

# Emiratisation Policy: Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction and Intentions to Continue Jobs in the Public Sector

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The workforce of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the most diverse workforces in the world. The population of expatriates has drastically expanded leading to a demographic imbalance, which has affected the UAE workplace. Domination of the UAE workforce by expatriates has resulted in some social and economic challenges in the UAE labour market. The resultant Emiratisation policy intends to protect the rights of the nationals to secure jobs and to be a significant part of private sector as well. The focus of current studies is to check recruitment decisions of employees in United Arab Emirates, as well as the impact of Emiratisation policy in expanding the interest among Emiratis to pursue and continue their career in the private sector. Therefore, the current study aims to find out the factors that affect the intentions of the nationals to continue their jobs in the private sector, particularly, the impact of salary/benefits and career development opportunities on the satisfaction level of the Emiratis working in the private sector, as well as how this satisfaction level affects their intentions to continue their jobs. A quantitative study was conducted with simple random sampling technique. Data was collected from 366 nationals working in private sectors. To analyse the results, SPSS 21 and SmartPLS3 was used. The findings clearly revealed that there is a strong positive association of the Salary/benefits and career development opportunities with the intention to continue their jobs in private sector. Furthermore, the current study will help in the identification and prioritisation of the social and economic issues that impact Emiratisation, and will also help to identify and understand the measures and incentives required for the operational implementation of labour nationalism policies throughout the United Arab Emirates. Finally, it will also add to the body of knowledge in this field.

**Key Words:** *Emiratisation, Labour nationalisation, Salary/benefits, Creeper Development Opportunities, job satisfaction, Intentions to continue.*



## INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s it was evident in Middle East that the public sector was unable to employ all freshly national graduates based on the fact that all the nationals wanted to join the public sector rather than private sector (Forstenlechner, Madi, Selim, & Rutledge, 2012). On the other side, national strategies designed to encourage the employment of nationals are popular throughout the Middle East, which results from the fact that a lot of expatriate workers have been introduced into these countries since the beginning of the state-building period. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) workforce is one of the most diverse in the world because, as the expatriate population expanded, they occupied junior and senior positions throughout the employment spectrum (Zeffane & Kemp, 2020). According to Edarabia, (2019), there are about 9.5 million people currently living in the UAE. The national population of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) makes up less than a third of the total population due to the influx of expatriates, leading to a situation where the nationals are a minority. The expatriate population currently makes up 88.52% of this population while UAE citizens account for the remaining 11.8% (Edarabia, 2019), which resulted in the excessive dependence of the state on expatriate workers, thereby creating a demographic imbalance. This imbalance has created a national identity issue as it resulted in an unemployment rate among the national population of almost 12% in 2013. In 2017, the unemployment rate amongst Emiratis increased from 2.9% to 3.4% as Emiratis preferred to remain unemployed than work in the private sector (Abbas, 2019).

As in 2018, the Dubai Statistics Centre published a labour force survey which reveals that the unemployment rate among Emirati nationals currently sits at 4% and will continue to rise. Even though only 0.5% of Dubai nationals are currently unemployed, making it the lowest in the world, the private sector still controls about 65 % of the jobs in the UAE with its workforce made up of 91% expatriates. This implies that nationals form only 8% and this figure is projected to further dip to 6% in 2020, and 3% in 2030 (Koji, 2011; Webster, 2019). The domination of the UAE workforce by expatriates resulted in the poor career advancement of UAE nationals as the labour market became segmented, such that UAE nationals worked in the public sector, while almost 99% of jobs in the private sector were staffed by expatriate workers (Ashour, 2020). This worsened the unemployment challenge as nationals who could not get jobs in the already saturated public workforce became unemployed, resulting in economic and social challenges in the UAE labour market. In response to these issues, the government of the UAE adopted the Emiratisation policy as a strategy to promote citizens' employment, overcome the structural division in the labour market, and localise its workforce (Kaabi, & Sandhu, 2018).

