

## IMPACT OF COMPENSATION & BENEFITS AND TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT ON INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The universities and higher educational institutions of UAE were striving their level best to achieve institutional excellence. Considering the strive for innovation and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, this study aimed to identify the mediating role of institutional innovation between compensation and benefits, training and development and institutional excellence in UAE higher education institutions.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** For the said purpose the data has been collected using structured questionnaires through simple random sampling. After ensuring the reliability and validity of the instrument, structural equation modelling has been conducted to test the framework developed in the study.

**Findings/Results:** The findings revealed that institutional innovation plays a significant mediating role and the two independent variables have also been found to have a significant impact over institutional excellence.

**Originality/Value:** This research provides significant perspectives for decision-makers as well as policymakers in universities and higher educational institutions, in addition to academics who specialize in institutional excellence and their impact on universities and higher educational institutions in the United Arab Emirates and other neighbouring nations at large.

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

**Keywords:** Institutional Excellence, Compensation and Benefits, Training and Development, Institutional Innovation.

## 1. Introduction

Institutional excellence was a process of assigning and self-evaluation to improve the effectiveness of the institutions, its position in the market, and increase the flexibility of work in it; it was a qualitative process that includes the involvement of all employees in all departments of the institutions to work collaboratively through understanding all activities to remove error and improve the process towards achieving work excellence (AlHalaseh & Alrawadyeh, 2022).

Institutional excellence was gaining competitive advantage. Competitive advantage can be achieved through the services being offered to the students, faculty, and other staff members (Mohammed & Faisal, 2022). For educational institutions, faculty played a key role in achieving excellence. HRM practices had a significant role in hiring, retaining and keeping the faculty motivated (Alserhan & Shbail, 2020; Walid et al., 2023). HRM practices were a set of distinct but interconnected behaviours, functions, and processes aimed at attracting, developing, and retaining employees for achieving excellence (Mohiuddin et al., 2022).

Although the idea has gained widespread acceptance as a new management strategy, it is still not clearly defined because there are many different ways it may be used (Mohammad et al., 2021; Azegele et al., 2021). HRM activities should be more focused and goal-oriented, rather than wide techniques for growing and strengthening their human potential (Arbab & Mahdi, 2018; Azegele et al., 2021). A variety of improved techniques, such as stringent selection processes and monetary and non-monetary incentives, may aid in improving employee performance (Nguyen, 2016). Training and development and compensation and benefits may have a positive impact on institutional excellence (Amin et al., 2014). Given that the study was focused on employee behaviour outcomes such as innovation and how the two core practices of HRM, which were compensation and benefits along with training and development, may play a crucial role in explaining work practices which assist institutional excellence (Azegele et al., 2021).

The two research practices were chosen based on their prevalence, relevance, and measurability in the literature reviewed (Mohammad et al., 2021). The critical role of compensation and benefits along with training and development in driving institutional excellence cannot be ignored. If implemented effectively, the two HR practices could have a significant impact on overall institutional excellence and success (Barakat & Ghani, 2021). Moreover, training and development prioritize skill development of the faculty and provide opportunities for continuous learning and training. When employees improve their performance because of the training and their robust performance management systems, it helps in rewarding the right candidates and leads to institutional excellence (Allam & Malik, 2020). Hence it can be claimed that training and development along with compensation and benefits have a profound impact on institutional excellence.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Institutional Excellence

Many researchers have dealt with the concept of institutional excellence from ancient to modern so that it is possible to notice the beginning of change from these definitions, however, institutional excellence has remained under researched in the context of Arab world, now institutional excellence is defined as the institution's endeavour to exploit critical opportunities that are preceded by effective strategic planning and commitment to the realization of a common vision prevailed by clarity of purpose, adequacy of resources and keenness on excellence (Pinar & Girard, 2008). The concept of institutional excellence appeared at the top of the developments sent by the knowledge revolution as a concept that highlights the main feature that must be characterized, just as excellence is a holistic and comprehensive concept that is indivisible, meaning that it is not possible to imagine the excellence of a distinct institution in a particular field without the other (Aljamal, 2018).

