opt for a reactive approach. The MBE-A model managers will concentrate not only on the mistakes but also help the employees rectify such mistakes. Employees will trust such managers more. On the other hand, the MBE-P model managers wait for an opportunity to punish the employees and therefore the relationship between such managers and the employees may not be good (Avolio & Bass, 1991). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formed:

H2: Transactional leadership has an impact on employee agility.

Leaders who follow laissez-faire leadership trust their employees and are confident in their skills, talent, and abilities. Such a leadership style involves many of the components of the transformational and transactional leadership styles (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020). In some cases, leaders use the good things from different leadership styles to boost employee agility. Laissez-faire leadership is one such leadership style followed by many leaders in modern organisations. The relational concepts that exist among employees need not be the same. Employees who possess stronger relational self-concepts may devalue laissez-faire leadership more than others (Wong & Giessner, 2018). In other words, the trust for the employees in organisations that follow a laissez-faire leadership may not be as good as that in other organisations. Employees in such organisations define themselves through dyadic relationships and may react negatively to laissez-faire leadership (Nielsen et al., 2019). Even incentives or rewards may not catch their attention very much. Such employees may reduce their contributions and organisational commitment. Brand et al. (2019) mentioned the role of employee trust in achieving more productivity and efficiency in an organisation. Laissez-faire

leadership may not be as successful as transformational or transactional leadership in achieving better employee agility outcomes (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3: Laissez-faire leadership has an impact on employee agility.

Employee incentive plays an important role in mediating different variables in the relationship between various leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and employee agility because of its role in enhancing employee behaviour, engagement, and motivation (Hafiz, 2020, p. 45). Employee incentives function as a mediating variable that affects the level at which leadership styles influence employee agility.

Employee incentives include elements such as compensation, rewards, and recognition. On the other hand, employee agility refers to the ability of employees to work quickly and cohesively without making mistakes (Newman, 2018). To motivate employees for better productivity and efficiency, tools such as better compensation, rewards, and recognition are used by transformational leaders. Transformational leadership is capable of achieving employee agility by inducing changes in organisations through the aforementioned tools (Gagel, 2017). As noted by Rotemberg and Saloner (1993), the leadership style, whether based on the organisational culture or the personal traits of the leader, affects the incentive contract between the leader and the subordinates. Transformational leaders follow a democratic management style, which is acceptable to most of the employees. Usually, employees resist the attempts of leaders to implement any change in the organisation. However transformational leaders can develop adaptability, proactivity, and resilience among

employees, and thereby implement the changes smoothly in the organisation and achieve the organisations' vision, mission, and goals (Adnan & Valliappan, 2019). Adnan and Valliappan (2019) further mentioned that the ability of transformational leaders in inspiring employees is higher through incentives, rewards, and positive communication, as compared to other leadership styles.

Transformational leadership influences employee agility by motivating and inspiring them to think creatively and adapt to change and challenges. Transformational leaders inspire the empowerment and innovation of the employees to take ownership of their work, thus promoting agility. These employee incentives serve as a support mechanism for this leadership style by giving rewards for risk-taking behaviour, adaptive performance, and innovative ideas (Hunter & Lovelace, 2020, p. 120). Incentives like promotion, recognition programmes, and rewards that promote the desired behaviour thus strengthen the connection between employee agility and transformational leadership.

The core principle that guides the transactional leadership style is the motivation given to the employees through rewards and punishment (Jensen et al., 2019). Transactional leaders use their power primarily, although they also use secondary means like rewards and punishment to motivate the employees. The followers or the employees are forced to obey all the instructions if their leaders follow the transactional style (Khan et al., 2020). A study by Menon and Suresh (2020) found that management support plays a crucial role in promoting employee agility. Transactional leaders are more interested in using an autocratic management style instead of a participatory management style (Jensen et al., 2019). Employees, on the other hand, like to collaborate with democratic leaders even if they failed to get enough

rewards and recognition. In short, a transactional leadership style may negatively impact employee agility, even if such leadership can provide enough incentives to the employees.

Adnan and Valliappan (2019) mentioned that transactional leaders play a vital role in achieving organisational agility and employee satisfaction. They can identify the expectations of their followers and respond to them properly by establishing a close link between effort and reward (Jensen et al., 2019). Such leaders use power judiciously to correct and train subordinates when performance needs to be improved. Nielsen et al. (2018) conducted a study to know the impact of transactional leadership on employee work motivation. They found that transactional leaders who provide contingent verbal rewards did succeed in motivating and improving employee agility more compared to transactional leaders who provide material rewards or sanctions. Transactional leadership is characterised by performance monitoring, and contingent rewards can enhance employee agility through incentives. The transactional leaders provide rewards and set out clear goals for demonstrating agility and meeting targets in response to changing situations and circumstances (Kankaew, Chaudhary, & Widtayakornbundit, 2024, p. 160). By connecting their rewards to agility-related behaviours like solving problems, and making quick decisions, transactional leaders incentivise agility among the employees.

Leaders who follow the laissez faire leadership style, do not provide any incentive, reward, or feedback to their followers. They consider employee needs with the least importance and make no efforts to hear the employee grievances. As a result, employees working under laissez-faire leadership will always be dissatisfied and they may not improve their productivity or efficiency (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Rewards are benefits

received arising from rendering or performing a task and taking on responsibility (Partheepkanth, 2011). There are two types of rewards: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards refer to psychological and intangible rewards that can be in the form of recognition that boosts employees' intrinsic motivation. Another type is the extrinsic rewards that refer to tangible and financial rewards such as pay, interpersonal rewards, benefits, and bonuses (Partheepkanth, 2011).

Leaders who follow laissez-faire leadership may not provide any reward to the employees. As a result, such employees may not be motivated either intrinsically or extrinsically to do their work. Satisfaction is a vital part of every employee's life (Yapa, 2002). Just like other humans, workers also need to feel a sense of achievement and develop a feeling of satisfaction while working in an organisation to deliver the good (Mohammed & Eleswed, 2013). In short, laissez-faire leadership has plenty of limitations in motivating the employees to achieve organisational agility and goals. On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership is characterised by minimal guidance and a hands-off approach which prevents employee agility without suitable incentives. When there is a lack of clear support and direction, employees may lack the drive to innovate or adapt. However, giving incentives for experimentation, initiative-taking, and self-motivated learning can help prevent the negative effect of laissez-faire leadership on agility (Kippenberger, 2021, p. 23). The incentives function as a catalyst for motivating employees and self-motivated behaviour to proactively pursue opportunities for growth and development. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H4: Employee incentives mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.

H5: Employee incentives mediate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.

H6: Employee incentives mediate the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.

Years of experience can moderate the relationship between various leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and employee agility (Lindberg, 2022, p. 90). The moderation happens because employees have different levels of experience and respond differently to various leadership styles and approaches, thus affecting their agility in the workplace.

According to Afsar et al. (2016), transformational leaders often emphasise cooperation, collective tasks, and accomplishment as they are getting more experienced in their profession. Although they may be reluctant in delegating the authority of decision-making to followers, they will do so as time goes on. As a result, the relationship between the employees and transformational leaders improves further. As per the views of Akkaya and Tabak (2020), the benefit from their experiences helps transformational leaders connect the vision of an organisation with its employees' goals and personal standards. A new leader who follows a transformational leadership style does not need to be able to blend the organisational goals with that of the employees properly. However, more experience will help such leaders achieve the expertise for meeting the goals of both the organisation and the employees (Tichy &

Devanna, 1986). According to Kuhnert and Lewis (1987), the ability of transformational leaders to use the internal organisational resources for the benefit of the organisation and employees will be improved when they get more experience.

The relationship between employee agility and transformational leadership can be moderated by years of experience. For instance, employees with less experience may find transformational leadership more empowering and motivating, thus encouraging innovation, risk-taking, and personal growth (Miller & Kirkpatrick, 2021, p. 35). The employees may take or view transformational leaders as their role models who inspire them to grow and develop new skills that will enable them to adapt to the changing world and circumstances, thus enhancing their agility.

According to Akkaya and Tabak (2020), organisational agility has three dimensions: *agility drivers* (the operation of companies), *agility capabilities* (the abilities of a company, making it agile), and *agility providers* (the ability of managers to use agility capabilities in their companies). The leadership style in an organisation plays a vital role in achieving the aforementioned three dimensions of organisational agility. According to Okonkwo et al. (2015), democratic leadership has the strongest positive impact on employees' commitment compared to autocratic leadership. As transactional leaders put more faith in the autocratic management style, their impact on organisational agility could be negative compared to the impact of transformational leaders.

As noted by Clinebell et al. (2013), transactional leadership has a significant positive impact on continuous commitment and a negative impact on effective commitment (Clinebell

et al., 2013). In other words, employees collaborating with transactional leaders may not develop effective commitment towards their organisations because of their discomfort under such leadership (Jensen et al., 2019). Transactional leadership's impact on employee agility tends to differ depending on the years of experience. Employees who have less experience tend to respond positively to transactional leaders who give clear feedback, expectations, and rewards, as these structures can enable them to navigate through complex situations and tasks with much agility (Mordi et al., 2023, p. 67). On the other hand, employees with more experience tend to perceive transactional leadership as bureaucratic or overly controlling, thus shifting their agility by underscoring compliance over autonomy and creativity.

Laissez-faire leadership is passive compared to the transformational or transactional leadership styles. Years of experience may not change such leadership that expects more from the employees, even if it fails to provide proper guidance and instructions to them. The leaders who follow this type of leadership want their employees to be self-starters (Wong & Giessner, 2018). They will not provide any instructions to the employees, even if they are well experienced to do so. These leaders allow their employees to make independent decisions. They will take charge only when employees fail to solve a particular problem (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020). As noted by Nielsen et al. (2019), laissez-faire leadership takes responsibility for the overall actions and decisions taking place in the organisation under their command.

According to Akkaya and Tabak (2020), there is a negative and insignificant relation between laissez-faire leadership and organisational agility. In other words, an organisation under laissez-faire leadership may not develop properly because of the lack of agility in that

organisation. Studies have shown that the years of experience significantly moderate the relationship of laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. Employees who have fewer years of experience tend to struggle when there is a lack of direction and guidance provided by laissez-faire leaders, resulting in a decline in agility because of uncertainty and lack of support (Alem et al., 2021, p. 98). On the other hand, more experienced employees tend to flourish under laissez-faire, leveraging their expertise and autonomy to quickly adapt to opportunities and challenges, thus enhancing their agility. Therefore, years of experience moderates the relationship between employee agility and leadership style, thus affecting how the employees respond and perceive various approaches to leadership (Mugo Muriithi, 2023, p. 65).

It is important to note that previous studies of various leadership styles have concluded years of experience as a potential moderator for the relationship of a leadership style with employee agility (Mugo Muriithi, 2023, p. 65). For example, Lindberg (2022, p. 90) believes that response of an employee towards a leadership style changes with his years of experience and this ultimately affects employee agility. Similarly, Afsar et al. (2016) believes that employees with more experience give high focus on professional values while Akkaya and Tabak (2020) conclude that experienced employees are greatly helpful to transform the organization's vision into reality.

According to Mordi et al., (2023, p. 67), years of experience enhance employee's confidence to successfully navigate through the challenging situations while Alem et al., (2021, p. 98) suggests that years of experience guide employees in their professional career and set their directions. A detailed review of relevant studies reveals that years of experience is a potential variable to test the relationship of a leadership style with employee agility and

this variable should be explored further to see its impact in different industries. Considering the outcome and suggestions of previous studies about the potential impact of its moderating impact, this study has included years of experience as moderating variable between three (transformational, transactional & Laissez-Faire) leadership styles with employee agility. This moderating impact was important in tailoring leadership strategies, thus enhancing employee agility across various levels of experience within the organisation. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H7: Years of experience moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.

H8: Years of experience moderates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.

H9: Years of experience moderates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.

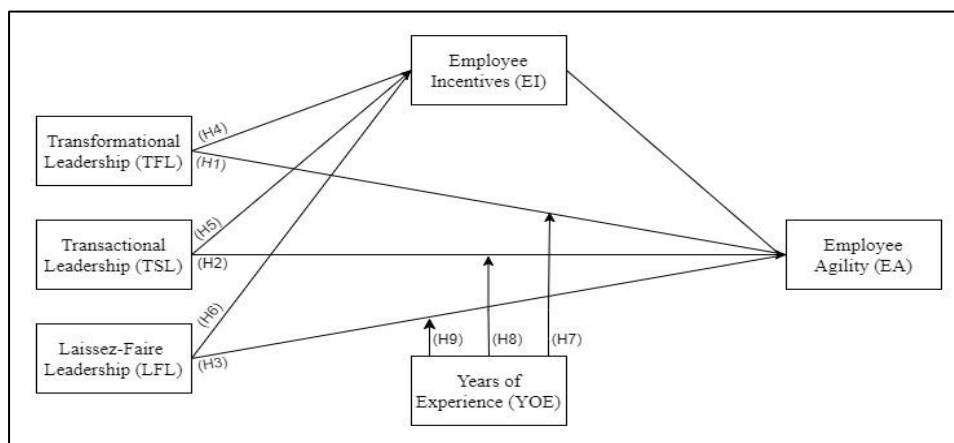
The conceptual framework of this study is given in Figure 1, in which transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership are independent variables; employee incentives is the mediating variable; years of experience is the moderating variable; and employee agility is the dependent variable. It is important to understand that moderator and mediator are two different types of variables based on their role within the conceptual framework of a study. A moderator or moderating variable is a variable that affects the strength or nature of relationship between independent and dependent variables (Baron and Kenny 1986). In Smart PLS, the role of moderator is measured through interaction effect and

based on the significance of interaction effect, it is concluded that whether the moderator is significant or insignificant (Hair et al., 2017). On the other hand, a mediator or mediating variable is a variable that can have a strong impact on dependent variable and this variable may replace independent variable if the analyses show full mediation of its relationship with the dependent variable (Baron and Kenny 1986).

The theoretical foundation and the underpinning theory of the study are provided in Chapter 2 through the literature review. This study is the first of its type to examine the relationship between leadership styles and staff agility in the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, these relationships were evaluated through moderating and mediating variables. The findings will help leaders of different organisations in making informed decisions about the leadership styles to adopt, based on the below-tested framework. Also, the findings can be used as background information by future researchers in similar or related topics.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Note. Source: Self-developed for the study.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the selected research methodology. The chapter provides the methodology, the modes of conducting the research, the respondents, and the data analysis. The descriptions are presented in sub-sections. It includes the introduction, the research approach, research philosophy, research design, time horizons, generalisability, data collection, population, data analysis, validity considerations, ethical considerations, pilot study, and a summary of the chapter. This quantitative explanatory study's main purpose is to examine the impact of the leadership style on improving employee agility. Additionally, this study is purposed to explore the vital roles leadership plays in improving employee agility in the organisation.

Over the past years, the topic has not been clearly defined. However, most scholars believe that an organisation's leadership styles play a significant role in improving employee agility. Still, the research has been shallow, and their roles in creating the impact have not been well defined. Reflectively, leadership styles have always determined the way an organisation has been reacting and adapting to changes within its environment (Sharma, Chaudhary, & Singh, 2019). It is worth noting that general leadership skills impact the employee in one way or another. Good leadership is a source of inspiration to the employee. In contrast, bad leadership styles are a source of negative behaviours in an institution and employee performance because leaders have behaviours that promote management (Saunders et al., 2015). It is anticipated that this research will facilitate understanding the topic in a broader and detailed description.

In simple words, research can be defined as a careful investigation of a problem in any branch of knowledge (Sekaran, 2006). It relies heavily on the available data while trying to develop new knowledge, theories, or principles. According to Mishra and Alok (2019), there are some differences between research methods and the methodology. While research methods refer to the techniques and methods used for conducting research, the research methodology indicates the approach taken by the researcher for solving the research problem. In short, the scientific approach adopted for conducting a research study is referred to as the research methodology (Mishra & Alok, 2019).

A research study can be conducted in many ways; however, the success of it depends heavily on the methodology used for the study. The research methodology helps a researcher systematically analyse the problem and try to identify suitable solutions for it (Bryman, 1988). The research process consists of plenty of logical steps or a sequence of processes that will guide the researcher to make some conclusions and recommendations at the end of the study (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Although there are plenty of types of research like descriptive, analytical, applied, fundamental, quantitative, qualitative, empirical, and conceptual available for the study of different topics or problems, not all of them may be suitable for a particular research problem (Kumar, 2019). The researcher needs to consider various things while selecting the appropriate research method for his study. For example, the proposed study investigates the role of leadership styles in improving employee agility. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented the researcher from conducting face-to-face interviews with leaders or employees, as social distancing was necessary for the fight against the coronavirus. Under

such circumstances, the researcher was left with the option of collecting data through online surveys and conducting the study based on quantitative research methods only.

4.2 Research Approach

This study will focus on a quantitative methodology to collect the required data from the selected sample of employees. A quantitative research methodology is suitable in this case, where many respondents will be required to get accurate data. It will provide a complete and detailed analysis and not limit the research scope. Besides, the outcomes will be quantifiable and measurable (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). On the contrary, Archibald et al. (2015) emphasised that qualitative research methods extend beyond the survey feedback of quantitative research or experimental observations to deliver in-depth responses to issues about the question under investigation. However, it is quite difficult to maintain, assess, and demonstrate the rigor in qualitative research, not to forget the researcher's bias, which also becomes a part of it. Hence, a quantitative methodology is best suited for this study. In addressing the literature gap, a quantitative method best aligned with the aims of this research will apply the deductive approach.

The study focuses on evaluating results orientated by respondents from different types of functional organisations. The research targets diverse types of organisations (education, hospitals, banks, telecommunication, airlines, and vehicles, etc.). These organisations are the types of working environments in which individuals' work is aimed at achieving specific goals. Therefore, the targeted organisations are mostly divided into various departmental sections such as the human resource department, production department, finance department,

and the managerial department, and the manager's office, all of which are functional areas. Therefore, targeting individuals who are employees in such organisations renders the research study efficient, since it will be easily available with plenty of information due to experience. In such working environments, individuals always work while concentrating on achieving individual goals that, in turn, translate into the achievement of departmental goals, and finally, organisational goals. Therefore, it is a form of work breakdown and increases efficiency.

4.2.1 Inductive Approach

The inductive approach's main purpose is to establish clear links between the research objectives and the findings resulting from the data collected. The inductive methodology lacks proposition: instead, it ensures a thorough exploration process before the raw data are condensed into a brief and summarised format. Finally, it ensures the development of the process evident in the raw data. The inductive approach is used to analyse qualitative data procedures to provide reliable and valid findings (Saunders et al., 2015). The inductive approach majorly focuses on personal lived experiences. They are majorly suited for research in which the study involves locating the meanings that people place in the structures, processes, and events of their individual lives (Patton et al., 2017). Most of the researchers conducting qualitative research find the inductive approach less complicated than using the deductive approach.

4.2.2 Deductive Approach

On the other hand, a deductive approach is a quantitative approach, which is concerned with developing a hypothesis from the pre-existing theory. Hence, this research will be

employing the deductive approach. The researcher is then required to develop the research strategy to prove the hypothesis. A critical approach determines the link between two variables without necessarily determining how human beings perceive. Developing such an understanding is crucial for the deductive method (Saunders et al., 2015). For instance, in this study, it would have been more realistic to argue that the managers should treat employees whenever there are changes according to the individual behaviour and how they perceive their work, instead of providing support to an individual when there are changes in an organisation. However, the deductive approach tends to construct a rigid methodology in which it does not allow an alternate explanation of what is taking place. The deductive approach can suggest an alternative theory; however, this is based on the limits which were set by the research design (Saunders et al., 2015).

The research approach refers to the detailed plans and procedures that are necessary to guide the researcher from the assumptions to the detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Ramonyai, 2021). It involves detailed plans and decisions that make sense with respect to the research problem. The research approach should be selected based on the nature of the problem that is being investigated (Matias, 2021). According to Sykes (1990), the research approach can be inductive (qualitative) or deductive (quantitative). Based on the nature of the research problem, the researcher needs to select the appropriate approach while investigating the problem. The research approach is useful for connecting theories with realities or to formulate theories from collected data (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The core idea behind the inductive research approach is formulating theories from collected data, whereas the deductive research approach is guided by the collection of data for

the support of existing theories (Sykes, 1990; Easterby et al., 2012). The proposed study will employ a deductive or quantitative research approach instead of an inductive or qualitative research approach. Quantitative research is often labelled as logical and data-driven research because of the use of statistical and numerical tools (Wu & Little, 2011). It answers questions starting with *how many* (quantitative) rather than *why* (qualitative) (Matias, 2021; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The reason for the selection of quantitative research over qualitative research for the proposed study is that quantitative research is more scientific in nature compared to qualitative research (Coe & Kim, 2015). Such a research approach is capable of testing and confirming theories and assumptions (Gabriel, 1990). Moreover, it can establish generalisable facts regarding the problem under investigation (Matias, 2021). Some of the most used quantitative methods of research include questionnaires, surveys, experiments, econometrics, mathematical modelling, and observations (Castellan, 2010). Quantitative research is more flexible compared to qualitative research in terms of the administration of research techniques (Ledford & Gast, 2018). For example, surveys can be conducted online or offline based on the convenience of the researcher while using quantitative research techniques. On the other hand, qualitative research can understand concepts, thoughts, and experiences (Ledford & Gast, 2018). Such a research approach is used mainly to get an in-depth understanding of the problem that is difficult to understand while using other means of research (Streefkerk, 2020).

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), the validity and reliability of quantitative research are greater compared to qualitative research because of the larger number of samples used in such research. An important element of quantitative research is the literature review related to the research question or hypotheses (Ledford & Gast, 2018). It helps the researcher

know the opinions, theories, results, and findings of previous researchers, and to make hypotheses for his study.