Additionally, the United Arab Emirates ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation grant an award to pioneers of Emiratisation in the private sector in order to encourage and stimulate them for working in the private sector in support of UAE vision 2021 for effective and efficient



contribution of emirates in the labour market of UAE. The main agendas of this award include the increased participation of the private sector in achievement national goals along with providing an attractive working environment for increasing involvement of the Emiratis in the labour market and to attain qualified national human resource in the UAE (Kaabi, & Sandhu, 2018). Moreover, there was an issue that the regional employers tended to hire expatriates rather than Emiratis. Therefore, Emiratisation policy came into being to protect the rights of the nationals to secure jobs and to be a significant part of the private sector as well. Very few studies take into consideration the UAE Nationals working in private sector (Kaabi, & Sultan, 2016; Reddy, 2019). On the other side, there are many studies which used qualitative approaches like interview-based research, focus group research (Farrell 2008; Marmenout & Lirio 2013) or conducted surveys in the public sector in UAE (Ibrahim, Al Sejini, & Al Qassimi, 2004) or UAE 's individual sectors economy etc. (Ibrahim & Perez, 2014).

To fill this gap in literature, the main theme of current research is to find out the driving forces that encourage UAE Nationals to work in private sector. Therefore, the current study aims to find out the impact of “salary benefits” and “Career Development Opportunities” provided to the nationals (because of Emiratisation policy) on their intentions to join and continue their jobs in private sector. For this, the author proposed a different hypothesis, and data was gathered from the Nationals working in different departments of the private sectors, which was analysed by applying different techniques to find out the insights. Findings of the current study will help the policymakers to develop employment policies which attract the Emiratis to join the private sector. The resultant balance will be beneficial for UAE government in the long run. This study will also help educational institutions to design some mindful graduate programs to spread awareness about the associated benefits of private sector jobs to attract Emiratis.

## **CONCEPTUALISING THE EMIRATISATION POLICY**

With independence in 1971, the small size of the population and an unskilled labour force prompted the UAE government to open its doors to expatriates to help build their economy (Al Ameri, 2018). The expatriate population comprised of other Arab and Iranian nationals, Asians, Westerners, etc., leading to the high dependence of the UAE on an expatriate workforce and increased unemployment for UAE nationals. Eynon and Ryan (2011) opine that the UAE's economic viability in the future depends on economic growth, and related opportunities in the private sector. This implies that the exclusion of Emiratis from the Private sector results from the issue of labour force imbalance and the consequential effect of their being marginalised in their own country. Taking genuine strides to confront these issues, the government of the UAE adopted the Emiratisation initiative to indigenise the labour force and correct the growing imbalance in workforce demographics.



This policy led to the formation of agencies tasked with the responsibility of strengthening the Emiratisation policy which was jointly handled by the “Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA)”, and the “National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority”. Raji, (2019) defines Emiratisation as a “multi-level process through which dependency on non-National labour force is reduced and nationals are being prepared to take up jobs performed by non-Nationals. Such preparation entails enabling nationals in the shortest possible period to perform their jobs equally good, if not better, than the non-nationals that enter the country due the large need for workforce”. All policies enacted to support and promote the inclusion of Emiratis in the UAE workforce are collectively known as Emiratisation, and they are adopted to groom locals for private and public sector jobs, thereby increasing the contributions of indigenes in the country’s decision-making process (El Sawy, 2019). This also implies Emiratis increased participation in the labour market and a reduction of the country’s dependence on Non-national workers.

### **EMIRATISATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Salama (2018) postulates that over 338,000 private sector companies currently operate in the UAE with a combined workforce of 5.26million, but the private sector is mostly dominated by expatriates who constitute 91% of the total working population in this sector. Official statistics reveal that in 2018, only 0.5 % of the private sector employees were Emiratis as companies continue to fall short and struggle with attracting and retaining Emiratis in this sector (Arabian Business, 2019). For several reasons, most expatriates in the private sector earn less than the public sector Nationals, and that explains the demographic imbalance in the UAE workforce (Palik, 2018). Despite its acceleration, Emiratisation in the private sector has not yet yielded the desired results. This is because of the mis-matched features in the private and public sector job environment (Marshall, 2018). Moreover, nationals shun private sector jobs which they feel pay fewer wages, and require more working hours and effort (Siddiqui, 2019; Khamis, 2017).

