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Article information:

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Rachid Zeffane, Shaker Jamal Bani Melhem, (2017) "Trust, job satisfaction, perceived organizational performance and turnover intention: A public-private sector comparison in the United Arab Emirates", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 39 Issue: 7, pp.1148-1167, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-06-2017-0135>

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Trust, job satisfaction, perceived organizational performance and turnover intention

A public-private sector comparison in the United Arab Emirates

Received 18 June 2017
Accepted 19 June 2017

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine and compare the differential impacts of job satisfaction (JS), trust (T), and perceived organizational performance (POP) on turnover intention (TI) in public and private sector organizations.

Design/methodology/approach – Draws on a sample of 311 employees from the service sector (129 public and 182 private) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The main concepts utilized in the study are borrowed from previous research and further tested for validity and reliability. Four main hypotheses are explored.

Findings – In support of previous research, statistical analysis (*t*-test) revealed that public sector employees tend to be more satisfied, more trusting, and have less intention to leave their organization. Regression analysis revealed that public sector employees' TI are most significantly affected by their perceptions of the performance of their organization, with JS, work experience (WE) and education (Ed) also having significant effects. In contrast, private sector employees' TI was most significantly affected by JS and feelings of trust (T).

Research limitations/implications – Although very useful, the present study is limited in scope and therefore suffers from some limitations. The sample only includes employees from UAE organizations operating in education, some government institutions and the financial sector. Future research might consider including employees the health sector and other public organizations such as the immigration/police departments which play important strategic roles in the UAE economy. Also, future research might consider extending the scope of the study to include institutions in similar neighboring countries in the region, such as Qatar and Kuwait.

Practical implications – The findings of this study points to the relative importance of trust, JS and perceived organizational performance in affecting TI in public and private sectors. These can be considered as indicators to assist managers in these sectors to better manage/minimize TIs. In particular, the findings indicate that managers in general (and UAE public sector managers in particular) need to monitor and better manage not only their employees' JS but also perceptions of the overall performance of the organization.

Originality/value – While research on the influence of JS on TI in both of these sectors has been abundant over the years, studies examining the impact of trust and perceptions of organizational performance remain few and are largely lacking. Also, studies on turnover in the UAE (and particularly those comparing public and private sectors) remain largely lacking. This study and its findings fill this gap and provide some insights on the differential impact of trust, JS and perceived organizational performance on employee TIs in public-private sectors, particularly in the UAE context.

Keywords United Arab Emirates, Trust, Job satisfaction, Turnover intention, Perceived organizational performance, Public/private sector

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The issue of differing attitudes and behaviors of employees in public vs private sector employees has been the subject of much debate and controversies for a number of years (Balfour and Wechsler, 1990; Zeffane, 1994; Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun, 2005; Hayes *et al.*, 2006; Coomber and Barribal, 2007; Baarspul and Wilderom, 2011; Mihajlov and Mihajlov, 2016). One of the topics that still preoccupy researchers, and human resource practitioners alike is that of differences in employee turnover/turnover intentions (TI) in



these sectors and the reasons behind such attitudes and difference (Pietersen and Oni, 2014). Research on the underlying reasons for the differences has produced mixed results. For that reason, research interest in differences in attitudes and behaviors between public and private sector employees (including TI) has grown significantly in recent years among practitioners and scholars alike. Practitioners are interested in learning the impact that various employee attitudes and behaviors may have on the critical human resource management issues that they are facing (Bright, 2008).

While research on the influence of job satisfaction (JS) on TI in both of these sectors has been abundant over the years, studies examining the impact of trust and perceptions of organizational performance remain few and are largely lacking. Also, studies on turnover in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (and particularly those comparing public and private sectors) remain largely lacking. This is rather surprising given recent reports warning that the UAE economy suffers from a high rate of voluntary employee turnover (Suliman and Al kathairi, 2012; Harhara *et al.*, 2015; Khalife, 2016). According to a recent Hays Salary and Employment Report (2016), 31 percent of the employees in the UAE changed jobs in 2015, with no less than 50 percent intending to leave their job in 2016. This trend points to the importance of the issue of turnover in the UAE context and justifies the need for further research.

This study attempts to fill the above research gaps and examines TIs and three main attitudinal variables that may affect it (namely, trust, and perceived organizational performance & JS). The study draws on a sample of 311 employees from the UAE service sector (129 Public and 182 Private). We also compare the relative impacts of the above three attitudinal variable on employees' TI in these two sectors.

Literature review and hypotheses

The study of turnover and TIs has been and is still a popular topic in management, human resource management, and the social sciences in general (Balfour and Wechsler, 1990; Zeffane, 1994; Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun, 2005; Hayes *et al.*, 2006; Coomber and Barribal, 2007; Mihajlov and Mihajlov, 2016). It has attracted research from all corners of the globe with serious attempts to identify and explain the reasons for this phenomenon, generally considered to be undesirable. In many cases, the research focused on identifying demographic and attitudinal variables that can best explain employees' intentions to quite their job. More recently, several studies have focused on uncovering commonalities/differences between public and private sector employees in this regard.

Job attitudes and employees' TIs: public vs private

Studies incorporating job attitudes and TIs have reported mixed results. While some studies reported greater satisfaction and lesser degrees of TIs in the public sector, others have pointed to the opposite.