Hameed (2020) has identified major differences between the qualitative and quantitative research approaches. In terms of reality, the quantitative or rationalistic approach provides tangible and fragmentable solutions, whereas qualitative research gives multiple, holistic, and intangible solutions (Saldana, 2021). While conducting quantitative research, the researcher–subject relationship will be independent. At the same time, in qualitative research, such relationships will be dependent or interrelated (Bluhm et al., 2011). While quantitative research can provide context-free generalisations, qualitative research provides context-specific hypotheses (Saldana, 2021). In terms of the explanation of actions, quantitative research can provide real causes. On the other hand, qualitative research is incapable of accomplishing this task. It explains actions in terms of interactive non-manipulable causes (Saldana, 2021). In quantitative research, the relation of values to the inquiry is value-free, whereas in qualitative research it is value-bound (Saldana, 2021). In short, quantitative research is rationalistic whereas qualitative research is naturalistic.

Quantitative research is usually conducted with the help of experiments and surveys, whereas qualitative research is executed with the help of phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, and textual analysis, etc. The most used sampling methods in the case of quantitative research are probability, random, stratified random, cluster, and multistage (Smith, 2021). On the other hand, qualitative research makes use of the purposive, theoretical, snowball, and convenience sampling methods (Mallette et al., 2020). In the case of data collection and analysis, qualitative and quantitative research also differ significantly. While

the former uses interviews, focus groups, diaries, testimonies, documents, records, and notes for the data collection, the latter uses questionnaires and Likert scales for the collection of data (Mallette et al., 2020). In the case of data analysis, the qualitative method uses content and thematic analysis or transcription verbatim.

On the other hand, the quantitative method uses descriptive and inferential statistics, and coded data are developed with the help of software packages (Coe & Kim, 2015). The confidence of the qualitative method depends on trustworthiness, confirmability, credibility, and transferability. At the same time, the confidence of the quantitative method is dependent on validity and reliability tests. Qualitative research presents the findings using verbatim quotes, categories, themes, and conceptual frameworks (Coe & Kim, 2015). On the other hand, quantitative research provides its findings using numerals, tables, graphs, and statistics.

According to Hameed (2020), in today's technology-driven world, the utility of the *scientific model* or a positivist–rationalistic approach (quantitative approach) is more compared to the naturalistic approach or qualitative approach. However, there are many criticisms against using the quantitative approach in an educational environment. Some scholars believe that the lack of educational innovations taking place at the school level can be attributed to the excessive use of the positivist–rationalistic approach. As per the views of Hameed (2020), the scientific method of research restricts, simplifies, and controls the variables, and it is difficult to transfer the findings of such a study to real-world situations. Moreover, the hypotheses and theories developed as part of this type of research could be contrasting or conflicting because of the lack of a context-free body of knowledge in educational settings. Another criticism against quantitative research is that it depends heavily

on artificial settings and ignores the socio-political climate of the research settings (Hameed, 2020). Although quantitative data can define research problems, they are incapable of explaining such problems descriptively. On the other hand, qualitative data explain problems descriptively, although the objectivity of such description need not be good (Smith, 2021). According to Bryman (1988), a qualitative method can be used to facilitate the quantitative part of the study, or then the other way around, or both approaches can be given equal emphasis.

At the same time, the general belief among scholars is that new researchers can *build on* the contribution of previous researchers while using the quantitative methodology for their studies. Compared to qualitative research, the results of quantitative research can be generalised to a wider population (Coe & Kim, 2015). For example, the proposed study will investigate the role of leadership style in improving employee agility. If the research is conducted with the help of qualitative research, the researcher will be forced to use interviews as the data collection method. However, it is difficult for a researcher to interview numerous employees from distinct parts of the world because of the practical difficulty, time consumption, and higher expenditure. On the other hand, it is possible for the researcher to conduct an online survey and collect responses from any part of the UAE, and that also features a high number of participants. Therefore, the findings of quantitative research can be generalised to a wider population compared to the findings of qualitative research. Moreover, qualitative research gives precise answers to research problems (Coe & Kim, 2015). While quantitative research is substantiated with the help of a deductive research approach, qualitative research is complemented with the help of an inductive research approach. The

core idea behind the deductive approach is to collect data for the support of existing theories, whereas the inductive research approach tries to make new theories from the collected data (Coe & Kim, 2015). The major aim of the proposed study is to support existing theories rather than to make new theories. Therefore, the deductive research approach is appropriate for this study. All the advantages of quantitative research over qualitative research prompted the researcher to use the quantitative data collection method for this study.

4.3 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy refers to the opinions, beliefs, and assumptions that affect how the research is conducted (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The observations are followed by critical analysis employing the available statistical methods. Additionally, in this case of identifying the impact of leadership styles on improving employee agility, the philosophy and beliefs directly affect it. It bears much significance to the overall output of the research study. The application of philosophy in a research study greatly affects the views and the methodology that is chosen. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), the three main ways of addressing and examining the research philosophy are through examining the ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Each of the factors mentioned here carries a crucial distinction and influences the research process and procedures.

According to Hallebone and Priest (2009), research paradigms are the philosophies of science. They consist of a set of beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed (Varpio & MacLeod, 2020). They can guide the way of science by shaping the elements like ontology (how reality is viewed), epistemology

(how the knowledge is conceived), axiology (the role and values of the research process), methodology (how the paradigm defines the processes associated with conducting science), and rigour (the criteria used to justify the quality of research in the paradigm) (Park et al., 2018). In academic research studies, ontology (positivism), epistemology (naturalism), and axiology are the most used research paradigms or philosophies, although these philosophies work on entirely different principles and theories.

4.3.1 Ontology (Objectivism)

Ontology is a research philosophy which concentrates on the nature of reality. Ontology has two aspects, which are objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism holds that the “social entities exist in reality external to the social actors concerned with their existence” (Saunders et al., 2015). On the other hand, subjectivism portrays that the social phenomenon is derived from the perceptions and the consequent actions of the social factors concerned with their existence.

Ontology is the nature of reality. It is concerned with identifying the overall nature of existence of a particular phenomenon (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). When people seek answers to some problems, they are expecting a type of knowledge external to them. The proposed study will use positivist ontology as the research philosophy. The positivist ontology argues that the world is external and there exists a single objective reality to any research phenomenon irrespective of the researcher’s perspective or belief (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). According to Park et al. (2020), positivism relies on the hypothetico-deductive method to verify a priori hypotheses that are often stated quantitatively. Such a hypothesis may have

functional relationships between causal and explanatory factors (independent variables) and outcomes (dependent variables) (Ramonyai, 2021). Most of the time, positivists use quantitative tools, techniques that emphasise measuring and counting, and naturalists or interpretivists use qualitative tools like observation, questioning, and description (Chilisa, 2019). However, on occasions like conducting an experimental study, the qualitative analysis may also be used by positivists (Chua et al., 2019).

As pointed out by Park et al. (2020), the preliminary aim of positivists is to develop explanatory associations or causal relationships that may be useful for the prediction and control of the problem under investigation. Quantitative data such as numbers and statistics are extremely important for positivists because of the ability of such data to solve problems scientifically (Chilisa, 2019). On the other hand, interpretivists use the views and opinions of people more frequently to solve a problem. These views and opinions need not be true all the time. In other words, the conclusions made by interpretivists need not be current all the time (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). At the same time, the same thing cannot be said about the conclusions made by positivists, which will be universally true, and they can be proved during different settings and contexts of studies (Ramonyai, 2021). The belief of positivists is such that a theory is reliable only when it can provide the same result on different occasions of testing (Chilisa, 2019). As per the views of positivists, the true source of knowledge is science (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). In other words, positivists never accept an argument if it is impossible to prove it scientifically. Positivists believe in the existence of a single tangible reality that can be understood, identified, and measured (Chilisa, 2019). They believe in temporal precedence (X must happen before Y, if X has to cause Y), association (X has

definite relations with Y), and a lack of confounders (X is the only cause of Y within the space identified) (Park et al., 2020).

Hence, for this research, subjectivism cannot be applied since objectivism will tend to view the organisational culture as something the organisation owns. On the other hand, the subjective view argues that the organisation is *what* it is because of the results of the continued social enactment (Saunders et al., 2015). An organisational culture is something that an organisation can recreate; it can be manipulated or changed to produce the desired results within the organisation by the management.

4.3.2 Epistemology

The epistemology explains the relationship between the researcher and reality. It deals with how a researcher has perceived reality. Epistemology is internal to the researcher, although ontology is external to him. It is interested in questions such as what is true and what is false (Carson et al., 2001). In short, the core principle behind epistemology is interpretivism, which believes that the reality is relative and multiple (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). As noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Neuman (2000), multiple realities may struggle to interpret problems in terms of fixed realities. The knowledge obtained through interpretivism, or ontology, could be socially constructed rather than objectively determined (Carson et al., 2001).

It is difficult to solve problems scientifically all the time. When scientific methods fail to solve a particular problem, it is logical to use epistemology or interpretivism, or naturalism, as the research philosophy to solve such problems (Dane, 2017). Although probabilities and

possibilities are unacceptable to positivists, they are acceptable to naturalists (Ramonyai, 2021). For example, the proposed study investigates the role of leadership style in improving employee agility. It is possible to investigate this problem after collecting data with the help of interviews with employees. However, the reliability of such investigation could be less compared to the reliability of investigations made by positivists using quantitative tools like a survey (Yin, 2009). In some cases, researchers will be forced to use their beliefs, views, and opinions while conducting research or interpreting a problem. Positivists never accept such a scenario. They are of the view that a researcher's beliefs and views should not interfere in the research process until the completion of the study (Dane, 2017). In short, the findings of a research study that makes use of positivism as the research philosophy will be more reliable, credible, and valid compared to the findings of a research study that uses naturalism as a research philosophy.

Epistemology is a research philosophy that is majorly concerned with acceptable knowledge in a study. Epistemology contains three other philosophical positions, which include positivism, realism, and interpretivism (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The positivism position always champions the investigation of observable social factors, and the findings will always be *law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists*. The positivist philosophy concentrates on resources for the development of knowledge. On the other hand, interpretivism focuses on the respondents' feelings. It advocates that it is important for the researcher to distinguish between the "humans' role as a social actor" (Saunders et al., 2015). The interpretivist philosophy concentrates on researching people than researching objects.

4.3.3 Axiology

Axiology is the research philosophy that dictates that values play a significant role in studying. If a researcher intends to acquire credible results, then the researcher requires values to guide the entire process of researching. The researcher must show the axiological skills to ensure that there is articulation of the individual values to make any judgments on the research and research process (Saunders et al., 2015). The research is based on writing personal statements; consequently, it will lead to conclusions based on individual opinions and a different conclusion from other researchers (Saunders et al., 2015). The main purpose of clearly defining a personal value position is to ensure that there is no bias in the entire research process, because this may help in deciding what is ethically appropriate, and it will provide a defence whenever there are queries about the decision-making in the research.

Axiology is the philosophical study of value (Flew, 1979). It is more interested in things that have value. It rejects all meaningless or valueless data while conducting research studies. It has strong connections with notions such as ethics, morals, aesthetics, and religious beliefs (Mackie, 1977). Values have a specific role in academic research studies, especially in the research process, research paradigm, and methodology. Values can be of two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Axiology says that something is intrinsically valuable if it is good (Flew, 1979). For example, a person's experience may be valuable for him even if it may not be valuable for others. On the other hand, extrinsic value refers to things that are valuable to others. Some philosophers do not believe in values because of their belief that the fundamental level of reality is valueless (Mackie, 1977). However, axiology denies such a stand and argues in favour of values while conducting a research study.

4.4 Research Design

The research will implement an explanatory research design through data collection and analysis. The research design can be of several types like explanatory, descriptive, correlational, experimental, quasi-experimental, or causal comparative (Miller & Salkind, 2002). The present study will employ the explanatory research design because of its ability to investigate problems that have not been clearly defined at the beginning of the study. In this research, the explanatory research design was applied to investigate the impact of leadership styles on employee performance. However, the researcher decided to narrow down the topic and investigate the influence of leadership styles on employee agility using an explanatory research design based on the findings and results of the pilot study. For example, this study initially planned to investigate the impact of leadership styles on employee performance. Later, the researcher decided to narrow down the topic and investigate the influence of leadership styles on employee agility.

Explanatory studies are often referred to as pilot and feasibility studies (Kumar, 2019). They can provide vital information to support evaluations, thereby reducing costs and minimising the potential harms of the intervention. Moreover, explanatory research design helps better understand the current situation and identify the key problems and concepts, based on previous research studies (Hallingberg et al., 2018). Such a research design can help the researcher in deciding which data collection methods are suitable for the study.

Furthermore, it guides the scholars in drawing meaningful conclusions after analysing the various dimensions of the study. Some of the most essential elements involved in an

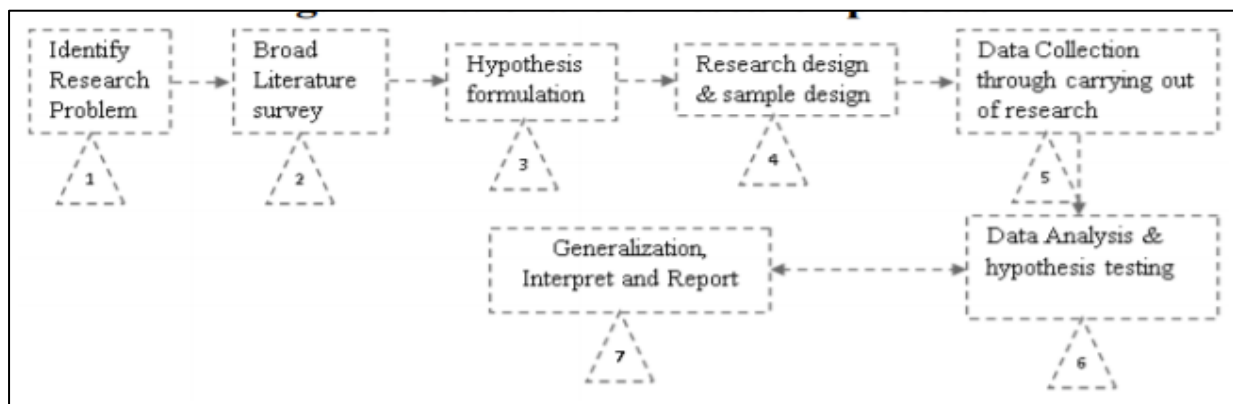
explanatory research design are the research philosophy, research approach, research strategies, data collection methods, and data analysis, etc. (Saunders et al., 2019). In this case, the unit of analysis identifies the impact of leadership styles on improving employee agility. A unit of analysis is the entity that the researcher wishes to say something about at the end of the study. The focus of this research is to identify the impact of the leadership styles on improving employee agility through the research.

4.4.1 Research Strategy

A research strategy refers to the step-by-step plan of action that gives direction to the researcher's thought process (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). The different steps of a research strategy are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

The Steps of a Research Strategy



Note. Source: Mishra & Alok, 2019

The identification of the research problem is the first step in the research process. The researcher may come across different topics and problems at the beginning of the study. However, all such topics need not be feasible for conducting a research study. Research problems mostly come either from real life or from the scholarly arena (Kumar, 2019). They can be identified by analysing, assessing, and evaluating the recent literature and reports. Some researchers or scholars have a habit of providing recommendations for future studies at the end of their articles (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Research topics can also be selected from such recommendations. In any case, the researcher needs to identify the research problem or topic based on the practicality of investigating that problem. In such circumstances, the researcher needs to assess the appropriateness of the problem and his capabilities and resources before selecting the research problem (Kumar, 2019).

The second step involved in a research process is the literature review or survey. There may be plenty of literature available on the Internet or other sources like books, journals, or newspapers that are relevant to the topic selected by the researcher for his study. The review of such literature will help the researcher identify the knowledge gaps that should be filled (Saunders et al., 2019). There is no need to investigate a problem many times if the solutions for that problem have been already identified. At the same time, it is logical to investigate a problem many times if the solutions for that problem have not been identified properly in the past. In any case, the literature search will help the researcher identify the gaps in knowledge or the literature, and try to fill those gaps properly (Bryman, 1992). The researcher will be able to formulate certain hypotheses after the review of the literature. These hypotheses need not be true all the time. Some of them could be right and many of them could be wrong. Only after

the completion of the study will the researcher be able to identify which hypotheses were proven and which were rejected (Kumar, 2019).

The next major step involved in a typical research methodology is the research design. It can be considered as a framework or approach that guides the researcher and helps him collect and analyse the data in a suitable manner. Moreover, the research design enables a researcher to assess the hypotheses, draw inferences, and identify relationships among the research variables (Flick, 2020). While conducting a study, a researcher needs to identify various relationships like the direct or indirect relationships between different research variables (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). The identification of such relationships helps the researcher analyse the collected data in an appropriate manner. In the absence of a proper research design, the researcher may not be able to identify such relationships in a proper manner.

4.4.2 Generalisability

Generalisability in research studies can be defined as the application of research findings based on a sample to the entire population (Miller & Salkind, 2002). If a research study fails to make findings that are transferable to another comparable situation, it can be said that the research lacks generalisability. Although the present study is conducted in the UAE, it is expected that the findings of the study can be applied to a wider context. The agility problems faced by employees in UAE organisations may have resemblances with such problems faced by employees in other countries. Therefore, the findings of this study can be applied to organisations in other countries as well. To ensure generalisability, the study

includes many ordinary questions guided by the literature regarding employee agility in the survey which is going to be conducted as part of the study.

The concept of employee agility goes beyond geographical boundaries. It entails a combination of characteristics and skills like innovation, adaptability, resilience, and problem-solving which are generally applied in modern workplaces. This focuses on the key factors of agility to ensure that the findings are applicable and relevant across different cultural and organisational contexts (Nevarez et al., 2023, p. 190). For instance, the particular challenges encountered by the employees in the UAE may be different from those of other countries, but the underlying urge for agility to navigate through the uncertainties and changes continues to be constant.

The worldwide trends like economic volatility, demographic shifts, and technological disruptions develop similar challenges for organisations globally. The challenges in many cases demand the employees to be alert and clear in their responses, irrespective of their geographic location. By accepting these common organisational challenges, the research study places itself in a strategic position that generates insights to get a wider significance beyond the UAE (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 30–45). For example, agility-related challenges like cross-functional collaboration, adaptation to market changes, and decision-making are dominant concerns for organisations worldwide.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings across various cultural contexts, the research methodologies and instruments need to involve rigorous cross-cultural validation. The process requires adapting research protocols and survey questions to account

for cultural diversity and guarantee that they give comparable data across different populations (Timo, 2020, pp. 80–98). This involves a range of samples that represent different cultural backgrounds, various nationalities, and organisational settings, thus ensuring there is applicability and credibility beyond the UAE. The cross-cultural validation studies give a guarantee that the findings provide insights that can be generalised to different countries rather than just artefacts of a particular cultural context.

A theory-driven approach helps strengthen the generalisability of the research study findings by preparing them to develop theoretical frameworks that have wider applicability. This is possible by developing well-established theories of organisational leadership, human resource management, and organisational behaviour. The study gives insights that go beyond particular geographical or cultural contexts (Turner, 2020, p. 60). For instance, theories like organisational learning and transformational leadership provide universal principles that inform different practices across various organisational settings. The theoretical foundation promotes the transferability and credibility of the findings to organisations working in various countries.

The practical implications of the study show how the findings inform organisational interventions and practices globally. This is by recognising actionable recommendations connected to promoting a culture of innovation, enhancing agile leadership behaviour, or applying flexible work arrangements employed to organisations having similar agility challenges globally (Franco, 2020). By underscoring the potential effect of the study findings based on organisational performance worldwide, the study underscores its contribution and strengthens its arguments to the wider body of knowledge in the area.

4.4.3 Time Horizons

4.4.3.1 Cross-Sectional Studies. The research will employ cross-sectional studies. The cross-sectional studies involve studying a particular time (Saunders et al., 2015). The research is mainly conducted for academic purposes, and therefore, it is a time constraint. Additionally, the research focuses on the incidence of the phenomenon, which is the leadership skills in an organisation, how it affects the employee agility, and how the employee adaption to the changes within an organisation is affected by the leadership styles. Besides, the study is based on the questionnaire conducted within a brief period of time.

In academic research projects, researchers usually employ two types of studies: cross-sectional study and longitudinal study. The major difference between these two studies is that while the former concentrates only on one point at a time, the latter focuses on multiple points at the same time (Setia, 2016). Moreover, cross-sectional studies are easy to conduct, and they can be completed within a brief time period (Setia, 2016). On the other hand, longitudinal studies may take many months or even years for their completion (Caruana et al., 2015). Hence, a cross-sectional study was conducted for the purpose of this thesis.

4.4.3.2 Longitudinal Studies. On the other hand, longitudinal studies are not time constrained. The research based on this study takes quite a long time, and it has the capacity to study the changes and the development of the phenomenon being studied (Saunders et al., 2015). The studies, in this case, require a lot of time to gain valuable information before it is published, and it majorly addresses change over a specified extended period of time. Hence, longitudinal studies are not an appropriate strategy for this research since the research aims to

understand how an organisation's leadership styles are currently affecting employee agility in the workplace.

4.5 Data Collection Instrument

The data collection process is significant. The data analysis cannot be complete without the data collection process. To ensure that the data analysis is complete and meets the research requirements for an appropriate conclusion, the data collection process should strictly ensure that it retains its relevance, and the required information is collected. Only the relevant information will be collected concerning the topic of study. Additionally, the process was well developed professionally. According to Yin (2013), there are various data collection methods. Nevertheless, before the data collection methods the data are divided into primary and secondary data. The primary data are raw information collected from the respondents. On the other hand, the secondary data are raw facts collected from already published sources. Therefore, there are primary sources and secondary sources (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Both the primary and the secondary research will be conducted as part of the present study since the use of primary and secondary data is important for the success of a research project. Primary data give current information whereas secondary data give information from the past (Coe & Kim, 2015). It is necessary to blend current information with past information to get deep insights into a research problem. As mentioned earlier, primary research has been conducted with the help of an online survey. On the other hand, secondary research has been conducted with the help of secondary sources such as websites, books, journals, and articles. Secondary research is often referred to as desk research and it involves the collection of

existing data (Smith, 2021). With the arrival of computers and the Internet, it is easy to collect secondary data with the help of a few finger-clicks.

