STRATEGIC AGILITY INFLUENCING HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN THE UAE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to investigate the impact of strategic agility on human resource management (HRM) within the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Interior (MoI), with a particular focus on how agile practices enhance HR functions amid bureaucratic and operational challenges

Research Method: This study aims to investigate the impact of strategic agility on human resource management (HRM) within the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Interior (MoI), with a particular focus on how agile practices enhance HR functions amid bureaucratic and operational challenges

Findings: The results show that strategic agility significantly influences HRM practices in the MoI. Agile Organizational Structure (β = 0.621, p < 0.001) and Technology and Data-Driven approaches (β = 0.377, p < 0.001) exhibited strong positive effects. Adaptive Leadership had a moderate but significant impact (β = 0.137, p = 0.048). Conversely, Continuous Innovation and Learning showed a significant negative relationship (β = -0.286, p < 0.001), indicating potential difficulties in integrating innovation within existing frameworks. Dynamic Strategy Formulation was found to have no significant effect (β = 0.011, p = 0.756).

Originality: This study addresses a critical gap in empirical research by examining the role of strategic agility in public sector HRM, specifically within the context of the UAE Ministry of Interior. It highlights the dual role of enabling factors such as organizational structure and technology, alongside barriers like innovation resistance, offering actionable insights for HR transformation in public institutions

Keywords: Strategic Agility, Human Resource Management, Public Sector, UAE Ministry of Interior, Agile Organizational Structure, Technology-Driven HR, Adaptive Leadership, Innovation Resistance, PLS-SEM

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic agility is increasingly recognized as a crucial capability for organizations facing unpredictable environments and rapidly changing market conditions. In the context of the UAE Ministry of Interior (MoI), strategic agility refers to the ability to sense environmental changes, seize emerging opportunities, and adapt operational strategies to sustain competitiveness and effectiveness. This is particularly important in public sector institutions, where rigid bureaucratic structures often limit the capacity for swift responses to external challenges (Jones & Wagstaff, 2021). While the broader implications of strategic agility for organizational performance have been widely examined (Teece, 2018), its specific impact on human resource management (HRM) within public entities such as the UAE MoI remains insufficiently explored.

Human resource management plays a vital role in enabling strategic agility, particularly in complex and hierarchical settings. Effective integration of HRM practices with strategic agility is essential to developing a workforce that can respond to ongoing change. However, public sector organizations frequently encounter obstacles such as bureaucratic inertia and resistance to change, which can impede the implementation of agile HR strategies. These challenges are particularly pronounced in

the UAE MoI, where traditional HR frameworks may not correspond with the demands of a rapidly evolving organizational environment (Smith et al., 2021).

Aligning HRM with strategic agility requires an emphasis on organizational ambidexterity, which involves the ability to simultaneously pursue innovation and maintain operational efficiency. In such contexts, HRM systems must support this dual capability by fostering both creativity and consistency (Tarba et al., 2020; Chakma et al., 2021). Despite the recognition of this need, there remains a gap in understanding how HR practices can be structured to achieve this balance, particularly within public sector institutions.

Operational HRM practices often remain focused on administrative tasks and regulatory compliance, limiting their strategic contribution. This misalignment is evident in the UAE MoI, where HR practices may fall short of supporting broader goals related to innovation and adaptability. The absence of a cohesive framework that integrates HRM with strategic agility further complicates efforts to advance organizational responsiveness (Saleh et al., 2023).

Barriers such as bureaucracy and resistance to change significantly affect the successful implementation of agile HRM practices within the UAE MoI. Hierarchical structures and inflexible procedures may delay decision-making and diminish the responsiveness of HR systems. Research has shown that such bureaucratic constraints can substantially undermine HRM effectiveness, as illustrated in studies of other public sectors, including Iran's transportation system (Nouri & Mousavi, 2020). Similarly, reluctance among employees and leadership to embrace change can obstruct the adoption of innovative HR practices, thereby weakening efforts to enhance strategic agility (Clauss et al., 2021).

Cultural factors also influence the implementation of strategic agility. The UAE's high-power distance and collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2001) shape organizational behavior and affect how agile strategies are perceived and enacted, particularly in HRM. A deep understanding of these cultural dynamics is necessary to develop HR practices that are both strategically aligned and culturally appropriate (Al-Nakib et al., 2021).

The scarcity of empirical research on the intersection of strategic agility and HRM in the public sector, especially within the Middle Eastern context, highlights the need for further investigation (Abdallah & Al-Lamki, 2022). Examining how strategic agility can be embedded within HRM processes in the UAE MoI may yield valuable insights for improving both organizational performance and workforce engagement. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the challenges and opportunities involved in aligning HRM with strategic agility in the UAE Ministry of Interior.

