

Antecedents to employee suggestion schemes: the study of UAE

Antecedents to
employee
suggestion
schemes

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is identifying and ranking the various antecedents or enablers that will enhance performance through employee suggestion schemes (ESSs) in various sector-specific businesses based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), an emerging Arab country.

Design/methodology/approach – This study employs the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to prioritize the factors affecting ESS. The AHP model was developed with five criteria and 24 subcriteria based on the interactional theory of organizational creativity. Data were collected through interviews with 27 top-level managers and industry experts from nine government agencies, nine semigovernment agencies, and nine privately owned UAE-based businesses.

Findings – The findings show that leadership support and management style, individual attributes, and corporate strategy are the most important factors that influence performance through ESS.

Research limitations/implications – The research model had limited dimensions and the findings cannot be generalized. To generalize the findings, the study should be carried out in other GCC countries because of homogeneity in the political, organizational, and sociocultural context. The outcome of the study provides both organizational and managerial implications for the better organizational performance through ESS.

Originality/value – Past studies on ESS have neglected the construct of individual characteristics of employees that generate novel ideas. This paper addresses the gap of sector-specific studies by considering that individual attributes of creative people as individuals are the heart of innovation, along with contextual factors that could help organizations to transform innovative engines through ESS. The originality of this research stems from a reliable and valid framework that can be subsequently used for driving performance through ESS. This study is a relevant contribution to both the academic literature and practical implications.

Keywords Employee involvement, Employee suggestion schemes, Analytic hierarchy process, Organizational performance, United Arab Emirates

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The globalization of business and global financial crisis followed by the unprecedented fast pace of change demands creativity, as a key foundation for innovation, forcing organizations to look at vivid alternatives to minimize cost and optimize profits (Lasrado *et al.*, 2017; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018). Innovation acts as an important driver of economic growth in any country; by having implemented successful innovation, companies generate more revenues that contribute to the prosperity of an organization as well as the whole countries' economy (Moneim, 2009). Creative achievements form the basis for progress in the world's emerging markets. Employee participation has become an essential part of continuous improvement (Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018; Marksberry *et al.*, 2014), mainly due to its ability to provide intangible competitive advantages that are difficult to duplicate or imitate. Also, the modern management has realized the potential value of employees' constructive ideas to address cost-related, improvement-related and work-related problems in building creative and innovative capabilities of firms through employee suggestion schemes (ESSs) (Mazzocato *et al.*, 2016; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018).



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Most of the ESS programs through already existing in the organization fail. Evidence suggests that not all companies have had the expected success (frequently failing) in implementing their continuous improvement programs or staff participation programs (Marín-García *et al.*, 2008). The inability of organizations to identify the strategic drivers that will encourage employees to come up with opinions and ideas, which in turn will affect the innovation capability of the firm. Considering this challenge, the paper seeks to investigate, analyze, and prioritize the enablers that are of utmost importance in running the ESS program successfully by effectively deploying intangible resources to enhance performance so that appropriate actions can be taken and strategies corrected to develop and improve the firm's innovation capabilities. This paper addresses the call for research proposed by several authors to take into consideration individual attributes in the ESS process to enhancing performance in organizations (Carrier, 1998; Griffiths-Hemans and Grover, 2006; Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Marín-García *et al.*, 2018; Marksberry *et al.*, 2014; Shalley and Gilson, 2004; McAdam and McClelland, 2002; Moneim, 2009; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018; Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002). Previous studies carried out in United Arab Emirates (UAE) have largely overlooked individual characteristics or attributes, such as cognitive skills, personal characteristics, domain-relevant skills, which constitute the idea generation process and largely concentrated on success factors from organizational perspective (Arif *et al.*, 2010; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015, 2017; Moneim, 2009). With the growing emphasis on emerging economies, placed on innovation and creativity in the knowledge economy, the study was an attempt to unravel both individual-level factors and organizational factors that promote ESS and to prioritize them to improve performance and corporate health in the complex work setting by actively involving employees. The major role of ESS in the well-being of both organizations and employees cannot be underestimated. Hence, the research question of this study is: what strategic drivers contribute to enhancing performance through ESS in government, semigovernment, and private businesses based in the UAE? The study examines the significance of each enabler in government agencies, semigovernment and privately-owned UAE-based businesses by using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) method. This study will provide useful theoretical and practical acumens. The contribution of the current study is as follows:

- (1) The author tries to address the gap of the lack of sector-specific, empirical studies about enablers or strategic drivers that enhance performance through ESSs in UAE, an emerging Arab country context.
- (2) The current study is a novel implementation of the AHP framework to rank the most influential enablers that enhance performance through ESS from experiences of industry experts and academicians in the UAE.
- (3) Also, the study aims to encourage organizations to adopt the best practices for implementing each enabler that ensure active employee participation, creating value through mutual growth and work in line with the UAE National Innovation Agenda and contribute to the long-term economic growth of the country by building innovative solutions and pioneer initiatives in organizations to effectively improve services, processes, and programs.

The objectives of this research are:

- (1) To identify various antecedents or enablers that will enhance performance through ESS in various sector-specific organizations, that is, government, semigovernment, and private businesses based in the UAE.

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- (2) To prioritize the enablers or drivers of ESS for effective policy implications using the AHP.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: discussing the literature and theoretical background followed by the research methodology and discussions. Finally, the paper concludes with both theoretical and managerial implications along with limitations and directions for future research.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

ESS is not a new concept. Literature from past studies has widely commented on the history, nature, goals, and evolution of ESS (Carrier, 1998; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, ESS has a considerable history in Europe, America, Middle East, and Asia and has been researched by several authors (Arif *et al.*, 2010; Carrier, 1998; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015).

The review of literature supports different programs under the employee involvement umbrella, such as quality circles, self-directed teams, continuous improvement, work environment measures, and staff suggestion schemes (Carrier, 1998; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; McAdam and McClelland, 2002; Moneim, 2009; Lasrado *et al.*, 2017; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018; Rapp and Eklund, 2002; Reuter, 1977). Both public and private sector economies have adopted suggestion schemes to achieve excellence (Du Plessis, 2016).

Many researchers have noted the important role of ESS in organizations in achieving competitive advantage by addressing various issues related to cost minimization and revenue generation (Carrier, 1998; Lasrado *et al.*, 2017; Leach *et al.*, 2006; Reuter, 1977), improving customer satisfaction (Arif *et al.*, 2010), increasing product quality and productivity (Lasrado *et al.*, 2017), increasing safety (Du Plessis, 2016), improving organizational commitment (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015), employee engagement, and motivation (Buech *et al.*, 2010).

It has been tested by researchers in a number of sectors such as automation and telecommunications (Griffins-Hemans and Grover, 2006), manufacturing (Moneim, 2009), printing equipment (Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002), insurance (Fairbank *et al.*, 2003), health care (Mazzocato *et al.*, 2016).

ESS in developed countries is studied from various perspectives by researchers (Buech *et al.*, 2010; Du Plessis, 2016; Griffiths-Hemans and Grover, 2006; Leach *et al.*, 2006; Mazzocato *et al.*, 2016; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018; Rapp and Eklund, 2002; Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002). Besides, ESS is studied in the context of the developing countries (Arif *et al.*, 2010; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015, 2017; Moneim, 2009).

