

Proposed A Framework for Examining the Relationships Among Leadership Styles, Organisational Culture, and Employee Performance in Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE

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Abstract

Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) play a critical role in safeguarding lives, protecting properties, responding to emergencies, and strengthening public security in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, enhancing employee performance within CDRS remains an important managerial and strategic concern, particularly as emergency-service organisations face increasing demands for operational effectiveness, adaptability, innovation, and service reliability. This paper proposes a conceptual framework for examining the relationships among leadership styles, organisational culture, and employee performance in UAE CDRS. Specifically, the framework positions transformational leadership and transactional leadership as independent variables, organisational culture as a mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. The paper argues that transformational leadership may enhance employee performance by promoting motivation, trust, commitment, innovation, and shared vision, while transactional leadership may support performance through role clarity, supervision, rewards, accountability, and compliance with operational standards. Furthermore, organisational culture is proposed as a key mediating mechanism through which leadership practices are translated into employee behaviour and

performance outcomes. By integrating leadership styles and organisational culture within a single framework, this paper contributes to leadership theory, organisational culture literature, and public-sector management research. Practically, the framework provides guidance for CDRS leaders, policymakers, and human resource managers seeking to strengthen employee performance through balanced leadership practices and a supportive organisational culture. Future empirical research is recommended to test the proposed relationships using quantitative data from CDRS employees in the UAE.

Keywords: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, employee performance, Civil Defence and Rescue Services, UAE

1. Introduction

Civil Defence agencies occupy a strategic position in national security systems because they are responsible for protecting lives, safeguarding properties, responding to emergencies, and supporting public safety. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) play an important role in strengthening public security, emergency preparedness, and national resilience. However, despite their strategic importance, civil defence organisations continue to face increasing pressure to improve service quality, organisational readiness, operational efficiency, and employee performance. Prior studies on UAE Civil Defence have highlighted the importance of strategic management, human resource management, and organisational performance in strengthening civil defence effectiveness (Al-dhaafri, 2018; Hassan & Alzaabi, 2018). Therefore, improving employee performance within CDRS remains an important concern for public safety, institutional effectiveness, and national development.

The need to improve CDRS performance has become more pressing as public-sector and emergency-service organisations respond to changing public expectations, technological development, operational complexity, and global demands for innovation. Public organisations in the UAE are increasingly expected to adopt innovative practices and improve their internal systems to enhance organisational outcomes (Al Hawi & Alsyouf, 2020). In this context, leadership is particularly important because leaders provide direction, shape employee behaviour, encourage adaptability, and create conditions that enable employees to perform effectively. Existing studies show that leadership styles can influence employee performance, organisational performance, motivation, and innovation across different sectors (Alghizzawi et al., 2024; Berisha et al., 2024; Biloa, 2023; Gomes & Maia, 2023; Sokolic et al., 2024).

Among the different leadership approaches discussed in the literature, transformational and transactional leadership styles are particularly relevant to the CDRS context. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring, motivating, and developing employees to exceed ordinary expectations. It can strengthen employee commitment, innovation, job satisfaction, and performance by encouraging employees to identify with organisational goals and take greater responsibility for their work (Chandrasekara, 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Widianto & Wilderom, 2023). Transactional leadership, by contrast, emphasises structure, role clarity, rewards, supervision, and corrective actions. It is useful in organisations where discipline, compliance, accountability, and clearly defined performance standards are required (AlAbri et al., 2022; Dong, 2023). In emergency and security-based organisations such as CDRS, both leadership styles may be important because employees require motivation and adaptability as well as discipline and operational control.

Organisational culture is another critical factor that may shape the relationship between leadership and employee performance. Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and behavioural expectations that guide how employees act within an organisation (Van der Post et al., 1997). A supportive organisational culture can help translate leadership practices into improved employee outcomes by creating shared expectations,

strengthening cooperation, and aligning employee behaviour with organisational goals. Prior studies have shown that leadership style and organisational culture are associated with employee and organisational performance (Asbari et al., 2020; Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono, & Nur, 2023; Mogaji & Dimingu, 2024). Therefore, organisational culture may serve as an important mechanism through which leadership practices influence employee performance.

