

# “Factors motivating governmental employees in the United Arab Emirates”

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# FACTORS MOTIVATING GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

## Abstract

To enhance the performance of organizations, the motivation of employees is a critical factor. The challenge is that motivation can be dependent on the culture and time of analysis. The timely studies are needed for different regions. The purpose of this study is to perform the motivation factors analysis of government employees to enhance their performance. Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory was used, where the focus is on motivators, which were compared with financial rewards. Another classification of motivators and movers that contributes to ideas was extracted from the literature and included in the questionnaire survey. A survey was designed and 64 employees working in governmental service sectors in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) responded to the questionnaire. Statistical analysis methods such as two proportion z-test, Chi-square, and Fisher tests, were used. Results showed that recognition, which was selected by 44% of employees, is the only source of satisfaction that has a higher effect than financial rewards. In addition, a sense of achievement, the opportunity to take responsibility, work itself, as well as advancement prospects have the same or lower effect than financial rewards. Moreover, results showed that, generally, factors associated with motivators are more important for ideas' contribution than movers, except for the desire to overcome frustration at work. The practical value of the results is obvious since motivation can significantly enhance the performance of organizations in the UAE.

## Keywords

financial rewards, motivators, movers, ideas' contribution, governmental sector

## JEL Classification

M10, M14, M38

## INTRODUCTION

Private and governmental sectors usually take attention to productivity and give it the highest priority in evaluating the organization's performance. Several studies highlighted many factors that affect the productivity and performance of the employee. One of the most important factors is the motivation strategy that is used by the organization. The effect of the organizational environment on the employee performance was studied in different sectors (Cera & Kusaku, 2020; Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020; Sasmita et al., 2019; Kuria & Kimutai, 2018; Inayatullah & Jehangir, 2012). Moreover, the motivation strategies can affect the output productivity either positively or negatively based on the type of industry and the motivation theory. On the other hand, Garg and Rastogi (2006) focused on motivating performance through job design, where designed jobs can have a positive impact on both employee satisfaction and the quality of performance.

Many theories study, investigate, and analyze the effect of motivation on employee performance. All these theories are categorized under two main groups: process theories and content theories such as Herzberg's motivation theory. In 1959, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman introduced a new theory of work motivation (Herzberg, 1968). That was

after the earliest theory of motivation that has been introduced by Maslow in 1943. Even though the motivation theory was extensively investigated in the literature, a large volume of research provides exciting evidence that motivation depends on the cultural context (Markus, 2016). What motivates people in the West, might not motivate people in the Middle-East. According to Trumbull and Rothstein-Fisch (2011), the motives of the students to achieve something can be very different depending on the cultural background. Latham and Pinder (2005) found the same conclusion. Moreover, Erciyas (2019) investigated the impact of factors such as culture, leadership, and power on staff motivation in selected international organizations. Besides the culture, the time has a key role. In the era of COVID-19, new circumstances might affect motivation. For example, employees might prefer to work in more safe positions with little contact with people (Bashirian et al., 2020). One of the recent studies, which investigated the influence of motivation on teachers' performance, is the study by Mulyana et al. (2021). New technology can also affect the motivation theory. For example, Bettayeb et al. (2020) made a systematic review of the motivation of mobile learning in the universities in the UAE. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2020) investigated the influence of social media on employees' knowledge-sharing motivation. All that means that there must be several studies about motivation over time to adapt to the new changes in all different regions.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Herzberg's motivation theory is widely known but it has been criticized regarding its soundness in different work situations (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003). Many researchers tried to analyze and study the validity of Herzberg's theory in different work areas (Sobaih & Hasanein, 2020; Alshmemri et al., 2017; Fugar, 2007; Islam & Ali, 2013; Yusoff et al., 2013; Tan & Waheed, 2011; Byrne, 2006; Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003; Olanrewaju, 2002; Gaziel, 1986). The basis for Herzberg's motivation theory and other theories was the Maslow's hierarchy theory of needs, which is one of the most well-known theories.

It is claimed that motivation factors are classified into two main categories: motivating factors and hygiene factors. Motivating factors focus on achievement, recognition, the work itself, liabilities, and advancement and progress. On the other hand, hygiene factors include company policies, supervision, relationships, work conditions, salary, status, and security (Herzberg, 1968). Motivator's factors focus on the employees. In contrast, hygiene factors focus on the workplace.

