

Strategic Conditions and Transformational Leadership: The Mediating Role of Strategic Management in a UAE Public-Sector Organisation

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Abstract

Public sector organisations increasingly face demands for digital transformation, institutional excellence, service improvement, and adaptive capability. Although strategic management and transformational leadership have been widely studied, limited research has examined how strategic conditions are translated into transformational leadership outcomes through organisational processes. This study addresses this gap by investigating the mediating role of strategic management in the relationship between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style in a United Arab Emirates (UAE) public sector organisation. Drawing on contingency theory, the resource-based view, and transformational leadership theory, this study develops and tests a mediation model in which strategic conditions represent the organisational and environmental foundation, strategic management represents the enabling process, and transformational leadership represents the leadership outcome. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey of 357 employees from the Sharjah Real Estate Registration Department and analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings demonstrate that strategic conditions significantly enhance strategic management capability. Strategic management, in turn, has a significant positive effect on transformational leadership style. Although strategic conditions also have a

direct effect on transformational leadership, the relationship is substantially strengthened through strategic management, which partially mediates the relationship between the two constructs. These findings indicate that transformational leadership in public organisations is not solely dependent on individual leader characteristics but is also enabled by strategic processes that provide direction, coordination, performance information, and organisational learning. This study contributes to public sector management literature by integrating strategic management and transformational leadership perspectives and identifying strategic management as the mechanism through which organisational conditions are converted into leadership capability. The findings highlight that public organisations seeking transformational leadership outcomes should not focus only on leadership development but should also strengthen the strategic conditions and management processes that enable leaders to mobilise employees and implement organisational change.

Keywords: strategic conditions, strategic management, transformational leadership, public sector organisations, UAE, PLS-SEM, mediation

1. Introduction

Public sector organisations worldwide are increasingly operating in environments characterised by institutional complexity, technological disruption, changing stakeholder expectations, and growing demands for improved service delivery. These pressures have transformed public organisations from traditional administrative entities into strategic actors expected to demonstrate adaptability, innovation, and long-term organisational capability. Consequently, strategic management has become an essential capability for public organisations seeking to align internal resources with external demands, translate strategic priorities into implementation, and improve organisational effectiveness (Bryson, 2018; Bryson & George, 2020; Poister et al., 2010).

Unlike private organisations, public sector organisations must pursue strategic objectives while simultaneously maintaining accountability, regulatory compliance, legitimacy, and public value. This complexity requires strategic management approaches that extend beyond formal planning activities and incorporate organisational capabilities, stakeholder alignment, implementation processes, and continuous learning (Bryson et al., 2018; George, 2021). Previous research has demonstrated that strategic planning and implementation can contribute to improved public organisational performance; however, achieving these outcomes depends on the organisational conditions that enable strategy to be effectively developed and executed (George et al., 2019; Elbanna et al., 2016).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) provides a particularly relevant context for examining strategic management and leadership within the public sector. UAE government organisations have pursued ambitious transformation agendas centred on digitalisation, innovation, institutional excellence, and service improvement. These developments have increased the importance of strategic capability and leadership capacity as public organisations seek to balance transformation objectives with operational reliability and regulatory responsibilities. Research on UAE public sector organisations has highlighted the importance of strategic management processes, innovation systems, and digital capabilities in supporting organisational transformation (Elbanna, 2013; Al Maazmi et al., 2024; Alfaqaei et al., 2024).

Within this changing environment, transformational leadership has become an important capability for public organisations. Transformational leaders are expected to communicate vision, inspire employees, encourage innovation, and facilitate organisational change while maintaining public value and institutional stability (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Existing public sector leadership research demonstrates that transformational leadership contributes to organisational effectiveness by influencing employee engagement, performance information use, and change-oriented behaviours (Wright & Pandey, 2010; Moynihan et al., 2012). However, leadership effectiveness is not solely determined by individual leader characteristics; it is also influenced by the organisational systems and strategic processes within which leaders operate (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022).

Despite extensive research on strategic management and transformational leadership, these two streams of literature have largely developed independently. Strategic management research has primarily examined strategy formulation, implementation, and organisational

performance (Bryson & George, 2020; Poister et al., 2010), whereas transformational leadership research has focused mainly on leader behaviours, follower motivation, and leadership outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Wright & Pandey, 2010). This separation creates an important theoretical limitation because leadership behaviours do not emerge in isolation; rather, they are shaped by organisational conditions, strategic processes, and institutional environments.

