STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT TOWARDS EMIRATISATION TALENT CLIMATE IN UAE: A PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT: *The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a unique country characterized by enormous diversity. The country has one of the greatest proportions of expatriates in the world with the local Emiratis accounting for a little above 10 percent of the entire population. Similarly, the workforce in the country is disproportionately inclined towards the expatriates who account for about 95 percent leaving about a 9.6 percent unemployment rate among Emiratis. This problem is more pronounced in the private sector where only less than 1 percent of the workforce are Emiratis. To reverse the trend, the UAE government introduced the Emiratisation policy with the overall goal of improving the talent climates of the Emiratis towards achieving a Knowledge Economy. Though the Emiratisation policy has been implemented in the UAE for over a decade, there is no holistic framework that contextualizes the policy from a talent climate perspective. Accordingly, this paper draws from the system dynamics theory and the stakeholder management theory to propose a conceptual framework that integrates stakeholder management in the implementation of Emiratisation policy for the achievement of talent climate. The proposed theory hypothesized that talent climate depends significantly on Emiratisation policy implementation which is significantly influenced by stakeholder identity, stakeholder communication, stakeholder social cooperation, and stakeholder mission consensus. The paper contributed to the body of knowledge by proposing the structural link between stakeholder management, Emiratisation policy implementation, and talent climate. The paper recommends further studies to validate the proposed framework using empirical data.*

Keywords: Emiratisation, Talent Climate, Stakeholder Management, Talent Management

1. INTRODUCTION

The agglomeration of seven Emirates under a constitutional federation formed the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the Abu Dhabi Emirate as the Capital. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a population that has a high proportion of expatriates from several Nationalities with local Emiratis accounting for only about 12 percent [1]. Besides the disproportionality in the population between the Emiratis and the expatriates in the UAE, the workforce is also inclined towards the expatriates. About 95 percent of the UAE workforce is dominated by expatriates with more unemployment associated with the Emiratis as it stands at around 9.6 percent [2]. While most Emiratis work in the public sector as indicated by about 60 percent, they only account for 0.34 percent of the private sector workforce. Such a scenario is considered an anomaly by the UAE government which is keen on creating a sustainable knowledge economy. Accordingly, Emiratisation was launched to strengthen the contribution of the Emiratis to the knowledge economy.

To support the Emiratisation program, the Labour Ministry was renamed the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE), with the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources (FAHR) serving as the main policy-making body for government human resources [3]. In policy, Emiratisation surrounds a variety of functions including job shadowing, talent management, training and coordination, and field and administrative studies, among others. To facilitate implementation, Federal Law No 8 establishing the Ministry of Labour was amended to implement a special department to ding adequate job opportunities for Emiratis. In 2005, Ministerial Orders 41, 42, and 43 imposed on all private sector businesses with more than 100 employees to hire and retail Emiratis by a minimum percentage. Other positions such as data entry clerk and health & safety (H&S) managers in the special sectors are to be reserved for UAE nationals.

It must be mentioned that the subject of Emiratisation has remained central to the UAE Vision 2021. The UAE Government sees Emiratisation as a means to improve citizenship welfare and ensure sustained knowledge economy creation. The need for Emiratisation is, therefore, integral to the Government's strategic leadership program for the long-term human resource development of the UAE [3].

Emiratization which is known as (Tawteen in Arabic) was launched last decade to pursue growth in the number of Emiratis participating in the job market and the overall contribution of local talents to the UAE knowledge economy agenda [3]. Like other labor naturalization policies or nationalization programs around the globe, Emiratisation is designed to foster the participation of citizens in the workforce and create a sustainable socio-economic environment that spurs integration and deviates from excessive reliance on expatriate labor [4]. After a decade of implementation, consensus came to actualize that Emiratization is riddled with complex challenges. The need to ensure effective implementation of the Emiratisation program was revealed when notable attention was given to the private sector, where Emiratis formed a staggering 0.34% to 0.54% of the total workforce. This is in sharp contrast with the public sector, where the locals account for about 60% of the total workforce [4]. Traditionally, demographics reveal a situation where expatriates make up about 80%-85% of the population, making the UAE one of the countries with the highest percentage of expatriates [2]. Nonetheless, these challenges only remain a part of the challenge, as unemployment amongst Emirati working adults stands at about 11.6%, compared with the national average of 2.5%. Given the national physical resource challenges, including the volatility in the oil and gas markets that resulted in unstable regional economic difficulties, it remains pertinent to the Government's agenda to develop local talents to serve the UAE's future economic viability and development [5].

