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Next-Gen Supply Chain Management Leaders: Redefining Resilience and Transformation in the UAE

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Abstract - **The U.S. China trade war, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Suez Canal blockage, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Red Sea shipping delays, cybercrime, and climate change showed that supply chain strategies that solely focus on cost optimization and manufacturing flexibility are insufficient. UAE Vision 2031 is to increase GDP from 1.49 trillion to 3 trillion, non-oil exports to 800 billion, international commerce to 4 trillion, and tourism to 450 billion. It plans to diversify into technology, banking, tourism, and renewable energy by 2031 to establish a knowledge-based, future-ready economy. To meet these objectives, supply chain operations must be resilient, integrated, and modern, and new leadership must be ready to spearhead this transition. This conference paper examines the leadership, strategic, and behavioral skills needed to transform the UAE and its supply chains. A qualitative exploratory theme synthesis of 2019–2025 Scopus and Web of Science indexed articles, UAE government policy reports, and industry white papers was done. Five fundamental leadership pillars digital intelligence, collaborative ecosystems, sustainability orientation, crisis forecasting, and learning agility enhance the ten performance criteria of the Integrated Supply Chain Performance Measurement (ISCPM) framework. Leadership-centered ISCPM integration into UAE Vision 2031 aligns academic models, policy aims, and industry practice, making the conference paper unique. The framework helps HR experts, lawmakers, schools, and universities create future-ready supply chain leadership programs.**

Keywords: **Supply Chain, Leadership, Resilience, Digital Transformation, UAE Vision 2031, Talent Development**

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, global supply chains have evolved from predictable and efficiency-focused to complex, unpredictable, and risk-driven. The trade war between the U.S. and China, the COVID-19 pandemic, the blockage of the Suez Canal, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, problems with maritime security in the Red Sea, cybercrime, and port closures caused by climate change have all had an impact on the supply chain. These problems have made lean supply chains and contract manufacturing less stable [1]. Global supply networks have become less reliable and competitive because of operational immobility, inventory imbalance, and rising logistics costs [2].

This situation has made companies all over the world set up complex, strong, and long-lasting supply chains. The UAE most urgently needs this. By 2031, the UAE wants its GDP to reach 3 trillion AED, its non-oil exports to reach 800 billion AED, and its international trade to reach 4 trillion AED. The UAE in 2031 has these goals. To reach these goals, build up modern logistics and supply chain management (SCM) systems. Certified people and experts will be able to make changes, use new technology, and ensure that SCMs follow ESG laws. It is important to look at supply chain management (SCM) leadership from all angles and to be open to new ideas [3].

This conference paper demonstrates that leadership development constitutes a strategic element of supply chain transformation and resilience, rather than merely a supportive function. The Integrated Supply Chain Performance Measurement (ISCPM) framework assesses performance based on ten criteria: Financial Health (FH), Collaboration (CL), Velocity (VC), Visibility (VS), Resilience (RE), Reliability (RL), Continuous Improvement (CI), Workplace Health (WPH), Sustainability (SS), and Service Excellence (SE) [4]. Emerging leadership skills should be Teaching these traits in leadership training will help the UAE's Vision 2031's four pillars: Forward Economy, Forward Ecosystem, Forward Diplomacy, and Forward Society. The research addresses a critical deficiency in both academia and practice by conceptualizing leadership as a quantitative performance enhancer [3].

This presentation at the conference suggests a complete SCM leadership framework that links supply chain performance data with leadership skills and the UAE Vision 2031 goals [3]. These goals will help you reach this goal: I) To find the leadership and strategic directions needed to create supply networks in the UAE that are flexible, strong, and long-lasting. II) Compare these skills to the 10 ISCPM performance criteria to see how they affect measurable results. III) Make sure that these traits fit with the four pillars of the UAE's Vision 2031 to help create supply chain leaders who are ready for the future.

The study addresses three principal research questions derived from these objectives: I) What leadership qualities are necessary

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for UAE supply chains to be resilient, flexible, and long-lasting? II) What impact do leadership traits have on the eleven ISCPM performance traits? III) How can these skills help UAE supply chain leadership pipelines move Vision 2031 forward?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Supply chain management (SCM) literature pays attention to reduction of cost, efficiency of operations, lean inventory management, etc. This concept has been seen as effective during a stable market economy. However, the world has seen disruption and structural fragilities that emerged during the 2019–2025 global shocks [5]. The series of disruptions has compelled a shift in the perception and its application from efficiency-centric to resilience-driven frameworks that value agility, flexibility, and risk management [6].