More specifically, limited research has examined **how strategic conditions are translated into transformational leadership outcomes**. Organisational readiness, leadership alignment, digital capability, operational support, and external strategic alignment may provide the foundation for effective leadership, but these conditions alone may not automatically produce transformational behaviours. A critical unanswered question remains: **through what organisational mechanism are strategic conditions converted into transformational leadership capability?**

This study addresses this gap by positioning **strategic management as a mediating mechanism** between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style. Drawing on contingency theory (Donaldson, 2001), the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), and transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985), this study argues that strategic conditions provide the organisational foundation, while strategic management represents the process through which these conditions are transformed into leadership outcomes. Through strategic activities such as environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, performance monitoring, and strategic learning, organisations develop the structures and processes that enable leaders to communicate strategic direction, motivate employees, encourage innovation, and support organisational transformation.

This study makes three contributions to existing literature. First, it extends strategic management research by moving beyond examining strategic processes as direct predictors of organisational outcomes and demonstrating their role as an explanatory mechanism linking organisational conditions with leadership outcomes. Second, it contributes to transformational leadership research by demonstrating that leadership effectiveness is not solely an individual-level phenomenon but is also enabled by organisational strategic processes. Third, it advances public sector management research by providing empirical evidence from a UAE public sector organisation, thereby extending knowledge beyond the Western contexts that dominate much of the existing strategic management and leadership literature.

Accordingly, this study examines the relationships among strategic conditions, strategic management, and transformational leadership style in a UAE public sector organisation. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do strategic conditions influence strategic management in a UAE public sector organisation?
- **RQ2:** How does strategic management influence transformational leadership style?
- **RQ3:** Do strategic conditions directly influence transformational leadership style?

- **RQ4:** Does strategic management mediate the relationship between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style?

To answer these questions, this study develops and tests a mediation model using survey data collected from employees of the Sharjah Real Estate Registration Department (SRERD), a specialised public sector organisation in the United Arab Emirates. By examining strategic management as the mechanism connecting strategic conditions and transformational leadership, this study provides a more integrated understanding of how public organisations develop leadership capability through strategic processes.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Public sector organisations increasingly operate within environments characterised by institutional complexity, technological transformation, stakeholder demands, and continuous expectations for improved service delivery. Unlike private organisations, public agencies must pursue strategic objectives while simultaneously maintaining accountability, regulatory legitimacy, and public value. These conditions require strategic management approaches that extend beyond formal planning activities and incorporate organisational capabilities, implementation processes, stakeholder alignment, and continuous adaptation (Bryson, 2018; Bryson & George, 2020; Poister et al., 2010).

This context is particularly evident in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where government organisations have prioritised strategic capability development, digital transformation, innovation, and service excellence as part of broader administrative reform initiatives. Recent studies of UAE public organisations highlight the importance of strategic management capability, innovation systems, and digital infrastructure in enabling government transformation (Elbanna, 2013; Al Maazmi et al., 2024; Alfaqaei et al., 2024). However, strategic capability does not emerge solely from the existence of formal strategic plans. Rather, it depends on the organisational and environmental conditions that enable strategies to be developed, implemented, monitored, and adapted effectively (Bryson et al., 2018; George, 2021).

This study conceptualises strategic conditions as the organisational and environmental foundation that shapes strategic management effectiveness. These conditions include organisational readiness, leadership and internal alignment, digital and operational support, and external strategic alignment. Strategic management is subsequently positioned as the organisational process through which these conditions are mobilised and translated into transformational leadership outcomes.

Drawing on contingency theory (Donaldson, 2001), the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985), and public sector strategic management perspectives (Bryson & George, 2020), this study proposes that strategic conditions influence transformational leadership through strategic management as a mediating mechanism. The underlying argument is that leadership effectiveness in public organisations is not produced solely by individual leader characteristics but also emerges from the strategic systems and organisational processes that enable leaders to operate effectively.

2.1 Strategic Conditions and Strategic Management

Strategic management effectiveness depends significantly on the organisational and environmental conditions surrounding strategy development and implementation. In public organisations, strategy is embedded within institutional, technological, and organisational contexts that determine whether strategic intentions can be translated into coordinated action (Poister et al., 2010). Therefore, understanding strategic management requires attention not only to strategic activities themselves but also to the conditions that enable those activities to succeed.

This study conceptualises strategic conditions as a higher-order construct comprising four dimensions: organisational readiness, leadership and internal alignment, digital and operational support, and external strategic alignment.

Organisational readiness reflects the internal capability required to support strategic activity, including organisational culture, employee competence, resource availability, and adaptability. From a resource-based view perspective, organisational resources and capabilities provide the foundation for developing strategic capabilities and sustaining competitive or organisational advantage (Barney, 1991). In public organisations, strategy implementation requires more than formal approval; it depends on whether employees possess the capability and willingness to translate strategic priorities into operational practices.

