

An Analysis of Talent Management Practices and their Alignment with UAE Vision 2031

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Received: 19 February 2026;

Revised: 6 March 2026;

Accepted: 20 March 2026

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ABSTRACT- This study explores UAE organizations' talent management practices in relation to UAE Vision 2031. The study uses a mix-method approach for data collection from 42 professionals through a survey and 7 semi-structured interviews with HR leaders and managers in finance, retail, and corporate services sectors.

The quantitative findings show that the distinctiveness recruitment, learning and development, performance management, succession planning and leadership commitment are significantly aligned with national development. The qualitative analysis finalized six themes which include performance governance, continuous learning, compliance-driven Emiratisation, financialized retention, digital transformation, and strategic misalignment. Most of the organizations offer strong operational HR systems but alignment with UAE Vision 2031 is partial and operational, not strategic. This study contributes to the strategic HRM literature in that it identifies the gaps between a nation's vision and an organization's actual implementation. This can lead to useful action plans that work to strengthen alignment through integrated workforce planning and being orchestrated through leadership intent.

KEYWORDS: Talent Management, UAE Vision 2031, Resource-Based View (RBV), Human Capital Theory, Social Exchange Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge-based economy, talent management plays a key role in building competitive advantage for both organizations and nations. Countries aiming for sustainable development now focus on human capital to improve innovation, productivity, and long-term growth. The UAE Vision 2031 highlights goals such as human development, economic diversification, digital progress, and global competitiveness.

Organizations in the UAE must align their talent practices with these national goals. This includes attracting and retaining talent, developing modern skills, encouraging innovation, and supporting Emiratisation. However, even with high investment in HR practices, proper alignment with national priorities is still unclear.

Most studies in the UAE focus on single HR practices and their impact on performance. They also rely mainly on

quantitative methods, which limits deeper understanding.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. It explores how talent practices align with UAE Vision 2031 and includes insights from professionals across different sectors.

The following research objectives will guide the study:

- To identify the current talent management practices across UAE organizations;
- To examine the degree these practices, align with UAE Vision 2031 priorities;
- To investigate barriers to alignment; and to make recommendations for improving alignment at both the organizational and policy-levels.

The analysis provided two crucial contributions. To begin with, the first contribution to the strategic human resource management literature consists in analysing talent management within the framework of a national vision. Moreover, it presents evidence showing that while UAE organizations have good operational talent management systems, they are functionally aligned to UAE Vision 2031 and not strategically aligned. The insights can help policymakers, HR leaders and organizations seeking to enhance the alignment between human capital strategy and national development strategies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Talent management has moved beyond a basic HR function and is now seen as a key factor in improving both organizational performance and national competitiveness. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this shift is clearly visible, as UAE Vision 2031 focuses strongly on human capital, innovation, and economic diversification as drivers of growth [13], [8]. Because of this, organizations are expected to align their talent practices with national priorities such as Emiratisation, digital transformation, and skill development for the future [9], [11].

From a theoretical view, the Resource-Based View explains that human capital can create long-term advantage when it is unique and valuable [1]. In the UAE, practices like recruitment, training, and succession planning help build such strengths [3]. Human Capital Theory also supports this idea by showing that investment in employee learning improves productivity and innovation [2], [13], [11]. In addition, Social Exchange Theory highlights that

fair treatment and growth opportunities improve employee commitment and retention [7],[6].

Past studies show that UAE organizations are using structured HR practices like performance systems, leadership programs, and employer branding. These practices improve retention and engagement in sectors like banking and aviation [12],[14]. However, there is still a gap in understanding how these efforts align with UAE Vision 2031 [9].

Many studies depend mainly on quantitative methods, which miss real workplace experiences [5]. At the same time, qualitative studies are limited in scope. Because of this, a mixed-method approach is needed. This study follows that approach to better understand how talent

management supports national goals.

III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical foundations, a conceptual framework is developed to illustrate the relationships between talent management practices and their alignment with UAE Vision 2031. The framework integrates key dimensions such as recruitment, learning and development, performance management, succession planning, and leadership commitment, and their influence on organizational outcomes (See the below figure 1).



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Talent Management and UAE Vision 2031 Alignment

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods design to understand talent management practices in UAE organizations and their alignment with UAE Vision 2031. It combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture both measurable results and real organizational experiences [5]. The quantitative part is based on a survey of professionals

from sectors like finance, retail, and corporate services. A total of 42 valid responses were collected using purposive sampling, ensuring participants had relevant experience.

The qualitative part includes seven semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and senior managers. These helped in understanding practices, challenges, and views on alignment.

