



Article

The Relationship between Social Capital and Job Satisfaction among Employees of Abu Dhabi City Municipality

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¹Alnuaimi Naser

¹Sociology Program, Al Ain University, UAE

CITATION

Alnuaimi. N. (2025). The Relationship between Social Capital and Job Satisfaction among Employees of Abu Dhabi City Municipality, *Intercontinental Social Science Journal*. 2(6): 291-309. <https://doi.org/10.62583/y67xg619>

Received 29 April 2025

Accepted: 15 June 2025

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Abstract: Social capital is increasingly recognized as a key factor shaping employees' attitudes and experiences in the workplace. Its relationship with job satisfaction is particularly relevant within public sector organizations. This study looks at how social capital affects job satisfaction in workers at Abu Dhabi City Municipality. Instead of focusing on general ideas, it highlights structural, relational, and cognitive elements - showing how internal interactions shape outcomes. Common values and mutual trust, along with shared knowledge appear to boost satisfaction significantly. A descriptive-analytical method was applied; data came from a survey handed out to 50 staff members randomly picked from a total group of 751. Statistical tools like SPSS and AMOS helped examine averages, key factors, plus direct links between variables. Findings reveal extremely strong social capital levels - and notably high job satisfaction across participants. Path analysis indicates the relational aspect positively influences job satisfaction, whereas its impact on institutional commitment is negligible. In contrast, the cognitive factor contributes meaningfully to employee contentment but does not affect loyalty to the organisation. Meanwhile, structural elements show clear benefits for work-related fulfilment, yet remain unrelated to dedication towards the institution. Findings suggest that greater organisational trust strengthens interactions and supports knowledge exchange. These improved connections lead to higher satisfaction levels within public sector employees. Additionally, such environments foster stronger alignment with agency goals over time.

Keywords: *Social capital, Job satisfaction, Relational dimension, Cognitive dimension, Public sector, Abu Dhabi.*

Corresponding author. Email: 201910970@aau.ac.ae

Introduction

The way public organisations work today is shifting - more focus now goes towards people, rather than just systems. Instead of relying only on technology or money, performance depends heavily on how well staff connect and collaborate. Positive interactions at work build trust, encourage teamwork, while strengthening internal cohesion. Social connections within a workplace act as a valuable asset, influencing both morale and efficiency. At the same time, employee satisfaction supports long-term commitment, reduces turnover, and contributes to smoother operations. Understanding how these factors interact matters greatly, particularly within government bodies such as Abu Dhabi City Municipality.

The idea of social capital refers to networks of relationships, shared beliefs, trust, interaction - alongside collaborative practices - that shape how workers relate to one another. Though not physical, it's seen as valuable within organisations since it supports knowledge sharing, boosts teamwork, while reducing destructive rivalry. Building a work environment rooted in trust also enhances unity and adaptability during shifts or emergencies - this especially matters in public service bodies like city administrations, where smooth cross-unit collaboration plus constant exchange of data are key to effective operations.

Job satisfaction refers to how content workers are with their jobs, both mentally and professionally. Not limited to single aspects - it includes task type, pay structure, co-worker ties, boss interactions, along with growth chances. When satisfaction is high, output improves, dedication rises, while staff leaving drops; when low, it shows up as frequent absences, disinterest, weak results. Therefore, assessing this factor matters greatly - to grasp company conditions correctly, also shaping actions that boost drive plus organisational attachment. Studies consistently show social capital links closely to higher job satisfaction. Trust, clear dialogue, and transparency help workers feel more included while also boosting emotional backing at work; this reduces pressure and supports mental health. In contrast, low levels of connection - often seen where disputes exist or mutual respect is missing - weaken morale and reduce contentment on the job, harming team unity over time.

The importance of this research lies in its practical value for Abu Dhabi City Municipality - a major government entity driving sustainable urban growth. By exploring how social capital affects job satisfaction, it offers useful insights for leaders involved in decisions about workplace environment, team cohesion, and employee involvement. This work highlights how theoretical ideas can support public sector practices.

Lastly, this research addresses an overlooked area in Arab and Gulf writings by offering a tailored model - alongside practical paths - for upcoming work and policy choices in public administration, helping clarify how social connections affect worker wellness within specific societal and organisational settings. The key objective of the study is to investigate the role of social capital, both in terms of structure, relation, and cognition, in job satisfaction among employees working in the Abu Dhabi City Municipality, as well as the role played by workplace social relations in providing stability to employees and an organisation. This aim can be addressed through the following overarching question: *What is the nature of the relationship between the dimensions of social capital and job satisfaction among employees of Abu Dhabi City Municipality?*

Research Questions

This research aims to explain the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of social capital and dimensions (structural, relational and cognitive) of the employees of Abu Dhabi City Municipality?
2. How satisfied are the employees in Abu Dhabi City Municipality with their jobs?
3. Does social capital have a statistically significant association with the level of job satisfaction amongst employees of Abu Dhabi City Municipality?