However, in 2005, Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) highlighted a question: Does Herzberg's motivation theory have staying power? According to them, Herzberg's model fails to separate motivators from movers that respond to external stimuli, and all the motivators are related to a feeling of achievement. Therefore, they used two factors: mo-

tivators and movers, where motivators are a desire to overcome frustration at work, a will to save the organization money, a will to enhance the organization's development, and self-satisfaction (which is associated with fulfilled ideas). Movers include a wish to get some funds or benefits, a co-worker being awarded, and a confidence that the company considers all suggestions equitably. Contribution to new ideas is very important to enhance work effectiveness. Such a contribution needs motivation. Mehrajunnisa and Jabeen (2020) investigated strategic drivers that can enhance employee suggestion schemes in the UAE. Moreover, knowledge sharing in public organizations of the UAE was investigated by Al Dari et al. (2018). Moreover, Jabeen and Al Dari (2020) developed a framework for integrating knowledge management benefits in the UAE organizations. They suggested that employees are continuously encouraged to share their thoughts, goals, and ideas.

Trust is important for motivation. Zak (2017) has explained the social, legal, and economic environments that cause differences in trust. Whitener (1997) focused on how employees' trust affects the success and effectiveness of human resource (HR) activities.

Some studies about motivation were held in the United Arab Emirates and other GCC countries. Agwa and Salem (2015) studied factors motivating expatriates in the United Arab Emirates. They found a set of motivators that are more influential than the pay. Shallal (2011) investigated the factors that enhance job satisfaction for employed Emirati

females in the United Arab Emirates. Zeffane (2010) developed an approach to “trust” in leadership based on Herzberg’s theory. Mehrez and Bakri (2019) studied the effect of different human resource practices on employees’ job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job turnover in the governmental sector in the State of Qatar. The results showed positive relationships between certain HR practices, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, which indicate an intention to stay. Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020) assessed the impact of performance appraisal on job performance focusing on the role of motivation in the governmental sector of Qatar. They found that the purpose and the evaluation method had impacts on employees’ motivation and job performance. Moreover, Patterson et al. (2020) explored job satisfaction determinants influencing the motivation of employees working in private and public sector organizations operating in the UAE.

One of the concerns in the governmental organization and public sectors was increasing productivity and maintaining job satisfaction. Many researchers investigated the relationship between different factors and the output performance of the employee. According to Ritz (2009), in the last 20 years, the public sector focused on increasing the performance of organizations by implementing managerial tools and methods. Ritz (2009) tried to link employee attitudes, managerial measures, institutional factors, and organizational performance. Pandeyet et al. (2008) claimed that there is a gap in knowledge about whether public service motivation matters to citizenship behavior internal to the organization. Abbass (2012) tried to explore the kinds of motivations needed by the employees of local government in Nigeria. Moreover, El Khouly et al. (2011) investigated three public organizations in Egypt. It was found that gender and emotional intelligence affect employee satisfaction.

Bright (2008) found that public service motivation does not affect the job satisfaction and turnover intentions of public employees when the person-organization fit was considered. Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) tried to explore how managers can use the positive part of public service motivation to increase employee performance and outlined the best strategies that can help to achieve objectives. Huang (2018) found that the motiva-

tion exchange rate exists between intrinsic motivation and monetary incentive and varies among individuals. Al Naqbi et al. (2018) investigated the effect of incentives (monetary and tangible, and non-monetary and intangible) on the performance of public sector organizations in the UAE.

## 2. AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

This paper aims to investigate motivation factors that affect employee performance and productivity in the governmental and public sector using Herzberg’s theory and Bassett-Jones and Lloyd’s theory as the basis of study in the UAE. A comparison is done between the financial rewards and the motivation factors introduced by Herzberg. For the first time in the United Arab Emirates, the comparison between the motivators and movers introduced by Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) has been investigated in the public sector. Table 1 shows 5 hypotheses of the study. The first two hypotheses are about the importance of financial rewards compared to other factors. The effect of gender, work experience, organization sector, and relationship with managers is investigated in the third and fifth hypotheses. The fourth hypothesis is the classical one about the difference between motivators and movers. The next section will describe how each hypothesis is investigated.