This issue is particularly important because employee performance in CDRS is unlikely to be shaped by leadership behaviour alone. Leadership may influence performance directly by motivating, guiding, supervising, and rewarding employees. However, leadership may also influence performance indirectly by shaping the organisational culture within which employees work. A strong organisational culture can reinforce leadership practices, guide employee conduct, enhance motivation, and improve service outcomes. Conversely, a weak or misaligned culture may reduce the effectiveness of leadership, even when leaders attempt to introduce change or improve performance. Studies on employee outcomes indicate that performance is influenced by organisational systems, motivation, work practices, and workplace conditions (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2006; Tims et al., 2013).

Accordingly, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for examining the relationships among leadership styles, organisational culture, and employee performance in Civil Defence and Rescue Services in the UAE. The framework positions transformational leadership and transactional leadership as independent variables, organisational culture as the mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. By developing this framework, the paper contributes to leadership and public-sector management literature by clarifying the possible direct and indirect pathways through which leadership styles may enhance employee performance in CDRS. Practically, the proposed framework may assist policymakers, civil defence leaders, and organisational managers in designing leadership and cultural strategies that improve employee effectiveness, strengthen public security services, and support the broader development goals of the UAE.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leadership Styles

Leadership style is widely recognised as a major factor influencing employee attitudes, organisational culture, and performance outcomes. In organisational studies, leadership is often examined through the behaviours and practices leaders use to direct, motivate, support, and control employees. Recent studies show that leadership styles can influence employee performance, innovation, engagement, job satisfaction, and organisational effectiveness across different organisational contexts (Alghizzawi et al., 2024; Badie' Alhmoud & Al-Kasasbeh, 2024; Berisha et al., 2024; Biloa, 2023; Karie & Kulmiye, 2023). In the context of Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS), leadership is particularly important because employees operate in a high-responsibility environment where safety, discipline, coordination, and timely decision-making are essential.

Among the various leadership styles discussed in the literature, transformational and

transactional leadership are especially relevant to this paper. Transformational leadership is associated with motivation, inspiration, innovation, trust, and long-term organisational development, while transactional leadership is associated with structure, reward systems, compliance, and performance monitoring. These two leadership styles provide a useful basis for examining how leadership may influence employee performance directly and indirectly through organisational culture.

2.2 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style that inspires employees to go beyond ordinary expectations by developing shared vision, motivation, trust, and commitment. Transformational leaders encourage employees to identify with organisational goals, think creatively, and develop confidence in their ability to perform effectively. Hetland et al. (2018) emphasised that transformational leadership can influence employee job crafting and work engagement by encouraging employees to take initiative and shape their work roles more positively. Similarly, Widiyanto and Wilderom (2023) argued that transformational leadership can act as an important organisational resource that supports followers' psychological capital and job performance.

Transformational leadership is also linked to innovation and adaptive behaviour. Alheet et al. (2021) found that leadership styles can influence employees' innovative work behaviour, suggesting that leaders who encourage creativity, support, and autonomy may strengthen employees' willingness to generate and apply new ideas. Chandrasekara (2019) also showed that transformational leadership can affect job satisfaction and job performance, particularly when leaders provide inspiration, individual support, and a clear sense of direction. These findings are relevant to CDRS because civil defence employees need to respond to complex and changing emergency situations that require both discipline and adaptive problem-solving.

In this paper, transformational leadership is considered an independent variable because it may directly improve employee performance and indirectly influence performance by shaping organisational culture. Transformational leaders can create a culture of trust, commitment, innovation, and shared responsibility. Such a culture may be especially useful in the CDRS context, where employees are expected to protect lives and property, coordinate emergency responses, and maintain high service standards.

2.3 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is based on exchange relationships between leaders and employees. It emphasises clear expectations, defined roles, performance standards, rewards, and corrective actions. Unlike transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiration and change, transactional leadership focuses more on supervision, compliance, and achieving agreed objectives. Dong (2023) noted that transactional leadership remains an important leadership approach because it provides structure and clarity in organisational settings. AlAbri et al. (2022) also linked transactional leadership with employee efficiency and adaptive performance, particularly within human resource management practices in the post-COVID-19 organisational environment.