In simple words, secondary data are the data gathered by someone else (Smith, 2021). Compared to secondary data, primary data are intrinsically good as they most likely provide trustworthiness and transparency about the phenomena researchers focus on (Martins & Serra, 2018). However, the collection of primary data is not as easy as the collection of secondary data. For example, it is necessary for the researchers to seek a lot of permissions and travel extensively for the collection of primary data. In contrast, secondary research can be conducted without requiring any permissions, and data collection can be accomplished remotely from home. At the same time, secondary data are highly objective rather than descriptive most of the time. Moreover, it is outdated compared to primary data. Primary research can give current data whereas secondary research gives data from the past. Despite all these limitations, secondary research will also be used for the present study because of its ability to gather diverse data from a wider population, and also in a quicker time.

4.5.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires and surveys are used by researchers for the collection of primary data. Although many researchers use these two terms (questionnaires and surveys) interchangeably, there are some differences between the two. A questionnaire consists of a set of questions whereas a survey consists of both the questions, and the process of collecting, aggregating, and analysing the responses from those questions (Smith, 2021). In simple terms, questionnaires include content only whereas a survey includes the content as well as the

method and analysis (Zhao et al., 2021). According to Walonick (1993), a questionnaire's design is an extensive method which allows the collection of data with the help of open- or closed-ended questions. In his opinion, the questionnaire survey is an estimation apparatus which is capable of collecting meaningful data from a wider population.

Questionnaires and surveys may not be suitable for all types of research problems. For example, not all people may respond to questions related to sexual orientation. Therefore, surveys or questionnaires may not bring the desired results if they were used for studies related to the aforementioned topic. But in other instances, these research techniques may help the researcher collect plenty of quantitative data.

The success and failure of a survey depend on the ability of the respondents to answer the questions properly. In other words, the respondents need ample awareness about the topic if they want to answer the questions related to that topic properly (Zhao et al., 2021). There is no point in asking an Indian about Chinese or American politics. But there is a sense in asking Indians about Indian politics and Americans about American politics. Only an employee, manager, or leader will be able to speak authoritatively regarding the role of the leadership style in improving employee agility.

Another success factor of a survey is the sample size (Zhao et al., 2021). There is a direct relationship between the sample size and the reliability of the information collected through the survey. In other words, when the sample size increases, the reliability and universal applicability of the survey results increase (Zhao et al., 2021). It is illogical for a researcher to collect data from a handful of respondents and apply the findings in a universal

context. At the same time, it is logical to apply the survey finding universally after collecting data from numerous people who belong to different communities, cultures, and stay in distinct parts of the world.

The third success factor of a survey is the nature, and the relevance of the questions used (Tan, 2017). As noted earlier, people may not answer descriptive-type questions the same way as objective-type questions. Therefore, the researcher needs to include more closed-ended questions and less open-ended questions in the survey if he wants to ensure more participation. As in the case of the nature of the questions, the relevance of the questions is also important for the success of a survey (Tan, 2017; Zhao et al., 2021). If the researcher conducts the study on employee agility, he should include questions related to leadership style, motivational factors, work environment, and organisational culture, etc.

Researchers usually prefer surveys over interviews while collecting primary data. This is because surveys are easy to conduct and cost-effective compared to interviews (Tan, 2017). The time and effort required for conducting interviews will be more compared to that required for surveys. Moreover, surveys can reach distant populations if conducted online (Zhao et al., 2021). On the other hand, interviews cannot be conducted with people who are staying in distant locations. Survey data are easy to analyse with the help of different software (Tan, 2017). On the other hand, the interview data cannot be analysed in such a manner. The researcher needs to analyse the interview data manually by identifying different themes from the collected data. As a result of that, the reliability, credibility, and validity of survey data could be much more than that of interview data.

A questionnaire will be conducted as part of the pilot study for the present study. As part of the pilot study, a questionnaire will be administered online in the United Arab Emirates with the help of the Google Forms. The pilot study questionnaire will consist of 36 closed-ended questions or multiple-choice questions. The reason for the selection of closed-ended questions instead of open-ended questions is the ability of such questions to improve participation in the survey. People are normally reluctant in answering open-ended questions since such questions will take too much time to provide a response as open-ended questions require descriptive answers (Tan, 2017). On the other hand, closed-ended questions give multiple choices as answers and the respondents need to select any of the choices while answering a question, as such questions require only objective answers. The researcher collected 25 responses for the pilot study, as an adequate suggested range for the respondents in a pilot study was between 10 to 40 (Hertzog, 2008). The main study consisted of 36 closed-ended questions, and it was expected to collect between 350 to 400 responses for this study from different people staying in different emirates of the UAE (Delice, 2010; Lakens, 2022).

As for the validity of the questionnaire items, the Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.7 to 0.89. This indicates that the selected items are good enough for the purpose of this thesis. All the variables, their dimensions, alpha values, and their citations are illustrated below in the following table for easy understanding.

Table 3*Study Variables, Their Sources, and Dimensions*

Sr.	Variable	Alpha	Citation	Dimension
1	Transformational Leadership	0.89	Afsar et al. 2016	Inspirational Drive Idealised Effect Intellectual Drive
2	Transactional Leadership	0.85	Afsar et al. 2016	Exception by Management (Active) Exception by Management (Passive)
3	Laissez Faire Leadership	0.70	Mwenje & Mwenje, 2016	Employee Trust Employees' will to do the job on their own
4	Employee Incentives	0.73	Al-Enezi et al. 2007	Rewards Recognition Compensation
5	Employee Agility	0.86	Pitaf et al. 2020	Adaptability Proactivity Resilience

Note. Source: Self-developed for the study.

A five-point Likert scale will be used for the making of questions for the survey.

According to Preedy and Watson (2010), a five-point Likert scale is a psychometric response

scale in which the responders specify their level of agreement to a statement in five points: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.

The five-point Likert scale can help respondents convey their responses in an accurate manner. Some of the respondents may be terribly dissatisfied with transformational leadership and they can express their feelings accurately while responding to this question. Such people can select option 1 and express their feelings properly. A mere response like *unsatisfied* may not help them express their feeling in an accurate manner. In the same manner, those who are very satisfied with the transformational leadership style can opt for option 5. In short, a survey based on the five-point Likert scale is more comprehensive and accurate compared to a three-point or seven-point Likert scale survey. As pointed out by Preedy and Watson (2010), a three-point Likert scale may not provide enough options to the respondents for expressing their views properly as the available options are fewer. On the other hand, a seven-point Likert scale may provide too many options, and the respondents may develop confusion while selecting the appropriate response (Preedy & Watson, 2010; Tan, 2017). In short, a five-point Likert scale is more flexible and comfortable for the respondents compared to the other two (7-point and 3-point).

4.6 Population, Sample, and Sampling

4.6.1 Population

To ensure that the research study has captured and included a representative sample, it is important to involve employees from various sectors including the government, semi-

government organisations, and the private sector. This will include selecting participants from various sectors as well as the non-profit organisations that operate within the UAE.

The study population will be the employees working in the organisations. The sample for the present study is selected from different organisations functioning in different emirates of the UAE. In simple words, a sample can be referred to as a smaller, manageable version of a larger group (Mishra & Alok, 2019). Both male and female employees will be included in the sample population. The UAE is a country in which people from distinct parts of the world, or expatriates, work in large numbers. In other words, the sample population will include people from distinct cultures and countries of origin. It is not necessary that the leadership style comfortable to some employees may be comfortable to other employees. Therefore, the researcher must include a diverse sample in the study population. It is impossible for a researcher to include all the people in a community while studying a problem in that community. At the same time, it is possible for the researcher to include some representatives and study the problem in that community in a comprehensive manner (Tan, 2017).

The selected sectors have their own leadership styles, culture, and employee dynamics, which is important because they create potential variations in the study. Moreover, their working environment and their unique characteristics give valuable insights into how leadership styles affect and impact employee behaviour and perception across various organisational contexts within the UAE. In simple words, a sample can be referred to as a smaller, manageable version of a larger

4.6.2 Sample Size

The sample size for the pilot study was to be between 10 to 40 responses (Hertzog, 2008), whereas for the main study, it was between 350 to 400 responses (Delice, 2010; Lakens, 2022). The rationale behind this number for the sample size was that various kinds of sectors and industries are considered to collect the information (education, hospitals, banks, telecommunications, airlines, and automobiles, etc.). Hence, it is not possible to have an exact population size that can indicate a precise sample size. If the number of members in a population increases and the sample size decreases, the margin of error will be increased. At the same time, it is difficult to increase the sample size beyond certain limits because of the administrative and cost-related issues (Kadem & Bakerao, 2010). Generally, scholars select a sample size between 100 and 1,000, depending on their ability to meet the cost and administrative issues (Kirby et al., 2002). Therefore, the researcher collected data from 384 respondents, which falls within the range of 350 to 400 responses, as suggested by Delice (2010) and Lakens (2022).

Good statistical research is well designed and later results in valid conclusions. The influence of a statistical test is the probability that a test will reject the null hypothesis, in which the null hypothesis is false. In essence, the power reveals the prospect of not committing type-two errors. In this case, the larger the sample size, the smaller the effect size that can be detected, and the opposite is also true. The sample size is required to make informed decisions in this research.

The UAE had a population size of 9.9 million people by the end of the year 2024 (Worldometer, 2024). In another statistic, the number of people working in all economic sectors of UAE was 7.384 million (Worldometer, 2024). These diverse workforces from the seven emirates provided the necessary population of workforce respondents required for the study. To achieve a decisive conclusion of achieving 384 respondents based on this population, the research considered a total population of ten thousand personnel. This population was considered from the seven emirates/states in the UAE. However, due to several financial constraints and inadequate time, the population was further narrowed down to a precise sample size of 384 respondents.

The research applied the formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the necessary sample size from the total target population. This method is applied to avoid biases in the selection of participants. Based on that, the sample size is determined from a population size of 9.9 million respondents. This formula is applied since the population distribution is not well known and the respondents may not be normally distributed. It is also necessary when trying to achieve a certain confidence interval when sampling a population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

$$s = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)}$$

where s is the sample size, X^2 represents the chi-square value (3.841) for a 95% confidence level, N is the total population, P is the population proportion, which is set at fifty percent (.50) to ensure the largest sample size, and d is the level of accuracy for the proportion, set at 0.05 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Based on this formula, a sample size of approximately 384 respondents was selected (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). It also helps in the determination of the right sample size by determining the level of accuracy for the proportion, which shows the confidence range in the survey results that reflects the true population. The sample is selected to ensure that they represent the overall population within a particular margin of error.

This results in approximately 384 respondents rounded to the nearest hundred figures that were applied as the sample size that would function as the overall representation of the entire population of the diverse workforces in different economic sectors of the seven emirates, based on limited knowledge about the behaviour of the population.

The selected sample must meet the established characteristics. This will ensure adequate and relevant data collection. As viewed above, the first characteristic is the selection of the study participants, both male and female, working as employees in different sectors with experience in their field. The study participants must be workers within the UAE. These individuals or workers will be selected from different occupational sectors, including education, the healthcare industry, banks, telecommunications, airlines, automobile, construction, technology, and other business sectors. Experience in a single or multiple industries is necessary to help analyse the leadership styles applied and their effects on the employees. Apart from that, the participants must have knowledge and experience, and have worked under different leadership styles, including transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, since the thesis evaluates the three different leadership styles and their effects on employee agility. Finally, the study participants must be residents of the UAE working in the region, which is critical because the study results will be generalised

to represent employees and workplace leaders in the UAE. In research, the ideal maximum sample size is 10% of the population being studied, provided it does not exceed 1,000 (Kirby et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the sample size for this study is smaller at 384 respondents, consisting of the UAE's workforce representatives from various sectors. The 384 respondents have been randomly stratified from the target population under investigation.

4.6.3 Sampling Strategy

The major features of a good sample design are goal-oriented, accurate representation, proportionality, random selection, economic, practical, and the ability to provide information (Tan, 2017). Prior to the study, the researcher has set some goals and objectives. The selected sample should have the ability to help the researcher achieve these goals, objectives, and targets. The selected sample should have the ability to represent the community to which they properly belong. For example, many of the companies in the UAE have full-time and part-time workers. The characteristics of the sample population will be constrained to include (a) employees with experience in their field, this is because experience helps to provide better understanding and judgement to their leader; (b) they should have knowledge and have worked under different leadership styles, as this thesis is evaluating three different leadership styles; and (c) be located in the UAE, since the study will be conducted in the United Arab Emirates.

It is vital to use appropriate sampling techniques to ensure the success of a questionnaire. There are various sampling techniques such as random sampling, convenience sampling, stratified sampling, and stratified random sampling for the collection of primary

data (Tan, 2017). It is not practical to research an entire population when conducting a questionnaire. This thesis will use a stratified random sampling technique to collect the primary data. Stratified random sampling is used in large-scale surveys where researchers select individuals or study participants to represent the larger population. Empirical data on the sampling method present significant benefits. First, it enables the estimation of subpopulations. According to Arnab (2017, p. 557), some research requires estimates for a specific population and various subpopulations. In such research, the best strategy is the stratified sampling method that allows researchers to classify the subpopulations as strata. An example would include a national survey to establish unemployment levels in a country, including the provincial levels. A stratified sampling technique would take each province as a stratum, providing specific data of the organisational leadership style, agility of organisations, innovation of employees, development behaviours of organisations, and strategies applied by organisations to remain competitive in the market. Further, the method facilitates or ensures the efficiency of a study. The stratification process increases the efficiency of the estimates by forming strata in a way that each stratum is standardised based on the characteristics being studied (Arnab, 2017, p. 247). For example, in this study, the stratification process will most likely increase the efficiency of the leadership styles being investigated based on the various characteristics reviewed to influence employee agility.

Further, Shi (2015) states that the stratified sampling approach enables a researcher to deduce information concerning a population founded on outcomes from a subgroup of a population without necessarily investigating each person. According to Mishra and Alok (2019), the stratified sampling method reduces the sampling bias by enhancing the

representativeness and accuracy of the findings. Therefore, this thesis will use the stratified sampling technique because it will conveniently help the researcher to divide the parent population into various strata and then sample randomly from the divided layers. The method enables the researcher not to sample randomly from the parent population. Shi (2015) states that stratified sampling tools are more accurate than systematic or simple random sampling. This is because the technique simplifies the difference between various kinds of individuals using classification. The technique is conducive as it extracts representative samples and reduces the sample size to improve the accuracy. The stratified sampling method enhances the effectiveness of a sample design regarding the estimator precision and survey costs (Shi, 2015).

However, Mishra and Alok (2019) state that the stratified sampling technique needs adequate understanding of the suitable features of the sampling frame because it is challenging to decide the features to be stratified. The cost and precision of a stratified sample design depends on how the sample elements are assigned to the strata. Proportionate stratification is an approach used to determine the strata sample size. In proportionate stratification, the sample size of every layer is proportionate to the stratum's population size (Mishra & Alok, 2019).

A random sampling method will help the researcher to get only the number of required respondents, regardless of the characteristics. On the other hand, imagine that the researcher divides the sample into different strata based on gender, age, race, country, and religion. In this case, the researcher will not only get the exact number of graduates who got jobs but also the number of graduates from each community (Americans, Germans, Christians, Muslims,

males. and females, etc.) who were able to secure jobs in that year. In short, stratified sampling can study a problem more comprehensively or at the micro-level, whereas random sampling is useful for studying a problem generally or at the macro-level (Mishra & Alok, 2019). Moreover, stratified sampling gives smaller errors as it has a lower standard deviation compared to other sampling methods. Furthermore, the measurements will be more manageable and cheaper when the population is grouped into strata (Mishra & Alok, 2019). Stratified sampling is more convenient for a community in which the population density varies significantly. Stratified sampling helps researchers obtain a sample population that best represents the community being studied. In the case of random sampling, each member of the community has an equal opportunity for being selected, but in the case of stratified sampling, only the suitable members of the community get the chance of being selected (Shahrokh & Dougherty, 2014). Although stratified sampling has plenty of advantages, it has plenty of disadvantages as well. For example, this type of sampling is not suitable when a population is undividable into groups, and subgroups (Shahrokh & Dougherty, 2014). Therefore, the technique is ineffective when the study population cannot be divided exhaustively into separate subgroups. It is also considered a misapplication of the method to make the subgroup sample sizes relative to the amount of data available from the subgroups, instead of scaling the sample sizes to the subgroup sizes (Arnab, 2017). Apart from this, selecting appropriate strata for a sample may be challenging. For example, it would be difficult to classify workers based on the different leadership styles they have been exposed to and their various outcomes in connection to agility. Finally, the process of arranging and evaluating the results is more challenging than for data gathered from a simple random sampling strategy. The thesis uses

the significant characteristics of a stratified random sampling method to ensure the successful application of the technique.

In line with Tan's (2017) emphasis on goal-oriented sampling, the chosen stratified sampling technique aligns with the study's objectives of assessing the impact of different leadership styles on employee agility in the UAE. Arnab (2017) supports the use of stratified sampling for estimating subpopulations, and in this context, the strata are defined by the criterion of *years of experience*. As highlighted in the articles, years of experience functions as a moderator variable in the relationship between leadership styles and employee agility. Mishra and Alok (2019) advocate for proportionate stratification, asserting its ability to enhance precision. By stratifying based on years of experience, the study ensures representation across diverse leadership exposures, contributing to a better understanding of the leadership–agility dynamics within distinct experience levels. This strategic approach aligns with the considerations of the moderation effects on the leadership–agility relationship, as highlighted in the literature and the study's contextual framework.

Stratified sampling was employed to ensure diversity and representativeness in the sample. It includes the division of the population into strata or subgroups depending on the relevance of the characteristics highlighted above. The collection of data from the sample was achieved through the administration of questionnaires through emails. The strata during the collection of data were created using various steps. The initial step was to define the population, inclusive of the potential participants. The variables relevant to the research questions were identified. The third step was to divide the population into strata, followed by the determination of the sample size for each stratum. Random sampling within each stratum

was followed, and finally, the strata samples were combined (Qualtrics, 2023). Next, leadership style training, role-playing exercise, case-studies, feedback mechanisms, and mentorship programmes and coaching are described.

- **Leadership Style Training:** The participants should be provided with training sessions that will cater to and address the different leadership styles incorporating their benefits, characteristics, and challenges. The training must be engaging, use real-life examples, and be interactive for better understanding.
- **Role-Playing Exercise:** The organisations create role-playing exercises in which the participants are given various leadership roles and are asked to demonstrate them in some scenarios that include the various leadership styles (Jones et al., 2021). This will enhance a deeper understanding of the different styles and their influence.
- **Case-Studies:** The use of various studies will help illustrate and demonstrate the application of leadership styles in the organisational context. This enables the participants to evaluate the effectiveness of every style and also enhance their critical thinking (Baltazar & Franco, 2023).
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Organisations should come up with a feedback mechanism that enables the participants to share their insights and experiences concerning various leadership styles (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). This will aid in the identification of areas that require adjustments, that will help improve the applicability of each style.
- **Mentorship Programmes and Coaching:** Organisations should create mentorship programmes that will pair the participants with leaders who are experienced and who can guide them in the understanding and application of these leadership styles. The

coaching will help the participants adapt well to different styles under certain situations, thus improving the general leadership effectiveness (Wefald et al., 2021). This gives a more practical and personalised approach to learning. By integrating these strategies into a training session or programme, the participants can have good knowledge of how different leadership styles work, and how they can apply and use them effectively.

4.6.4 Confidentiality

The researcher and the respondents are the only individuals who can make any corrections and changes whenever necessary (Amerius-Sargeant & Nickie, 2020). According to Cho and Larose (1999), online surveyors commit multiple violations of physical, informational, and psychological privacy compared to such violations in conventional survey methods. Moreover, Internet-based surveys can invade the interactional privacy of online communities (Cho & Larose, 1999). Privacy is a critical issue in most Middle Eastern countries, including the UAE. The researcher will make sure that the personal details of the questionnaire respondents are properly protected. Under no circumstances will such details be disclosed without taking informed consent from the respondents.

4.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study will be executed using **SmartPLS** as it offers distinctive advantages, particularly in the realm of intricate research scenarios that involve structural equation modelling (SEM). It stands out by accommodating both reflective and formative measurement models, a notable benefit in comparison to traditional tools (Guenther et al.,

2021). The user-friendly nature of **SmartPLS** is particularly advantageous for researchers with limited statistical proficiency, facilitating efficient model estimation and evaluation (Guenther et al., 2021). It demonstrates resilience in handling scenarios with small sample sizes, ensuring robustness when dealing with limited data (Guenther et al., 2021). Moreover, **SmartPLS** is adept at handling non-normal data, offering versatility in diverse research contexts. The user-friendly interface, suitability for structural equation modelling (SEM), and adaptability to diverse research settings, collectively position **SmartPLS** as a valuable tool for conducting data analysis in this study, as indicated by its ease of use and applicability to SEM.

While conducting a research study, a researcher will come across or collect a lot of data. This data can be referred to as raw data. Raw data may not help a researcher very much in making conclusions out of his study, and thus raw data needs to be analysed using different data analysing techniques to make it useful for the study (Islam, 2020). Some people compare the process of data analysis with the processes in a manufacturing unit, whereby raw materials will be cleaned before the manufacturing process that makes the finished good. Similarly, data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, and transforming raw data into reliable, credible, and meaningful conclusions (Islam, 2020). Induction, deduction, and abduction are some of the popular data analysis methods used by researchers, depending on the nature of the study conducted or the data collection method used. However, quantitative data can be analysed properly with the help of deduction (Islam, 2020). Since the proposed study will employ a quantitative research design, the data analysis method used for that study will be deduction.

Deduction is the process of collecting data in support of existing theories, whereas induction is the process of making new theories from the data collected (Hyde, 1998).

Deduction is mostly executed with the help of data analysing software, and hence the outcomes of such analysis could be 100% right (Shahrokh & Dougherty, 2014). The same thing cannot be said about induction that works manually using methods such as thematic coding. The conclusions made from induction need not be true all the time. In other words, the reliability, credibility, and validity of deduction are much greater than that of induction (Shahrokh & Dougherty, 2014). In short, deduction is the most reliable way of data analysis while conducting academic research works. The increased use of deduction during data analysis would increase the credibility, validity, and reliability of the results obtained from a research project. However, it is impossible for a researcher to leave out unexpected data while conducting research.

