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Impact of Employee Motivation on Training and Development

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines employee motivation to engage in training and development within organizations in the UAE. This study deliberately emphasizes aspects of national strategies (e.g., UAE Vision 2031 and the National Talent Development Strategy) as well as factors such as generational diversity, financial Constraints and rapid technological change that shape the decisions of individuals to participate in training.

Methodology: A survey was distributed to employees in multiple UAE organizations with a total of 41 respondents to determine important motivation factors that influence the engagement of employees in training.

Findings: The findings illustrate that all employees agree that motivation is an important factor for their engagement in any training. Key motivations for participation in training were opportunities for career development, incentives and credentials, tailored training programs and recognition from management. The findings also illustrate a substantive use of contemporary training resources, including AI-enhanced learning technologies, micro-learning formats, virtual reality training simulations, and blended learning practices. The study cites examples from Dubai Police, Etisalat and the Ministry of Interior to illustrate that motivation leads to increased training innovation and outcomes.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The research reported in this paper adds to the field of Human Resource Management by showing that employee motivation is a key mediating factor in motivating engagement in Training and Development (T&D) from employees who represent a diverse, multicultural and multi-generational workforce in the United Arab Emirates. In practical terms, the research provides organizations with empirically-supported evidence that can assist them in developing and implementing T&D programs that align with employees' motivational requirements. By adopting this approach, organizations can improve the effectiveness of their training initiatives, enhance the performance of their workforces, and contribute to their long-term success. The research also supports the importance of incorporating employee motivation frameworks into national workforce development policies and talent management initiatives.

Keywords: *Human Resource Management (HRM), Training and Development (T&D), AI-Enhanced Learning, Personalized Learning, Employee Motivation, UAE Vision 2031*

JEL Classification Codes: *O15, M53, J24*

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INTRODUCTION

Human resource management (HRM) has become significant and impacts organizational performance, employee development and long-term sustainability. In the modern workplace, HRM involves more than being an administrator with basic responsibilities; it is about developing a work environment that maximizes employees' skills and efforts, fosters their involvement and promotes lifelong learning. A core component of basic HR practices is training and development, which is important to prepare employees for changes in the workplace, technology and other developments impacting organizations.

However, the effectiveness of T&D programs is closely tied to an employee's motivation. Motivated employees are more willing to engage in training sessions, show a greater interest in the training content and utilize the skills they have recently learned in their day-to-day functional responsibilities. Therefore, motivation is central to connecting the learning experience to an enhancement in performance results.

In the UAE context, multiple national and organizational factors are influential in providing employee motivation. Investment in human capital is significant for creating a highly competitive, knowledge-based work environment according to UAE Vision 2031 and associated government policies for developing and training talented workers. Furthermore, employee perceptions of the value of training programs vary based on the generational mix of employees, money available to invest in training and technological advancements that may provide different perceptions about training program relevance.

The focus of the present research is on employee motivation being the predictor/antecedent and not a mediator to explain how employees decide whether or not to participate in training and development programs. This research is set within the growing workforce training investment by the UAE through national strategies such as UAE Vision 2031. Due to this context, the research is presented with a theoretical issue; there is a lack of consistency in the level of employee engagement with training and development programs despite a heavy investment from the UAE. An underutilization of organizational resources for training will occur as a result of this inconsistency. Therefore, the organizational return on the investment in the development of human capital will be limited.

Problem Statement

The UAE has made great strides in investing in training and developing its workforce, however we still see that companies will struggle to get their employees engaged and committed to using training and development programs. There are no definitive studies that have been published that look at the reasons why employees in the UAE's highly diverse workforce – with workers from different generations, ethnicities and nationalities – get involved in T&D programs. A lack of understanding about what motivates employees to participate in T&D makes it difficult for organizations to predict how much money they should invest in T&D, and could result in organizations spending money on training that does not create knowledge that can actually be used to improve the organization. This study addresses a significant gap in the empirical knowledge regarding T&D engagement and will explore the major factors that drive T&D engagement among employees of UAE companies. The research will produce practical recommendations for T&D initiatives that connect corporate training programs to the larger economic and social development objectives of the Country.