Leadership and internal alignment represent the extent to which organisational leaders communicate strategic direction, encourage coordination, and establish shared understanding across organisational units. Public sector strategies often involve multiple stakeholders and functional areas; therefore, internal alignment is critical for ensuring that strategic objectives are understood and implemented consistently (Bryson et al., 2018). Without leadership commitment and organisational alignment, strategic plans may remain symbolic rather than becoming embedded organisational practices.

Digital and operational support has become increasingly important in public sector strategic management. Government organisations increasingly rely on digital infrastructure, information systems, and operational integration to improve service delivery, monitor performance, and respond to changing demands. Within the UAE context, digital transformation initiatives have increased the importance of technological capability as an organisational enabler of strategic implementation (Al Maazmi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, technology contributes to strategic capability only when supported by appropriate organisational processes and managerial practices.

External strategic alignment reflects the extent to which organisational priorities correspond with regulatory requirements, stakeholder expectations, and environmental changes. Public organisations operate within institutional environments where legitimacy, compliance, and stakeholder responsiveness are central considerations. Therefore, effective strategic management requires alignment between internal capabilities and external public responsibilities (Bryson & George, 2020).

From a contingency perspective, organisational effectiveness depends on the fit between

internal capabilities and environmental demands (Donaldson, 2001). Similarly, strategic management research suggests that successful strategy implementation requires alignment among people, processes, resources, and external expectations (George, 2021). Therefore, stronger strategic conditions are expected to enhance strategic management capability.

Accordingly:

H1: Strategic conditions have a significant positive effect on strategic management in a UAE public sector organisation.

2.2 Strategic Management and Transformational Leadership

Strategic management provides the organisational process through which strategic intentions are transformed into coordinated action. Contemporary public management research views strategic management as a continuous process involving environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, performance monitoring, evaluation, and strategic learning (Bryson, 2018; Poister et al., 2010). These processes enable organisations to interpret environmental changes, establish priorities, allocate resources, and improve future decision-making.

Transformational leadership refers to leadership behaviours through which leaders develop shared vision, inspire commitment, encourage innovation, provide intellectual stimulation, and support employee development (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Although transformational leadership has traditionally been examined as an individual leadership capability, public sector research increasingly recognises that leadership behaviours are shaped by organisational structures, processes, and institutional contexts (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Wright & Pandey, 2010).

In public organisations, leaders must often manage competing demands involving transformation, accountability, service quality, and institutional stability. Strategic management provides leaders with the organisational mechanisms necessary to perform these roles by establishing strategic direction, generating performance information, supporting coordination, and facilitating organisational learning (Moynihan et al., 2012).

When strategic management processes are effective, leaders have greater ability to communicate meaningful goals, align employees around shared objectives, encourage innovation, and facilitate organisational adaptation. Therefore, strategic management represents an organisational capability that strengthens transformational leadership.

Accordingly:

H2: Strategic management has a significant positive effect on transformational leadership style in a UAE public sector organisation.

2.3 Strategic Conditions and Transformational Leadership

Although strategic management represents the proposed mechanism connecting strategic conditions and transformational leadership, strategic conditions may also influence leadership outcomes directly. Leadership behaviours are embedded within organisational environments

that shape leaders' capacity to motivate employees, encourage innovation, and support organisational change.

Supportive organisational cultures, capable employees, effective communication systems, technological resources, and stakeholder alignment can create conditions that enable transformational leadership behaviours. Conversely, insufficient resources, weak internal coordination, or limited organisational readiness may constrain leaders' ability to inspire employees and implement change initiatives.

This perspective aligns with transformational leadership research, which suggests that leadership effectiveness depends not only on leader behaviours but also on contextual factors that support or restrict leadership practices (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In public organisations, where leaders operate within complex institutional environments, organisational context plays an important role in enabling transformational leadership (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Wright & Pandey, 2010).

The UAE public sector provides a particularly relevant setting because leaders are expected to support rapid transformation while maintaining service reliability, regulatory compliance, and public value. Therefore, favourable strategic conditions are expected to contribute directly to transformational leadership capability.

Accordingly:

H3: Strategic conditions have a significant positive effect on transformational leadership style in a UAE public sector organisation.

2.4 Strategic Management as a Mediating Mechanism

Although strategic conditions may directly influence transformational leadership, this study argues that strategic management represents the primary mechanism through which these conditions are converted into leadership outcomes.

A mediation perspective suggests that organisational conditions do not automatically produce transformational leadership behaviours. Instead, favourable conditions create the foundation for effective strategic management processes, which subsequently enable leaders to communicate vision, coordinate action, encourage innovation, and support organisational learning.

Strategic management provides the organisational architecture through which leaders interpret environmental changes, establish priorities, implement strategies, monitor performance, and learn from experience. In public organisations, these processes are particularly important because strategic ambitions must be translated into practical actions while maintaining institutional legitimacy and stakeholder trust (Bryson & George, 2020).