Some of the major steps involved in data analysis are data coding, the development of the data file and data entry, data cleaning, data screening, data analysis, and the interpretation of the results (Islam, 2020). Data coding becomes necessary if the researcher failed to use a pre-coded questionnaire. Data cleaning refers to the checking of data for errors. The researcher does not need to be able to collect only the relevant data or current data as part of primary or secondary research, but irrelevant data and incorrect data need to be segregated before the actual data analysis process. Data screening is the step during which the researcher checks the assumptions or hypotheses for use in statistical tests (Shahrokh & Dougherty, 2014). Once the data screening is over, the researcher needs to conduct the actual data analysis using the SmartPLS software. The output produced by this software needs to be interpreted during the last stage of data analysis.

The questionnaire data will be analysed based on structural equation modelling (SEM), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), R-square, and reliability, with the help of the SmartPLS. SmartPLS is widely used for the analysis of statistics in social science and is both vital and beneficial in research because it assists in predicting patterns and establishing swift forecasts.

PLS is normally used when there a complex cause–effect relationship that exists between variables, and SEM is used to analyse the structural relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2014). As noted by Fan et al. (2016), with the increasing availability of data in recent times, the application of SEM in social science research becomes easier.

The researcher will also use exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to reduce the data to a smaller group of summary variables. It also assists in the exploration of the fundamental theoretical phenomena's structure. Fabrigar and Wegener (2011) define EFA as a group of approaches that explains the correlations amongst variables regarding the underlying entities, known as factors. A factor is an unobservable variable that influences more than one observed measure and that accounts for the correlations among these observed measures. In other words, the observed measures are interrelated because they share a common cause (i.e., they are influenced by the same underlying construct); if the latent construct was partitioned out, the intercorrelations among the observed measures will be zero (Brown, 2015, p. 10). EFA helps in the identification of the structure of the association between the respondent and the variable.

EFA can identify the smallest number of hypothetical constructs such as factors, dimensions, latent variables, synthetic variables, or internal attributes that can be explained

easily (Watkins, 2018). EFA is useful for the identification of common factors that exist among different variables. In social science research, the possibility of the study population possessing some unobservable factors or characteristics cannot be ruled out. EFA will help the researcher identify such factors and increase the credibility of the findings of his study (Schumacker, 2015).

4.8 Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are two indispensable features of the measuring instrument. A research study conducted using an instrument that does not possess these features will not help the researcher in getting beneficial results (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). That is why researchers who are making use of quantitative methods select research instruments that have higher scores in terms of validity and reliability. To avoid the validity and reliability problems in this study, the researcher will design the survey questions in a careful manner. All the questions designed for the questionnaire will be scrutinised many times to ensure their validity and reliability in bringing the desired results. The researcher will make sure to avoid ambiguous questions in the questionnaire to help the respondents avoid confusion while answering them.

4.8.1 Validity Considerations

According to Heale and Twycross (2015), validity in a quantitative study can be defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in that study. For example, if a survey conducted for investigating the role of the leadership style in improving employee agility measures only the employee motivation, that survey cannot be considered valid. It is a fact that employee motivation can be affected by the leadership style. At the same time, there

may be plenty of other factors that may impact employee motivation positively or negatively. Since the study aims to investigate the role of the leadership style on employee agility, the designed questionnaire should investigate various leadership styles and their impact on employee agility instead of focusing more on employee motivation. In short, the designing of survey questions in a quantitative study is extremely important as it decides the validity and credibility of the study (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

Validity can be divided into distinct categories such as content validity, construct validity, and criterion validity (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). While content validity ensures that the researcher has covered all the content related to the problems and the variables, construct validity refers to the validity of test scores in making inferences related to the concept being studied (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). The present study will make sure to cover the major topics related to leadership styles and employee agility to ensure content validity. In the same manner, the questionnaire scores will be thoroughly analysed to ensure construct validity. On the other hand, criterion validity is measured in terms of convergent validity (a measure showing correlations between similar variables), divergent validity (an instrument showing differences between variables), and predictive validity (an instrument that predicts the likelihood of an incident or task occurring in the future) (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020).

Researchers make use of convergent validity when they use two different measurement procedures and research methods (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). For example, this study will make use of a questionnaire and secondary sources for the collection of data to prove the impact of leadership styles on improving employee agility. On the other hand, divergent validity is helpful when the data present in the study are different from those the researcher is

searching for (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). For instance, imagine that the proposed study collects some data related to motivation, although the study was intended for collecting data related to leadership and employee agility. In such a case, the researcher can effectively use divergent validity to interpret such data. The proposed study topic involves many elements that are similar and dissimilar. For example, transformational leadership and transactional leadership are two leadership styles that are functioning based on entirely different concepts. Both these leadership styles can affect employee agility in one way or another. The questions related to these similar and dissimilar leadership styles will be included in the questionnaire to ensure criterion validity (see Appendix 1).

To validate the questionnaire tools, discriminant and convergent validity assessments will be conducted. Discriminant validity ensures the uniqueness of each latent construct, preventing potential overlap, while convergent validity affirms the convergence of items within a construct, enhancing its dependability (Cheung et al., 2023). These assessments, integral to SmartPLS analysis, serve as pivotal checkpoints in confirming the accuracy of the questionnaire tool. The execution of these validity tests, combined with the judicious removal of redundant and invalid inquiries, will significantly enhance the methodological strength and credibility of the research findings, aligning with established psychometric principles (Tan, 2017; Preedy & Watson, 2010).

4.8.2 Reliability Considerations

Reliability is the accuracy of the instruments used in quantitative study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). In other words, reliability depends on the ability of the instruments to give

the same results while conducting the study in different settings. If the instruments can provide the same results, the study and its findings can be considered as reliable. Imagine a case in which a person sets an alarm in a clock for 6:30 am every day for waking up. Suppose the clock sounds the alarm at 7:00 am every day instead of 6:30 am. In this case, the person can say that the clock is reliable but not valid. Since the clock sounds the alarm at 7:00 am every day, the person can assume that the actual time is 7:00 am when the clock rings. At the same time, since the clock failed to make an alarm at the set time which is 6:30 am, it cannot be considered valid. In the same manner, a questionnaire intended for investigating the solutions of a particular problem may succeed in identifying solutions for another problem. In this case, the questionnaire cannot be considered a valid instrument although its findings are reliable for solving another problem.

As in the case of validity, reliability can be divided into various categories such as homogeneity or internal consistency, stability, and equivalence, etc. (Lobiondo-Wood & Haber, 2013). Homogeneity refers to the correlation between a variable and the outcome of the study. The strong correlation between variables is an indication of the higher reliability of a study (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). For example, it is expected that the participatory leadership style may have a strong correlation with employee agility. If the researcher can prove this hypothesis, it can be concluded that the findings of the study have higher reliability. Stability is another attribute of reliability. It refers to the stability of the results while conducting studies in different contexts (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). Imagine that the proposed study will be conducted in the United States along with the UAE. If these two studies yield related results, one can say that it has higher stability and reliability. Equivalence refers to the process for

qualitatively determining the level of agreement between two or more observers (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). The researcher will review the findings of previous researchers and will compare his findings with those of previous researchers to make meaningful and reliable conclusions.

In ensuring the reliability of the survey instrument, a pilot study will be undertaken. The researcher will employ a robust methodological approach by incorporating established constructs of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, employee incentives, and employee agility, supported by reputable citations (Tan, 2017; Afsar et al., 2016; Mwenje & Mwenje, 2016; Al-Enezi et al., 2007; Pitaf et al., 2020). The reliability of the questionnaire items will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha values, ranging from 0.7 to 0.89, indicating good internal consistency (Tan, 2017). Notably, the variables, their dimensions, alpha values, and respective citations will be meticulously presented for transparency and clarity, and the items whose inter-rater reliability is insignificant will be dropped.

SmartPLS will be employed as a tool in the pilot study to further enhance the validity and reliability of the scale. Extensive statistical analyses, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Cronbach's alpha, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), will be conducted (Gebremedhin et al., 2022). These analyses will validate the underlying structure of the questionnaire items and assess their consistency (Gebremedhin et al., 2022). After the completion of these tests, survey questions will be systematically removed based on their repetition and adherence to validity criteria, ensuring that the final questionnaire will be a refined and reliable instrument for data collection. This methodological rigour aligns with best

practices in survey research, contributing to the robustness of the study's findings (Tan, 2017; Preedy & Watson, 2010).

4.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher will ensure a high ethical standard by maintaining the respondents' integrity and dignity. Among these aspects include obtaining the respondents' consent and debriefing them of what they are expected to do during the research, and what the research is all about. Besides, the researcher will assure the respondents of their confidentiality and anonymity where there will be a need to do so. The respondents' decision to participate will be made from their free will upon having the full details of what the research entails. The questionnaire will brief about the whole research and the various leadership styles being assessed in this thesis.

Before the beginning of the study, the researcher ensured extensive training on ethical factors. According to Cubin (2015), the training indicated equipping researchers with the required knowledge to ensure that there are unified specifications in ethical adherence. The Belmont Report by Friesen P. et al. (2017) and Miracle V. A. Dimens Crit (2016) requires the researcher involved human respondents to abide by beneficence's ethical principles of honesty, dignity, and integrity.

The researcher will address the perception of bias and will practise the concept of bracketing. It requires the "ability to refrain from judgement and stay away from the ordinary way of perceiving things" (Gregory, 2019).

Finally, the respondents will be individuals who can answer the research questions ethically. The respondents selected were evaluated and verified to take place in the questionnaire process. Secondly, the respondents are given confidentiality assurances before any data collection process begins. The research is majorly based on respondents above 18 years old.

Plagiarism is another major ethical issue that can take place while conducting a research study like this. It occurs in two ways: intentional and unintentional. Some of the views and opinions of the researcher might have some resemblance with the views and opinions of previous researchers. While using such views in an academic research project like the proposed one, unintentional plagiarism occurs. It is difficult to avoid such plagiarism issues. At the same time, it is possible to avoid intentional plagiarism issues. All the information taken from external sources will be cited in APA format in the proposed study to avoid issues related to intentional plagiarism.

4.10 Pilot Study

Pilot studies are conducted before actual field research studies to assess the cost, time, feasibility, and statistical variability of the developed projects. According to Sarantakos (2012), pilot studies are meant to measure research designs' efficiency and effectiveness. Through this preliminary study, undesirable features are improved for the validity of the data to be collected. Pilot studies also enable researchers to devise efficient research instruments and develop appropriate sample sizes for their research studies (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

A pilot study is aimed at providing a preview of the main study. A study relies on the efficiency and effectiveness of the research design. A pilot study is used to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the main study. Based on the research design, the sample size and research instruments need to provide a basis for validating the collected data. When the data are valid enough, the study's reliability is highly boosted. Hence, when conducting the main study, the researcher is confident that the study will provide an unbiased outlook on the research topic at hand. The primary study's success at providing an unbiased outlook of the research topic relies on the pilot study being able to improve the validity of the data by identifying and removing undesirable features (Ismail, Kinchin, & Edwards, 2018). The researcher can also validate the study's reliability, time, feasibility, and statistical variability using the preliminary study to avoid constraints when conducting the main study.

4.10.1 The Purpose and Benefits of the Pilot Study

The pilot study aims to refine the intervention and evaluate its acceptability, feasibility, reliability, and uptake. In essence, the pilot study helps to develop a basis for validating the selected sample size for both the pilot and main study. The researcher for the main study can consult with scholars around the UAE that have conducted similar studies to understand the framework that these researchers used in conducting the main study to ensure reliability. The researchers will also be able to shed light on the planning and feasibility for both the pilot and the main study that shaped the fundamental research so that the research question was thoroughly dissected and answered. The pilot study also helps in preparing for the main trial (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). It helps the researcher to approach the main trial prepared for any

limitations that might arise when conducting the proposed study. When the procedures for the main trial are laid out, they can be evaluated for feasibility using the pilot study.

The sample and research design of the pilot study should mirror the same for the main study. The pilot study will have at least 25 respondents from the main study population being used. The researcher's capacity to maintain the defined requirements to ensure independence between the pilot study and the main study is required to validate the pilot study. One of the benefits of the pilot study is that it serves as a testbed for the main study, determining whether the proposed or outlined procedures would be beneficial (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). As a result, the quality and validity of the procedures used in the pilot study will mirror the main study's projected conclusions. There will also be tactical aspects to aid in devising methods that do not appear to perform efficiently or generate the intended results, as the final study expects.

4.10.2 Objectives of the Pilot Study

The objectives of the pilot study include:

1. To evaluate the feasibility of study procedures established for the main study. The pilot study is used to validate if the study procedures based on the research design are feasible enough to be used in the main study. The preliminary study is usually considered a testing tool to validate various aspects that directly or indirectly affect the main study.
2. To ensure the high reliability of the main study. The main study's reliability can be assessed using the pilot study. If the pilot study is reliable, scaling it through the main

study can guarantee reliability. When the pilot study fails the reliability test, the main study cannot be conducted, and the research needs to go back to the drawing board and figure out whether to change the research design and strategy to improve the validity of the questionnaire items (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020).

3. To validate the efficiency and effectiveness of the research design for the main study. The research design needs to be efficient and effective enough to achieve the objectives of the main study.

4.10.3 Identifying and Choosing Pilot Study Participants

The participants for the pilot study were chosen based on gender, age, education, nationality, and years of experience. These aspects are most common when classifying the available participants for the study. Based on the research study, these aspects play a crucial role in achieving the overall study objectives since they influence leadership. The primary purpose of a pilot trial is not to prove the treatment's superiority but to evaluate the trial methods and procedures and estimate the parameters for calculating the primary sample size (Hallingberg et al., 2018). The sample size formulae used in main treatment estimates are not used in pilot trials. The rule of thumb is an excellent strategy for determining sample size. The guideline stipulates that each treatment must have at least 30 subjects, 12 subjects, or 70 subjects. Using the rule of thumb helps validate the participants in the pilot study to ensure an optimal fit.

4.10.4 Planning

The pilot study provides the required outlook of how the main study will be conducted based on the established study procedures and protocols. The research instrument to be used in the pilot study is a questionnaire. Based on efficiency differences, questionnaires are more viable than interviews. Interviews are more viable for sponsored research where the study has no financial constraints and can use the research instruments that provide the optimal outcome in terms of providing qualitative data that would have responded to the research questions and objectives directly using open-ended questions that encourage explications from the respondents. In this case, the pilot study planning phase revealed the impracticality of using interviews as data collection instruments since the financial and time constraints are significant for the researcher. Specifically, identifying 25 interview candidates for the pilot study proved so difficult that the complexity of undertaking a similar challenge in the main study appeared inherently overwhelming due to cost and time requirements since it would have involved recruiting at least 100 participants. Contrastingly, issuing online survey questionnaires provided several critical benefits and opportunities for guiding the development of the explanatory research design applied in the main study along with the data collection instruments and analysis techniques that would be proficient in collecting and analysing the relevant data for results/findings that would respond sufficiently to the research questions and objectives.

During the planning phase of the pilot study, the use of open-ended questionnaires in the questions as an attempt to exploit the benefits they provide in interviews was deemed inappropriate and potentially detrimental to recruiting participants and ensuring their

participation. Specifically, open-ended questions allow participants to explicate responses provided in questionnaires through written responses akin to extended responses to questions asked in interviews (Cleave, 2023). However, unlike in interviews, open-ended questions in questionnaires require significant additional space to allow participants to explain their responses exhaustively (Cleave, 2023). Despite the additional space, there is no guarantee that the material provided would yield data significant towards responding to research questions and objectives under investigation in a study (Cleave, 2023). Hence, the pilot study helped prevent this outcome by prioritizing the use of closed-ended questions in the online survey questionnaire issued.

The questionnaire used for the survey will be composed of 36 closed-ended questions where the responses will be based on the Likert scale. The questionnaire will also feature multiple-choice questions. The close-ended questions will encourage participation in the survey as the participants feel less burdened filling out questionnaire forms.

The multiple-choice questions also reduce the burden of filling out open-ended questions. These provisions will ensure a high response rate to solidify the pilot study. The plan is to roll out the questionnaire to at least 25 respondents for the pilot study and collect the responses. Then, the decision will be made on whether to modify the questionnaire based on the responses received. The modification will be based on a scale: slightly modified, averagely modified, or completely modified. The researcher will also decide which responses will be eliminated from the final draft responses for the pilot study. Ensuring enough validity of the responses collected for the pilot study is crucial, especially for responses paired with the responses from the main study (Penman, Robinson, & Cross, 2019). Hence, modifying the

responses will help offset any bias on the data collected and ensure that the main study will have reliable responses.

4.10.5 Data Collection, Duration, and Analysis

The duration for data collection needs to be adequate to ensure that enough responses are collected to achieve an above-average response rate. The limited effectiveness of qualitative data in determining the relationships between the variables investigated undermined its serious consideration (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Instead, the research clearly required statistical analysis to quantify the relationships specifically to determine their respective and contrasting relationship between the three leadership styles and employee agility. In this case, the researcher determined that data collection needed to facilitate data that could be quantified and analyzed using statistical methods and software (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Since the most efficient approach would entail developing an instrument capable of collecting the data needed, the researcher decided to use a questionnaire survey. However, the prospect of undertaking a study with such a high number of participants required careful execution hence the need for a pilot study. It revealed challenges for the study involving larger sample populations.

The pilot study has been allocated one month to collect responses for the questionnaire survey. This period will be enough to roll out the survey and collect the responses. The responses will be stored in sheets awaiting the data analysis process. The researcher will focus on preparing tools to analyse the data during this period. The tools need to be prepared to ensure that the pipeline where the data will be transferred does not affect the validity of the

data. The analysis will be conducted for 10 days. The data analysis process will include cleaning and transforming the data to meaningful insight through deduction.

4.10.6 Data Analysis

The pilot study was conducted before the main study to improve the validity and reliability of the proposed study further. According to Smith et al. (2015), a pre-study is usually conducted to develop various aspects of the trial procedures or to collect data to facilitate the planning and conduct the trial, whereas a pilot study refers to the tests of the full trial procedures on a small sample. The purpose of the pre-study is to refine the intervention and evaluate its acceptability, feasibility, cost, and uptake. It helps researchers to calculate or confirm the sample size required for the pilot study and main trial (Leach et al., 2011).

Although pre-study does not require much planning, the pilot study requires planning even if it involves relatively brief testing of the intervention (Smith et al., 2015). The purpose of a pilot study is to prepare everything needed for the main trial. A pilot study is usually conducted on a small scale, with the help of all the main study procedures. The study design of the pilot study should be like that of the main study and its samples should be from the actual population selected for the main study (Vallely et al., 2007). As mentioned earlier, the pilot study collected data from more than 25 respondents.

The sample size for the pilot study will be in a range between 10 and 40 because such ranges are recommended for this kind of research (Hertzog, 2008), and that for the main study will be between 100 and 1,000. The rationale behind this number for the sample size is that various kinds of sectors and industries are considered to collect the information (education,

hospitals, banks, telecommunications, airlines, and automobiles, etc.). If the number of members in a population increases and the sample size decreases, the margin of error will be increased. At the same time, it is difficult to increase the sample size beyond certain limits because of administrative and cost-related issues. The pilot study sample size of 24 to 50 is justifiable because of the preliminary nature of the study (Hertzog, 2008). Pilot studies are used to evaluate the feasibility of the study design, and procedures used and to be used in the main study (Tseng & Sim, 2021). Generally, scholars select a sample size between 100 and 1,000 depending on their ability to meet the cost and administrative issues, whereby this range is a reasonable number because it ensures that a balance is met between practical feasibility and the statistical requirements (Lakens, 2022). The researcher plans to collect data at least from 350 to 400 participants. The selected sample size is within the recommended size for a main study.

The selected sample must meet the established characteristics. This will ensure adequate and relevant data collection. As viewed above, the first characteristic is the selection of the study participants, both male and female, working as employees in different sectors with years of experience in their field. The study participants must be workers within the UAE, since the study focuses on this region. These individuals or workers will be selected from different occupational sectors, including education, the healthcare industry, banks, telecommunications, airlines, automobile, construction, technology, and other business sectors. Years of experience in one industry is necessary to help analyse the leadership styles applied and their effects on the employees.

Validation of the pilot study depends on the researcher's ability to maintain the outlined standards to ensure independence between the pilot study and the main study. The pilot study acts as a preliminary for the main research to assess whether the outlined or the projected methods will be effective. Therefore, the measurement of the quality and validity of the techniques used in the pilot study will reflect the expected outcomes in the main study. There will also be tactical elements to enhance the revision of strategies that do not seem to work efficiently and produce the desired results, as expected in the final study. However, there should be the use of quantitative methods of analysing data since pilot testing is one of the ways of checking for the validity and reliability of the main study.

The respondents for the pilot study were chosen based on their suitability for the actual questionnaire. This is regarding gender, age, education, nationality, and years of experience. In a pilot trial, the primary goal is not proving the treatment's superiority but evaluating the trial processes and procedures, and to obtain the parameters' estimation for the calculation of the main sample size. Pilot trials do not use the sample size formulae used for the main treatment calculations. Hallingberg et al. (2018) state that the effective method to determine sample size is the Rule of Thumb.

A reliability examination will be conducted to evaluate the consistency of measurements, specifically focusing on the assessment of the composite reliability (Cheung et al., 2023). Validation tests, encompassing both discriminant and convergent validity evaluations, will be employed to verify the accuracy and appropriateness of the chosen research instruments (Cheung et al., 2023). Factor analysis, a crucial element of the outer model or measurement model, will be used for the exploration of latent variables and their

interrelations (Taherdoost et al., 2022). Following this, hypothesis testing utilising SEM (structural equation modelling) will be executed, involving the scrutiny of path coefficients to validate the proposed relationships. Furthermore, a check for multicollinearity will be conducted by examining VIF values to ensure independence among variables, and the R-square value will be computed to assess the overall validity of the model (Sundus et al., 2022). These comprehensive testing procedures are designed to strengthen the methodological foundation of the pilot study, contributing to the refinement of strategies, and ensuring their efficacy in the subsequent main study.

