The influence of Wasta on employees and organisations in Kuwait: exploring the impact on human resource management, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment

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The Influence of Wasta on Employees and Organisations in Kuwait

Exploring the Impact on Human Resource Management, Knowledge Sharing, Innovation and Organisational Commitment

By

Abrar Abdulsalam Al-Enzi

A Doctoral Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University.

2017

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List of Abbreviations

BOS  Bristol Online Survey
DWEN  Dell Women's Entrepreneur Network Summit
ECHP  European Community Household Panel
EFA  Exploratory Factor Analysis
GCC  Gulf Cooperation Council
GLOBE  Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness
HR  Human Resource
HRM  Human Resource Management
HRMP  Human Resource Management Practices
INNOV  Innovation
KM  Knowledge Management
KMO  The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
KMS  Knowledge Management Systems
KMV  Key Mediating Variable
KS  Knowledge Sharing
LMX  Leader-Member Exchange
MBA  Masters of Business Administration
MENA  Middle East and North Africa
MGRP  Manpower and Government Restructuring Program
MNOs  Multinational Organisations
MPs  Members of The Parliament
OC  Organisational Commitment
OCB  Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
OCQ  Organisational Commitment Questionnaire
PCA  Principle Components Analysis
POS  Perceived Organisational Support
R2  R-Squared
R&D  Research and Development
SERs  Social Exchange Relationships
SET  Social Exchange Theory
SPSS  Statistical Package for The Social Sciences
UAE  United Arab Of Emirates
UK  United Kingdom
Abstract

This thesis examines the influence of *wasta* on employees and organisations in Kuwait. *Wasta* is a set of personal networks based on family or connections in which power and influence is used to accomplish things. As *wasta* evolved, it became deeply rooted in Kuwait. For instance, it became a tool which people use to get recruited in any position, regardless of their qualification. It is considered as a family obligation, a technique for doing business, and a practice which people use to maintain one’s status. To date, there has been little research on the influence of *wasta* within organisations in terms of human resource management (HRM) practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to address the research question: *does wasta influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?*

A mixed method sequential exploratory research design is utilised to examine the specified research question. The justification behind this approach is that both qualitative and quantitative strategies supplement each other by giving a more in-depth and complete picture of the topic. Based on a total of 343 individual responses, the outcomes identified with *wasta* in businesses are considerable, as it does not only impact employees’ performance, but also the entire organisation’s performance. The findings revealed that *wasta* influences HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait. In addition, the results of this study developed new models that fit within the context of this research and suggests several recommendations that could be developed to reduce the unwanted effects of *wasta* and improve employees’ as well as organisations’ performance.

Consequently, this thesis provides a conceptual framework of what *wasta* is, how it is being executed, and ways in which it impacts employees and organisations in terms of the measured variables. It aims to deliver insight for citizens, employees, local and multi-national organisations, and the government in Kuwait about how the practice of *wasta* impacts performance, either positively or negatively. This thesis contributes to new knowledge within the field of business in the Middle East and provides a basis on which further research could be carried out. Therefore, this research will support and provide additional value to the minimum research that is available on *wasta* in Kuwait and worldwide.
Chapter 1: The Research Context

1.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the main reason this research was undertaken, and it is divided into four sections. The first section briefly addresses the research context and general background about *wasta*. The second section discusses the aims and objectives of the thesis. The third section briefly discusses the contributions of the study and the last section summarises the overall outline of the thesis.

1.1 Section 1: Research Context

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing acknowledgment that sectors in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE) can no longer hire all recent graduates that seek employment (Forstenlechner et al., 2012). Hence, in search for jobs, some specialists say that networking and connections have the most vital influence in finding employment (see Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; Brandstaetter et al., 2016; Alreshoodi, 2016). Without having someone who can put in a decent word for the applicant, their odds of getting employed are probably non-existent (Balderrama, 2010). While not all individuals are recruited through connections and networking, it is the safest and most guaranteed approach in getting recruited (Balderrama, 2010).

In recent decades, connections in various working environments have assumed a crucial part in impacting organisational performance because connections essentially shape work group engagements. According to Turban and Daniel (2012), the increasing significance of personal connections inside the working environment is complicated by the high level of social networks that individuals create within their workplace. On this note, most people in various parts of the globe were able to secure employment, positive evaluations, advancements, and considerably more due to their solid connections (Rachel, 2004). Within the Middle East context, social or personal connections are known as ‘*wasta*’. As reported by Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993), "understanding *wasta* is key to understanding decisions in the Middle East, for *wasta* pervades the culture of all Arab countries and is a force in every significant decision… *Wasta* is a way of life" (p. 209).
In addition, *wasta* is not about qualification, it is about connections. This general concept has persistently clarified the fact that people can secure anything based on connections they may have, paying little regard to qualifications (Turban & Daniel, 2012). In addition, *wasta* is not about reaching a higher-up individual, it is about contacting the correct individual (Balderrama, 2010). It involves a social network of personal connections where people contact individuals with power, not just when they are in need, but also for other services that may benefit them in the future. It also “can be seen as the intervention of a patron in favour of a client to obtain benefits and/or resources from a third party” (Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008, p.1). Additionally, if the *wasta* provider was unable to grant the favour personally, he/she will contact his/her own circle of network to get the job done.

