

Impact of Project Management Practices on Organizational Performance with Servant Leadership as a Mediating Factor in the UAE Property Development Industry

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Abstract

Leadership, not just technical capability, is the decisive factor in the success of large-scale construction and property development projects in the UAE. This study investigates the direct and indirect effects of Project Management Practices (PMP) on Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO), with Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) serving as a mediating variable. Drawing on integrated theories from project management, leadership, and performance measurement, the study proposes a conceptual framework tailored to the UAE construction context. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey of 355 professionals in middle and top management positions across the UAE's construction and property development sector. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that PMP significantly influences OPO ($\beta = 0.417$) and SLC ($\beta = 0.653$), while SLC has a strong positive effect on OPO ($\beta = 0.476$). Additionally, a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.311$) confirms the partial mediating role of servant leadership. The model demonstrates high reliability, validity, explanatory power (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2), establishing a robust and context-specific framework. These

results underscore the importance of people-centred leadership in amplifying the impact of project management practices and offer actionable insights for enhancing organizational performance in the UAE construction industry.

Keywords: Project Management, Servant Leadership, Organizational Performance, Structural Equation Modelling, UAE Construction, Property Development.

1. Introduction

The construction and property development sector is a major driver of economic growth and urban transformation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As the nation undertakes large-scale developments such as Al Reem Island, Dubai Hills Estate, and the Expo 2020 District, project management has become increasingly complex. These projects involve multiple stakeholders, tight deadlines, high-quality expectations, and significant financial investment. Moreover, the sector is characterized by a multinational and multicultural workforce, with employees originating from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Egypt (Anwar et al., 2025; Adeleye & Bello, 2025). This diversity introduces additional challenges related to communication, coordination, motivation, and workplace harmony (Aleid & Ochieng, 2025).

Despite the deployment of advanced technologies and structured project management frameworks, project delays, inefficiencies, and inconsistent organizational performance remain persistent issues in the UAE construction sector (Mawed et al., 2025; ALZaabi & Yassin, 2021). One often overlooked factor contributing to these challenges is the leadership style adopted by project managers. Traditional leadership styles such as autocratic or transactional approaches may not adequately address the relational and motivational needs of a diverse workforce. More importantly, such styles may fall short in fostering a collaborative, ethical, and inclusive working environment, an essential condition for success in large, labor-intensive construction projects (Bonanno et al., 2007; Al Shamsi, 2015).

Recent research highlights servant leadership as a promising alternative, due to its emphasis on empathy, empowerment, trust, and ethical stewardship. These values are particularly relevant in managing culturally diverse teams and ensuring alignment with human-centered policy frameworks like the UAE Labour Law (Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021) and strategic national agendas such as the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. Studies by Coetzer et al. (2017), Siddiquei et al. (2025), and Wadood et al. (2024) show that servant leadership enhances employee well-being, resilience, and sustainability in construction project contexts. Similarly, research by Alahbabi et al. (2021) confirms its relevance to UAE organizations by linking servant leadership to job performance via employee happiness. Farradia et al. (2022) also demonstrate that servant and authentic leadership positively influence affective commitment, an essential component of workforce retention and motivation. Furthermore, servant leadership contributes to organizational climate resilience and ethical team behavior (Kumar et al., 2025), addressing the need for adaptable and people-focused leadership in a sector prone to occupational hazards, tight schedules, and resource constraints.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the suitability and effectiveness of servant leadership in enhancing project management and organizational performance within large-scale construction and property development projects in the UAE. Specifically, it aims to develop and validate a conceptual framework in which servant leadership functions as a mediating variable between project management practices and organizational performance outcomes. By examining this mediating role, the study will provide empirical evidence on whether servant leadership strengthens the link between

effective project execution and enhanced organizational outcomes such as efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, team cohesion, and long-term performance sustainability.

This framework is expected to offer practical insights for project leaders, construction firms, and policymakers in the UAE, enabling them to adopt leadership development strategies that not only improve project delivery but also foster a more inclusive and resilient work environment. Additionally, the research supports national priorities outlined in the UAE Vision 2031, which emphasizes innovation, excellence in governance, and the development of human capital across all sectors. By filling a notable gap in the construction leadership literature and contextualizing it within the unique demographic and cultural dynamics of the UAE, this study aspires to contribute meaningfully to both academic scholarship and real-world practice in project-based industries.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature underpinning the development of the study framework. It explores four key themes: (1) the landscape of property development in the UAE, (2) the role of project management practices in executing large-scale property development projects, (3) the measurement and drivers of organizational performance within the UAE's property development sector, and (4) the applicability of servant leadership as a leadership approach within the UAE construction industry. Each sub-section below elaborates on these core areas to establish a foundation for the conceptual framework.

