



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON
EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND PERFORMANCE IN SAUDI AIRLINES***

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GSM 2018 27



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EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND PERFORMANCE IN SAUDI AIRLINES**

By

KHALID K. ALHARBI

**Thesis Submitted to the Putra Business School in Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

June 2018

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved parents, family, and friends



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2018

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The Path-Goal Theory is strongly referred to as one of the main organisational subjects of leadership styles in human resources literature. The theory proposes four leadership behaviors that are directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. In addition, the primary premise of the theory is to predict leadership effectiveness in maximizing employee attitude and performance in different situations. Nevertheless, several deficiencies have been identified in the literature which require further development such as understanding the underlying mechanisms and the boundary conditions of leadership effects.

Building on the Path-Goal Theory and the Social Identity Theory, the general objective of this study is to examine the effects of leadership styles on employee affective commitment and performance directly and through the mediating effect of organisational identification, as well as the moderating effect of job security in the context of Saudi Airlines in Saudi Arabia. This is motivated by the fact that Saudi Airlines faces an ongoing internal organisational and external environmental changes, and therefore, the role of organisational identification and job security is relevant.

This quantitative study utilized a stratified random sampling technique and used a sample of 353 respondents from the company headquarter, as well as the four international airports of Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, and Medina). In addition, the collected data were analyzed using the partial least squares technique to achieve the study findings. In general, these findings revealed that the behaviors of leaders at Saudi Airlines were major determinants of the Path-Goal Theory's role on subordinates' attitudes and behavior. It was confirmed that there are significant relationships between leadership styles and the studied outcomes, as well as

significant mediating and moderating effects of organisational identification and job security respectively.

In specific, the results showed that affective commitment is influenced by participative leadership, achievement-oriented leadership, and organisational identification. Job performance is influenced by supportive leadership, organisational identification, and affective commitment. Organisational identification is influenced by directive, supportive and achievement-oriented leadership. In addition, organisational identification mediates the effect of directive, supportive, and achievement-oriented leadership on affective commitment and job performance. On the other hand, job security had a significant moderating effect on the influence of achievement-oriented leadership style on organisational identification. This study has identified the leadership determinants of organisational identification, affective commitment, and job performance, yet it demonstrates that leadership styles, according to the Path-Goal Theory, are good indicators for employee attitude and performance in the study context.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN LANGSUNG DAN TIDAK LANGSUNG GAYA KEPIMPINAN
TERHADAP KOMITMEN DAN PRESTASI PEKERJA DI SYARIKAT
PENERBANGAN SAUDI**

Oleh

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Kajian literatur sumber manusia menunjukkan bahawa teori *Path-Goal* adalah salah satu rujukan utama yang dianggap sebagai subjek pokok dalam bidang organisasi untuk corak kepimpinan. Teori ini mencadangkan empat corak kepimpinan, yaitu, kepimpinan yang memberi arahan, kepimpinan yang mendukung, kepimpinan yang partisipatif, dan kepimpinan yang berorientasikan pencapaian. Di samping itu, kekuatan utama teori ini adalah didalam meramalkan keberkesanan kepimpinan dalam memaksimumkan sikap dan prestasi pekerja dalam situasi yang berbeza. Walau bagaimanapun, beberapa kekurangan telah dikenal pasti dalam kajian literatur yang memerlukan pengamatan yan lebih lanjut, seperti kefahaman mekanisme asas dan batasan kesan kepimpinan.

Berlandaskan Teori *Path-Goal* dan Teori *Social Identity*, objektif asas kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan corak kepimpinan terhadap komitmen dan prestasi pekerja secara langsung dan juga melalui kesan perantara (*mediating*) identiti organisasi, serta kesan pengadaran (*moderating*) jaminan pekerjaan dalam konteks Syarikat Penerbangan Saudi di Arab Saudi. Ini didorong oleh fakta bahawa Syarikat Penerbangan Saudi menghadapi perubahan dalaman organisasi dan persekitaran yang berterusan. Oleh itu, peranan identiti organisasi dan jaminan pekerjaan adalah sangat relevan.

Kajian kuantitatif ini menggunakan teknik pensampelan rawak berstrata (*stratified random sampling*) dan menggunakan 353 responden dari ibu pejabat syarikat, serta empat lapangan terbang antarabangsa di Arab Saudi (Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, dan Madinah). Di samping itu, data yang dikumpul dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik

partial least squared untuk mencapai hasil kajian. Secara umum, hasil kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa corak kepemimpinan di Syarikat Penerbangan Saudi adalah penentu utama (dalam peranan Teori *Path-Goal*) ke atas sikap dan tingkah laku pekerja bawahan. Ini mengesahkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara corak kepemimpinan dan hasil kajian, serta kesan pengantara (*mediating*) dan pengadaran (*moderating*) yang signifikan oleh identiti organisasi dan jaminan pekerjaan.