As emerging countries are the fastest-growing economies in the world, improving a business in the developing countries by taking advantage of the employees' hidden abilities or ideas not only benefits those nations but also strengthens the economies of the world (Moneim, 2009).

2.1 Theoretical background

The componential theory of organizational creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1997) is a comprehensive model of social and psychological factors focusing on four components namely: expertise, creativity-relevant skills, intrinsic task motivation, and the social environment, that is, the supervisory encouragement, resources, and so on that enable an individual to be creative at work. Another theory supporting organizational creativity in a complex social setting is the interactional theory of organizational creativity (Woodman *et al.*, 1993), which focuses on individual factors such as personality, cognitive factors, intrinsic motivation, and knowledge and group factors such as leadership, cohesiveness, communication patterns, knowledge sharing, and a problem-solving approach. At the organizational level, it deals with factors such as training, organizational culture, strategic planning, a free exchange of information, collaboration, rewards, and so on.

2.2 Strategic drivers that enhance employee suggestion schemes (ESSs) in organizations

Drawing on theories of creativity and innovation taking a holistic approach at both individual and contextual level, five criteria and 24 subcriteria that act as strategic drivers enhancing performance through ESS were identified.

2.2.1 Corporate strategy. Past studies have stressed the importance of strategy as a link from policy to practice that effectively drives performance through ESS (Amabile, 1997; Du Plessis, 2016; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015; Leach *et al.*, 2006; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.1.1 Strategic planning. A successful suggestion system requires well-formulated standardized procedures, policy structure, rules, and guidelines following vision, mission, and long-term objectives (Amabile, 1997; Du Plessis, 2016; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018). Also, strategic planning affects people's psychology to explore new ideas and helps build a learning culture (Leach *et al.*, 2006).

2.2.1.2 Adequate publicity and program visibility. For sustainable development of suggestion schemes for a long-term-oriented approach, organizations need to focus on publicity and campaigns to promote continuous improvement of suggestion schemes (Rapp and Eklund, 2002; Moneim, 2009). The success stories about the successful suggestions made should be well communicated to staff through vouchers, bulletin boards, cafeteria, awards, and so on to promote awareness and motivation among other employees (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015).

2.2.1.3 Allocation of resources. The prime step for making the employee suggestion system to work is an allocation of budget for awards, promotions, and so on (Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002). It facilitates effective functioning of suggestion schemes (Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018). The greater is the access to organizational resources, the greater is the influence on individual ability to generate ideas (Griffiths-Hemans and Grover, 2006).

2.2.1.4 Fair and transparent procedures. If the objectives are well communicated by placing a proper suggestion system with fair and transparent procedures, employee engagement is increased (Du Plessis, 2016). The quality of interactions between management and employees is improved if the procedures are fair, free from bias, ensure accuracy of information, provide a mechanism to rectify mistakes, adhere to standards of ethics, and ensure that employees' opinions are taken into account (Buech *et al.*, 2010).

2.2.2 Individual attributes/characteristics. Many researchers suggested that ESS is based on individual submission of ideas, and employees' creativity performance depends partly on individual attributes (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015; Shalley and Gilson, 2004).

2.2.2.1 Personality. Personality is an important attribute that influences the creativity of an individual (Amabile, 1997). Individuals with a high level of creative personalities take a challenging task and get involved in risk with broader interest with a creative problem-solving approach (Shalley and Gilson, 2004). Also, Gupta and Banerjee (2016) highlighted those individuals who rank high in creative personality exhibit high performance and creative skills than the one who ranks low.

2.2.2.2 Cognitive style. The other contributor to individual creativity is a cognitive style, which includes abilities, such as divergent thinking, emotional cognition, and fluency of thoughts (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016). Individuals who possess an innovative cognitive style elicit superior creative performance (Woodman *et al.*, 1993). Individuals with imaginable abilities and greater fluency of thoughts, divergent thinking exhibited to produce more ideas that can last for a longer period (Shalley and Gilson, 2004).

2.2.2.3 Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is often regarded as a belief in an individual to come up with a useful and novel idea (Axtell *et al.*, 2000). To generate ideas, self-efficacy is the foremost factor required (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). Self-efficacy affects creativity to a greater extent when impacted with motivational aspects to take up challenging goals (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016).

2.2.2.4 Expertise. Another trait of domain-relevant skills that are sorted out by researchers is expertise. It is the factual knowledge, technical abilities, procedural and intellectual skills to perform a task gained through experience and education researchers (Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Woodman *et al.*, 1993). Expertise helps to foster suggestion scheme not only in submission but also in the evaluation process fostering creativity in an organization (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). Employees are more creative when backed with information, power, and skill (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.2.5 Intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation fosters creative behavior through self-driven excitement for work, enthusiastic, personal challengers for work interest, pleasure, and experience merely not being motivated by money or recognition (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016). To face challenges in creative work, a certain level of internal force, that is, motivation is required that pushes individuals toward innovativeness (Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.2.6 Extrinsic motivation. Employees in organizations should be motivated by effective rewarding strategies (Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018; Leach *et al.*, 2006). Also, the traditional way of motivating individuals only with rewards has shifted its focus with changing trends to offering recognition, perks, incentives, tokens, and so on to employees. Incentives aid the process of idea generation. Recognition helps in underpinning a culture of performance (Moneim, 2009).

2.2.3 *Leadership support and management style.* The role of leadership support and management style has been perceived as prominent and crucial factor for the success of an organization from various literatures supported (Amabile, 1997; Arif *et al.*, 2010; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015; Marksberry *et al.*, 2014; Reychav and Sharkie, 2010; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.3.1 Top management support. Top management should take the initiative of displaying the innovative culture by increasing employee motivation in improving performance and productivity (Marksberry *et al.*, 2014; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018). Effective management support is required to spur the effectiveness and efficiency maintaining a balance of attitude behaviors and relationships (Carrier, 1998). ESS is the heart of fostering a quality culture of continuous improvements; top management should realize the outcome achievement by supporting it (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015; Reuter, 1977). Leaders need to understand their employees to provide support at every level needed (Amabile, 1997; Shalley and Gilson, 2004).

2.2.3.2 Supervisory support. Although senior management support is necessary to define strategy and goals, most continuous improvement activities occur at the worker and middle management level (Marksberry *et al.*, 2014). Department heads and supervisors should be accountable for effectively gathering information related to the subordinates and encourage participation in suggestion program activities (Du Plessis, 2016; Reuter, 1977). The quality of a relationship that exists between supervisor and subordinate relates to the level of innovation in an organization (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015).

2.2.3.3 Participative management style. Management practices of the organization play a role in the success of the suggestion programs (Carrier, 1998). Axtell *et al.* (2000) found a positive relationship between employee's participation and employee's innovative behavior in submitting and implementing suggestions. Management has a responsibility to satisfy the need for employee participation, and they are required to create a culture that is supportive for employee involvement. By doing so, staff absenteeism is reduced; there is a greater organizational commitment, improved performance, reduced turnover, and greater job satisfaction (Reychav and Sharkie, 2010).