Data were collected through a questionnaire and an

interview guide. The questionnaire used Likert-scale items on key HR areas, while interviews explored themes like Emiratisation and digital change.

Quantitative data were analysed using statistical methods, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis [15]. Ethical standards were followed throughout the study.

Quantitative Results- The quantitative analysis examined how various talent management practices are related to organizational outcomes, particularly with respect to the fit with UAE Vision 2031. The descriptive results indicated that the respondents were from different sectors and had varying numbers of experiences. This provided a relatively balanced perspective into the way organizations work.

Results of the correlation analyses revealed significant positive relationships between selected key practices and outcomes. Recruitment had a fair positive association with organizational alignment ($r = 0.595$, $p < 0.001$) (see the table 1). This leads one to the supposition that proper hiring processes help to match the skills of employees with national aims. Learning and development had a

significant positive relationship with innovation and future-ready skills ($r = 0.761$, $p < 0.001$). This brings out the importance of passing learning.

There was also a strong positive association between performance management and sustainable growth ($r = 0.788$, $p < 0.001$), i.e. clear evaluation systems support long-term results. Regression results showed that succession planning is a strong predictor of talent sustainability ($b = 0.698$, $R^2 = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$). Leadership commitment was also important to alignment ($b = 0.653$, $R^2 = 0.427$, $p < 0.001$).

Overall, the results report that talent management is an important aspect in aligning organisations with UAE Vision 2031.

Qualitative Results- The qualitative analysis gave the study more insight in to how talent management practices are implemented and felt within organizations. Thematic analysis uncovered six main themes describing talent management practices and the alignment of these practices to UAE Vision 2031.

Table 1: Summary of Quantitative Findings

Relationship	Statistic	Result
Recruitment → Alignment	$r = 0.595^{**}$	Moderate positive
Learning & Development → Innovation	$r = 0.761^{**}$	Strong positive
Performance Management → Growth	$r = 0.788^{**}$	Strong positive
Succession Planning → Sustainability	$\beta = 0.698$, $R^2 = 0.487$	Significant predictor
Leadership Commitment → Alignment	$\beta = 0.653$, $R^2 = 0.427$	Strong predictor

First, performance governance became a prevailing theme where organizations became highly dependent on KPI-related systems, and organized performance assessments. Second, continuous learning was identified as a key practice; but initiatives for training were mostly operational and not always connected with longer-term strategic objectives. Third, recruitment practices were found out to be structured but mainly due to compliance requirements, especially in respect of Emiratisation policies.

Fourth, retention strategies were mostly financial in nature, with itself generally being concerned with compensation, incentives, and internal mobility, including less emphasis on long-term engagement and career development. Fifth, digital transformation was a general consensus on the role of transformation to support UAE Vision 2031, the transformation of organizations with automation, AI tools, and paperless systems. Finally, there was an important theme of strategic misalignment and awareness gaps, which shows that while organisations have developed a strong level of operational practices, awareness and integration of UAE Vision 2031 is inconsistent (See the figure 2 and table 2).

These findings suggest that talent management in UAE organizations is well-developed at an operational level and is not fully strategic with regard to integrating national objectives.

V. DATA ANALYSIS USING NVIVO

Table 2: Summary of Qualitative

Theme	Key Insight
Performance Governance	KPI-driven and performance-focused systems
Continuous Learning	Training is operational rather than strategic
Recruitment & Emiratisation	Compliance-driven practices
Retention Strategies	Financially focused retention mechanisms
Digital Transformation	Viewed as primary alignment tool
Strategic Misalignment	Limited awareness of UAE Vision 2031