Secara khusus, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa komitmen afektif dipengaruhi oleh kepemimpinan yang partisipatif, kepemimpinan yang berorientasikan prestasi, dan identiti organisasi. Prestasi kerja dipengaruhi oleh kepemimpinan yang mendukung, identiti organisasi, dan komitmen yang afektif. Identiti organisasi dipengaruhi oleh kepemimpinan yang memberi arahan, sokongan dan kepemimpinan yang berorientasikan pencapaian. Di samping itu, identiti organisasi bertindak sebagai penengah (*mediator*) antara kesan kepemimpinan yang memberi arahan, kepemimpinan yang mendukung, dan kepemimpinan yang berorientasikan pencapaian dengan komitmen yang afektif dan prestasi kerja. Sebaliknya, jaminan pekerjaan mempunyai pengaruh pengadaran (*moderating*) yang signifikan terhadap pengaruh gaya kepemimpinan yang berorientasikan pencapaian terhadap identiti organisasi. Kajian ini telah mengenal pasti determinan untuk kepemimpinan ke atas identiti organisasi, komitmen yang afektif, dan prestasi kerja. Juga, ia menunjukkan bahawa corak kepemimpinan, mengikut Teori *Path-Goal*, adalah petunjuk yang baik untuk sikap dan prestasi pekerja dalam konteks kajian.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 4 June 2018 to conduct the final examination of Khalid K. Alharbi on his thesis entitled “Direct and Indirect Effects of Leadership Style on Employee Commitment and Performance in Saudi Airlines” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Degree of Doctor Philosophy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
APPROVAL	vi
DECLARATION	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.2.1 Overview of the Aviation Sector of Saudi Arabia	3
1.2.2 Saudi Airlines	4
1.3 Problem Statement	6
1.4 Purpose of the Study	9
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Significance of the Study	10
1.6.1 Theoretical Significance	10
1.6.2 Practical Significance	11
1.7 Scope of the Study	12
1.8 Definitions of Key Terms	12
1.9 Organisation of the Thesis	14
1.10 Chapter Summary	14
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Leadership	15
2.2.1 Leadership Theories	16
2.3 Path-Goal Theory	26
2.3.1 Boundary Conditions	29
2.3.2 Critiques and Strengths of the Path-Goal Theory	29
2.3.3 Research on the Path-Goal Theory	31
2.4 Organisational Identification	33
2.4.1 The Social Identity Perspective	36
2.4.2 Types of Identification	38
2.4.3 Significance of Organisational Identification	39
2.4.4 Organisational Identification vs. Organisational Commitment	41
2.4.5 Organisational Identification during Times of Change	44
2.5 Organisational Commitment	46

	2.5.1	Three Components Model of Organisational Commitment	47
	2.6	Job Performance	50
	2.7	Summary of Research Gaps	50
	2.8	Chapter Summary	52
3		RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT	53
	3.1	Introduction	53
	3.2	Underpinning Theories	53
	3.3	Research Framework	55
	3.4	Relationships among Constructs and Hypotheses Development	56
	3.4.1	Leadership Styles and Employees' Affective Commitment and Performance	56
	3.4.2	Leadership Styles and Organisational Identification	58
	3.4.3	Organisational Identification and Employees' Affective Commitment and Performance	59
	3.4.4	Affective Commitment and Job Performance	61
	3.4.5	The Mediating Effect of Organisational Identification	62
	3.4.6	The Moderating Effect of Job Security	63
	3.5	Chapter Summary	66
4		RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	67
	4.1	Introduction	67
	4.2	Research Philosophy and Design	67
	4.3	Population	71
	4.4	Sampling	72
	4.4.1	Sampling Technique	72
	4.4.2	Sample Size	73
	4.5	Instrumentations	73
	4.5.1	Demographics	74
	4.5.2	Measurement of Leadership Styles	74
	4.5.3	Measurement of Organisational Identification	75
	4.5.4	Measurement of Affective Commitment	75
	4.5.5	Measurement of Job Performance	75
	4.5.6	Measurement of Job Security	76
	4.6	Questionnaire Translation	76
	4.7	Data Collection Procedures	77
	4.8	Data Analysis Procedures	77
	4.8.1	Descriptive Statistics	77
	4.8.2	Partial Least Squares (PLS)	78
	4.9	Pilot Study	80
	4.10	Chapter Summary	81