Over the years, some studies revealed that public sector employees tend to be more satisfied and therefore have much lower intentions to leave their job (Newstrom and Reif, 1976; Koch and Steers, 1978; Steel and Warner, 1990; Schneider and Vaught, 1993; Bright, 2008; Stocks and Hardin, 2001; Kumari and Pandey, 2011; Wang *et al.*, 2012) while others point to the exact opposite (Borges, 2013; Burke and Singh, 2016). For example, Stocks and Hardin (2001) found that employees in public accounting firms had much higher JS and lower TIs than those employed in the private sector. Contrarily, Reed *et al.* (1993) reported accountants in public practices to be more likely to turnover than accountants working in private practices. Similarly, Wang *et al.* (2012) found that public sector employees in Taiwan tended to report lower satisfaction. However (and interestingly) they also had much lower intentions to leave than their private sector counterparts.

It seems that studies that have reported significant differences in satisfaction and turnover between public and private sector employees are those that focused on intrinsic satisfaction. In contrast, studies that focused on extrinsic satisfaction tended to produce mixed results. For instance, Schneider and Vaught (1993) found and argued that public sector employees tend to more satisfied with the extrinsic factors of their job, such as pay satisfaction. In their view, public sector professionals tend to feel that maintenance or extrinsic factors are more satisfying. At the same time, they report no significant differences between and private sector employees with regard to other aspects of JS included in the Job descriptive Index scale they used (see Schneider and Vaught, 1993).

The rationale given for greater JS and less turnover in the public sector is that employees in the public sector tend to enjoy far greater job security than their private sector counterparts. This tendency is not shared by several other studies reporting greater dissatisfaction and intentions to quit among employees in that sector (Bogg and Cooper, 1995; Lambert *et al.*, 2002; Tzeng, 2002; Yin and Yang, 2002; Larabee *et al.*, 2003; Pillay, 2009; Lane *et al.*, 2010; Burke and Singh, 2016). The differences in findings appear to be largely contextual and in many cases country specific. For example, in a recent study comparing the JS and TIs of private and public sector employees in Serbia, (Mihajlov and Mihajlov (2016) found that public employees have higher JS and lower TIs compared to their counterparts in the private sector. Interestingly, the vast majority of studies examining the satisfaction and turnover of public sector employees in Middle Eastern in general and the UAE in particular have tended to report positive satisfaction and lower TIs. (Zeffane *et al.*, 2008; Srivastava, 2012; Al Afari and Abu Elanain, 2014; Yaghi, 2016). One of the explanations for this trend is that UAE public sector employees are generally highly paid and enjoy several benefits. Among such benefits are: opportunity for flexible working hours; employer sponsored health insurance coverage for them and their dependents; schooling and education allowances for them and their dependents; annual air tickets to/from their country of origin and generous yearly vacation. In addition, Emirati citizens enjoy reasonable job security and may expect long-term employment (Suliman, 2006).

This may explain the low mobility and turnover of employees in that sector, including key sectors such as government departments, government utilities as well as public sector education. In a comprehensive analysis of the process and outcomes of Emiratisation, Al-Ali (2008) argues that UAE nationals/citizens (in particular) tend to consider that the private sector offers relatively little career opportunity and low wages in comparison to the public sector. This certainly explains why Emirati nationals, in particular, prefer to work in the public sector. In contrast the UAE private sector's business model is largely dependent on the creation of low wage jobs which are more likely to engender high turnover (Ashfaq, 2008). In further support to this and in a more recent study of JS and turnover in the UAE, Al-Hummadi (2013) also found that JS was relatively higher among employees in the public sector, this being concomitant with the lower rate of turnover in that sector. One of the main justifications she provides for these differences is that employees in the UAE public sector tend to receive better pay and benefits than their private sector counterparts and also have much less fear of job losses. The proposed hypothesis is as follows:

- H1. Public sector employees in the UAE tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and have lower intentions to leave their jobs than private sector employees.

Determinants of TI: public vs private sector

JS and TI. Over the years, an overwhelming number of studies have examined the relationship between JS and labor turnover (Hellman, 1997; Ross and Zander, 2006; Amy and Foreman, 2009). The vast majority of these studies have indicated that job dissatisfaction leads to greater intent to leave and thereby increase the likelihood of turnover (Hellman, 1997; Coomber and Barribal, 2007; Kumari and Pandey, 2011;

Saeed *et al.*, 2014; Mihajlov and Mihajlov, 2016). In his comprehensive meta-analysis Hellman (1997) concluded that employees' dissatisfaction inevitably results in higher chances that they would start considering other employment opportunities. These relationships were also found in several other studies (Hayes *et al.*, 2006; Coomber and Barribal, 2007) indicating that positive JS tends to decrease the likelihood of TIs. Similarly, greater job dissatisfaction results in a higher chance that employees would consider alternative employment opportunities.

However, studies that compared the relationship of JS to TIs have found mixed results. Some studies indicated that positive JS leads to less inclination to TIs in both sectors (Koch and Steers, 1978; Bright, 2008; Jassem *et al.*, 2011; Muhammad *et al.*, 2017). Other studies indicated that there were differences between the two sectors in this regard. For instance, drawing on a study of turnover among public and private sector employees in Taiwan, Wang *et al.* (2012) found that the JS and TIs of public employees were different from those of private employees. In particular, they found that the public employees had lower JS and lower TIs compared to their counterparts in the private sector. The negative relationship between JS and TI was weaker among public compared to private employees (Wang *et al.*, 2012). It is worth noting that Wang and his colleagues focused primarily on the "extrinsic aspects" of JS. However, the majority of studies that have reported significant differences in satisfaction and turnover between public and private sector employees are those that focused on intrinsic satisfaction. In contrast, studies that focused on extrinsic satisfaction tended to produce mixed results. For instance, Schneider and Vaught (1993) found and argued that public sector employees tend to more satisfied with the extrinsic factors of their job, such as pay satisfaction. In their view, public sector professionals tend to feel that maintenance or extrinsic factors are more satisfying. At the same time, they report no significant differences between and private sector employees with regard to other aspects of JS included in the Job descriptive Index scale they used (see Schneider and Vaught, 1993).