Recent studies have highlighted the critical need for leadership in the transformation of supply chain management, acknowledging that technological investments alone are insufficient to effect change without strong, visionary leadership (Alquraidi et al., 2024; Tantry, 2025). This analysis examines critical literary themes pertinent to next-generation supply chain management leadership, resilience, and transformation, emphasizing the UAE's Vision 2031 objectives [3].

This research is based on the notion that combining past results and finding gaps that need a new leadership model is the best way to go. Strong leadership is required in the face of global upheavals where the supply systems have been pushed to their breaking points during the last ten years. Suppliers began to relocate, and prices began to grow in the year 2019 as a result of the trade war that was taking place between the United States and China at that time, which led to a rise in tariffs. During COVID-19, irrespective of borders and geographies, significant industry went on shutdowns, manpower shortfalls, and restrictions in the borders [7].

According to the World Trade Organization, during 2021, COVID-19 affected 75% of enterprises worldwide. In 2021, the Suez Canal was blocked for a week, resulting in the disruption of 12% of global marine commerce [8,9]. In 2022, Russia and Ukraine tension caused supply chain disruptions in oil and food, especially grain. The supply chain network was severely disrupted during 2024 and 2025 due to cyberattacks, Red Sea attacks, and climate change-related droughts [10]. Leadership quality is a more reliable predictor of the resilience of a supply chain than technology investment, according to the findings of a number of studies. According to [11], strategic foresight, collaborative cultures, and decentralized decision-making all contribute to a quicker recovery from shocks than transactions and efficiency. Transactions and efficiency take between thirty and forty percent longer to recover from shocks than these other three factors. Resilience is dependent on both leadership and organization [12,13].

Besides disruption, several megatrends are transforming global supply chains. Digital transformation through AI, blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and predictive analytics enables the supply chain to be faster, more reliable, and easier to monitor. However, empirical research demonstrates that the adoption of technology demands commitment from senior management, digital proficiency, and cultural readiness. Sustainability is also a strategic need [14] states that CI, FH, and TPM all benefit from ESG goals, circular economy practices, and decarbonization targets. To develop smart logistics cities, regional industrial hubs, and new trade routes like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and the UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), we need leaders who can encourage collaboration, resilience, and ecosystems that cross national borders [15].

Despite tremendous budgets for logistics infrastructure, UAE supply chain operations have multiple challenges in organizing the end-to-end supply chain networks, such as unforeseen failures, inadequate equipment reliability, elevated operational expenses, diminished productivity, and low inventory turnover [3,16]. These problems have an effect on the UAE's Vision 2031.

This study employs the Integrated Supply Chain Performance Measurement (ISCPM) framework and its ten attributes originally proposed by [17] and looks at supply chain performance in ten areas: Financial Health (FH), Collaboration (CL), Velocity (VC), Visibility (VS), Resilience (RE), Reliability (RL), Continuous Improvement (CI), Sustainability (SS), Workplace Health (WPH), and Service Excellence. These are attributes that are important for planning, strategy, and operations [17].

The four pillars that make up UAE Vision 2031 are Forward Economy, which covers FH, RL, VC, CI, and SS; Forward Ecosystem, which covers VS, VC, RL, and CL; Forward Diplomacy, which covers RE, VS, and CL; and Forward Society. This mapping strategy relies on measurement in order to connect leadership qualities to national strategic objectives. According to the findings of this research, the 10 traits of the Information Systems and Crisis Prevention Management (ISCPM) are facilitated by five pillars of leadership: digital intelligence, collaborative ecosystems, sustainability orientation, crisis foresight, and learning agility. In addition, these pillars of leadership support the goals of Vision 2031. [3].

Despite the fact that individuals are becoming increasingly conscious of leadership in supply chain management (SCM), the research demonstrates that there are three significant issues. In the first place, the majority of conventional studies on leadership abilities do not use frameworks that are based on performance, such as ISCPM, which makes it hard to quantify them. Secondly, there are very few studies that establish a connection between the growth of leadership in supply chain management (SCM) and national strategic objectives, such as the UAE Vision 2031. Third, the effects of leadership behaviors on resilience, sustainability, and digital transformation are seldom examined in empirical research. [3,17].

