Strategic Management and Operational Efficiency in UAE Police: The Mediating Impact of Risk Management on Sustainability Goals

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the mediating role of Risk Management (RM) in the relationship between Strategic Management (SM) and Operational Efficiency (OE) for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the UAE Police. Despite increasing emphasis on sustainability and performance-driven governance in public sector institutions, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how strategic management translates into operational and sustainability outcomes through structured risk governance mechanisms. The primary objective of this research is to develop and empirically validate an integrated governance framework that explains how strategic management dimensions enhance operational efficiency and sustainability performance through risk management mediation. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted. Data were collected from 383 personnel across Abu Dhabi Police, Dubai Police, and Sharjah Police using proportionate stratified random sampling from a total population of 92,000 employees. The study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine direct and indirect relationships among Strategic Management dimensions, Risk Management, Operational Efficiency, and Sustainable Development Goals. Reliability and validity assessments confirmed the robustness of the measurement model. The findings reveal that Strategic Capability and Strategic Action significantly strengthen Risk Management, which in turn enhances Operational Efficiency. Operational Efficiency demonstrates a strong positive effect on Sustainable Development Goals, confirming that sustainability performance is operationally embedded rather than planning-driven. The mediation analysis further indicates that Risk Management functions as a critical transmission mechanism between strategy execution and operational performance. This study contributes to knowledge by advancing an execution-centered governance framework that integrates strategic capability, risk governance, and operational systems as drivers of sustainability outcomes in public policing institutions. The findings provide theoretical enrichment across RBV, dynamic capabilities, and public value theory, while offering practical guidance for risk-integrated strategic governance in public sector organizations.

Keywords: Risk Management, Strategic Management, Operational Efficiency, Sustainability Goals, UAE.

INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, shifting societal expectations, and increasing global uncertainties, public sector organizations are under immense pressure to enhance Operational Efficiency (OE) while simultaneously addressing Risk Management (RM) and sustainability challenges. Law enforcement agencies such as the UAE Police operate in environments that are particularly complex, requiring them to balance the core mission of ensuring public safety with broader societal responsibilities, including transparency, accountability, and environmental stewardship (Almazrouei and Yassin, 2020). However, despite the growing importance of these issues, the interplay between Strategic Management (SM), RM, and OE in the public sector remains underexplored, especially in the context of law enforcement. Figure 1 illustrates the rising trend in

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reported crimes across the UAE from 2020 until 2025, highlighting the urgency of strengthening operational capacity. In addition to the Ministry of Interior (MOI) statistics, annual police bulletins from individual emirates (e.g., Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah) were reviewed to triangulate the data and reduce single-source dependence. This strengthens the reliability of the trend and provides empirical justification for examining how SM and RM can enhance OE in the UAE Police..

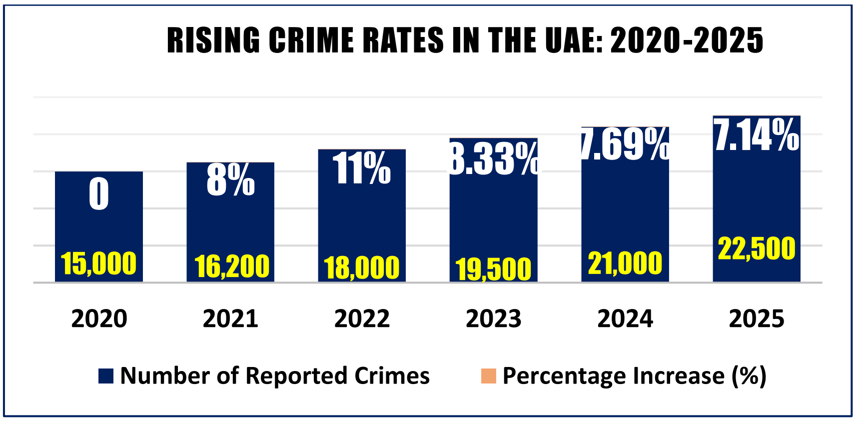

Figure 1.: Rising crime rates in the UAE (2020–2025)

Source: AlMazrouei and Yassin (2020); UAE Ministry of Interior (2024)

SM, widely recognized as a critical enabler of organizational success, provides a framework for setting long-term objectives, optimizing resource allocation, and aligning operations with broader goals (Grant, 2020). While significant research has been conducted on SM in the private sector, there is a dearth of studies examining its application in public sector organizations, which must navigate unique constraints such as limited resources, heightened public scrutiny, and the need to align operations with national development goals such as the UAE Vision 2030 (AlMazrouei et al., 2021). The lack of empirical evidence on how SM impacts OE in law enforcement settings hinders the development of evidence-based practices tailored to the needs of public sector organizations.

Moreover, the role of RM as a mediating factor in the relationship between SM and OE remains insufficiently studied. RM is critical for identifying, assessing, and mitigating uncertainties that could disrupt organizational goals (Lam, 2021). Public sector organizations, including the UAE Police, face a myriad of risks, ranging from operational threats such as cyberattacks and equipment failures to external pressures like regulatory changes and shifting public expectations (Juma and Perumal, 2022). Effective integration of RM into SM frameworks is essential to ensure that organizational strategies are resilient and adaptable. However, existing research often treats SM and RM as separate domains, overlooking their interconnectedness and the potential for RM to enhance the alignment of strategic objectives with operational outcomes (Aven, 2020).

For the UAE Police, addressing these challenges is particularly critical given the dynamic and high-risk environment in which they operate. The organization must navigate evolving threats such as advancements in criminal tactics and the increasing reliance on technology for policing while addressing societal demands for greater accountability, transparency, and inclusivity (Almazrouei and Yassin, 2020). These complexities necessitate a comprehensive framework that integrates SM with RM to maximize OE and sustainability. However, the absence of empirical studies focusing on this integration in law enforcement agencies creates a significant knowledge gap, limiting the ability of such organizations to adopt best practices tailored to their unique operational and societal contexts. In addition to OE, the UAE Police must also align their practices with broader sustainability objectives, as outlined in the UAE Vision 2030. Sustainability encompasses three interrelated dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. Environmental sustainability involves reducing the ecological impact of operations, such as transitioning to renewable energy and adopting green technologies (AlMazrouei et al., 2021). Social sustainability focuses on promoting community welfare, inclusivity, and public trust, which are critical for maintaining legitimacy and public confidence in law enforcement agencies (Epstein and Buhovac, 2020). Economic sustainability emphasizes the efficient use of resources to ensure long-term operational viability. However, achieving these Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) requires an integrated approach that aligns SM and RM with operational objectives, which is currently lacking in many public sector organizations (Alshurideh et al., 2023). However, the lack of research on how SM and RM interact to drive OE and sustainability in public sector organizations, particularly in law enforcement, limits the development of comprehensive frameworks that address the unique challenges faced by the UAE Police.