2.   STRATEGIC AGILITY

In response to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the global business environment, organizations have increasingly prioritized strategic agility as a fundamental capability. Strategic agility refers to an organization's ability to detect environmental shifts, identify and seize emerging opportunities, and reconfigure operations to sustain performance and competitiveness (Teece, 2018; Perez et al., 2023). Although the concept has been thoroughly examined within the private sector, its application in public sector settings, particularly within hierarchical and bureaucratic institutions such as the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior (UAE MoI), remains insufficiently addressed. Public organizations are often constrained by rigid structures and strict regulatory frameworks, which complicate the adoption of agile practices (Jones & Wagstaff, 2021; Al-Nakib et al., 2021).

Recent scholarly work has highlighted several dimensions that contribute to strategic agility, especially in the area of human resource management. Among these, adaptive leadership is widely regarded as a key enabler. It plays a critical role in enhancing responsiveness within HR decision-making processes, promoting workforce flexibility, and supporting effective talent development (Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, the presence of agile organizational structures is essential. Such structures facilitate

timely reallocation of resources, encourage distributed decision-making, and support cross-functional collaboration, all of which enhance the strategic role of HRM (Tarba et al., 2020; Saleh et al., 2023). However, implementing these principles within public institutions is challenging, as traditional hierarchical systems often hinder the operational flexibility required to support agility-focused reforms.

Another foundational element of strategic agility is the capacity for continuous innovation and organizational learning. Organizations that cultivate a culture emphasizing experimentation, employee development, and technological advancement are generally more adept at meeting workforce challenges and adapting to change (Chakma et al., 2021; Lee & Kumar, 2022). Despite these benefits, the introduction of innovative HR practices in public sector organizations may generate resistance, especially when such practices conflict with long-standing procedures and employee expectations. This reality underscores the need for context-sensitive frameworks that are carefully aligned with the institutional culture of public organizations.

Dynamic strategy formulation has also been explored as an important mechanism for enhancing HRM agility. This approach allows organizations to revise and realign workforce strategies in response to changing internal and external conditions. Nevertheless, its success is closely tied to the presence of other agility-supporting factors, including engaged leadership and adaptable organizational designs (Kamalrudin et al., 2024). Furthermore, technological advancements have emerged as significant facilitators of HR agility. Innovations in data-driven tools, such as real-time workforce analytics, predictive recruitment systems, and performance monitoring technologies, have been shown to improve decision-making processes, strengthen employee engagement, and increase overall operational efficiency (Alhantoobi et al., 2024; Zhang & Chen, 2023).

Despite the expanding literature on strategic agility, its relationship with HRM in public sector contexts remains relatively underexplored. The case of the UAE MoI is particularly relevant, as it operates within a cultural environment characterized by high power distance and strong collectivist values (Hofstede, 2001). These cultural attributes present additional challenges for the design and implementation of agile HR strategies. It is therefore necessary to develop approaches that achieve a careful balance between promoting adaptability and maintaining organizational stability and regulatory adherence (Abdallah & Al-Lamki, 2022). Addressing these challenges through focused research can provide valuable insights into how public sector organizations can enhance workforce resilience and agility while preserving operational continuity.

2.1 KEY DIMENSIONS OF STRATEGIC AGILITY

Strategic agility has emerged as a critical capability for organizations operating in complex and fast-changing environments. Within human resource management (HRM), strategic agility involves implementing flexible and responsive practices that support an organization's ability to adapt to internal and external changes. While the concept has been widely studied in private sector contexts, its application in public sector institutions such as the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior (UAE MoI) has received limited attention (Jones and Wagstaff, 2021; Al-Nakib et al., 2021). This literature review examines five core dimensions of strategic agility in HRM, namely adaptive leadership, agile organizational structure, continuous innovation and learning, dynamic strategy formulation, and the use of technology and data in HR functions.

2.1.1 ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Adaptive leadership refers to a leadership approach that promotes flexibility and responsiveness within HR practices. It plays a central role in enhancing decision-making, supporting employee adaptability, and fostering an organizational culture that is open to change (Smith et al., 2021). In public sector environments, however,

leadership practices often remain rooted in hierarchical traditions. This leads to significant resistance to the decentralization of authority, thereby limiting the potential of adaptive leadership to influence HR strategies effectively (Jones and Wagstaff, 2021).