Transactional leadership may be particularly relevant in CDRS because civil defence work requires discipline, standard operating procedures, accountability, and compliance with safety rules. Employees must clearly understand their duties, expected performance levels, and consequences of failure. Transactional leadership can therefore support operational reliability by ensuring that employees follow procedures and meet performance expectations. However, while transactional leadership may improve short-term efficiency and task completion, it may not be sufficient on its own to promote long-term innovation, commitment, or cultural transformation.

Therefore, this paper considers transactional leadership as a second independent variable. It may influence employee performance directly through rewards, supervision, and corrective actions. It may also influence organisational culture by promoting discipline, accountability, and performance-oriented behaviour. In a CDRS environment, a balance between transformational and transactional leadership may be necessary because employees require both motivation and structure.

2.4 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, practices, and behavioural expectations that guide how employees act within an organisation. It shapes how employees communicate, cooperate, respond to leadership, and perform their duties. Van der Post et al. (1997) developed an instrument for measuring organisational culture, showing that culture can be studied as an important organisational construct. Schermerhorn et al. (1985) also highlighted the role of organisational behaviour in shaping how people work together and respond to organisational systems.

Several studies have linked organisational culture with leadership and performance. Bautista and Uy (2023) found that organisational culture and leadership style can influence organisational performance, particularly during periods of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Budi Cahyono and Nur (2023) also reported that leadership style and organisational culture affect employee performance. Similarly, Asbari et al. (2020) showed that organisational culture can contribute to innovation-related competencies, indicating that culture may shape how employees develop and apply skills within organisations.

In this paper, organisational culture is positioned as a mediating variable. This means that leadership styles may not only affect employee performance directly but may also influence performance through the culture created within the organisation. For example, transformational leadership may promote a culture of trust, learning, innovation, and commitment. Transactional leadership may promote a culture of accountability, discipline, and performance monitoring. When organisational culture supports the goals of CDRS, employees may become more motivated, coordinated, and effective in their roles.

2.5 Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees carry out their duties effectively and contribute to organisational objectives. It includes task completion, service quality, productivity, adaptability, commitment, and achievement of expected outcomes. In

public-sector and emergency-service organisations, employee performance is especially important because it affects service delivery, public safety, and organisational reliability. Mborea and Cheruiyot (2017) argued that employee performance measurement and management are important concerns in the public sector, where performance must often be assessed beyond purely financial indicators.

The selected literature shows that employee performance is influenced by several organisational factors, including leadership, motivation, human resource practices, and organisational culture. Kehoe and Wright (2013) found that high-performance human resource practices influence employees' attitudes and behaviours, while Kuvaas (2006) showed that performance appraisal satisfaction can affect employee outcomes through work motivation. Tims et al. (2013) also linked job crafting with work engagement and performance, suggesting that employees perform better when they are actively involved in shaping and improving their work. Zhang and Zhou (2014) further demonstrated that leadership can influence employee creativity through trust and other mediating mechanisms.

For CDRS, employee performance should be understood in relation to the nature of civil defence work. Performance is not only about productivity but also about safety, protection, security, responsiveness, teamwork, and reliability. Employees in CDRS are responsible for protecting lives and property, responding to emergencies, and supporting public welfare. Therefore, leadership styles and organisational culture may be important factors in strengthening employee performance within this sector.

2.6 Relationship Between Leadership Styles, Organisational Culture, and Employee Performance

Previous studies suggest that leadership styles, organisational culture, and employee performance are closely connected. Leadership styles influence how employees understand their roles, respond to organisational goals, and behave in the workplace. Organisational culture provides the internal environment through which leadership practices are accepted, reinforced, or weakened. Employee performance is then shaped by both leadership behaviour and the cultural conditions within the organisation.

Several studies support this relationship. Budi Cahyono and Nur (2023) directly examined the influence of leadership style and organisational culture on employee performance. Bautista and Uy (2023) similarly found that leadership style and organisational culture affect organisational performance. Berisha et al. (2024) and Biloa (2023) further confirmed that leadership style can influence employee performance, while Badie' Alhmoud and Al-Kasasbeh (2024) highlighted the connection between leadership styles, employee engagement, and organisational performance. These findings support the assumption that leadership and culture are important predictors of performance outcomes.