Primarily, four reasons underscored the preference for quantitative data over qualitative data: generalizability, objective data, quick and accurate analysis, as well as precise causal explanations between variables (Cleave, 2023). Generally, generalizability through quantitative analysis is more replicable in follow-up studies involving the variables than through qualitative data (Cleave, 2023). In this case, the need for generalizable results rested primarily in helping distinguish the differences in relationships between the leadership styles and employee agility where each featured distinct benefits from a qualitative perspective such as higher employee autonomy under laissez-faire leadership compared to transformational leadership. On the other hand, objective data is more valuable in scientific research when compared to subjective data (collected via qualitative approaches) because of its replicability in other studies thus enhancing/guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the results (Cleave, 2023). In this case, objective data was the most effective way to identify clear distinctions in respondent perceptions regarding leadership styles as they related to employee agility through the questions in the survey questionnaire.

In terms of quick and accurate analysis, quantitative data involves statistical analysis using mathematical formulas rather than extended review of the implied or subjective meanings people provide via subjective data in qualitative analysis (Cleave, 2023). Fortunately, several programs have been developed to help conduct quantitative data analysis thus enhancing the quickness and accuracy of the results generated. In this case, the SmartPLS was the program the researcher relied on. It helped quantify the data collect using Likert scores in the survey questionnaires before arranging it and applying distinct formulas that helped provide the results presented in the data analysis section. Lastly, quantitative data highlights precise causal explanations that outline the relationship between the variables involved. As mentioned, qualitative data would have generated less accurate data due to subjective data and inferences. In the end, the questionnaire data was analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), R-square, and reliability with the help of the SmartPLS.

4.11 Summary

This chapter provided detailed information on the methodology and procedures that were applied in the process of conducting the research. The research was proposed to provide detailed findings on the impact of leadership styles on improving employee agility in the region of the UAE. This quantitative study associated the specific strategic ideas so that it explored the lived experiences of the leaders and employees in an organisation.

The researcher in this study is seeking to address the impact of different leadership styles on employee agility through employees' incentives as mediations, and different

leadership styles' impact on employees' agility through the effect of incentives like compensation, recognition, and rewards. The research question aligned with the problem statement, as it is not known how leadership styles impact improving employee agility. Consequently, the applied quantitative approach is best associated with the researcher's intent to explore and understand how to influence the improvement of employee agility.

Moreover, the research questions are aligned with the existing components (literature- and theory-guided) of the study. The time horizon that will be applied to complete the research is cross-sectional study involving studying at a particular time (Saunders et al., 2015). The research is mainly conducted for academic purposes, and therefore due to the time constraint the research focuses on the incidence of the phenomenon, which is the leadership skills in an organisation, and how it affects the employee agility and how the employee adaption to the changes within an organisation is affected by the leadership styles. Besides, the study is based on a questionnaire conducted within a brief period of time. The research majorly concentrates on the specific phenomenon and locality. The generalisability, in this case, will be expected to align with the previous research.

The questionnaire is the primary data source. The researcher-maintained adherence to ethical standards while conducting this study. The Belmont Report (Phoebe Friesen, Lisa Kearns, Barbara Redman, & Arthur Caplan, 2017; Anabo, I. F., Elexpuru-Albizuri, I., & Villardón-Gallego, L., 2019) asserts that any researcher conducting research involving human beings should ensure ethical principles with justice, beneficence, and respect. All the collected data will be kept confidential, maintaining the respondents' privacy and anonymity. The main

delimitations that are expected from the empirical study process include its limitation to the leaders and employees of a specific region.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, the analysis of the data is presented. The analysis is conducted to achieve the research objectives of the study. It is important to note that before the main test, a preliminary test is conducted to confirm the reliability and validity of all the items and measurement scales included in the study.

This chapter includes the results of the following assessments. Firstly, the results of the pilot test are included, which were conducted through SmartPLS (partial least squares) with fifty respondents (N=50). The core objective of conducting the pilot test was to ensure that all the measurement scales and items of the study were valid and reliable, as per the standard evaluation criteria. Secondly, the results of the main test were conducted through the structural equation modelling technique of SmartPLS (partial least squares) for a total of 384 respondents (N=384). Initially, a total of 392 questionnaires were received from the respondents. While validating the questionnaires, the researcher realised that eight questionnaires were having similar responses to one another. After dropping those eight questionnaires, a total of 384 completed questionnaires were included in the study.

It is important to note that analyses of SmartPLS consist of two individual stages. In stage one, the measurement model of the study is evaluated, while the structural model of the study is analysed in the second stage. Details of the assessments of both the measurement and structural model of the study are provided in this chapter.

5.1.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

In this study, a total of 384 completed questionnaires were included and evaluated for the main study. The demographic profile of the respondents of the study includes five categories, namely age, gender, education, nationality, and years of experience. Information related to the work experience of the respondents is important in this study since years of experience is included as a moderating variable. Table 4 below combines the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 4

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20–29 years	84	22%
	30–39 years	223	58%
	40–49 years	69	18%
	50–59 years	8	2%
Gender	Male	230	60%
	Female	154	40%
Nationality	UAE citizen (Emirati)	127	33%
	Expatriate resident	257	67%
Education	Secondary school	1	0%
	Diploma	61	16%
	Bachelor's	169	44%
	Master's	119	31%

Work Experience	PhD	15	4%
	Prefer not to say	19	5%
	0-3 years	111	29%
	4-7 years	150	39%
	8 years & above	123	32%

Note. Self-developed for the study.

The highest number of respondents in this study were aged between 30–39 years. People between 20–29 years were the second highest, followed by the age group of 40–49 years, and then 50–59 years. Percentagewise, this ratio is 58%, 22%, 18%, and 2%, respectively.

In this study, a total of 230 respondents were male while 154 respondents were female, showing respective percentages of 60% and 40%. Out of 384, a total of 127 respondents (33%) were UAE citizens, generally known as Emiratis, while 257 respondents (67%) of the study were expatriates of various nationalities living in the UAE. Table 4 also shows that 169 respondents of this study held a bachelor's degree, making the highest percentage of 44%, while master's degree holders were the second highest at 31% with 119 respondents. A total of 61 respondents had college diplomas, while 15 of them were PhD graduates. A total of 19 respondents did not opt to disclose their educational qualifications, while 1 of them had a secondary school certificate.

Furthermore, a total of 150 respondents had work experience between 4 to 7 years, making the highest percentage of 39%, while 123 respondents (32%) had work experience of more than 8 years, and 29% of the respondents had work experience of up to 3 years.

Importantly, respondents of this study had diverse backgrounds in terms of age, gender, nationality, education and years of experience. This is because the UAE is a land of diversity, and it is important to include respondents of various background. This helps to include a broader range of responses/viewpoints that can be generalized in an overall perspective. Among the five demographic factors (age, gender, nationality, education and years of experience) included in the study, only years of experience is analyzed as moderating variable to explore its moderating role between leadership styles and employee agility while the other four demographic factors are included in the data analyses of the study.

5.1.2 Results of the Pilot Test

Before the main study is conducted, a pilot test of the study was conducted through 50 respondents. Through the pilot test, the validity of the items and measurement scales was confirmed. The next section discusses the details of the pilot test of the study.

5.1.3 Pilot Test of the Measurement Scales

The core objective of the pilot test was to ensure the internal consistency of all measurement scales included in the study before the researcher proceeded with the main test of the study. This study has five measurement scales, namely, transformational leadership (TFL), transactional leadership (TSL), laissez-faire leadership (LFL), employee incentives

(EI), and employee agility (EA). Each measurement scale has eight items, except laissez-faire leadership which has four items. In this way, a total of 36 items are assessed through five measurement scales.

Using SmartPLS analysis of the measurement model, the reliability of each measurement scale is measured through Cronbach's alpha. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 and above is considered significant (Hair et al., 2016). However, according to Cho and Kim (2015), the acceptable range of Cronbach's alpha also depends on the nature of the study and there is no single rule of thumb that fits all. Garson (2016) believes that a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.60 and above is considered *good* for studies of consumer research, but most scholars consider the value of 0.70 and above as *good*. A detailed chart on acceptable values of Cronbach's alpha was suggested by George and Mallery (2003), which is provided below in Table 5.

Table 5

Range of Cronbach's Alpha

Sr.	Range of Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
1	Less than 0.50	Unacceptable
2	0.50-0.60	Poor
3	0.60-0.70	Acceptable
4	0.70-0.80	Good
5	0.80- 0.90	Very good
6	Above 0.90	Excellent

Note. George & Mallery, 2003

Through SmartPLS, the Cronbach's alpha values of all the five measurement scales were evaluated and the results of the evaluation were combined in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Cronbach's Alpha of the Measurement Scales in the Pilot Test

Sr.	Scale Name	Items	Total (N)	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Transformational Leadership (TFL)	8	50	0.91
2	Transactional Leadership (TSL)	8	50	0.89
3	Laissez-Faire Leadership (LFL)	4	50	0.83
4	Employee Incentives (EI)	8	50	0.86
5	Employee Agility (EA)	8	50	0.90

Note. Source: Own survey results.

As seen in Table 6, all the five measurement scales of the study have a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.80 and above, which fall within the category of *very good* and *excellent* as per the standard evaluation criteria of George and Mallery (2003). Among all the five scales, the highest value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.91 for the transformational leadership (TFL) scale while the scale of laissez-faire (LFL) leadership had the lowest value of 0.83. The remaining scales of transactional leadership (TSL), employee incentives, and employee agility have Cronbach's alpha values of 0.89, 0.86, and 0.90, respectively. The results confirm that all the measurement scales included in the study are valid and reliable. Now, the next step is to ensure the item-wise reliability and validity of each item included in the scale, which is discussed in the following section.

5.1.4 Item-Wise Pilot Test of the Transformational Leadership Scale

The pilot test for the transformational leadership (TFL) scale was conducted to ensure the reliability of all the eight items included in the study. The TFL scale was adopted from Afsar et al. (2016) and it was used to analyse the impact of transformational leadership on employee agility. Among the eight items, the maximum value of outer loading was 0.91 for the second item of the scale, “My leader explains the importance of a strong sense of purpose”, while the minimum value was 0.80 for the third question, “My leader convinces me to go beyond self-interest for the betterment of the group”. The rest of all the six items of the scale had outer loading values of more than 0.80.

Table 7

Item-Wise Outer Loading Values of the TFL Scale in the Pilot Test

Sr.	Transformational Leadership	Outer Loading
1	My leader communicates a compelling vision of the future.	0.89
2	My leader explains the importance of a strong sense of purpose.	0.91
3	My leader convinces me to go beyond self-interest for the betterment of the group.	0.80
4	My leader considers the moral and ethical consequences of the decisions.	0.89
5	My leader displays a strong sense of power and confidence.	0.85
6	My leader coaches, teaches, and trains others to develop their strengths.	0.89
7	My leader collects different opinions from others to get a better way	0.90

	of solving problems.	
8	My leader believes that every individual has different needs, abilities, and aspirations.	0.86

Note. Source: (Afsar et al., 2016)

5.1.5 Item-Wise Pilot Test of the Transactional Leadership Scale

The measurement scale of transactional leadership (TSL) is adopted from Afsar et al. (2016) and used to measure the direct impact of TSL on employee agility. This scale consists of eight items, and the individual value of outer loading for each item is given in the below table. The highest value of outer loading was 0.89 for the seventh item, “My leader doesn’t bother me if I do not bother him”, while the least value is 0.76 for the third item, “My leader pays special attention to the breaking of rules, and deviation of set standards”. All the other six items had an outer loading value of more than 0.75.

Table 8

Item-Wise Outer Loading Values of the TSL Scale in the Pilot Test

Sr.	Transactional Leadership	Outer Loading
1	My leader helps in exchange for my efforts.	0.77
2	My leader clearly formulates expectations and shows satisfaction if expectations are met.	0.80
3	My leader pays special attention to the breaking of rules and deviation of set standards.	0.76

4	My leader only reacts to problems if it is absolutely necessary.	0.81
5	My leader is a firm believer of <i>if it is not broken, don't fix it</i> .	0.81
6	As long as work meets the minimal standards, my leader avoids making improvements.	0.80
7	My leader doesn't bother me if I do not bother him.	0.89
8	Things have to go wrong for my leader to act.	0.87

5.1.6 Item-Wise Pilot Test of the Laissez-Faire Leadership Scale

The next scale included in the study is the laissez-faire leadership (LFL) scale, which is used to measure the impact of laissez-faire leadership on employee agility. This scale was adopted from Mwenje and Mwenje (2016) and consists of four items. As given in Table 9, all the items of the scale are reliable, where the fourth item of the scale has the highest outer loading value of 0.87, while the third item has the lowest value of 0.77. The remaining two items have outer loading values of 0.81 and 0.85, respectively.

Table 9

Item-Wise Outer Loading Values of the LFL Scale in the Pilot Test

Sr.	Laissez-Faire Leadership	Outer Loading
1	The formulation of decisions in the organisation is completely delegated to subordinates.	0.81
2	The implementation of decisions in the organisation is completely delegated to subordinates.	0.85

3	Leadership allows employees to determine their own organisational objectives.	0.77
4	Employees are allowed to make decisions about their job because they know more.	0.87

5.1.7 Item-Wise Pilot Test of the Employee Incentives Scale

In this study, the scale of employee incentives (EI) was used as a mediator to assess its mediating role for the direct relationships of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. This scale was adopted from Al-Enezi et al. (2007) and included eight items. Item five of the scale, “I am compensated for working extra hours and during holidays”, had the highest outer loading value of 0.92, while item two of the scale, “I often get an opportunity to interact with top management”, had the lowest value of 0.77. The other six items also had an outer loading value of more than 0.80.

Table 10

Item-Wise Outer Loading Values of the EI Scale in the Pilot Test

Sr.	Employee Incentives	Outer Loading
1	I get opportunities for career development.	0.88
2	I often get an opportunity to interact with top management.	0.77
3	My leader rewards me if I complete my tasks with responsibility.	0.87
4	My leader involves me in decision-making processes.	0.91
5	I am compensated for working extra hours and during holidays.	0.92

6	My work provides me with an opportunity to interact with industry professionals.	0.88
7	I get recognition of my work from the peers and seniors.	0.89
8	I get compensated for any loss, injury, or suffering.	0.90

5.1.8 Item-Wise Pilot Test of the Employee Agility Scale

The last measurement scale of the study in employee agility (EA) is adopted from Pitaf et al. (2020) and includes eight items. EA is the dependent variable of the study, and the item-wise values of the outer loading for all eight items are summarised in Table 11. Item 7 of the scale, “I can work well in a demanding schedule or workload”, had the highest outer loading value among all the items (0.91), while item 4 of the scale, “I can communicate well with people from different backgrounds”, had the lowest value of 0.74. Besides this, the other six items had an outer loading value of more than 0.75.

Table 11

Item-Wise Outer Loading Values of the EA Scale in the Pilot Test

Sr.	Employee Agility	Outer Loading
1	At work, I adjust to new workplace procedures.	0.88
2	I use new equipment at work.	0.90
3	I can quickly adapt when switching from one project to another.	0.89
4	I can communicate well with people from different backgrounds.	0.74
5	I am reluctant to accommodate and incorporate changes in my work.	0.83

6	I remain calm and composed when faced with difficult circumstances.	0.79
7	I can work well in a demanding schedule or workload.	0.91
8	When a different situation occurs, I react by trying to manage the problem.	0.83

Using SmartPLS, the researcher has now completed the preliminary test. The results of the analysis have confirmed that all the items and measurement scales of the study are valid and reliable in the pilot test. The next step includes details of the main test, where several assessments were conducted to evaluate the main data of the study for 384 respondents (N=384). Before the main test is conducted, it is important to discuss both the models of the study, i.e., the conceptual and the hypothesised models.

5.1.9 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study was given in Figure 1, in which transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership are independent variables, employee incentives is the mediating variable, years of experience is the moderating variable, and employee agility is the dependent variable. The theoretical foundation and the underpinning theory of the study are provided in Chapter 2 through the literature review.

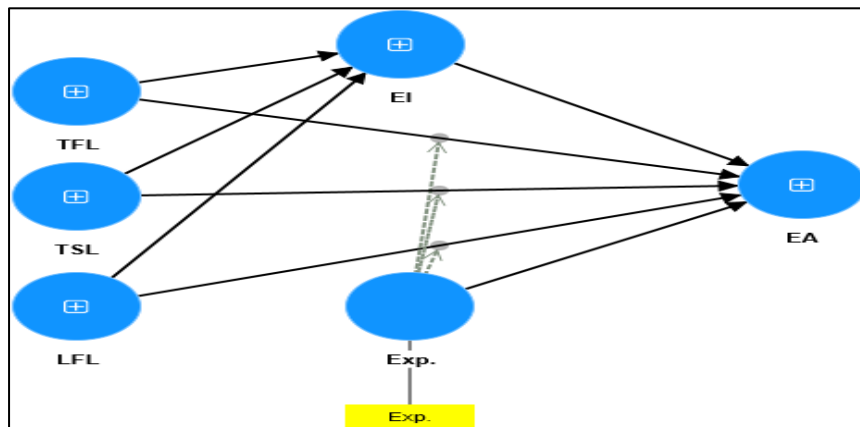
5.1.10 Hypothesised Model

The hypothesised model of the study created through SmartPLS (partial least squares) is given in Figure 3 below. This study includes a total of six variables. Transformational

leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership are included as exogenous variables; employee incentives are the mediating variable; years of experience is the moderating variable; and employee agility is the endogenous variable. In SmartPLS, the research model of a study is evaluated through two individual stages. The first stage includes the evaluation of the measurement model, which is also known as the outer model, while the second stage includes the evaluation of the structural model, which is also called the inner model of the study (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). According to Rifai and Hassan (2016), the relationships between the variables of a study and their indicators are evaluated in the measurement model, while the relationships among all the variables of a study are assessed in the structural model. At first, the researcher evaluated the measurement model, and then the structural model of the study.

Figure 3

Hypothesised Model of the Study



Note. TFL=transformational leadership, TSL=transactional leadership, LFL=laissez-faire leadership, EI=employee incentives, Exp.= years of experience, EA=employee agility. Source: Output of SmartPLS.

5.1.11 Evaluation of the Measurement Model

There are different methods to assess the validity and reliability of all the indicators and scales in the measurement model. Through this process, the researcher can understand how the theory of a study fits its data (Latan & Ramli, 2013).

In SmartPLS, the evaluation of the measurement model (also called the outlet model) involves the testing of relationships between the variables and their indicators. Hair et al. (2017) have suggested three core assessments to evaluate the overall measurement model of the study. This includes internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Internal consistency is measured through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, while convergent validity is assessed through indicator reliability and average variance extracted. Similarly, the discriminant validity of the measurement model is measured through cross-loading.

5.1.12 Internal Consistency

The first step for the evaluation of the measurement model is internal consistency, which is measured through Cronbach's alpha (a traditional approach) and composite reliability.

5.1.12.1 Cronbach's Alpha. Using SmartPLS, the internal consistency for all five measurement scales of the study was assessed through the Cronbach's alpha values. Generally, scholars have suggested that the Cronbach's alpha value should be more than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Scale-wise Cronbach's alpha values are combined in Table 12 below. All five scales of this study showed a value of more than 0.80, which confirms their internal consistency as per the standard evaluation criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2014).

Table 12

Cronbach's Alpha of the Measurement Scales

Sr.	Scale Name	Total (N)	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Transformational Leadership	384	0.94
2	Transactional Leadership	384	0.94
3	Laissez-Faire Leadership	384	0.81
4	Employee Incentives	384	0.94
5	Employee Agility	384	0.91

Note. Own analysis results.

5.1.12.2 Composite Reliability. The next assessment of internal consistency is composite reliability. It is important to note that composite reliability is different from Cronbach's alpha. This is because Cronbach's alpha is a traditional approach to measuring internal consistency. Generally, Cronbach's alpha assumes that all indicators of a scale are equally reliable, which underestimates the internal consistency of measurement scales. Therefore, the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique

prefers composite reliability over Cronbach's alpha due to its realistic approach of not assuming that all the indicators of a scale are equally reliable (Hair et al., 2014). Notably, the range of composite reliability values is between 0 to 1, and a higher value means more reliability. The generally accepted criterion for the value of composite reliability is 0.70 and above. Moreover, it is suggested that any indicator with a composite reliability value of less than 0.60 should be removed as it negatively impacts the scale as a whole and decreases its overall reliability (Garson, 2016).

Table 13 below provides the value of composite reliability for all five measurement scales. All scales of the study showed composite reliability values of 0.80 and above, which is in line with the standard evaluation criterion of composite reliability, as suggested by Garson (2016).

Table 13

Composite Reliability of the Measurement Scales

Sr.	Scale Name	Total (N)	Composite Reliability
1	Transformational Leadership	384	0.95
2	Transactional Leadership	384	0.94
3	Laissez-Faire Leadership	384	0.81
4	Employee Incentives	384	0.94
5	Employee Agility	384	0.92

Note. Own survey results.

5.1.12.3 Convergent Validity. The second step to evaluate the measurement model of the study is convergent validity, which is measured through two individual assessments, namely, indicator reliability and average variance extracted. Gefen and Straub (2005) suggest that convergent validity demonstrates the loading strength of scale items (indicators) on the intended scale of the study. Also, it is critical to note that convergent validity and internal consistency are two different things. This is because the core focus of convergent validity is on the scales of the measurement model, while internal consistency focuses on the items of a scale (Straub et al., 2004). Firstly, the author evaluated the indicator reliability and then measured the average variance extracted (AVE).

5.1.12.4 Indicator Reliability. This study has a total of 36 indicators (items) which are used to evaluate the five measurement scales of the study. To check the reliability of all items, the factor loading was assessed using SmartPLS. Standard evaluation criteria of indicator reliability are suggested by Hair et al. (2014), where a value of 0.70 and above is considered as significant. It is important to note that scholars have suggested the removal of any indicator that has a factor loading value of less than 0.50 (Garson, 2016; Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The item-wise loadings of all 36 indicators are provided in Table 14. All the items have loading values of 0.70 and above, which confirms the validity of all the items of the study as per standard evaluation criteria.