Institutional excellence has become the mouthpiece of many modern universities in UAE in order to guarantee students excellence and maintain the competitiveness that keeps them in the ranks of their competitor institutions (Asif, Asad, Bhutta, & Khan, 2021; Qalati, Ostic, Sulaiman, Gopang, & Khan, Social media and SMEs' performance in developing countries: Effects of technological-organizational-environmental factors on the adoption of social media, 2022). This interest was not born of the moment, but rather began with the industrial revolution in the United States of America during the First World War when factories were operating at full capacity to meet the states' needs for supplies and equipment (Karam & Kitana, 2020; Qalati S. , Qureshi, Ostic, & Sulaiman, 2022). Interest in quality and continuous improvement has been included, and many models of quality and continuous improvement have emerged, such as the Japanese excellence model, the seven quality tools, and others that seek to develop profit-making, governmental, or other institution (El Hawi & Alzyadat., 2019; Bilal & Sulaiman, Factors persuading customers to adopt islamic banks and windows of commercial banks services in Sultanate of Oman, 2021).

### 2.2 Compensation and Incentives

Despite the on-going discussions related to the contribution of human resources practices and institutional excellence, one of the challenges facing the Human Resources Management Department is the implementation of human resources practices related to compensation and incentives.

HRM practices also related more to the motivational factors that affect employee satisfaction and their performance and retention to gain institutional excellence (Noe et al., 2006; Riphah et al., 2022). Compensation and incentives are the aspects of HRM practices and not the newer aspect, which is the motivational aspect of HRM practices. Given this, the literature (studies) related to the compensation and incentives of employees is the most crucial aspect of HRM practices and gave several contractionary findings (Alserhan & Shbail, 2020; Ullah et al., 2021).

Departments in all institutions are currently adhering to the principles of caring for the human component in the institution as one of the most important tools that most influence the institutional excellence, and considering intellectual capital as one of the most important elements in sustainability of institutions with excellence, and that given distinguished compensation and incentives, which has the potential to increase the state of creativity and innovation inherent in employees (Grace et al., 2018; Asad et al., 2021).

According to Sir Richard Branson of Virgin Atlantic, corporate customers do not come first, and therefore it is the employee who brings them. A happy employee makes customers happy, which is translated as a personal or objective view of the institutional excellence, and with this vision employees are considered the heart of the institutions or facility that contributes to its excellence. To export employee happiness according to Sir Richard Branson, this task falls to human resources practices where compensation and incentives play a significant role (Allam, 2019; Adomako & Nguyen, 2020).

### **2.3 Training and Development**

To be completed properly and successfully, administrative work requires individuals who can do so, which required training and development. It also requires that a specific goal or task be accomplished within a set time frame and according to the administrative work plan (Sulaiman & Asad, 2023). Finally, training and development to promote the excellence is mandatory, as opposed to many other types of work that is completed without training of the employees, Excellence requires specialization, and responsibility is given to the employees who is trained and developed (Ahmad et al., 2022). HRM practices are not only implemented to change employee awareness, but also to promote proactive behaviours that can have an impact on institutional outcomes (Asad et al., 2011; Alkhuzaie et al., 2024).

Institutions have recently become a means of hiring, training and developing the brains that contain within them the innovations and creativity skills, and the task of identifying these employees has always been an institutional puzzle that has not yet been solved (Asad et al., 2021), while those who identify the creativity and innovation of these employees have higher rates of giving and efficiency (Zuhaib et al., 2022). Thus, the institutional aspect relates to the early stage of human resource practices which includes selection, hiring and training to accomplish the task (Collins & Smith, 2006; Asad et al., 2023).