In the UAE context, Abdulla et al. (2023) examined leadership development in academia, showing the growing importance of leadership capacity in UAE organisations. Al Hawi and Alsyounf (2020) also emphasised innovation in UAE public organisations, which is relevant to CDRS because civil defence organisations must continuously improve their services and

response systems. Hassan and Alzaabi (2018) and Al-dhaafri (2018) specifically examined UAE civil defence organisational performance, making their work particularly relevant to this paper's focus on CDRS.

Therefore, this literature review supports the proposed conceptual framework in which transformational leadership and transactional leadership serve as independent variables, organisational culture serves as the mediating variable, and employee performance serves as the dependent variable. The thesis also frames these same relationships through hypotheses linking transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, and employee performance in CDRS.

3. Research Gap

Although leadership styles, organisational culture, and employee performance have received growing attention in organisational and management research, the existing literature remains relatively fragmented. Several studies have examined the influence of leadership styles on employee performance and organisational outcomes across different sectors (Alghizzawi et al., 2024; Badie' Alhmoud & Al-Kasasbeh, 2024; Berisha et al., 2024; Biloa, 2023; Karie & Kulmiye, 2023; Laksmi & Surya Perdhana, 2024; Sokolic et al., 2024; Winarsih, 2024). Other studies have focused on the role of organisational culture in shaping employee behaviour, innovation, and organisational performance (Asbani et al., 2020; Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Mogaji & Dimingu, 2024; Van der Post et al., 1997). However, much of this literature has examined leadership styles, organisational culture, and employee performance as separate or direct relationships rather than integrating them into a single mediating framework.

In particular, transformational leadership and transactional leadership have often been discussed as distinct leadership approaches. Transformational leadership is commonly associated with motivation, inspiration, trust, innovation, and employee development (Chandrasekara, 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Maheshwari & Kha, 2023; Widiyanto & Wilderom, 2023), while transactional leadership is associated with structure, reward systems, supervision, compliance, and performance monitoring (AlAbri et al., 2022; Dong, 2023). Although both leadership styles may contribute to employee performance, limited studies have examined their combined effect within the same conceptual model, especially in public security and emergency-response organisations where both inspiration and discipline are required.

Furthermore, organisational culture has been recognised as an important factor linking leadership practices with employee and organisational outcomes (Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Van der Post et al., 1997). Leadership can shape organisational values, norms, expectations, and employee behaviour, while organisational culture can either strengthen or weaken the effect of leadership on performance. However, few studies have specifically examined organisational culture as a mediating variable between transformational and transactional leadership styles and employee performance. Existing studies on mediating mechanisms have often focused on related constructs such as trust, motivation, psychological capital, employee creativity, job crafting, or human resource practices rather than

organisational culture as the central mediator (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2006; Tims et al., 2013; Widiyanto & Wilderom, 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2014).

This research gap is more evident in the context of Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE. UAE-based studies have examined areas such as leadership development, innovation in public organisations, strategic human resource management, and organisational performance in civil defence institutions (Abdulla et al., 2023; Al-dhaafri, 2018; Al Hawi & Alsyouf, 2020; Hassan & Alzaabi, 2018). However, these studies do not sufficiently explain how transformational and transactional leadership styles jointly influence employee performance through organisational culture within the specific context of UAE CDRS. Given the strategic role of CDRS in public safety, emergency response, protection, and national security, this gap requires further conceptual and empirical attention.

Therefore, this paper addresses the gap by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, and employee performance in the UAE CDRS context. The framework positions transformational and transactional leadership as independent variables, organisational culture as a mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. By doing so, the paper contributes to leadership and organisational culture literature by explaining the possible direct and indirect pathways through which leadership styles may enhance employee performance in public security and emergency-service organisations.

4. Conceptual Methodology

This paper adopts a conceptual methodology to develop a theoretical framework explaining the relationships among transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, and employee performance in Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE. A conceptual methodology is appropriate for this study because the objective is not to test empirical relationships, but to synthesise existing literature and propose a logically grounded framework that can guide future empirical investigation.