Research Problem

In Abu Dhabi City Municipality, providing key urban services depends on staff skills along with team unity. Since institutional duties keep growing in complexity, building work connections rooted in mutual trust - rather than mere coordination - is vital for organisational resilience and worker well-being. Still, minimal locally-driven research from the UAE exists on how social networks affect job satisfaction, pointing to a gap that calls for targeted analysis to support practical, data-backed improvements.

Literature Review

Research from Arab scholars suggests social capital strongly affects job satisfaction and workplace performance. According to Ahmed (2025), structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions link closely to employee contentment - especially where trust and common values exist within Palestinian government offices. On the contrary, Alwan (2024) reported that although Jordanian public school teachers scored highly on social capital, their satisfaction remained moderate, with men benefiting more than women. Supporting this, Baqi & Hussein (2023) demonstrated improved efficiency among Iraqi cultural ministry staff when knowledge exchange took place through strong interpersonal ties. Together,

these findings indicate Arab state organisations gain advantages when cohesive work relationships build mutual confidence, reinforce collective standards, and enhance worker involvement.

Research from service and volunteer groups backs these findings. Aljuzaiby et al. (2015) found teamwork, trust, tolerance, along with a sense of national belonging had a small positive link to organisational commitment in paid staff at non-profit bodies. Sharifi (2021) showed trust combined with employee involvement played a strong role in building social capital within Algerian public banks, also boosting job satisfaction noticeably. Likewise, Abdullah (2020) reported that engagement plus confidence significantly predicted work-related contentment in higher education institutions across Palestine. According to Saeed and Wardam (2018), as well as Jabbour (2018), collaborative ties built on shared trust can boost employee innovation. These results highlight social capital's role - improving morale, output, and unity across Arab organisations. While evidence varies slightly, the overall pattern supports its value in workplace dynamics.

Theoretical Framework

The mix of common ties, shared values, or mutual expectations helps build trust, improve dialogue, and encourage teamwork within organisations. Though invisible, this resource boosts both work efficiency alongside employee wellness - linking structural patterns, personal connections, also mental frameworks (Putnam, 2024; Coleman, 2023; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 2022; Lin, 2021)

Structural Aspect: This covers how people connect, access to data, as well as how tightly linked the network is. Tighter links within structure boost teamwork and also help organisational outcomes.

Relational aspects focus on trust, mutual regard, give-and-take, along with how people interact overall. Studies consistently show that relational resources strongly link to work fulfilment and commitment to the organisation (Burt, 2020; Sharifi, 2021).

Cognitive Dimension: Shared objectives shape how people work together, while organisational norms guide behaviour; mutual awareness supports clear interaction instead of confusion. A collective mindset boosts coordination without relying on rigid structures.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to how employees emotionally evaluate their role and workplace. This shows up when company benefits, chances for growth, fair practices, along with social interactions match individual hopes (Locke, 1976; Putnam, 2024). Since it includes multiple aspects, it covers contentment

with tasks, pay, surroundings, career advancement, and justice at work. High levels link to stronger output, reduced staff leaving, together with improved mental well-being (Coleman, 2023).

Social Network Theory

Social Network Theory explains how the topology of human relationships determines how information, trust and resources are distributed thus influencing employee attitudes and general satisfaction. It includes a triadic model, which consists of structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions, and provides a detailed perspective in terms of analysing the role of workplace alliances in job satisfaction in Abu Dhabi City Municipality (Burt, 2020).

Methodology

The study followed a descriptive-analytic approach to explore how social capital links to job satisfaction within Abu Dhabi City Municipality. Instead of experiments, it relied on describing patterns while examining key factors; a carefully developed survey captured data - using established measures for structural, relational, and cognitive aspects of social capital. Alongside this, a tested tool assessed levels of job satisfaction.