Historical evidence shows that the impact of social networks in helping people secure employments has pre-occupied researchers for a considerable period (see Granovetter, 1995; Bewley, 1999; Pellizzari, 2004; Calvò-Armentol, 2006). The role of family and social ties in assisting people in advancement procedures, avoiding lawful issues, and accelerating processes has also been researched in some theoretical and empirical works (see Montgomery, 1991; Ioannides & Loury, 2004). It seems that many managers and those in charge of recruitment decisions prefer to hire individuals with whom they are socially associated with (Ponzo & Scoppa, 2010), hence denying qualified and capable people from landing a reasonable position. This, in turn, results in low performance and motivation level between workers in addition to organisations (Sadozai et al., 2012; Alreshoodi, 2016). While it is obvious that effective transformation in any organisation is usually preserved by effective HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment, understanding whether personal connections, such as *wasta*, within organisations can influence these concepts is important in acknowledging the degree of impact on employees and organisational practices to adjust any unwanted effect that does not add to the efficiency and development of organisations.

However, there is a lack of specific studies seeking to identify, analyse, and investigate how *wasta* influences HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment in Kuwait. Thus, undertaking this study is crucial. It will provide exploratory empirical evidence that will extend the literature on *wasta* in business management in addition to offering a database for future research. It will also
increase awareness as well as helping managers understand how and in what ways wastā can impact both employees’ and organisational performance. Furthermore, this research could help with international business relations when it comes to commerce and trade (Abdalla et al., 1998), since it acknowledges behavioural resemblances and distinctions of people from various countries (Malpass & Poortinga, 1986).

1.2 Section 2: Purpose of the Study

1.2.1 The Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to investigate and examine the consequences of wastā on organisations and employees who are affected by it, specifically in Kuwait, in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment. Therefore, the proposed overall research question for this study is as follows:

Does wastā influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?

1.2.2 The Objectives of the Research

To date, there has been little in-depth organisational research on the impact of wastā. Hence, undertaking this study will help in acknowledging how and in what ways wastā influences the measured variables. This would, in turn, equip organisational leaders with new knowledge on how wastā plays a vital role in influencing individuals’ behaviour, performance, and commitment towards organisational success. As a result, the objectives of this study are as follows. To:

- Analyse the historical development of wastā;
- Define and evaluate related forms of social capital and determine how they are related to wastā;
- Critically evaluate literatures on factors and theories related to different forms of social capital to examine how they influence HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment within organisations. In addition, exploring if wastā would generate similar results as social capital with regards to HRM practices, innovation, knowledge sharing, and commitment in Kuwaiti organisations.
• Investigate how Kuwaiti employees perceive *wasta* to determine whether *wasta* impacts HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment by using mixed methods approach.

• Provide recommendations on how to reduce the influence of *wasta* on employees and organisations, if a problem exists.

Consequently, to accomplish the desired objectives, this research paper will study *wasta*, social capital, and the measured variable thoroughly in addition to any related theories and concepts as well as developing theoretical models when necessary for further explanation. Furthermore, people’s point of view will be investigated via a survey and interviews with respect to *wasta*. The collected data will be analysed regarding the influence of *wasta* on the measured variable. Finally, reasons will be identified for the generated outcomes and recommendations will be suggested on how to reduce the unwanted influence of *wasta* that does not add to the development of organisations.

1.3 Section 3: Contributions of the Study

A summarised contribution of the study is as follows:

• **Theoretical:** The research examines and introduces new knowledge with regards to how and in what ways *wasta* influences HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in organisations in Kuwait.

• **Methodological:** The research provides new methodological insights and a new approach into researching the role of cultural factors, such as *wasta*, using a modified exploratory sequential mixed methods research design. The use of a modified exploratory sequential mixed methods research design provides insights in understanding and answering the research question as well as the objectives of this study.

• **Practical:** The research develops a framework aimed at helping organisations and the government in Kuwait as well as for future research. In addition, it could be extended and used in other Arab nations.
1.4 Section 4: Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into eight chapters, of which the first chapter is the introduction that provides an overview and background of the main issues addressed in this research as well as setting a foundation on the aims and objectives of the research. Chapter 2 provides background information on Kuwait’s history, culture, and values to understand why such culture was chosen as a case study and in what ways it influences the process of *wasta*.

Chapter 3 reviews existing literatures in the field appropriate to *wasta*. The aim of this chapter is to review and understand the history, different definitions, and concepts of *wasta*. Initially, this chapter critically reviews background information about *wasta* and then provides a wide review of related constructs and international comparison of *wasta*. In addition, the chapter also reviews how *wasta* influences women.

Chapter 4 provides a literature review on how *wasta* influences organisational performance by reviewing how social capital influences the measured variables. The aim of this chapter is to review and understand how social capital and *wasta* are linked to HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment.

Chapter 5 describes the methodology and the modified exploratory sequential mixed methods used in the thesis. The chapter addresses and provides rationale for selecting the chosen approach, design, instrument, and various techniques used to undertake the data collection and analysis in addition to discussing the ethical awareness related thereto.

Chapter 6 is divided into two parts due to its lengthy volume. The first part presents the hypothesis formulation and findings from both qualitative and quantitative data collection in chronological order. The second part presents findings from other set of qualitative data collected in chronological order. The qualitative data were analysed using Nvivo software and the findings were summarised into themes and codes. On the other hand, the quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software in which the frequency, reliability, correlation, exploratory factor, and regression analyses were used to present and summarise the findings of the questionnaire.
Chapter 7 presents and discusses key findings gathered from the survey, interviews, and previous literatures. The chapter aims at answering and justifying the aim and objectives of this thesis. Lastly, chapter 8 provides an overall conclusion of the thesis by presenting the achievements and challenges of the study concerning the aim and objectives of this thesis, contribution to knowledge, and recommendations for further research. Figure 1.1 summarises the thesis outline.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and explained reasons for undertakings this study, since it is the first study, to the extent of the researcher’s knowledge and lack of literatures, to examine the influence of *wasta* on HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment in Kuwait. Therefore, the following chapters will provide further evidence and clarification to support the necessity of conducting the study. The next chapter, chapter two, provides clarification and justification as to why Kuwait was chosen as a case study.
Figure 1.1: Thesis Outline
Chapter 2: Kuwaiti Culture

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce background information about Kuwait’s culture as well as explaining reasons why Kuwait was chosen as a case study for this thesis. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section addresses general background information about Kuwait. The second section discusses Kuwait’s culture and structure by linking it to several cultural theories. Lastly, the third section explains Kuwaitization policy and how the policy impacted Kuwait.