The paradox within many UAE organisations is that a large amount of financial and strategic investment has been made into training and developing employees, but the anticipated return on that investment – in terms of ongoing engagement by employees – has not met expectations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Gap

There are no definitive studies that have been published that look at the reasons why employees in the UAE's highly diverse workforce – with workers from different generations, ethnicities and nationalities – get involved in T&D programs. A lack of understanding about what motivates employees to participate in T&D makes it difficult for organizations to predict how much money they should invest in T&D, and could result in organizations spending money on training that does not create knowledge that can actually be used to improve the organization. This study addresses a significant gap in the empirical knowledge regarding T&D engagement and will explore the major factors that drive T&D engagement among employees of UAE companies.

There are important contextual factors that influence training and development in the UAE and thus the way in which organisations develop and implement learning projects. One of these factors is employee motivation, which is an important mediating variable in that it signals the degree to which training is adopted, implemented and converted into performance outcomes. It is also important to understand these influences in the context of the UAE socio-economic and organisational culture so that both formal and informal national and organisational aspirations can be fulfilled. According to a review of the literature on successful training implementation within the UAE context, there are three primary factors that shape or define how successful training implementations are achieved. These success factors include: The national strategic priorities that affect training implementation; the Generational Diversity of individuals in the workplace; and Financial and/or Resource Constraints on the organization to provide effective programs for development and progression.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which explains that employees are more motivated when they receive recognition and are provided a growth opportunity. This theory provides an important lens to understand the reason behind employees being engaged in training and development activities. It highlights the impact of intrinsic motivation which is driven by career growth and self-improvement. In addition to the influence of the extrinsic motivators like: rewards and management recognition. These factors are identified in the study as a key driver of employees' participation in training.

Overall Vision and Coordination of the National Strategy

Organizations are strategically investing in training and development of their employees as a way to meet their country's national growth and sustainability goals. These programs are also seen as essential assets in developing a workforce with the skills necessary to support an economy based on knowledge, which is part of both the UAE Vision 2031 and the National Strategy for Talent Development (PMO, 2023).

As indicated earlier, training and development programs are now viewed as key factors for driving improvements in the organization's innovation, productivity, and long-term

performance; therefore, these programs are being regarded less as operational expenditures and more as necessary investments for future success.

There is also a strong link between employee motivation and the belief that personal development contributes to the overall development of a nation. As a result, employees are more willing to participate and engage in training and development initiatives if they know that their personal development contributes to meeting the larger objectives of their country. According to Farnham (2010), Bennett and Lemoine (2014), when employees align their own personal ambitions with the organization's and the counties' common goals, organizations can create a workplace that is motivating and encourages commitment to the organization.

The example of the Emirates' Emiratization efforts is a good illustration: the program is aimed at preparing Emiratis for future leadership and skilled job placement through directed training and development of skills necessary for meeting those objectives, and integrating individual growth (career development) with a sense of national identity and social responsibility (contributing actively to the development of the country, in alignment with national development goals long term). According to (Rosemary Batt & Monique Valcour, 2003) the process of integrating individual growth with organizational growth and subsequent results in better quality and quantity of employee output (i.e., employee engagement, productivity levels of organization, etc.) explains why there is a direct connection between the training and development of UAE citizens and the policies of Emiratization and the country's sustainable development strategy.

Generational Change and Workforce Diversity

The UAE labor market is defined by incredible diversity- both generationally and culturally. The labor force consists of Emirati and expatriates from different cultures and numerous different ages, from Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and now Generation Z. Each of these generational groupings has its own learning styles, motivational components and training needs and expectations.

Younger workers (especially Millennials and Generation Z) are active tech users with increased interest in technology-type employment and are particularly interested in advancement and working in settings that promote creativity and innovation. They desire experiences that provide flexibility and digital learning such as e-learning and gamified formats that foster interactivity and personalization. In contrast, older workers tend to desire stability and appreciation and have a desire to develop practical skills that they can use to be successful in their current jobs.

To maintain its competitive advantage, a firm must also develop the dynamic capabilities of its human resources (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997). Therefore, HRM must evolve training initiatives to accommodate both the generational expectations of learning preferences, including traditional methods, as well as perceived modern methods. A combination of traditional workshops, mentoring, and digital learning appeals to individual preferences and ultimately serves as a good means of motivating employees, as they feel valued and engaged.

Recognizing and addressing these differences amongst generations turns diversity from a challenge into an asset. "When employees view the training as personalized to meet their individual goals and needs, they are inherently more motivated, which leads to more

engagement in the training session or activity and intention to retain these skills to further job performance,” concluded Yee.