5	DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	82
5.1	Introduction	82
5.2	Descriptive Analysis	82
5.2.1	Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents	82
5.2.2	Descriptive Statistics of the Variables	84
5.3	Preliminary Analysis	84
5.3.1	Missing Values	85
5.3.2	Outliers	85
5.3.3	Common Method Variance	85
5.4	Assessment of Measurement Model	85
5.5	Assessment of Structural Model	90
5.5.1	Mediation Effect	95
5.5.2	Moderation Effect	95
5.6	Summary of Hypotheses and Findings	96
5.7	Chapter Summary	97
6	DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION	98
6.1	Introduction	98
6.2	Discussion of the Findings	98
6.3	Implications of the Research	103
6.3.1	Theoretical Implications	103
6.3.2	Practical Implications	104
6.4	Limitations and Directions for Future Research	106
6.5	Conclusion	107
	REFERENCES	108
	APPENDICES	135
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	160

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
4.1 Summary of the Research Design	71
4.2 Distribution of Population and Sample	73
4.3 Summary of Measurements	74
4.4 Summary of Reliability Results from Pilot Study	81
5.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents	83
5.2 Descriptive Statics of the Variables	84
5.3 Measurement Model Evaluation	88
5.4 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	89
5.5 Collinearity Assessment (VIF Values)	91
5.6 Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing (Direct Effect)	92
5.7 Effect Size	93
5.8 Results of R ² and Q ² values	93
5.9 Indirect Effect	95
5.10 Interaction Effect of Job Security	96
5.11 Summary of Hypotheses Results	97

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	Leadership styles Identified by Ohio State University Studies	19
2.2	The Managerial Grid Model	20
2.3	Findings from the Fiedler Model	22
2.4	The Path-Goal Model	27
2.5	Expanded Model of Organizational Identification	35
2.6	The Continuum of Organizational Identification Forms	36
3.1	Conceptual Framework of the Study	56
4.1	Research Philosophy	68
4.2	Research Design	70
4.3	Overall Steps in PLS Analysis	79
5.1	The Measurement Model	90
5.2	The Structural Model	94
5.3	Interaction Effect of the Moderating Role	96

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BOT	Build-Operate-Transfer
CR	Composite Reliability
GACA	General Authority of Civil Aviation
GOF	Goodness of Fit
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
IATA	International Air Transport Association
LBDQ	Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire
LPC	Least-Preferred Co-worker Questionnaire
PLS	Partial Least Squares
SBDQ	Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter begins with the background of the study which also includes a brief overview of the aviation sector in Saudi Arabia, as well as, Saudi Airlines. Furthermore, the chapter continues with a discussion of the problem statement, purpose and objectives, research questions, significance, and scope of the study, as well as, definitions of terms. Finally, the chapter concludes with the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

Present day, organisations often change in an attempt to enhance organisational viability (Van Knippenberg, Martin, & Tyler, 2006). This happens due to the fact that today's corporate environment is not static due to the rapid technological advancement and globalisation. In such times, leadership has always been an essential factor to achieve the new organisational goals. Scholars have demonstrated that leadership is extremely necessary for the success of organisations. Organisations need strong leadership for optimal effectiveness, as well as, creating a vision and inspiring organisational members who want to realise that vision (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Leadership has been known to enhance employees' commitment towards their jobs, motivation at work, and task performance (Lussier & Achua, 2013). Thus, understanding how leadership processes may help to achieve more motivated and productive employees.

Leadership is probably one of the most critical topics in the realm of organisational behaviour (Lord & Maher, 1990). It can be defined as the ability to motivate, influence and enable individuals, who are members, to contribute to the objectives of organisations (House et al., 2002; Robbins & Judge, 2013). In other words, leadership is a process affecting others in order to obtain the desired outcomes.

Besides leadership, organisational identification has an important role in determining employees' commitment and performance. Organisational identification is a key factor for unifying employees with their organisations (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; He & Brown, 2013). High levels of organisational identification will more likely derive employees to adopt the organisation's perspectives and to act in accordance with organisational values, norms, and attitudes (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Van Knippenberg et al., 2006). Employees who are identified with their organisations will devote their efforts to be involved in their organisations while simultaneously empathise with the successes and failures of their organisation as their own. Also,

they act and behave in a way that helps the organisation to achieve its goals (Ashforth et al., 2008). In addition, highly identified employees are more satisfied, committed, productive, and will continue to work for their organisations in order to provide higher performance (Ashforth et al., 2008; Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015; Riketta, 2005).

Organisation theorists have examined the ways people define themselves in terms of their relationship to organisations, thus applying the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the concept of social identification to the workplace (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Therefore, organisational identification is considered as a specific form of social identification. The SIT asserts that employees define themselves based on their group memberships (Tajfel, 1978). Members are said to identify with the organisation when they define themselves, at least partially, in terms of what the organisation is thought to represent. Organisational identification has an important place in the field of organisational behaviour as it has significant implications for individuals, groups, and organisations (He & Brown, 2013; Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015; Riketta, 2005). According to Bergami & Bagozzi (2000), and Hogg & Terry (2000), membership in a work organisation is one of the most crucial group affiliations a person has, probably more important than any other group membership.