It is therefore important to develop local talents necessary to drive the future of the UAE's economic policies and agendas, it has become even more critical that close attention is paid to the policy of Emiratization to address challenges and improve the country's economic success [4]. The implementation of the Emiratisation policy for achieving a talent climate requires the input of numerous stakeholders guided by a common goal and interest. Therefore understanding the role of stakeholder management in the implementation of the Emiratisation policy for the talent climate in UAE is paramount. Accordingly, this paper reviewed relevant literature to propose a conceptual framework for stakeholder management for Emiratisation policy implementation towards achieving a talent climate in the UAE.

2. Emiratisation policy

The Emiratisation policy dates back to the 1990s. The UAE government uses it as the main policy in addressing the labor market imbalances of the UAE [5]. In imitating related indigenization policies in fellow GCC states, there has been an effort to restore expatriates with local employees through the imposition of barriers on the employment of expatriates in the government sector. Thereby compelling the private sector to employ citizens [6]. The implementation of these initiatives is geared towards an increase in the cost of employing migrant labor until it becomes prudent for employers to employ local employees [7]. These kinds of indigenization policies are not new. Rather, they draw on the past knowledge of other countries with numerous migrant employees in their labor forces. In the GCC, the first labor market indigenization policy was imposed in the form of Saudisation in Saudi. Later, it took the form of Bahrainisation in Bahrain, then Qatarisation in Qatar, and finally Omanisation in Oman [8]. All over the GCC region, these indigenization policies have substantially taken like forms but with little or more emphasis on diverse components.

Emiratisation is a multidimensional procedure by which less dependency is put on the expatriate labor force, and citizens are trained to occupy occupational opportunities which were previously occupied by expatriates. Such training includes ensuring that citizens are well equipped with the required skills to work effectively and efficiently beyond migrant workers within the shortest possible time. There are two main aspects of the components. First is directing the use of expatriates, particularly in the private sector, and the second is financing the training and education of the local people to enable them to take up jobs in both the private and public sectors.

The National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority (TANMIA) was formed by the UAE government in 1999. The purpose of the formation of TANMIA was to implement the policy of Emiratisation. TANMIA is an independent body to provide employment opportunities for the natives of the UAE [9]. TANMIA also

gives young Emiratis vocational training and provides incentives like public recognition to companies that provide jobs for natives. Before now, the main push of the Emiratisation policy has been to pay attention to the ways of controlling the entry and stay of foreign migrant workers in the UAE [10]. Under the policy of Emiratisation, all UAE banks were expected to raise the percentage of Emiratis among their staff by 4% each year from 1999 onwards to reach a 40% national employment goal by 2008. Banks were expected to provide new minimum salaries to natives and provide them with an insurance provider as well as more flexible working hours.

Not long ago, the UAE government intensified its demands to provide jobs for natives all through the private sector. This happened following an announcement in May 2009 that all private companies can only offer employment to Emiratis when employing secretaries and human resource managers; again, private sectors must replace all expatriates presently occupying the positions of secretaries and human resource managers within one and half years [11]. With time, the implementation of the Emiratisation policy has shown little reliance on free-will compliance and others on enforcement rules together with measures such as minimizing the number of expatriate employment permits accepted by the government [12]. Simultaneously, in the present years, the policy of Emiratisation has included strong attention on education to develop Emirati natives for jobs in the private sector. The UAE public sector has made significant progress in Emiratisation efforts, even though some agencies are still lacking. At the federal level, about 98% of Emiratisation has been achieved whilst the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance have about 33% and 55% respectively. Emiratis form about 60% of the total government workforce, even though they form about 0.34% in the private sector. These observations reveal that Emiratisation in the private sector is extremely poor and has yet to gain the needed presence desired by the UAE government.