2.2.3.4 Employee empowerment. Employee empowerment enhances employees' long-term orientation with regard to suggestion schemes through open communication (Marksberry *et al.*, 2014). It helps to eliminate the top-bottom open communication concerning the uneven distribution of economies with demands of rapid change without any delays (Reychav and

Sharkie, 2010); thus, enhancing employees' openness to change, motivating employees to express views, alternatives, and suggestions freely (Lasrado *et al.*, 2017).

2.2.4 Organizational culture. Studies have reported that organizational culture and support strategies will have a positive impact on performance in both individual and organizational process (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Lasrado *et al.*, 2017; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; Moneim, 2009).

2.2.4.1 Collaborative working environment. Collaborative working environment (CWE) is the need of the hour to build effective ESS system to overcome issues with conflict management (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016). The level of collaboration and innovation strategy effects management practices such as planning, multidisciplinary teams' and leaders' impacts on innovation capabilities and performance (Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018). CWE is the major factor required to support creativity and innovation within firms as creativity in a construct of creative behavior from individual characteristics, group characteristics, and organizational characteristics (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016).

2.2.4.2 Training and learning. Training can increase both the quality and quantity of ideas generated by enhancing the creativity of individual employees (Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018). Nonfinancial rewards such as training programs, conferences, seminars, symposiums, and workshops can enhance organizational effectiveness toward creativity (Griffiths-Hemans and Grover, 2006). By providing effective training to employees who rate low in terms of personal attributes, creative performance among employees can be boosted (Amabile, 1997).

2.2.4.3 Open communication and information sharing. Open communication and information sharing have been cited as critical components for facilitating suggestions (Lasrado *et al.*, 2017). Organizational environment should encourage a free flow of suggestions through open communication across all organizational units, departments, and functional levels (Moneim, 2009; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018). The success of the suggestion scheme lies in generating periodic reports with accurate information sharing and through open communication platform (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016).

2.2.4.4 Networking. Researchers have pointed out that people need social networks to interact, pass the information along with economic support to foster creativity in an organization. The quality depends on the strength of the connectivity of the network (Gupta and Banerjee, 2016). To derive creative ideas, individuals must make use of synthesizing, integrated, and effective networks and informal flow in enhancing the business results (Lasrado *et al.*, 2017).

2.2.4.5 Ethical environment. The competitive era demands ethical environment as a prime responsibility of all stakeholders to submit suggestions, ideas to improve business (Buech *et al.*, 2010). Ethical culture and environment form a powerful tool for leaders to communicate the beliefs, values, and awareness of programs, ethical issues, decision-making in building trust, and encouraging employees to come up with creative ideas of corporate interest (Lawrence and Weber, 2014).

2.2.5 Evaluation. To add value to the creative ideas generated, proper evaluation technique must be used to assure the quality of ideas generated and make the best selections for implementation.

2.2.5.1 User-friendly system. A user-friendly simple system for collection of suggestions is necessary for the effectiveness of ESS as it reduces errors and increases efficiency and memorability (Arif *et al.*, 2010). Suggestion schemes can gather more ideas and capture the interest of stakeholders if the systems are made easier to use (Lasrado *et al.*, 2017). User-friendly suggestion system increases employee participation. An effective suggestion system should contain clear guidelines, procedures, methods, friendly interface, flexible, accessible, and universal in terms of languages (Fairbank *et al.*, 2003).

2.2.5.2 Evaluation committee. According to Du Plessis (2016), a structured committee should have administrators, evaluators, implementation managers, and award panels. A

specialized committee for evaluation is to be set up to choose the best suggestion with effective utilization of time and declare rewards to be the most appropriate idea implementation (Moneim, 2009). There is a need for suggestion committee, eligibility criteria administration, and procedures related to submissions of ideas (Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002). The success of ESS relies heavily upon the managers as judges and motivators who administer and evaluate the suggestion received (Reuter, 1977).

2.2.5.3 Feedback. Feedback acts as a key important factor for the success of a suggestion scheme as it keeps staff informed about the progress of suggestions being submitted, implemented, or rejected. If feedback is not timely provided, the employees get demotivated and dissatisfied (Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002). If employees are not provided with feedback, they feel ignored and dissatisfied, which in turn may lead to decreasing the suggestion submissions in future (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). Feedback helps in maintaining the momentum of continuity for nonimplemented suggestions by motivating employees toward the scheme (Buech *et al.*, 2010; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.5.4 Time. Systems responsiveness and information access play an important role in suggestion submission activity (Arif *et al.*, 2010). Giving the right time for evaluation is necessary, instead of ignoring or removing evaluation completely (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). Employees feel motivated if the ideas are promptly evaluated and execution of ideas is focused in time (Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002). If review and evaluation function properly about time, it will act as a motivating force in attracting excellent suggestions.

2.2.5.5 Implementation of suggestion. Implementation of a suggestion is categorized as one of the crucial factors required for the sustainability of suggestion schemes (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). Upon implementation of suggestions, employees feel privileged, committed, and contribute to future endeavors with improved satisfaction (Arif *et al.*, 2010). Apart from the implemented ideas, those ideas that are rejected are to be commented with reasons for rejections and improvements (Moneim, 2009).

Based on the literature review, criteria and subcriteria to enhance ESS were identified (Table I) and used in the development of an AHP-based model.

3. Research landscape

The UAE has been a model for emerging and developing countries (World Economic Forum, 2016). ESSs have been used across the globe including the UAE (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). The UAE has shifted its focus from being an oil-based economy to a more diversified one with investments in various sectors, such as infrastructure, financial services, tourism, and so on. By the year 2020, this shift is expected to enhance the country's GDP in the world economy. It has already become a market of choice (The Global Economy Outlook, 2015). In parallel with the ambitious vision of 2021, the UAE Government has also launched the Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award (SKEA) by introducing innovation as a major pillar of management (SKEA, 1999). The prime objective was to build innovative solutions and pioneer initiatives in organizations to effectively improve services, processes, and programs. This transformation demands organizational resilience to survive the disruptions of emerging market economies. Therefore, every organization is striving to be innovative. ESS has become a buzz word toward achieving Vision 2021.

4. Research methodology

4.1 Overview of research technique

The AHP is a powerful methodology developed by Saaty (1983). The AHP consists of three main operations, including hierarchy construction, priority analysis, and consistency

Table I.
Criteria and subcriteria
to enhance ESS

Sl. No	Main criteria	Sub criteria	Reference
1	Strategy (S)	Strategic planning (S1) Adequate publicity and program visibility (S2) Allocation of resources (S3) Fairness of procedures (S4)	Amabile, 1997; Buech <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Du plessis, 2016; Griffins-Hermans and Grover, 2006; Lasrado <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Leach <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Marin-Garcia <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Moneim, 2009; Prado-Prado <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Rapp and Eklund, 2002; Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002.
2	Individual attributes/ characteristics (IA)	Personality (IA1) Cognitive style (IA2) Self-efficacy (IA3) Expertise (IA4) Intrinsic motivation (IA5) Extrinsic motivation (IA6)	Amabile, 1997; Axtell <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Lasrado <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Leach <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Marin-Garcia <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Moneim, 2009; Prado-Prado <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Woodmann <i>et al.</i> , 1993.
3	Leadership and management style (LMS)	Top management support (LMS1) Supervisory support (LMS2) Participative management style (LMS3) Employee empowerment (LMS4)	Amabile, 1997; Arif <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Axtell <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Carrier, 1998; Du Plessis, 2016; Lasrado <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Lasrado <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Marksberry <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Moneim, 2009; Prado-Prado <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Reychav and Sharkie, 2010; Reuter, 1977; Shalley and Gilson, 2004.
4	Organizational culture (OC)	Collaborative work environment (OC1) Training & learning (OC2) Open communication and information sharing (OC3) Networking (OC4) Ethical environment (OC5)	Amabile, 1997; Buech <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Griffins-Hermans and Grover, 2006; Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Lasrado <i>et al.</i> , 2017 Lawrence and Weber, 2014; Marin-Garcia <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Moneim, 2009; Prado-Prado <i>et al.</i> , 2018.
5	Evaluation (E)	User-friendly (E1) Evaluation committee (E2) Feedback (E3) Time (E4) Implementation of suggestion (E5)	Arif <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Buech <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Du plessis, 2016; Lasrado <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Marin-Garcia <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Moneim, 2009; Fairbank <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Reuter, 1977; Van Dijk and Van den Ende, 2002.
Source(s): Author's data			