The development of the framework was based on a narrative and integrative review of literature related to leadership styles, organisational culture, employee performance, public-sector management, and UAE Civil Defence organisational performance. The selected literature was reviewed to identify recurring theoretical arguments, empirical findings, and conceptual relationships among the key variables. Studies on transformational leadership were examined to understand how inspirational motivation, shared vision, employee development, and innovation may influence employee performance (Chandrasekara, 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Widiyanto & Wilderom, 2023). Similarly, studies on transactional leadership were reviewed to determine how role clarity, supervision, rewards, accountability, and performance monitoring may affect employee outcomes (AlAbri et al., 2022; Dong, 2023).

The review also considered studies on organisational culture to clarify its role as a mediating mechanism between leadership styles and employee performance. Prior studies suggest that organisational culture shapes employee behaviour, cooperation, commitment, innovation, and

organisational performance (Asbari et al., 2020; Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Van der Post et al., 1997). Therefore, organisational culture was conceptualised as a mediator because leadership practices may influence employee performance not only directly, but also indirectly through the values, norms, expectations, and behavioural patterns embedded within the organisation.

In addition, studies on employee performance and public-sector performance management were reviewed to establish the relevance of the dependent variable. Employee performance was treated as a multidimensional outcome involving service quality, task effectiveness, adaptability, commitment, and contribution to organisational objectives. This is particularly relevant in CDRS, where employee performance is connected to emergency response, safety, protection, reliability, and public welfare (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2006; Mborea & Cheruiyot, 2017; Tims et al., 2013).

The conceptual framework was developed through three main stages. First, the major constructs were identified from the literature: transformational leadership and transactional leadership as independent variables, organisational culture as the mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. Second, the theoretical relationships among these constructs were synthesised from previous studies on leadership, culture, and performance. Third, research hypotheses were formulated to represent the expected direct and indirect relationships among the variables.

This conceptual approach enables the paper to organise existing knowledge into a coherent framework suitable for the UAE CDRS context. It also provides a foundation for future empirical testing using quantitative methods such as survey research and structural equation modelling. Therefore, the proposed framework should be understood as a theory-building contribution that requires subsequent empirical validation among CDRS employees in the UAE.

5. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for examining the relationships among transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, and employee performance within Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE. The framework is developed on the assumption that leadership styles influence employee performance both directly and indirectly through organisational culture. Prior studies suggest that leadership styles are important predictors of employee and organisational outcomes (Alghizzawi et al., 2024; Berisha et al., 2024; Biloa, 2023; Karie & Kulmiye, 2023), while organisational culture plays an important role in shaping employee behaviour and performance (Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Van der Post et al., 1997). The proposed conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

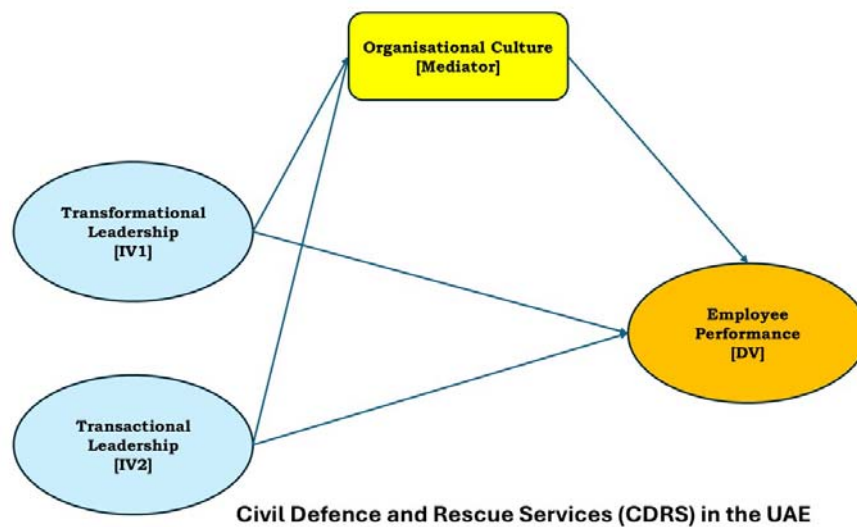


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework

5.1 Independent Variables

The independent variables in the proposed framework are transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership refers to leadership behaviour that inspires, motivates, and develops employees by promoting shared vision, trust, commitment, and innovation. This leadership style is relevant to employee performance because transformational leaders can encourage employees to exceed ordinary expectations, take initiative, and become more engaged in their work (Chandrasekara, 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Widiyanto & Wilderom, 2023).

