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Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
DBA	Customer Experience Management (CXM): towards examining the linkages and impact on business performance	Mrs Sumarie Schreiner	Dr J. C. de Villiers
<p>Abstract: In the dynamic business landscape characterised by rapid economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and evolving consumer behaviours, Customer Experience Management (CXM)'s role as a key differentiator for sustainable competitive advantage and enhanced financial performance gained widespread recognition (Grønholdt et al., 2015; Klink et al., 2021; Holmlund et al., 2020; Homburg et al., 2017). Despite the acknowledged positive impact of CXM on differentiation and market performance, gaps in the operationalisation and measurement of CXM constructs persisted (Homburg et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This research aimed to enhance the CXM construct, deepening understanding of its effects on market and financial performance. Adopting an explanatory quantitative research design, the study surveyed over 174 senior and executive managers and CX practitioners from a broad spectrum of industries, drawn from the Customer Experience Professional Association (CXPA) and Qualtrics XM Institute panel. By applying Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), it examined essential CXM dimensions—Customer Understanding and Insight, Experience Design, and Performance Metrics & Measurement—to reveal complex relationships and latent variables within the CXM framework. The findings highlighted the collective role of Customer Data Collection (CDC) and Analysis (CDA) in driving CXM differentiation (DIF), indicating these processes alone do not guarantee competitive advantage. It also emphasised the importance of routine innovation in Customer Journey Touchpoints (CJTI) for enhancing CXM differentiation (DIF) and Financial Performance (FP). The indirect relationship between CXM-driven differentiation (DIF) and financial outcomes (FP) was mediated by market performance (MP). The introduction of two empirically validated CXM Maturity Diagnostic Instruments revealed that higher maturity levels in Customer Experience Design and related practices of the Mapping and Innovation of Customer Journey Touchpoints (CJTM and CJTI) significantly influenced market Differentiation (DIF) and Financial Performance (FP). The study advocated integrating CXM into broader business strategies, recommending the Balanced Scorecard framework and a CX-centric Strategy Map prioritising the Customer perspective, thus embedding CXM into daily management practices. Through this comprehensive exploration, the research underscored the intricate relationship between essential CXM dimensions and sustained business success, bridging the gap between theoretical insights and their practical applications.</p>			

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Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
DBA	Capital Structure Volatility During Financial Crisis: The Covid-19 Impact on Saudi Listed Companies	Mr Islam Mahmoud	Dr Robert Gharios
<p>Abstract: The corporate capital structure financing decision is a critical issue for firms in emerging economies. This issue has been widely studied to examine the impact of capital structure decisions on firm performance. Researchers observed varying results when they examined the impact of different pandemics or crises on capital structure of different firms. These variations are due to differing market conditions, sectors, and research models used. This study aimed to examine how the capital structure of listed companies in Saudi Arabia was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The three leverage ratios utilized in this research as measures of the capital structure are the total debt ratio, long-term debt ratio, and short-term debt ratio, in addition to firm-related factors which are size, tangibility, profitability, efficiency, and growth opportunity to examine the changes in leverage from before COVID-19 to during COVID-19 using panel data analysis. The findings indicated that the COVID-19 outbreak has significantly impacted the total debt, long-term debt, and short-term debt ratios of listed firms in Saudi Arabia, and that firm-related factors such as size, tangibility, profitability, and efficiency influenced the capital structure. For the total debt-to-assets ratio, significant results were found in the consumer discretionary, consumer staples, healthcare, industrial, material, and utility sectors. For long-term debt, significant results were found in the consumer discretionary, healthcare, industrial, material, and utility sectors. Additionally, significant results for short-term debt were observed in the consumer staples, healthcare, and consumer discretionary sectors. The results of this study are beneficial for listed companies and their management in identifying and responding to shocks arising from future pandemics and preventing financial risks.</p>			

Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
PhD	Effective Crisis Leadership Framework for the Public Sector: An Exploration of Crisis Leadership in Emerging Markets of Africa	Mrs Balogun Olabisi Fausat	Dr Vasilios Stouraitis
<p>Abstract: The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed method exploratory study was to identify why leadership effectiveness significantly drops in times of crisis, the relationship between leadership competencies and effective crisis management and what external factors affect crisis leadership competencies in times of crisis in public sectors of Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) in Africa. In this approach, a questionnaire was used to measure the relationship between the independent variables of Riggio and Newstead's (2023) key crisis leadership competencies and the dependent variable being effective crisis leadership. At the same time, the central phenomenon of effective crisis leadership was explored using qualitative method of semi structured interview with a subset of the participants. To this end, 174 participants filled the online questionnaire while 11 subset of the participants were interviewed.</p> <p>The findings validate the relevance of crisis leadership and reveal nine crisis leadership competencies that are essential for effective crisis management in the public sector. They are: strategic leadership capability; proactiveness; intelligence; communication; teamwork; sense making; decision-making; empathy and learning. This study recommends that public sector leaders are duly experienced and adequately trained before being assigned to a role. This study's findings advance the research in literature on the significance of effective crisis leadership in the public sector. Recommendations for future research includes increasing the population sample in order to broaden the concept on crisis leadership.</p>			

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Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
DBA	Supply Chain Resilience in the Face of COVID-19: Exploring Effective Strategies	Mr Adel Naiem Nagi Hanna	Dr. Robert Gharios
<p>Abstract: The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed method exploratory study was to identify why leadership effectiveness significantly drops in times of crisis, the relationship between leadership competencies and effective crisis management and what external factors affect crisis leadership competencies in times of crisis in public sectors of Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) in Africa. In this approach, a questionnaire was used to measure the relationship between the independent variables of Riggio and Newstead’s (2023) key crisis leadership competencies and the dependent variable being effective crisis leadership. At the same time, the central phenomenon of effective crisis leadership was explored using qualitative method of semi structured interview with a subset of the participants. To this end, 174 participants filled the online questionnaire while 11 subset of the participants were interviewed.</p> <p>The findings validate the relevance of crisis leadership and reveal nine crisis leadership competencies that are essential for effective crisis management in the public sector. They are: strategic leadership capability; proactiveness; intelligence; communication; teamwork; sense making; decision-making; empathy and learning. This study recommends that public sector leaders are duly experienced and adequately trained before being assigned to a role. This study’s findings advance the research in literature on the significance of effective crisis leadership in the public sector. Recommendations for future research includes increasing the population sample in order to broaden the concept on crisis leadership.</p>			
Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
DBA	Competition versus Collaboration: Developing a Hybridised Model for Growth Sustainability in the Nigerian Banking Industry	Mr Hassan Abdullahi	Dr Anju Mehta Verma
<p>Abstract: Technology has become more prevalent in our daily lives, and several adopted models and user engagement quirks have emerged. Despite these admirable achievements, there is a clear risk of capital importation in the future that would harm our capital market and economy as a local investment in FinTech remains glaringly inadequate to the foreign capital input, and the traditional banks are grasping the intense competition poised by the FinTech companies. A rigorous narrative literature review of the FinTech (Financial Services Technology) firms and the traditional banks in Nigeria, concerning competition versus collaboration between these two players in the financial sector of the country, and proposed a competitive-collaborative hybridised model for growth and sustainability between them in the face of the disruptive technology. Several related works were reviewed to identify gaps in knowledge, and to define the proposed model. to explain the underlying significance of combining competition and collaboration in the Nigerian banking sector to sustain growth. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and PESTLE analysis of both players were examined and incorporated in the development of the competitive-collaborative hybridised model, and the performance metrics for the model is also outlined. The developed model allows a loosely connected network of businesses and other organizations that grow their capabilities around a common set of technologies, information, or skills and collaborate and compete to create new goods and services is an ecosystem collaborative business model. The developed hybridized competitive-collaborative business model (CCBM) is a shared enterprise, serving one another, assisting one another in creating value, committed to one another, and pursuing jointly developed objectives and goals. The developed hybridized model is recommended for financial institutions for growth and development.</p>			

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Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
DBA	Open Banking Initiative in India – Can FinTechs Enhance Financial Inclusion and Improve Profitability of Urban Cooperative Banks	Mr Mahesh Ramamurthy	Dr. Ashish P. Thatte
<p>Abstract: Open Banking is a transformative concept in the banking industry, involving the integration of modern technologies through collaborations with FinTech firms to expand and enhance banking services. Supported by global banking regulators, this initiative aims to deliver superior products and services to customers while recognizing them as the true proprietors of their banking data. This paradigm shift enables customers to authorize third-party FinTech organizations to access their data, requiring banks to comply with such requests. Historically, banks have maintained exclusive control over customer data, which conferred a default advantage in customer ownership. Consequently, the banking sector has shown a measured response to the Open Banking initiative. This research investigates the range of popular products and services offered by FinTech firms and their benefits to bank customers. It also examines the perspectives of bankers and the potential advantages Open Banking could bring to the banking sector. The study focuses on Scheduled Urban Cooperative Banks in India, utilizing an exploratory research design with primary data collected through a customized questionnaire. Analytical methods included bivariate and multivariable inferential statistics, along with content analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses. The results indicate that Open Banking can significantly promote financial inclusion and enhance the profitability of these banks.</p>			

Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
PhD	TRANSFORMATION TO E-LEADERSHIP: REDEFINING THE SKILLSET AND TRANSITIONAL PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATION TO E-LEADERS WITHIN VIRTUAL WORKPLACES IN LEBANON	Mrs Sabrine El Bitar	Dr. Elizabeth Soliday-Nau; Dr. Gábor András
<p>Abstract: This research aims to investigate the transitional practices, challenges, and skills of Lebanese leaders transitioning to e-leadership within SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study concentrates on recognizing challenges, strategies, necessary skills, and the transitional practices of the shift toward e-leadership. It aims to contribute to the academic discourse on virtual work and digital transformation among Lebanese Leaders who, due to COVID-19, were compelled to shift to the virtual environment. This study provides a theoretical and practical model attempting to give a practical guide describing the best practices that could facilitate a smooth transition towards e-leadership with a focus on both task-oriented and behavioral-oriented skills. A qualitative methodology was used, involving a literature review and semi-structured interviews with senior managers in SMEs. Whereby a thorough examination of the existing literature and theories that tackle the transitional practices, challenges, skills, and existing theories at a global level were performed, Ddata were gathered through in-depth and semi-structured interviews with Lebanese executives who had to adapt to virtual workspaces. To provide a diverse mix of experiences and viewpoints, participants were chosen by purposeful sampling procedure. The participants occupied senior managerial positions among several small to medium-sized services in Lebanon. Findings indicate that successful e-leadership requires advanced communication skills, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and digital proficiency. This study provides models for e-leadership transition, highlighting necessary skills for overcoming challenges and leveraging digital technologies for remote work.</p>			

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Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
PhD	Deciphering Resource Dependence Management Dynamics in Nascent Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Evidence from Tanzania	Mr Mutaju Marobhe	Dr Robert Goedegebuure

Abstract: This study addresses the problem of resource dependence in nascent entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE), mainly focusing on its drivers and magnitude of use of specific strategies to overcome the predicament. The emphasis in the extant EE literature is mainly on conceptualizing the interactions between different EE factors to create resources. This is the first study in the field of EE to investigate how different EE factors affect the ability of EEs to acquire resources and their resilience, as well as how they can make EEs more or less dependent on resources. To fill in that gap and explore the problem, the theory of resource dependence in nascent EEs (RDT) and the concepts of resource-based view theory (RBV) were used. A sequential explanatory mixed method design was employed; in the first phase, surveys with EE actors across 159 Tanzanian towns were conducted, using structural equation modelling (SEM) for analysis. The second phase was qualitative; it involved conducting interviews with EE actors to explain the significance of quantitative results. Thematic analysis was applied to develop codes and themes from the interview transcripts. The findings indicate that EE size is negatively associated with resource dependence, and small EEs, i.e., rural ones, have lower resource creation abilities, rendering them dependent on mature EEs. Both resource dependence management strategies, i.e., buffering and bridging, enhance EEs' resource acquisition capability. However, the latter increases resource dependence. Conversely, the presence of high collaborative values among EEs' actors exacerbates EEs' resource dependence. The results further suggest that EE size and collaborative values promote both buffering and reducing bridging magnitude. The findings also suggest that resource acquisition capability has a positive influence on EE resilience. This study enriches and complements the main argument of the RDT by confirming the conceptualized multifaceted relationships relating to the resource dependence phenomenon. It offers themes for further refining the conceptualizations of the Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) by providing detailed explanations of the intertwined relationship between resource dependence and EE factors.