Table 14

Factor Loadings of All Indicators of the Study

Scale Name	Items	Outer Loadings
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	TFL1	0.89
	TFL2	0.73
	TFL3	0.90
	TFL4	0.73
Transformational Leadership	TFL5	0.89
	TFL6	0.75
	TFL7	0.89
	TFL8	0.86
	TSL1	0.82
	TSL2	0.85
	TSL3	0.87
	TSL4	0.79
Transactional Leadership	TSL5	0.80
	TSL6	0.82
	TSL7	0.88
	TSL8	0.87
	LFL1	0.74
	LFL2	0.82
Laissez-Faire Leadership	LFL3	0.84
	LFL4	0.79
	EI1	0.80
	EI2	0.85
Employee Incentives	EI3	0.84
	EI4	0.86
	EI5	0.87

Employee Agility	EI6	0.86
	EI7	0.85
	EI8	0.83
	EA1	0.78
	EA2	0.79
	EA3	0.79
	EA4	0.77
	EA5	0.80
	EA6	0.79
	EA7	0.75
	EA8	0.74

Note. Own survey results. Transformational Leadership (TFL), Transactional Leadership (TSL), Laissez-Faire Leadership (LFL), Employee Incentives (EI), Employee Agility (EA)

5.1.13 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The second assessment of convergent validity is the average variance extracted (AVE). In SmartPLS, the average variance extracted is measured for each scale of the measurement model, and the rule of thumb for AVE is that its value should be more than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). It is important to note that a value of more than 0.50 shows that more than 50% of the indicators' variance is explained by the construct (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Hair et al., 2016).

The following table includes the AVE of all the five scales of the study, and each scale has an AVE value of more than 0.50. The scale of employee incentives has the highest AVE

value of 0.72, while the employee agility scale has the least value of 0.60. This confirms the convergent validity of all scales included in the study.

Table 15

AVE Value of the Measurement Scales

Sr.	Scale Name	Total (N)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
1	Transformational Leadership	384	0.69
2	Transactional Leadership	384	0.70
3	Laissez-Faire Leadership	384	0.64
4	Employee Incentives	384	0.72
5	Employee Agility	384	0.60

Note. Own survey results.

5.1.14 Discriminant Validity

In the evaluation of the measurement model, the last assessment is discriminant validity, and it shows that each scale is different from other scales of the measurement model. In other words, discriminant validity shows that each scale is unique from the other scales in terms of its indicator loadings (Hair et al., 2014). A commonly used method to assess discriminant validity is cross-loadings, which is measured through the loading of each indicator of a scale. According to Lee et al. (2011), the cross-loading value for each item of a scale should be more than 0.70. As a rule of thumb, the indicators of a scale should strongly load on its associated scale and weakly on other scales (Gefen & Straub, 2005). For example,

all eight items of the transformational leadership (TFL) scale should load strongly on the TFL scale, but the same items should load weakly on all other scales. Thus, the value of outer loading on the TFL scale should meet the standard evaluation criteria (more than 0.70) as suggested by Lee et al. (2011), while the loading on non-associated scales (TSL, LFL, EI, & EA) should be less than 0.70. Next, Table 16 provides cross-loadings of all the scales of the measurement model, where each value is more than 0.70. Besides this, all the indicators load strongly on intended scales and weakly on unintended scales. The results of SmartPLS confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model of the study.

Table 16

Cross-Loadings of the Measurement Scales

Items	TFL	TSL	LFL	EI	EA
TFL1	0.89	0.22	0.01	0.13	0.18
TFL2	0.73	0.35	0.06	0.11	0.11
TFL3	0.90	0.23	0.01	0.11	0.15
TFL4	0.73	0.33	0.07	0.13	0.12
TFL5	0.89	0.24	0.01	0.14	0.18
TFL6	0.75	0.33	0.05	0.12	0.11
TFL7	0.89	0.22	0.03	0.09	0.12
TFL8	0.86	0.24	0.04	0.09	0.11
TSL1	0.29	0.82	0.15	0.20	0.12
TSL2	0.26	0.85	0.13	0.17	0.10
TSL3	0.24	0.87	0.12	0.14	0.08

TSL4	0.22	0.79	0.12	0.19	0.13
TSL5	0.35	0.80	0.10	0.18	0.16
TSL6	0.25	0.82	0.19	0.17	0.08
TSL7	0.25	0.88	0.16	0.16	0.10
TSL8	0.25	0.87	0.15	0.13	0.10
LFL1	0.04	0.16	0.74	0.20	0.22
LFL2	0.02	0.15	0.82	0.22	0.15
LFL3	0.03	0.14	0.84	0.23	0.16
LFL4	0.03	0.09	0.79	0.21	0.19
EI1	0.15	0.20	0.24	0.80	0.47
EI2	0.16	0.18	0.20	0.85	0.45
EI3	0.11	0.17	0.25	0.84	0.41
EI4	0.12	0.21	0.20	0.86	0.46
EI5	0.09	0.16	0.24	0.87	0.43
EI6	0.10	0.14	0.26	0.86	0.32
EI7	0.09	0.15	0.23	0.85	0.25
EI8	0.13	0.18	0.19	0.83	0.36
EA1	0.16	0.03	0.12	0.40	0.78
EA2	0.14	0.06	0.15	0.35	0.79
EA3	0.12	0.02	0.12	0.31	0.79
EA4	0.09	0.14	0.22	0.41	0.77
EA5	0.10	0.17	0.24	0.43	0.80
EA6	0.19	0.17	0.15	0.49	0.79
EA7	0.13	0.14	0.22	0.42	0.75
EA8	0.14	0.03	0.12	0.41	0.74

Note. TFL=transformational leadership, TSL=transactional leadership, LFL=laissez-faire leadership, EI=employee incentives, EA=employee agility. Source: Own survey results.

As per the standard evaluation criteria of Hair et al. (2017), the three core assessments of the measurement model of the study are now completed. Firstly, the internal consistency of the measurement model is evaluated through the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Secondly, convergent validity is assessed through the indicator reliability and average variance extracted. Lastly, the discriminant validity is evaluated through the cross-loading of the indicators. Consolidated results for all the assessments of the measurement model are provided in Table 17. These results confirm that the measurement model of the study is valid and reliable. Now, the final step of SmartPLS analyses is to evaluate the structural model of the study, which will explain the nature of the relationship among the various variables included.

Table 17

Consolidated Results for the Validity and Reliability of the Measurement Model

Scale	Items	Outer Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE	Discriminant Validity	Remarks
TFL	TFL1	0.89	0.95	0.69	Yes	Eight items of TFL are validated.
	TFL2	0.73				
	TFL3	0.90				
	TFL4	0.73				
	TFL5	0.89				
	TFL6	0.75				
	TFL7	0.89				

	TFL8	0.86				
	TSL1	0.82				
	TSL2	0.85				
	TSL3	0.87				
TSL	TSL4	0.79	0.94	0.70	Yes	Eight items of TSL are validated.
	TSL5	0.80				
	TSL6	0.82				
	TSL7	0.88				
	TSL8	0.87				
	LFL1	0.74				
LFL	LFL2	0.82	0.81	0.64	Yes	Four items of LFL are validated.
	LFL3	0.84				
	LFL4	0.79				
	EI1	0.80				
	EI2	0.85				
	EI3	0.84				
EI	EI4	0.86	0.94	0.72	Yes	Eight items of EI are validated.
	EI5	0.87				
	EI6	0.86				
	EI7	0.85				
	EI8	0.83				
	EA1	0.78				
EA	EA2	0.79	0.92	0.60	Yes	Eight items of EA are validated.
	EA3	0.79				
	EA4	0.77				

EA5	0.80
EA6	0.79
EA7	0.75
EA8	0.74

Note. TFL=transformational leadership, TSL=transactional leadership, LFL=laissez-faire leadership, EI=employee incentives, EA=employee agility. Source: Self-developed for the study.

5.1.15 Structural Model Analysis

The last step of SmartPLS analysis is the evaluation of the structural model, which is also known as the inner model of the study. According to Rifai and Hassan (2016), the core objective of the structural model evaluation is to examine the relationship of all the variables included in the structure model of the study (including exogenous, endogenous, moderating, and mediating). Primarily, three core assessments are included in structural model evaluation, i.e., collinearity assessment conducted through the variance inflation factor (VIF); the significance of path coefficient, generally known as beta; and R-square, commonly known as the coefficient of determination (Hair et al., 216). Details of each assessment are provided in the next section.

5.1.16 Collinearity Assessment

Collinearity assessment is the first step of the structural model evaluation. Assessing the collinearity among the variables of a structural model is very important since it is a double

regression from indicator to construct (Latan & Ramli, 2013). The collinearity test simplifies the understanding of data, and it is primarily used to understand how the different variables of the study are correlated and associated with each other. If the variables of a study are closely associated with each other, then the issue of multicollinearity arises; therefore, scholars have recommended assessing collinearity issues among the various variables of a study (Kothari, 2004).

In SmartPLS, the assessment of collinearity is done through the variance inflation factor (VIF), since VIF indicates the level of collinearity (Hair et al., 2014) and it is also known as the reciprocal of tolerance (Latan & Ramli, 2013). Ghazali and Latan (2005), Hensler *et al.* (2009), and Hair et al. (2016) suggest that the value of the variance inflation factor should be less than 5.

Table 18

Collinearity Assessment of the Structural Model

Sr.	Exogenous Variable	Endogenous Variable	VIF Value
1	Transformational Leadership	Employee Agility	1.14
2	Transactional Leadership	Employee Agility	1.19
3	Laissez-Faire Leadership	Employee Agility	1.14

Note. Own survey results.

The structural model of this study has three exogenous variables, namely, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, and one

endogenous variable, i.e., employee agility. The results of the collinearity assessment of all three exogenous variables are combined in Table 18. The variance inflation factor value of transformational leadership is 1.14 of transactional leadership is 1.19, and of laissez-faire leadership is 1.14. All the values are significant (less than 5), as per the standard evaluation criteria of the VIF value.

5.1.17 Significance of Path Coefficients

The next step of the structural model evaluation is the assessment of path coefficients along with the p-value and t-statistics. In SmartPLS, the assessment of path coefficients is done through the bootstrapping method (Hair et al., 2016). According to Garson (2016), path coefficients represent the hypothesised relationships of different variables of a structural model, and they are beta coefficients of ordinary least squares. The range of path coefficient values is between 0 to 1, and a value close to 1 describes a strong relationship while a value close to 0 demonstrates a weak relationship among the variables (Garson, 2016). Cohen (1988) suggests that path coefficient values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are considered small, medium, and large, respectively. It is important to note that along with the value of the path coefficient (also known as the beta value), the author needed to know the p-value and t-statistics to confirm the nature of the relationships among the variables. According to Rifai and Hassan (2016), and Hair et al. (2016), the value of the t-statistics should be more than 1.96, while the p-value should be less than 0.05.

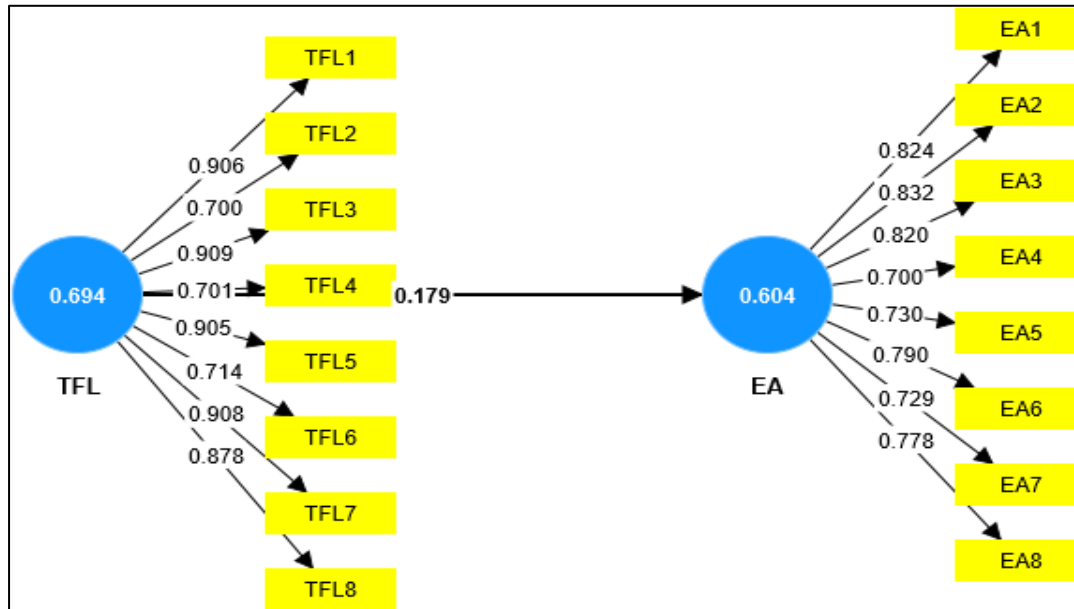
By using the bootstrapping method, a total of nine relationships were evaluated for this study which included three direct, three mediating, and three moderating relationships. The

direct relationships examine the direct relationship of transformational leadership (TFL), transactional leadership (TSL), and laissez-faire leadership (LFL) with employee agility (EA). The mediating relationships evaluate the mediating role of employee incentives (EI) for the relationships of transformational leadership (TFL), transactional leadership (TSL), and laissez-faire leadership (LFL) with employee agility (EA). The moderating relationships assess years of experience (YOE) as a moderator between the relationships of transformational leadership (TFL), transactional leadership (TSL), and laissez-faire leadership (LFL) with employee agility (EI). In the next section, the author examined each of these relationships individually.

5.1.18 Direct Relationship Between TFL and EA

The first direct relationship of the structural model examines the impact of transformational leadership on employee agility. The output of SmartPLS shown in Figure 4 describes the nature of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.

The value of the path coefficient is 0.18, which is significant as per the standard evaluation criteria of Cohen (1988). Similarly, the value of the t-statistics is 2.14, while the p-value is 0.03, and both values are significant as per the standard evaluation criteria of Rifai and Hassan (2016). Based on these results, it can be concluded that transformational leadership has a direct impact on employee agility.

Figure 4*Structural Model of TFL and EA*

Note. Output of SmartPLS.

5.1.19 Direct Relationship of TSL with EA

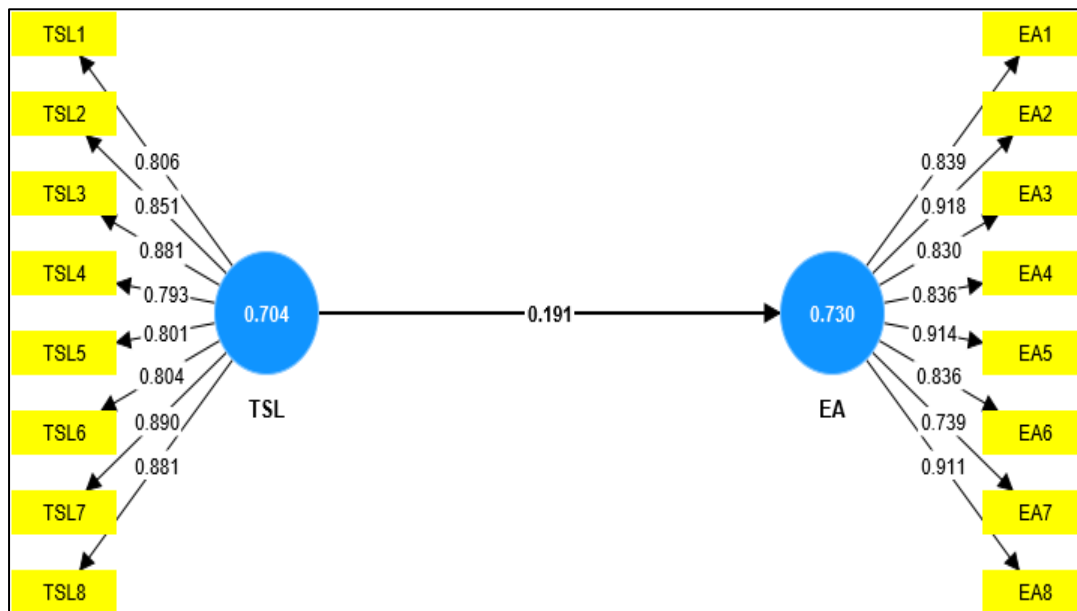
The second relationship of the structural model is the direct relationship of transactional leadership with employee agility. Through the bootstrapping method of SmartPLS, the results of the relationship testing are given in Figure 5 below.

As per the results, the path coefficient value for the direct relationship of TSL with EA is 0.05, which is not significant, as suggested by Cohen (1988). Similarly, the value of the t-statistics is 1.52, while the p-value is 0.13. Both of these values are insignificant, as they should be more than 1.96 and less than 0.05, respectively, as per the criteria of Hair et al.

(2016). This result suggests that transactional leadership (TSL) does not have a direct impact on employee agility (EA).

Figure 5

Structural Model of TSL and EA



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

5.1.20 Direct Relationship of LFL with EA

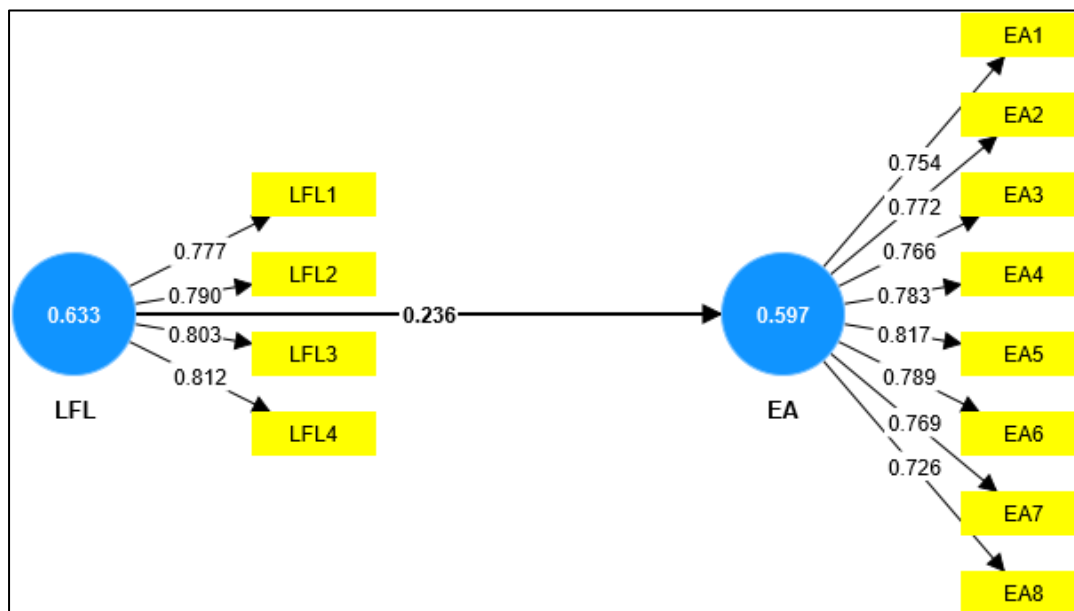
The last direct relationship of the structural model of this study is the relationship of laissez-faire leadership with employee agility.

The results of the analysis show that the value of the path coefficient for the direct relationship of LFL with EA is 0.04, which is insignificant as it does not meet the standard evaluation criteria of path coefficient significance suggested by Cohen (1988). Also, the

values of the t-statistics and p-value are 1.16 and 0.25, respectively. Both the foregoing values are insignificant as they do not meet the standard criteria of Hair et al. (2016) and Rifai and Hassan (2016). Based on above findings, it can be concluded that laissez-faire leadership has no direct impact on employee agility.

Figure 6

Structural Model of LFL and EA



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

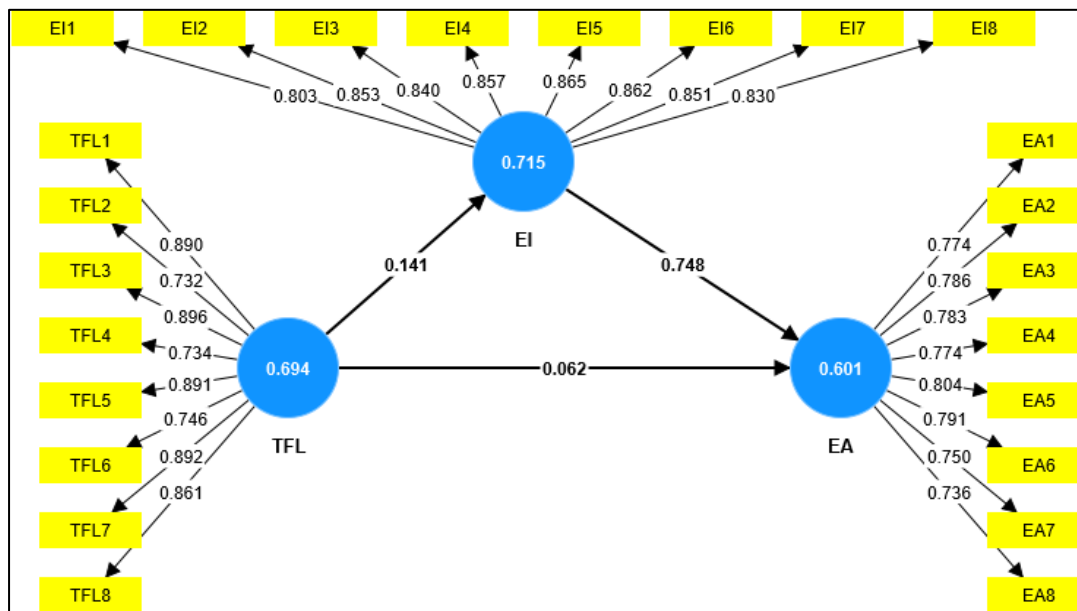
After the evaluation of the direct relationships, the next step is to evaluate the relationships of the mediating roles. A detailed evaluation of each concept is provided in the next section.