2.1.2 Agile Organizational Structure

An agile organizational structure allows for more responsive and collaborative HR functions through flexible work arrangements and the ability to reallocate resources quickly. These structures improve coordination among departments and enable faster implementation of HR initiatives (Tarba et al., 2020). In the context of public sector organizations, however, bureaucratic hierarchies present a major challenge. Rigid chains of command and formal procedures slow down decision-making processes, reducing the efficiency and responsiveness that agile structures are intended to provide (Saleh et al., 2023).

2.1.3 CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AND LEARNING

Organizations that emphasize continuous innovation and learning are better positioned to address evolving workforce requirements. This includes ongoing training, adoption of emerging technologies, and skill development initiatives that strengthen employee capabilities and engagement (Chakma et al., 2021; Lee and Kumar, 2022). In the public sector, however, institutional norms and conservative cultures often lead to resistance when attempting to introduce such changes. The reluctance to move away from established routines can significantly hinder efforts to implement continuous learning strategies (Clauss et al., 2021).

2.1.4 DYNAMIC STRATEGY FORMULATION

Dynamic strategy formulation involves the regular reassessment and adjustment of HR policies to respond to shifts in the organizational environment. This practice enables proactive workforce planning and ensures that HR activities remain aligned with strategic objectives (Kamalrudin et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the formulation of such adaptive strategies in public institutions must comply with overarching governmental policies. This need for alignment with broader administrative frameworks can delay implementation and reduce the overall responsiveness of HR functions (Abdallah and Al-Lamki, 2022).

2.1.5 Technology and Data-Driven HR

The integration of digital tools and data analytics into HR operations enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of workforce management. Applications such as real-time analytics, predictive recruitment systems, and performance monitoring tools support informed decision-making and contribute to higher levels of employee engagement (Alhantoobi et al., 2024; Zhang and Chen, 2023). Despite the benefits, public sector organizations must contend with concerns related to data privacy, security, and regulatory compliance. These constraints can limit the extent to which technological innovations are adopted within HR departments (Hofstede, 2001).

The growing recognition of strategic agility in human resource management highlights its importance in enhancing organizational adaptability and responsiveness. However, applying this concept within the public sector, particularly in institutions such as the UAE Ministry of Interior, presents significant challenges due to entrenched structural hierarchies, cultural norms, and regulatory constraints. Addressing these obstacles requires tailored strategies that align with the distinctive characteristics of public governance. By integrating the key dimensions of strategic agility, including adaptive leadership, flexible structures, continuous learning, dynamic strategy development, and data-informed decision-making, public organizations can strengthen the effectiveness of their HR practices. Achieving this transformation requires a structured and balanced approach that promotes innovation while upholding accountability. Through such efforts, institutions like the UAE Ministry of Interior can

cultivate a resilient and forward-looking workforce, better equipped to manage the complexities of a rapidly changing environment.

3.   MODELLING ANALYSIS

A quantitative research design was adopted to examine the influence of strategic agility on human resource management (HRM) within the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior (MoI). Data were collected from MoI employees using structured questionnaires, which ensured consistency and reliability across various measurement items (Alhammadi and Sulaiman, 2022). To prepare the dataset for analysis, normalization procedures were applied to enhance the comparability of variables and ensure data integrity for advanced statistical testing.

The modelling analysis followed a systematic process to maintain rigor and validity. The first step involved constructing the measurement model by defining latent constructs and assigning relevant observed indicators, based on theoretical frameworks and prior research. Data screening was then conducted to manage missing values and check for normality in data distribution. Subsequently, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), ensuring internal consistency and convergent validity (Memon et al. 2023).