As compared to the public sector, private companies target profit, which is quantifiable, making it easy for management to be held accountable. Poor performance can be easily identified, leading to the termination of the contracts of defaulting employees (Khamis, 2017). The Emiratisation strategy is not only about replacing expatriates with Emirati nationals, it entails training Emiratis in skills, and proficiencies needed to succeed in the workplace. Therefore, it is evident that nationals can only get attracted towards the private sector jobs when they are paid well and have career growth opportunities.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

According to Armstrong, and Taylor, (2014) there is a certain range of extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors which affect the employee’s satisfaction level at the job. Similarly, Ibrahim

et al., (2004) examined the association between job satisfaction and performance, they inferred that “in a collectivist culture such as the UAE, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can be a source of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.” Further, in a study conducted by Daleure, (2016) the satisfaction level of the young employees with higher salaries and more benefits was shown to be high when compared to the ones getting low salaries and less benefits. This illustrates how salaries and wages play a very important role to enhance the satisfaction level of the employees with their job.

Ibrahim and Perez (2014) further explained that satisfaction with the job directly influences the employee’s commitment towards their job, thus revealing that satisfied employees are more intended to continue their jobs. Similarly, Farrell, (2008) and Marmenout and Lirio, (2013) explained that there is a positive significant impact of salary and benefits on employees’ intention to remain in the private sector. Davidson (2009 p.54) indicated that “those in the public sector can expect to earn several times as much as those in the private sector”. Likewise, Al Waqfi and Forstenlechner (2012) argued that salary expectations of the UAE nationals are higher on average, therefore, when public sectors offer them higher salaries along with other benefits they tend to remain loyal and more satisfied to their jobs and in turn they want to continue it for longer period of time.

Extensive study of the literature revealed that accessibility of career development opportunities positively and significantly impacts the employee’s intention to remain in the private sector for a long period of time (Anderson, 2016). In the literature, the role of training is also found to be very important in career development opportunities and private sector employers are more efficient in providing the training to their employees, which results in rapid growth in the career of the employees. In return, the employees stay loyal to the organisation and continue their jobs (Bratton, 2012). As when employees are excelling in their career with continuous growth, they believe in a kind of job security and when they feel secure in their jobs they remain with the same organisation and continue their jobs. Therefore, based on the literature review we hypothesise that:

**H1:** *There is a significant impact of salary and benefits on employees’ intention of remaining in the private sector.*

**H2:** *There is a significant impact of career development opportunities on employees’ intention of remaining in the private sector.*