Theoretical Literature And Hypothesis Development

The Resource-RBV posits that an organization's ability to gain and sustain a competitive advantage hinge on its capacity to develop, deploy, and protect valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Barney, 1991). In the context of the UAE Police, this includes leveraging high-impact assets such as advanced technologies, specialized human capital, and institutional expertise to enhance OE while supporting national strategic initiatives such as UAE Vision 2030 (Grant, 2020). These capabilities enable the organization to remain agile and responsive in a rapidly evolving security environment. However, RBV also suggests that the presence of such resources is not inherently sufficient; rather, their strategic integration into operational processes and governance structures determines their actual value (Peteraf, 1993). SM, RM, OE and SDG are important internal factors for any organization as intangible resources that can differentiate them in the competitive pperformance.

SM in UAE Police

SM, as defined by Grant (2020), is the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating strategies that align an organization's internal capabilities with external opportunities to achieve long-term objectives. In the context of this study, SM represents the ability of the UAE Police to systematically plan, decide, and act to achieve their objectives while addressing dynamic challenges. It is assessed through strategic planning, capability, choice, and action, which together enable the organization to align operations with national SDG and improve law enforcement outcomes.SM in the public sector involves a structured approach to planning, decision-making, and resource allocation that aligns public organizations' objectives with societal needs and governmental priorities. Unlike the private sector, where the primary focus is on profitability and competitiveness, SM in public sector emphasizes accountability, transparency, and delivering value to citizens (AlMazrouei and Yassin, 2020; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2021). According to AlMazrouei et al. (2021), SM in public sector serves as a critical tool for navigating resource constraints, meeting stakeholder expectations, and addressing national and international development goals. For public sector organizations like the UAE Police, SM plays a vital role in balancing immediate operational priorities with long-term societal objectives, such as sustainability and public safety. The complexity of public sector environments, characterized by diverse stakeholders, regulatory frameworks, and dynamic challenges, necessitates the adoption of a comprehensive SM approach. As highlighted by Kamalrudin et al. (2024), this approach must integrate OE with broader goals, such as fostering community trust, enhancing security, and contributing to national strategies like the UAE Vision 2030.

OE in UAE Police

OE, as described by Epstein and Buhovac (2020), is the ability of an organization to maximize output while minimizing the use of resources and waste, reflecting the effective achievement of objectives. For the UAE Police, OE refers to optimizing resources, streamlining processes, and achieving measurable performance outcomes such as improved response times, higher public satisfaction, and reduced crime rates (AlMazrouei and Yassin, 2020). It highlights the organization's capacity to fulfill its public safety mission effectively while using resources sustainably. OE in the public sector is critical for ensuring that government agencies and institutions provide effective and high-quality services while optimizing resource utilization. Unlike private sector organizations, public entities such as the UAE Police must balance efficiency with public accountability, transparency, and regulatory compliance (AlMazrouei and Yassin, 2020). However, achieving OE in the public sector presents several challenges, including bureaucratic rigidity, resource constraints, technological limitations, and evolving stakeholder expectations (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2022).One major issue affecting OE in the public sector is bureaucratic inefficiency. Many government organizations operate within hierarchical structures that can slow down decision-making processes and create inefficiencies in service delivery (Christensen and Lægreid, 2021). Excessive layers of approval, rigid regulations, and a lack of operational flexibility hinder the ability of public institutions to respond promptly to emerging issues, including security threats, emergency responses, and administrative tasks (Moore, 2020). For the UAE Police, overcoming

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bureaucratic hurdles requires adopting more agile management practices and decentralizing decision-making processes to improve service responsiveness.

RM in UAE Police

RM, according to Aven (2020), refers to the systematic process of identifying, assessing, mitigating, and monitoring risks to ensure the resilience and adaptability of an organization. In this study, RM are viewed as a mediating variable, bridging SM and OE within the UAE Police. These practices include identifying potential risks, assessing their impact, mitigating uncertainties, and continuously monitoring them to ensure the effectiveness of strategies and the organization's operational stability. RM in the public sector is crucial for ensuring operational stability, public trust, and effective resource allocation. Public institutions, such as law enforcement agencies, must navigate complex and dynamic environments where uncertainties range from cybersecurity threats to financial constraints and shifting regulatory requirements. Effective RM ensure that these institutions remain resilient and capable of responding to emerging threats while maintaining high levels of service efficiency and accountability (Frigo and Anderson, 2020). One of the critical challenges in public sector RM is cybersecurity. With the increasing reliance on digital systems for governance, law enforcement, and public service delivery, cyber threats pose significant risks. Cyberattacks can compromise sensitive data, disrupt operations, and erode public trust. Studies highlight the importance of integrating advanced cybersecurity measures, including predictive analytics, threat detection algorithms, and encrypted communication networks, to mitigate such risks (Albastaki and Manap, 2024). For instance, the UAE Police have adopted AI-driven surveillance systems and blockchain-based data management tools to enhance security and minimize vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure (Hristov et al., 2024).

SDGs in UAE Police

SDGs, according to the United Nations (2019), refer to strategic objectives aimed at balancing economic development, social well-being, and environmental protection to ensure long-term global sustainability. In this study, SDG are examined as an outcome influenced by the integration of SM and RM within the UAE Police. Public sector institutions also contribute to sustainable urban development by incorporating environmentally responsible practices into their infrastructure planning. Implementing green building standards within government facilities, including police stations, reduces environmental impact and improves energy efficiency (Alzaabi et al., 2020). In UAE, solar-powered surveillance systems and energy-efficient public service buildings have been introduced to lower carbon footprints, supporting SDG such as the UAE's Net Zero 2050 Initiative (UAE Government Portal, 2022). Additionally, community engagement plays a key role in building sustainable communities. Law enforcement agencies actively foster social cohesion and enhance public trust by engaging with communities through neighborhood watch programs and digital crime-reporting platforms (AlYammahi and Robani, 2024). Awareness campaigns on sustainability-related issues, such as waste management and traffic safety, further contribute to creating environmentally conscious communities (AlMazrouei et al., 2021). In this study, four SDGs are considered especially relevant to the operational context of the UAE Police: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). These goals were selected because they strongly align with the operational mandates and public service objectives of modern policing institutions (AlMazrouei and Yassin, 2020; Kamalrudin et al., 2024).