On balance, previous research strongly indicates that there are significant differences between the two sectors, in terms of employee attitudes and consequent behaviors. However, and overall, the direction of the relationship between satisfaction and TI was found to be consistently negative in both public and private sectors.

For example, in an early study of turnover among senior executive of federal government agencies in the US, Wilson (1994) found that JS had a significant negative impact on TI. Similarly, and more recently, using data from the *Federal Human Capital Survey*, Lee and Whitford (2008) found that satisfaction reduces the likelihood of the intention to leave. In the same vein, Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) and Seung-Bum and Keon-Hyung (2009) also found strong negative relationships between satisfaction and TI among federal and state government employees. Similar relations were also found by several recent studies focusing on employees in the private sector (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Maden, 2014; Lu and Gursoy, 2016; Yang *et al.*, 2016).

Based on the above research and literature arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H2. JS is expected to have a significant negative impact on TIs among both public and private sector's employees in the UAE.

Impact of perceptions of organizational performance on TI. Understanding employees' perceptions of performance of their organization and their implications in public and private sector organizations is a challenging task (Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun, 2005). The concept of "perceived organizational performance (POP)" refers to employees' perceptions of the overall organization-level performance (Delaney and Huselid, 1996). It is a valuable concept that allows researchers to capture the interface between attitudes and performance (Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000).

Intention to quit would spark in one's mind when individual feel that the organization he/she works for does not fulfill their needs or if they are disappointed about what they see their organization achieving by comparison of what they expect it to achieve. Several studies have indicated that employee perceptions of the overall performance of their organization can have significant implications on their attitudes and behaviors, including TI (Delaney and Huselid, 1996; Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000). However, the majority of studies examining employees perceptions of their organizational performance have tended to equate such perceptions with perceptions of organizational support, and yet the two concepts are not the exactly same (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Allen *et al.*, 2003; Canipe, 2006). For example Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) reviewed more than 70 studies concerning employees' general belief that perceived organizational support (POS) had significant implications on attitudes, including TI. Similarly, Allen *et al.* (2003) developed a model investigating antecedents of POS and its role in predicting voluntary turnover. It is worth noting that they focused on the service sector (215 department store employees and 197 insurance agents). Their findings suggest that perceptions of organization support had strong implications on TIs.

In the UAE context, public sector employees are often compelled to compare the efficiency (and success) of their organization with that of similar organizations in the private sector. They tend to hold high expectations of organizational performance and would expect the standards and economic performance of their public institutions to equal or surpass those of private organizations (Ibrahim and Al Falasi, 2014). Hence, strong feelings of unsatisfactory organizational performance may trigger thoughts of seeking employment in other non-public organizations if these are perceived to be more performant. Presumably, their motivation/intention to quit is not necessarily guided by personal extrinsic gains; but more by feelings of frustration (Jassem *et al.*, 2011):

H3. In the UAE public sector, employees' perceptions of low organizational performance are likely to influence their intention to leave.

Trust and TIs. In recent years, trust has become an important topic of academic inquiry in a variety of social science disciplines, including management, sociology, psychology, and economics (Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996; Mayer and Davis, 1999; Schoorman *et al.*, 2007; Colquitt *et al.*, 2007). The concept of trust relates to individual attributions about other people's intentions and motives underlying their behavior. More specifically, it involves "positive expectations about others." These attributions influence and are influenced by general beliefs and expectations of individuals about the treatment they will receive from others (Mayer *et al.*, 1995).

Several studies have shown that trust is strongly related to a range of other employee attitudes, including TI (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Brasheara *et al.*, 2005; Canipe, 2006; Mulki *et al.*, 2008; McKnight *et al.*, 2009; DeConinck, 2011; Mulki *et al.*, 2013; Harhara *et al.*, 2015). These relationships were found to be relevant to organizations in both public and private sectors (Albrecht, 2006; Balkan *et al.*, 2014; Ertürk, 2014). The logic behind these relationships is that when employees experience high trust (if they trust others, and feel they are trusted by others), they are more likely to feel safe and comfortable in their job which makes them less inclined to want to leave. On the other hand, if they experience distrust, they would be more likely to worry, feel uncomfortable in their job and are therefore more likely to want to leave.

In a comprehensive meta-analysis, Dirks and Ferrin (2002) found that trust is a key antecedent to several outcomes, including turnover. In a study of trust in the Australian context, Ferres and her colleagues found co-workers trust to be a significant predictor of TI (Ferres *et al.*, 2004). In a four-country study, Costigan (2012) found and reported that employees' trust of their supervisor was a significant predictor of TI. Similarly, in a study of 344 salespeople, Mulki *et al.* (2013) found that trust was a significant antecedent of TI.

Several studies reported lower feelings of trust among employees in the public sector (Morgan and Zeffane, 2003; Shah Nawaz and Goswami, 2011; Top *et al.*, 2015). In a comparative study of public and private sector employees in India, Shah Nawaz and Goswami (2011) found that the level of trust among private sector employees was much higher than that of public employees. In a more recent comparative study conducted in Turkey, Top *et al.* (2015) also found the level of trust among private sector employees to be much higher than that of employees from the public sector.