2.1 Property Development in the UAE

The property development sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as a cornerstone of national growth, urban modernization, and global competitiveness. Guided by long-term national strategies such as UAE Vision 2031 and the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, the sector is characterized by mega infrastructure projects, smart cities, mixed-use developments, and high-value real estate investments. These initiatives are not only reshaping the UAE's urban landscape but also creating demand for sophisticated project management capabilities that ensure timely delivery, quality outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction (Mawed et al., 2025; Aleid & Ochieng, 2025).

Property development projects in the UAE typically involve multiple layers of complexity, including stringent regulatory compliance, sustainability requirements, and high stakeholder expectations. These challenges are further amplified by the multicultural nature of project teams and the technical demands of large-scale developments. As such, effective project management becomes indispensable in aligning project objectives with national goals, mitigating risks, managing resources, and ensuring smooth coordination among contractors, consultants, developers, and government agencies (ALZaabi & Yassin, 2021; Kumar et al., 2025).

Moreover, the sector's reliance on a diverse and predominantly expatriate workforce introduces unique dynamics that must be addressed through culturally intelligent leadership and adaptive management practices (Aleid & Ochieng, 2025). Issues such as safety

compliance, worker well-being, and communication barriers are critical considerations for project managers striving to maintain performance standards (Anwar et al., 2025; Adeleye & Bello, 2025).

In this context, leadership styles that prioritize inclusivity, ethical guidance, and empowerment, servant leadership style is gaining recognition for their role in enhancing project execution and organizational outcomes. Project managers in the UAE property development industry must not only master technical tools and methodologies but also adopt people-centric approaches that foster collaboration, trust, and resilience among diverse teams (Coetzer et al., 2017; Siddiquei et al., 2025).

2.2 Project Management Practices in Property Development in UAE

Mega property development projects in the UAE such as high-rise towers, integrated urban developments, and smart infrastructure, require a robust and multi-dimensional approach to project management. Key project management elements essential in these large-scale undertakings include comprehensive project planning, scope and schedule management, cost control, risk mitigation, stakeholder engagement, quality assurance, and resource allocation (ALZaabi & Yassin, 2021; Mawed et al., 2025). Effective planning ensures that the project aligns with the broader urban vision, regulatory frameworks, and sustainability goals, such as those outlined in the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. Schedule management is particularly critical in the UAE, where timely project delivery impacts investor confidence and market positioning (Kumar et al., 2025). Cost management helps mitigate financial risks in a volatile real estate market, while rigorous risk management addresses issues such as labor shortages, supply chain delays, and environmental concerns (Anwar et al., 2025; Wadood et al., 2024).

Moreover, stakeholder management is vital, given the involvement of multiple parties including government agencies, foreign investors, contractors, and end-users. In culturally diverse project teams, clear communication and leadership are required to maintain alignment and productivity (Aleid & Ochieng, 2025). Quality control ensures that construction standards meet international benchmarks, while proper resource planning guarantees the optimal use of skilled labor and materials (Bonanno et al., 2007; Adeleye & Bello, 2025). Studies such as those by Al Shamsi (2015) and Coetzer et al. (2017) also stress the importance of leadership in navigating complex construction environments where adaptability and ethical management influence both project outcomes and team cohesion.

Together, these project management elements form the backbone of successful execution and performance in the UAE's high-value property development sector, where innovation, accountability, and integration with national development strategies are increasingly prioritized.

2.3 Organizational Performance of UAE Property Development Industry

Organizational performance in the UAE property development industry is a multidimensional construct encompassing financial outcomes, project delivery effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, and innovation capability. Given the country's reliance on large-scale infrastructure and real estate projects as engines of economic growth, performance

measurement is not limited to profit margins but also includes non-financial indicators such as timely project completion, quality compliance, customer satisfaction, and alignment with national strategic visions like the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan and UAE Vision 2031 (Mawed et al., 2025; Kumar et al., 2025). In this context, project success can be defined by adherence to time, budget, and scope, remains a fundamental indicator of organizational performance (Al Shamsi, 2015).