Hypothesis development

Hypothesis development is the process of formulating a clear, testable, and research-based prediction about the relationship between variables.

The relationship between strategic management and risk management

SM and RM are closely interconnected, as both frameworks enable organizations to navigate uncertainties while maintaining long-term strategic objectives (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2022). SM provides structured planning and governance mechanisms, while RM identifies, assesses, and mitigates potential threats that could hinder organizational performance (Frigo and Anderson, 2020). Empirical studies highlight that the integration of RM

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within SM processes strengthens organizational resilience and adaptability (Lam, 2021). This interrelationship ensures that organizations can effectively allocate resources, enhance preparedness, and maintain strategic agility (Aven, 2020). Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: SM and RM are positively correlated in the UAE Police.

H1a: Strategic Planning and RM are positively correlated in the UAE Police.

H1b: Strategic Capability and RM are positively correlated in the UAE Police.

H1c: Strategic Choice and RM are positively correlated in the UAE Police.

H1d: Strategic Action and RM are positively correlated in the UAE Police..

The effect of SM on OE

SM significantly influences OE in public sector organizations by ensuring efficient resource allocation, streamlining decision-making, and fostering adaptability to emerging challenges (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2022). Empirical studies indicate that public sector organizations that adopt strategic frameworks experience enhanced service delivery, increased accountability, and improved decision-making processes (Frigo and Anderson, 2020). These elements contribute to an organization's ability to maintain operational resilience and meet evolving public safety demands. Therefore, this study hypothesizes the following:

H2: SM has a significant positive effect on OE in the UAE Police.

H2a: Strategic Planning has a significant positive effect on OE in the UAE Police.

H2b: Strategic Capability has a significant positive effect on OE in the UAE Police.

H2c: Strategic Choice has a significant positive effect on OE in the UAE Police.

H2d: Strategic Action has a significant positive effect on OE in the UAE Police..

The effect of RM on OE

RM is fundamental to enhancing OE, particularly in public sector organizations operating in high-risk and complex environments (Aven, 2020). Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) frameworks support the integration of Risk Assessment (RA), mitigation, and monitoring mechanisms into strategic planning, ensuring that organizations maintain operational continuity and resilience (Moore, 2020). Research indicates that organizations that embed RM into their operational frameworks are better equipped to manage uncertainties, enhance decision-making, and improve overall efficiency (Christensen and Lægreid, 2021). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: RM has a significant positive effect on OE in the UAE Police.

The effect of OE on SDGs

OE directly influences an organization's ability to achieve SDG by optimizing resources and reducing waste. The integration of advanced technologies, predictive analytics, and smart policing solutions in law enforcement agencies contributes to reducing energy consumption, improving crime prevention strategies, and fostering responsible governance (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2021). Furthermore, studies have shown that OE leads to improved sustainability outcomes by reducing environmental impact and enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement strategies (Frigo and Anderson, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: OE has a significant positive effect on SDG in the UAE Police.

RM as mediate SM and OE

The mediating role of RM has gained significant attention in recent organizational studies, particularly in dynamic and high-stakes environments such as policing. While SM provides the vision, resource allocation, and long-term planning necessary for institutional performance, the effectiveness of these strategies often depends on how well organizations can identify and mitigate risks that arise during implementation. Thus, RM is frequently positioned as the “bridge” that translates strategic intent into tangible operational outcomes.

In the context of the public sector, and more specifically the UAE Police, this relationship becomes critical. Strategic initiatives such as adopting artificial intelligence in predictive policing, integrating renewable energy into operations, or expanding community engagement programs face multiple risks ranging from budgetary constraints and technological disruptions to public resistance and cybersecurity threats. Without effective RM, these risks can undermine strategic initiatives and reduce OE.

Scholars argue that RM functions as an enabling mechanism that ensures strategies are not only well-formulated but also resilient and adaptable (Aven, 2020; Lam, 2021). By systematically identifying, assessing, and mitigating uncertainties, RM enhances the likelihood that strategic objectives will be realized in practice. For example, in law enforcement, risks such as inadequate training, political influence, or cyberattacks may derail operational reforms. Integrating RM into strategic frameworks allows police organizations to anticipate these threats, thereby safeguarding OE outcomes such as reduced response times, optimized resource allocation, and improved public trust (Juma and Perumal, 2022).

In addition, RM strengthens accountability and transparency two elements that are indispensable in public administration. When risks are addressed proactively, strategies can be implemented with greater efficiency and less disruption, enabling the organization to achieve higher levels of OE while aligning with broader SDGs. The mediating role of RM, therefore, is not merely about controlling negative outcomes but about ensuring that strategic efforts are robust enough to thrive under uncertainty.

Building on the theoretical underpinnings of the Resource-Based View (RBV), Institutional Theory, and Stakeholder Theory, RM can be conceptualized as the process that operationalizes strategic resources in a manner consistent with institutional legitimacy and stakeholder expectations. Previous empirical studies confirm that organizations that embed RM into their strategic frameworks are more likely to achieve efficiency gains and long-term sustainability (AlMazrouei and Yassin, 2020; Albastaki and Manap, 2024).Accordingly, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H5: RM mediates the relationship between SM and OE within the UAE Police.