By positioning strategic management as a mediator, this study extends existing research by explaining how organisational resources and contextual conditions become transformed into leadership capability. Rather than viewing strategic management and transformational leadership as separate domains, this study proposes that strategic processes provide the bridge

connecting organisational context with leadership behaviour.

Accordingly:

H4: Strategic management mediates the relationship between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style in a UAE public sector organisation.

2.5 Conceptual Model

Based on the theoretical arguments above, this study proposes that strategic conditions influence transformational leadership style through strategic management. Strategic conditions represent the antecedent organisational and environmental context, strategic management represents the mediating organisational process, and transformational leadership style represents the resulting leadership outcome. The proposed model is presented in Figure 1.

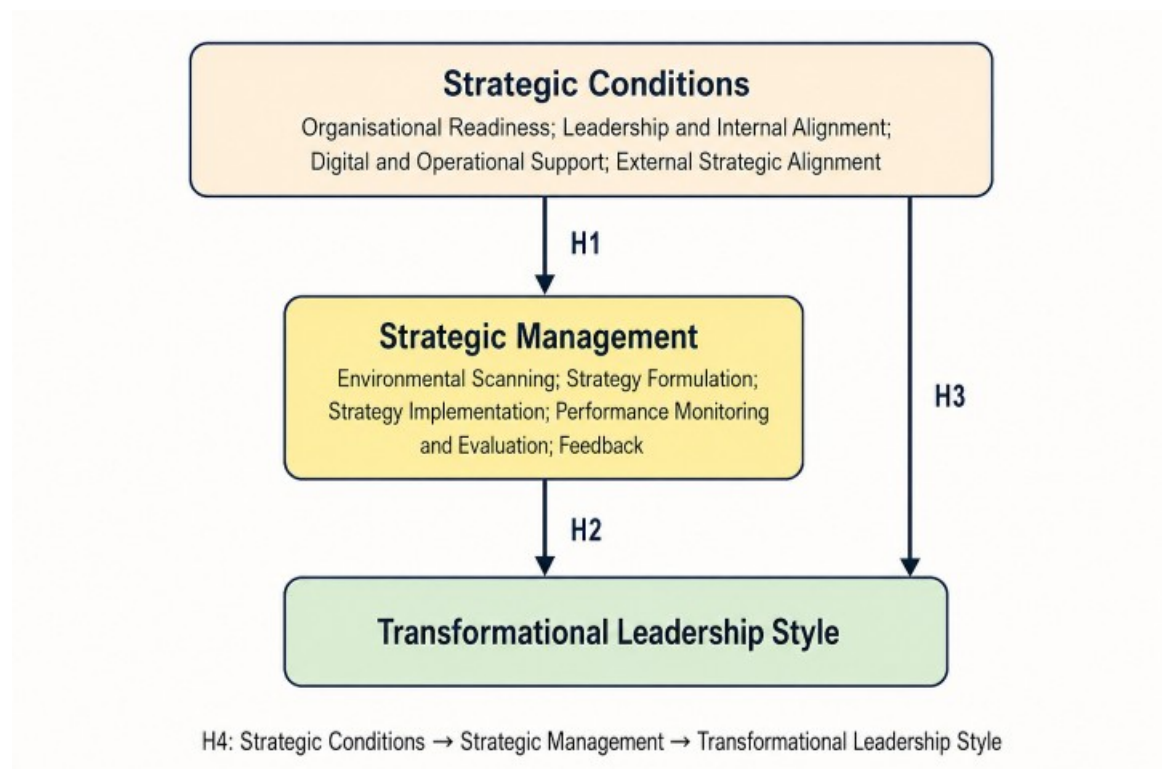


Figure 1. Proposed mediation model linking strategic conditions, strategic management, and transformational leadership style

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Context

This study adopted a positivist, deductive, and quantitative research design to examine the relationships among strategic conditions, strategic management, and transformational

leadership style. A cross-sectional survey approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to test a theoretically derived mediation model by examining hypothesised relationships among latent constructs using data collected from organisational respondents at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders et al., 2023).

The research was conducted in the Sharjah Real Estate Registration Department (SRERD), a specialised public sector organisation in the United Arab Emirates. SRERD provides an appropriate empirical setting because its operations involve regulatory compliance, property-related services, stakeholder coordination, digital service delivery, and administrative performance. These characteristics reflect the complex environment faced by contemporary public organisations, where strategic management capability is required to align organisational resources with institutional expectations and service demands (Bryson, 2018; Elbanna, 2013).

The unit of analysis was the individual employee. The target population consisted of 675 management and supervisory employees whose responsibilities provided sufficient exposure to strategic activities, organisational coordination, implementation processes, performance monitoring, and leadership practices. A total of 357 usable responses were obtained and included in the final analysis.