However, evolving priorities such as sustainability, digital transformation, and stakeholder-centric development models have expanded performance expectations. For example, the integration of smart technologies, green building standards, and agile project delivery methods are increasingly used to evaluate organizational effectiveness (Wadood et al., 2024; Aleid & Ochieng, 2025). Research by Coetzer et al. (2017) and Siddiquei et al. (2025) further suggests that leadership practices, particularly servant leadership, significantly impact team performance and organizational outcomes in construction environments.

Moreover, performance in the UAE's multicultural and fast-paced property sector is also shaped by workforce management practices, regulatory adaptability, and risk mitigation strategies (Anwar et al., 2025; Adeleye & Bello, 2025). These factors are particularly critical in a sector that must balance rapid delivery with social responsibility, safety compliance, and environmental stewardship. As such, the assessment of organizational performance in the UAE property development industry requires a comprehensive framework that reflects both traditional project metrics and strategic agility in responding to market and policy shifts.

2.4 Suitability of Servant Leadership in UAE Construction Context

Servant leadership is highly suitable for large-scale construction projects in the UAE, where project teams are often composed of workers from diverse nationalities, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds. The UAE construction industry, driven by mega-projects in real estate and infrastructure, depends heavily on effective coordination, trust-building, and clear communication across multicultural teams (Aleid & Ochieng, 2025; Mawed et al., 2025). Servant leadership, with its emphasis on empathy, ethical behavior, listening, and putting others' needs first, fosters a people-centered work environment that encourages inclusiveness and respect (Bonanno et al., 2007; Coetzer et al., 2017). These qualities are essential in a setting where cultural misunderstandings and communication barriers can easily hinder productivity and morale.

According to Liden et al. (2014), servant leaders create psychologically safe climates, which are particularly beneficial for migrant workers who may otherwise hesitate to express concerns or contribute ideas. Similarly, Siddiquei et al. (2025) emphasize that servant leadership enhances team resilience in construction environments by strengthening interpersonal trust and support. The servant leader's focus on empowering and developing individuals also aligns with the need to motivate and retain skilled labor in high-pressure construction environments (Wadood et al., 2024). Furthermore, Farradia et al. (2022) and Alahbabi et al. (2021) highlight that servant leadership positively influences employee commitment and job performance, particularly in culturally diverse and performance-driven settings like the UAE.

In this context, servant leadership not only enhances interpersonal dynamics but also improves team cohesion, reduces conflict, and contributes to project success by ensuring that all workers, regardless of background, feel valued and supported. Given the UAE's multicultural labour force and demanding construction timelines, servant leadership represents a culturally adaptive and performance-enhancing leadership style that addresses both human and operational dimensions of project success.

3. Formulation of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is developed to explore the relationship between project management practices and organizational performance in the context of large-scale construction and property development projects in the UAE, with servant leadership introduced as a mediating variable. This framework is grounded in leadership theory, project management principles, and organizational performance literature, particularly in multicultural, high-risk, and project-intensive environments such as the UAE construction sector.

The framework is based on the premise that effective project management, comprising scope, schedule, cost, risk, quality, and stakeholder management which directly influences organizational performance. However, the execution and impact of these practices are significantly shaped by the leadership style adopted by project managers. In the UAE's construction industry, which is characterized by a highly diverse workforce and complex stakeholder environments, leadership that is ethical, inclusive, and people-oriented is essential for successful project delivery and long-term organizational sustainability.

Servant leadership is introduced as a mediating construct due to its well-established role in promoting team cohesion, trust, and employee well-being, factors that are crucial for enhancing both project outcomes and overall performance in multicultural project settings (Coetzer et al., 2017; Siddiquei et al., 2025; Alahbabi et al., 2021). It is posited that servant leadership does not merely coexist with project management practices but actively amplifies their effect on organizational performance by creating a supportive environment that encourages collaboration, motivation, and alignment with organizational goals.

The development of the framework also considers contextual factors such as the UAE Vision 2031, Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, and the Federal Labour Law, which emphasize sustainable development, human capital advancement, and workplace well-being. These national frameworks highlight the importance of adopting leadership approaches that are socially responsible and adaptable to dynamic construction project environments.