METHODOLOGY

The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is grounded in the theoretical foundations of the Resource-RBV, Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, ERM Framework. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the framework combines the Balanced Scorecard’s accountability focus, ERM’s structured approach to uncertainty, and Moore’s emphasis on legitimacy and public value. In doing so, it extends existing models by explicitly theorizing the mediating role of RM and positioning SDG as the ultimate dependent outcome. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the research framework demonstrates how RM mediates SM that would affect directly on OE and indirectly benefits to SDG achievement. In this way, the proposed model contributes originality by explicitly linking strategic planning, risk management, operational efficiency, and sustainability in a single empirically testable framework designed for high-risk public institutions such as the UAE Police. This contribution goes beyond prior models by showing that efficiency, legitimacy, and resilience are interconnected dynamics, offering a comprehensive lens for examining how public sector organizations, particularly law enforcement agencies like the UAE Police, can optimize their strategies to achieve efficiency, resilience, and sustainability.

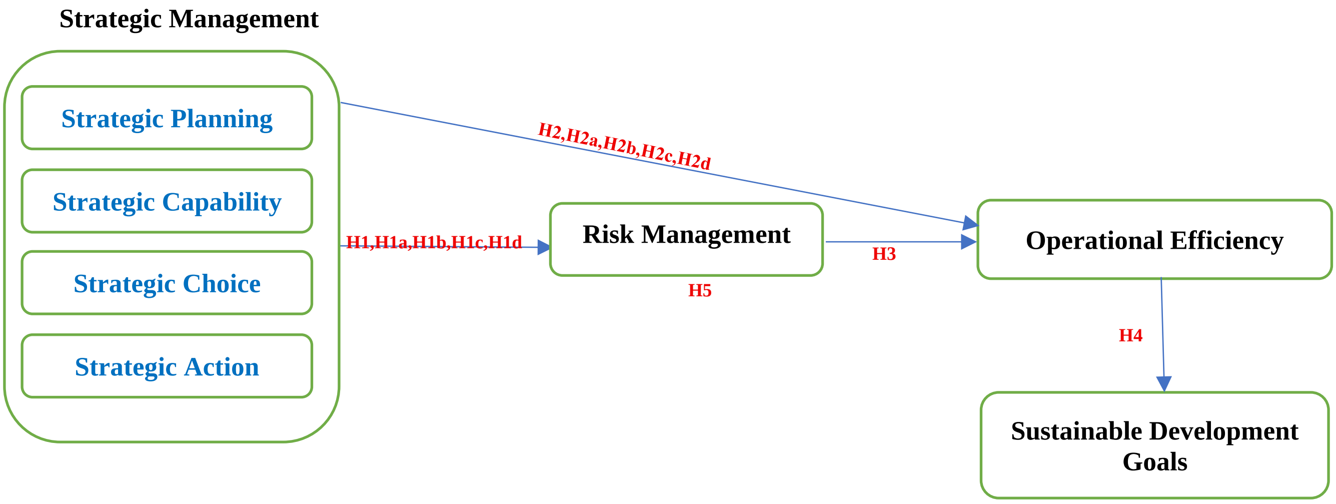

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Data collect

Abu Dhabi Police, Dubai Police, and Sharjah Police, consistent with the defined population and sampling frame. Out of these, 383 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 95.75%. Seventeen questionnaires (4.25%) were not returned, and notably, no incomplete responses were recorded. All returned questionnaires were fully completed and deemed usable for analysis, resulting in 383 valid responses for subsequent statistical procedures. Nonetheless, the minimum sample requirement for generalisation was met. A period of six (6) weeks was allocated to collect data. The results were downloaded from the online data collection platform and analyzed with Analysis of (Smart PLS). The collected data was originally entered into the online data collection platform based on the weights of the various responses.

Demographic analysis

Table 1 shows the respondents profile for those who participated in the research. As shown in the table, The sample consists of 53.3% male and 46.7% female respondents, indicating a relatively balanced gender representation within the participating police departments. The majority of respondents fall within the 25–34 years (37.6%) and 35–44 years (39.2%) age categories, collectively representing 76.8% of the sample. This suggests that the workforce is predominantly composed of mid-career professionals who possess sufficient experience while remaining actively engaged in operational and strategic responsibilities. Only 2.9% of respondents are within the 45–54 age bracket, indicating a comparatively smaller proportion of late-career personnel. The educational profile shows a well-qualified workforce. Diploma holders account for 27.2%, while Bachelor's (24%), Master's (22.7%), and PhD holders (26.1%) collectively represent a highly educated institutional environment. Notably, nearly half of the respondents hold postgraduate degrees (Master's and PhD), reflecting strong academic competency within the UAE Police. This level of educational attainment may positively influence the implementation of Strategic Management and Risk Management practices, as higher education is often associated with analytical capability and strategic awareness. Respondents demonstrate a balanced distribution of professional experience. The largest group (28.7%) has between 10–15 years of experience, followed by those with less than one year (25.1%). This indicates the presence of both seasoned officers and newly recruited personnel. The diversity in tenure enriches the dataset, as responses reflect both institutional memory and contemporary perspectives on strategic and operational practices. The highest proportion of respondents (36.8%) belong to the Risk Management department, followed by Strategic Planning (26.6%). This is particularly relevant to the research model, as RM serves as a mediating variable between SM and OE. The substantial representation from RM and Strategic Planning departments ensures that responses are informed by personnel directly involved in strategic and risk-related decision-making processes. Operations (14.1%), Information Technology (14.4%), and Administration/HR (8.1%) provide additional cross-functional insights, enhancing the multidimensional validity of the findings. The largest category of respondents comprises Department Heads (27.7%), followed by Strategic Analysts (23.2%) and Officers/Inspectors (20.6%). Directors and Senior Managers represent 13.6% of the sample. This distribution indicates a strong representation of

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managerial and decision-making roles, which is essential for evaluating constructs such as Strategic Management and Operational Efficiency.

The inclusion of both executive and operational-level personnel ensures that responses capture perspectives from multiple hierarchical levels. Respondents are relatively evenly distributed across the three emirates: Dubai (36.0%), Abu Dhabi (34.7%), and Sharjah (29.2%). This geographical balance enhances the representativeness of the sample and strengthens the generalizability of findings across major policing institutions within the UAE. Nearly half of the respondents (48.6%) reported receiving formal training in Strategic Management, while 36.3% received training in Strategic Planning. However, only 15.1% reported formal training related to SDGs.