Once the measurement model was validated, the structural model was developed to test the hypothesized relationships between strategic agility and HRM practices. Path analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Rahman et al. 2022; Almansoori et al. 2022), supported by software tools such as SPSS (Alhantoobi, Alghizzawi, and Ezmigna, 2024). Path coefficients, standard deviations, and T-statistics were calculated to evaluate the strength and significance of the identified relationships (Kamalrudin, Aldhaheri, and Hakimi, 2024; Khahro et al. 2023). The model's explanatory power was further assessed using indicators such as the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). To ensure robust estimation, bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was performed, enabling precise significance testing of each model path. The results of the bootstrapping are as reflected by figure 1 and table 1.
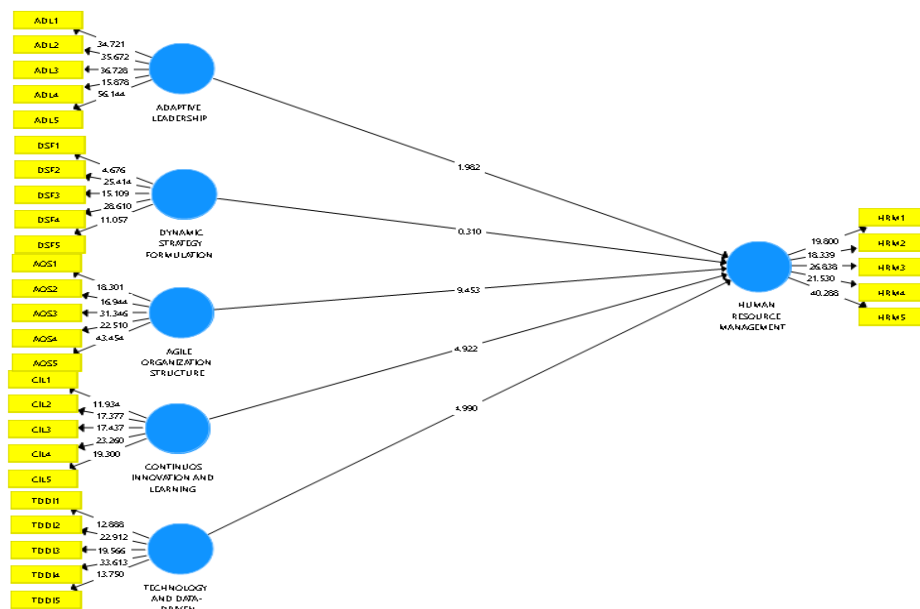

Figure 1: Model after bootstrapping process

Table 1: Results of hypothesis testing (bootstrapping)

Path relationship	Path Strength	T Statistics	P Values	Remark
Adaptive Leadership -> Human Resource Management	0.137	1.982	0.048	Significant
Agile Organization Structure -> Human Resource Management	0.621	9.453	0.000	Significant
Continuous Innovation and Learning -> Human Resource Management	-0.286	4.922	0.000	Significant
Dynamic Strategy Formulation -> Human Resource Management	0.011	0.310	0.756	Not Significant
Technology And Data-Driven -> Human Resource Management	0.377	4.990	0.000	Significant

The results of the hypothesis testing using bootstrapping, as presented in Table 1, offer several important insights into how different dimensions of strategic agility influence human resource management (HRM) within the UAE Ministry of Interior (MoI). Among the tested dimensions, agile organizational structure emerged as the most influential factor, showing a strong positive effect on HRM with a path coefficient of 0.621, a T-statistic of 9.453, and a p-value of 0.000. This finding highlights the critical role of flexible and collaborative work structures in enhancing HR responsiveness and operational efficiency within public sector institutions. Similarly, technology and data-driven HR practices showed a significant and substantial impact on HRM (path coefficient = 0.377, T-statistic = 4.990, p-value = 0.000). The use of analytics and digital tools appears to support effective decision-making, improve workforce planning, and enable a more proactive HRM approach.

Adaptive leadership also demonstrated a statistically significant, though more modest, influence on HRM (path coefficient = 0.137, T-statistic = 1.982, p-value = 0.048). This suggests that leadership styles promoting flexibility and responsiveness can positively affect HR strategies, particularly by fostering a culture that embraces change and innovation. Interestingly, the dimension of continuous innovation and learning exhibited a negative but statistically significant relationship with HRM (path coefficient = -0.286, T-statistic = 4.922, p-value = 0.000). This counterintuitive finding may reflect the challenges faced in integrating innovation into the public sector, where entrenched routines and institutional resistance may hinder the effective implementation of continuous learning and development initiatives. In contrast, dynamic strategy formulation did not show a statistically significant effect on HRM (path coefficient = 0.011, T-statistic = 0.310, p-value = 0.756). This result suggests that adjusting HR policies in response to external changes, while important, may not independently lead to improved HRM outcomes unless accompanied by structural and cultural support.

Collectively, the findings affirm that several dimensions of strategic agility significantly influence HRM effectiveness, though their impacts vary in magnitude and direction. Overall, the results reinforce the broader argument that higher levels of strategic agility contribute positively to HRM effectiveness within the MoI. These conclusions are consistent with existing research that emphasizes the integration of strategic agility into HRM as a key driver of organizational performance (Alhammadi and Sulaiman, 2022). For example, prior studies have demonstrated that modern strategic planning enhances human capital performance in the UAE public sector (Alhantoobi, Alghizzawi, and Ezmigna, 2024), and that fostering innovation and creativity strengthens HRM practices (Kamalrudin, Aldhaheri, and Hakimi, 2024). In this context, the MoI's commitment to strategic agility serves as a foundational step toward improving HRM systems and promoting institutional effectiveness. To maximize these benefits, however, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that

addresses not only policy flexibility but also organizational culture, technological integration, and leadership development

4. DISCUSSIONS

The empirical findings present a nuanced understanding of how different dimensions of strategic agility influence human resource management (HRM) within the UAE Ministry of Interior (MoI). Among the five dimensions examined, Agile Organizational Structure emerged as the most influential, showing a strong and statistically significant positive effect on HRM (coefficient = 0.621, $p < 0.001$). This result underscores the critical role of flexible, decentralized, and cross-functional structures in enabling responsive and collaborative HR practices. It supports prior studies emphasizing structural adaptability as a cornerstone of agility, particularly in traditionally rigid public sector institutions (Tarba et al., 2020; Saleh et al., 2023).