There were other environmental changes related to the institutional excellence that relying on traditional sources (Chethiyar et al., 2019), however, the tool of change in the field of global trends related to access to advanced technology as a tool of globalization has created healthy and unhealthy competition in the areas of manufacturing related and unrelated to this technology, which calls for the need of training (Hammami , Ahmed , Johny, & Sulaiman, Impact of knowledge capabilities on organisational performance in the private sector in Oman: An SEM approach using path analysis, 2021; Ullah, et al., The effect of work safety on organizational social sustainability Improvement in the healthcare sector: The case of a public sector hospital in Pakistan, 2021).

## 2.4 Institutional Innovation

Institutional innovation appeared on many levels, including innovation on the individual level, where workers have a creative innovation to develop work, through innate characteristics that they enjoy, such as intelligence and talent, or through acquired characteristics, such as problem-solving, for example, and these characteristics can be trained and developed, and the individual's intelligence and talent helps in that (Saqib & Satar, 2021).

As for automatic cognitive innovation, it does not require a person to be well-knowledgeable, or to plan to do something (Zahid, Ali, Danish, & Sulaiman, 2022; Xie, et al., 2023). His unconscious mind, without his feeling or planning, or making an effort to obtain these ideas, and perhaps we find that this matter is clear when we remember the apple falling on the head of Isaac Newton, then the laws of gravity came to his mind (Lee et al., 2019).

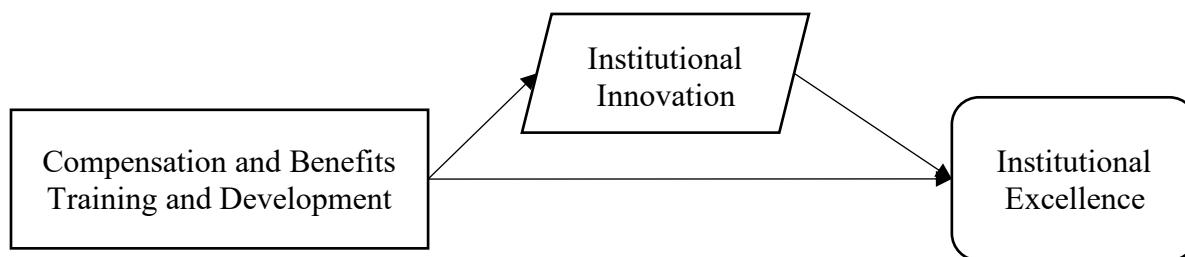
As for the second level, it is innovation at the group level, so that there are specific groups in the work that cooperate with each other to implement the ideas they carry and change something for the better, as an artistic group in the production department, for example (Pitafi et al., 2020). While the third level is innovation at the level of institutions: there are institutions that are distinguished in their level of performance and work, and often the work of these institutions is typical and ideal for other institutions, and in order for institutions to reach innovation, there must be individual and collective innovation (Aboobucker Ilmudeen, 2020).

## 2.5 Framework and Theoretical Support

The focus over institutional excellence did little to tap the full power or potential of institutional theory. Institutions change over time, are not uniformly taken-for granted, have effects that are particularistic, and are challenged as well as hotly contested (Sulaiman, Asad, Ismail, & Shabbir, 2023; Sulaiman, Asad, Shabbir, & Ismail, 2023). Thus, although institutions serve both to powerfully drive change to achieve excellence and to shape the nature of change across levels and contexts, they are also themselves change in character and potency over time which is a must for their sustainability, survival and for achieving excellence (Salih, 2020; Salem et al., 2023). It was in this spirit in this research the researcher focused on the study of institutional theory and institutional excellence.

Moreover, Resource-Based Theory (RBV) is a management framework used to identify strategic resources (human resource) that an institution can exploit to achieve excellence. Barney's 1991 article "The Firm's Resources and Sustainable Competitive Advantage" was widely cited as a pivotal work in the emergence of the resource-based view (Saridakis et al., 2017). Given this, the RBV model was deemed appropriate as a philosophical theory supporting human resource practices for achieving institutional excellence. This is because the adoption of Human resource practices including searching the CVs of potential employees to choose the best employee out of thousands of employees if there are no more potential employees (Kaufman, 2015). The RBV model has been used to measure institutional excellence. In this way, the researcher is free to

include compensation and benefits and training and development as independent variables and institutional excellence as a dependent variable.