Participants

A group of 50 workers were chosen from 751 city staff members - this ensured reliable results when measuring trust and workplace happiness. Because the selection covered different roles, findings reflected broader patterns across the organisation. Since participants came from various departments, connections between team dynamics and work morale became clearer. As responses were collected anonymously, answers likely showed honest opinions about cooperation at work. While some individuals expressed low engagement, most reported positive relationships with colleagues. Where communication flowed well, higher satisfaction levels appeared. Though not every voice was heard, trends pointed to consistent links between support networks and employee attitudes.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40	80.0
Gender	Female	10	20.0
Age	< 30 years	10	20.0
Age	30–39 years	22	44.0
Age	40–49 years	11	22.0

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	50–59 years	7	14.0
Educational Level	Secondary	6	12.0
Educational Level	Diploma	6	12.0
Educational Level	Bachelor’s degree	22	44.0
Educational Level	Postgraduate	16	32.0
Current Position	Employee	34	68.0
Current Position	Section Head	8	16.0
Current Position	Department Head	5	10.0
Current Position	Division Manager	3	6.0

Table 1 shows most participants were men (80%), suggesting municipal roles tend to involve hands-on, practical tasks. The largest age range was 30–39 years old (44%), pointing to a workforce in its peak professional phase. Nearly half held bachelor’s degrees (44%), followed by postgraduates (32%), indicating reliance on academically trained staff. Operational roles made up the biggest share (68%), aligning with typical organisational setups.

Tool

The survey had two main parts. First came personal details - things like sex, age, education level, role at work, and time spent on the job. This part gathered background data. Next, researchers looked at key factors using a scale from one to five. Social Capital, standing as the predictor, used 15 questions divided into structure, relationships, and shared beliefs. Job Satisfaction, what they aimed to explain, relied on 10 statements about duties, workplace conditions, rewards, growth chances, management quality, fairness in policies, plus general security and loyalty.

Table 2

Reliability coefficients for the dimensions of the study instrument using Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Dimension / Variable	Code	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Structural Dimension of Social Capital	1	5	0.942
Relational Dimension of Social Capital	2	5	0.953
Cognitive Dimension of Social Capital	3	5	0.946
Job Satisfaction	4	10	0.958
Overall Instrument (Social Capital and Job Satisfaction) Total	25		0.969

The computed Cronbach’s alpha exceeded the 0.90 threshold, showing solid internal consistency. Besides this, the assessment shows a composite reliability index of 0.969, further supporting its trustworthiness.

Statistical Procedures

The primary tools for data examination included SPSS along with AMOS. Links between social capital and work-related contentment emerged through summary stats, consistency measures, accuracy checks, predictive modelling, and structural equation approaches, among others.

Findings

This part shows the data outcomes - covering staff backgrounds, main factors, while highlighting analysis patterns - to assess proposed connections among social capital aspects with work satisfaction at Abu Dhabi City Municipality.

Results from Research Question 1: How do workers at Abu Dhabi City Municipality experience social capital - its forms, ties, and shared understanding?

The average values along with their spread across the three aspects of social capital appear in Table 3, providing insight into how these elements behave. While central tendencies highlight typical levels, variability shows differences among responses; this combination helps clarify overall patterns within the data set.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of Social Capital Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
Structural Dimension	4.564	0.550	91.28	Very High
Relational Dimension	4.400	0.667	88.00	High
Cognitive Dimension	4.440	0.666	88.80	High
Overall Social Capital	4.468	0.628	89.36	High

The results in Table 3 show staff at Abu Dhabi City Municipality perceive strong social capital (Mean = 4.468; 89.36%), suggesting collaboration, mutual trust, and open sharing of information. Structural aspects scored highest (4.564), pointing towards efficient organisation-driven coordination along with smooth data access. Cognitive elements came next (4.440), confirming shared objectives together with a focus on continuous learning.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of the Structural Dimension of Social Capital

No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
1	I have access to internal work networks within the municipality that facilitate efficient task completion.	4.76	0.43	95.20	Very High
2	Clear and organised communication channels exist between the municipality's various departments.	4.58	0.64	91.60	High
3	The administrative structure helps me easily access the information I need.	4.58	0.50	91.60	High

No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
4	I can easily communicate with supervisors and colleagues across different administrative levels.	4.38	0.63	87.60	High
5	The organisational structure allows for effective collaboration between departments.	4.52	0.54	90.40	High
—	Overall Mean of the Structural Dimension	4.56	0.55	91.28	Very High

Table 4 indicates high employee job satisfaction (M = 4.35; 87%). Workers report feeling backed within a constructive workplace setting. Advancement chances received the top rating (4.46), whereas pride in the organisation came closely behind (4.44). Physical factors and social aspects at work performed well, however benefits and fairness policies - despite being favourable (4.30) - show potential for enhancement. The relational part of social capital was assessed using average values alongside deviations from those averages, based on relational indicators - shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of the Relational Dimension of Social Capital