On a different note, the increasing importance of job security concerning the lives of millions of employees has led to an increased focus of research on this phenomenon. It is an employee's perception that reflects on the ability to continue maintaining the job, in addition to the stability of the career features (Probst, 2003). Therefore, employees with high job security will perceive to maintain their jobs and safeguarding the same job features. On the other hand, employees with perceptions of low levels of job security will have a feeling of uncertainty, and ambiguity regarding their future employment, and difficulty in choosing the appropriate reaction within the work environment (Lee & Peccei, 2007; Loi, Chan, & Lam, 2014). For the most part, job insecurity has been considered as a form of stress at work (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002), which is detrimental to employees' physical and psychological wellbeing (Sverke et al., 2002).

In this study, leadership styles will be studied in order to observe their effects on employees' identification with their organisation, and the overall effect on employees' attitude and behaviour, specifically on affective commitment and job performance. Simultaneously, taking into consideration the moderating effect of job security. In addition, this study is taking place at Saudi Airlines in Saudi Arabia. An overview of the aviation sector in the country, as well as the company, will be discussed next.

1.2.1 Overview of the Aviation Sector of Saudi Arabia

In 2016, Saudi Arabia has announced “Vision 2030”. The vision of this national transformation plan is that Saudi Arabia is “the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the investment powerhouse, and the hub connecting three continents”. In addition, the government has set 24 goals to be achieved. Among the most important ones are; to raise the share of non-oil exports from 16% to 50%; to increase the private sector’s contribution in the GDP from 40% to 65%; to be among the top ten countries on the Global Competitiveness Index; and to raise the ranking in the Government Effectiveness Index from 80 to 20 (Vision 2030, 2016).

Moreover, one of the main goals that will affect the aviation sector, especially in terms of flight and passenger traffic, is to increase the number of Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million per year. These goals and others will be achieved through different transformative programmes, such as the privatisation programme, the government restructuring programme, the performance measurement programme, and many others (Vision 2030, 2016).

In harmony, the aviation sector in the country is under reform. The government, represented by the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), is working hard to develop the industry through infrastructure development, privatisation, and market deregulation. The government planned to upgrade existing airports, as well as build new ones. For instance, the government dedicated \$7.2 billion to build a new international airport in Jeddah, in order to increase the capacity to 30 million passengers per year (Altaley, 2014).

In terms of privatisation, GACA announced that all airports in the county will be privatised (GACA, 2017). This announcement came in accordance with “Vision 2030”, which was stimulated by the successful partnership with the private sector in building the new international airport in Medina (Prince Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz International Airport), which is the first airport in the region that was developed as a build-operate-transfer project (BOT). It is worth noting that Saudi Arabia has 27 airports, four of which are international airports.

The deregulation of the aviation industry in Saudi Arabia has caused the already competitive industry to be more intense, thus giving passengers more choices when selecting airlines. Currently, five commercial airline companies are licensed by the Saudi authorities, which are Saudi Airlines, Flynas, Nesma Airlines, Saudi Gulf Airlines, and Flyadeal (the last three companies just started to operate in 2017). Other regional big companies such as Qatar Airways, Emirates, and Etihad Airways, as well as the low-cost airlines such as Fly Dubai, Fly Almasria, Air Arabia, and many other international companies that can operate to or from Saudi international and regional destinations, are among the long list of competitors.

Furthermore, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) expects 7.2 billion passengers to travel worldwide in 2035, a near doubling of the 3.8 billion air travellers in 2016. The prediction is based on a 3.7% annual compound average growth rate. To be specific, the Middle East is forecasted to be among the five fastest-growing markets in terms of additional passengers per year with 4.8% annually. The aforementioned market will see an extra 244 million passengers a year on routes to, from and within the region by 2035, where the total market size prediction is 414 million passengers. The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia will all enjoy strong annual growth of 5.9%, 4.7%, and 4.1% respectively (IATA, 2016).

1.2.2 Saudi Airlines

Saudi Airlines is the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia. The company was established in 1945, with a modest fleet of three DC-3 planes, and became one of the largest airline companies in the world. Nowadays, Saudi Airlines plays a critical role in the kingdom's development. The company operates 194,840 flights yearly and obtains 141 aircrafts ("Saudi Airlines to," 2017). Its domestic flights serve 26 cities throughout the Kingdom, and its international flights serve many destinations in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. Furthermore, the pride of the company lies in that it is the national carrier of the country, and is one of the pillars to achieve the goals of "vision 2030". Saudi Airlines plays a vital role in transferring the pilgrims and tourists while keeping pace with the steady increase in their numbers.

Throughout its entire tenure, Saudi Airlines went through different stages. However, recently the company foster its capital investment, as well as, organisational change to adapt to the new competitive and environmental changes. The publicly owned company received huge subsidies from the government of Saudi Arabia. The primary aim of this capital investment is to increase the number of fleet which will reach 200 airplanes by the year 2020 (Abdul Ghafour, 2015), which almost doubled the number of 2015.