**H3:** *There is a significant impact of job satisfaction on employees’ intention of remaining in the private sector.*

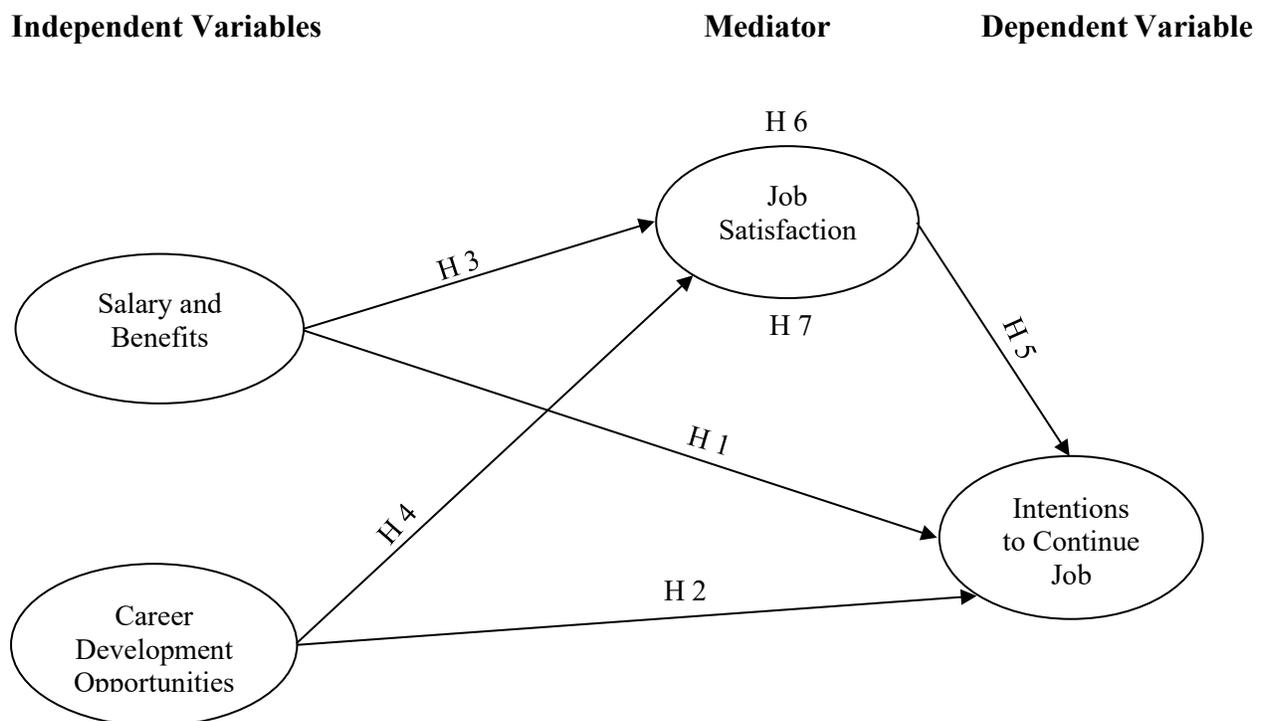
**H4:** *There is a significant impact of Salary and benefits on job satisfaction of the private sector employees.*

**H5:** *There is a significant impact of career development opportunities on job satisfaction of the private sector employees.*

**H6:** *Job satisfaction mediates the association between Salary and benefits and employees' intention of remaining in the private sector.*

**H7:** *Job satisfaction mediates the association between career development opportunities and employees' intention of remaining in the private sector.*

**Figure 1:** Theoretical Framework



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The number of Nationals employed in the private sector is far less than those employed in the public sectors (85% public sector and 15% in private sector) in UAE (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). On the other side the official retirement age of the Emiratis is one of the lowest in all over the world and most of the population is young aged and is occupied in full time education. For current study we approached the UAE government Human resource development entity and found the list of Nationals who have been working in private sector organisations in UAE. Respondents were randomly selected from that list. Initially 500 respondents were approached. A Google



survey questionnaire was developed with two parts 1). The demographic information of the respondents 2). Items related to the variables of the current study on five-point Likert scale, with statements ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. After one week of distribution, the survey responses started to come in. After three months, we received 408 responses back with a response rate of 81.6%. Thereafter, a careful scrutinisation of the survey questionnaires was done; unengaged and missing responses were eliminated. Finally, 366 responses were included for further analysis in the study.

### **Measures of the Study**

A four-item scale developed by Rutledge and Alkaabi (2017) was used to assess salary/benefits. The three-item scale developed by Armstrong-Stassen, and Templer, (2005) was used to assess Career Development Opportunities. Job satisfaction was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Curry, Wakefield, Price, and Mueller, (1986). A six-item scale developed by Barksdale and Darden (1972) was used to assess Intentions to continue Job.