verification (Ho, 2008). According to Saaty (2008), AHP prioritizes the decision-making process and reaches an outcome based on the following steps:

- Step 1: Defining a problem as a goal
- Step 2: Developing an overall hierarchical structure of a problem
- Step 3: Assigning weights to each criterion/subcriterion according to its relative importance and constructing the pairwise comparison matrix
- Step 4: Synthetization
- Step 5: Checking for inconsistencies
- Step 6: Developing the overall priority ranking

In AHP, a problem is structured as a hierarchy. A pairwise comparison is carried out at each level of the hierarchy and a matrix is developed. The hierarchical structure enables a comprehensive assessment of all variables and their relationships. A pairwise comparison is carried out at each level of the hierarchy, and a matrix is developed. AHP mainly relies on the

judgment of experts to derive the priority scales. These scales measure the intangibles in relative terms. The comparisons are made using a scale of absolute judgment that represents how much more one element dominates another for a given attribute. The AHP method used in this research is according to Saaty (2012), as shown in Figure 1.

AHP has been successfully implemented in various contexts by several researchers, such as Cheng and Li (2001) in business performance; Hussain *et al.* (2015) in the manufacturing sector; Mehrajunnisa and Jabeen (2019) in female empowerment, and so on. In recent studies, AHP techniques have become one of the most widely used tools for decision-makers and researchers as an emerging solution to complex real-world and multicriteria decision-making problems (Hussain *et al.*, 2015; Ho, 2008; Vargas, 1990). AHP draws more accurate and helpful results than the numerical assignment method (Cheng and Li, 2001). The main concern of AHP is dealing with inconsistencies arising with the judgment and improving this judgment (Saaty, 2008). AHP judges and selects the elements/concepts that have a greater influence on a predetermined objective. AHP has been used to accurately evaluate the influence of the criteria in terms of goals. The AHP provides a means of prioritizing the various elements in the hierarchy, thereby helping governments and industry practitioners to focus on the most important areas (Cheng and Li, 2001). It is one of the dominant methods for multicriteria decision-making because of its simplicity and transparency, which makes

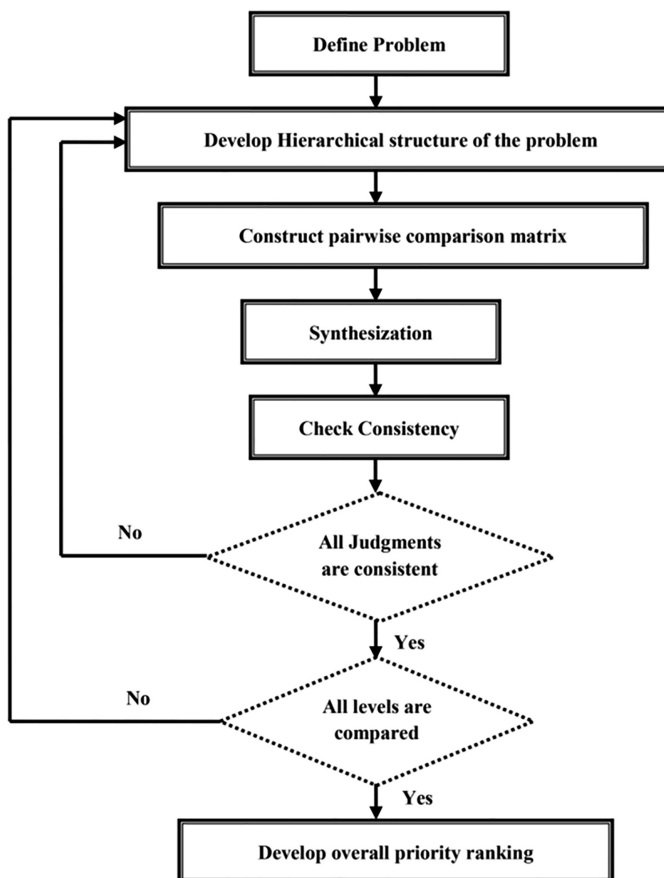


Figure 1.
Outlines the AHP
method used in this
research (Saaty, 2012)

the results comprehensible to the layman (Vargas, 1990). Many modern-world complex problems are now being resolved with the use of this technique by managers and policymakers. As the objective of this research is to prioritize different enablers that enhance performance through ESS, an AHP seems a better option for this research. Hence, AHP was chosen as the most suitable and appropriate method for this study to support the decision-making process.