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To address these issues, this study introduces the Resilient SCM Leadership Framework, which quantifies leadership as a supply chain performance factor. The research links five leadership pillars to the ten ISCPM qualities and four Vision 2031 pillars to demonstrate that leadership is a strategic talent needed to construct robust, long-lasting, and future-ready UAE supply chains [3].

III. METHODOLOGY

The conference paper employed inductive methodology for qualitative exploratory research. The study utilized only secondary data from 2019 to 2025 to describe supply networks post-pandemic and geopolitically evolving. This study gathered research articles from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), indexed peer-reviewed journals, UAE government policy reports and strategic plans, and McKinsey, BCG, PwC, and Deloitte white papers. High-quality literature on supply chain leadership, resilience, digital transformation, sustainability, and organizational change in the UAE and GCC were selected using purposive sampling. [18,19].

IV. FINDINGS

Five mutually dependent pillars of leadership were discovered during the theme synthesis of forty-seven research studies. These pillars are consistently responsible for the development of supply chains that are robust, sustainable, and digitally enabled. Although they are all distinct from one another, the following managerial talents, behavioral styles, and strategic abilities are all complementary to one another: digital intelligence, collaborative ecosystems, sustainability orientation, crisis forecasting, and learning agility. According to the findings, the four strategic pillars of the UAE Vision 2031 are supported by these five pillars, and these five pillars also contribute to the achievement of the 10 ISCPM attributes. [3].

Out of the 47 polls that were conducted, 39 of them listed digital intelligence as the talent that was highlighted most frequently. Leaders may make use of artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain technology, the Internet of Things (IoT),

digital twins, and predictive analytics to get a better understanding of what is happening in real time, automate corporate processes, and make choices based on factual information. [1,20].

In 36 research studies, collaborative ecosystem leadership was the second most essential aspect. It involves collaborating with individuals from many companies and departments, ensuring that supply chain objectives are in agreement, and promoting trust and psychological safety so that the exchange of information is made simpler. Procurement, logistics, manufacturing, and sales are all streamlined as a result of these leaders, which in turn enhances collaboration, employee wellness, and the quality of the services that are provided. Due to the fact that regional supply hubs such as the United Arab Emirates need ecosystems that comprise ports, free zones, customs, and regulatory agencies, this competence is very vital. Sustainability orientation was the third pillar of the 32 investigations that were conducted. It is a long-term strategy that incorporates environmental, social, and governance (ESG) concepts such as the decarbonization of the economy, the creation of a circular economy, and the use of ethical sourcing in choices on supply chain management [21]. By reducing the risks associated with regulation and reputation, leaders who were concerned with sustainability were able to bring about continuous improvement (CI) and financial health (FH) on an ongoing basis. The "Forward Economy" is described in the United Arab Emirates' Vision 2031 as an economy that is founded on environmentally friendly development and manufacturing that is both sustainable and environmentally responsible. [22].

The ability to predict crises is a crucial leadership talent that has not yet been completely developed, according to 28 research studies that have been conducted. It requires the identification of early warning indicators, the simulation of scenarios, the development of contingency plans that are based on risk assessment, and the facilitation of swift organizational reactions to disruptions [22]. Firms were able to prepare themselves for impending crises, establish protections, and provide responses in a timely manner thanks to the assistance of leaders who were able to anticipate these crises.

As a result, these firms were more financially stable, reliable, and resilient. Geopolitics has a significant impact on the logistical channels of the United Arab Emirates, which is why this capability is so very crucial [23]

It was discovered that learning agility assisted all of the other pillars after twenty-seven experiments were conducted. It is possible for leaders to quickly learn new abilities, get rid of out-of-date ones, and spread innovation across their own firms (Iyer & Rawool, 2024).

Continuous improvement (CI), worker productivity and happiness (WPH), and employee satisfaction (SE) may be improved when leaders cultivate cultures of continuous learning that motivate people to become more engaged, exchange information, and experiment with new approaches. It supports the "Forward Society" pillar of the UAE Vision 2031, which promotes the development of human capital and skills that will be beneficial in the future. [3, 24].