To analyse the results SPSS 22 and SmartPLS3 was used. Tests of validity and reliability were performed to establish the discriminant validity among variables. Descriptive as well as correlational analyses were performed. To test the proposed hypotheses, measurement and structural models were analysed by applying different tests. To test the model, data was collected from a single source. The respondents were told about the anonymity of their response to the items in the questionnaire. In this way, method biases were controlled.

Furthermore, scale items were checked to make sure that items do not contain ambiguity or vague concepts. In addition, the CFAs results, strong factor loadings, and positive mediation results, noticeably specify that the findings of our research are not limited or contaminated by self-reported measures. To tackle the bias issue, Herman single factor test was applied. The result of Herman single factor test should be less than 0.5, which means that a single factor should explain less than 50% of variance. The value of test was  $0.3(30) < 50\%$  showing that there was no issue of common method bias.

### **Descriptive and Correlation**

Table 1 illustrates the values of means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations, for the study measures. The bivariate correlation analysis in table 1 shows that Salary/Benefits had a significant positive correlation with Career Development Opportunities ( $r=.44, p < .01$ ), Job Satisfaction ( $r=.51, p < .01$ ) outcome variable, and Intentions to Continue Job ( $r=.41, p < .01$ ). Similarly, Career Development Opportunities had a positive correlation with Job Satisfaction ( $r=.38, p < .01$ ), Intentions to Continue Job ( $r=.47, p < .01$ ), and Job Satisfaction was found to have a positive correlation with Intentions to Continue Job ( $r=.39, p < .01$ ).

**Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and correlations**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Salary/Benefits	3.53	0.65				
Career Development Opportunities	4.29	0.72	.44**			
Job Satisfaction	4.05	0.77	.51**	.38**		
Intentions to Continue Job	3.26	0.57	.41**	.47**	.39**	

N=366; \*\* $p < .01$ **Confirmatory Factor Analysis; Reliability and Validity**

To investigate the psychometric properties of the measures a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted by using SmartPLS3. “Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ ” and “composite reliability (CR)” were calculated to assess the reliability of measures as per directions provided by Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009). Table 2 depicts the reliability of all the reflective measures on the basis of values of Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  (above 0.70) and CR. In addition, the measures’ “convergent and discriminant validity” was assessed. As “factor loadings” of all indicator variables were  $\Rightarrow 0.70$  with significant loading of each item ( $p < 0.01$ ) onto its underlying variable and “average variance extracted” AVE of latent variables was above 0.50 for all study constructs, therefore, “convergent validity” was established (Hair et al. 2010). Further, the “Fornell and Larcker (1981) method” was used to establish the “discriminant validity” and results indicated that the shared variance between various contracts was less than the average variance shared in the latent constructs with their respective indicator variables.

**Table 2: Factor loadings, reliability, and validity**

Constructs/ indicators	Factor Loadings				AVE	CR	Cronbach's $\alpha$
	1	2	3	4			
<b>Salary/Benefits</b>					0.637	0.875	0.800
SAL1	0.783						
SAL2	0.793						
SAL3	0.780						
SAL4	0.836						
<b>Career Development Opportunities</b>					0.606	0.822	0.780
CDO1		0.792					
CDO2		0.783					
CDO3		0.761					
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>					0.612	0.905	0.791
JSAT1			0.782				
JSAT2			0.787				
JSAT3			0.793				
JSAT4			0.761				
JSAT5			0.792				
JSAT6			0.780				
<b>Intentions to Continue Job</b>					0.684	0.896	0.832
INT1				0.787			
INT2				0.836			
INT3				0.917			
INT5				0.760			

*“Note: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted”*

Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) suggested that the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio is more accurate measure of discriminant validity while using smart PLS. The value of HTMT ratio should be less than 0.9. As depicted in Table 3, all values were less than 0.9 for entire model.

**Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio**

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Salary/Benefits	-			
Career Development Opportunities	0.724	-		
Job Satisfaction	0.803	0.810	-	
Intentions to Continue Job	0.785	0.812	0.775	-

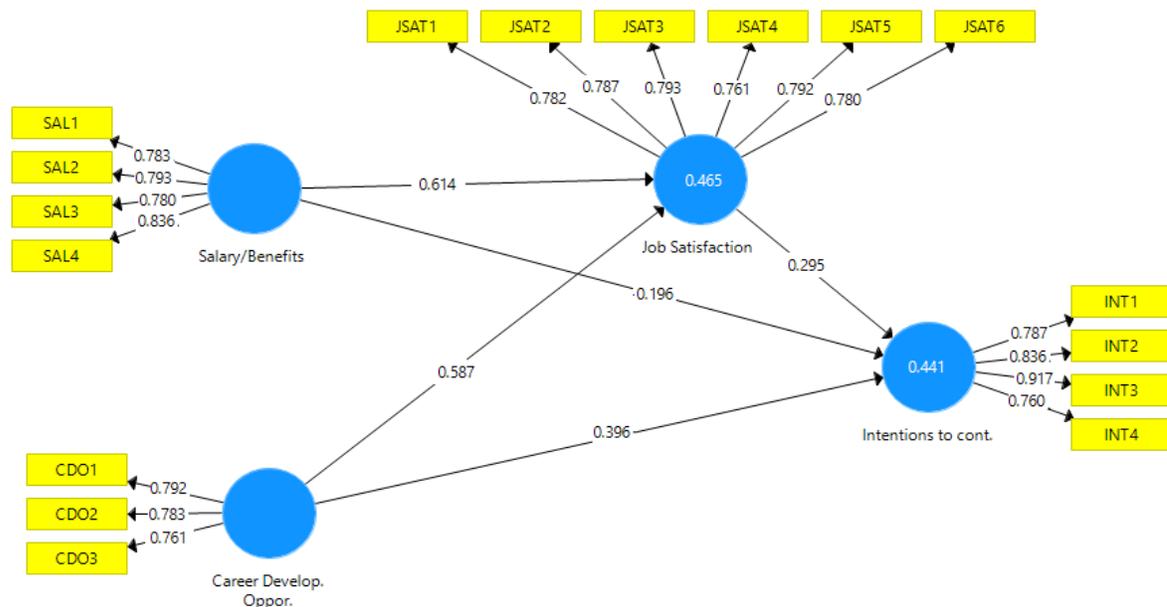
## Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping technique was employed to assess the structural paths. To test the hypotheses 500 subsamples were used. Hypothesised results were confirmed through B-coefficient, t-value, and p-value. While overall model fitness or change in model was measured by Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ). The results of the  $R^2$  show that there was a 69% change in the attitude of women buyers due to all variables. This shows the good fit of the model.  $R^2$  for job satisfaction was 46.5%, whereas,  $R^2$  Intentions to Continue Job was 44%.

### Direct Hypothesis

In Table 4 the results presented show that Salary/Benefits is positively and significantly related to Intentions to continue Job ( $\beta = .196^{***}$ ,  $t=4.713$ ) and in Table 4 Career Development Opportunities is positively and significantly related to Intentions to continue Job ( $\beta = .396^{***}$ ,  $t=5.921$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which projected a positive association between Salary/Benefits and Intentions to continue Job, and Hypothesis2, which projected a positive association between Career Development Opportunities and Intentions to continue Job, is fully supported. Similarly, H3, H4 and H5 are fully supported by results given in table 4.