However, the above tendencies do not seem to apply to public sector organizations in the middle-east context. In that context public employees seem to be relatively more loyal (to) and more trusting of their organization and its management (Al-Ali, 2008). For instance, in his study of change in the UAE, AlHawi (2014) found the level of trust to be much high among employee in the public sector. Hence, and given the relatively higher levels of loyalty among UAE public employees, trust is unlikely to be a factor that may influence them to anticipate/consider moving jobs. This also relates to the fact that the majority of employees in that sector (being Emirati Citizens) are expected to (and do) hold strong feelings of patriotism (which translates into greater loyalty/commitment towards the government organizations which employ them. They consider these organizations to be prime movers of national economic success and therefore believe (in), support and promote their vision (Suliman and Al kathairi, 2012; Suliman and Al Harethi, 2013; Ibrahim and Al Falasi, 2014). This not the case of private sector employees who are generally more preoccupied by micro-level issues and endeavors.

Based on the above literature and arguments, we are inclined to espouse the following hypothesis:

- H4.* Feelings of trust/distrust are more likely to affect turnover intention among UAE employees in the private sector.

Figure 1 illustrates the main relationships and hypotheses examined this study

Methodology

Data and sample

We targeted individuals employed in organizations operating in the UAE service sector. To achieve balanced and representative samples of employees in both public and private Sectors. We focused on the service sector considered to be a prime economic driver in the UAE. It employs almost sixty percent of the working population. The value added by the service sector, in terms of gross domestic product, is ranked second, after the oil sector (Fanack Chronicle, 2016). In order to obtain balanced number of responses from both public and private sector employees, we targeted individuals employed in education, banking and finance, and government/public services utilities. We used a non-probability convenience sampling technique which commonly accepted, particularly for online survey research (Schillewaert *et al.*, 1998; Gnanakkan, 2010; Lane *et al.*, 2010; Derby-Davis, 2014).

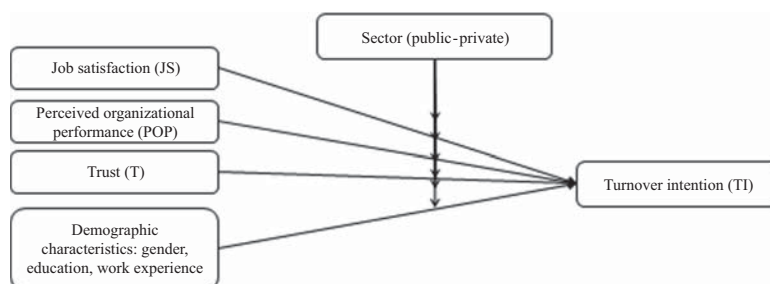


Figure 1.
Main hypothetical relationships

The data were gathered via mass electronic mail sent to employee groups in these services, inviting them to participate in an online survey questionnaire. Web survey was used primarily for ease of use and speed of response. Also, to fulfill our intention to gather sufficient responses from employee groups from both public and private sector, we targeted individuals from both sectors. The survey questionnaire was connected to a web address. In compliance with the ethics standards of the university employing the researchers, a cover letter (with the university logo) explaining the purpose of the survey was sent to each targeted respondent. The letter was also displayed at the outset of the online questionnaire. Respondents were assured of complete anonymity, that the data will only be analyzed in aggregate, and that no attempt will be made to identify individual respondents. To encourage respondents to participate, the purpose and importance of the study for the UAE service sector (both public and private) were underlined. In total 1,000 individuals were invited to participate. This was the researchers' target at the start of the survey. At the close of the survey, 311 valid questionnaires had been completed and received online, for a response rate of 31 percent. This response rate is generally expected and is acceptable for survey research, particularly web surveys (Egan *et al.*, 2004; Davidson *et al.*, 2010). Some of the reasons for the low response rates for this type of surveys include perceived survey burdens due to the increasing number of web surveys as well as the time-demand they make on prospective respondents (Egan *et al.*, 2004). Other recent studies using similar survey approach also reported low response rates and in some cases below thirty percent (see for example Knapp *et al.*, 2017).

Table I shows the sample distribution by sector of activity.

The distribution of respondents across the two sectors is comparable and acceptable (public sector: $n = 129$ for 41.5 percent of total sample and private sector: $n = 182$ for 58.5 percent of the total sample).

The distribution also reflects the concentrations of public and private sector organizations across the three main sectorial-activities targeted (re: government/administrative utilities, education, banking and finance). 45.3 percent of the respondents worked in the education sector, 21.2 percent in banking and finance, 18 percent in government/administrative/utilities, and 15 percent in other service sectors. The vast majority (59 percent) of the respondents were aged between 25 and 35 years old. 19.6 percent were in the 19-25 age group; 19 percent were in the 36-45 age category. 6.4 percent were aged between 46 and 55. The remainder (3 percent) were over 55. The majority (59.8 percent) were male. The sample also has a good representation of gender groups. In all, 60 percent of respondents were males ($n = 125$; almost equally divided across public and private sectors, respectively, 64 and 61) and 41 percent were females ($n = 186$; with 65 and 121 respondents from each sector, respectively). In terms of educational background, 52.7 percent of respondents were degree holders. The distribution of work experience (WE) is also wide-ranged.