The increase in the number of fleet was in tandem with the expected growth in demand. The company plans to increase the number of passengers to 45 million by the year 2020 compared to 29.5 million in 2015. Furthermore, the company has enhanced its competitive position by opening more routes primarily in Asia, Africa, and North America.

Moreover, Saudi Airlines is currently under privatisation, where some of the company's sectors are in the final stages of the privatisation process (Alarabia, 2016). The motives for ownership restructuring through privatisation are diverse and usually include objectives such as enhancing carrier financial performance and efficiency (Backx, Carney, & Gedajlovic, 2002), as well as providing high-quality services to be more competitive. As some may insist that improvement is difficult to bring about for a company that still operates according to a public sector model, where customer

satisfaction and loyalty are not top objectives, nor is profit maximisation or cost reduction (Aluwaisheg, 2015; Backx et al., 2002).

Saudi Airlines has been widely criticised for providing low-quality services (Albedewi, 2016; Ansari, 2015; Kutbi, 2011). The Shura Council highlighted that the company is providing low-quality services which led to losing customers to other regional airlines. Moreover, the Council tackled the company as it is getting huge government subsidies, nevertheless, the company was still ranked low compared to other airline companies (Shura Council, 2015). The ranking of the Saudi Airlines moved downward from its already low position of (77) in 2014, to an even lower position of (84) and (82) in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Other regional competitors such as Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Etihad Airways were ranked among the top six companies (Skytrax, 2016). The ranking is based on five criteria which are: staff, catering, in-flight entertainment, seat comfort, and value for money. While most of the criticisms and complaints, however, were focused on the conduct and performance of its staff (Aluwaisheg, 2015; Skytrax, 2016).

Leadership is critical for the performance of every organisation in the twenty-first century. (Mumford & Gibson 2011), specifically in the airlines industry (Almutairi, 2013; Burckhardt, Hargiss, & Howard, 2012; Gusau, 2014). Furthermore, Leadership is a crucial element in influencing employees' commitment and performance in order to achieve high-quality services (Lee, Cheng, Yeung, & Lai, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, the Shura Council stressed that, with Saudi Airlines, the procedures for promoting employees to leadership positions are not clear and that the company should emphasise on leadership roles and practices to enhance organisational effectiveness to achieve organisational goals (Alqahtani, 2018; "Shura Council holds," 2018).

Although, it has been noted that there is an absence of strong leadership within the service organisations in Saudi Arabia (Drummond & Al-Anazi, 1997), nevertheless the role of leadership in the airlines industry in Saudi Arabia has so far not been investigated. In addition, studies that have addressed airline companies in Saudi Arabia remain limited in number, and the few that were available (e.g., Al-medabesh & Ali, 2014; Ansari & Qadri, 2014; Ansari, 2015) focused only on specific technical aspects such as seating comfort, in-flight entertainment systems, and cleanliness. This study, however, focuses on managers and employees as the key elements in service organisations.

Furthermore, Saudi Airlines is going through an organisational change (privatisation), which might affect employees' organisational identification (Elstak et al., 2015; He & Brown, 2013; Van Knippenberg et al., 2006; Van Dick, Ullrich, & Tissington, 2006). It has been noted that such a process puts employees' organisational identification at stake (He & Brown, 2013), as it involves a possible threatening change in identity (Elstak et al., 2015). Despite pre-change levels of organisational identification, it is hard to preserve identification during changes. Organisational change negatively affects organisational identification that might lead to the loss of identification or the

so-called dis-identification (Bartels, Douwes, De Jong, & Pruyn, 2006; Elstak et al., 2015; Kim, Song, & Lee, 2013; Lee & Mao, 2015; Smith, da Cunha, Giangreco, Vasilaki, & Carugati, 2013), yet, lack of commitment and lower performance (Lee et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2013).

Organisational identification is a key factor of pre, during, and post-organisational change. A high level of organisational identification among employees at Saudi Airlines is required to maintain a smooth psychological transition, as well as, employees' support for change and adaptation of new goals and objectives. Identification guarantees that the employees maintain their connection with the company (Chreim, 2002; Fiol, 2002), and orient their behaviour towards supporting the organisation through its difficult period (Elstak et al., 2015). In addition, when employees have a strong belief in the necessity of change, supportive mindset towards change, and positive appraisal of the result, then the danger or threats of lost identification to oneself is mitigated, and the employees will be more dedicated to their jobs (Lee & Mao, 2015).

Job security rises as a critical issue in Saudi Arabia as the government has passed a law the allows government agencies and bodies, as well as private sectors, to terminate employees resulting to the cancellation of the position he or she is holding (Alshamrani, 2017). This coupled with the fact that job security is one common situational factor that is associated with organisational restructuring (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Cartwright & Cooper, 2014), such as privatisation (Backx et al., 2002; Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). It has been widely accepted that employees involved in organisational change are expected to experience a significant reduction in job security levels (Fried et al., 2003). Fried and his colleagues also found that following a drastic organisational change, employees differed in their experiences of job security. They attributed this variation in employees' perceptions of job security to some organisational circumstances.