5.1.21 The Mediating Role of EI Between TFL and EA

The first mediating relationship evaluates the mediating role of employee incentives between transformational leadership and employee agility. Figure 7 below shows the assessment results of SmartPLS using the bootstrapping method.

Figure 7

Structural Model of TFL and EA With EI as a Mediator



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

The results of the analysis show that the path coefficient value for the mediating role of employee incentives between transformational leadership and employee agility is 0.75. Besides this, the values of the t-statistics and p-value are 1.78 and 0.07. All three values mentioned above are not significant as they do not meet the standard evaluation criteria of

Cohen (1988) and Rifai and Hassan (2016). Based on these results, it can be concluded that employee incentives do not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.

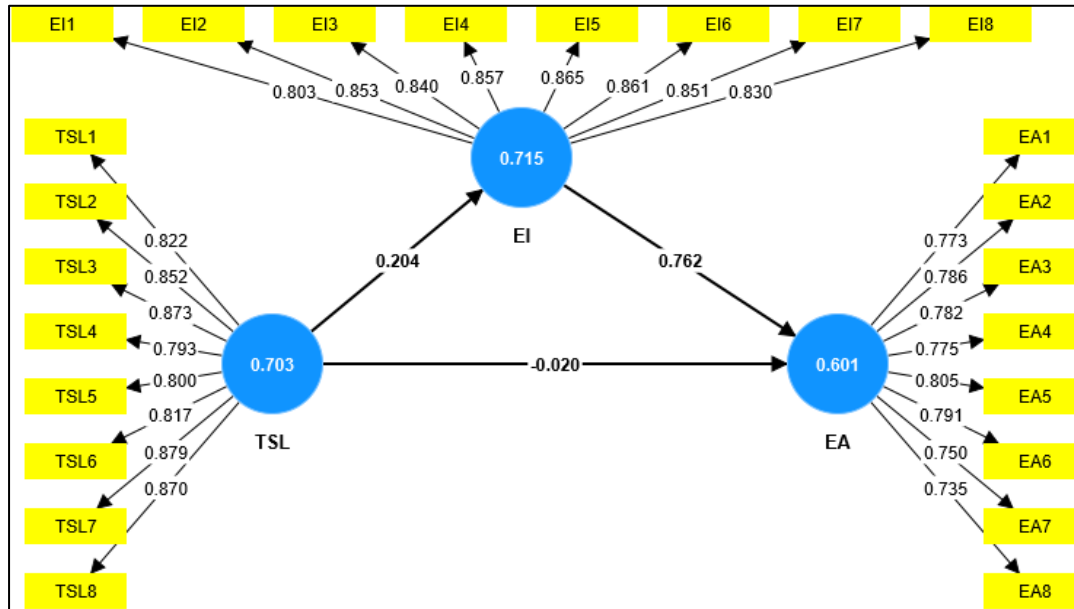
5.1.22 The Mediating Role of EI Between TSL and EA

The next assessment of the structural model of this study examines the mediating role of employee incentives for the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.

As shown in Figure 8, the value of the path coefficient for the mediating role of employee incentives between transactional leadership and employee agility is 0.31, which is significant, as suggested by Cohen (1988). Moreover, both the values of the t-statistics and p-value are significant at 2.74 and 0.00, respectively, as they meet the standard evaluation criteria of Hair et al. (2016). Based on the above results, it is evident that employee incentives mediate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.

Figure 8

Structural Model of TSL and EA With EI as a Mediator



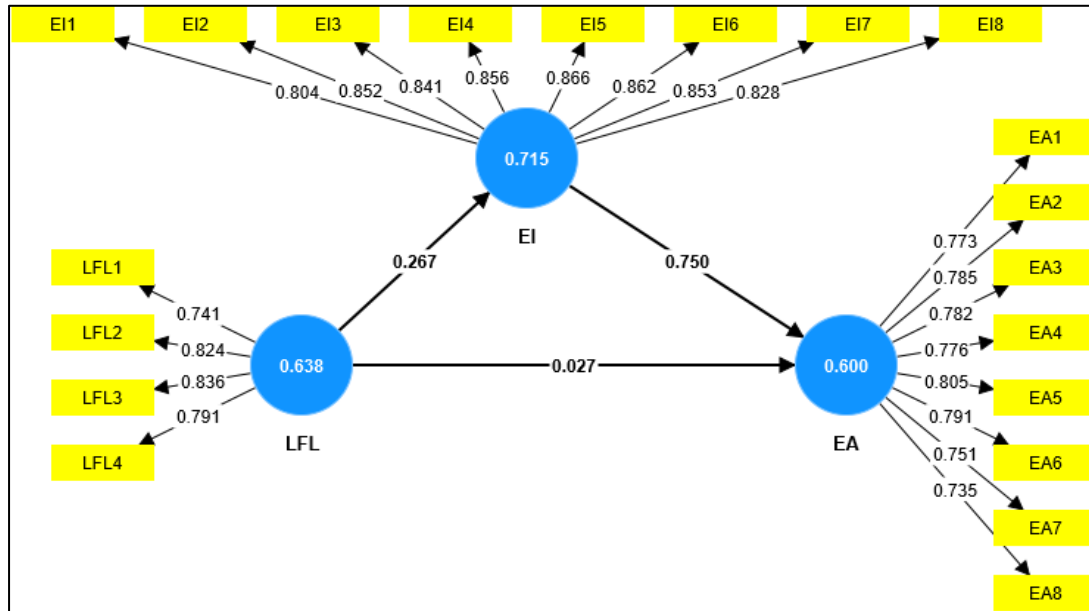
Note. Output of SmartPLS.

5.1.23 The Mediating Role of EI Between LFL and EA

The last relationship of the mediating role investigates employee incentives as a mediator for the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility. The output of SmartPLS for the previously mentioned relationship is given in Figure 9. The value of the path coefficient for this relationship is 0.28, and it is significant as per the standard evaluation criteria of path coefficient significance (Rifai & Hassan, 2016). Moreover, the value of the t-statistics is 4.50, while the p-value is 0.00, and both are significant as suggested by Hair et al. (2016). This result shows that employee incentives mediated the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.

Figure 9

Structural Model of LFL and EA With EI as a Mediator



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

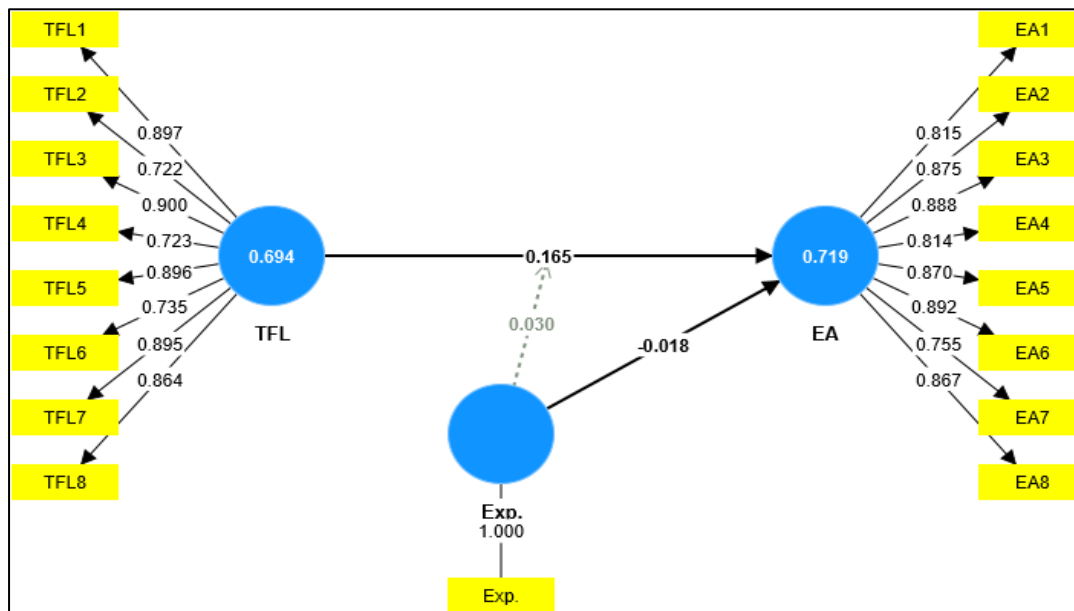
5.1.24 The Moderating Role of YOE Between TFL and EA

The first moderating relationship of this study investigates the moderating role of years of experience between transformational leadership and employee agility. Using the bootstrapping method of SmartPLS, the aforesaid relationship was assessed, and the output of the result is depicted in Figure 10 below. As per the results, the value of the path coefficient for the moderating role of years of experience between transformational leadership and employee agility is 0.00, while the value of the t-statistics and p-value are 0.04 and 0.97, respectively. Importantly, none of the above values is significant, as per the criteria of Cohen

(1988) and Rifai and Hassan (2016). These results confirm years of experience as a non-significant moderator for the relationship of transformational leadership with employee agility.

Figure 10

Structural Model of TFL and EA With YOE as a Moderator



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

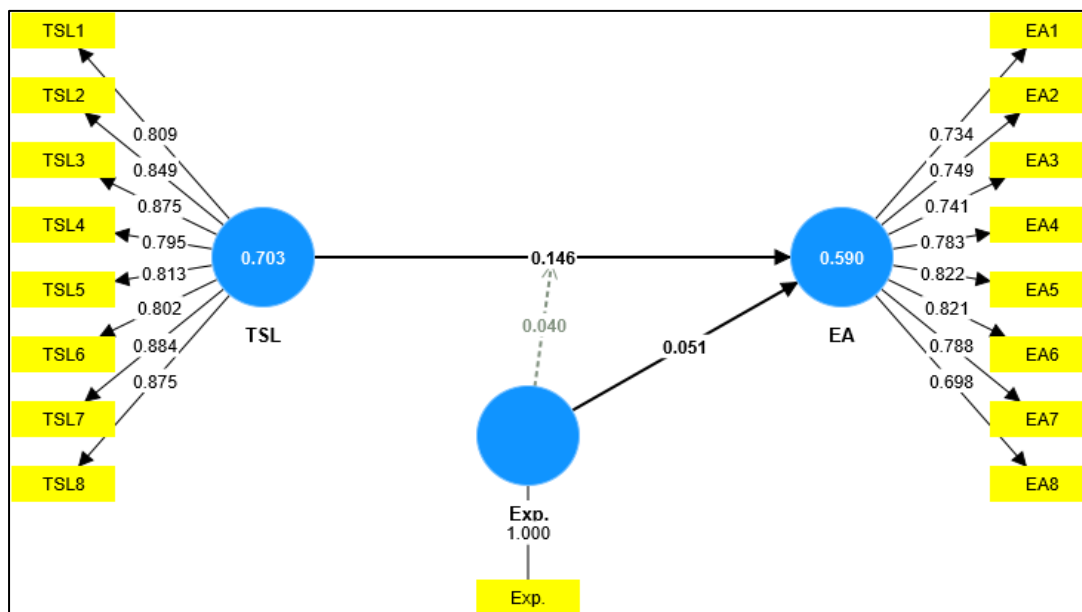
5.1.25 The Moderating Role of YOE Between TSL and EA

The next relationship of the structural model evaluates years of experience as a moderator between the relations of transactional leadership and employee agility. As per the results of the analysis (Figure 11), years of experience is a non-significant moderator as the value of path coefficient significance is 0.01, which does not meet the standard evaluation criteria of Cohen (1988). Similar is the case with the value of the t-statistics and p-value, as

they both are insignificant, being 0.36 and 0.72, respectively, as per the criteria given by Hair et al. (2016). Thus, the evidence shows that years of experience does not moderate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.

Figure 11

Structural Model of TSL and EA With YOE as a Moderator



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

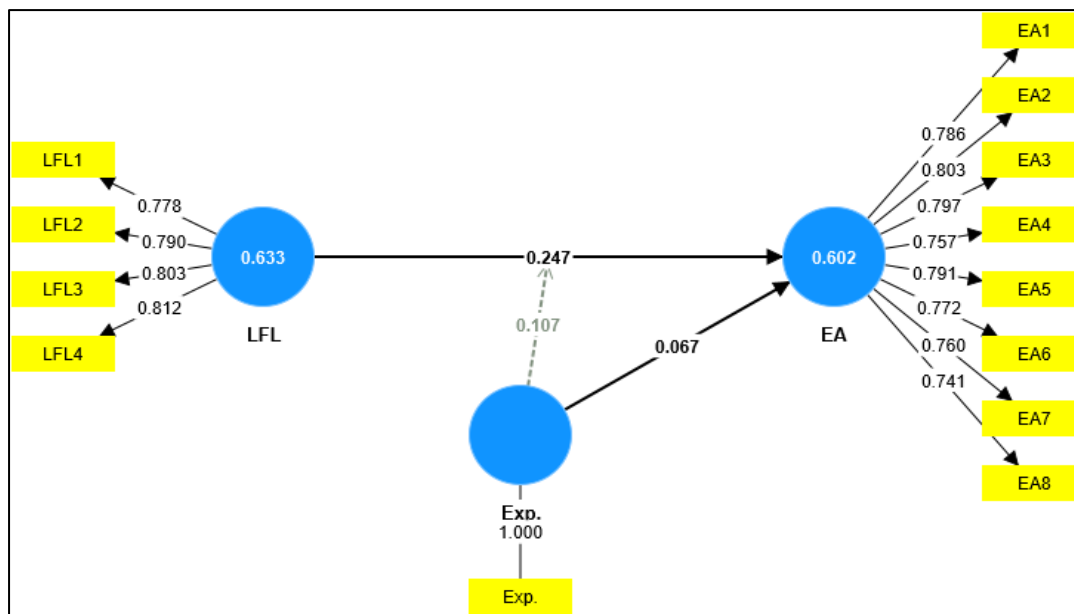
5.1.26 The Moderating Role of YOE Between LFL and EA

The final assessment of the structure model examines the moderating role of employee incentives between the relationship of laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. The output of SmartPLS for the foregoing relationship is provided in Figure 12. As per the results of the analysis, the path coefficient value for the moderating relationship of years of

experience with laissez-faire leadership is 0.05, which does not meet the standard evaluation criteria suggested by Cohen (1988). Similarly, the value of the t-statistics is 1.37, which is insignificant, and the p-value is 0.17, being non-significant, as suggested by Rifai and Hasan (2016) and Hair et al. (2016). These findings confirm that the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility is not moderated by years of experience.

Figure 12

Structural Model of LFL and EA With YOY as a Moderator



Note. Output of SmartPLS.

Now, all the nine relationships of the structural model which include three direct relationships, three mediating relationships, and three moderating relationships, are evaluated. The consolidated results of the structural model evaluation are provided in Table 19 below.

Table 19*Consolidated Results of the Structural Model Evaluation*

Path	Type	(β)	t-Statistics	p-Value	Remarks
TFL→EA	Direct	0.18	2.14	0.03	Supported
TSL→EA	Direct	0.05	1.52	0.13	Not supported
LFL→EA	Direct	0.04	1.16	0.25	Not supported
EI*TFL→EA	Mediating	0.75	1.78	0.07	Not supported
EI*TSL→EA	Mediating	0.28	2.74	0.00	Supported
EI*LFL→EA	Mediating	0.31	4.59	0.00	Supported
YOE*TFL→EA	Moderating	0.00	0.04	0.97	Not supported
YOE*TSL→EA	Moderating	0.01	0.36	0.72	Not supported
YOE*LFL→EA	Moderating	0.05	1.37	0.17	Not supported

Note. TFL=transformational leadership, TSL=transactional leadership, LFL=laissez-faire leadership, EI=employee incentives, YOE=years of experience, EA=employee agility. Source: Self-developed for the study.

5.1.27 The Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The last assessment of the structural model evaluation is the coefficient of determination (R^2), and this is commonly used to evaluate the overall structural model of the study (Hair et al., 2016). Generally, the R-square shows the combined effect of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables, and it is calculated as the squared correlation between the actual and predicted values of the endogenous variable (Hair et al., 2014). According to

Hensler et al. (2009) and Rifai and Hassan (2016), the range of R-square value is between 0 to 1, where an R-square value of less than 0.25 is considered weak, between 0.25 to 0.50 as moderate, and more than 0.50 as high. Notably, the acceptance criteria for the value of R-square can differ based on the research discipline, the nature of the study, and the complexity of the research model. For example, studies of consumer behaviour consider an R-square value of 0.20 as high (Hair et al., 2016). In this study, the value of R-square for the endogenous variable, i.e., employee agility, is 0.574. This outcome shows that transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership explain 57.40% of the variance of the endogenous variable (employee agility). Thus, the R-square value for employee agility is significant according to the standard evaluation criteria of Hensler et al. (2009), Rifai and Hassan (2016), and Hair et al. (2016).

Using the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique of SmartPLS, the researcher has now completed the analyses of the study. This includes the evaluation of both the measurement model and the structural model. Based on these results, the researcher evaluated all the nine hypotheses of the study, the detail of which is given in the next section.

5.2 Hypotheses Testing

To achieve the research objectives, this study has included a total of nine hypotheses that aim to measure the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships. The first three hypotheses were used to measure the direct impact of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership on employee agility. The next three hypotheses were used to examine the mediating role of employee incentives for the

relationship of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. The last three hypotheses were used to investigate the moderating role of years of experience in the relationship of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. The details of each hypothesis test are provided in the next section.

5.2.1 The Hypotheses of the Direct Relationships

In this study, a total of three hypotheses are used to examine the direct relationships. The first hypothesis is “Transformational leadership has an impact on employee agility”. As per the results of the analysis, this hypothesis is accepted. This means that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with employee agility in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This outcome is in line with the previous studies by Huang et al. (2023) and Cehbon et al. (2019). In addition, Ahammad et al. (2020) and Khan et al. (2020) stated in their respective studies that the performance of employees has a positive relationship with transformational leadership. In other words, employees feel more comfort and easiness while collaborating with transformational leaders since these leaders can understand the problems of employees properly.

The second hypothesis of the study, “Transactional leadership has an impact on employee agility”, is used to measure the direct relationship of transactional leadership with employee agility. Considering the results of the analysis, this hypothesis is not supported. This means that transactional leadership does not have a significant relationship with employee agility in the UAE. This finding is consistent with earlier studies of Yaseen et al. (2018) and

Sharon Clarke (2013). Similarly, the effectiveness of transactional leadership in facilitating the development of new skills and fostering innovativeness was questioned by Alavi et al. (2021), supported by the observation that its impact on idea generation in the UAE was statistically insignificant.

The last hypothesis of direct relationship is “Laissez-faire leadership has an impact on employee agility”. The results of the analysis confirm that this hypothesis is not supported, and this result is the same as the outcome of previous studies conducted by Skogstad et al. (2014). Besides this, the study of Thanh and Quang (2022) in Vietnam also concluded that laissez-faire leadership has a negative impact on employee engagement, and a similar outcome was also derived from the study of Zhang et al. (2023). Despite the potential for autonomy in fostering creativity and rapid decision-making, the effectiveness of laissez-faire leadership hinges on individual skills, motivation, and self-discipline, introducing the possibility of role confusion and performance declines, as noted by Thanh and Quang (2022). Hence, the evidence confirmed that laissez-faire leadership does not have a significant impact on employee agility in the UAE.

In summary, based on the foregoing discussion, the result shows that one hypothesis of direct relationship is supported, while the other two hypotheses are not supported.

5.2.2 The Hypotheses of the Mediating Relationships

This study had three hypotheses of mediating relationships where *employee incentives* is used as a mediating variable to explore their mediating impact. The first hypothesis of the mediating relationships is, “Employee incentives mediate the relationship between

transformational leadership and employee agility”. Based on the results of the SmartPLS analysis, this hypothesis is not supported. This means that employee incentives do not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility. This non-significant mediating role of employee incentives is consistent with the earlier studies of Sihotang (2021), and Rachman, Sugijanto, and Samsyah (2020). Furthermore, Lee and Hidayat (2018), and Handoyo, Hamid, and Iqbal (2015) also mentioned in their studies that employee incentives do not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.

The second hypothesis of the study, “Employee incentives mediate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility”, is used to examine the mediating role of employee incentives between transactional leadership and employee agility. The results of the analysis confirm that the hypothesis is supported, and this outcome is the same as the outcome of previous studies by Jensen et al. (2019) and Nielsen et al. (2018). Therefore, employee incentive is a significant mediator of the above relationships, and it has a positive impact on employee agility.

The third hypothesis of mediating relationships is “Employee incentives mediate the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility”. Based on the outcome of the analysis, the result shows that employee incentives are a significant mediator for the relationship of laissez-faire leadership with employee agility, and they have a positive impact on employee agility. Previous studies by Hinkin and Schriesheim (2008), Fiaz, Su, and Ikram (2017), and Wong and Giessner (2015) reported similar findings.

5.2.3 The Hypotheses of the Moderating Relationships

The last three hypotheses of this study were used to examine the moderating role of years of experience. The first hypothesis, “Years of experience moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility”, examines years of experience as a moderating variable. The results of the analysis confirm that the hypothesis is not supported, and years of experience is a non-significant moderator for the relationship of transformational leadership with employee agility. This outcome is in line with previous studies by Riaz, Ramzan, and Akram (2012), and Abbas and Ali (2021).

The next hypothesis, “Years of experience moderates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility”, investigates years of experience as a moderating variable. Given the results, this hypothesis is also not supported. This confirms that years of experience is not a significant moderator, and it does not moderate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility. Previous studies by Abbas and Ali (2021) and Syaharudin et al. (2022) had also concluded a non-significant moderating role of years of experience. Similar results were reported by Fernandes and Awamleh (2004) in their study as well.

The last hypothesis of the study, “Years of experience moderates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility”, is used to examine the moderating role of years of experience. Like the above two results, this hypothesis is also non-supported. This finding is in line with the previous studies by Lundmark, Richter, and Tafvelin (2022), and

Breevaart and Zacher (2019). Thus, the author confirms that years of experience does not moderate the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.

In summary, the evidence showed that none of the three hypotheses of moderating relationships are supported, suggesting the non-significant moderating role of years of experience.