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, refers to leadership behaviour based on structure, supervision, rewards, corrective actions, and performance expectations. It is particularly useful in organisations where discipline, compliance, and task clarity are required. This leadership style can support employee performance by clarifying duties, monitoring work outcomes, and rewarding employees for achieving expected standards (AlAbri et al., 2022; Dong, 2023). In the CDRS context, both leadership styles are important because civil defence work requires a combination of motivation, adaptability, discipline, and operational control.

5.2 Mediating Variable

The mediating variable in the framework is organisational culture. Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, rules, and behavioural expectations that guide how employees act within an organisation. It shapes the internal environment through which leadership practices are interpreted and translated into employee behaviour. Previous studies have shown that organisational culture is closely related to leadership and performance outcomes (Asbari et al., 2020; Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Mogaji & Dimingu, 2024).

In this framework, organisational culture is proposed as the mechanism through which leadership styles influence employee performance. Transformational leadership may create a culture of trust, innovation, commitment, and shared responsibility, while transactional leadership may create a culture of accountability, discipline, role clarity, and performance monitoring. Therefore, organisational culture is expected to strengthen the link between leadership styles and employee performance in CDRS.

5.3 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is employee performance. Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively carry out their duties and contribute to organisational objectives. In the context of CDRS, employee performance is especially important because civil defence employees are responsible for emergency response, public safety, protection of lives and properties, and national security support. Public-sector performance studies emphasise that employee performance must be managed and measured carefully because it directly affects service quality and institutional effectiveness (Mborea & Cheruiyot, 2017).

Employee performance may be influenced by leadership practices, organisational systems, motivation, and workplace culture. For example, effective leadership can improve employee attitudes and behaviours, while strong organisational culture can reinforce commitment and performance expectations (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2006; Tims et al., 2013). Therefore, this framework positions employee performance as the final outcome influenced by transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and organisational culture.

6. Research Propositions / Hypotheses

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, this paper develops a set of research hypotheses explaining the relationships among transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, and employee performance in Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE. The hypotheses are structured around three main relationships: the direct effect of leadership styles on employee performance, the effect of leadership styles on organisational culture, and the mediating role of organisational culture in the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance.

6.1 Leadership Styles and Employee Performance

Transformational leadership is expected to have a positive influence on employee performance. Transformational leaders motivate employees by communicating a clear vision, encouraging commitment, supporting innovation, and developing employees' confidence and capabilities. Previous studies indicate that transformational leadership is associated with job satisfaction, work engagement, job crafting, psychological capital, and improved employee performance (Chandrasekara, 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Widiyanto & Wilderom, 2023). In the CDRS context, transformational leadership may encourage employees to perform beyond minimum expectations, especially in situations requiring commitment, adaptability, and public service responsibility.

H1: Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance in

CDRS in the UAE.

Transactional leadership is also expected to influence employee performance. Transactional leaders clarify roles, set performance expectations, monitor employee behaviour, and provide rewards or corrective actions based on performance outcomes. This style is particularly relevant in structured organisations where discipline, accountability, and compliance are important. Studies have linked transactional leadership with employee efficiency, adaptive performance, and organisational outcomes (AlAbri et al., 2022; Dong, 2023). In CDRS, transactional leadership may improve employee performance by reinforcing operational procedures, role clarity, and performance standards.

H2: Transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance in CDRS in the UAE.

6.2 Leadership Styles and Organisational Culture

Transformational leadership is expected to influence organisational culture because leaders shape values, norms, expectations, and shared meanings within the organisation. Transformational leaders may develop a culture that encourages trust, innovation, commitment, learning, and shared responsibility. Such cultural conditions are important in emergency-service organisations because employees must coordinate effectively and respond to complex operational challenges. Prior studies suggest that leadership style plays an important role in shaping organisational culture and performance outcomes (Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Mogaji & Dimingu, 2024).

H3: Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on organisational culture in CDRS in the UAE.