*Figure 1 Research Framework*

In today’s knowledge-based economy, institutions as the centres of developing human resource play vital role in and incentive plans and processes are a key source of retaining the best employees for achieving institutional excellence (Bag et al., 2020). So strategic compensation and incentives have got a vital importance for achieving institutional excellence. Compensation and incentives lead to better future of the employees which helps institutions to gain best out of the employees which leads to institutional excellence (AlHalaseh & Alrawadyeh, 2022). However, generalizing that strategic compensation and incentives serves as a panacea for all types of institutions.

Similar to the recruitment and selection process, the contribution of training to the finally selected employee is of great importance for achieving institutional excellence (Rasheed et al., 2017; Al Shobaki & Abu-Naser, 2016; Al Zaabi, 2019). Training and development, according to Apascarietei and Elvira (2021) is one of the fundamental and essential factors of HRM practices that contribute to and enhance the success of any institution. Looking at Al-Eida, (2020), the ways in which employees perceive they have been trained contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional excellence. Hence, the researchers urge public and private institutions to employ healthy and sustainable training and development measures to train and develop their employees so that they can have a significant contribution to the excellence of their institutions. While the observations of Ilyukhina, Bogatyreva, Makhmudova, and Ermakova (2019) concluded that an effective training and development system for employees increases the institution's chances of achieving excellence.

The quest of institutional excellence is one of the most significant current concerns. The objectives outlined in excellence standards are those that institutions should work toward achieving in order to encourage improved quality and distinction in their institutional excellence, and achieving these objectives calls for management involvement (Chaubey et al., 2021; Beil-Hildebrand, 2002). Success and development depend on speed and innovation to achieve the best use of human resources, as establishing institutional excellence is one of the most crucial activities and processes for human resources.

### 3. Research Methodology

The purpose of the current study is to identify the mediating role of institutional innovation between compensation and benefits, training and development, and institutional excellence. For the said purpose data has been collected using structured questionnaire adopted from the prior studies. Considering the issues identified in the introduction section higher educational institutions have been chosen for the target population. The data after diagnostic tests has been tested using structural equation modelling to analyse the framework raised in the study.

### 4. Analysis and Findings

In order to identify the problems with outside loadings, the study first examined the outer loadings. All the values in the outer loadings must be higher than 0.7 as referred by Quinlan, Zikmund, Babin, Carr, and Griffin, (2018). Therefore, all the item loading indications of all construct's compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development have specific values ranging from a lower bound of 0.746 and a higher bound that is 0.920 are mentioned in Table 1.

*Table 1 Outer Loadings*

	Compensation and Benefits	Institutional Excellence	Institutional Innovation	Training and Development
CB1	0.920			
CB2	0.747			
CB3	0.862			
CB4	0.803			
CB5	0.880			
IE1		0.800		
IE2		0.783		
IE3		0.764		
IE4		0.837		
IE5		0.762		
IE6		0.811		
IE7		0.816		
IE8		0.782		
II1			0.780	
II2			0.782	
II3			0.765	
II4			0.858	
II5			0.794	
II6			0.830	
II7			0.840	



II8			0.810	
TD1				0.817
TD2				0.808
TD3				0.746
TD4				0.766
TD5				0.862

Table 1 reveals the findings of outer loadings which confirms that all the items are represented in the model and all variable values of compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development are higher than the threshold level of 0.7.

#### 4.1 Construct Reliability and Validity

The construct reliability and validity in which the Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) have been examined for all variables which are compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, (2015) demonstrated that all variable values in Cronbach’s Alpha must be higher than the threshold level of 0.7, whereas, Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, (2013) revealed that all variable values in composite reliability must be less than 0.60.

Consequently, if the variable values are 0.7 or above 0.7 they are more substantial. AVE also ensured that convergent validity has been analyzed. Likewise, AVE implies that all variable values are calculated according to the threshold level of 0.50 or higher than 0.50 referred by Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, (2013). Therefore, the calculated values of all constructs which are compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development are mentioned as per the threshold level in Table 2.