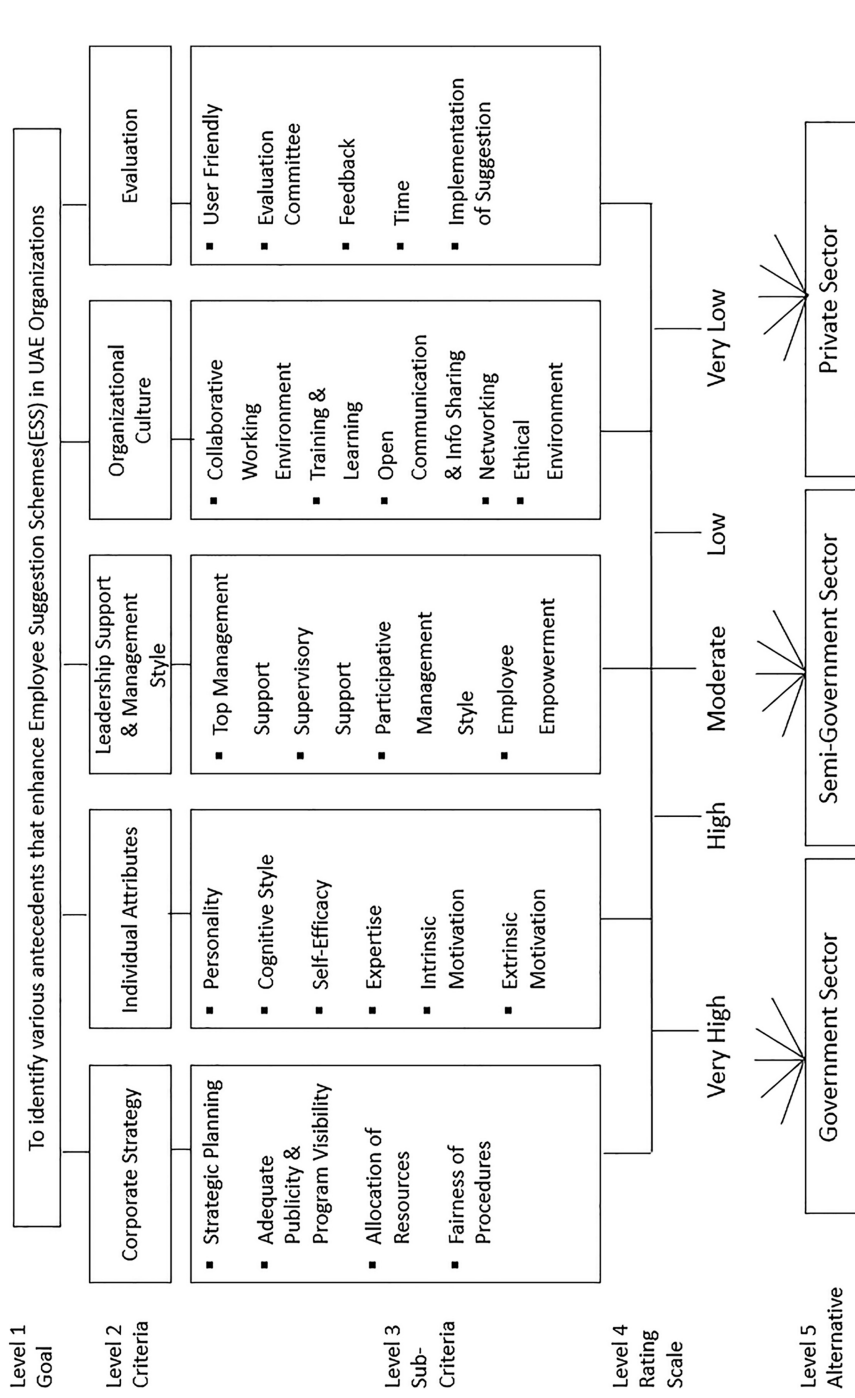
4.2 AHP model

The aim of this research to identify and prioritize the most influential strategic drivers that enhance performance through ESSs in government, semigovernment, and private businesses based in the UAE was a complex process. We have composed a multicriteria decision-making model of ESS to rank the most influential enabler in the businesses sector. This research is built on a hierarchical process and the criteria and subcriteria that were identified based on theories of innovation and creativity (Amabile, 1977; Woodmann *et al.*, 1993) that integrates the individual and contextual factors to understand various enablers of ESS. The AHP model used in this study is presented in Figure 2. The classification of the goal and all other decision criteria and variables are presented in five major levels. The highest level of hierarchy in the AHP model represents the goal that is needed to be investigated in the complex hierarchical system, that is, to identify the strategic drivers or enablers that enhance ESS in various sector-specific organizations based in UAE. The second level of the hierarchy consists of the criteria, namely corporate strategy, individual attributes, leadership support and management style, organizational culture, and evaluation. The criteria are further subdivided into subcriteria at level 3 in the hierarchy. The criteria and subcriteria are gleaned from an exhaustive literature review. Level 4 contains the rating scales. Lastly, Level 5 of the AHP model represents the governments, semigovernment, and privately owned UAE-based businesses as the alternatives to be considered to achieve the goal.

4.3 Data collection and questionnaire design

After the formation of the AHP hierarchy, the next phase to follow up is the data collection. Data were collected from 27 respondents, nine from government, nine from semigovernment, and nine from private sector organizations based in UAE. Moreover, the sample was drawn from only those organizations that had implemented ESS for more than five years with a prime focus on building a culture of continuous creativity and innovation to improve their business processes.

The primary source of inconsistent judgments are human errors taking place at the stage of data collection; it is necessary to examine the tool by which data is collected. Generally, it is a specifically constructed questionnaire, which can be presented in different graphical forms, based on a verbal or numerical scale. A questionnaire was designed on a nine-point scale based on five criteria as suggested by Saaty (1983) with 24 subcriteria. This is the standard rating scale first proposed by Saaty (1983) that continues to be used in all AHP work. For example, suppose there are n factors to be compared at a certain level to identify their relative importance. These factors are compared two at a time to obtain a_{ij} values, which give the magnitude of importance of item i over item j . They reflect opinions, knowledge, and feelings of the experts on the analyzed fragment of the decision problem. Comparisons are designed to express the dominance of one element over the other. The dominance or importance or significance or probability or preference or relevance and other relationships, which are defined depending on the analyzed decision problem, type of elements, and their place in the hierarchical structure. Saaty (1983) proposed a special bipolar nine-point comparison scale, known as the fundamental scale. It has 17 degrees (from “1” to “nine” on each side), and it is, in fact, the only scale used in the AHP (Prusak *et al.*, 2016).



Source: Author's data

Figure 2.
Proposed AHP model

The questionnaires were developed in English and Arabic and comprised both open- and closed-ended questions using a nine-point ratio scale as shown in Table III (Saaty, 1983). To ensure the accuracy of the translation, a back-translation was completed to check for any inconsistencies or possible translation errors. The questionnaire was pilot-tested by an hour-long focus group discussion comprised of two academics and an expert team of three managers with more than 10 years of experience in the implementation of continuous improvement programs. In light of their comments, some of the items had to be rephrased to make them more representative of the intended constructs. All focus group members agreed to include five criteria and 24 subcriteria in this AHP model. The modified questionnaire was used to collect data from a diverse set of sectors and organizations ranging from manufacturing, oil and gas, logistics, construction, tourism, and services (health care, electricity, municipality, telecommunications, etc.). Table II shows the sample selection details/design. In each sector, only those organizations that were listed in the Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award (SKEA, 1999) and that had won international accolades were selected. The target respondents were largely the key persons who were nominated for the Innovation and SKEA award. The list includes the industry experts, quality heads, and evaluation committee members responsible for the successful functioning of the ESS in their organizations with more than 10 years of experience. After prior corporate approval via interorganizational mailing systems, potential respondents were given an electronic cover letter that included the researcher's contact details, the procedures of the research, understanding, and confidentiality.