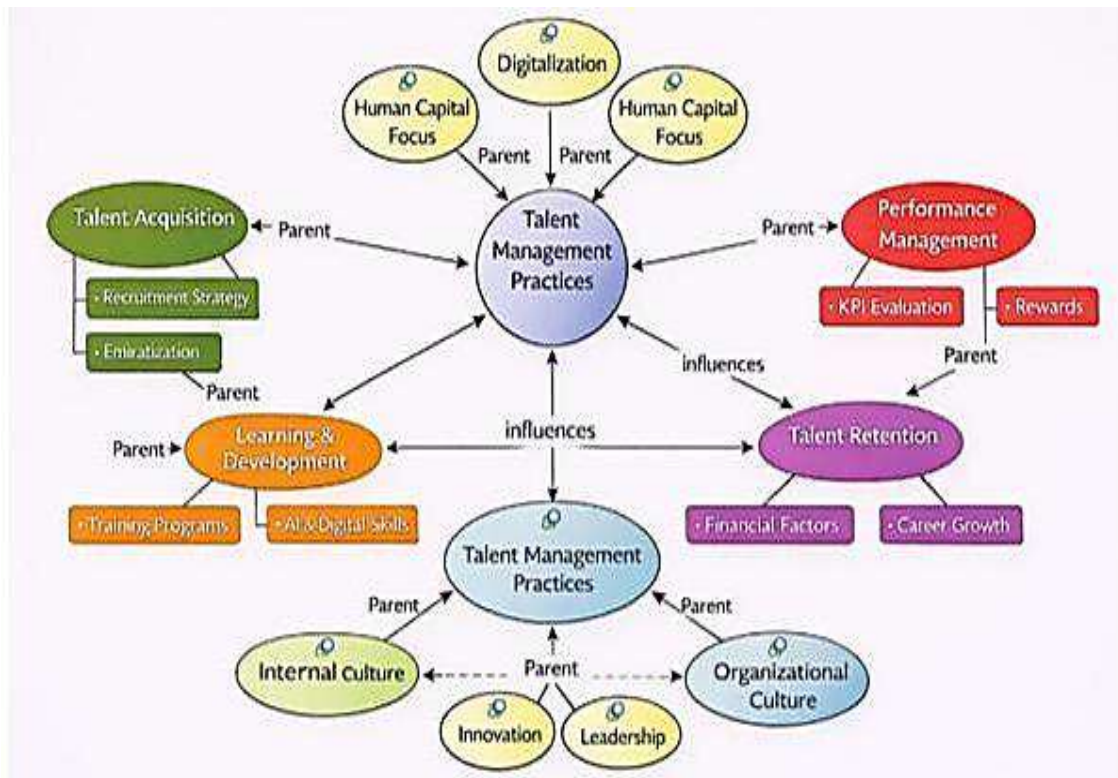


Figure 2: Nodes Diagrams Based on the Interviews (NVivo output)

VI. DISCUSSION

This study looked at how far talent management practices in UAE organizations match the goals of UAE Vision 2031. By combining both quantitative and qualitative results, it gives a clearer picture of what is working and where gaps still exist.

The quantitative findings show that practices like learning and development, performance management, succession planning, and leadership commitment have a strong impact on outcomes such as innovation and sustainability. This supports the Resource-Based View (RBV), which says that human capital can create long-term advantage [1]. It was seen that structured hiring and succession planning help in building strong talent within organizations.

The link between learning and development and innovation also supports Human Capital Theory [2]. When organizations invest in employee skills, they become more ready for future changes. Leadership commitment was also found to be important, which connects with Social Exchange Theory [7], [6]. Support from leaders helps employees stay engaged and improves overall performance.

However, the qualitative findings show a slightly different picture. Many organizations have strong HR systems, but they are often focused on short-term results. For example, Emiratization is sometimes treated as a rule to follow, rather than a long-term strategy [16].

A key point is that alignment with UAE Vision 2031 is still more operational than strategic. Organizations focus more on digital initiatives and compliance instead of fully linking their HR practices with national goals [9]. There is also a strong focus on financial rewards and short-term results, which may limit long-term growth.

Overall, organizations have strong systems in place, but there is a need to connect these practices more clearly with national priorities.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study examined talent management practices in UAE organizations and their alignment with UAE Vision 2031 using a mixed-method approach. The results show that organizations have well-developed systems, especially in recruitment, performance management, and employee development.

The findings confirm that key practices like learning, succession planning, and leadership support contribute to innovation and strategic alignment. However, alignment with UAE Vision 2031 is still not complete. Many organizations focus more on compliance activities like Emiratization and digital change rather than long-term planning.

In simple terms, while systems are strong, their connection with national goals needs improvement. Closing this gap is important for long-term growth and competitiveness.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, a few simple steps can help improve alignment:

- Organizations should clearly connect their HR strategies with UAE Vision 2031.
- More focus should be given to long-term workforce planning.
- Formal succession planning systems should be developed.
- Leaders should take an active role in aligning strategies with national goals.

- Retention strategies should go beyond salary and focus on growth and engagement.
- Employees should be made more aware of UAE Vision 2031 through training and communication.

IX. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has some limitations. The sample size is small and limited to a few sectors, so the results may not apply everywhere. Also, the data is self-reported, which may affect accuracy. The study is cross-sectional, so it does not show changes over time.

Future research can include larger samples and more sectors. Long-term studies can also help in understanding how alignment changes over time. Researchers can also compare public and private organizations and develop better ways to measure alignment with national strategies.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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