2.1 Section 1: Kuwait’s Context

The purpose of this section is to provide a context for *wasta* in relation to Kuwait by providing background information in a simple way that will assist readers to better understand Kuwait. Hence, this section is broken down into three subsections: demographic, religion, and economy.

2.1.1 Demographic

Kuwait is a small country that is positioned in the Eastern part of the Arab world. It shares boarders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It is approximately 17,818 square kilometres (Kuwait Government, 2017) and is a member in the GCC. Being a desert country, Kuwait is known for its dry and hot climate. In the summer, temperatures rise up to 60°C and get as low as 13°C during the winter. Additionally, the official language in Kuwait is Arabic, although English is also spoken as a second language.

2.1.2 Religion

The formal religion in Kuwait is Islam and the Islamic Law is the main source of regulations (Kuwait Constitution, 1962). However, foreigners are given the freedom to practice their own rituals and religion in the country. The Islamic religion impacts many businesses and social characteristics of the Kuwaiti life, including family affairs, business protocols, dress code, food, and personal hygiene, in ways that aid in uniting people (Rice, 1999). Therefore, Islam facilitates the creation of networks that involve strong kinship connections, such as *wasta*.
2.1.3 Kuwait’s Economy

Kuwait is considered to be one of the safest and most stable places for living and doing business transactions in the Arab region (Alhabib, 2010). Kuwait’s geographical location is the key factor for the progressive development, economic stability, and supportive political consistency that helps with the continuous improvement in the country. As did many other things, Kuwait’s economic and social life changed after World War II and became one of the world’s largest oil reserves (Almutairi, 2013), which contributed to the tax-free system in the country.

Nonetheless, after the war, the country sustained its wealth and growth, evident through substantial rise in national income that permitted the government to provide citizens free healthcare, education, and housing (Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, 2016). With the existence of oil as a key economic factor, the government continued to support and sponsor policies that benefited Kuwaiti citizens. Such support includes retirement income, marriage bonuses, housing loans, virtually guaranteed employment, etc. (Al-Ajmi, 2003). To date, Kuwait is a tax-free nation and can uphold this distinctive feature because of its economy. It is not surprising that Kuwait’s economy is ruled by oil, as 90% of export profits and 75% of government revenue is originated from petroleum resources (Almutairi, 2013).

2.2 Section 2: Kuwait’s Culture

Culture is another aspect that influences the way people, organisations, and governments interact with one another. This section relates several cultural theories with Kuwait’s culture and then addresses the social structure of the country.

2.2.1 Hall Context Theory

Hall’s (1982) theory groups countries based on how people communicate within societies. Hall (1982) classified the grouped countries as high/low or high/medium/low context cultures and described context as “the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event” (p. 18). Hence, the context results from the “collection of social and cultural conditions that surround and influence the life of an individual, organisation, or community” (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005, p. 301).
The distinction between high and low-context cultures varies to what extent connotation is created within the context against the code. In a high context culture, such as Kuwait, many things are left unspoken, where the appropriate signals are vital in the clarification of a communication (Zaharna, 1995). On the other hand, in low-context cultures (e.g. the UK), most of the communication is clearly conveyed (Cho & Cheon, 2005, p. 102). In addition, high-context cultures are known to be collectivistic, thus creates an emphasis on groups rather than individuals. Being in a Kuwaiti culture, citizens are primarily concerned with the need of being associated with a group, and therefore envision the ‘self’ as being entrenched in a group network (Al-Husaini, 2004). This, in turn, strengthens the ruling of ‘obligations’ over ‘rights’. For instance, decisions that are crucial to a person’s life are often influenced by a group’s decision, as opposed to low context cultures (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005).

2.2.2 Hofstede Theory

Building and maintaining connections with people is just one form of cultural diversity. To maintain a network, people need to understand the culture with which they are associating. With access to employees working in organisations in over 50 countries, Hofstede (1997) developed a model that described different cultural dimensions. He initially recognised four dimensions that distinguished one culture from another, but later added a fifth dimension known as long-term orientation, which is exclusively for Confucius philosophy. Below is Kuwait’s cultural dimension based on Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) findings by categorising Kuwait in the Arab countries group.

The first dimension is individualism/collectivism. This dimension signifies how people identify themselves and their connections with others. Individualism refers to how the interests of a person supersedes the interests of others. Tie links or relationships are loose because people only concentrate and care about themselves and their immediate families. Individualism highlights the “I” versus “we” consciousness because they value independency and self-sufficiency (Hofstede, 2011). Masakazu (1994) defined individualism as “a view of humanity that justifies inner beliefs and unilateral self-assertion, as well as competition based on these” (p. 127). In collectivist cultures, the interest of others supersedes the interests of a person. Tie links or relationships are strong, coherent and last a long period because people usually tend to protect each other in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede, 1997). This is because they put emphasis on
belonging and value relationships (Hofstede, 2011). By defining both terms, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) concluded that Arab countries are more of a collectivist society, since goals are set with major consideration of others and the culture is tightly united. Furthermore, individuals highly emphasise connections with others in addition to stressing interdependent actions and displace an individual’s aim for the group’s wellbeing.