Transactional leadership may also shape organisational culture, but through different mechanisms. By emphasising rules, rewards, supervision, standards, and corrective actions, transactional leaders may create a culture of accountability, discipline, compliance, and performance orientation. Such a culture can be important in CDRS because emergency response work requires consistency, procedural accuracy, and clear authority structures. Therefore, transactional leadership is expected to contribute to the development of an organisational culture that supports order and performance control.

H4: Transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on organisational culture in CDRS in the UAE.

6.3 Organisational Culture and Employee Performance

Organisational culture is expected to have a significant effect on employee performance. A strong organisational culture provides employees with shared values, behavioural expectations, and a sense of direction. It can encourage cooperation, commitment, innovation, accountability, and service quality. Previous studies have shown that organisational culture is related to employee performance and organisational outcomes (Asbari et al., 2020; Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Van der Post et al., 1997). In CDRS, organisational culture may be especially important because employee performance is connected to safety,

protection, emergency responsiveness, and public welfare.

H5: Organisational culture has a significant positive effect on employee performance in CDRS in the UAE.

6.4 Mediating Role of Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is proposed as a mediating variable between leadership styles and employee performance. This means that leadership styles may influence employee performance not only directly, but also indirectly through the organisational culture created by leaders. Transformational leadership may improve employee performance by developing a culture of trust, commitment, innovation, and shared purpose. In contrast, transactional leadership may improve employee performance by creating a culture of discipline, accountability, compliance, and performance monitoring.

Previous research suggests that leadership and culture are closely connected and that organisational culture can influence performance outcomes (Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Mogaji & Dimingu, 2024). In addition, studies on employee performance indicate that performance is shaped by organisational systems, motivation, work practices, and workplace conditions (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2006; Tims et al., 2013). Therefore, organisational culture may serve as the pathway through which leadership practices are translated into improved employee performance.

H6: Organisational culture mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in CDRS in the UAE.

H7: Organisational culture mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance in CDRS in the UAE.

Table 1. Summary of proposed hypotheses

Hypothesis	Proposed Relationship
H1	Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance.
H2	Transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance.
H3	Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on organisational culture.
H4	Transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on organisational culture.
H5	Organisational culture has a significant positive effect on employee performance.
H6	Organisational culture mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance.
H7	Organisational culture mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance.

7. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

This paper contributes to leadership and organisational behaviour literature by proposing an integrated conceptual framework that links transformational leadership, transactional leadership, organisational culture, and employee performance within the context of Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE. While previous studies have examined the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes (Alghizzawi et al., 2024; Berisha et al., 2024; Biloa, 2023; Karie & Kulmiye, 2023), fewer studies have examined how transformational and transactional leadership jointly influence employee performance through organisational culture, particularly in emergency-service and civil defence institutions.

First, the framework extends leadership theory by positioning transformational and transactional leadership as complementary rather than competing leadership styles. Transformational leadership is associated with inspiration, motivation, innovation, and employee development (Chandrasekara, 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Widiyanto & Wilderom, 2023), while transactional leadership is associated with structure, role clarity, performance monitoring, and reward-based motivation (AlAbri et al., 2022; Dong, 2023). By incorporating both styles into one framework, this paper provides a more balanced theoretical explanation of leadership in CDRS, where employees require both motivational support and operational discipline.

Second, the framework contributes to organisational culture literature by conceptualising organisational culture as a mediating mechanism between leadership styles and employee performance. Previous studies have shown that organisational culture influences employee behaviour and organisational outcomes (Asbari et al., 2020; Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Van der Post et al., 1997). However, this paper advances the discussion by arguing that leadership styles may influence employee performance not only directly but also indirectly through the values, norms, expectations, and behavioural patterns embedded in organisational culture.

Third, this paper contributes to public-sector and security-service research by applying leadership and organisational culture concepts to the UAE CDRS context. Much of the leadership literature has focused on business, education, hospitality, and general public-sector organisations (Badie' Alhmoud & Al-Kasasbeh, 2024; Gomes & Maia, 2023; Maheshwari & Kha, 2023; Sokolic et al., 2024). By focusing on CDRS, the proposed framework responds to the need for context-specific models that reflect the realities of emergency response, public safety, discipline, coordination, and service reliability. In doing so, the framework offers a theoretical basis for future studies on leadership, culture, and employee performance in civil defence and emergency-service organisations.