Measures

Demographic characteristics. As a nominal (dichotomous) variable referring to sector was attributed dummy values of 0 for private sector and 1 for public sector. Gender, also as a

Table I.
Sample distribution

	Public sector	Private sector	Total
Education	59 (41.8%)	82 (58.2%)	141
Government/Administrative Utilities	53 (94.6%)	3 (5.4%)	56
Banking and Finance	6 (9.1%)	60 (90.9%)	66
Other	11 (22.9%)	37 (77.1%)	48
Total	129 (41.5%)	182 (58.5%)	311

nominal and dichotomous variable, was attributed nominal values of 1 for females and 2 for males. Education level was measured by asking respondents to report on the highest education level they attained. The ranges and values used are: high school or below = 1, higher education (technical/university) = 2, postgraduate (master/Phd) = 3. WE was measured by asking respondents to report their overall WE. The ranges and values used for this were: none or < 1 year = 1, 1-5 years = 2, 6-10 years = 3, 11-20 years = 4, Over 20 years = 5.

The instruments (composite scales) used in this study were borrowed from previous research. A five-point Likert Scale was used to assess respondents' agreement-disagreement with a list of statements. All of the constructs used were borrowed from previous research and were tested for validity and reliability. The Cronbach coefficients were above 0.7 which are considered sufficiently robust to warrant subsequent analysis (Nunnally, 1978; Sekaran and Bougie, 2003; Hair *et al.*, 2010).

TI. TI refers to an individual's probability to leave their current job (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986). In this study, we adopted the five-item measure of TI developed and validated by Simmons *et al.* (1997). The items used are as follows: I am presently looking and planning to leave, I am seriously considering leaving in the near future, as far as I can see, I intend to stay in this organization, it is very unlikely that I would ever consider leaving this organization, and there are lots of job opportunities for me, but I intend to stay. Cronbach α was 0.92 for the scale.

Perceived organizational performance (POP). This concept reflects employees' perceptions of the overall organization-level performance. Previous research used perceptions of performance and argued that this is a valuable way to capture the interface between attitudes and performance (see for example Delaney and Huselid, 1996). To capture perceptions of organizational performance on a variety of performance aspects, we used a seven-item instrument based on item scales developed by Ironson *et al.* (1989). The seven items are as follows: my organization has better quality of products and services as compared to others, my organization develops new products and services, my organization is able to attract essential employees, my organization is able to retain essential employees, in my organization, the customers/clients are satisfied with the organization products/services, in my organization, there is a good relationship between management and employees, in my organization, there is good relationship among employees in general. This scale puts more emphasis on the soft aspects of performance and is therefore a reflection of human resource management success. This was further confirmed by reliability tests which generated a Cronbach α of 0.88.

Trust (T). Trust was measured using a seven-item scale drawn from the instrument developed by Mayer and Davis (1999) derived from Rotter's (1967) original trust scale. This measure of trust focuses on "trusting others," rather than on "being trusted" by others. Similar items were also advocated by Cummings and Bromiley (1996), the seven items are as follows: one should be very cautious with strangers most people tell the truth, most people can be counted on to what they say they will do, one must be alert and cautious as people can take advantage of you (reversed item), most people are honest, I have high trust in people/colleagues who work with me, I trust the managers and supervisors I deal with in my work. Cronbach α was 0.76 for this scale.

Job Satisfaction (JS). JS was measured using a six-items scale borrowed from the instrument developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951). The six items are as follows: I like my job better than the average worker does, I am seldom bored with my work, I would not consider working for another job, Most days I am enthusiastic about my job, I feel fairly well satisfied with my job, I find real enjoyment in my work. Cronbach α was 0.90 for the scale.

Validity and reliability tests

The validity and reliability of the above constructs was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010) using SMART-PLS. The results of that analysis are shown in

Tables AI and AII. They reveal that the item scales included in each construct are convergent and carry sufficient goodness of fit to be maintained in the instrument/construct. Overall, the above tests indicate that the variables considered in the study are sufficiently reliable for use in further analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Nunnally, 1978). We also tested for convergent validity of the measures. Convergent validity is the degree to which multiple attempts to measure the same concept in agreement. As recommended by Hair and his colleagues (Hair *et al.*, 2010), the estimation of the convergent validity is through examining the values of factor loading, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). The factor loadings for all remaining items of the constructs ranged from 0.6629 to 0.8751 exceeded the threshold of 0.6 as recommended by Chin *et al.* (1997). The AVE, which represents the total amount of variance in the indicators of a latent construct, were in the range of 0.552 and 0.724 which were all above the suggested value of 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). CR, which describes the degree to which the indicators of a construct exhibit that construct, range from 0.830 to 0.929 which was higher than the suggested value of 0.6 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In the next step, the value of Cronbach α was used to measure the reliability of the measures. The values range from 0.74 to 0.90 which were above the threshold of 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The discriminant validity was tested in the next step. Discriminant validity can be tested by comparing the square root of the variance extracted for a construct and correlations of that construct with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Tables AI and AII, the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than the correlations of that construct with other constructs. This result shows adequate discriminant validity. Overall, it demonstrates that the measures show adequate reliability as well convergent validity.

Analysis and results

To test for the impacts of the independent variables on TI for the overall sample, we ran multiple regression analysis. The results of that analysis are shown in Table II. In support of previous research, these results show that JS is the most important determinant of TI ($\beta = -0.677$, $p < 0.01$), followed by trust ($\beta = -0.308$, $p < 0.01$), perceived organizational performance (POP) ($\beta = -0.205$, $p < 0.01$) and WE ($\beta = -0.081$, $p < 0.1$). These results clearly indicate that sector (meaning public vs private, as a dummy variable), JS, trust, and perceived organizational performance (POP) are the best predictors of TI.