According to the literature, generational diversity is an important factor in developing training, motivating employees, and adopting technology-enhanced learning opportunities in the UAE. Because of this, it will be necessary for training programs to be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of people from multiple age groups and cultural backgrounds.

Financial Constraints and Efficiency Requirements

Even though the UAE government and larger organizations have been engaged in investing in workforce skills and development, many organizations—particularly smaller and medium-sized ones—continue to experience the effects of financial constraints, which inhibits their capability to deliver a comprehensive training experience. These constraints influence the prioritization of Human Resource departments to maximize their use of organizational capacity and control their costs—but that means motivating employees to maximize their experience and efforts based on the resources they have available to them.

At an abstract level, the “hard” side of HRM, as discussed by Gomez-Mejia, Balkin and Cardy (2007), is focused on the rational/universalist control of, and economic approach to the control of human resources. That means organizations must get the most value out of their limited budgets without creating a decrease in morale of the individuals providing the value. Employers can engage multiple motivational strategies, including recognition programs, bonus systems and promoting an internal labour market through career development schemes to keep their employees motivated in their roles, even with limited funding.

In these cases, technology-based solutions such as AI-based learning technologies and virtual training programs are fast becoming increasingly popular as a cost-savings strategy.

Financial constraints force organizations to turn to scalable, technology-driven, and cost-effective training solutions which create new possibilities for employees' motivation through the provision of flexible and personal learning pathways. This move towards digital learning ecosystems is positively impacting both organizational efficiency and employee engagement.

Future Practices in Training and Development

To achieve the UAE's vision by preparing and empowering the next generations for the future, many government and private sectors are encouraging and motivating their workforce to learn new skills and upgrade their employees through various techniques. Pushing new ideas and shifting strategies requires training to keep all workforces aligned. Motivation is the move that makes the person act (Burton, 2012), and what can make an employee willingly go to training and have the passion to learn more is the motivation and empowerment that the organization contributes to them. As the UAE government announces its agenda and future strategies, all organizations should follow. The challenge is how to make the workforce follow the new strategy with passion and ensure the plan thrives; here comes HR's role to motivate and adapt to all the changes.

As one of the major influences of the dynamic workflow in the UAE in the UAE Vision 2031, one of the important pillars is an integrated and technologically advanced infrastructure (‘We the UAE 2031’ vision, 2023). This indicates that any new cutting-edge technology, such as artificial intelligence, is welcomed in any shape or form. The AI tools are now used in training and developing employees across the UAE's sectors.

The Future Training and development in the UAE is increasingly moving towards technology-driven, personalized, and continuous learning approaches. Organizations are and will continue to adapt more AI-driven learning systems along with virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) simulations to offer practical, hands-on experience. Training will become highly customized, utilizing data analytics to build learning paths suited to each employee's abilities, linking them to the UAE Vision 2031 and the National Talent Development Strategy as part of one of the key influences on T&D. Moving to another influence, Generational Change and Workforce Diversity, younger employees prefer learning through on-the-job training and one-on-one mentoring. Meanwhile, distinct barriers and most significantly, each generation has communication issues and a lack of motivation or job insecurity (Lim, 2015). It was found that low motivation to learn is a major obstacle to cross-generational knowledge transfer (Lim, 2015), which indicates the importance of motivation.

The emerging themes in the current literature indicate that the future of training in the UAE will be based upon the personalization of training using artificial intelligence (AI), the establishment of continuous learning cultures within organizations, and the creation of motivational strategies to meet the diverse needs of the workforce.

The preceding contextual drivers (National Strategy, Generational Diversity, Financial Considerations) are described separately from the methodology used to explore these drivers, which is provided in the methodology section below.

The UAE has an expatriate-led workforce, with a smaller proportion of Emirati nationals, resulting in different motivational dynamics between employees. While expatriate employees tend to be motivated by career mobility and transferable skills for international employment, Emirati employees are subject to national workforce development policy such as Emiratization, which links commitment to training and development (T&D) to job security in the UAE labour market; therefore, the incentive to participate in T&D activities cannot be generalised across the workforce without regard for the differences in employment status and the national policy environment.