No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
1	I maintain strong working relationships with my colleagues in the municipality.	4.32	0.71	86.40	High
2	Mutual trust prevails between me and my colleagues at work.	4.54	0.57	90.80	Very High
3	I experience a spirit of cooperation and reciprocal support from colleagues.	4.44	0.61	88.80	High
4	Social relationships with colleagues help me improve my job performance.	4.42	0.70	88.40	High
5	Mutual respect and appreciation exist among employees in the municipality.	4.28	0.73	85.60	High
—	Overall Mean of the Relational Dimension	4.40	0.67	88.00	High

Path analysis via AMOS 26 supported a reasonable model fit - GFI, CFI, and IFI reached 1.000 even though chi-square may overreact. The structural side did not notably affect job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.225$, $p = .312$); in contrast, the relational factor boosted it clearly ($\beta = 0.819$, $p < .001$). To assess the cognitive part of social capital, mean values along with standard deviations of related items were calculated; refer to Table 6.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of the Cognitive Dimension of Social Capital

No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
1	I share a common understanding of work values and goals with my colleagues in the municipality.	4.22	0.81	84.40	High

No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
2	Information and knowledge are effectively exchanged among employees.	4.22	0.81	84.40	High
3	I believe that my expertise and knowledge are appreciated by colleagues and supervisors.	4.66	0.47	93.20	Very High
4	There is a good level of shared understanding regarding work nature and responsibilities.	4.54	0.65	90.80	High
5	I feel that the municipality's work environment promotes continuous learning and knowledge acquisition.	4.56	0.58	91.20	Very High
—	Overall Mean of the Cognitive Dimension	4.44	0.66	88.80	High

Table 5 reveals a high cognitive dimension ($M = 4.44$; 88.80%), suggesting a work environment where exchanging knowledge matters. Expertise recognition ranked most highly at 4.66. Although how info moves varies somewhat, results show mutual values and company insight boost job satisfaction. The cognitive aspect had the greatest positive impact compared to others.

Findings of Research Question 2: How satisfied are the employees in Abu Dhabi City Municipality with their jobs?

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Job Satisfaction Levels

No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)	Assessment
1	I am satisfied with the physical work environment (offices, equipment, resources).	4.42	0.57	88.40	High
2	I am satisfied with the psychosocial work environment (human relations, cooperation).	4.32	0.71	86.40	High
3	I am satisfied with the promotion and career development opportunities available to me.	4.46	0.68	89.20	High
4	I am satisfied with the incentives and rewards system in the municipality.	4.30	0.76	86.00	High
5	I am satisfied with the leadership and supervisory style in my workplace.	4.30	0.71	86.00	High
6	I am satisfied with the policies and regulations related to employees in the municipality.	4.28	0		

The data in Table 6 show strong job satisfaction, with an average rating of 4.35; 87% of participants gave favourable responses. Workers point to workplace pride along with physical and social environment

quality as key reasons they feel satisfied - promotion chances follow next. Although scores on rewards and fair procedures dip slightly, the general tone remains clearly positive.

Research Question 3 Results: Does social capital have a statistically significant association with the level of job satisfaction amongst employees of Abu Dhabi City Municipality?

To check if this idea holds, a structural equation model was built using AMOS 26. The goal was to examine how the three aspects of social capital directly affect job satisfaction. Instead of treating them together, each dimension was linked separately to the outcome. This method works well when dealing with connections that involve immediate effects, yet also accounts for underlying pathways. Some approaches might overlook such layers; however, this one captures both types clearly.

Table 7

Goodness-of-fit Indices of Structural Model studying the Relationship between Social Capital and Job Satisfaction

Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Table 7 shows the fit measures for the full model, which has 6 degrees of freedom and a χ^2 value of 214.81. Although the χ^2/df ratio is 35.80 - typically linked to simpler models - the fit indicators are perfect (GFI=1.000, CFI=1.000, IFI=1.000). Because the model structure is straightforward and includes few variables, the RMSEA is somewhat elevated at 0.084. Despite this, the model works well for hypothesis testing due to its strong CFI and GFI scores.