The collected data were interpreted and a priority vector was assigned to each criterion and subcriterion. A single interviewer conducted the interviews and the same questionnaire was used for each interview to obtain the desired results. Face-to-face interviews were

Table II.
Sample collection
details/design

Context	UAE
Sectors	Public
	Private
Industry	Manufacturing
	Oil and gas
	Construction
	Logistics
	Services (health care, electricity, municipality, communication, etc.)
	Tourism
Selection criteria	Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Award (SKEA)
	International accolades such as: ideas UK, etc.
Key persons interviewed	Industry experts, quality heads, and evaluation committee members
No of years of experience	> 10 years
Source(s): Author's data	

Table III.
Scale of 1–9 for the
analytic hierarchy
process preference

Intensity of importance	Definition	Explanation
1	Equal importance	Two criteria contribute equally to the objective
3	Moderate importance	Judgment slightly favors one over another
5	Strong importance	Judgment strongly favors one over another
7	Very strong importance	A criterion is strongly favored and its dominance is demonstrated in practice
9	Absolute importance	Importance of one over another affirmed on the highest possible order
2, 4, 6, 8	Intermediate values	Used to represent compromise between the priorities listed
Source(s): Saaty, 1983		

conducted to collect the data from the sample based on the agreed time and venue. The interviews took around two months to complete and were conducted by one interviewer. Interviews were necessary for this study for the following reasons:

- (1) To ensure that the right respondent is filling the AHP preference scale
- (2) For the interviewer to evaluate the antecedents or strategic enablers responsible for enhancing performance through the ESS program

The validity of the construct is sound as the focus of the study was on interviewing the top-level management and the industry experts responsible for the functioning of the ESS program. The survey fatigue problem was solved by providing respondents with two choices or alternatives to compare at a time and make judgments. Making the judgment was made easy and simplified with two items to be compared at a time, and the respondents were not overloaded with a list of 24 items simultaneously. This pairwise comparison helps in generating more logical and useful information with consistency involving intuitive feelings from the respondents from their experience (Saaty, 2012). The small sample size is acceptable from AHP's perspective (Cheng and Li, 2001; Hussain *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, a sample size of 27 respondents was considered to be satisfactory for this research study. In line with Saaty (2012), the geometric mean approach was given preference over the arithmetic mean approach to combine the individual pairwise comparison judgments to obtain the consensus pairwise comparison judgment matrices for the entire team. These attributes were placed in a matrix form with pairwise comparison to calculate the mean and synthesize the final evaluation of alternatives performance based on ranks of criteria and subcriteria (Saaty, 2008).

4.4 Analysis and results

The 27 respondents were asked to compare and evaluate the importance of one criterion over the other. The next step in AHP analysis is to determine the pairwise comparison as it generates more meaningful information and improves consistency of judgment as suggested by Saaty (2012). A nine-point scale as shown in Table III was used for making judgments and assigning weights. The weights are defined by collecting data to weigh criteria and subcriteria, and prioritization is conducted by assigning a number from a scale developed by Saaty (1983) representing the importance of the criteria.

The questionnaire was designed based on five criteria identified from the literature with at least three subcriteria for each criterion. For example, if a respondent made a judgment to choose training as a more important criterion than cost, then training was rated as "9" and the latter, that is, cost was rated as "1/9" in comparison and the judgments followed on similar grounds. The consistency index (CI) was applied to check the consistency. Saaty (1990) defined consistency index as

$$CI = (\lambda_{\max} - n) / (n - 1)$$

where $\lambda_{\max}$ = the maximum eigenvalue of the matrix of the important ratios
 n = number of factors.

Moreover, the consistency ratio (CR) is also used to assess the matrix in order to check consistency sufficiency. The CR is defined as the ratio of CI to the random index (RI) of a matrix of comparison generated randomly.

$$CR = CI/RI$$

These random pairwise comparisons have been simulated to produce average random indices for different matrix sizes. The values of RI are shown in Table IV. Saaty (1990)

commented that if the value of CR is smaller or equal to 0.10, only then the consistency is accepted.

Table V represents the geometric means of pairwise comparison of five main criteria. The next step was to define the relative priorities of the criteria (the last column of Table V) by computing “Priority Vectors.” For calculating the priority vectors, Saaty (1990) has introduced the “Consistency Principle,” which says that

$$a_{ik} = a_{ij} \cdot a_{jk}$$

and subsequent arguments for using the special case of the consistency matrix formed by elements

$$a_{ik} = w_i / w_j,$$

where w_i = the elements of the priority weight vector corresponding to criteria i
 w_j = the elements of the priority weight vector corresponding to criteria j .

Table V shows that the respondents rank leadership support and management style as the most important enablers in enhancing performance in various UAE organizations with a priority weight of 33 percent, followed by individual attributes, as a second strategic priority with 30 percent. Corporate strategy, organizational culture, and evaluation ranked third, fourth, and fifth, respectively. The priority vector column in Table V shows that leadership and management style and individual attributes together constitute more than 50 percent as antecedents that enhance performance. It may be noted that all the consensus responses in Table V fulfilled the acceptable level of consistency requirement.

Table VI shows how the respondents rank the subcriteria of corporate strategy. The respondents believe that the most effective driver was adequate publicity and program visibility and allocation of resources with both ranking the top priority score of 27 percent; they rank strategic planning at 26 percent and fairness of procedures at 20 percent. All

Table IV.
Random index (RI)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0.00	0.00	0.52	0.89	1.11	1.25	1.35	1.40	1.45	1.49

Note(s): N = no of factors
Source(s): Saaty, 1983

Table V.
Geometric means of
pairwise comparison
of main criteria

Corporate strategy	Strategy planning	Individual attributes	Leadership and management style	Organizational culture	Evaluation	Priority weight
Strategic planning	1.00	1.89	0.33	1.78	4.20	0.23
Individual attributes	0.53	1.00	3.82	2.53	4.10	0.30
Leadership and management style	3.06	0.26	1.00	6.77	4.31	0.33
Organizational culture	0.56	0.40	0.15	1.00	1.26	0.08
Evaluation	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.79	1.00	0.06

Note(s): Consistency ratio (CR) = 0.00 < 0.1, hence consistent

subcriteria of organizational structure and management style showed an acceptable level of consistency.

Similarly, the next priority listing of the pairwise comparison for individual attribute's subcriterion in [Table VII](#) shows that extrinsic motivation was considered as the most important with a priority score of 36 percent, followed by self-efficacy (26 percent). Both subcriteria constitute almost 50 percent priority score as antecedents that drive performance through ESS in the UAE organizations. Intrinsic motivation contributed to (11 percent), followed by cognitive style (10 percent), personality and expertise (9 percent). All subcriteria of organizational structure and management style showed an acceptable level of consistency.

The pairwise comparison of leadership support and management style in [Table VIII](#) shows that the employee empowerment is ranked first, giving it a 43 percent priority weight, followed by top management support (31 percent), and supervisory support least, with (8 percent). All subcriteria of organizational culture showed an acceptable level of consistency.

The pairwise comparison of organizational culture in [Table IX](#) shows that the training and learning are ranked first, giving it a 36 percent priority weight, followed by the ethical environment (21 percent) and networking least, with (9 percent). All subcriteria of organizational culture showed an acceptable level of consistency.

The pairwise comparison of evaluation subcriteria in [Table X](#) shows that the feedback is ranked first, giving it a 42 percent priority weight, followed by time (24 percent), and implementation of suggestions was ranked last, at (9 percent). All subcriteria of social factors showed an acceptable level of consistency.