In light of Self-Determination Theory, the movement to Emiratization represents extrinsic motivation through its association with governmental policy and job security incentives; conversely, expatriates' personal pursuit of their career growth reflects intrinsic motivation in that it is motivated by their internal desire to learn and improve themselves. Therefore, this relationship provides a theoretical foundation to help explain why different groups within the UAE may react differently to the same training and development programs.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative research approach and structured survey instrument, this study explored the factors of employee motivation regarding training and development in organizations in the United Arab Emirates. The survey was designed to capture a representative sample of the UAE workforce by targeting employees of government, semi-government and private sector organizations throughout the UAE. The structured questionnaire included items measuring motivational factors (i.e., career development, incentives/recognition), perceptions of the relevance of training to the workplace, and attitudes toward modern training technologies such as AI enhanced learning, microlearning, and VR simulation.

RESULTS

A survey of individuals from several companies in the UAE was conducted to gain insight about employee perceptions of motivation and training. The results provide significant insights into what may instantiate employee participation in training and development initiatives. The results of the descriptive analysis provide a snapshot of how employees perceive their motivation and how they impact their willingness to participate in T&D activities.

The results indicated that every participant agreed; every participant stressed the important role motivation plays in their desire to be a part of training and development initiatives. This shows how much the success of training activities depends on the extent employee considers it important, supported by indepth involvement for their company. The fact all respondents agreed provides further support to the idea that motivation is a prerequisite for training engagement at UAE companies (all respondents were employees in UAE organisations).

As shown in Figure 1, the main motivator for employees to participate in training programs was perceived to be the opportunity for career development. This aligns with literature that indicates personal development focused programs are key for the retention of talent in high-demand careers. Incentives, professional credentials, and programs that offered tailored training to employees earned high ratings, which suggests that employees demonstrate more commitment to their jobs when recognition from their company matches their training. The results of this study support the general HRM literature that identifies career advancement and recognition as the primary motivators for employees to learn.

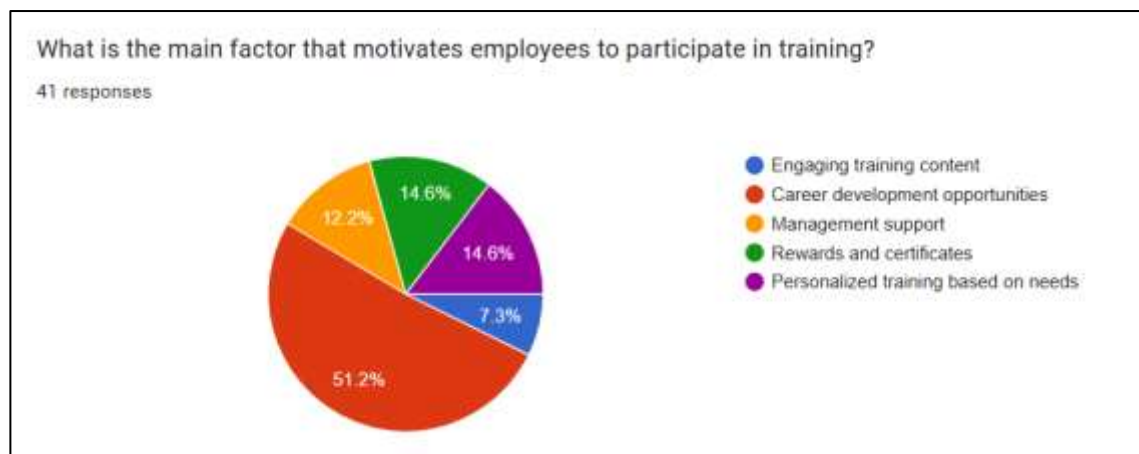


Figure 1: Main Motivational Drivers for Employee Training Participation

Acknowledgment from management as a fundamental motivator for engaging in training, as shown in Figure 2. In particular, younger employees who appreciate ongoing feedback often will have greater confidence and feel inclined to engage as a result of supportive leadership. The importance of management reinforcement and feedback mechanisms in increasing training participation rates for younger employees is demonstrated by the findings.



Figure 2: Impact of Management Recognition on Employee Training Motivation

Figure 3 demonstrates that companies in the UAE are increasingly employing and investing in more modern training strategies both within education and education and with the introduction of new technologies including microlearning, VR simulations, blended learning, as well as training and learning solutions that are driven by AI. This embrace of modern technologies is aligned with the UAE's strong commitment to innovation and does not run counter to their Vision 2031. Overall, the survey confirms that motivation is a key driver of training success and should be a consideration in the design of future T&D initiatives.