3. Theoretical Underpinning

3.1 Talent Climates within the System Dynamic Theory

The system dynamic theory posits that a system comprises various integral parts, each holding significance, and the system can only function optimally when all constituent parts are considered [13]. Thus, this theory bears relevance when examining the roles of stakeholders in cultivating a talent climate [14]. Talent management through the lens of system dynamics facilitates the alignment of cultural and contextual factors within talent management, providing a comprehensive operationalization perspective [15]. In this paper, the talent climate is intricately woven into the system theory, giving rise to a global talent management framework. This theory elucidates the significance of the talent climate and the roles of embedded actors [30], as illustrated in Figure 1.
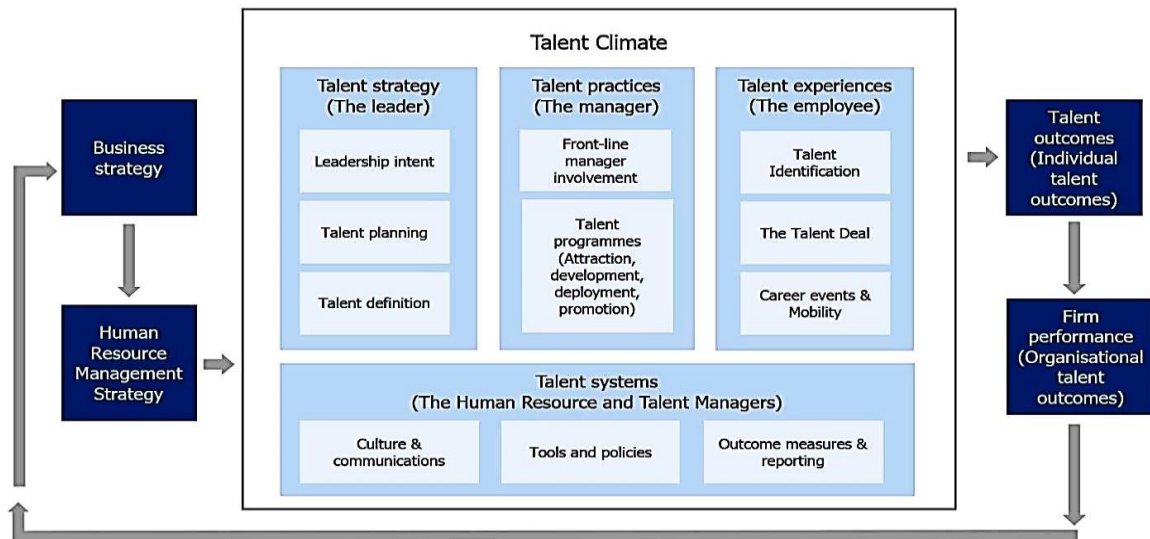
Figure 1: Talent Climates within the System Dynamic Theory

The systems view, as depicted in Figure 1, enables the comprehensive consideration of all pertinent factors within the talent management landscape, accentuating the individual roles of actors in talent management and their interconnectedness. This model of talent management harmonizes with stakeholder management theory, designating specific roles and responsibilities to stakeholders within the talent management framework. Examining the roles of stakeholders or actors within the talent management model reveals that each possesses distinct duties and responsibilities. [16]contends that top leadership and management wield primary influence over talent strategy, involving the communication of clear leadership intent, plans, and overall strategy. Supervisors and managers exert the most influence on talent practices, as they oversee the day-to-day execution of talent-related activities [17]. The talent pool of employees predominates in terms of experience and the leveraging of other talents. Lastly, human resources and talent managers are tasked with facilitating interaction among all stakeholders within the talent management ecosystem [18].

In the context of the UAE, the Emirati talents at the core of the multi-actor model may denote the Emirati talents engaged in the program. The government assumes a leadership role, while individual businesses function as supervisors and managers of the program. Within each organization, the government ensures the appointment of a specialized talent manager responsible for nurturing Emirati talent and fostering talent development in alignment with the government's vision [31, 32].

3.2 Stakeholder Management Theory

The stakeholder management theory, initially proposed by Freeman in 1984, serves as a foundational concept in understanding and managing the various parties involved in a specific project [19]. Chinyio and Olomolaiye [20], emphasize the importance of stakeholder management theory in identifying, analyzing, comprehending, and effectively handling stakeholders. The original model introduced by Freeman in 1984, along with subsequent developments by Freeman et al. in 2007 and Mitchell et al. in 1997, has

significantly contributed to the field of stakeholder management. These models collectively underscore the notion that talent management has historically been conceptualized in anecdotal terms. Stakeholder management, in many instances, has been limited to the mere identification of stakeholders, with less emphasis on comprehensively elucidating the inter-relationships among them [21]. Existing research efforts have predominantly aimed to define and describe the positions of stakeholders within talent management, rather than providing detailed insights into their interplay.

To bridge this gap, the proposed model offers an implementation framework that can be effectively applied to facilitate sustainable stakeholder management. The model is founded on five key constructs: effective communication, a clear understanding of stakeholders, well-defined objectives, adaptability to changes, and fostering social cooperation. In this paper, we leverage stakeholder management theory and system dynamics theories to introduce the Stakeholder Management Towards Emiratisation Talent Climate Framework in the UAE, as elaborated in the following section.