Table 1 Profile of Respondents (N = 383)

Variable	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Gender	Male	204	53.3
	Female	179	46.7
Age	< 25	78	20.4
	25–34	144	37.6
	35–44	150	39.2
	45–54	11	2.9
Education	Diploma	104	27.2
	Bachelor's	92	24
	Master	87	22.7
	PhD	100	26.1
Experience (Years)	< 1	96	25.1
	1–5	87	22.7
	6–10	90	23.5
	10–15	110	28.7
Department	Operations	54	14.1
	Risk Management	141	36.8
	Strategic Planning	102	26.6
	Administration / HR	31	8.1
	Information Technology	55	14.4
Job Position	Officer / Inspector	79	20.6
	Department Head	106	27.7
	Director / Senior Manager	52	13.6
	Strategic Analyst	89	23.2
	Other	57	14.9
City	Abu Dhabi	133	34.7
	Dubai	138	36
	Sharjah	112	29.2
Formal Training Received	Strategic Management	186	48.6
	Strategic Planning	139	36.3
	Sustainability Development Goals	58	15.1

Measurement model evaluation

Reliability assessment is a fundamental step in evaluating the measurement model, as it determines the internal consistency of the constructs used in the study. Internal consistency reliability refers to the degree to which items measuring the same construct produce similar scores, thereby indicating that they consistently represent the

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underlying latent variable (Hair et al., 2022). In PLS-SEM, reliability is commonly assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR). While Cronbach's alpha assumes equal indicator loadings, Composite Reliability accounts for different outer loadings and is therefore considered a more precise measure in SEM-based studies (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Table 2, presents the reliability results for all constructs included in this study. The reliability results demonstrate that all constructs in the study exhibit excellent internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.927 to 0.954, substantially exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, thereby indicating strong internal reliability. Likewise, Composite Reliability values range from 0.928 to 0.955, further confirming the robustness and stability of the measurement model. The consistency between Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values across constructs suggests that the indicators are highly correlated and effectively capture their respective latent variables without substantial measurement error.

Table 2 Reliability test

	No. of Items	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Composite reliability**
OE	9	0.933	0.935
RM	10	0.939	0.941
SA	10	0.954	0.955
SCa	10	0.948	0.952
SCh	6	0.939	0.939
SDG	9	0.933	0.935
SP	4	0.927	0.928

SP: Strategic Planning; SCa: Strategic Capability; SCh: Strategic Choice; SA: Strategic Action; RM: Risk Management; OE: Operational Efficiency; SDG: Sustainable Development Goals; RA: Resource Allocation

Discriminant Validity

According to the following table 3. presents the latent variable correlations with the square roots of AVE reported on the diagonal. The diagonal values are as follows: Operational Efficiency (0.807), Risk Management (0.805), Strategic Action (0.842), Strategic Capability (0.828), Strategic Choice (0.875), Sustainable Development Goals (0.826), and Strategic Planning (0.906). In all cases, the diagonal value for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs in the corresponding row and column. For example, Strategic Planning reports a square root of AVE of 0.906, which is higher than its highest correlation with any other construct (0.780 with Strategic Capability). Similarly, Strategic Choice demonstrates a diagonal value of 0.875, exceeding its strongest inter-construct correlation (0.782 with Strategic Action). Sustainable Development Goals show a square root of AVE of 0.826, which is greater than its highest correlation (0.783 with Operational Efficiency). Although some constructs exhibit strong theoretical relationships such as Strategic Action and Risk Management (0.790) or Strategic Capability and Strategic Planning (0.780) these correlations remain below their respective AVE square roots, confirming empirical distinctiveness.

Table 3 Latent Variable Correlations (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

	OE	**RM**	**SA**	**SCa**	**SCh**	**SDG**	**SP**
OE	**0.807**						
RM	0.707	**0.805**					
SA	0.721	0.790	**0.842**				
SCa	0.728	0.736	0.752	**0.828**			
SCh	0.684	0.722	0.782	0.751	**0.875**		
SDG	0.783	0.761	0.715	0.704	0.660	**0.826**	
SP	0.653	0.710	0.740	0.780	0.717	0.643	**0.906**

Finally, the measurement model of this research is presented in Figure 3. Based on the above discussion, it can be confirmed that the measurement is valid for further analysis as suggested by Hair et al. (2020).