**Table 1.** Hypotheses of the study

No	Hypothesis
1	$H_1$ : The importance of financial rewards can be higher or lower than the importance of Herzberg’s sources of satisfaction.
2	$H_2$ : Employees seeking financial rewards have different choices regarding Herzberg’s sources of satisfaction.
3	$H_3$ : Employees with different gender, experience, organization, or relationship with the direct manager have different choices regarding Herzberg’s sources of satisfaction.
4	$H_4$ : The average percentage of motivators’ importance is higher than that percentage for movers.
5	$H_5$ : The percentage of employees contributing to ideas is affected by gender, work experience, organization sector, and relationship with managers.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the motivation factors. Motivators of Herzberg’s theory are compared with financial rewards. Motivators and movers

of Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) were also used in this study. A comparison with the results of Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) is presented. A survey was conducted to examine the motivation for work. This study employed Roscoe's Rule of Thumb to determine sample size. This rule suggests that the sample size range between 30-500 respondents is suitable for carrying out quantitative research. It was sent to 100 employees from five different governmental entities in the United Arab Emirates. A total of 64 employees responded to the questionnaire. The methodology depends on analyzing the questionnaire statistically to find the most effective ways to motivate employees to work and to contribute ideas. The effect of several factors, such as gender, working sector, experience, and relationship to the manager, on contributing ideas has been investigated. Because of the nature of data that is categorical data, the analysis depends in many cases on Chi-square and Fisher tests.

Contingency tables are used to summarize the relationship among the categorical variables of interest. A contingency table is a special type of frequency distribution table, where the interaction between two variables is shown (Kateri, 2014). The study also conducts a chi-square test. It is used to understand whether there is a correlation between the variables. Moreover, the Yates correction is made to account for approximating the binomial distribution by the continuous chi-square distribution (Kateri, 2014). The Yates correction is recommended if the expected cell frequencies are below 10. Another way is the Fisher test which is an exact way used when at least one of the numbers is lower than 10.

A simple comparison between the financial rewards and the other Herzberg's motivations has been done ( $H_1$ ). To test this hypothesis, a two-proportion z-test is used. Then the relationship between financial rewards and these Herzberg's sources of satisfaction was investigated using Pearson's chi-square test and Fisher test ( $H_2$ ).

$H_3$  investigates the effect of four different factors, which are gender, experience, organization sector, and relationship with the direct manager on selecting Herzberg's sources of satisfaction.  $H_4$  can be stated using the two-proportion z-test to examine the difference between the average percentage

of motivators and movers in this study. To test the effect of gender, work experience, organization sector, and relationship with the managers on generating ideas,  $H_5$  is used.

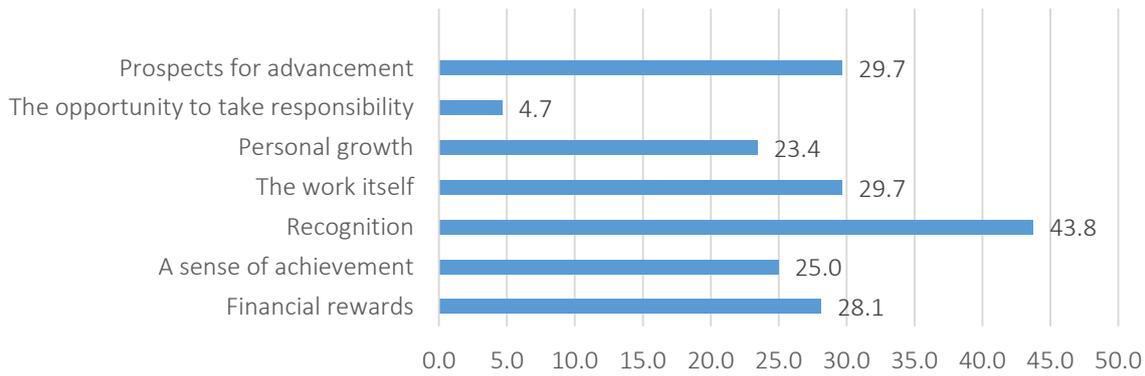
## 4. RESULTS

A crucial first step in the analysis is the careful description of the available data, including gender, place of work, and years of experience. According to the survey results, from 64 respondents 30 were males and 34 were females. 38% of the respondents work in educational institutions, 14% – in hospitals, and 48% – in ministries and civil defense. Moreover, 13% of the respondents have 1 to 5 years of experience, 52% – 6 to 15 years, and the rest has experience of more than 15 years. 69% of them contributed some ideas.