The second dimension that differentiates cultures is masculinity/femininity. Hofstede (1980) concluded that this dimension identifies to what extent societies value traditional male roles over female roles from culture to culture. He categorised masculine cultures as those that discriminate between what men and women are expected to do. Cultures that are masculine distinguish between social gender roles. This is where men are viewed to be more assertive, competitive and stress material accomplishments; whereas, women are viewed to be more modest, caring and stress about the quality of life (Hofstede, 2001). On the other hand, cultures that are labelled as feminine are those that stress a somewhat equal opportunity between both genders and do not differentiate between them. Both genders are expected to be modest, care for others and be concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede, 2001). Arab countries, due to their tradition and religion, are considered relatively feminine societies. In such societies, the quality of life is the sign of success. Hence, “the fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine)” (Kaufman, 2014, p. 226). Therefore, Arab people work for a living, problems are solved through negotiations, and individuals focus on the welfare of others.

The third dimension is power distance. According to Hofstede (1997), power distance is “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (p. 28). Hofstede believes that power distance is learned. In high power distance cultures, youths are expected to be obedient towards their parents and respect those who are in power, as opposed to low power distance cultures. In addition, in such cultures, power and influence are generally “concentrated in the hands of a few rather than distributed throughout the population” (Jandt, 2001, p. 211). In organisations, power is centralised and there is a wide gap between employers and employees as the ones at the top consider themselves better than those at the bottom of the organisation. Therefore,
according to Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) analysis, Arab countries are significantly high power distance cultures.

Hofstede’s (1980) fourth dimension is uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance is the degree of nervousness that people feel in uncertain or unknown situations. In high uncertain avoidance cultures, maintaining written guidelines and rules are favoured to prevent such circumstances. Cultures that are high in uncertainty avoidance are energetic, passionate, and pursue security and assertiveness in comparison with cultures that are weak in uncertainty avoidance. Arab societies scored high in this dimension, and thus they prefer to avoid uncertain situations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). To summarise in terms of Kuwait’s culture based on Hofstede theory, Kuwait is classified as a collectivist, relatively feminine society that stresses high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance.

2.2.3 GLOBE Theory

Global leadership and organisational behaviour effectiveness (GLOBE) focuses on exploring cultural values (should be) as well as practices (as is), including organisation practices and leadership, in more than 50 countries (House et al., 2004). The GLOBE project defines leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members" (House et al., 2004, p. 15). Starting with approximately more than 20 styles, researchers eventually minimised it to the following six global leader behaviour dimensions (Liddell, 2005): the transformational/charismatic leader, the team-oriented leader, the self-protective leader, the participative/delegator leader, the humane style leader, and the autonomous leader (for more details see House et al., 2004). Bear in mind, the scores of the leadership styles range from 1 to 7. Scores between 1-3.5 suggest that the style is observed to prevent outstanding leadership (also known as universal negative leader attributes); whereas, scores between 4.5-7 suggest that the style is observed to contribute to outstanding leadership (also known as universal positive leader attributes). However, scores from 3.5-4.5 suggest that the style does not make a difference in terms of outstanding leadership (House et al., 2002).

It is also important to understand what works and what does not in different cultural settings. Based on the GLOBE project, culture is defined as “shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from
common experiences of collectives and are transmitted across age generations” (House et al., 2002, p. 5). Cultures can be explained in terms of nine dimensions, as shown in table 2.1. As with the leadership styles scores, cultural dimensions were also measured on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high). It is also noted that high value scores were often seen linked to low practice scores (Grove, 2005). Thus, to understand what each score means in terms of society characteristics, table 2.1 represents some characteristics associated with each dimension taken from House et al. (2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>• Value competition, success, and progress.</td>
<td>• Value cooperation and warm relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build trust on basis of calculation.</td>
<td>• Build trust on basis of predictability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance orientation</td>
<td>• Value training and development.</td>
<td>• Value societal and family relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• View formal feedback as necessary for performance improvement.</td>
<td>• View formal feedback as judgmental and discomfiting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>• Use formality in interactions with others.</td>
<td>• Use informality in interactions with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rely on formalised policies and procedures.</td>
<td>• Rely on informal norms for most matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-group collectivism</td>
<td>• Duties and obligations are important determinants of social</td>
<td>• Personal needs and attitudes are important determinants of social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>behaviour.</td>
<td>behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A strong distinction is made between in-groups and out-groups.</td>
<td>• Little distinction is made between in-groups and out-groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power distance</td>
<td>• Power seen as providing social order.</td>
<td>• Power linked to corruption and coercion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resources available to only a few and information is localised and hoarded.</td>
<td>• Resources are available to almost all and information is widely shared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Egalitarianism</td>
<td>• Less occupational sex segregation.</td>
<td>• More occupational sex segregation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Afford women a greater decision-making role in community affairs.</td>
<td>• Afford women little or no decision-making role in community affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humane orientation</td>
<td>• The interests of others are important.</td>
<td>• One's own self-interest is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Members of society are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of others.</td>
<td>• The state provides social and economic support for individuals’ wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Collectivism</td>
<td>• Group loyalty is encouraged, even if this undermines the pursuit of individual goals.</td>
<td>• Pursuit of individual goals is encouraged, even at the expense of group loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rewards are driven by seniority, personal needs, and/or within-group equity.</td>
<td>• Rewards are driven very largely by an individual’s contribution to task success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Orientation</td>
<td>• Emphasise working for long-term success.</td>
<td>• Prefer gratification as soon as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organisations tend to be flexible and adaptive.</td>
<td>• Organisations tend to be inflexible and maladaptive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.3.1 GLOBE Country Clusters

Countries were clustered to provide an easy way in examining the differences and similarities in various countries. According to the GLOBE findings, two grouped clusters, Arabic and Anglo, will be mentioned in this thesis to observe the similarities and differences between the societies in terms of cultural practices, values, and leadership behaviour.