Adaptive Leadership also demonstrated a significant positive influence, albeit with a smaller effect size (coefficient = 0.137, $p = 0.048$). This suggests that leadership practices promoting flexibility and responsiveness can enhance HRM outcomes, but their impact may be limited unless embedded within a broader system that supports innovation and adaptability. The relatively modest effect indicates that leadership alone may not drive transformation unless complemented by enabling organizational structures and technological infrastructure.

A particularly noteworthy and unexpected finding was the negative impact of Continuous Innovation and Learning on HRM (coefficient = -0.286, $p < 0.001$). This counterintuitive result highlights potential tensions between innovation efforts and institutional readiness. It is plausible that the push for continuous innovation—without adequate alignment with organizational culture and existing workflows—can lead to resistance or implementation challenges. Such disruptions may compromise HR operations rather than enhance them, a pattern also observed in previous public sector research where innovation clashed with entrenched routines (Lee & Kumar, 2022; Clauss et al., 2021).

In contrast, Dynamic Strategy Formulation did not show a statistically significant effect on HRM (coefficient = 0.011, $p = 0.756$), suggesting that the mere presence of adaptive strategic policies does not guarantee practical impact on HRM processes. This may be attributed to the challenges of translating high-level strategic intentions into tangible HR practices in a bureaucratic environment where policy implementation often faces institutional inertia and regulatory constraints.

On the other hand, Technology and Data-Driven HR initiatives demonstrated a significant and substantial positive effect (coefficient = 0.377, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the growing importance of digital transformation in HRM. This finding reflects the enabling role of data analytics, automation, and digital platforms in improving workforce planning, recruitment, performance monitoring, and decision-making processes. It aligns with contemporary research emphasizing that digital capabilities are essential for enhancing agility and operational excellence in HR functions (Zhang & Chen, 2023; Alhantoobi et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that not all dimensions of strategic agility contribute equally to HRM effectiveness. While agile structures and technological integration appear to be strong enablers, dimensions like continuous innovation require careful management to avoid misalignment with institutional capabilities and expectations. The results also point to the importance of coherence across strategy, leadership, and structure to ensure that agility translates into sustained HRM improvements.

In the context of the UAE MoI, where hierarchical systems and cultural norms such as high-power distance prevail, the successful adoption of agile HR practices depends on a holistic approach. This involves aligning agility initiatives with organizational culture, developing leadership capacity, and ensuring that innovation is supported by readiness and integration mechanisms. These insights contribute to the

broader discourse on public sector reform and offer practical guidance for building resilient and future-ready HR systems in government institutions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the pivotal role of strategic agility in enhancing human resource management (HRM) within the UAE Ministry of Interior. The results reveal that agile organizational structures and technology-driven HR practices are key enablers of effective and responsive HRM in the public sector. These dimensions support adaptability, collaboration, and data-informed decision-making—critical features for modern HR systems. Conversely, the negative impact of continuous innovation underscores the need for careful alignment between innovative initiatives and the institution's existing operational culture and capabilities. Moreover, the limited effect of dynamic strategy formulation suggests that strategic vision alone is insufficient; without adequate support systems and integration mechanisms, its impact on HRM remains minimal.

These findings carry significant theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on strategic agility by demonstrating how its dimensions interact with HRM in a bureaucratic and culturally specific context. It encourages further academic inquiry into the contextual variables that mediate or moderate this relationship, particularly in public sector settings. For practitioners and policymakers, the research provides a structured guide for implementing agile reforms that are both culturally sensitive and operationally feasible. It emphasizes the importance of not only adopting agile frameworks but also ensuring they are embedded within systems that support execution and sustainability.

Future research should build upon these insights by examining the long-term effects of strategic agility on HRM outcomes, using longitudinal data to capture change over time. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or case studies, could also provide a deeper understanding of the organizational dynamics that facilitate or hinder the successful adoption of agility in HRM. Such research will be essential in helping public institutions evolve and remain resilient in the face of ever-changing internal and external demands.

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