5.3 Summary

This chapter includes the details of analyses that were conducted for the pilot test and the main test of the study. Initially, a pilot test was conducted through SmartPLS to ensure the reliability and validity of all the items and scales included in the study. After that, the main test of the study was also conducted using the structural equation modelling technique of SmartPLS. The main test was conducted in two stages. The first stage included the evaluation of the measurement model, while the second stage included the evaluation of the structural model of the study. The individual output of SmartPLS for each relationship testing is included in the analyses and thoroughly explained to interpret the results of the study. Based on the results of the analyses, all the hypotheses of the study are concluded and a total of three hypotheses were supported while six hypotheses of the study were not supported. The supported hypotheses included one hypothesis of a direct relationship and two hypotheses of moderating relationships. Meanwhile, the non-supported hypotheses included two hypotheses of direct relationships, one hypothesis of a mediating relationship, and three hypotheses of moderating relationships. The overall results of the hypothesis testing are summarised in Table 20 below.

Table 20*Summary of the Hypotheses Testing*

No.	Hypotheses	Findings
H1	Transformational leadership has an impact on employee agility.	Supported
H2	Transactional leadership has an impact on employee agility.	Not supported
H3	Laissez-faire leadership has an impact on employee agility.	Not supported
H4	Employee incentives mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.	Not supported
H5	Employee incentives mediate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.	Supported
H6	Employee incentives mediate the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.	Supported
H7	Years of experience moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.	Not supported
H8	Years of experience moderates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility.	Not supported
H9	Years of experience moderates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.	Not supported

Note. Source: Self-developed for the study.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study is to examine the direct impact of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership on employee agility within the UAE context. Besides this, the study also investigates the mediating role of employee incentives for the relationships of these leadership styles with employee agility. Lastly, the moderating effect of years of experience is examined for the relationship between transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, and employee agility. Contingency theory is the underpinning theory of this study, and it is widely used to investigate the impact of various leadership styles within an organisation.

This chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, the achievements of the research objectives of this study are discussed. The second part of the chapter concludes the study and provides some recommendations and highlights the main contributions of the present study. Finally, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are provided in the third part of the chapter.

6.2 Achievement of the Research Objectives

To achieve the research objectives of the study, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership are examined as independent variables, employee incentives as a mediating variable, and years of experience as a moderating variable. The direct relationships pertain to three leadership styles and employee agility, while the

mediating and moderating relationships pertain to employee incentives and years of experience, respectively. Details of each relationship are provided in the next section.

6.2.1 The Direct Relationships of Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership with Employee Agility

The first objective of this study was to examine the direct impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership on employee agility. To achieve this objective of the study, all three leadership styles included in the study were assessed individually in terms of their direct impact on employee agility. H1, H2, and H3 of the study were developed to achieve the first research objective of the study.

The first hypothesis of the study (H1) was used to examine the impact of transformational leadership on employee agility. Based on the results of the SmartPLS analysis, it is concluded that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on employee agility in the UAE. Similarly, the direct impact of transactional leadership on employee agility was explored through H2 of the study. Considering the results of the analysis, it is concluded that transactional leadership has no direct impact on employee agility in the UAE. The third direct impact of this study was evaluated through H3 of the study to evaluate the direct impact of laissez-faire leadership on employee agility. Analysis of the bootstrapping method of SmartPLS confirmed that laissez-faire leadership has no direct impact on employee agility in the UAE.

In view of the above results, it can be concluded that organisations of various domains operating in the UAE can have better employee agility if their management adopts a

transformational leadership style. This is because transformational leadership includes all those key elements that motivate employees to do better in their roles, which will ultimately contribute to the growth and development of any organisation. Moreover, the study shows that employees prefer this leadership style to all the incentives that they receive from their organisations. This means that transformational leadership can be instrumental in achieving the organisational objectives.

6.2.2 The Mediating Role of Employee Incentives

The second objective of this study was to examine the mediating role of employee incentives for the relationship between three leadership styles (transformational, transactional, & laissez-faire) with employee agility. To achieve this objective, three hypotheses of mediating relationships, namely H4, H5, and H6, were formulated and assessed individually.

Firstly, the mediating role of employee incentives was evaluated between transformational leadership and employee agility. Through the results of the analysis, the author concluded that employee incentives do not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee agility.

Secondly, the mediating role of employee incentives was examined for the relationship of transactional leadership with employee agility. The results of the analysis confirm that employee incentives mediate the relationship of transactional leadership with employee agility.

Lastly, employee incentives were evaluated in terms of its mediating role in the relationship of laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. Analyses of SmartPLS confirm that employee incentives mediate the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.

It is important to note that H4 of the study is not supported, which means that employee incentives do not mediate the relationship of transformational leadership with employee agility. Thus, it is concluded that monetary reward is not the only factor that influences employee agility, and employees are also motivated by the leadership style that is practised by their organisation. This is because a better leadership style provides a superior work environment that is instrumental for the mental wellbeing of employees. Employees need peace of mind, learning, and growth opportunities, besides financial reward.

On the other hand, H5 and H6 of the study conclude that employee incentives play a critical role in employee agility. This is because the relationships of two leadership styles, namely, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership, are fully mediated by employee incentives. This means that the employees of any organisation prefer incentives in any form as they have a direct impact on employee agility. Traditionally, monetary and non-monetary, both types of employee rewards, have been a potential source of motivation for the employees of various organisations at different levels, and a similar result was also derived from this study. Thus, organisations should pay more attention to facilitating their employees through various types of incentives to have better employee agility.

6.2.3 The Moderating Role of Years of Experience

The third objective of the study is to examine the moderating role of years of experience in the relationships of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. The last three hypotheses of the study (H7, H8, & H9) were formulated and assessed individually to achieve this objective of the study.

H7 of the study was used to examine the moderating role of years of experience for the relationship of transformational leadership with employee agility, and the results of the analysis confirmed that years of experience does not moderate the above relationship. Similarly, H8 of the study was used to investigate the moderating role of years of experience between the relationship of transactional leadership and employee agility. Considering the results of the data analysis, it is concluded that years of experience does not moderate the relationship between transactional leadership and employee agility. Lastly, H9 of the study was used to establish if years of experience moderates the relationship of laissez-faire leadership with employee agility. Similar to H7 and H8, the analytical evidence showed that years of experience is a non-significant moderator for the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee agility.

Based on the above findings, it was concluded that years of experience do not moderate the relationship of all three key leadership styles (transformational, transactional and Laissez-Faire) with employee agility in the UAE. This means that employees in the UAE do not change their preference towards the leadership style over the years. For example, if an employee likes the transformational leadership style in the initial years of his job, he will

always like the same style of leadership. It is unlikely that after a few years of experience, his preference will switch to another leadership style which is entirely different from the transformational leadership style.

This finding provides an important insight for organizations that provide leadership development trainings to their employees for their growth and development. Such trainings are crucial to enhance the skills and knowledge of employees since growth and development of any organization are closely linked with the competencies of its employees. These findings suggest that organizations should design training programs to develop leadership skills in their employees without considering their years of experience in the organization. This is because, experienced and early career employees both have same preferences towards a leadership style and these preferences do not change by the passage of time as concluded in this study. In fact, organizations should promote elements of their preferred leadership style within their employees from the first day and by the passage of time, employees can develop these traits and perform effectively to achieve organizational objectives.

Employees should not be segregated based on their length of service with the organization while delivering training programs of leadership development. Also, the focus of any training program should be mainly on key components of a leadership style that help employees to develop themselves as leaders and do better at workplace. This will ultimately equip employees with all those tools that increase their productivity and keep improving further until they reach the level of excellence. By this way, findings of the study have guided the organizations to adopt a focused approach which is mainly aimed at leadership development instead of their individual segmentation based on their years of experience.

Lastly, the research objectives, questions, and outcome of the study are combined and presented in Table 21 below to summarise the overall findings of the study.

Table 21

Summary of the Research Questions, Objectives, and Outcomes

Research Obj.	Research Question	Outcome
RO1	RQ1: What is the impact of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee agility, and which leadership style is ideal to improve employee agility in the UAE?	Transformational leadership has an impact on employee agility, while other leadership styles do not have any impact. Transformational leadership is the ideal style to improve employee agility in the UAE.
RO2	RQ2: Does employee incentives mediate the relationships of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles with employee agility?	Employee incentive only mediates the relationships of transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles with employee agility.
RO3	RQ3: Does years of experience moderate the relationships of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles with employee agility?	Years of experience does not moderate the relationships of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles with employee agility.

Note. Self-developed for the study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The core aim of this study is to examine the impact of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership on employee agility. To achieve the objective, the researcher developed a conceptual framework that included independent, mediating, moderating, and dependent variables. These variables were identified through an extensive review of relevant literature from past studies. Finally, a total of six variables were included in the study. Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership were included as the independent variables and evaluated in terms of their impact on employee agility. Employee incentives was taken as a mediating variable to see its mediating role between the three leadership styles and employee agility. Similarly, years of experience was used as a moderating variable to see its moderating role between the three leadership styles and employee agility. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 384 respondents and evaluated through the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique of SmartPLS to examine all the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships of the study.

The findings of this study could be used to make numerous changes in the practical setting. One such way is the development of leadership in the workplace. If the role of the organisation is to improve workplace agility, then they will have an idea of the leadership style and leadership qualities that they should build among the emerging leaders. The finding could also be used in the selection process for leaders as the organisations aim to recruit the right leaders to achieve the desired outcomes. Further, the findings of the study could be used to know the kind of incentives to extend to the employees to promote agility.

On the other hand, this study added value to the underpinning theory as well, which was contingency theory. The questionnaire items were guided by the theory, as well as the literature, the research objectives, and the research questions, respectively. Hence, the study has greatly enhanced the researcher's understanding of the theory's implementation in a more precise way. Importantly, this study has combined several variables in a single study that were recommended by previous studies. Moreover, the inclusion of both the mediating and moderating variables had further increased the significance of the study because of its wider impact.

Based on the results of the analyses, it can be concluded that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on employee agility in the UAE, while transactional and laissez-faire leaderships do not. Similarly, employee incentives do not mediate the relationship of transformational leadership with employee agility; however, employee incentives mediate the relationship of transactional and laissez-faire leaderships with employee agility. Lastly, years of experience is a non-significant moderator as it does not moderate the relationships of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership with employee agility.

7.1 Recommendations to Industry and Government Bodies

The findings of this study provide significant insights that can be used by the industry practitioners of the private sector and the government bodies in the United Arab Emirates. Firstly, this study concludes that transformational leadership has a significant positive influence on employee agility. Moreover, this study has shown that employee incentives do

not mediate the relationship of transformational leadership with employee agility. This shows that employees are not always motivated through monetary reward, and even a good leadership style can positively influence their performance and productivity. Therefore, this study recommends that the organisations of government and the private sector should adopt the transformational leadership style to achieve their organisational objectives.

Secondly, it is important to understand that transformational leadership has certain attributes such as trust-building, encouraging others, promoting integrity, humility, leading by example, and coaching others, etc. If any organisation is not able to adopt a transformational leadership style, then the foresaid attributes can be promoted individually within the organisational culture to foster transformational leadership. This can greatly help organisations to put them on the path of sustainable growth and development.

7.2 Contributions of the Study

The findings of this study have several contributions, which are discussed in the following sections.

7.2.1 Contributions to the Body of Knowledge

This study examines the impact of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee agility in the UAE. Moreover, the mediating role of employee incentives and moderating role of years of experience are also investigated in this study. The direct, mediating, and moderating analysis of potential variables combined in a single study in the UAE provides insightful contributions to the body of knowledge that are provided below.

To begin with, previous studies have investigated individual leadership styles in terms of their direct impact and suggested further research on other leadership styles. To cover the gap of previous studies, this study has combined three widely practised leadership styles in a single study, which is one of the several contributions to the body of knowledge (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020, p. 14).

Secondly, most of the previous studies were conducted in terms of their direct relationship only, with exceptions for some of them that used either a mediating or moderating variable. However, this study has combined both the mediating and moderating variables to come up with a comprehensive research outcome that can contribute to both academia and industry.

The findings further reinforced Contingency Theory by highlighting that transformational leadership is effective in enhancing employee agility. This implies that leadership styles aligned with motivating and inspiring employees can adapt well to dynamic and changing organisational environments. On the other hand, the lack of support for transactional leadership suggested that the reward-based and performance-monitoring approach of transactional leadership may not be sufficient to foster agility among employees. This indicates that flexibility and innovation, which are crucial for agility, may not be nurtured through transactional leadership. Furthermore, the finding that laissez-faire leadership does not impact employee agility supports the notion that a hands-off approach fails to provide the necessary guidance and support required for agile performance. This highlights the importance of active leadership in promoting agility.

Similarly, the results suggested that while transformational leadership itself fosters agility, adding employee incentives does not enhance this effect. It implies that intrinsic motivation driven by transformational leaders is more critical than extrinsic rewards. In addition, the findings also underscore the importance of employee incentives in the context of transactional leadership. It suggested that the effectiveness of transactional leadership in promoting agility is contingent upon the presence of appropriate incentives, aligning with Contingency Theory's premise that different situations require different leadership approaches. Despite laissez-faire leadership generally being ineffective, the presence of employee incentives can compensate to foster agility, as highlighted as an outcome of this study. This further indicated that even minimal leadership intervention, when coupled with proper incentives, can enhance agility.

As for the years of experience, the findings suggested that the impact of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez faire leadership on agility does not vary with employees' years of experience. It indicated that these three leadership styles are universally ineffective across different experience levels, as years of experience does not amplify or diminish the influence of these leadership styles on agility.

These findings collectively contribute to the refinement of Contingency Theory by elucidating the differential impacts of various leadership styles on employee agility and the roles of employee incentives and years of experience. They emphasise that while transformational leadership directly enhances agility, the efficacy of transactional and laissez-faire leadership is heavily contingent on the presence of employee incentives. Additionally,

the uniform influence of these leadership styles across different experience levels underscores the importance of the leadership approach over employee tenure in fostering agility.

7.2.2 Contributions to the Industry Practitioners

The primary aim of business organisations is to maximise the productivity of their employees, as this helps them to achieve their organisational objectives. To achieve this objective, all types of organisations need to identify those factors which influence the agility of their employees. The outcome of this study has the following contributions to various organisations operating in the UAE.

Firstly, this study highlights the key elements of leadership that should be adopted and promoted within various types of organisations. This can facilitate the achievement of organisational objectives in the UAE and neighbouring nations since all the Gulf nations share similar cultural values and learn from each other's experiences. Importantly, the Gulf region is currently going through a rapid development process to achieve their long-term objectives of economic development until 2030. Over the past few years, the GCC region has witnessed a massive transformation, and this trend is expected to continue for the next ten years. Expo 2020 and FIFA World Cup 2022 are some of the key global events that were successfully hosted by this region in recent years, while Expo 2030 and FIFA World Cup 2034 are among the major events that are expected to happen within this region in the next decade. All these mega events will put this region on the global map and attract businesses from various domains. The outcome of this study can help businesses to choose a leadership style that has a

high impact to increase the overall productivity of their workforce in the UAE and GCC region.

Secondly, outcome of this study has guided industry practitioners to develop better career development and succession plans for their organizations. Generally, it is a common practice among most of the organizations that seniority of an employee is primarily considered before his promotion to next level. Here seniority means his total length of service with the organization instead of his contribution for the organization. This perception is not supported by this study as the findings of this study suggest that year of experience do not have any moderating impact between leadership styles and employee agility. This means that organizations should evaluate employees based on their actual performance and contributions rather than their length of service with the organization.

An employee with even less year of experience can do better than the employee that has more years of experience. It is all about the learning, understanding, adaptability and leadership skills of an employee that help him for career growth and spending more years on the same role does not mean that employee is competitive enough to be considered for next level. This is a realistic scenario often seen in many organizations as employee who remain on same position for many years are often trapped in comfort zone and they are not ready to come out of this zone to grow further in their career. In this way, this study has guided organizations to adopt a more realistic approach to ensure the productivity and contribution of various employees within an organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, workshops and training courses are another way of improving and polishing individual skills to be promoted to the next level and be prepared to deal with the future problems that they might face. Based on the situation,

employees might need to be more resilient, agile and pro-active to be able to deal with unforeseen dilemmas. For such purposes, human resource departments must be more vigilant to introduce and implement such rigorous practices to prepare the workforce for better employee performance, that will enhance the overall organisational impact.

7.3 Limitations

Like other studies, this study also has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings of the study. Firstly, the data of this study were collected from a single country, namely, the United Arab Emirates. The results of this study may not be generalised to other regions of the world since organisational practices generally differ geographically. Importantly, the UAE is a modern Arab state and one of the most dynamic countries in the world. Therefore, the organisational practices in the UAE may differ from many other countries, particularly in developing nations.

Secondly, questionnaire-based research studies have certain inherited limitations, and they apply to this study also. Thirdly, cross-sectional study also posed as a limitation, as the results would have been different if it was a longitudinal study. The lack of qualitative data was a major limitation of the current study. Even though a questionnaire survey was administered for the purpose of collecting primary data, it has limitations in collecting qualitative data (Partington, 2002). As mentioned earlier, most people are reluctant to answer descriptive questions while attending to surveys because of the excessive time required for answering such questions. As a result, the researcher may not include any descriptive-type questions in the proposed survey. According to Partington (2002), while qualitative data

explain concepts, quantitative data define them. On the other hand, questionnaires can provide answers to the pre-planned questions alone.

Lack of time and funds was another important limitation of this research. It was necessary to collect data from as many organisations in the UAE as possible to meet the objectives of the study. It should be noted that the UAE consists of seven emirates and plenty of organisation's function in these emirates. Therefore, a minimum one-year period was necessary for the comprehensive investigation of the role of leadership style in improving employee agility in the UAE organisations.

Employees who did not have adequate knowledge, were not familiar, or could not understand the study became a disadvantage to the study. According to Patton (2015), respondents who lack any experiences are not to be included in the study. Consequently, the knowledge on the roles and the impacts of the leadership styles within an organisation are not fully ascertained by individuals who had little-to-no background of the study. The wider view of the impact of the leadership styles among all leaders and employees was limited.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The outcome of this study has provided useful insights for further research, which are provided below. In order to gain a wider understanding of key leadership styles in different parts of the world, this study suggests further research on leadership styles with the comparative analysis of two or more countries. Such studies can enhance the overall understanding of the key leadership styles that have effectively and efficiently contributed to the growth and development of the organisations in various countries.

Secondly, this study suggests further research that is based on the feedback of C-level executives and HR leaders as it will provide an overview of leadership styles from the viewpoint of the strategic managers who influence the design and execution of leadership style that is practised in an organisation. Furthermore, other moderates could also be considered for the future studies. For instance, technological adoption, job complexity, psychological safety, and organisational culture are some of the examples that could be tested as a moderator in the context of different leadership styles and their impact on employee agility.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire



The Impact of Leadership Styles on Improving Employee Agility: The Mediating Role of Employee Incentives

Dear Respondent,

Greetings of the day!

I am a postgraduate student at the British University in Dubai and am pursuing my Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). As part of my DBA research, I am exploring the impact of leadership styles on employee agility in the UAE.

The data collection is solely for academic research and will not be used for any other purpose. There are no risks to your privacy as you will not share any personal information. Your participation is voluntary, and it will add value to my study. Please feel free to contact me on the details below if any further information is required from my side. Thank you and have a good day ahead!

Yours sincerely,

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Section 1: Demographic Factors

(Please select ONE option from each of the questions below)

1. What is your gender?☐ Male☐ Female**2. What is your age (in years)?**☐ Between 20–29☐ Between 40–49☐ Between 30–39☐ Between 50–59**3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**☐ Secondary School☐ Master's☐ Diploma☐ PhD☐ Bachelor's☐ Prefer not to say**4. What is your nationality?**☐ UAE National (Emirati)☐ Expatriate**5. What is your total work experience?**☐ 0–3 years☐ 8 years and above☐ 4–7 years

Section 2: Study Variables

(Please select ONE option against each statement as per your understanding)

1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
A. Transformational Leadership					
1. My leader communicates a compelling vision of the future.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My leader explains the importance of a strong sense of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My leader convinces me to go beyond self-interest for the betterment of the group.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My leader considers the moral and ethical consequences of the decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My leader displays a strong sense of power and confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My leader coaches, teaches, and trains others to develop their strengths.	1	2	3	4	5

7. My leader collects different opinions from others to get a better way of solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My leader believes that every individual has different needs, abilities, and aspirations.	1	2	3	4	5
B. Transactional Leadership					
1. My leader helps in exchange for my efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My leader clearly formulates expectations and shows satisfaction if expectations are met.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My leader pays special attention to the breaking of rules and deviation of set standards.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My leader only reacts to problems if it is absolutely necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My leader is a firm believer of <i>if it is not broken, don't fix it.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6. As long as work meets the minimal standards, my	1	2	3	4	5

leader avoids making improvements.					
7. My leader doesn't bother me if I do not bother him.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Things have to go wrong for my leader to act.	1	2	3	4	5
C. Laissez-Faire Leadership					
1. The formulation of decisions in the organisation is completely delegated to subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The implementation of decisions in the organisation is completely delegated to subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Leadership allows employees to determine their own organisational objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Employees are allowed to make decisions about their job because they know more.	1	2	3	4	5
D. Employee Incentives					
1. I get opportunities of career development.	1	2	3	4	5

2. I often get an opportunity to interact with top management	1	2	3	4	5
3. My leader rewards me if I complete my tasks with responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My leader involves me in decision-making processes.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am compensated for working extra hours and during holidays.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My work provides me with an opportunity to interact with industry professionals.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I get recognition of my work from the peers and seniors.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I get compensated for any loss, injury, or suffering.	1	2	3	4	5
E. Employee Agility					
1. At work, I adjust to new workplace procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I use new equipment at work.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I can quickly adapt when switching from one project to another.	1	2	3	4	5

4. I can communicate well with people from different backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am reluctant to accommodate and incorporate changes in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I remain calm and composed when faced with difficult circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I can work well in a demanding schedule or workload.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When a different situation occurs, I react by trying to manage the problem.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you!