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DBA	The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Culture and Performance	Mr Elie El Khoury	Dr. Abir El Saadi
<p>Abstract: This research study investigates the profound influence of transformational leadership on organizational culture and performance across diverse industries. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with top management and directors (n=8) and quantitative data from surveys (n=100) comprising 15 closed-ended questions on a 5-point Likert scale. The research identifies critical dimensions of transformational leadership crucial for shaping positive organizational culture and enhancing performance outcomes. Based on the analyses, key findings emerged from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative themes included emphasis on trust, inspiration, and collaboration; adaptation to diverse contexts; alignment with organizational vision; continuous self-improvement; and focus on stakeholder satisfaction. Quantitative results revealed that transformational leadership moderately affects organizational culture (R=0.395, R²=0.156), strongly influences organizational performance (R=0.758, R²=0.574), and has a moderate impact on job satisfaction (R=0.531, R²=0.282). These findings underscore the need for nuanced comprehension of transformational leadership practices across contexts. This study advances theoretical understanding and provides actionable insights for cultivating high-performance environments, with its significance lying in guiding leadership development and understanding the interplay between leadership, culture, and performance. While acknowledging limitations, such as the use of self-report surveys and the need for industry-specific replication studies, the findings are interpreted with balanced perspectives. The original contribution of this research is evident in its identification of specific dimensions of transformational leadership that are critical for achieving desirable organizational outcomes.</p>			

Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
PhD	The impact of Digital Transformation on Security Operations in the financial sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain	Mr Alaa AlBahrani	Dr. Elizabeth Soliday-Nauai
<p>Abstract: During the last years there are significant changes and difficulties faced by security operations in Bahrain's financial sector as a result of digital transformation. This research focuses on the adaptation of information security managers to technological advancements, such as internet banking, mobile payments. The rapid integration of digital technology after the COVID-19 pandemic was examined, with a specific focus on the banking industry's susceptibility to cyber risks and the significance of protecting confidential financial data. The purpose of the study was to provide information security managers, banking executives, and stakeholders with knowledge and resources needed to improve security operations in the digital age. The objective was to uphold client trust and enhance the ability of financial institutions to withstand attacks from hackers. For this aim, both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as surveys and individual interviews with prominent figures in the industry, were applied. Data were collected between November 2023 and January 2024. Descriptive and bivariate inferential statistics and thematic analysis were conducted to analyze the obtained quantitative and qualitative data, respectively.</p> <p>According to the results of the study, digital banking improves both customer satisfaction and operational effectiveness, but also brings about new vulnerabilities in terms of security. In addition, it was discussed the rate at which digital transformation is taking place in Bahrain's financial industry, the variety of digital projects being executed, and their impact on security operations.</p> <p>The dissertation enhances our understanding of the intricate relationship between digital transformation and security operations in the banking industry. This dissertation examines significant trends and issues, providing</p>			

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strategic insights and best practices for financial institutions to improve their security measures in response to digital innovations. The study highlights the significance of adopting a well-planned strategy, allocating resources to talent development, and fostering partnerships with fintech startups in order to effectively navigate the digital transformation landscape.that are critical for achieving desirable organizational outcomes.

Degree	Title	Author	Dissertation Supervisor
PhD	POST-PANDEMIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A Proposed Guide for SMEs on Maintaining Employee Loyalty and Performance During Crisis	Mrs Nour El Akkad	Dr. Robert Gharios

Abstract: The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the relation between efficient HRM practices that enterprises apply, especially during crisis, and employee loyalty and productivity, and to understand their impact on the overall performance of the enterprise. As a result, the study focuses on Covid-19 as an example of a crisis that compromised HRM and emphasized its importance for the survival of enterprises. Because SMEs have a crucial role in supporting economies, especially in developing countries, the results obtained from this study are used to provide them with a set of recommendations that are meant to help them avoid high employee turnover and lower productivity as well as to sustain their performance during crisis. Consequently, the importance of this thesis lies in the fact that, by helping SMEs, it could also help in maintaining economic stability during crisis, especially for less developed countries. The thesis is based on the exploratory qualitative research method since it falls under the social sciences category and it also adopts an inductive approach. Data was collected from three different SMEs in Cairo, Egypt and analyzed using the relational content analysis method. The data collection instruments were questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The key research questions addressed in this thesis are: 1) How did specific enterprises deploy HRM to survive the pandemic? 2) How did this affect the loyalty of employees? and 3) How did this reflect on organizational performance? According to the findings of the study, when the enterprise adopts HRM practices that are meant to support employees and prioritize their needs, especially at times of crisis and uncertainty, it leads employees to become more loyal to the enterprise and it improves their productivity. This, in turn, reflects positively on turnover rates and the overall performance of the enterprise. The research limitations include the few numbers of SMEs fitting the research criteria as well as the willingness of upper management to participate in the research and share specific data and information.