**Figure 2:** Full Measurement Model

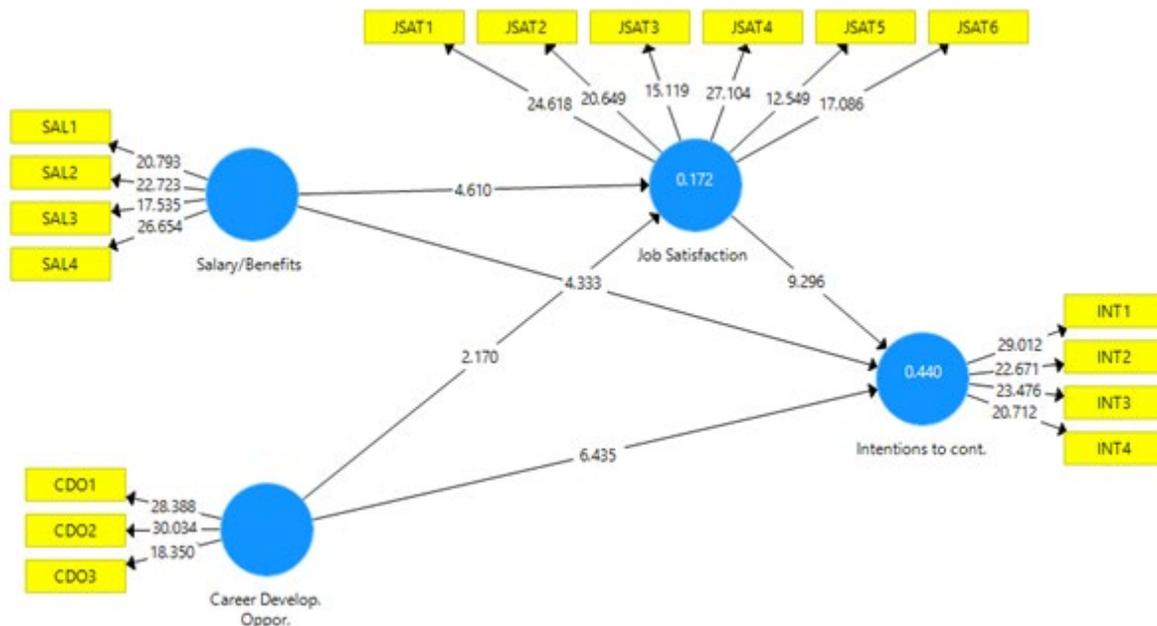


**Table 4:** Hypothesis Testing Results

	Hypotheses	B-Coefficient	T Value	P Values	CILL%	CIUL%
H <sub>1</sub>	SAL -> INT	0.196	4.713	0.000	0.427	0.558
H <sub>2</sub>	CDO -> INT	0.396	5.921	0.010	0.145	0.261
H <sub>3</sub>	SAL -> JSAT	0.614	9.221	0.000	0.152	0.339
H <sub>4</sub>	CDO -> JSAT	0.587	8.936	0.000	0.301	0.457
H <sub>5</sub>	JSAT -> INT	0.295	4.124	0.000	0.236	0.347
H <sub>6</sub>	SAL -> JSAT -> INT	0.203	3.865	0.000	0.090	0.136
H <sub>7</sub>	CDO -> JSAT ->INT	0.190	3.770	0.000	0.087	0.121

As depicted in Table 4 the mediation hypotheses (H<sub>6</sub> and H<sub>7</sub>) are supported. An indirect and positive effect of Salary/Benefits was found on Intentions to continue Job ( $B=.203^{***}$ ,  $t= 4.713$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), similarly, an indirect and positive effect of Career Development Opportunities was also found on Intentions to continue Job ( $B=.190^{***}$ ,  $t= 3.770$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The formal two tailed significance test, assuming a normal distribution, showed that the indirect effect was positive and significant. Further, results show a non-zero value for lower limit and upper limit confidence interval, supporting the significance level of findings.

**Figure 3:** Full Structural Model





## **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

### **Findings of the study**

All hypothesis of the study were found to be supported. That shows that salary/benefits and career development opportunities are positively related to intentions of employees to continue their jobs in the private sector and that job satisfaction acts as an underlining mechanism between “salary/benefits and career development opportunities” and intentions of employees to continue their jobs. Our findings related to salary/benefits are consistent with the findings (Al-Ali, 2008; Abdalla et al., 2010; Daleure, 2016; (Farrell, 2008; Marmenout & Lirio, 2013; Al Waqfi & Forstenlechner 2012), which states that a handsome amount of salaries and associated benefits results in an increased satisfaction level that ultimately leads to long term intentions in the employees for that specific job.