a. The Arabic Cluster

The Arabic cluster includes Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Kuwait and Qatar. In societal practices, this cluster confirmed strong ranking in in-group collectivism and power distance, and weak ranking in future orientation and gender egalitarianism (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002). Additionally, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, humane orientation, performance orientation, and assertiveness were scored in the middle range (Liddell, 2005). Regarding societal values, the Arabic cluster ranked high in future orientation, performance orientation, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. However, the cluster ranked low in power distance, assertiveness, and gender egalitarianism. With regards to leadership scores, this cluster marked top for team-oriented and charismatic tracked by participative and humane style and low for self-protective and autonomous styles. This is because managers believed that those styles negatively influence efficient leadership. Table 2.2 represents Kuwait’s scoring in terms of practices and values in 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimensions</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Collectivism</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-group Collectivism</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Orientation</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Egalitarianism</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humane Orientation</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Orientation</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Kuwait’s GLOBE Societal Culture Dimensions (Source: GLOBE, 2004, n.p.)
The above table demonstrates that Kuwait is the type of society that values obligations and duties, and prefer power being distributed differently among various social classes by scoring high in power distance (5.12) and in-group collectivism (5.8). The culture seems to be more male-driven by overlooking women’s success and it does not encourage future rewards by scoring low in gender egalitarianism (2.58) and future orientation (3.26). The reason for Kuwait scoring quite low in gender egalitarianism in the GLOBE project is due to women occupying “a secondary role compared to men, particularly in leadership positions in organisations” (Liddell, 2005, p. 8). In the case of the other dimensions, Kuwait does not seem to stress much about it, as it does not make much of a difference to the culture by scoring mid-range in them. In terms of Kuwait’s leadership scores, Kuwait scored 5.90 in charisma, 5.89 in team-oriented style, 5.21 in humane style, 5.03 in participative style, 4.02 in self-protection, and 3.39 in autonomous style (GLOBE, 2004). Therefore, Kuwait highly emphasises team-oriented, charismatic, participative, and humane style since Kuwaiti’s view these as positive leadership traits. On the other hand, Kuwait scored low on self-protective and autonomous styles because they do not believe that such styles are associated with positive leadership.

b. The Anglo Cluster

The Anglo cluster includes Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States. The scores of the countries in societal practices for all dimensions were middle range except for power distance (ranked high) and gender egalitarianism (ranked low). In terms of values, the countries scored high in performance orientation, humane orientation, in-group collectivism (collectivism II), and future orientation. However, they scored low in power distance and scored medium in other dimensions. With regards to leadership scores, the Anglo cluster ranked highest in charismatic, team-oriented, participative style and humane leadership, while ranking low in autonomous and self-protective leadership. Due to being an individualistic culture, GLOBE researchers noticed how important participative leadership is in this cluster. Therefore, it is important for managers to assign responsibilities, encourage people in decision-making, and to efficiently lead the employees in the Anglo cluster (Ashkanasy et al., 2002).

In conclusion, the most valued leadership style in western societies is participative
leadership; while in the East or Arab countries, the most valued leadership is the mixture of “family and tribal norms and bureaucratic organisational structures that foster authoritarian management practices” (Wolf, 2006, p. 57). Being in an Arabic culture, many businesses maintain their characteristics and leadership styles even after expansion.

2.2.3.2 Hofstede and GLOBE Theory Critique

Despite the accomplishment of Hofstede’s theory, it is not without its limitations (Smith, 1996; Fang, 1998; Tayeb, 2000). Researchers have criticised Hofstede's model for being inadequate (Schwartz, 1994) and based on one organisation (Schwartz, 1994; Smith et al., 1996; McSweeney, 2002). Donthu and Yoo (2002) further criticised Hofstede's (1991) cultural dimension index for clustering 22 Arab countries in one group assuming that they are similar in terms of society and will generate identical scores in terms of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity. Few studies have been published to validate Hofstede’s theory in Arab countries and to confirm/disconfirm of having homogenous societies that is driven by Islamic belief. However, as the focus of this research is Kuwaiti culture, only the studies about Kuwait will be reported.

In 2004, Al-Sharqcrwi conducted a research about Hofstede's cultural dimensions in Kuwait. The results of her findings somewhat contradict Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)’s findings. She concluded that the Kuwaiti society is strongly individualist due to probably having a loosely knit social structure (Al-Sharqcrwi, 2004), as opposed to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005). As for the masculinity/femininity dimension, Kuwait appeared to be strongly feminine in which both genders are expected to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (Al-Sharqcrwi, 2004). This finding is quite similar to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) by categorising Kuwait as a relatively feminine society. Regarding power distance, Kuwait ranked low in this category, suggesting that Kuwaitis have a low tolerance for unequal power distribution (Al-Sharqcrwi, 2004), which contradicts Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)’s findings. Lastly, Kuwait scored medium-high in the uncertainty avoidance index, which confirms Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)’s findings. As a result, Al-Sharqcrwi (2004)’s research only contradicts two dimensions of Hofstede’s findings, which are individualism/collectivism and the masculinity/femininity dimensions.
More recently, in 2016, there was another published research that examined Hofstede’s dimensions in Kuwait. The study examined gender differences in Hofstede’s cultural dimensions among a Kuwaiti sample (AlAnezi & Alansari, 2016). The results revealed that males scored higher results than females in individualism and masculinity dimensions, whereas females scored higher than males in the power distance dimension (AlAnezi & Alansari, 2016). The findings suggest that gender differences exist in culture dimensions. However, uncertainty avoidance dimension was omitted from this research. Therefore, as some of these findings contradict Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)’s findings and confirm that homogeneity of Arab societies is void, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions concerning Arab countries need to be further investigated.