The findings indicate that motivated employees tend to be more receptive to technology based learning methods, which also align with UAE's National Digital Transformation Strategy.

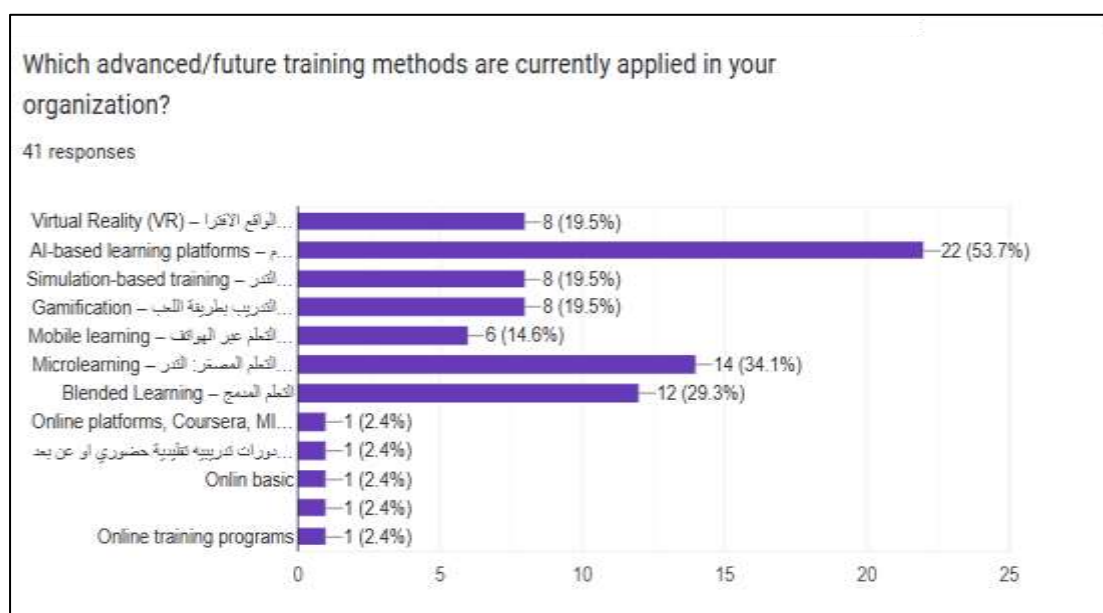


Figure 3: Implementation Levels of Advanced Training Methods in UAE Firms

Finally, the diverse ways of providing training show that the budget is available to train and develop employees to reach the government's goals, Training in the UAE has evolved and now

uses modern ways, which will be modified and evolved based on the needs and align with the global technology developments. The results of this study indicate an increase in the adoption by companies of flexible, scalable and cost-effective training models that meet both employee expectations as well as national strategic priorities.

Discussion

Employee motivation plays a major role in how organizations in the UAE design and deliver their training and development programs. When employees feel encouraged, supported, and appreciated, they naturally show more interest in learning and improving their skills. At the same time, training in the UAE is strongly influenced by national strategies, generational changes, financial limitations, and the country's shift toward advanced technologies.

The examples below show how motivation interacts with these influences in real UAE organizations, along with the challenges that appear during the training process.

Challenges Affecting Motivation and Training in UAE Organizations

When it comes to training and development in the UAE, one of the biggest obstacles is the high expense attached to current training instruments. New technologies such as VR simulations, AI learning tools, and the latest training programs are exiting the proverbial assembly line as the latest and greatest examples of what good is in development and training, but financial limitations from small businesses, for example, means these things are out of their budget.

Further, employee resistance to change, an age-old problem, continues to be a considerable obstacle in the UAE. This is related to the age and generational make-up of the UAE workforce, which is made up of four different generations. The traditionalists, older and long-tenured workers are more apt to stay with what they know, and avoid new and unproven training methods, such as digital education and training that employs gamification. Younger workers, in contrast, much prefer flexible systems and online training strategies.

This pushback is not helpful to incentivizing new training. As the survey in the appendix showed, advancements in their career is certainly another motivator, but a very brief amount of time could potentially lead to a lackluster training program, in which some already have expressed frustration. We have already seen that workforce members here desire individualized training.