The findings related to career development opportunities are consistent with the results of a number of studies (Goby, et al., 2015; Bratton, 2012; Beer, 2009; Pfeffer, 2007), as they reflected the importance of a secured future and the growth opportunities available to the employees as resultant in a level of loyalty that ensured that they would remain committed to their jobs in the future. As career growth is mainly dependent on the different types of training provided to the employees, the literature reveals that the private sectors provide more training opportunities to their employees than the public sector. Training will always enhance the capability of individual workers, resulting in promotions and career development .

Likewise, current findings are in line with the results of the Armstrong and Taylor (2014), and Ibrahim et al., (2004), who explained the importance of internal and external factors that determine the satisfaction level of employees with their jobs. Finally, the results support the findings and statement of Ibrahim and Perez (2014) that satisfied employees tend to continue their jobs for a longer period as compared to less satisfied or unsatisfied employees. Therefore, it can be stated that if the private sector employers in UAE pay compatible salaries as specified in public sector to the nationals, along with provision of job security in terms of career development opportunities, more nationals will join the private sector on a merit basis and that will further improve the educational level of the country with fair hiring policies and procedures, and employee turnover will decrease.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

As discussed, compared to the private sector, public sector jobs are less tasking, and more flexible. These employees are also highly paid with attractive bonuses. The IMF suggested a reduction in the benefits of Emiratis employed in the public sector to discourage nationals from seeking only government jobs and accepting private sector employment (Gulf news, 2019). If the government



supports the gradual alignment of government salaries and conditions to those obtainable in the private sector, it encourages a shift away from government employment. The government of the UAE is already taking steps to equalise the public and private sector in the UAE. Vision 2020 intends to provide 20,000 more jobs for nationals by the year and “increase the number of Emiratis in the private sector by tenfold in 2021”. This vision has in its sights the increase of the share UAE national’s workforce in private sector (Vision, 2020).

In March 2019, the government announced equal holidays for the workforce in both the public and private sector as part of its strategy to achieve a balance between both sectors (Al Kaabi, 2016). Even though the public sector is doing its best to close deployment gaps in the implantation of the Emiratisation policy, some jobs remain challenging in the context of Emiratisation. For example, most new graduates’ students require the English language to speak or they must clear IELTS to apply for different jobs. Therefore, it is observed that expatriates might get more jobs than citizens. For the Nationals employed in the private sector, the welfare component of the pay must be given more attention. Measures should be taken to subsidise the wages of Nationals working in the private sector to break up the gap between the welfare component and efficiency.

In addition, based on the results of the current study, it is suggested that there is a need to promote awareness regarding the importance and benefits of participation of Nationals in private sector employment at different levels. Also, the provision of incentives on community-based work experience can be another attractive factor to join the private sectors. Based on the reality that the UAE has been through a rapid growth and development phase that will continue in the near future, the young generation at UAE will face tough competition in the future in terms of education, experience, and better English skills etc. Therefore, there is a need to create a balance between the private and public sector in terms of salary and benefits as well as the career opportunities provided to Nationals so that they think more about joining the private sector rather than waiting for job opportunities in the public sector.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Along with multiple strengths there are some limitations of the current study, which can be considered in the future to acquire some more insights about the discussed area. This study is conducted only in the private sector, whereas, in future a cross comparison between the private and public sector can be conducted and the difference can be seen based on the factors other than salary/benefits and career development opportunities to check what other features are more important for employees in determining their career in the public or the private sector. In this study authors adopted the quantitative research approach with distribution of survey questionnaire to collect data from the respondents, so further studies can take into consideration the mix method approach or quasi experimental design while investigating the intrinsic and extrinsic factors



affecting job continuity and the intentions of employees in different sectors. Moreover, as education is the most important factor when deciding one's career and applying for different jobs in different sectors, studies must be conducted to find out the impact of different educational levels of the Nationals and requirements for the applicants while choosing the sectors for their occupation.



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