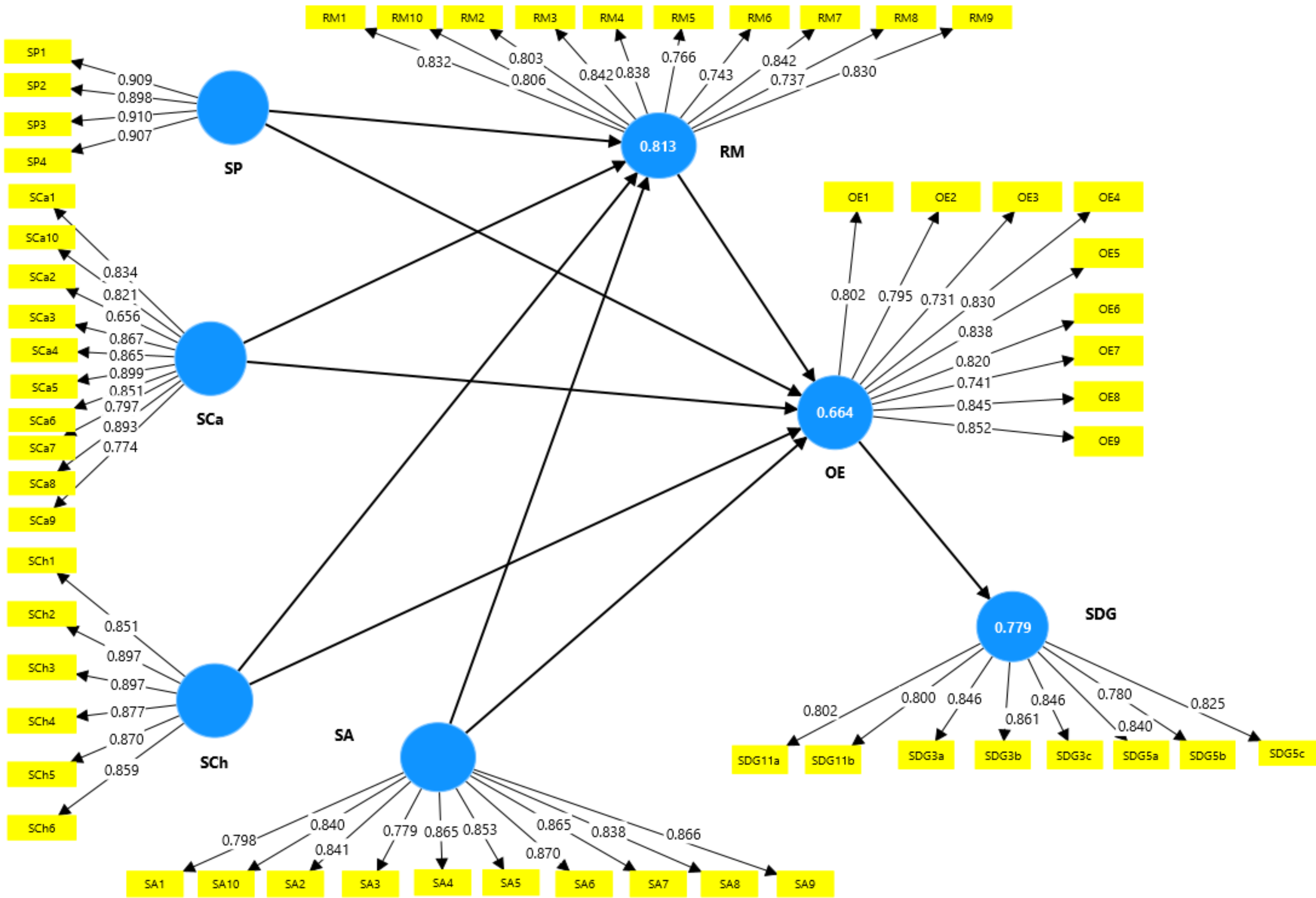

Figure 3. Evaluation of Measurement Model (final Model)

Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesis testing phase provides empirical validation of the proposed theoretical framework linking SM, RM, OE, and SDGs within the UAE Police. Using bootstrapping procedures in PLS-SEM, the significance and direction of structural relationships were assessed in line with predictive-oriented modeling principles (Hair et al., 2020).Testing hypotheses is the most important test in the current research since it shows whether or not the goals of the research were met. Since there is a mediation in the current research, the direct effect test, and the indirect effect test will be used to examine the hypotheses. Through the use of PLS-SEM, all of the research's hypotheses have been verified. The t-value is taken into account when evaluating the structural relationships between the variables that have been identified for this research. Hair et al. (2022) state that for a t-value to be deemed statistically significant, it must be 1.96 or above (one-tailed). The direct effect test, one sort of hypothesis testing, was employed in this research.

Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effect)

This section presents the result of hypotheses testing for direct effect. The direct effect test aims to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 4. and explained in the following conclusions.

Table 4 Summary of the Direct Effect

Hypotheses	**Beta**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**SD**	**T statistics**	**P values**	**Decision**
OE -> SDG	0.883	0.884	0.014	61.693	0.000	Supported
RM -> OE	0.730	0.735	0.076	9.559	0.000	Supported
SA -> OE	-0.058	-0.061	0.078	0.743	0.458	UnSupported
SA -> RM	0.600	0.602	0.062	9.618	0.000	Supported

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SCa -> OE	0.303	0.299	0.093	3.251	0.001	Supported
SCa -> RM	0.223	0.225	0.066	3.354	0.001	Supported
SCh -> OE	0.013	0.021	0.083	0.156	0.876	UnSupported
SCh -> RM	0.042	0.042	0.059	0.714	0.475	UnSupported
SP -> OE	-0.167	-0.172	0.078	2.150	0.032	Supported
SP -> RM	0.075	0.072	0.061	1.227	0.220	UnSupported

SP: Strategic Planning; SCa: Strategic Capability; SCh: Strategic Choice; SA: Strategic Action; RM: Risk Management; OE: Operational Efficiency; SDG: Sustainable Development Goals; RA: Resource Allocation

The path from OE to SDGs is positive and highly significant ($\beta = 0.883$, $t = 61.693$, $p < 0.001$). This coefficient is exceptionally strong, indicating that improvements in operational efficiency substantially enhance sustainability performance outcomes. The magnitude of this effect confirms that operational systems, performance routines, and service delivery mechanisms are central drivers of SDGs achievement. This finding is theoretically consistent with public value theory, which emphasizes that measurable societal outcomes are realized through effective operational execution rather than solely through strategic declarations (Moore, 2020). It also aligns with performance management perspectives that highlight the role of operational systems in translating strategy into tangible results (Kaplan and Norton, 2001).

RM exerts a strong positive effect on OE ($\beta = 0.730$, $t = 9.559$, $p < 0.001$). This relationship confirms that structured risk identification, mitigation, and monitoring processes enhance OE. The result supports the argument that risk governance functions as a strategic enabler of efficiency rather than merely a compliance mechanism (Arena et al., 2017; Frigo and Anderson, 2020). Organizations that systematically integrate risk management into decision-making processes appear better equipped to sustain operational stability and responsiveness.

Strategic Action (SA) demonstrates a strong and significant positive effect on Risk Management ($\beta = 0.600$, $t = 9.618$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the execution dimension of strategy significantly shapes risk governance practices. From a dynamic capabilities perspective, strategic action reflects the organization's ability to mobilize and deploy resources in response to environmental change, which inherently influences risk structures and control systems (Teece, 2018). However, SA does not significantly affect OE directly ($\beta = –0.058$, $t = 0.743$, $p = 0.458$), suggesting that its influence on operational outcomes may be indirect and mediated through RM.

Strategic Capability (SCa) positively influences both OE ($\beta = 0.303$, $t = 3.251$, $p = 0.001$) and RM ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 3.354$, $p = 0.001$). Although the magnitude of these effects is moderate, both relationships are statistically significant. This finding supports resource-based and capability-based perspectives, which argue that organizational competencies and knowledge structures underpin performance and governance mechanisms (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2018). Capabilities provide the foundational infrastructure that enables both OE and RM integration.

In contrast, Strategic Choice (SCh) does not demonstrate significant direct effects on either OE ($\beta = 0.013$, $p = 0.876$) or RM ($\beta = 0.042$, $p = 0.475$). These results suggest that formal decision-making orientations, while conceptually important, may not independently drive performance or risk outcomes unless translated into concrete actions. This finding reinforces the distinction between strategic intent and strategic execution emphasized in contemporary public sector strategy literature (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2021).