In this regard, Saudi Airlines offers an excellent opportunity for research and future studies due to internal organisational and external environmental changes. Saudi Airlines needs an all-around analysis to identify gaps and fulfilling those gaps to face the intensity of competition and the increasing demand.

1.3 Problem Statement

The low performance of employees at Saudi Airlines has attracted great concern recently. As aforementioned, Saudi Airlines has been ranked low compared to other regional airlines as most of the criticisms were about employees' attitude and performance. In addition, more passengers are shifting to other airlines due to the poor service quality. This, in turn, has led the company to launch the new strategic project "TOP 5" which aims to classify the company as a 5-star company by the end of 2019

through a comprehensive process to develop the travel experience at all stages (“Saudi Airlines Launches,” 2018).

Airlines undergoing privatisation require highly effective leadership practices. The fact that public and private managers differ in leadership behaviours had already been demonstrated (Anderson, 2010; Hansen & Villadsen, 2010). In addition, Hooijberg & Choi (2001) concluded that managers in the public sector see a weaker association between the goal-orientation leadership role and effectiveness as compared to the private sector counterpart. This is consistent with the notion that in public sector organisations, managers believe they have less discretion in exercising leadership roles than in private sector organisations. Also, it has been suggested that leadership in the public system is more weakly quoted than that in the private system, which is well structured and developed (Bedrule-Grigoruta, 2012).

Employees are considered as the main element to the success of any organisation. Therefore, managers in Saudi Airlines should ensure that their employees maintain a positive attitude and performance in order to be more competitive in terms of providing high-quality services. According to Backx et al. (2002), managers in privately owned airlines have greater incentive to seek out and implement better organisational practices to achieve efficiency and improve labour productivity especially that lower employees’ performance levels are manifested in public carriers. In addition, Backx and colleagues noted that managers in privately owned airlines should be more sensitive to service quality than their public counterparts since perceived service quality is generally held to influence a firm’s financial performance. This could be achieved through more leadership practices.

The critical role of leadership has been widely proclaimed in business research (Lord & Maher, 1990; Zhang & Chen, 2013). Empirical studies have found that leadership is one of the most important factors for employees commitment and performance (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2013; Shin, Oh, Sim, & Lee, 2016; Tanchaisak, 1995). Nevertheless, most leadership studies that took place in Saudi Arabia only focused on transformational and transactional leadership behaviours (e.g., Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012; Alkahtani, 2016; Almutairi, 2013, 2016; Mutahar, Rasli, & Alghazali, 2015; Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012), and little attention was given to specific leadership behaviours. He & Brown (2013) pointed out that there is a need for further research to examine the relationships between the different dimensions of leadership behaviours such as directive leadership on employees’ attitude and performance. Several studies (e.g., Miao, Newman, & Huang, 2014; Shin et al., 2016) have researched on specific leadership behaviour and found that directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-orient leadership significantly enhances employees’ attitude and job performance. However, the role of these four leadership styles in the airlines industry in Saudi Arabia has not been investigated.

There is a common stance in the literature that the aforementioned leadership behaviours, as proposed by the Path-Goal Theory, have significant effects on employees' attitude and performance. However, this stance remains the only bigger picture of reality as these relationships are far from basic. Northouse (2016) and Yukl (2013) raised several concerns about the theory and its empirical studies as there is a significant failure to provide adequate explanation for the proposed relationships. Yukl referred to this issue as "inadequate explanation of causal effects" (p.173). Schwarz (2017) agreed that the individual-level mechanism underlying these relationships remains unclear.

Organisational identification, based on the SIT, provides a powerful lens to understand the relationships between leadership and its outcomes. In this regard, numerous research works have revealed that leadership is a primary source of employees' organisational identification. Employees' immediate leaders play an important role in their daily work lives in an organisation, and as employees picture their supervisor as an organisation representative (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002), the leaders' behaviours may shape how employees view their relationship and social identification with their organisation (He & Brown, 2013). Although, extensive research was conducted on aspects relating to leadership and organisational identification, however, recent research efforts stated that most of the research was only limited to transformational leadership and other leadership styles such as directive leadership which should be emphasised (He & Brown, 2013).

Although a big deal of leadership research have emphasised on the contingent nature of leadership, most of the studies that attempted to investigate situational factors only focused on two moderators, namely role clarity and task structure (Alanazi, 2014). It has been noted that this has occurred because scholars generally feel uncomfortable in extending leadership theories because of the difficulty of developing meaningful extensions or modifications to the theories (Schriesheim & Neider, 1996). Miao et al. (2014) concluded that more investigation should be done to examine organisational contexts in which followers respond more positively to the exercise of leadership (Miao et al., 2013). In addition, there is a consensus that further development in this regard is required due to the fact that it is not clear how individual differences and situational factors affect the impact of leadership on employees' identification (He & Brown, 2013).