Accordingly, the conceptual framework suggests that project management practices have a direct positive influence on organizational performance. At the same time, servant leadership enhances the effectiveness of project management and is positively associated with improved performance outcomes. Most importantly, it is expected that servant leadership plays a mediating role by facilitating a culture of empowerment, trust, and ethical decision-making that bridges project execution with long-term organizational success. The items and constructs related to this framework are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. list of measured indicator and construct in the framework

Construct	Code	Measured Items	
Project Management Practices (PMP)	PMP1	Project planning and scheduling	ALZaabi & Yassin (2021);
	PMP2	Cost and resource control	Mawed et al. (2025); Bonanno
	PMP3	Quality assurance	et al. (2007)
	PMP4	Risk management	
	PMP5	Stakeholder communication and coordination	
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	SLC1	Empowerment	Coetzer et al. (2017);
	SLC2	Ethical behaviour	Siddiquei et al. (2025);
	SLC3	Listening and empathy	Alahbabi et al. (2021);
	SLC4	Stewardship	Farradia et al. (2022);
	SLC5	Commitment to people's growth	Bonanno et al. (2007)
	SLC6	Team resilience and well-being	
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	OPO1	Project success (time, cost, scope)	Al Shamsi (2015); Wadood et
	OPO2	Stakeholder satisfaction	al. (2024); Kumar et al.
	OPO3	Innovation and sustainability	(2025); Anwar et al. (2025);
	OPO4	Workforce safety and adaptability	Adeleye & Bello (2025); Aleid
	OPO5	Alignment with national development goals	& Ochieng (2025)

Based on the information presented in Table 1, the proposed conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. It depicts the relationships among the key constructs which are five project management practices, six servant leadership characteristics, and five organizational performance outcomes. In this framework, servant leadership functions as a mediating variable, reflecting its role in enhancing the effectiveness of project management practices in achieving improved organizational performance outcomes.

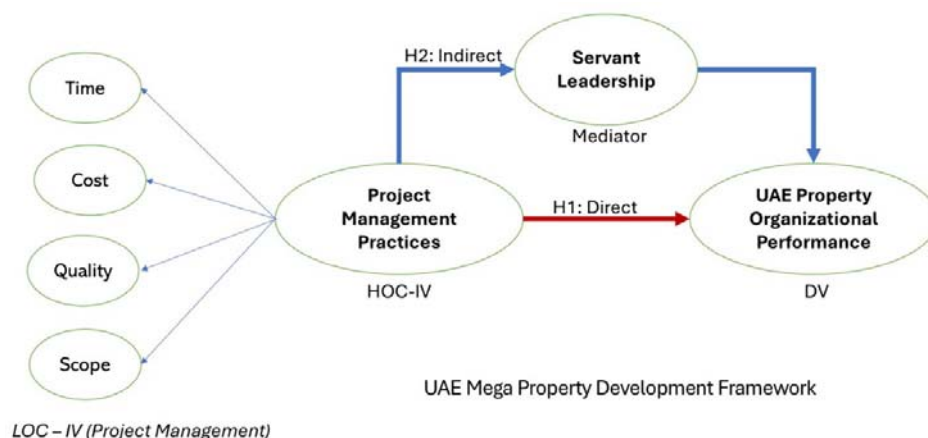


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, illustrated in Figure 1, provides a structured foundation for empirical investigation. It is designed to assess the strength and direction of the hypothesized relationship between project management practices and organizational performance within the context of large-scale construction and property development projects in the UAE. Furthermore, the framework incorporates servant leadership as a mediating variable, aiming to evaluate its role in enhancing or influencing this relationship. The proposed framework will be validated using quantitative methods in the subsequent sections.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to empirically test the proposed conceptual framework, which examines the relationships between project management practices, servant leadership, and organizational performance within the context of large-scale construction and property development projects in the UAE. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey developed based on validated constructs from prior literature (Liden et al., 2008; Turner, 2014; Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The instrument consisted of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To ensure clarity, content validity, and reliability, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of professionals from the construction and property development industry (Saunders et al., 2019).

A total of 355 valid responses were collected from individuals holding middle and top management positions in UAE-based construction and property development firms. These participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, as their strategic roles in project execution, leadership implementation, and organizational performance evaluation made them well-suited to provide informed and relevant insights (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling is particularly appropriate in applied research where specific expertise or experience is critical to addressing the research objectives.

The collected data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which is suitable for examining complex relationships among multiple latent constructs and their observed indicators (Hair et al., 2019). SEM was chosen for its ability to assess both direct and indirect effects, including the mediating role of servant leadership between project management and organizational performance. Moreover, SEM is widely recognized in social science research for its robustness in validating theoretical models involving multiple constructs and pathways with greater statistical power and precision (Kline, 2016). This dual capability of integrating the measurement and structural models enhances the overall rigor and reliability of the analysis.