Real UAE Examples Connecting Motivation and Training

Dubai Police

Dubai Police is famous for utilizing some of the latest techniques in training for officers. Training is done using a full virtual school, AI supported elements, and VR scenarios. These strategies align with the UAE national objective of high-tech and smart government systems. Motivation is derived from defined pathways, unique certificates for specialties, and recognition systems. Many officers participate actively because they understand how training connects to their personal growth which was clear from the survey responses.

Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior uses smart and mobile-based training, virtual reality (VR) simulations, and structured programs for leadership development. Employees have motivation to engage actively, which contributes to both performance and commitment through certificates, recognition, and defined opportunities for growth.

E& by Etisalat

Motivation at Etisalat is accomplished through engagement and competition. The e& Academy offers digital learning in the form of microlearning, badges, and leader boards, making training more appealing. This plan also parallels the trend of younger employees wanting a market-based training program as well as the shift by the UAE to modern digital learning platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The efficacy of training and development can be greatly improved if organizations can identify training offerings that are primarily aimed at employee career advancement and professional competence. Employees will appreciate the value of attending training. When attracting younger employees, organizations utilizing digital and interactive techniques such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence technologies and bite-size learning, must also offer choices for older employees who may be resistant to traditional learning to still take part. In addition, a personalized learning portfolio, recognition and supervisor support can help keep employee motivation while also elevating perceived job value when an employee attends training.

Limitations

The nature of the study being exploratory dictated that the results were represented using descriptive statistics. A convenience sampling approach, which is commonly used in exploratory Human Resource Management (HRM) research, was utilized, with a total of 41 respondents from government, semi-government, and private sector recognized organizations completing the survey. This may limit the generalizability of the findings across the broader UAE workforce.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, employee motivation is an important dimension that largely determines the extent to which training and development interventions will succeed in organizations in the UAE. Motivated employees are likely to seek development, engage with the training and even take it upon themselves to transfer new skills back to the workplace. The UAE national strategies, a multi-cultural workforce and rapid technology changes provide both opportunities and issues developing the most effective training initiatives.

The survey of the employees is compelling evidence that employees viewed career development as the most important factor in relation to motivation and in addition, learning tailored to their interests, recognition and reward. These employees' motivation factors truly contribute to the level of participation at work, commitment to the organization and performance at work. Real examples from leading organizations in the UAE such as Dubai Police, Etisalat and the Ministry of Interior show that motivated employees excel when the training and development connects with rewards and incentives and new technologies designed for learning.

On a challenging note, there are costs associated with advanced training development and there are employees, for some reason, resistant to new technologies.