3.2 Instrument and Measures

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure strategic conditions, strategic management, and transformational leadership style. The instrument comprised 65 measurement items (five items for each construct) assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The measurement items were adapted from established studies and refined to reflect the institutional and operational context of the Sharjah Real Estate Registration Department. Table 1 summarises the measurement specification, dimensions, and validation procedures for each construct.

Strategic conditions were modelled as a formative higher-order construct comprising organisational readiness, leadership and internal alignment, digital and operational support, and external strategic alignment. The formative specification was adopted because these dimensions represent distinct and complementary organisational conditions that collectively define the strategic environment. Changes in one dimension do not necessarily result in corresponding changes in the remaining dimensions. For example, an organisation may demonstrate strong digital capability while experiencing limited organisational readiness or insufficient internal alignment. Therefore, the formative approach is theoretically appropriate because the dimensions collectively contribute to the formation of strategic conditions (Becker et al., 2012; Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009).

Strategic management was specified as a reflective higher-order construct consisting of environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, performance monitoring and evaluation, and feedback and strategic learning. This specification assumes that these dimensions represent manifestations of an underlying strategic management capability. Consequently, improvements in strategic management capability are expected to

be reflected in enhanced environmental analysis, strategic planning, implementation effectiveness, performance assessment, and organisational learning.

However, the possibility of alternative specification should be acknowledged. Strategic management may also be interpreted as a composite process where its dimensions jointly define the construct rather than reflect an underlying capability. The reflective specification was retained in this study because the dimensions were conceptualised as interconnected expressions of an integrated strategic capability. Future research should compare reflective and formative models to determine the most appropriate representation of strategic management in different organisational contexts.

Transformational leadership style was operationalised as a reflective construct comprising idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. These dimensions represent established behavioural manifestations of transformational leadership and were derived from the foundational work of Bass (1985) and Bass and Riggio (2006).

Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire underwent content and face validity assessment. Ten experts reviewed the measurement items to evaluate their relevance, clarity, wording, and suitability for the research context. A pilot study involving 30 respondents was subsequently conducted to assess questionnaire clarity, completion time, and preliminary reliability. Based on expert feedback and pilot-test results, three items were revised before the final questionnaire administration.

Table 1. Measurement development and construct specification

Construct	Measurement specification	Dimensions	Validation procedure
Strategic conditions	Formative higher-order construct	1. Organisational Readiness	Content and face validity assessment by 10 experts, followed by pilot testing with 30 respondents
		2. Leadership and Internal Alignment	
Strategic management	Reflective higher-order construct	3. Digital and Operational Support	
		4. External Strategic Alignment	
Transformational leadership style	Reflective construct	1. Environmental Scanning	
		2. Strategy Formulation	
		3. Strategy Implementation	
		4. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation	
		5. Feedback and Strategic Learning	
		1. Idealised Influence	
		2. Inspirational Motivation	
		3. Intellectual Stimulation	
		4. Individualised Consideration	

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

The target population comprised 675 management and supervisory employees of the Sharjah Real Estate Registration Department whose responsibilities provided exposure to strategic planning, implementation, organisational coordination, performance monitoring, and leadership practices. The study employed [insert sampling method, such as purposive, stratified, census, or simple random sampling] to identify eligible participants.

A total of [insert number] questionnaires were distributed, of which [insert number] were returned. After data screening, 357 usable responses were retained, representing a response rate of [insert percentage] and a usable response rate of [insert percentage]. The sample size was considered adequate for the proposed PLS-SEM model based on [insert the actual justification used, such as power analysis, inverse square root method, gamma-exponential method, or minimum sample recommendations].

Data collection was conducted following institutional approval and organisational procedures. Participants were informed of the academic purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw without consequence.

Before analysis, the responses were screened for missing values, incomplete submissions, inconsistent response patterns, and potential outliers. Cases were classified as incomplete when [insert criterion]. Inconsistent responses were identified using [insert criterion, such as straight-lining, unusually short completion time, or contradictory responses]. Univariate outliers were assessed using [insert criterion], while multivariate outliers were evaluated using [insert procedure, if applicable]. Missing values in retained cases were treated using [insert method]. Following these procedures, [insert number] cases were excluded and 357 responses were retained.

3.4 Common-Method Bias Assessment

Because the study relied on self-reported data collected from a single source at one point in time, procedural and statistical measures were used to reduce and assess common-method bias. Procedurally, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, construct sections were separated, ambiguous wording was minimised, and participants were informed that there were no correct or incorrect responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Harman's single-factor test was conducted as an initial diagnostic assessment. The first unrotated factor accounted for [insert percentage] of the total variance, indicating that no single factor dominated the covariance among the measures. However, Harman's test has limited sensitivity and cannot, by itself, rule out common-method bias.