These results indicate that sector (public vs private) plays an important moderating effect.

Analysis of variance

The significance of sector in the above analysis justifies the need to further explore differences in employee attitudes between these two sectors. To do so, we ran *t*-test comparisons between the two sectors. The results of that analysis are shown in Table III.

Path shape	Path coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Sector→TI	-0.07*	0.08	-1.71	0.09
JS →TI	-0.68***	0.07	-10.76	0.00
Trust→TI	-0.31***	0.09	-5.42	0.00
POP→TI	-0.21***	0.06	-3.87	0.00
Work experience→TI	-0.08**	0.04	-2.03	0.04
Edu level→TI	-0.02	0.06	-0.54	0.59
Gender→TI	-0.01	0.08	-0.21	0.83

Notes: $n = 311$. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table II.
Results of
regression analysis

	Mean	SD	<i>F</i>	Significance (prob)
<i>Turnover intention (TI)</i>				
Public sector	2.74	0.87	6.18	0.01
Private sector	2.99	0.93		
<i>Trust (T)</i>				
Public sector	3.37	0.66	15.68	0.00
Private sector	3.06	0.69		
<i>Perceived organizational performance (POP)</i>				
Public sector	3.38	0.77	2.09	0.15
Private Sector	3.51	0.74		
<i>Job satisfaction (JS)</i>				
Public Sector	3.53	0.77	7.70	0.01
Private Sector	3.23	1.00		

Table III.
Comparisons across
the two sectors (*t*-test)

The results of this analysis clearly indicate differences in degrees of TIs between the two cohorts of employees. As one would expect, public sector employees are less likely (or inclined) to leave their organization than their private sector counterparts ($F = 6.18$, $\text{Prob} = 0.013$). Similarly, public sector employees tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than their private sector counterparts ($F = 0.7.70$, $\text{Prob} = 0.006$). These findings lend strong support to *H1*. They support findings from previous research (Newstrom and Reif, 1976; Koch and Steers, 1978; Schneider and Vaught, 1993; Bright, 2008; Al-Ali, 2008; Zeffane *et al.*, 2008; Kumari and Pandey, 2011; Jassem *et al.*, 2011; Al Afari and Abu Elanain, 2014; Mihajlov and Mihajlov, 2016; Yaghi, 2016). However, our results do not support the findings and arguments put forth by Wang *et al.* (2012). They reported that public employees in Taiwan had lower extrinsic JS and yet also display lower TIs compared to their counterparts in the private sector. This implies (but does not necessarily mean) that satisfaction is positively related to turnover, a view that is not consonant with the vast majority of previous studies examining satisfaction and turnover. A potential reason for this is that they focused primarily on “extrinsic aspects” of JS. This is more evident when one considers the mixed results reported by Schneider and Vaught (1993).

What is most interesting in our findings are the significant differences between public and private sector employees in relation to trust. Public sector employees seem to enjoy significantly greater trusting relationships with their peers and superiors than employees in the private sector ($F = 15.68$, $\text{Prob} = 0.000$). These findings are contextual and appear to be specific to employees in public organizations in the Middle-East in general and in the UAE in particular. These findings seem to be consonant with those reported in previous studies focusing on the UAE (Al-Ali, 2008)

Common and differential impacts

To further test for the moderating effect of sector (public vs private), we ran multi-group analysis. The relationships were also tested for robustness and proved to be so. The portion of variance explained (R^2) was applied to evaluate the predictive accuracy of the model. As the results show, 55.3 percent of the variance in TI is explained by its 8 determinants which satisfy the requirement for the 0.30 cut off value (Quaddus and Hofmeyer, 2007). Beside the R^2 , cross-validated redundancy (Q^2) developed by Geisser (1975) and Stone (1974) was applied to assess the predictive relevance using a blindfolding procedure in PLS. The obtained Q^2 value of 0.35 for TI was far greater than zero, implying acceptable

predictive relevance. The bootstrapping technique with 500 replications was applied to test structural model (Wetzels *et al.*, 2009).

In terms of the collective explanatory power of the independent variables (i.e R^2), the results indicate that the independent variables explain a significant amount the variance in TI. More specifically, for the overall sample, the independent variables (taken collectively) explain 54 percent of the variance in TI ($R^2 = 54$ percent, adj. $R^2 = 53$ percent, $F = 50.664$, $p < 0.001$). This strong collective explanatory power of the independent variables is consistent across for both sectors (i.e, public and private). With regard to the public sector, the results indicate that the independent variables collectively explain fifty four percent of the variance in TI ($R^2 = 54$ percent, adj. $R^2 = 51$ percent, $F = 23.425$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, in the case of the private sector, the results show that the independent variables collectively explain sixty percent of the variance found in TI ($R^2 = 60$ percent, adj. $R^2 = 59$ percent, $F = 44.55$, $p < 0.001$).

The results of this analysis are shown in Table IV. They also indicate that there are both common and differential effects of the main attitudinal variables on TI in the two sectors. They also reveal that some demographic characteristics (mainly WE and level of education (Ed)) have some impacts on TI, but mainly in the public sector. These latter findings are somewhat surprising. However, we cannot dwell on these, as such impacts are relatively weaker than those involving the main attitudinal variables.