*Table 2 Construct Reliability and Validity*

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Compensation and Benefits	0.898	0.925	0.713
Institutional Excellence	0.917	0.932	0.632
Institutional Innovation	0.924	0.938	0.653
Training and Development	0.840	0.887	0.614

Table 2 reveals the findings of all variables in Cronbach’s Alpha for compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development values were 0.898, 0.917, 0.924, and 0.840 whereas, the composite reliability for compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development values were 0.925, 0.932, 0.938, and 0.887. Likewise, the average variance extracted for compensation and benefits,



institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development values were 0.713, 0.632, 0.653, and 0.614.

#### 4.2 Discriminant Validity by Fornell-Larcker Criterion

The study has evaluated the analysis of discriminant validity for all variables which are compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development. Similarly, Discriminant validity also confirmed that one latent variable varies from the other latent variable. Likewise, Hair et al. (2010) demonstrated that the Fornell-Larcker criterion is the most standard approach for examining the discriminant validity. Therefore, the calculated values for all variables compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development are mentioned in Table 3.

*Table 3 Discriminant Validity by Fornell- Larcker Criterion*

	Compensation and Benefits	Institutional Excellence	Institutional Innovation	Training and Development
Compensation and Benefits	0.844			
Institutional Excellence	0.545	0.795		
Institutional Innovation	0.772	0.616	0.808	
Training and Development	0.724	0.522	0.726	0.783

Table 3 shows the results of discriminant validity by the Fornell-Larcker Criterion for all variables in the structural model that are reliable as well as valid which have been examined.

#### 4.3 Discriminant Validity by Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Discriminant validity is a significant concept in structural equation modelling that reveals that one variable varies from the other latent variable. Subsequently, the discriminant validity by applying the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion that can be used to test the discriminant validity as well as to evaluate the average correlation of the indicators through variables, whereas, if the variable value of HTMT is below 0.90, hence, discriminant validity has been evaluated between two variables as stated by Ab Hamid, Sami, and Sidek., (2017). Therefore, Table 4 shows the findings of discriminant validity by HTMT criterion for all variables which are compensation and benefits, institutional excellence, institutional innovation, and training and development.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity by Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Compensation and Benefits	Institutional Excellence	Institutional Innovation	Training and Development
Compensation and Benefits				
Institutional Excellence	0.590			
Institutional Innovation	0.850	0.660		
Training and Development	0.825	0.576	0.820	

The above-shown results of discriminant validity by heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) show that all variable values are reliable as well as valid.

#### 4.4 Direct Effects

The study has analysed the analysis of a systematic model of the structural model to provide a detailed picture of the direct effect results. Therefore, Table 5 shows the measured values of path coefficient direct effects that indicate a significant correlation.

Table 5 Path Coefficient Direct Effects

Path Coefficients	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	2.50%	97.50%
Training and Development-> Institutional Excellence	0.042	0.052	0.125	0.336	0.000	-0.215	0.266
Compensation and Benefits-> Institutional Excellence	0.063	0.062	0.095	0.662	0.000	-0.106	0.27

Table 5 shows the analysis of the path coefficient direct effect which indicates that there is a significant relationship between training and development and institutional excellence ( $\beta=0.042$ ,  $t=0.336$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), whereas there is also a significant relationship between compensation and benefits and institutional excellence ( $0.063$ ,  $t=0.662$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

#### 4.5 Mediating Effects

The study has assessed the mediating effects in which the mediating variable, institutional innovation has been introduced. Therefore, the findings of mediating effects are mentioned in Table 6.