Figure 1 summarizes the factors affecting the motivation. The six intrinsic sources of satisfaction introduced by Herzberg are compared with the financial rewards. The results clearly showed that recognition is dominating the other factors. 43.8 % of the respondents stated that their recognition is the most important motivation. There is a slight difference between the work itself (29.69%); and financial rewards, which contribute to 28.1%. To test the difference between the financial rewards and the other Herzberg's motivation sources, a two-proportion z-test has been used to test  $H_1$ . The results presented in Table 2 indicate that only recognition is significantly larger than financial rewards. On the other side, only the opportunity to take liabilities is significantly lower than financial rewards.

Table 3 presents a contingency to show the relationship between the most important source of satisfaction, which is recognition, and the financial rewards.

Similar tables can be made for the other sources of satisfaction and can be compared to financial rewards to find the relationship between each one of the intrinsic sources of satisfaction introduced by Herzberg and financial rewards. This is to test  $H_2$ . Table 4 shows the significance of the relationship using the Fisher test and Pearson's Chi-squared test with Yates' continuity correction. The first method is exact. The second one is with correction.



**Figure 1.** Herzberg's sources of satisfaction (motivators) vs. financial rewards (%)

**Table 2.** Two proportion z-test to compare financial rewards with Herzberg's motivators (*p*-values)

z-test type	A sense of achievement	Recognition	The work itself	Personal growth	The chance to take liabilities	Prospects for advancement
Two-sided	0.841	0.097	1	0.686	0.001	1
One-sided	0.421	0.049	0.5	0.343	0.000	0.5

**Table 3.** Contingency table for financial rewards and recognition

Variable 1 \ Variable 2		Recognition		Total number of respondents
		Number of times selected	Number of times not selected	
Financial rewards	Number of times selected	7 (39%)	11 (61%)	18
	Number of times not selected	21 (46%)	25 (54%)	46

This is why the *p*-values can be different. However, this difference did not affect the results.

**Table 4.** Relationship between financial rewards and Herzberg's sources of satisfaction

Herzberg's sources of satisfaction	Pearson's Chi-squared test ( <i>p</i> -value)	Fisher test ( <i>p</i> -value)
A sense of achievement	1	1
Recognition	0.834	0.781
The work itself	0.263	0.548
Personal growth	0.924	0.764
The chance to take liabilities	0.005	0.003
Prospects for advancement	0.388	0.189

All the sources of satisfaction are independent of the financial rewards, except the chance to take liabilities. This is attributed to the fact that employees who wish to increase their responsibilities usually expect higher monetary earnings.

Table 5 shows the effect of organization, gender, experience, and relationship with the manag-

er on the choice of the best source of motivation. This is directly linked to  $H_3$ . Fisher test was used and the obtained *p*-values are tabulated in Table 5. Only personal growth has a relationship with the experience in the organization. Table 6 shows the details of this relationship. The percentage of respondents who selected personal growth is the highest for the 1:5 years' experience, where 62% selected personal growth as one of the most important motivators. This is expected because young people wish to have personal growth more than others do.

Moreover, respondents were asked to mention the reasons for the contribution of their ideas. These reasons were grouped into motivators that were rooted in intrinsic sources of satisfaction of Herzberg, and movers that were responses to external stimuli. In the survey, 69% of the respondents contributed to an idea in the organization. As presented in Table 7, according to 56.82% of the respondents, a desire to enhance the organization's development was the main reason for the contribution of the idea. Another motivator with a

**Table 5.** Effect of organization, gender, experience, and relationship with the manager on the choice of the best source of motivation (*p*-value)

Variables	A sense of achievement	Recognition	The work itself	The chance to take liabilities	Prospects for advancement	Personal growth
Organization	0.452	0.212	0.201	0.054	0.527	0.425
Gender	0.564	0.801	0.785	0.255	1.000	0.412
Experience	0.646	0.377	0.417	0.111	1.000	0.020
Relationship with manager	1.000	0.202	1.000	0.265	0.470	1.000

**Table 6.** Effect of experience on personal growth as a motivator

Variable 2	Variable 1	Personal growth		Total number of respondents
		Number of times selected	Number of times not selected	
Experience	1-5 years	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	13
	6-15 years	6 (18%)	27 (82%)	33
	More than 15 years	5 (28%)	13 (72%)	18

high percentage is self-satisfaction associated with fulfilled idea with a percentage of 54.55 %. As expected, motivators are more important for the respondents than movers. Moreover, 76.6% of the respondents stated that self-motivation is more important than external motivation.