In terms of the common impacts, the results clearly indicate that JS is strongly and significantly related to TIs in both sectors (public and private). This lends strong support to $H2$ and also corroborates the findings of previous research (Koch and Steers, 1978; Hellman, 1997; Hayes *et al.*, 2006; Coomber and Barribal, 2007; Bright, 2008; Jassem *et al.*, 2011; Kumari and Pandey, 2011; Saeed *et al.*, 2014; Mihajlov and Mihajlov, 2016).

The attitudinal variables that were found to play significant differential impacts on TI in each sector are perceived organizational performance and trust. It is worth emphasizing that previous research did not explore the relevance/impacts of these variables in a single platform of study. Nevertheless, these findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that the degree of trust among public sector employees in the UAE is comparatively higher than that of private sector employees (AlHawi, 2014).

As shown in Table IV, the results indicate that perceived organizational performance (POP) is the strongest predictor of TI in the public sector. This lends support to $H3$ and verify the assumptions/findings of previous studies (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Brasheara *et al.*, 2005; Canipe, 2006; Mulki *et al.*, 2008; McKnight *et al.*, 2009; DeConinck, 2011; Mulki *et al.*, 2013).

In addition, the results also show that WE and education also affect public sector employees' TI. This result was unexpected and may be explained by the fact that UAE public sector employees with more WE and greater education (competence) are much less likely to anticipate leaving their organization. These latter relationships may well be a reflection of greater feelings of job security (hence less need for job mobility) among public

Path (IV→DV)	Path Coefficient of public sector (i) n = 129	Path Coefficient of private sector (j) n = 182	Difference (i,j)	t-value	p-value
JS → TI	-0.26**	-0.87***	0.60	4.03	0.00
Trust → TI	0.05	-0.44***	0.50	2.80	0.01
POP → TI	-0.55***	-0.04	-0.51	4.06	0.00
Work Experience → TI	-0.19**	-0.02	-0.17	2.40	0.02
Education level → TI	-0.16**	0.05	-0.21	1.67	0.09
Gender → TI	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.05	0.96

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table IV.
Comparison of the effects on turnover intentions

sector employees (the majority being UAE nationals) as the result more confidence on their competence (through more WE as well as higher levels of education).

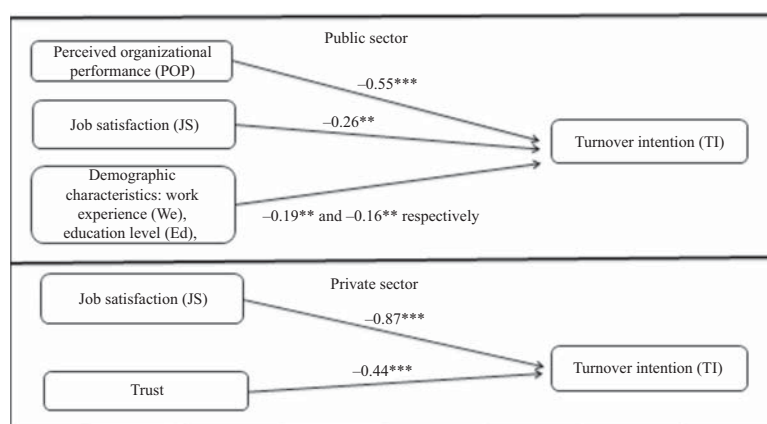
In contrast, and in addition to JS, Trust appears to be a strong predictor of TI in the private sector. The relative importance of trust in the private sector lends strong support to the assumptions and predictions formulated in *H4*. They also point to differential and contextual specificities in the UAE public vs private sector (Al-Ali, 2008; Mulki *et al.*, 2013).

The above findings on the differential impacts are summarized and illustrated in Figure 2.

Conclusions and discussions

The aim of this study was to examine potential differences in TIs among public and private sector employees, focusing on the UAE. The aim was also to uncover potential commonalities/differences in the relationships between three main attitudinal variables (namely JS, employees' perceptions of organizational performance, and trust) and TIs in these sectors. We also included and tested for the potential relevance of demographic variables such as gender, WE, and education in affecting TI in both sectors. Based on thorough examination of the literature on this topic as well as the context of this study (UAE), we formulated four main hypotheses.

The data and the results of our study strongly indicate that all four hypotheses are supported. Some of the findings are commonly expected and to a large degree in line with findings from previous research (i.e. those relating to *H1* and *H2*). However, other findings appear to be specific (and perhaps unique) to the UAE context (i.e. those relating to *H3* and *H4*). Overall, our findings confirm the general view that public sector employees tend to be more satisfied and less inclined to consider leaving their jobs than their private sector counterpart. This is consistent with findings from previous studies (Newstrom and Reif, 1976; Koch and Steers, 1978; Bright, 2008; Kumari and Pandey, 2011; Mihajlov and Mihajlov, 2016; Yaghi, 2016). This tendency seems to be even more evident in the UAE context and also supports findings from previous research in that context (Al-Ali, 2008; Zeffane *et al.*, 2008; Jassem *et al.*, 2011; Al-Hummadi, 2013; Al Afari and Abu Elanain, 2014; Harhara *et al.*, 2015). Examination of the relationships between attitudes and TI indicates that these (i.e. JS, perceived Organizational performance and trust) have differential impacts on TIs in the public by comparison to private sector. More specifically, and in addition to JS, it employee perceptions of the overall performance of their organization has the greatest impact on TI. In addition, it seems that TI of public sector employees is also affected by employees' WE as



Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 2. Graphical illustration of the differential impacts

well as their level of education. This was unexpected and seems to be a pattern that is specific to the employee profiles and attitudes in the UAE public sector.