*Table 6 Mediating Effects*

Path Coefficients	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	2.50%	97.50%
Institutional Innovation-> Institutional Excellence	-0.025	-0.021	0.211	0.117	0.000	-0.397	0.421
Compensation and Benefits-> Institutional Innovation	0.298	0.297	0.05	5.930	0.000	0.202	0.407
Training and Development-> Institutional Innovation	0.077	0.076	0.052	1.485	0.000	-0.028	0.180

Table 6 shows the analysis of mediating effects which indicates that there is a significant relationship between institutional innovation and institutional excellence ( $\beta=-0.025$ ,  $t=0.117$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Similarly, there is a significant relationship between compensation and benefits and institutional innovation ( $\beta=0.298$ ,  $t= 5.930$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) whereas there is a significant relationship between training and development and institutional innovation ( $\beta=0.077$ ,  $t=1.485$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

#### 4.6 Specific Indirect Effects

The study has examined institutional innovation as a mediating effect between independent variables of compensation and benefits and training and development and the dependent variable of institutional excellence. Therefore, the measured values of all variables in the specific indirect effect are mentioned in Table 7.

*Table 7 Specific Indirect Effects*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	2.50%	97.50%
Compensation and Benefits->	-0.007	-0.004	0.062	0.119	0.000	-0.112	0.124

Institutional Innovation-> Institutional Excellence							
Training and Development-> Institutional Innovation-> Institutional Excellence	-0.002	-0.004	0.020	0.098	0.000	-0.055	0.034

Table 7 shows the findings of specific indirect effects which indicate that institutional innovation has a significant relationship between compensation and benefits and institutional excellence ( $\beta = -0.007$ ,  $t = 0.119$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), whereas institutional innovation has also a significant relationship between training and development and institutional excellence ( $\beta = -0.002$ ,  $t = 0.098$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

#### 4.7 Construct Cross-Validated Redundancy

After analysing the outer loadings, construct reliability and validity, direct effects, mediating effects, and specific indirect effects, another important tool is to confirm the predictive relevance of the model which is checking the construct cross-validated redundancy. Subsequently, the analysis used the Stone-Geisser test to measure the  $Q^2$  values of the endogenous latent construct. Similarly, we have assessed the cross-validated redundancy of the construct by applying a blindfolding method. Therefore, the analysis of construct cross-validated redundancy is mentioned in Table 8.

Table 8 Construct Cross-Validated Redundancy

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (= 1 - SSE/SSO)$
Institutional Excellence	800.000	528.307	0.340
Institutional Innovation	800.000	345.293	0.568

Table 8 shows the findings of cross-validated redundancy which indicates that  $Q^2$  values are higher than zero which are institutional excellence (0.340) and institutional innovation (0.568) which implies that the predictive relevance of the model is significant. Similarly, if the calculated values of  $Q^2$  are higher than zero model holds significant predictive relevance, whereas, if the  $Q^2$  values are less than zero it shows that the model has a weak or lack of predictive relevance (Henseler & Fassott, 2009).

## 5. Conclusion

Incentives and procedures are essential for retaining the best employees in order to achieve institutional excellence in today's knowledge-based economy, where institutions serve as hubs for the development of human resources (Bag et al., 2020). Subsequently, achieving institutional excellence requires strategic compensation and incentives. Compensation and incentives lead to the better future for the employees which helps institutions to attain superior employees which leads towards institutional excellence (AlHalaseh & Alrawadyeh, 2022). Training and development are one of the essential and fundamental factors of HRM practices that contribute and enhance the success of any institution (Apascaritei & Elvira, 2021). Al-Eida (2020) revealed that the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional excellence are influenced by ways in which employees perceive they have received training. Therefore, the researchers encourage both private and public institutions to use training and development strategies that are healthy and sustainable in order to prepare their staff to make a significant contribution to the excellence of their institutions.

The research suggests that future research could be conducted by using other factors to improve institutional excellence regarding opinion of compensation and incentives, and training and development opinion of institutional innovation in universities and higher educational institutions operating in the United Arab Emirates who are involved in institutional excellence to overcome the limitation of study. Similarly, empirical research on compensation and incentives and training and development, and institutional excellence to the implementation of institutional innovation through the universities and higher educational institutions operating in the United Arab Emirates for institutional excellence.

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