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4. Hypotheses Development

4.1 Stakeholder Identity and Emiratisation Policy Implementation

Stakeholder management starts with a clear understanding of stakeholders and their position within the program. A vivid understanding of who stakeholders are and how they affect the project is essential for the proper assessment and appropriate response to change [23]. Stakeholders play the role of producing systems that meet their needs. They also work with other individuals, especially those outside their chosen specialties, and share all relevant information [24]. The management of an existing relationship between various stakeholders takes place in the course of business. The stakeholder management approach involves a long-term social exchange between parties, social attachment, mutual trust, cooperation toward problem-solving, and commitment [23].

Understanding stakeholders is critical as stakeholders have different points of view. These points of view sometimes lead to conflicts. Therefore, these views need to be appropriately explained to ensure easy understanding and peaceful co-existence. Stakeholders are divided into either internal or external stakeholders [25]. Internal stakeholders are stakeholders who get directly involved in the decision-making process of an organization. In contrast, external stakeholders are those affected by the activities of the organization in a remarkable way. Stakeholder relationship with organization guarantees success [26]. Stakeholder relationship creates insight, contributes to knowledge, and aids in shaping the objectives and vision of projects. Stakeholders are entities, and they have stakes in programs. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H1: Stakeholder identity has a positive and significant effect on Emiratization policy implementation in the UAE.

4.2 Stakeholder Communication and Emiratisation Policy Implementation

Communication is important for maintaining the support and commitment of all stakeholders. The expectations of a realistic stakeholder are evident through effective communication routines [26]. The development of effective communication between stakeholders needs considerable attention and effort. Effective communication helps to keep stakeholder trust. Stakeholder communication is an essential part of actual stakeholder management processes. Communication aims to create actions and bring about common understanding and global alignment [27]. Firms have different motives for communicating with stakeholders. Some of these reasons include legitimacy management, and reputation building, among others. Legitimacy management deals with communication among organizations and their audiences. Stakeholder communication is the key to the success or failure of a firm. Effective communication among the various stakeholders in the Emiratisation policy can therefore facilitate its seamless implementation [24]. It is therefore hypothesized:

H2: Stakeholder communication has a positive and significant effect on Emiratisation policy implementation in the UAE.

4.3 Stakeholder Social Cooperation and Emiratisation Policy Implementation

Cooperation is a critical strategic tool for stakeholders within a common program or policy. Cooperation between a firm and its stakeholders, for instance, helps in the attainment of organizational goals and objectives. It helps minimize the occurrence of stakeholders' threatening behavior [28]. Policy implementation success reached through cooperation meets the needs of all stakeholders and helps address the core policy objective. It must, however, be admitted that cooperation between stakeholders may take place in a highly complex environment, where conflicts and other unsustainable practices may occur. As Choi & Murray [23] put it, cooperation may not always guarantee sustainable development or success. Thus, the cooperation of the various stakeholders may be highly influencing in achieving sustainable Emiratisation policy implementation. It is therefore hypothesized:

H3: Stakeholder social cooperation has a significant effect on Emiratisation policy implementation in the UAE.

4.4 Stakeholder Mission Consensus and Emiratisation Policy Implementation

A policy or program can be defined as the attainment of a particular mission and objective which includes a series of activities and tasks which use resources [58]. Policies involve key stakeholders, assigned to different roles. Stakeholders have a significant interest in the delivery of a policy with the least capital investment for the performance demanded by the business case [59]. The top management has the responsibility of focusing on the mission and objectives of the policy. Policy stakeholders are in different categories. Some are regularly part of the policy confederation, while others are not [60]. Thus, different stakeholders may have different missions and objectives which need to be solidified to achieve a common goal. Thus, the various stakeholders in the Emiratisation policy have a consensus on their mission, they are bound to achieve common objectives and goals. Thus within common consensus among the stakeholders on the mission and objective of the Emiratisation policy, the more likely the success of the policy implementation. It is therefore hypothesized:

H4: Stakeholder mission consensus has a significant effect on Emiratisation policy implementation in the UAE.