5. Results and Analysis of the Proposed Framework Model

This section presents the empirical results derived from testing the proposed framework model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The analysis evaluates the reliability, validity, and strength of the hypothesized relationships among project management practices, servant leadership characteristics, and organizational performance outcomes.

5.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

This section assesses the measurement model to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs before testing the structural relationships. Key indicators such as internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are evaluated to confirm the adequacy of the latent variables used in the proposed framework.

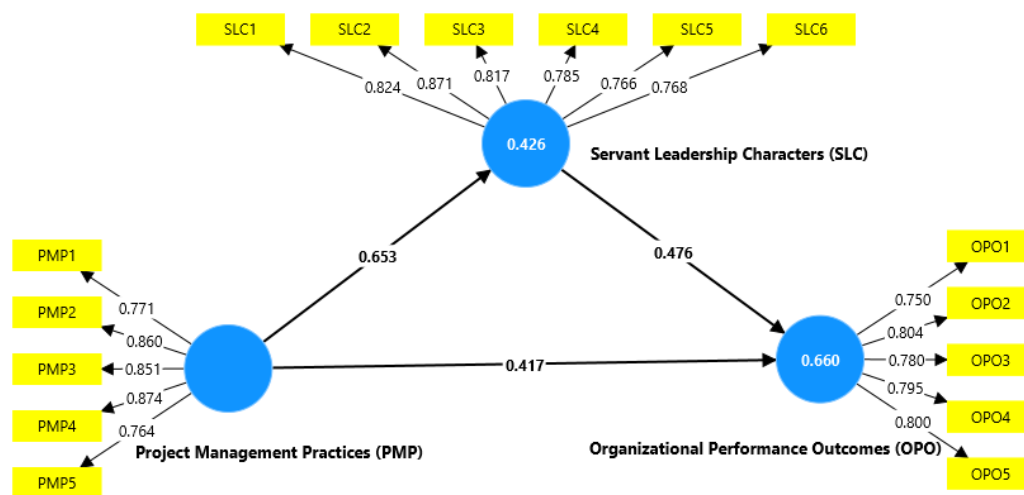


Figure 2. The Model after PLS Algorithm procedure

5.1.1 Construct Reliability and Validity

This subsection examines the reliability and validity of the measurement items used for each construct in the model. Indicators such as Cronbach's alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are used to assess internal consistency and convergent validity, ensuring that each construct accurately represents the underlying concept.

Table 2. Results of construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	0.845	0.618
Project Management Practices (PMP)	0.882	0.681
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	0.891	0.649

As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrate acceptable levels of internal consistency and convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha values for Organizational Performance Outcomes (0.845), Project Management Practices (0.882), and Servant Leadership Characteristics (0.891) all exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, ranging from 0.618 to 0.681, is above the 0.50 benchmark, confirming satisfactory

convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.1.2 Discriminant Validity

This subsection evaluates discriminant validity to ensure that each construct in the model is distinct from the others. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio are applied to confirm that the constructs do not excessively overlap and measure unique aspects of the framework.

Table 3. Results of HTMT

	Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	Project Management Practices (PMP)	Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)			
Project Management Practices (PMP)	0.840		
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	0.859	0.736	

Table 3 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) results used to assess discriminant validity among the three constructs. All HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.90, indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Specifically, the HTMT values between Organizational Performance Outcomes and Project Management Practices (0.840), between Organizational Performance Outcomes and Servant Leadership Characteristics (0.859), and between Project Management Practices and Servant Leadership Characteristics (0.736) confirm acceptable discriminant validity.

Table 4. Results of Fornell Larcker criterion

	Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	Project Management Practices (PMP)	Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	0.786		
Project Management Practices (PMP)	0.727	0.825	
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	0.748	0.653	0.806

Table 4 presents the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which further confirms discriminant validity among the study constructs. According to this criterion, the square root of the AVE (shown on the diagonal) for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square roots of AVE for Organizational Performance Outcomes (0.786), Project Management Practices (0.825), and Servant Leadership Characteristics (0.806) all exceed the corresponding inter-construct correlation values in their respective rows and columns. This indicates satisfactory discriminant validity across all constructs.