Where available, the manuscript should additionally report full-collinearity variance inflation factors following Kock (2015). The full-collinearity VIF values ranged from [insert minimum] to [insert maximum]. Because all values were below [insert threshold used], common-method bias was not considered a serious threat to the findings. Accordingly, common-method bias cannot be completely excluded, and the reliance on Harman's single-factor test should be

recognised as a methodological limitation.

3.5 Data Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling through SmartPLS. PLS-SEM was selected because the model included higher-order constructs, formative and reflective measurement specifications, and direct and indirect structural relationships (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2019).

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the measurement models were evaluated. Reflective constructs were assessed using outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio. The formative higher-order strategic conditions construct was evaluated using collinearity diagnostics, formative weights, loadings, and statistical significance.

Second, the structural model was assessed using inner-model VIF values, path coefficients, coefficients of determination, effect sizes, and predictive relevance. Statistical significance was evaluated using bootstrapping with [insert actual number] resamples. The analysis reported path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and bias-corrected confidence intervals.

The mediating effect of strategic management was evaluated through the specific indirect effect of strategic conditions on transformational leadership style. Mediation was determined by examining the significance and direction of both the indirect and direct effects. A significant positive indirect effect accompanied by a significant positive direct effect was interpreted as complementary partial mediation (Sarstedt et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2010).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with applicable university ethical requirements and organisational approval procedures. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to decline participation without consequence. All responses were treated confidentially and analysed in aggregate form. No personally identifiable information was included in the analysis or reporting, and the collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

4. Results

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

The study obtained **357 valid responses** from employees of the Sharjah Real Estate Registration Department (SRERD). The respondents represented different organisational functions and hierarchical levels, including administrative, technical, supervisory, and managerial positions. This diversity provided adequate representation of employees involved in strategic activities and leadership practices, supporting the suitability of the sample for examining the proposed relationships among strategic conditions, strategic management, and transformational leadership style.

Before conducting the PLS-SEM analysis, preliminary data screening was performed to

assess the quality and suitability of the dataset. The responses were examined for missing values, incomplete submissions, inconsistent response patterns, and potential outliers. Following this assessment, no problematic cases were identified, and all 357 responses were retained for subsequent analysis.

Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the characteristics and distribution of the study constructs. As presented in Table 2, the mean values of strategic conditions, strategic management, and transformational leadership style were above the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale, indicating generally favourable perceptions among respondents. The standard deviations indicated an acceptable level of response variation, while the skewness and kurtosis values fell within acceptable ranges, suggesting that the data did not demonstrate severe distributional concerns.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the principal constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Strategic conditions	3.364	0.669	−0.066	−0.483
Strategic management	3.445	0.627	−0.224	−0.407
Transformational leadership style	3.450	0.640	−0.048	−0.417

Because the study relied on self-reported data collected through a single questionnaire, potential common method bias was considered. Following recommended procedures, procedural remedies were applied during questionnaire administration, including assuring respondents of confidentiality and anonymity, separating construct sections, and clarifying that there were no right or wrong responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition, Harman's single-factor test was conducted as a diagnostic assessment. The results indicated that no single factor accounted for a substantial proportion of the total variance, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to materially influence the findings. Overall, the preliminary assessment confirmed the adequacy of the dataset for subsequent evaluation of the measurement and structural models using PLS-SEM.

4.2 Higher-Order Measurement Model Assessment

Following validation of the lower-order constructs, the higher-order constructs were assessed according to their respective formative and reflective specifications. Strategic conditions were modelled as a formative higher-order construct comprising organisational readiness, leadership and internal alignment, digital and operational support, and external strategic alignment. The VIF values ranged from 1.090 to 1.161, indicating that collinearity among the formative dimensions was not a concern. All four dimensions demonstrated positive and statistically significant weights, confirming that each made a distinct contribution to the strategic conditions construct.

Digital and operational support recorded the largest formative weight of 0.293, followed by leadership and internal alignment at 0.278, organisational readiness at 0.275, and external

strategic alignment at 0.268. The relatively similar weights indicate that strategic conditions are formed through the combined contribution of internal readiness, leadership alignment, technological support, and external responsiveness.

Strategic management and transformational leadership style were assessed as reflective higher-order constructs. Strategic management recorded dimension loadings ranging from 0.656 to 0.705, Cronbach's alpha of 0.703, composite reliability of 0.808, and AVE of 0.458. Transformational leadership style recorded dimension loadings ranging from 0.602 to 0.740, Cronbach's alpha of 0.568, composite reliability of 0.755, and AVE of 0.437.