Corporate strategy	Strategic planning	Adequate publicity and program visibility	Allocation of resources	Fairness of procedures	Priority weight
Strategic planning	1.00	0.86	1.13	1.21	0.26
Adequate publicity and program visibility	1.16	1.00	1.14	1.10	0.27
Allocation of resources	0.88	0.88	1.00	1.67	0.27
Fairness of procedures	0.83	0.91	0.60	1.00	0.20

Note(s): CR = 0.00 < 0.1 (consistent)

Table VI.
Geometric means of
pairwise comparison of
the subcriteria strategy

Individual attributes	Personality	Cognitive style	Self-efficacy	Expertise	Intrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation	Priority weight
Personality	1.00	1.17	0.20	2.77	0.49	0.14	0.09
Cognitive style	0.85	1.00	0.30	1.67	0.68	0.53	0.10
Self-efficacy	4.95	3.39	1.00	4.21	2.54	0.33	0.26
Expertise	0.36	0.60	0.24	1.00	1.75	0.33	0.09
Intrinsic motivation	2.04	1.46	0.39	0.57	1.00	0.34	0.11
Extrinsic motivation	7.34	1.90	2.99	3.01	2.94	1.00	0.36

Note(s): CR = 0.01 < 0.1 (consistent)

Table VII.
Geometric means of
pairwise comparison of
subcriteria individual
attributes

The final step in the analysis is to compare the global priorities. The global weight is the normalization of linear combinations achieved and is calculated as the product of the weight of subcriteria and the weight of the main criterion (Saaty, 1990). For example, in organizational culture, the subcriterion "fairness of procedures" is calculated by multiplying its weight (0.12) with its main criterion "corporate strategy" weight (0.17) resulting in a global weight equal to 0.02, as shown in Table XI. It represents the final results of all the priorities of the criterion multiplied by the subcriterion priorities presenting from highest to lowest.

Leadership and management style	Top management	Supervisory support	Participative management	Employee empowerment	Priority weight
Top management	1.00	4.57	1.86	0.57	0.31
Supervisory support	0.22	1.00	0.46	0.20	0.08
Participative management	0.54	2.19	1.00	0.47	0.18
Employee empowerment	1.77	5.10	2.11	1.00	0.43
Note(s): CR = 0.00 < 0.1 (consistent)					

[illegible][illegible]

				Antecedents to employee suggestion schemes
Criteria	Subcriteria	Total priority	Total subcriteria ranking	
Corporate strategy	Strategic planning (S1)	0.04	3	513
	Adequate publicity and program visibility (S2)	0.04	3	
	Allocation of resources (S3)	0.03	4	
	Fairness of procedures (S4)	0.02	5	
Individual attributes	Personality (IA1)	0.02	5	
	Cognitive style (IA2)	0.02	5	
	Self-efficacy (IA3)	0.04	3	
	Expertise (IA4)	0.02	5	
	Intrinsic motivation (IA5)	0.02	5	
	Extrinsic motivation (IA6)	0.05	2	
	Top management (LMS1)	0.05	2	
Leadership and management style	Supervisory support (LMS2)	0.02	5	
	Participative management (LMS3)	0.03	4	
	Employee empowerment (LMS4)	0.06	1	
	Collaborative working environment (OC1)	0.01	6	
Organizational culture	Training and learning (OC2)	0.02	5	
	Open communication (OC3)	0.01	6	
	Networking (OC4)	0.01	6	
	Ethical environment (OC5)	0.01	6	
	User-friendly (E1)	0.01	6	
	Evaluation committee (E2)	0.01	6	
	Feedback (E3)	0.02	5	
	Time (E4)	0.01	6	
	Implementation of suggestion (E5)	0.01	6	
Evaluation				Table XI. Ranking of priority for the total subcriteria

5. Discussion

This study aimed to prioritize the antecedents that promote ESS and contribute to enhancing performance in UAE organizations. The respondents collectively ranked leadership and top management style, individual attributes, and corporate strategy at the top. The findings are inconsistent with [Amabile \(1997\)](#), who emphasized leadership support and management style, individual attributes, and corporate strategy as drivers that help to translate employee creativity into practical ideas in an organization. The top management should take initiatives to foster a culture of innovation by motivating employees in improving performance and productivity ([Amabile, 1997](#); [Marksberry et al., 2014](#); [Prado-Prado et al., 2018](#)). ESS is the heart of fostering a quality culture of continuous improvements, and hence, top management should realize the outcome achievement by supporting it. Additionally, because employees are increasingly working in locations separated by time and geographical location, this presents leaders with a new level of complexity when trying to foster creativity. Leadership needs to play an active role in fostering, encouraging, and supporting creativity ([Lasrado et al., 2017](#)). Studies have emphasized the salience of supportive supervision and a caring, consultative work environment in fostering creativity.

The pairwise comparison of leadership support and management style showed that employee empowerment, top management support, and participative management style were given the highest priority for the successful implementation of the ESS program in UAE organizations. The success of idea implementation corresponds to level employee participation through empowerment and supportive environment ([Reychav and Sharkie, 2010](#)). Also, employee empowerment helps to eliminate the top-bottom open communication

about the uneven distribution of economies with demands of rapid change without any delays. It ensures that organizational obstacles to improvement are removed, thus, enhancing employee's openness to change, motivating employees to express views, alternatives, and suggestions freely. Moreover, participative management helps in fostering employee creativity and employee innovative behavior in the submission of ideas and implementation of suggestions. Hence, organizations should focus on building cascading effects through supportive management practices in effectively involving employees in submitting constructive ideas.

The pairwise comparison of individual attributes was ranked as the second-highest priority. These findings are in line with researchers who emphasized that individual attributes help boost organizational creativity and organizational performance (Amabile, 1997; Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018). In individual attributes, the respondents ranked both extrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1997; Gupta and Banerjee, 2016; Leach *et al.*, 2006; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018) and self-efficacy (Axtell *et al.*, 2000; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015; Shalley and Gilson, 2004), were given the highest priority. To be competitive, organizations should invest in motivating employees to submit suggestions with effective rewarding strategies; in fact, financial rewards improve the return on investment (ROI) (Leach *et al.*, 2006; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018). One of the most influential factors for effectiveness and successful submission of suggestion is rewards for the employees to increase productivity (Lasrado *et al.*, 2015). The traditional way of motivating individuals only with rewards has shifted its focus with changing trends to offering recognition, perks, incentives, tokens, and so on to employees. Incentives aid the process of idea generation, whereas recognition helps in underpinning a culture of performance.

Self-efficacy is the foremost component required for employees to be more creative (Amabile, 1997). Much of the research on individual creativity has focused on the importance of intrinsic motivation. This emphasizes the employees rather than the system to drastically improve or change the performance of the organization. The debates about learning organizations organizing an ESS as a means of developing workers' skills to respond more quickly to the rapidly changing market conditions continue.

The pairwise comparison of the corporate strategy was ranked as the third-highest priority. The findings are per (Amabile, 1997; Lasrado *et al.*, 2015; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; Prado-Prado *et al.*, 2018), who emphasized the importance of corporate strategy. The participants ranked both adequate publicity and program visibility and allocation of resources as the top-ranking priority as important enablers that contributed to the corporate strategy. According to Amabile (1997) and Leach *et al.* (2006), successful companies make strategic planning a top priority to inculcate a learning culture in the organizations. The corporate strategy should be well communicated to the employees at all levels and involve the employee interest to personally align with the mission and values of the organization. Also, the success stories about the successful suggestions made should be well communicated to staff through vouchers, bulletin boards, cafeteria, awards, and so on to promote awareness and motivation among other employees. For sustainable development of suggestion schemes for a long-term-oriented approach, organizations need to focus on publicity and campaigns to promote continuous improvement of suggestion schemes. To facilitate the effective working of ESS, organizations must design to set aside a fixed financial budget and establish procedures to employees about its usage in improving or processing the suggestions ahead in future.