Saudi Airlines is going through a tremendous organisational change. In such times, job security raises an important situational factor, however, there is still no clear conclusion concerning the effects of job security on employees' behavioural reactions (Fried et al., 2003). In addition, only a few studies have examined the specific moderating effect of job security on job characteristics–employee reactions relations (Johns, Xie, & Fang, 1992; Tiegs, Tetrick, & Fried, 1992). It has been noted that studies in the area of job security should identify additional variables in the work environment that may help determine circumstances in which job security contributes as a moderator to positive or negative work-related outcomes (Fried et al., 2003). In

addition, the role that job security can play as moderator when studying employees' attitude and performance is less understood, therefore, warrants further investigation (Kraimer, Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 2005). This study attempts to enhance knowledge on the contribution of job security to the employees' commitment and performance in the airlines industry, specifically, the Saudi Airlines in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effect of leadership styles on employees' attitude and performance as perceived by employees at Saudi Airlines, while simultaneously, investigating the mediating role of organisational identification and the moderating role of job security. In particular, this study examines four different leadership styles which are: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented, with the aim to identify their effects on organisational identification, affective commitment, and job performance. This will help to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) that are related to employees' organisational identification, affective commitment, and job performance.
2. To examine the relationships between employees' organisational identification and their affective commitment, and job performance.
3. To examine the mediating effect of organisational identification on the relationships between leadership styles and employee affective commitment and job performance.
4. To examine the moderating effect of job security on the relationships between leadership styles and employees' organisational identification.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions were designed to address the objectives of this study, as well as, to test the proposed model:

1. Are there any significant relationships between leadership styles and employees' organisational identification, affective commitment, and job performance?
2. Are there any significant relationships between employees' organisational identification and their affective commitment, and job performance?
3. Does organisational identification mediate the relationships between leadership styles and affective commitment, and job performance?
4. Does job security moderate the relationship between leadership styles and organisational identification?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The notion that leadership could be a source for organisational identification has caught the attention of organisational behaviour and human resource management scholars in recent years (He & Brown, 2013). This study employs these two key constructs that have significant effects on employees' commitment and performance, in addition to job security as a boundary condition. It aims to expand the literature on issues that are left open. Accordingly, this study has some theoretical and practical significance.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this current study is significant as it is among the pioneer, if not the first, to integrate the Path-Goal Theory and the SIT in an attempt to unveil the underlying mechanism in which leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) are translated into employees' affective commitment and performance by examining the mediating effect of organisational identification. Consequently, this study also expands on the literature with regard to the leadership-identification linkage. To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first which have incorporated the studied leadership styles and organisational identification, addressing the echoes of Alharbi & Abdullah (2016) and He & Brown (2013) for expanding and deepening our knowledge in such areas.

This study deliberated on the contingent nature of leadership by investigating job security as a boundary condition of the relationships between leadership styles and organisational identification. Therefore, this study enhances our existing knowledge of the conditions when leadership styles can effectively stimulate employees' organisational identification, and in turn, their job attitude and performance.

Also, this study has placed equal emphasis on all four leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) as previous studies did not equally emphasise some of them (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013). Likewise, this study is different as it investigates two different outcomes. According to House & Dessler (1974) and House & Mitchell (1975), the Path-Goal Theory is solid in which it could be used as the underpinning theory to examine further dependent variables. This, in turn, allows for more experimental studies to be done in order to improve our knowledge on the leadership effect. Thus, in addition to job performance, this study takes a step further by considering organisational identification and affective commitment.

This study includes organisational identification and affective commitment and emphasises on their theoretical and empirical differences in relation to leadership. The relationship between organisational identification and organisational commitment is one of the fuzziest relationships between the SIT and employee attitude. It is very

important to distinguish between the two constructs, as many studies have overlapped or interchangeably use the terms as synonyms (Ashforth et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005). Van Dick and colleagues (2004) stated: “Because the two concepts have different bases and consequences, one should be cautious in translating the findings from organisational commitment research into the organisational identification area” (p.353). In addition, Ng (2015) highlighted that although researchers usually choose only one of these variables as a focal outcome of the study based on a seldom justification, the choice of one construct over another seems arbitrary. Ng also concluded that researchers should consider including the two constructs in their investigations.