The composite reliability values exceeded 0.70, indicating acceptable composite reliability. However, the AVE values for both higher-order constructs were below the recommended threshold of 0.50. Strategic management and transformational leadership style therefore demonstrated only partial convergent validity at the higher-order level. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.568 for transformational leadership style indicates limited internal consistency among its higher-order dimensions.

These limitations should not be obscured by the acceptable composite reliability values. The findings involving strategic management and transformational leadership should therefore be interpreted cautiously. The lower AVE and alpha values suggest that the dimensions may not represent interchangeable manifestations of their respective higher-order constructs as strongly as expected.

The constructs were retained because their dimensions were theoretically meaningful, their composite reliability values were acceptable, and their loadings were positive and substantively interpretable. Nevertheless, future research should reassess the weaker dimensions, refine the measurement items, and evaluate alternative higher-order specifications. Any removal of dimensions or re-specification of the constructs should be theoretically justified rather than based solely on statistical improvement.

Overall, the lower-order constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, while the higher-order reflective constructs demonstrated acceptable composite reliability but only partial convergent validity. The structural results should therefore be interpreted in light of these measurement limitations.

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated using inner-model collinearity, path coefficients, explanatory power, effect sizes, predictive relevance, and bootstrapping. The VIF value for strategic conditions as a predictor of strategic management was 1.000. The VIF values for strategic conditions and strategic management as predictors of transformational leadership style were both 2.058. These values indicate that structural collinearity was not a concern.

Bootstrapping with [insert actual number] resamples was used to test the hypotheses. As shown in Table 3, strategic conditions had a strong positive association with strategic management, supporting H1. Strategic management was positively associated with transformational leadership style, supporting H2. Strategic conditions also retained a smaller

positive direct association with transformational leadership style, supporting H3.

Table 3. Structural relationships and hypothesis outcomes

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Strategic conditions → Strategic management	0.717	19.354	<0.001	Supported
H2	Strategic management → Transformational leadership style	0.558	10.140	<0.001	Supported
H3	Strategic conditions → Transformational leadership style	0.172	3.129	0.003	Supported
H4	Strategic conditions → Strategic management → Transformational leadership style	0.400	9.496	<0.001	Supported

The model explained 51.4% of the variance in strategic management and 47.9% of the variance in transformational leadership style. Strategic conditions had a large effect on strategic management, while strategic management had a moderate effect on transformational leadership style. The remaining direct effect of strategic conditions on transformational leadership style was small. The Q^2 values were greater than zero for both endogenous constructs, indicating predictive relevance within the analysed sample.

Table 4. Explanatory power, effect sizes, and predictive relevance

Endogenous construct	R^2	Predictor	f^2	Q^2
Strategic management	0.514	Strategic conditions	1.058	0.507
Transformational leadership style	0.479	Strategic conditions	0.027	0.471
Transformational leadership style	0.479	Strategic management	0.292	0.471

4.4 Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of strategic management was evaluated using the specific indirect effect. Strategic conditions were positively associated with strategic management, which was subsequently positively associated with transformational leadership style. The resulting indirect effect was positive and statistically significant, $\beta = 0.400$, $t = 9.496$, $p < 0.001$.

The direct association between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style remained statistically significant after strategic management was included in the model, $\beta = 0.172$, $t = 3.129$, $p = 0.003$. Because the direct and indirect effects were both positive and statistically significant, the findings indicate complementary partial mediation.

The total association between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style was 0.572. The indirect pathway accounted for approximately 69.9% of the total association, indicating that strategic management represented the principal statistical pathway connecting

strategic conditions with transformational leadership style.

Table 5. Mediation results

Effect	Path	β	t-value	p-value
Direct effect	Strategic conditions → Transformational leadership style	0.172	3.129	0.003
Indirect effect	Strategic conditions → Strategic management → Transformational leadership style	0.400	9.496	<0.001
Total effect	Strategic conditions → Transformational leadership style	0.572	-	-

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of the Direct Relationships

The findings indicate that strategic conditions are strongly associated with strategic management. Organisational readiness, leadership and internal alignment, digital and operational support, and external strategic alignment collectively provide a favourable context for strategic activity. This result is consistent with contingency theory, which emphasises alignment between organisational capabilities and environmental demands, and with the resource-based view, which positions organisational resources and capabilities as foundations of strategic action (Barney, 1991; Donaldson, 2001).

Strategic management was also positively associated with transformational leadership style. This finding suggests that strategic processes may provide leaders with clearer direction, performance information, coordination mechanisms, and organisational learning opportunities. These conditions can support behaviours associated with vision communication, employee engagement, innovation, and organisational change. However, the relationship should be interpreted as an association rather than definitive evidence that strategic management causes transformational leadership.