Organizational culture was ranked as the fourth-highest priority. These findings are in line with (Amabile, 1997; Griffiths-Hemans and Grover, 2006). The respondents ranked organizational culture as the fourth most influential factor in driving performance through ESS in various organizations based in the UAE. Organizational culture defines the way employees complete tasks and interact with each other in an organization. It affects both

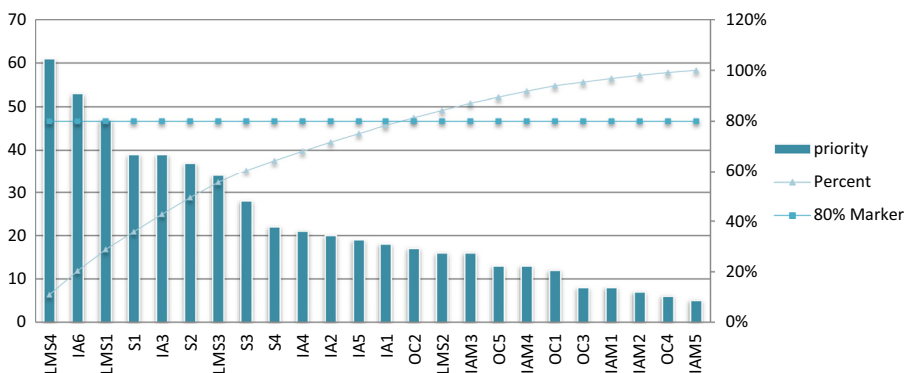
individual and organizational processes, such as employee behavior, performance, learning and development, creativity, and innovation. In organizational culture, the training and learning were ranked the most important influential factor along with the ethical environment. Training and learning can increase both the quality and quantity of ideas generated by enhancing the creativity of individual employees. Also, nonfinancial rewards such as training programs, conferences, seminars, symposiums, and workshops can enhance organizational effectiveness toward creativity. By providing effective training to employees who rate low in terms of personal attributes, creative performance among employees can be boosted (Amabile, 1997; Marin-Garcia *et al.*, 2018). Also, ethical environment constitutes a powerful tool that communicates the beliefs, values, and awareness of programs by building trust and encouraging employees to come up with creative ideas of corporate interest.

It was also surprising to note that evaluation received the least priority because, compared with other factors, it had the least influence on the success of ESS in UAE organizations. The reason behind this could be that all respondents were from the organizations that manage well the evaluation process and have successfully employed well-experienced top evaluation committee members for checking the feasibility of the suggestion.

The final step in the AHP is to develop the overall priority of the 24 subcriteria. According to Pareto's principle for many phenomena, 20 percent of input is responsible for 80 percent of the results obtained; in other words, 80 percent of results are the consequences of 20 percent of the causes (Coyle, 2004). Thus, following Pareto's principle and taking Table VI into consideration, the global priority is drawn as shown in Figure 3. The highest global priority subcriteria that impacted performance were employee empowerment (LMS4), extrinsic motivation (IA6), top management support (LMS1), and strategic planning (S1), which reached 40 percent, while the remaining 60 percent was distributed among 20 other subcriteria.

6. Conclusion

The study was a modest attempt to identify the antecedents or enablers that enhance ESS in various sector-specific government, semigovernment, and private businesses based in the UAE and to prioritize the factors that influence performance in those organizations. The findings were consistent with Amabile (1997), who emphasized leadership support and management style, individual attributes, and corporate strategy as drivers that help to enhance the employee creativity into practical ideas in an organization. The comparison between the highest and lowest priorities of various strategic drivers to the success of ESS is



Source: Author's data

Figure 3.
Pareto chart depicting
over all global priority

clearly explained in the discussion. An AHP questionnaire was used to collect primary data from various UAE organizations. Consistency test was performed to ensure the consistency of the pairwise comparison.

These results also suggest that sector-specific organizations tend to be more focused on considering individual attributes of creative people as individuals are the heart of innovation, along with contextual factors that could help organizations to transform innovative engines through ESS in generating valuable ideas and increase the participation rate in such schemes. Organizations should understand that these factors do not operate independent of each other but are interrelated. ESS aids in leveraging on employees' talents and creativity to come up with solutions to existing challenges and improving the overall performance of the organization by enhancing work processes. It is now clear that intangible assets are driving value creation in today's global economy to gain a competitive advantage in a saturated market by utilizing existing resources more efficiently and creatively. To realize the 2030 Abu Dhabi Economic Vision and the UAE National Charter 2021, the organizations in UAE have been striving hard to improve their performance. The main focus is to improve the quality of services, safety environment, operational efficiency, leadership effectiveness, and stakeholder responsiveness about performance. This study aims to help organizations realize the innovative potential of their workforce in improving performance by generating novel ideas through effective employee involvement programs such as ESS. ESS has great potential to accelerate the innovation process. In the world of emerging markets, the fastest-growing countries are the developing countries. To survive in the emerging market, organizations need to dynamically reinvent businesses and strategies to sustain growth in the emerging market economies. This necessitates strategic flexibility, the individual's and the organization's ability to be efficient in its businesses to cope up with the fast-changing business environment by taking advantage of its competent workforce.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The theoretical contribution of the study is twofold. Firstly, it was an attempt to apply theories of creativity taking into consideration the creative constructs of individual attributes, which form the basis for innovation and creativity to identify various enablers influencing ESS in various sector-specific organizations in UAE. Secondly, this study added to the already existing body of literature by providing a deeper insight into the successful implementation and functioning of ESS in the developing countries to survive disruptive changes in emerging markets through effective employee involvement. Moreover, this research addresses the challenge of prioritizing the enablers to ESS in deploying intangible resources effectively to enhance organizational performance.

The practical implications of this study are that it will provide an insight into policymakers and managers seeking to gain further understanding of the various enablers to successfully drive the ESS for better organizational performance. The contribution of this research, through successive stages of data collection, measurement, analysis, and refinement, is a set of a reliable and valid framework that can be subsequently used in different practical perspectives and approaches as follows:

From a managerial perspective, this study helps organizational leaders to prioritize and frame empowerment strategies that can effectively involve their employees and create a cascading effect down the baseline through continuous support.

From an employee perspective, framing effective rewarding and motivational strategies (training and learning, etc.) can improve the engagement of employees in the ideation process.

From an organizational perspective, this study helps organizations to prioritize and prepare in advance about the climate that fosters a culture of creativity and innovation through collaboration, communication, and ethical safeguarding mechanisms to effectively drive the ESS program.

From an economic perspective, innovation has become one of the most crucial drivers of long-term development, ESS aids in creating value in today's global economy to gain a competitive advantage in a saturated market by utilizing existing resources more efficiently.

6.2 Limitations and future research

The study is also limited to the small sample size and to the small number of criteria in research to assess antecedents to ESS. Also, the study is limited to only the UAE. It is suggested that the study should be carried in other GCC countries because of homogeneity in the political, organizational, and sociocultural context. In the future, this model can be used for quantitative studies by framing hypotheses and testing the significance of factors toward its defined goal by incorporating advanced statistical methodologies. Most of the organizations in the UAE are striving to be innovative because of the positive motivation provided by the government. To be creative, they should nurture ESSs, which act as catalysts for organizations willing to transform into engines of innovation.

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