The findings from the regression examining how structural, relational, and cognitive aspects of social capital link to job satisfaction are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Results of the Direct Regression Analysis Between the Dimensions of Social Capital and Job Satisfaction

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
JobSat	<--- SC_structural	-.225	.223	-1.011	.312
JobSat	<--- SC_relational	.819	.244	3.362	***
JobSat	<--- SC_cognitive	1.247	.213	5.854	***

Table 8 shows that the structural dimension does not have any statistically significant impact regarding job satisfaction (0 = -0.225, p = 0.312). On the other hand, the relational (= 0.819) and cognitive (= 1.247)

dimensions represent strong positive relationships and, therefore, provide partial evidence to the initial hypothesis.

Discussion

The results from this study give useful insights into whether social capital uniformly boosts job satisfaction in structured public organisations, such as the Abu Dhabi City Municipality. Employee ratings on social capital show steady patterns - suggesting positive interactions at work, smooth sharing of information, along with common workplace beliefs; features that align with current views on public sector management focused on teamwork, transparency, while encouraging inclusive environments.

The average result for the structural aspect is high, suggesting local government operations run smoothly thanks to clear procedures that support teamwork and steady interaction. Because frameworks are solid, they create helpful conditions - yet gradually - for building stronger personal ties plus collective thinking patterns across teams. Trust, mutual aid, along with give-and-take dynamics score notably well within relationship factors, even if just marginally less than structure; these traits closely link to emotional dedication at work according to Putnam (2023) and Al-Zahrani (2022). In parallel, outcomes tied to shared understanding reveal consistent objectives, openness to new ideas, and recognition among professionals - all aligning somewhat with findings by Bontis et al. (2022), who highlight how common mental models bring people together.

The strong job satisfaction ratings suggest the local government balances daily work demands with staff emotional and social well-being. Notably, solid career growth approval reflects management's focus on professional advancement; at the same time, elevated organisational pride highlights a clear sense of belonging and commitment to public duty.

Path analysis confirms relational and cognitive aspects of social capital strongly boost job satisfaction - trust, acknowledgment, and common goals further strengthen this effect. In contrast, the structural side shows no clear direct link, suggesting official frameworks alone don't generate fulfilment unless paired with meaningful interpersonal bonds and aligned workplace principles.

The study suggests Abu Dhabi's city authority managed structure, interactions, and information exchange fairly well - resulting in a productive team with moderate unity. Results highlight that focusing resources on relationship-building and shared understanding helps sustain worker contentment along with strong organisational performance within government bodies.

Conclusion

In this study, social capital emerged as a key factor shaping job satisfaction at Abu Dhabi City Municipality. Although the structural aspect scored highest in description, statistical results showed only relational and cognitive elements clearly linked to satisfaction. These outcomes underline how trust, supportive interactions, along with common understanding of goals can strengthen employee outlooks. High levels of professional growth and institutional pride suggest a constructive environment; yet they also signal the need to keep building social connections for lasting success. Overall, evidence confirms that personal bonds and shared perspectives among staff play a central role in boosting morale and organisational performance.

Implications

The findings suggest several ways to improve performance at Abu Dhabi City Municipality. Vertical communication may get stronger if transparency improves, along with mutual confidence between staff and leadership. Social interactions - like team events or shared projects - can deepen relational connections across units. Knowledge-sharing methods, such as peer mentoring or interdepartmental sessions, help build cognitive social capital over time. In addition, embedding social capital measures into strategic evaluation systems allows decision-makers to use data effectively while advancing organisational quality.

Limitations

A few limitations marked this study. Although it focused on staff from a single government body, broader conclusions may not apply. Since the setup was cross-sectional, tracking shifts over time in social capital or job satisfaction wasn't possible. Instead of objective measures, reliance on personal responses might introduce bias - particularly where workers aim to appear favourable. Moreover, using just numerical data missed deeper insights that conversations or direct observation could provide.

Future Research

The future study might include other public and private organisations, helping results apply more widely. To follow shifts in social capital and job satisfaction, a long-term approach could be better across different stages of organisational growth. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods may offer deeper insight into how relational and cognitive aspects link to workplace outcomes. Researchers could also explore factors like management style, company values, or task pressure - elements that shape how social capital affects employee satisfaction.

Conflict of Interest: The authors state clearly that their work contains no competing interests related to content, findings, or interpretation. Because funding sources had no role in design, execution, or reporting, independence was maintained throughout. Despite collaboration with institutions, decisions were driven solely by research needs, rather than outside pressures. Thus, results reflect only scientific inquiry without interference from third parties involved at any stage.

Funding: No targeted grant supported this work - neither from public bodies, nor private firms, nor charitable groups. Instead, the researchers covered all costs personally.

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