5.2 Structural Model Evaluation

This section presents the evaluation of the structural model to assess the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. Key metrics such as path coefficients, R-square (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) are analyzed to determine the strength, direction, and explanatory power of the proposed framework.

5.2.1 R-Square Value

This subsection examines the R-square (R^2) values to evaluate the explanatory power of the independent variables on the dependent constructs. R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables explained by the model, reflecting the strength of the structural relationships.

Table 5. Results of R-square

	R-square
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	0.660
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	0.426

As shown in Table 5, the R-square (R^2) values indicate the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables in the model. The R^2 value for Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO) is 0.660, suggesting that 66% of the variance in organizational performance is explained by Project Management Practices and Servant Leadership Characteristics. Additionally, the R^2 value for Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) is 0.426, indicating that 42.6% of the variance in servant leadership is explained by Project Management Practices. According to Hair et al. (2019), these values represent substantial and moderate explanatory power, respectively.

5.2.2 The f-square Value

This subsection assesses the f-square (f^2) values to determine the effect size of each exogenous construct on the endogenous variables. The f^2 metric indicates the individual contribution of each predictor to the R-square value, helping to understand the relative impact of each path in the structural model.

Table 6. Results of f-square value

	Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	Project Management Practices (PMP)	Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)			
Project Management Practices (PMP)	0.293		0.742
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	0.383		

Table 6 presents the f-square (f^2) values, which measure the effect size of each exogenous construct on the endogenous constructs in the model. According to Cohen (1988), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Project Management Practices (PMP) has a moderate effect on Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO) with an f^2 value of 0.293, and a large effect on Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) with an f^2 value of 0.742. Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) also shows a large effect on Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO) with an f^2 value of 0.383. These results suggest that both PMP and SLC significantly contribute to explaining variations in organizational performance, with PMP playing a particularly strong role in shaping servant leadership.

5.2.3 Hypothesis Testing

This subsection presents the results of hypothesis testing based on the structural model's path analysis. Path coefficients and corresponding p-values are examined to determine the significance and strength of the hypothesized relationships among the constructs in the proposed framework.

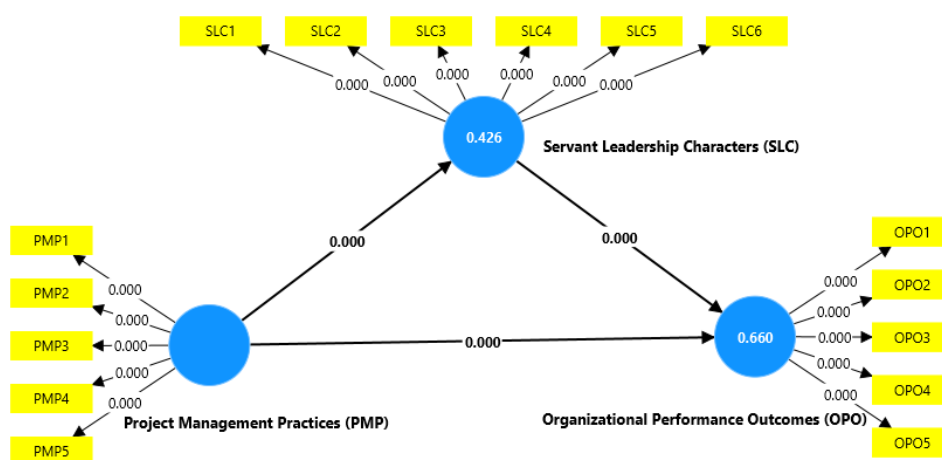


Figure 3. Model after bootstrapping procedure

Table 7. Results of direct relationship

Direct relationship	Path strength	P values
Project Management Practices (PMP) -> Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	0.417	0.000
Project Management Practices (PMP) -> Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	0.653	0.000
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC) -> Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	0.476	0.000

Table 7 presents the results of the direct path relationships between the constructs in the proposed model. All path coefficients are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating strong support for the hypothesized direct effects. The path from Project Management Practices (PMP) to Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO) is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.417$, $p = 0.000$), demonstrating a moderate effect. The path from PMP to Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) is also significant and relatively strong ($\beta = 0.653$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that effective project management contributes to the development of servant leadership behaviors. The path from SLC to OPO is significant with a strong effect ($\beta = 0.476$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that servant leadership positively influences organizational performance. These results confirm the theoretical assumptions that both project management practices and servant leadership significantly enhance performance outcomes in the UAE construction and property development context.