This study contributes to the regional managerial studies in regard to leadership, as well as, organisational identification. Notably, the research on the studied leadership styles and organisational identification has been widely neglected in regional literature. In this respect, this study helps to investigate the applicability of Western-developed leadership styles to a local sitting (Saudi sitting), which is different from the Western sitting in a number of ways (Cassell & Blake, 2012). This study, also, addresses Ngo et al.'s (2013) calls to expand the knowledge of organisational identification in non-Western countries. Accordingly, a foundation for future research on the applications of the Path-Goal Theory and organisational identification in the region is established.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

This study is significant to Saudi Airlines managers as it helps them to understand how they can strategise their role in the organisation in different situations. In particular, it enhances their knowledge by maximising the use of leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) to enhance employees’ attitude and performance by having highly identified employees. Leaders need to choose a leadership style that best fits the needs of followers and the work they are doing (House, 1996). In addition, such empirical studies which are based on the Path-Goal Theory have practical utility as it offers significant insights that can be applied in ongoing settings to improve one’s leadership (Gibson et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016).

Furthermore, supervisors should pay more attention to their leadership behaviours especially with employees who have low levels of job security. Given that job insecurity is becoming a common organisational phenomenon due to the rapidly changing economic environment (Loi et al., 2014), as well as, organisational changes (Ashford et al., 1989; Cartwright & Cooper, 2014), it would be fruitful for the organisation to cultivate high leadership practices in such a context.

This study is also significant to Saudi Airlines employees as it investigates the possibilities that can help them fulfil their social identification needs, which is a fundamental human need (Elsback, 1999; Johanson & Ashforth, 2008). This, in turn, will help them inculcate better work attitude and performance (He & Brown, 2013; Lee et al., 2015), especially that organisational change negatively affects the level of employees' identification (He & Brown, 2013).

In general, this study may help Saudi Airlines to overcome some of the shortcomings of employees' negative attitude and performance, by having more effective managers and highly identified employees. The Path-Goal Leadership has been developed specially to address such issues (House, 1996).

1.7 Scope of the Study

This quantitative study is limited to the effects of leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) on employees' affective commitment and job performance, with the mediating effect of organisational identification, and the moderating effect of job security. In addition, the underpinning theories are the Path-Goal Theory and the SIT. This is a generic study on the aforementioned constructs conducted in Saudi Arabia which targeted Saudi Airlines for the purpose of applying the proposed framework. Saudi Airlines offers an appropriate context for this study, in addition to the researcher's accessibility to data collection due to his previous affiliation with the company. Furthermore, all permanent subordinates who work at the company's headquarters, as well as the four international airports of Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, and Medina airports), are included in the present study.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms, which are frequently used in this study, have the following meaning:

a. Leadership

It is the ability to motivate, influence and enable individuals to contribute to the objectives of organisations of which they are members (House et al., 2002; Robbins & Judge, 2013).

b. Leadership Styles

The manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people as seen by the employees, which includes the total pattern of explicit and implicit actions performed by their leader (Newstorm & Davis, 1993). In this study, the leadership styles refer to the directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented styles.

c. Directive Leadership Style

Leadership behaviours are directed towards providing psychological structure for subordinates, such as letting subordinates know what they are expected to do, scheduling and coordinating work, giving specific guidance, and clarifying policies, rules, and procedures (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016).

d. Supportive Leadership Style

Leadership behaviours are directed towards the satisfaction of subordinates' needs and preferences, such as displaying concern for subordinates' welfare and creating a friendly and psychologically supportive work environment (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016).

e. Participative Leadership Style

Leadership behaviours are directed towards encouragement of subordinate influence on decision making and work unit operations, such as consulting with subordinates and taking their opinions and suggestions into account when making decisions (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016).

f. Achievement-Oriented Leadership Style

Leadership behaviours are directed towards encouraging performance excellence, such as setting challenging goals, seeking improvement, emphasising excellence in performance, and showing confidence that subordinates will attain high standards of performance (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016).

g. Organisational Identification

A specific form of social identification, which can be defined as “the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organisation, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organisation(s) in which he or she is a member” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; p.104).

h. Organisational Commitment

A psychological state that “can reflect a desire, a need, and/or an obligation to maintain membership in the organisation” (Meyer & Allen, 1991; p.62).

i. Job Performance

“behaviours or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organisation” (McCloy, Campbell, & Cudeck, 1994; p.439).

j. Job Security

“the perceived stability and continuance of one’s job as one knows it” (Probst, 2003; p.452).

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

This study is organised as follows. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter, in particular, it illustrates the problem statement, study objectives, and the context in which the study is taking place. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature pertaining to the study. Chapter 3 discusses the underpinning theories, research framework, and hypotheses development. Chapter 4 presents the methodology employed to achieve results. Chapter 5 consists of the data analysis and findings of this study. Last but not least, Chapter 6 presents the discussion, recommendations, and conclusion based on the study findings.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the proposed study. Specifically, this introductory chapter contains the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, the research significance, and the scope of the study, followed by the definitions of terms. The chapter ends with the organisation of the study. The next chapter provides a review of the literature that are related to this study.

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