In relation to the private sector and in addition to JS, employees' feeling of trust seems to play significant role in influencing employees' likelihood to seek alternative employment. This is a very interesting result indeed. Although there is limited research on the linkages between trust and TI, it is worth noting that a more recent study conducted in the UAE does indicate its significant relevance in that context (AlHawi, 2014). These findings seem rather unique and therefore largely contextual. It is most likely linked to the fact that the level of trust among public sector employees (in the UAE) is comparatively higher among public sector employees, which indicates low variance in levels of trust among public sector employees. This low variance would hence reduce/minimize the impact of trust in the public sector. In contrast, feelings of distrust among employees in the private sector are more likely to generate turnover intentions.

Practical implications

Both public and private organizations invest a lot on their employees in terms of induction and training, developing, maintaining and retaining them. Therefore, managers in general and human resource managers in particular, should not neglect the issue of voluntary turnover and do all that they possibly can in order to minimize it. They should also try to uncover and understand its underlying causes and take appropriate measures geared to maximize employee retention. In turn, this would minimize replacement costs and by the same token improve their organization's performance. Also, high turnover could lead to an overall loss of trust and confidence among the workforce. This, in turn would affect individual and organizational performance. UAE managers in both public and private sector need to understand that employees in their organizations should be treated as assets that can make their organization withstand competitions and the waves of globalization. This asset needs to be monitored with due care.

This study provides useful attitudinal indicators that can be explored and used by public and private sector managers. These indicators can be utilized as soft managerial tools to help them better manage/minimize TIs. In particular, our findings indicate that managers in general (and UAE public sector managers in particular) need to monitor and better manage not only their employees' JS but also their perceptions of the overall performance of the organization, which may include meeting expected ethical standards (Ibrahim and Al Falasi, 2014). If these perceptions are negative, they are likely to aggravate turnover which is already a serious concern in the UAE economy as a whole. To address this issue, public sector managers could consider giving more importance to regular employee surveys that would help them capture (and therefore avoid) negative perceptions. The same would apply to the private sector, where both trust and JS, seem to play a major role. For that sector, managers would use survey feedback to enhance their awareness of both issues (trust and JS). Solutions can only be found if the issues and their underlying reasons are properly diagnosed and fully understood.

Research limitations and suggestions for future research

Although very useful, the present study is limited in scope and therefore suffers from some empirical limitations. First, we did not consider the wide range of public sector organizations. Our sample only includes responses from organizations operating in education, some government institutions and the financial sector. It would be useful to consider the health sector and other public organizations such as the immigration/police departments which play important strategic roles in the UAE economy. Future research could consider employees from these institutions. Also, the sample size somehow prevents generalization. The relatively low response rate also needs to be acknowledged. Future empirical research could consider a much larger sample and perhaps extend the scope of the study to include institutions in similar neighboring countries in the region, such as Qatar and Kuwait.

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Appendix 1

Construct	Item	Factor loading	Convergent validity Average variance extracted (AVE) ^a	Composite reliability (CR) ^b	Internal reliability Cronbach α
Sector	Sector	1	1	1	1
Gender	Gender	1	1	1	1
Educational level	Educational level	1	1	1	1
Work experience	Work experience	1	1	1	1
Job satisfaction (JS)	JS1	0.84	0.72	0.93	0.90
	JS2	0.56			
	JS3	0.79			
	JS4	0.87			
	JS5	0.86			
	JS6	0.88			
Perceived organizational performance (POP)	POP1	0.75	0.59	0.91	0.89
	POP2	0.78			
	POP3	0.76			
	POP4	0.78			
	POP5	0.80			
	POP6	0.82			
	POP7	0.67			
Trust	TRUST1	0.28	0.55	0.83	0.74
	TRUST2	0.70			
	TRUST3	0.56			
	TRUST4	0.33			
	TRUST5	0.69			
	TRUST6	0.66			
	TRUST7	0.79			
Turnover intention (TI)	TI1	0.76	0.64	0.88	0.86
	TI2	0.80			
	TI3	0.8			
	TI4	0.82			
	TI5	0.77			

Notes: TI, turnover intention; POP, perceived organizational performance; JS, job satisfaction; Edu level, educational level; Experience, work experience. Sector is dummy variable equal 1 if public 0 otherwise, gender is dummy variable equal 1 male 0 otherwise and trust is trust level. ^aComposite reliability = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}; ^bComposite reliability = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}; ^cdenotes for discarded item due to insufficient factor loading below cut off 0.6

Table A1.
Result of confirmatory factor analysis

Table AII.
Inter-correlation
matrix**Appendix 2**

	Mean	SD	Edu level	Experience	Gender	JS	POP	Sector	TI	Trust
Edu level	2.31	0.61	1							
Experience	2.94	0.98	0.03	1						
Gender	1.60	0.49	-0.06	0.19**	1					
JS	3.36	0.93	0.09	0.03	-0.16**	<i>(0.85)</i>				
POP	3.45	0.76	-0.01	-0.04	0.04	0.61**	<i>(0.77)</i>			
Sector	1.59	0.49	-0.16**	-0.03	0.16**	-0.16**	0.08	1		
TI	2.89	0.91	-0.08	-0.08	0.07	-0.71**	-0.54**	0.14*	<i>(0.80)</i>	
Trust	3.19	0.70	0.15**	-0.02	-0.11*	0.53**	0.44**	-0.22**	-0.368**	<i>(0.74)</i>

Notes: Coefficients shown in italic (and in brackets) on the diagonal line refer to the square root of AVE (discriminant validity of the constructs). *,**Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels (two-tailed), respectively

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