4.5 Emiratisation Policy Implementation and Sustainable Talent Climate

As earlier discussed, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced the Emiratisation policy to improve the proportion of local Emiratis in the country's workforce, especially in the private sector where less than 1 percent are Emiratis. One of the aims of the Emiratisation policy is to inculcate a talent climate among the Emiratis. This enables them to acquire the necessary skills necessary for national development. This is because talents have been considered fundamental to the distinctive performance of organizations; however, sustaining a constant flow of talent remains one of the most challenging aspects of HR management, even for multinational enterprises [29]. Others have added that talents are

instrumental to the competitive performance of organizations, work innovation, and overall organizational growth [3]. Despite the relevance of talent to business advancements in both the private and public domain, there is no clear strategy for the management of talent in a comprehensive talent utilization strategy [30]. Implementing the Emiratisation policy could serve as an important strategy for achieving the Emiratisation talent climate. It is therefore hypothesized:

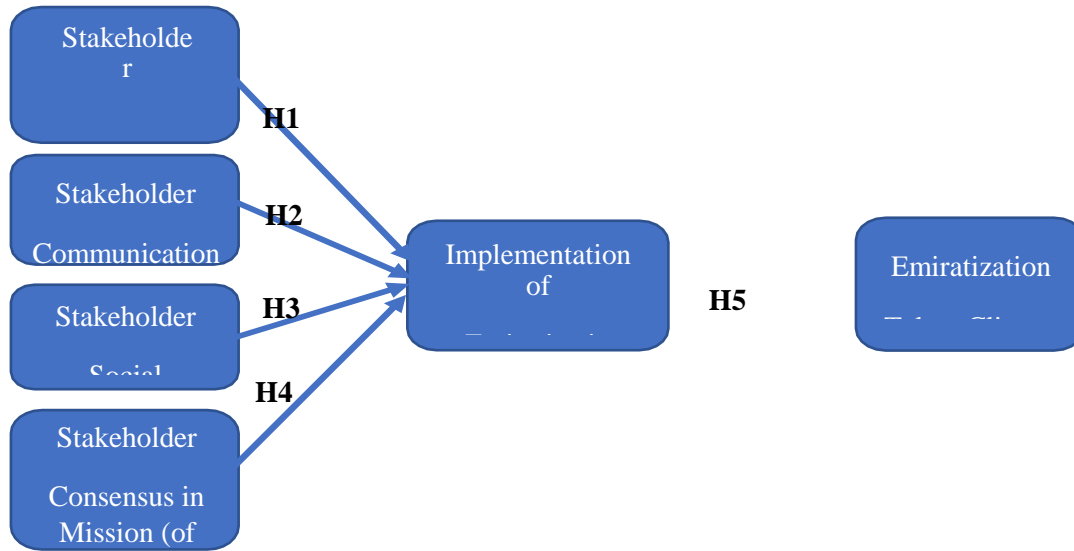H5: Emiratisation policy implementation has a significant effect on the Emiratisation talent climate in the UAE.

Figure 2: Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework postulated that sustainable Emiratisation talent climate depends on the implementation of Emiratisation policy which is influenced by stakeholder identity, stakeholder communication, stakeholder cooperation, and stakeholder consensus in mission (of Emiratisation). These interrelationships are discussed in the following subsections.

5. CONCLUSION

Emiratisation, like other indigenization policies, is implemented by governments to address the imbalances in the labor market between the locals and the expatriates. The essence is to protect the citizen against unemployment and possible exploitation by private organizations. In the UAE, the Emiratisation policy there has been an effort to restore expatriates with local employees through the imposition of barriers on the employment of expatriates in the government sector. Thereby compelling the private sector to employ citizens. The implementation of these initiatives is geared towards an increase in the cost of employing migrant labor until it becomes prudent for employers to employ local employees. Though the policy has been implemented for over a decade, there is still no holistic contextualization of the policy from the talent management perspective. A number of barriers have been identified related to the policy including the role of the various stakeholders. However, there is no previous research effort on how stakeholder management could be integrated into the Emiratisation policy implementation in the UAE.

Accordingly, this paper contextualized the Emiratisation policy within the theoretical lens of stakeholder management theory and talent management theory to propose a 'stakeholder management towards Emiratisation talent climate in UAE' framework. The proposed framework postulated that stakeholder management will greatly enhance Emiratisation policy implementation in the UAE. Specifically, the framework hypothesized that stakeholder identity, stakeholder communication, stakeholder social cooperation, and stakeholder mission consensus have a significant influence on Emiratisation policy implementation. The framework further postulated that the implementation of the Emiratisation policy significantly influences the talent climate of Emiratis in organizations. The proposed framework will offer valuable insight to the policymakers on how to efficiently implement Emiratiation policy by utilizing stakeholder management towards developing the talent climate of Emiratis. However, despite the contribution, the paper is not without some limitations. The framework was only deduced from relevant literature without empirical validation. Accordingly, the paper recommends that further studies should be carried out to validate the proposed framework.

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