Strategic conditions retained a smaller direct association with transformational leadership style. Supportive organisational and environmental conditions may therefore facilitate leadership behaviours independently of formal strategic-management processes. Nevertheless, the relatively small effect size indicates that favourable conditions alone may be insufficient unless they are accompanied by effective strategic processes.

5.2 Interpretation of the Mediation Mechanism

The mediation result represents the principal contribution of the study. The significant indirect association indicates that strategic management statistically explains a substantial proportion of the relationship between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style. The indirect effect was considerably larger than the remaining direct effect, suggesting that strategic management is the primary pathway through which favourable organisational conditions are associated with transformational leadership.

This result integrates strategic management and leadership perspectives by showing that organisational context and leadership behaviour are connected through strategic processes. Rather than viewing transformational leadership solely as an individual characteristic, the findings suggest that leadership behaviours are embedded within organisational systems that provide direction, information, coordination, and learning.

Because the study is cross-sectional, the mediation model should be described as theoretically consistent with an enabling mechanism rather than as proof of a causal sequence. Longitudinal research is required to determine whether changes in strategic conditions precede changes in strategic management and subsequent changes in leadership behaviour.

5.3 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The study contributes theoretically by positioning strategic management as a connecting mechanism between organisational conditions and transformational leadership. It extends strategic management research beyond organisational performance outcomes and contributes to transformational leadership research by demonstrating the relevance of organisational systems and processes.

The UAE public-sector setting also contributes contextual evidence from an administrative environment characterised by digital transformation, institutional reform, service improvement, and regulatory accountability. Nevertheless, the single-organisation design limits broader generalisation.

Practically, the findings suggest that public organisations should not rely exclusively on leadership-development programmes. They should also strengthen organisational readiness, internal alignment, digital infrastructure, external responsiveness, and strategic-management processes. Such improvements may create a more supportive environment for transformational leadership behaviours. These recommendations should be implemented cautiously because the findings identify associations based on employee perceptions rather than verified causal effects.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how strategic conditions influence transformational leadership style through strategic management as a mediating mechanism in a UAE public sector organisation. By integrating strategic management and transformational leadership perspectives, the study addressed an important gap in understanding how organisational contexts and strategic processes jointly contribute to leadership capability. The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership in public organisations is not solely an individual-level phenomenon but is also shaped by the strategic systems, organisational capabilities, and managerial processes within which leaders operate.

The empirical results provide support for the proposed mediation model. Strategic conditions were found to significantly strengthen strategic management, indicating that organisational readiness, leadership and internal alignment, digital and operational support, and external strategic alignment collectively provide the foundation for effective strategic processes.

Strategic management, in turn, demonstrated a significant positive relationship with transformational leadership style, suggesting that strategic activities such as environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, performance monitoring, and strategic learning create the organisational mechanisms that enable transformational leadership behaviours to emerge.

The study further demonstrated that strategic management partially mediates the relationship between strategic conditions and transformational leadership style. This finding represents the central contribution of the study by explaining the mechanism through which organisational conditions are translated into leadership outcomes. Rather than assuming that favourable organisational conditions automatically produce transformational leadership, the findings show that strategic management acts as the connecting process that converts organisational capabilities and environmental alignment into leadership effectiveness.

The study contributes to public sector management literature by providing empirical evidence from the UAE context, where government organisations are simultaneously pursuing digital transformation, innovation, institutional excellence, and improved service delivery. The findings extend existing strategic management and leadership research by demonstrating that leadership capability can emerge through organisational processes that provide strategic direction, coordination, performance information, and learning opportunities.

From a practical perspective, public sector organisations should recognise that developing transformational leadership requires more than leadership training alone. Organisations should strengthen the strategic conditions that enable effective management processes, including employee readiness, internal alignment, digital capability, operational support, and stakeholder responsiveness. In addition, strategic management should be treated as a leadership-enabling capability rather than merely an administrative activity. Strengthening strategy processes can enhance leaders' ability to communicate vision, engage employees, and guide organisational transformation.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the constructs. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to examine how strategic conditions and strategic management capabilities develop over time and influence leadership outcomes. Second, the study was conducted within a single UAE public sector organisation, which may limit generalisability across different public institutions and national contexts. Future research could replicate the model across multiple government organisations or comparative public sector settings. Third, the study relied on employee perceptions collected through a survey approach. Future research could incorporate multiple data sources, including objective organisational performance indicators, supervisor assessments, or qualitative evidence, to provide deeper insight into the strategic processes underlying transformational leadership.

Overall, this study demonstrates that transformational leadership in public organisations is strengthened when supportive strategic conditions are effectively translated through strategic management processes. By positioning strategic management as the mechanism linking organisational context and leadership behaviour, this study provides a more integrated

explanation of how public organisations develop leadership capability in environments characterised by continuous transformation and increasing strategic demands.

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