V. DISCUSSIONS

This research suggests realigning leadership capabilities to convert supply chains from efficiency-focused to resilient, sustainable, and technologically competent networks. Digital intelligence, collaborative ecosystems, sustainability, crisis prediction, and learning agility represent a change from transactional to dynamic, integrative, and future-oriented leadership.

Digital intelligence improved operational agility, network

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visibility, speed, and reliability best [24]. Collaboration and rapid learning are needed for system-wide change, not just technology adoption. Sustainability orientation improves CI, TPM, and FH and protects ESG initiatives from outside shocks using crisis forecasting. Successful companies in all 10 ISCPM categories generally excel in all five leadership areas. This supports the view that leadership is a systemic ability, not merely a collection of attributes. It emphasizes that leadership abilities strengthen the supply chain, not merely enable it. [3]

This study provides three theoretical advances. First, it makes leadership a strategic resource for supply chain performance evaluation rather than a cultural element. Second, it links the 10 ISCPM attributes to leadership pillars, showing leaders how to improve operational and strategic outcomes. Third, integrating these attributes into UAE Vision 2031's four pillars produces a unique integrative framework that encompasses leadership development in supply chain transformation. Current SCM literature doesn't do this. These contributions link leadership research, which emphasizes behavioral attributes, to supply chain performance research, which emphasizes process metrics without discussing leadership structures. [3,22].

The outcomes benefit supply chain companies, particularly maritime and logistics firms in the UAE. Human resources and talent development professionals may use the framework to construct leadership programs on digital intelligence, collaborative ecosystems, sustainability, crisis forecasting, and learning agility. Leadership pipelines should include digital literacy training, cross-functional team rotations, ESG project leadership, and scenario-based risk simulations. The findings reveal that supply chain executives must invest in AI, IoT, and blockchain and alter their organizations to enable adoption and cross-functional integration by digitally aware leaders. Leaders should encourage cooperation and create rules that make it easier to exchange data, brainstorm, and make choices from diverse locations. The paper emphasizes ISCPM-based performance thinking and Vision 2031 alignment in supply chain and logistics curricula, notably in the UAE. This will equip graduates with technical and strategic leadership capabilities for future supply chains. [23].

The paper recommends making supply chain leadership development a permanent element of the UAE's Vision 2031 agenda. National logistics talent efforts should include the five-pillar framework. Industry-academia leadership training collaboration and leadership competency audits in public procurement evaluations should also be encouraged. These efforts will build future-ready Emirati leaders who can compete in global logistics and maritime commerce [3].

VI. CONCLUSION

This research examines the growing capabilities and strategy frameworks needed for future supply chain management (SCM) professionals to be resilient and adaptable in line with UAE Vision 2031. Based on a thematic synthesis of 47 peer-reviewed studies and policy-industry sources, the Resilient SCM Leadership Framework combines five fundamental leadership pillars digital intelligence, collaborative ecosystems, sustainability orientation, crisis foresight, and learning agility—with the ten Integrated Supply Chain Performance Measurement (ISCPM) attributes and the four strategic pillars of UAE Vision. The findings reveal that these five leadership pillars are systemic, mutually reinforcing attributes that directly affect company performance. [3,23]

The study affects policy and practice. It advises that companies should include leadership development in their supply chain strategy by helping existing and future leaders become more digitally literate, aware of ESG problems, better at risk prediction, and better at working together. Supply chain courses must teach ISCPM-based performance thinking and leadership to prepare students for the future. The Vision 2031 implementation strategy should prioritize UAE supply chain leadership development. [3,22,23]

The research admits its limits despite its contributions. Thematic analysis uses secondary data and qualitative synthesis to provide depth but no statistical generalization. The research also examines the UAE, which may make it tougher to generalize to other cultures or institutions. Limitations enable research. Future study may empirically test the proposed paradigm by using primary data from UAE SCM professionals and multi-criteria decision-making methods like AHP and SEM to quantify the relative influence of each leadership pillar on ISCPM features. Cross-national comparative research might examine how context affects the framework's application [3,22]

This research shows that next-generation SCM executives drive supply chain change, not only human capital. UAE enterprises may establish robust, flexible, digitally smart, and sustainable supply chains by adding the five leadership pillars to the ISCPM model and aligning them with Vision 2031. Strong leadership is needed to make the UAE a global logistics and maritime hub that can compete and flourish in a complicated global economy [3].

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