7.2 Practical Contributions

The proposed framework also offers practical value for CDRS leaders, policymakers, and human resource managers in the UAE. Since CDRS employees operate in a

high-responsibility environment, effective leadership is essential for strengthening safety, protection, responsiveness, and service quality. The framework suggests that improving employee performance requires more than individual supervision; it also requires leadership practices that shape a supportive and performance-oriented organisational culture.

First, the framework can help CDRS leaders understand the different practical roles of transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership may be useful for building commitment, trust, motivation, innovation, and adaptability among employees. This is important in emergency-service organisations where employees must respond effectively to complex and unpredictable situations. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, may be useful for strengthening discipline, role clarity, accountability, and compliance with operational procedures. Therefore, CDRS managers should not rely exclusively on one leadership style but should balance transformational and transactional practices according to operational needs.

Second, the framework highlights the importance of organisational culture as a management priority. If leaders want to improve employee performance, they must pay attention to the values, norms, and expectations that guide employee behaviour. A strong organisational culture can reinforce teamwork, responsibility, discipline, service commitment, and innovation. This is consistent with studies showing that leadership style and organisational culture influence employee and organisational performance (Bautista & Uy, 2023; Budi Cahyono & Nur, 2023; Mogaji & Dimingu, 2024). For CDRS, such a culture can support better emergency response, stronger coordination, and improved public safety outcomes.

Third, the framework can guide leadership development and training programmes in UAE CDRS. Training should not only focus on technical or operational skills but also on leadership behaviours that improve employee motivation, communication, ethical conduct, and cultural alignment. This is relevant because leadership development has become increasingly important in UAE organisations (Abdulla et al., 2023), and public organisations in the UAE are under pressure to innovate and improve institutional performance (Al Hawi & Alsyouf, 2020). By using the proposed framework, CDRS can design leadership programmes that develop both transformational and transactional capabilities.

Finally, the framework may assist policymakers and senior CDRS administrators in diagnosing performance challenges. If employee performance is weak, the issue may not only be related to individual skills or resources; it may also reflect leadership practices and organisational culture. Therefore, the framework provides a practical tool for identifying whether performance improvement should focus on leadership development, cultural change, performance management systems, or a combination of these areas. This is particularly relevant to UAE civil defence institutions, where organisational performance and strategic management have already been identified as important areas of concern (Al-dhaafri, 2018; Hassan & Alzaabi, 2018).

8. Conclusion

This paper proposed a conceptual framework for examining the relationships among

leadership styles, organisational culture, and employee performance in Civil Defence and Rescue Services (CDRS) in the UAE. The framework positions transformational leadership and transactional leadership as independent variables, organisational culture as a mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. The central argument is that leadership styles may influence employee performance directly and indirectly through the organisational culture developed within CDRS.

The value of the proposed framework lies in its integrated approach. Rather than examining leadership styles, culture, and performance separately, the framework explains how these variables may interact within a public security and emergency-service context. Transformational leadership may improve employee performance by inspiring employees, promoting innovation, and strengthening commitment. Transactional leadership may enhance performance by clarifying expectations, reinforcing accountability, and supporting procedural compliance. Organisational culture may then serve as the mechanism through which these leadership practices are translated into shared values, behavioural norms, and improved employee outcomes.

The framework is particularly relevant to CDRS because civil defence work requires both adaptability and discipline. Employees must be motivated to respond effectively to emergencies, but they must also comply with rules, procedures, and performance standards. Therefore, a balanced leadership approach supported by a strong organisational culture may be essential for improving employee performance, service reliability, and public safety outcomes in the UAE.

Future research should empirically test the proposed framework using data from CDRS employees in the UAE. Quantitative studies may examine the direct effects of transformational and transactional leadership on employee performance, as well as the mediating effect of organisational culture. Structural equation modelling could be used to assess the strength and significance of the proposed relationships. Future studies may also compare different CDRS departments, ranks, or emirates to determine whether the framework operates differently across organisational levels or operational contexts. Such empirical testing would strengthen the theoretical validity and practical usefulness of the framework and provide evidence-based guidance for leadership development and performance improvement in UAE Civil Defence and Rescue Services.

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