In terms of the GLOBE theory, it has been less criticised than Hofstede theory. This might be because there are less questionable issues or because it is a more recent measurement, and therefore researchers have not yet completely investigated it (Venaik & Brewer, 2008). However, Hofstede himself criticised the GLOBE theory arguing that the study is United States (US) driven and neglects to capture what is proposed through the questionnaire (Hofstede, 2006, 2010). In addition, he argues that having 18 dimensions is pointless (Hofstede, 2010). However, there is a lack of research that examines and validates the GLOBE theory in Arab countries, especially in Kuwait. Therefore, an investigation needs to be done to confirm the results. In the meantime, the findings of Hofstede and GLOBE theory will be used in this research.

2.2.4 Social Structure

Kuwait has a closely-connected social network of people due to its geography, homogenous race, and Islamic principles (Al-Sabah, 2001). Since 1752, Al-Sabah has been the ruling family in the country and is currently governed by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Accordingly, four fundamental characteristics of Kuwaiti culture that contribute to why Kuwait was chosen for this research will be discussed, namely women, the Kuwaiti family, dewaniya, and wasta.

2.2.4.1 Women as Leaders

Kuwait is traditionally a collective, family-oriented society where in the past men and women differ in terms of tasks. Women were expected to act according to social values upon which they were raised. “They were instructed by their families to be submissive
and modest” (Alsuwailan, 2006, p. 55). However, today women have real progress and they have many of the same rights as men. Such advancement is regarded as a significant leap in women's rights in Kuwait. In 2016, Kuwaiti women outnumbered Kuwaiti men in the total workforce in the country (Toumi, 2016), which is quite a massive achievement for women in the Arab world. This success is related to women’s characteristics in terms of values and practices. Women’s organisational practices in relation to advancement in the Arab world, based on the GLOBE theory, include high scores in humane orientation, gender egalitarianism, performance orientation, and low scores in power distance. Furthermore, women’s organisational values in the Arab world emphasise high scores in humane orientation and high gender egalitarianism. Therefore, the results indicate that organisational practices are more related to women’s advancement than values (Bajdo & Dickson 2002).

### 2.2.4.2 The Kuwaiti Family

People who lived in Kuwait from 1920 and onwards hold a Kuwaiti nationality that is restricted to Kuwaiti descendants through the male line (Kennedy, 2004). Both traditional and contemporary citizens in Arab societies consider family as the essential component of social organisation (Barakat, 1993). Being a family-oriented society, Kuwaiti families are commonly closed and private (Al-Thakeb, 1985). It involves a closely-knit, yet extended family circle with some members distantly related. Thus, family is an interrelated foundation where individuals help and support each other, unite when needed, and are frequently considered as a pool of resources for business enterprises (Al-Mekaimi, 2003). The extended family is an adequate method of social structure, as it contains the nuclear family, immediate relatives, distant relatives, tribe members, friends, and neighbours (Al-Thakeb, 1985). This trait of Kuwaiti culture highlights social networking in relationships.

### 2.2.4.3 Dewaniya

As previously mentioned, the Kuwaiti society is defined as a collectivist society and what makes Kuwait a distinctive culture to western societies is the *dewaniya*. *Dewaniya* is known to the Arab culture as a large reception room that is used for male gatherings (Kennedy, 2004). In the past, the term “*dewaniya*” initially referred to the segment of a Bedouin tent where men gather and sit apart from the family to debate relevant matters.
of the day (Al-Kandari, 2002). Accordingly, today the *dewaniya* has changed into a more frequent casual gathering and welcomes any outsider linked to someone within the circle who cares to join (Al-Kandari, 2002). Furthermore, the *dewaniya* comprises the origins of Kuwait’s consensual political system. It plays the role of a political medium where people gather to discuss their interests, and over the years, it has proved to be a great political inspiration on several events (Al-Kandari, 2002). For an example, the *dewaniya* system could be used as a place for an election campaign because it is regarded as a visible Kuwaiti institution (Tetreault, 1993). In addition, *dewaniya* has become a method for decision making where people gather to exchange information, listen, question, interpret, and confirm formal as well as informal meanings (Weir, 2008; Weiner, 2016).

There are three types of *dewaniya*: private, public, and family. The private *dewaniya* is for close friends who gather daily, the public *dewaniya* is set on a weekly basis for whoever wishes to gather, and the family *dewaniya* is a gathering for prominent family members (Al-Kandari, 2002). In the past, the *dewaniya* used to be exclusively for men because of the influence of Islam, which endorses segregation between men and women. Such segregation prohibits women’s access to men’s *dewaniya* due to social principles and cultural customs (Al-Mughni, 2000). Today, women have their own *dewaniya* that is restricted to female attendees. Arab women are still prohibited from entering men’s *dewaniya* and men are not permitted to enter women’s *dewaniya* due to traditional customs influenced by Islamic culture. Nonetheless, having a *dewaniya* comes with a price. For instance, serving tea and Arabic coffee to guests is a requirement and providing feasts is sometimes central, if it was a special occasion (Al-Jassar, 2009).

2.2.4.4 Wasta in Kuwait

In brief context, *wasta* is the glue that holds the society together making it an important component of the culture, but it is not openly debated with strangers. It is an indigenous phrase that does not have an equivalent word in English and is best described by Gardner (2010) as follows:

“*Wasta is a way to get there. When I say that I have a wasta in the Traffic Directorate, it means that I’ve got somebody there who can help me cut*
through the red tape. They can take care of my problem. But that term really evolved new meanings — now you can say ‘Oh, his dad is a real wasata’, meaning that he can get stuff done for you. So, it refers to a person. But you can also think of it as a process: ‘wasta does its worth’. You’re not talking about a specific person anymore. Or “with wasta you can do anything. You better get wasta” is a very common clause in speech. If you have wasta, you can get it done in a day. It means you can get it done if you have a way — an intermediary way, a way to get in, or someone inside the system” (p. 154).