A comparison between the current study and the study by Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) shows that the importance of motivators is higher than that of movers in both studies. Seeing a colleague being awarded is the least important factor in both studies. However, the major difference between the two studies is the importance of the first motivator, namely, a desire to overcome frustration at work. This is might be because frustration existence is not so high in UAE. There are some similarities and differences between the two studies based on the two-proportion z-test (two-sided). It is obvious that the average values of motivators and movers are not distant from each other. The

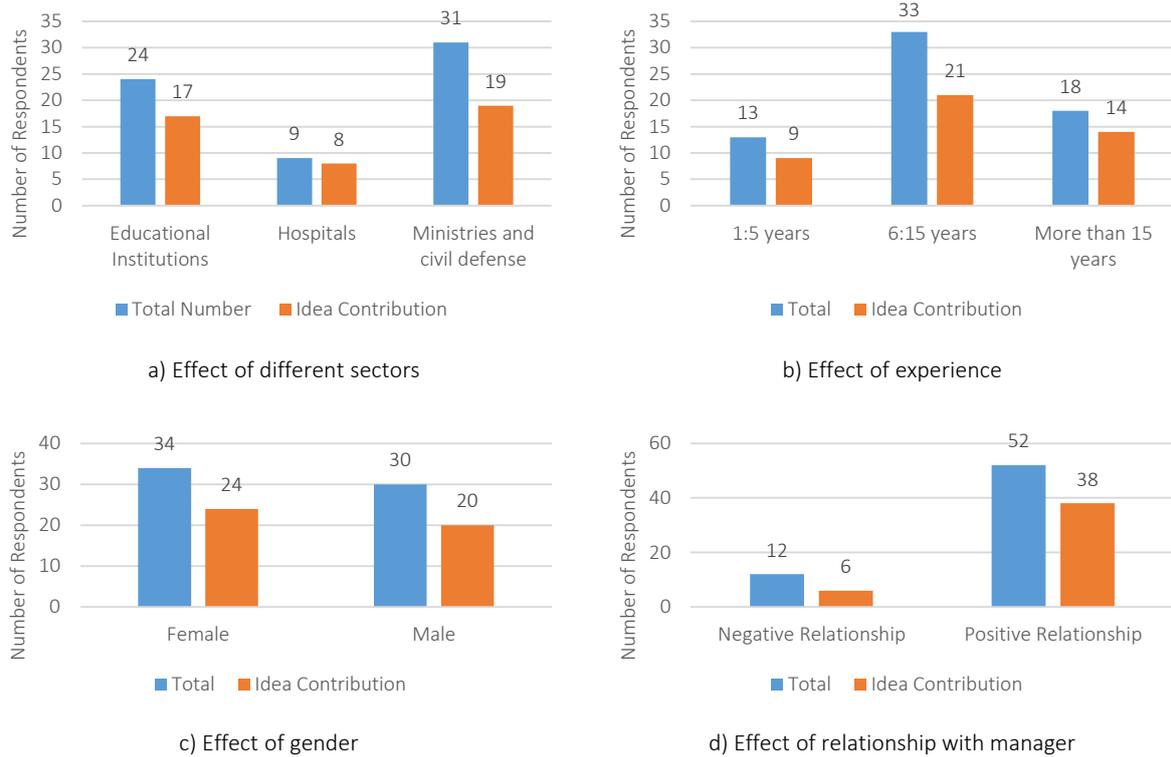
difference is big between movers and motivators for each study.

A two-proportion z-test (one-sided) was used to investigate the significance of the difference between the motivators and movers in this study to analyze  $H_4$ . The *p*-value used to compare motivators and movers in this study is 0.001.