Table 8. Results of Indirect relationship

Indirect relationship	Path strength	P values
Project Management Practices (PMP) -> Servant Leadership Characters (SLC) -> Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	0.311	0.000

Table 8 presents the result of the indirect relationship analysis, examining the mediating role of Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) in the relationship between Project Management Practices (PMP) and Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO). The indirect path PMP $\rightarrow$ SLC $\rightarrow$ OPO is statistically significant with a path coefficient of 0.311 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong mediating effect. This suggests that servant leadership partially mediates the relationship between project management practices and organizational performance. In other words, effective project management not only directly enhances performance but also does so indirectly by fostering servant leadership behaviors, which in turn contribute to improved outcomes. These findings support the hypothesized mediating mechanism and highlight the importance of leadership style in translating project management practices into organizational success.

5.2.4 Predictive Relevance

This subsection evaluates the predictive relevance of the structural model using the Q^2 values obtained through the blindfolding procedure. A Q^2 value greater than zero indicates that the model has sufficient predictive accuracy for the endogenous constructs, confirming the model's practical utility.

Table 9. Results of CCVR

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	1990.000	1197.198	0.398
Project Management Practices (PMP)	1990.000	1990.000	0.000
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	2388.000	1746.242	0.269

Table 9 reports the results of the construct cross-validated redundancy (Q^2) test using the blindfolding procedure, which assesses the predictive relevance of the structural model (Hair et al., 2019). A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance for a particular endogenous construct.

Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO) has a Q^2 value of 0.398, indicating strong predictive relevance. Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) shows a Q^2 value of 0.269, which also reflects moderate predictive relevance. As expected for an exogenous construct, Project Management Practices (PMP) has a Q^2 value of 0.000, indicating no predictive relevance (which is typical for predictor variables).

These results confirm that the model has substantial capability in predicting the endogenous variables, particularly organizational performance outcomes.

Table 10. Results of CCVM

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO)	1990.000	1145.833	0.424
Project Management Practices (PMP)	1990.000	959.880	0.518
Servant Leadership Characters (SLC)	2388.000	1186.023	0.503

Table 10 presents the results of the construct cross-validated communality (Q^2) test, which evaluates the predictive relevance of the measurement model using the blindfolding procedure (Hair et al., 2019). A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the measurement model has acceptable predictive accuracy for each construct.

- Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO) recorded a Q^2 value of 0.424, indicating strong predictive relevance.

- Project Management Practices (PMP) achieved the highest Q^2 value of 0.518, reflecting high predictive accuracy of its indicators.
- Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC) also demonstrated strong indicator-level predictive relevance, with a Q^2 value of 0.503.

These results suggest that the measurement model reliably predicts the observed indicators for all latent variables, further supporting the model's robustness and explanatory strength.

5.3 Summary of Finding

The results of the structural model analysis provide strong empirical support for the proposed conceptual framework. The findings confirm that Project Management Practices (PMP) have a significant impact on Organizational Performance Outcomes (OPO), both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of Servant Leadership Characteristics (SLC).

Specifically, PMP was found to significantly influence OPO ($\beta = 0.417$) and SLC ($\beta = 0.653$), while SLC also demonstrated a strong direct effect on OPO ($\beta = 0.476$). The presence of a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.311$) confirms that servant leadership partially mediates the relationship between project management and performance outcomes, thereby validating the central hypothesis of the study.

Moreover, the model exhibited strong psychometric properties, with high levels of construct reliability and validity, substantial explanatory power (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). These statistical outcomes affirm that the constructs and their interrelationships are both theoretically sound and practically meaningful.

Overall, the findings underscore the critical role of leadership style, particularly servant leadership, in enhancing the effectiveness of project management practices, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance. This is especially relevant in the UAE's construction and property development sector, where large-scale, high-stakes projects require both technical precision and people-centered leadership to succeed.

5.4 Discussion and Contribution of Findings

The findings of this study provide strong empirical validation for the proposed conceptual framework, offering new insights into how project management practices (PMP) and servant leadership characteristics (SLC) jointly influence organizational performance outcomes (OPO) in the context of large-scale construction and property development projects in the UAE.