In terms of business context, emotional trust is more critical than cognitive trust, thus making connections being more significant than legal agreements (Demirbag et al., 2003). Cognitive trust arises from the confidence in another person’s achievements, abilities and reliability; whereas, emotional trust arises from feelings of emotional understanding, closeness, or relationship (Washington, 2013). Hence, since Islam includes a business code of ethics, it encourages truthfulness in business where Muslim businessmen are obligated to fulfil their contracts and promises (Al-Ajmi, 2003). Further discussion about wasta will be addressed in-depth in chapter three.

2.3 Section 3: Kuwaitization

During the mid-20th century, GCC countries main source of revenue became oil that drastically helped shape the country’s economic, demographic, and social structures. Due to the rapid growth of the economy and income of the countries, many foreigners became attracted to work in the Arab region by dominating private sectors (Salih, 2010). In time, such domination became a serious problem in the GCC when governments realised that there were high-unemployment rates between local citizens by over relying on foreign employees. As a result, the GCC countries created the ‘localisation’ program, which is the procedure of replacing foreign employees with local employees in some economic positions.

Despite substantial efforts from the Gulf countries, creating jobs for local citizens in private sectors is quite challenging. Al-Ali (2008) witnessed that local citizens do not wish to accept working in private sectors due to long working hours, short annual leave, and the constraints on employees’ behaviour and performance. With the growing rate of unemployment, governments began to feel the pressure because the public sector
became flooded with citizens (De Boer & Turner, 2007) and left few job vacancies. Thus, as a solution, the Kuwaiti government focused on private sectors in lowering unemployment rates by developing the ‘Kuwaitization’ policy (Salih, 2010).

2.3.1 Kuwaitization Policy

According to Al-Humoud (1996), the growing number of Kuwaiti youths who are qualified to enter the labour market is quite substantial and such problem needs to be dealt with. As it is a self-imposed government obligation to provide all Kuwaitis with jobs in the public sector, it has led public sectors to hire individuals that are incompetent and do not necessarily possess the required qualifications. As stated in article 41 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, every Kuwaiti has the right to work in any profession provided by the state and is required to commit to the duties provided for the benefit of the public (Al-Awadhi, 2014). In 2001, a senior member of the Kuwaiti Government affirmed in an interview that the public sector hires too many nationals, even when there is no need for them (Northam, 2001). In addition, the interviewee also disclosed that Kuwaitis are spoiled by the welfare system (Northam, 2001), which in turn discourages any hard work from local citizens by depending on foreigners.

By over-employing employees in public departments, public sectors began to overlook individuals’ university degrees, regardless of their majors, except for some professions such as medicine and engineering during recruitment. Al-Shemeri (1997) declared that it is unfortunate that this problem has not been dealt with before and has been left for so long that it started to negatively impact the society. From Al-Dehany’s (2005) point of view, unemployment needs long-term resolutions that consider the “compatibility between the educational output (supply) and the requirements of the labour market (demand)” (Salih, 2010, p. 171).

In 1997, the Kuwaiti Civil Service Commission developed the localisation policy in an attempt to create jobs for local citizens by increasing local workforce intake in private sectors to 1% each year and 10% in public sectors. However, the percentages were increased throughout the years. In 2014, the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) secretary, Fauzi Al-Majdali, declared that the national labour quotas have increased in private sectors from 60 to 66% in banking sectors, 56 to 60 % in telecommunication services, 2 to 3% in the agricultural sector, 15 to 20% in real estate,
and 16 to 18\% in insurance services (Al-Jarida, 2014). Penalties were set for those who violated the policy. Even with the increase, some percentages seemed impossible to fulfil, as some jobs are viewed as not socially accepted for Kuwaitis due to cultural expectations. For an example, Kuwaitis refuse to work as a sale person or in agriculture, retail, food and hotel sectors, thus these jobs are fulfilled with expats instead (Fattahova, 2013).

The government witnessed that private sectors were not doing enough in recruiting Kuwaitis, which is why they imposed such quotas to make private companies hire more local citizens. However, since private sectors are profit driven, unemployment also became a problem because they were unable to secure Kuwaitis with jobs. This is because private sectors tend to search for the cheapest labour and have little interest in human resource development (Salih, 2010). Because many private companies view Kuwaitis as expensive, unmanageable, and lacking the required skills and work ethics, they continued to hire expats. A study by Madzikanda and Njoku (2008) concluded that numerous private sector managers are hesitant to recruit Kuwaitis due to efficiency concerns, high salary demands, and low levels of obedience. Nationals, on the other hand, believe that working in a private sector is insecure, as they could be fired anytime, unlike the public sector. In addition, Kuwaitis prefer to be rationally paid and work for a short period of time with generous incentives and retirement packages (Salih, 2010). Therefore, for this reason, they find it hard to accept private sector regulations, as a result they turn to the public sector for jobs.

Additionally, Salih (2010) concluded that many Kuwaitis would prefer to join the public sector rather than joining the private sector due to lower working hours. The most important element for Kuwaitis when seeking a job is high salary and low working hours. However, as explained by Jones (2005), the only reason why some Kuwaitis might consider the private sector is due to the creation of ‘social allowance,’ extra wage for citizens. Nonetheless, the private sector is nationally blind, since their requirements differ from those of the public sector. According to one participant in Salih’s (2010) study:

“The requirements of the private sector are different than those in the public sector. The private sector needs language [Arabic and English], it needs personality, it needs someone who can fit in a multi-cultural environment, and you
need to be somebody who can abide by policies, procedures, and values” (p. 178).