Figure 2 (a) shows the contribution of the respondents to ideas from different organizations. The percentage of the ideas contributors for the hospitals is the highest. This percentage is the lowest for ministries and civil defense. However, the difference is not very big among the three percentages. With the same logic, Figure 2 (b) shows the effect of the work experience on the results. Figure 2 (c) shows the effect of gender on contributing ideas. Figure 2 (d) shows the effect of the relationship with the manager on the idea's contribution.

**Table 7.** Employee responses to motivators and movers

Dimensions	Responses	% of total
<b>Motivators</b>		
A desire to overcome frustration at work	5	11.36
A desire to save the organization money	11	25.00
A desire to enhance the organization's development	25	56.82
Self-satisfaction associated with fulfilled idea	24	54.55
<b>Movers</b>		
A wish to get extra funds or benefits	6	13.64
A co-worker being awarded	3	6.82
Confidence that the organization considers all suggestions equitably	7	15.91



**Figure 2.** Effect of organization, experience, gender, and relationship with the manager on contributing ideas

To test the effect of gender, work experience, organization sector, and relationship with managers on generating ideas, Table 8 shows both the Fisher test and Chi-squared test. This is to test  $H_5$ . The Fisher test is used because sometimes the sample size is small.

There is no evidence that any one of the listed factors influences the idea's contribution. Furthermore, even though the relationship with the manager does not have a significant effect on generating ideas, it was found by analyzing the questionnaire that 87.5% of the respondents think that having a positive relationship with the manager affects their performance.

Generally, the study shows the validity of Herzberg's theory. It is worth mentioning the importance of culture and time on the results. Different results are expected if the same survey is done in a decade from now in the same country. The globe faces new challenges. Therefore, safety and job security might be of higher importance. New frameworks are needed to take into consideration all such factors. Despite that, it is expected that some criteria such as financial rewards will be dominating. The importance of ideas' contribution is increasing in the era of digitization and sustainability, especially in a country like the UAE.

**Table 8.** Effect of gender, work experience, organization sector, and relationship with managers on the idea's contribution ( $p$ -values)

Relationship to ideas' contribution	Chi-squared test (Yates corrected)	Fisher test
Organization sector	0.28	0.33
Gender	0.95	0.79
Work experience	0.58	0.59
Relationship to manager	0.23	0.17

## CONCLUSION

The paper investigated the motivation theory according to Herzberg's theory to check if this theory is currently valid in the UAE. The difference in the importance of motivators and movers was investigated. Comparison with financial rewards was done. Moreover, the effects of factors such as gender, experience, organization, and relationship with the direct manager were studied. The paper shows that motivation does indeed have a significant effect on employee performance based on the respondents' opinions. The results of the data analysis clearly demonstrate that those factors taken into consideration during the study (recognition, financial rewards, personal growth, and a sense of achievement) contribute to employees' motivation to achieve organizational goals. Some factors had important impacts on motivation and job performance, such as recognition and financial rewards. Other factors, including gender, experience, organization sector, and relationship with direct manager, have a limited or no impact. The relationship between motivation and performance can easily be stated to be quite natural, if not obvious. It is also statistically shown that motivators depending on internal factors are more important than movers coming from external stimuli. The results exhibited a tangible understanding of how motivation is responsible for enhancing employee performance.

Future research can focus on the effect of the recent global changes during the pandemic of COVID-19 on the perception of people's motivation. The severity of the pandemic is different from a region to another, and therefore, the effect of that perception is expected to be different. Virtual transition is expected to significantly affect the motivation for work. Future research can include larger sample sizes and can compare the results of different countries in the region.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Bashaer Soumar, Mohammed Alnahhal.

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Formal analysis: Bashaer Soumar, Mohammed Alnahhal, Muataz Al Hazza.

Investigation: Bashaer Soumar, Mohammed Alnahhal.

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Project administration: Mohammed Alnahhal, Mosab I. Tabash.

Resources: Mosab I. Tabash.

Supervision: Mohammed Alnahhal.

Validation: Muataz Al Hazza.

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Writing – original draft: Ahmad Sakhrieh, Mohammed Alnahhal, Muataz Al Hazza.

Writing – review & editing: Mohammed Alnahhal, Ahmad Sakhrieh, Mosab I. Tabash.

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