Strategic Planning (SP) presents a nuanced pattern. The path from SP to Operational Efficiency is negative but statistically significant ($\beta = –0.167$, $t = 2.150$, $p = 0.032$). Although significant, the negative coefficient suggests that formal planning processes may not automatically enhance operational efficiency and, in some contexts, may introduce procedural rigidity. This finding echoes critiques within public administration literature that excessive formalization can constrain adaptive performance (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2022). Conversely, the path from SP to RM is not significant ($\beta = 0.075$, $p = 0.220$), indicating that planning processes alone do not directly strengthen risk governance without complementary execution mechanisms.

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Hypothesis Testing (mediation effect)

In PLS-SEM, mediation is assessed by examining the significance of indirect effects through bootstrapping procedures (Hair et al., 2020). A mediation effect is supported when the indirect path coefficient is statistically significant, indicating that the predictor influences the outcome variable through the mediator.

The indirect effect of SA on OOE through RM is positive and highly significant ($\beta = 0.438$, $t = 6.817$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that SA enhances OE primarily through its influence on RM. Given that the direct effect of SA on OE was not significant in the structural model, this result suggests full mediation. In theoretical terms, this implies that strategic execution improves operational performance only when it is institutionalized through structured risk governance processes. This aligns with strategic risk management theory, which emphasizes the integration of risk processes into strategic execution as a key driver of organizational performance (Frigo and Anderson, 2020; Arena et al., 2017). It also supports dynamic capabilities theory, which argues that the deployment of strategic initiatives must be coordinated with governance mechanisms to yield measurable performance outcomes (Teece, 2018).

Similarly, Strategic Capability (SCa) demonstrates a significant indirect effect on OE through RM ($\beta = 0.163$, $t = 3.015$, $p = 0.003$). Although the magnitude of this effect is moderate, it confirms that organizational capabilities contribute to operational efficiency partly by strengthening risk governance systems. Capabilities such as knowledge management, institutional learning, and structured procedures enhance risk identification and mitigation, which in turn improves operational outcomes. This result is theoretically consistent with the resource-based view, which posits that organizational resources and capabilities generate performance advantages when embedded within effective governance systems (Barney, 1991).

In contrast, the indirect effect of Strategic Choice (SCh) on OE via RM is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.031$, $p = 0.479$). This suggests that formal strategic decision-making orientation does not meaningfully translate into operational efficiency through risk governance mechanisms. Similarly, the indirect effect of Strategic Planning (SP) on OE via RM is not significant ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.227$). These findings reinforce earlier results from the direct effects analysis, indicating that declarative planning and formal choice structures alone do not guarantee improvements in OE unless accompanied by execution-oriented and capability-driven processes.

Table 5 Mediation Testing (Indirect Effect)

Hypotheses	**Beta**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**SD**	**T statistics**	**P values**	**Decision**
SA -> RM -> OE	0.438	0.442	0.064	6.817	0.000	Supported
SCa -> RM -> OE	0.163	0.166	0.054	3.015	0.003	Supported
SCh -> RM -> OE	0.031	0.030	0.043	0.708	0.479	UnSupported
SP -> RM -> OE	0.055	0.052	0.045	1.208	0.227	UnSupported

SP: Strategic Planning; SCa: Strategic Capability; SCh: Strategic Choice; SA: Strategic Action; RM: Risk Management; OE: Operational Efficiency; SDG: Sustainable Development Goals; RA: Resource Allocation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings reveal a structurally coherent, execution-centered governance configuration in which risk and operational mechanisms play pivotal roles in translating strategic intent into sustainability outcomes. The structural model reveals a hierarchical and execution-driven configuration. OE serves as the primary conduit through which strategic and risk governance processes influence sustainability outcomes. RM emerges as a central mediating mechanism between strategic execution and OE. Strategic Action and Strategic Capability demonstrate significant roles in shaping governance and performance structures, while Strategic Choice and Strategic Planning exhibit limited or indirect influence.

These findings underscore the theoretical proposition that sustainable development outcomes in public sector organizations are predominantly driven by operational execution and risk governance integration rather than by planning or decision orientation alone. The statistical strength and theoretical coherence of the supported paths reinforce the robustness of the structural model and provide empirical validation for the integrated strategic governance framework proposed in this study.

Collectively, the mediation analysis reveals that RM acts as a critical transmission mechanism linking strategic execution and organizational capability to operational performance. However, it does not mediate the effects of strategic planning or strategic choice. This pattern highlights the structural importance of execution and capability dimensions within the integrated framework.

From a governance perspective, the results suggest that sustainability-oriented public sector organizations must institutionalize risk management as a central coordination mechanism to convert strategic initiatives into operational results. Strategic intent without risk-integrated execution appears insufficient to produce measurable performance improvements. Therefore, the empirical findings strengthen the argument that effective public value creation depends on the alignment of strategy, capability, and risk governance systems (Moore, 2020; Bryson, 2018). the mediation analysis confirms that the structural model is execution-driven, with Risk Management serving as a pivotal intermediary that channels strategic action and organizational capability into operational efficiency. This finding enhances the theoretical robustness of the proposed framework and provides practical insights for public sector leadership seeking to strengthen sustainability performance through integrated strategic governance.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the interrelationships among SM, RM, OE, and SDGs within the UAE Police, with the aim of developing and empirically validating an integrated governance framework. Drawing upon multiple theoretical perspectives including the Resource-Based View, dynamic capabilities theory, stakeholder theory, public value theory, institutional theory, and enterprise risk management the research proposed and tested a structural model that explains how strategy translates into sustainability performance in a public sector context.

The empirical findings reveal a clear and coherent governance pathway. Strategic Capability and Strategic Action emerged as the most influential strategic dimensions, significantly strengthening RM systems. RM, in turn, demonstrated a strong positive effect on OE, and OE emerged as the dominant predictor of SDGs achievement. This sequential structure confirms that sustainability performance is not directly produced by strategic declarations or planning frameworks alone; rather, it is mediated through capability-driven execution, risk-integrated governance, and efficient operational systems. Importantly, the results distinguish between formal strategic planning and strategic execution. While planning and strategic choice remain conceptually significant, they do not independently generate performance outcomes without institutional capability and implementation mechanisms. This finding reinforces the central argument of the study: effective governance in policing institutions is execution-centered rather than plan-centered.