Appendix

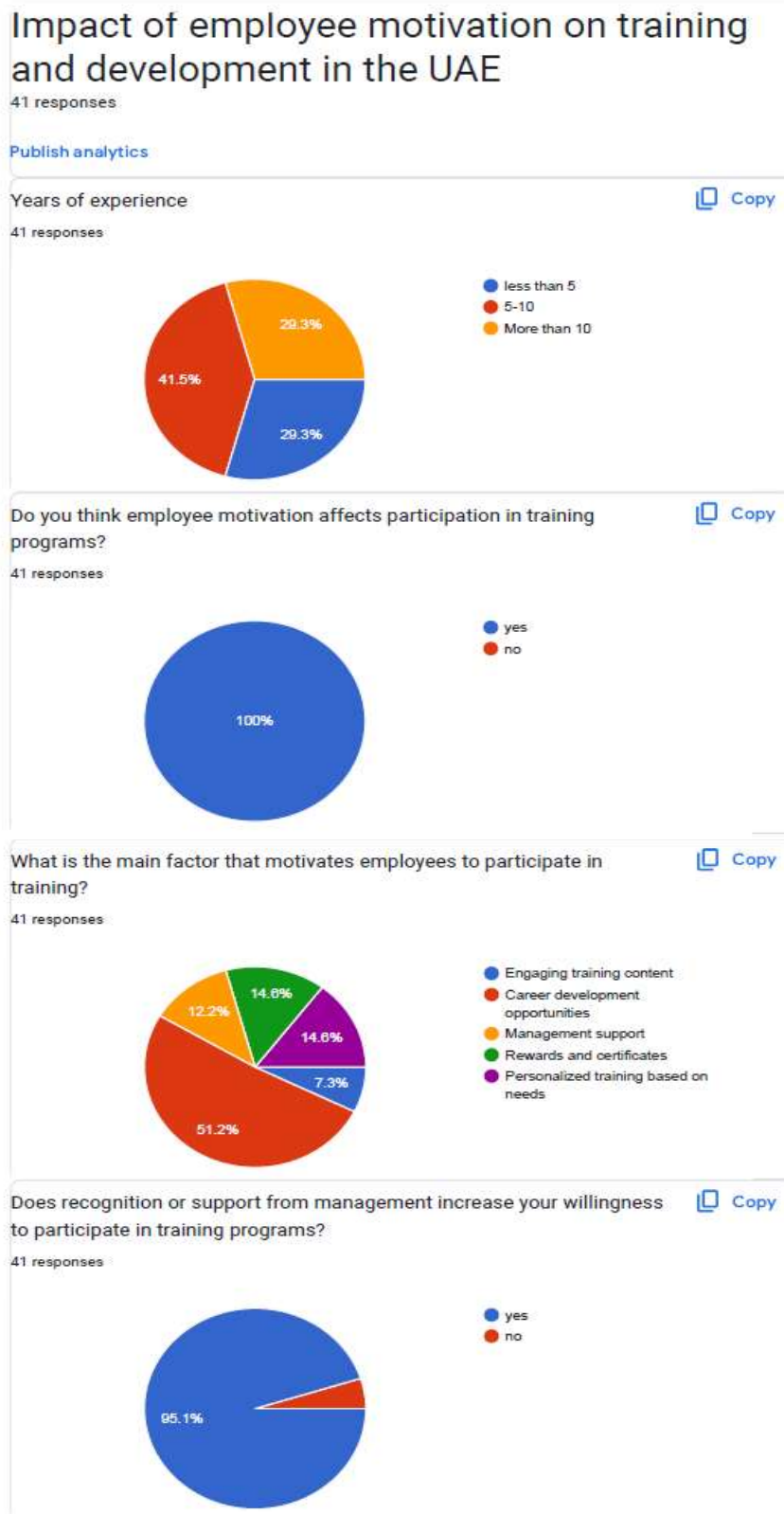
Appendix 1: Questionnaire

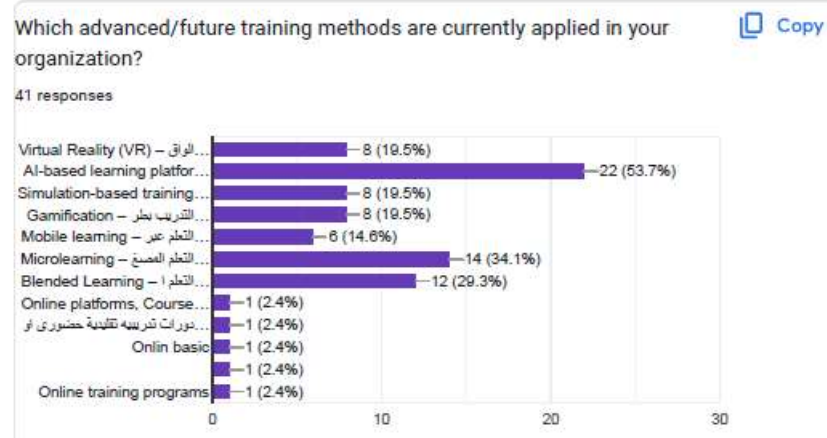
Impact of employee motivation on training and development in the UAE

1. Years of experience
 - Less than 5
 - 5-10
 - More than 10
2. Do you think employee motivation affects participation in training programs?
 - Yes
 - No
3. What is the main factor that motivates employees to participate in training?
 - Engaging training content
 - Career development opportunities
 - Management support
 - Rewards and certificates
 - Personalized training based on needs
 - Other:
4. Does recognition or support from management increase your willingness to participate in training programs?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Does providing rewards or certificates motivate you to engage more in training?
 - Yes
 - No
6. What motivational methods does your organization provide to encourage employees to participate in training programs?
 - Rewards or incentives
 - Certificates or recognition
 - Management support and follow-up
 - Career development opportunities
 - Flexible training schedules
 - Other:
7. Which advanced/future training methods are currently applied in your organization?
 - Virtual Reality (VR)

- AI-based learning platforms
- Simulation-based training
- Gamification
- Mobile learning
- Micro-learning
- Blended Learning
- Other:

Appendix 2: Questionnaire's Answers:





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