5.4.1 Alignment with Previous Research

The significant direct relationship between project management practices and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.417$) supports earlier studies emphasizing the importance of project planning, resource allocation, and risk management in achieving project success (Turner, 2014; Pinto & Slevin, 1988). This is particularly relevant in the UAE, where construction projects are often large in scale, complex, and strategically linked to national economic goals. As emphasized by Kaplan and Norton (1996), performance is best achieved when strategy is aligned with execution, a view that is reinforced by the present findings, as effective project

management practices translate into measurable organizational outcomes such as timeliness, budget adherence, and client satisfaction.

Moreover, the strong effect of project management on servant leadership ($\beta = 0.653$) aligns with Liden et al. (2008), who argued that leadership style is often influenced by the broader organizational processes and practices. In this study, project management appears to create the structural and cultural environment in which servant leadership can flourish particularly in promoting empathy, empowerment, and collaboration, which are critical in team-intensive construction environments.

The significant direct relationship between servant leadership and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.476$) supports previous work that links servant leadership to improved employee engagement, team cohesion, and productivity (Liden et al., 2008; Greenleaf, 1977). In the UAE context, where multicultural and hierarchical dynamics are common, servant leadership offers a valuable leadership paradigm that encourages inclusivity and trust, aligning with the socio-cultural emphasis on respect and collectivism.

The indirect effect of project management on organizational performance through servant leadership ($\beta = 0.311$) confirms the partial mediating role of leadership, consistent with research by Eva et al. (2019), who emphasized the mediating impact of leadership behaviors on organizational outcomes. This finding extends existing theory by showing how leadership functions as a mechanism through which technical and strategic project management practices are internalized and executed at the team level.

5.4.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature in several meaningful ways. First, it offers a model integration by synthesizing elements from project management theory, servant leadership theory, and performance measurement frameworks such as the Balanced Scorecard. This integrated approach results in a unified conceptual model tailored to the construction and property development sector, an area that has traditionally received limited attention in leadership-performance research. Second, the study provides a valuable contextual extension by applying and validating these theoretical constructs within the UAE's construction industry, thereby extending predominantly Western-centric models (Liden et al., 2008; Kaplan & Norton, 1996) into a Middle Eastern, high-growth economic context. This contributes to the sparse literature on leadership and organizational performance dynamics in GCC countries, where cultural and operational conditions differ significantly from Western contexts. Finally, the study advances the understanding of mediating mechanisms by empirically confirming the mediating role of servant leadership. This highlights that organizational performance is not only a result of effective management practices but also significantly influenced by how leaders engage with and support their teams during the execution of complex projects.

5.4.3 Practical Implications

The results of this study offer several actionable insights for construction firms and property developers operating in the UAE. First, there is a clear imperative for leadership development.

Organizations are encouraged to invest in leadership training programs that nurture key servant leadership traits such as empathy, trust-building, and empowerment. Cultivating these attributes can significantly enhance the performance and cohesion of project management teams. Second, the findings highlight the value of integrated project practices, where leadership-oriented behaviours are embedded within standard project management methodologies. By doing so, firms can ensure that technical strategies are executed through a people-centred approach, increasing adaptability, collaboration, and team motivation. Finally, the validated conceptual framework can be used as a practical tool for performance strategy alignment. Managers can adopt this model to link performance metrics not only to process efficiency and project deliverables but also to human and relational factors, leading to a more holistic and sustainable approach to project success in complex construction environments.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the direct and indirect effects of project management practices on organizational performance outcomes, with a particular focus on the mediating role of servant leadership characteristics. Grounded in integrated theoretical perspectives and tested within the context of the UAE's construction and property development sector, the research offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how leadership and project execution jointly shape organizational success. The empirical results provide robust support for the proposed conceptual model. Project management practices were found to significantly influence both servant leadership characteristics and organizational performance outcomes. Furthermore, servant leadership emerged as a partial mediator, demonstrating that leadership style is not merely a contextual factor but a critical mechanism that enhances the effectiveness of technical project management in achieving superior performance.

The study contributes to the existing literature by bridging conceptual gaps between project management, leadership theory, and performance evaluation. It extends these frameworks into a Middle Eastern setting, thereby addressing a significant geographical and contextual gap in current scholarship. From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of integrating leadership development into project management strategies and aligning performance measures with both operational and human-centred dimensions. The validated framework model not only enhances theoretical understanding but also provides a strategic roadmap for construction firms and developers aiming to achieve sustainable project success in complex, high-stakes environments. Future research could build upon these findings by exploring additional moderating or contextual variables, such as organizational culture or project complexity, to further enrich the model's explanatory power.

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