The mediation analysis further strengthens this conclusion by demonstrating that RM serves as a critical integrative mechanism linking strategy to operational performance. Risk governance enhances institutional stability, coordination, and responsiveness, which subsequently improve operational systems and enable measurable progress toward sustainability objectives. OE therefore functions as the primary conduit through which strategic intent is transformed into tangible public value and SDG outcomes. Collectively, the findings advance an integrated governance logic:

Strategy → Capability and Action → Risk Governance → Operational Systems → Sustainability Outcomes.

This layered framework provides both theoretical clarity and practical direction. It illustrates that sustainable public sector performance depends on structured capability development, embedded risk governance, disciplined operational execution, and measurable performance alignment with national and global sustainability agendas.

In the context of the UAE Police, the study demonstrates that sustainability is operationally embedded rather than externally appended. Institutional performance improvements such as enhanced service delivery, equitable access, transparency, and responsible resource utilization are achieved through integrated systems that align strategy, risk management, and operational efficiency. this research contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence of how public sector institutions can achieve sustainable development outcomes through execution-centered governance. It offers a comprehensive and validated structural model that integrates strategic management, risk governance, and sustainability performance within a unified framework. By emphasizing capability-driven strategy, risk-informed decision-making, and operational excellence, the study provides a roadmap for enhancing institutional resilience, public value creation, and long-term sustainability in policing and broader public sector governance.

Practical and Managerial Implications

The findings of this study provide significant practical and managerial implications for leadership within the UAE Police and other public sector institutions operating in complex, risk-intensive environments. The structural model reveals that sustainability performance is achieved through an execution-centered governance framework in which strategic capability and strategic action strengthen risk management, risk governance enhances operational efficiency, and operational efficiency ultimately drives Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) achievement. This layered pathway offers a clear managerial roadmap for institutional reform and performance enhancement.

A primary practical implication concerns the prioritization of institutional capability development over excessive emphasis on formal planning structures. While strategic planning remains necessary for direction-setting, the findings indicate that capability-driven governance yields stronger performance outcomes. Senior leaders should therefore invest in strengthening organizational knowledge systems, structured procedures, training programs, adaptive leadership capacity, and digital infrastructure. Capability development initiatives such as continuous professional development, integrated data systems, and cross-functional coordination mechanisms serve as the foundational drivers of both risk governance and operational efficiency.

Second, the study highlights the need to reposition Risk Management as a strategic enabler rather than a compliance function. The strong positive relationship between Risk Management and Operational Efficiency suggests that risk systems should be embedded into strategic and operational decision-making processes. Practically, this requires integrating risk identification, assessment, and mitigation frameworks into budgeting cycles, operational planning, and performance dashboards. Risk governance units should collaborate closely with strategic management and operational departments to ensure that risk considerations shape real-time decision-making. This integrated approach enhances responsiveness, reduces operational disruptions, and supports continuity in high-uncertainty environments such as policing.

Third, the central role of Operational Efficiency in driving SDG achievement implies that sustainability goals must be operationally embedded rather than symbolically declared. Managers should translate sustainability objectives into measurable operational targets linked to key performance indicators. For example, response time metrics, resource utilization rates, digital service delivery indicators, and transparency benchmarks can be aligned with sustainability-related outcomes such as equitable access, institutional accountability, and public safety. This alignment ensures that sustainability becomes a daily operational practice rather than an external reporting requirement.

Limitations and Directions For Future Research

Despite the significant findings and contributions of this research, several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize the results and guide future inquiry.

First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, collecting data at a single point in time. While this approach is appropriate for examining structural relationships among constructs, it limits the ability to infer causal directionality with absolute certainty.

Second, the data were collected using self-reported survey instruments administered to employees within the UAE Police. Although measures were taken to ensure reliability and validity, self-reported data may be subject to common method bias, perceptual bias, and social desirability effects.

Third, the study focused exclusively on the UAE Police, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other public sector institutions or national contexts. The UAE operates within a unique governance framework characterized by strong centralized leadership, rapid digital transformation, and proactive sustainability policies. These contextual factors may influence the relationships observed in the structural model. Replication studies across other Emirates, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, or different public sector domains would enhance external validity and comparative insight.

Fourth, while the model integrates multiple constructs Strategic Management dimensions, Risk Management, Operational Efficiency, and SDGs it does not account for all potential moderating or contextual variables. Factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, political influence, technological maturity, or regulatory pressure may also shape governance-performance relationships. Including such moderating variables in future research could provide a more nuanced understanding of institutional dynamics.

Building upon the findings and limitations of this study, several directions for future research emerge that may further advance understanding of integrated governance, strategic management, risk systems, operational efficiency, and sustainability performance within public sector institutions.

First, future research should adopt longitudinal research designs to examine the dynamic evolution of governance-performance relationships over time. The current study utilized a cross-sectional approach, which limits the ability to observe institutional change processes. Longitudinal studies could investigate how capability development, risk governance maturity, digital transformation initiatives, and sustainability embedding evolve across reform cycles. Such designs would provide stronger causal inferences and allow scholars to assess whether improvements in Risk Management or Strategic Capability produce sustained performance gains.

Second, comparative studies across different Emirates, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, or international policing institutions would enhance generalizability and contextual insight. The UAE Police operate within a distinctive governance and digital transformation environment. Cross-country comparisons could reveal whether the execution-centered governance pathway identified in this study is context-specific or universally applicable across diverse institutional settings.

Third, future research could incorporate additional moderating and mediating variables to refine the structural model. Potential moderating variables may include leadership style (e.g., transformational or adaptive leadership), organizational culture, digital maturity, institutional autonomy, or regulatory pressure. Exploring such factors would deepen understanding of the conditions under which Strategic Management and Risk Management most effectively translate into Operational Efficiency and sustainability outcomes.

Fourth, scholars may investigate the role of digital transformation as a mediating or moderating mechanism. Given the increasing integration of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, real-time dashboards, and smart policing technologies, future models could explicitly examine how digital governance capabilities interact with risk management and operational systems to drive sustainability performance.

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