However, it was only until 2001 when Kuwaitization policy strength began to show when the government established the MGRP department to enforce the policy. MGRP’s objective was to train and motivate Kuwaitis to apply in private sectors and encourage companies to hire more citizens. Four years later, MGRP revised the policy for two years, which led to the Decision No. 955/2005 that further increased the percentage for some classes to 50%, while others are subjected to 100% mandatory Kuwaitization. It was not easy for MGRP to enforce the policy on organisations. One challenge that the government perceived was that private sectors were more male-driven, meaning that job vacancies in such sector targets only male citizens (Salih, 2010). Another aspect of the problem is Kuwait’s bureaucratic administrative system that values people who have wastā.

Since many organisations struggled to fulfil the quota policy, this has led to the appearance of the so-called ‘phantom employment’ in private sectors, now also witnessed in public sectors. This is where organisations recruit Kuwaitis and pay them monthly salaries to stay home just to fulfil the quota and to avoid paying any fines (Salih, 2010). Nevertheless, it was not until April 2014 when the Public Authority of Manpower inspected over 103 private companies and discovered 3340 phantom employees were paid salaries worth hundreds of thousands of Kuwaiti Dinars to scam the government into believing they were abiding by the Kuwaitization policy (Al-Sayed, 2015). For the first time in years, during 2015, the government took legal actions against those employees by stopping their monthly salaries as well as demanding a full refund or filing a lawsuit against them as a punishment (Al-Sayed, 2015). One main reason for the spread of such a phenomenon is due to the lack of effective follow-up from concerned authorities in inspecting companies (Al-Sayed, 2015).

To conclude, many Kuwaitis are unwilling to join the private sector since they have a choice to work in the public sector. Since the government is morally committed to employ all citizens, the door to public jobs will remain open. Not only does the government provide citizens with jobs, but they also provide other benefits, such as a full local and abroad education with generous allowances and free two-way travel tickets (Joyce, 2014). Another key reason that prevents Kuwaitis from working in private sectors is the long working hours. Hence, Kuwaitis still fears the Kuwaitization
scheme because they became used to the government “cushion” and such benefit do not exist in a privatised setting (Madzikanda & Njoku, 2008).

2.4 Conclusion

Kuwait is a unique place for the study to take place, as it has a substantial economic and strategic position in world affairs. However, Kuwait faces daily challenges in business operations due to its tradition and custom with regards to the practice of *wasta*. Hence, Kuwait was chosen as a case study to explore the extent of *wasta* in Middle Eastern organisations. One simple reason behind that choice is that the researcher is originally from and familiar with the culture. As proposed by Buckingham and Saunders (2004), individuals with similar backgrounds will usually share an extensive area of understanding, reducing incorrect conclusions and providing a great deal of data collection accessibility.

Moreover, since Kuwaitis are guaranteed a job in the public sector, their motivation for proficiency is usually weak or absent (Zafer, 1999). Furthermore, *wasta* seem to play a substantial role in showing preferential treatments in Kuwait. These “hidden” services, along with the employment policy, have generated what is called “masked or phantom unemployment” in almost every governmental and private establishment, which is also admitted by the Secretary General of the MGRP:

“I regret to admit that a considerable number of Kuwaitis currently registered in the private sector is not real. Out of the 12,000 people who joined the private sector in 2007, I would say around 4,000 of them are phantom employees” (Salih, 2010, p. 176).

In addition to the Secretary General of the MGRP, Al-Saleh (1996) went further and accused Members of Parliament (MPs) for the spread of *wasta* in employing unqualified and unneeded people in various departments. In Kuwait, individuals find it easier to seek and secure *wasta* due to their daily/weekly meets-ups and cultural norms. However, to date, there has been little in-depth organisational research on the impact of *wasta*. Hence, this research aims at exploring employees’ perception and to further understand *wasta* within the business context in the Middle East. The following chapter, chapter three, provides an in-depth insight into *wasta*. 
Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the literature of the research. It is divided into four sections. The first section addresses the research topic by briefly discussing the background and history of *wasta*. The second section discusses the contextual literature review of the research along with the Islamic perspective and the roles of homophily and altruism with regards to *wasta*. The third section explains related constructs and how similar they are to *wasta* in terms of business context. Lastly, the fourth section explains women’s perspective relating to *wasta*.

3.1 Section 1: Background

In some countries, formal procedures are overlooked; lack of transparency and accountability perseveres and responsibilities are given due to personal relationships (Kathawala et al., 2012). Arabic cultures are an example of such economy. The term “واﺳﻄﺔ” or “Wasta” is a very popular Arabic expression representing a social custom that is widely practiced in the Arab region. However, trying to define such a small phrase is quite challenging, as there are various definitions of *wasta* in previous studies. Table 3.1 provides several definitions of today’s *wasta*, as suggested by various scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hutchings and Weir (2006a)</td>
<td><em>Wasta</em> involves social network of interpersonal connections based on family and kinship relations and involves the use of influence and power through politico-business and social networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteoak et al. (2006)</td>
<td><em>Wasta</em> “relates to having special help to get ahead in life, help that may not be available to others who are potentially competing for the same resource, job, contract, promotion, or life chances” (p. 81).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loewe et al. (2007)</td>
<td>“Wasta is defined as the act of asking for or benefiting from preferential treatment instead of going through official channels” (p. 55).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adi (2014)</td>
<td>“Wasta is having the power of connections or who you know and employ it in gaining preferential treatment for a person who is ineligible for it” (p. 4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Wasta can be viewed as a source of nepotism, cronyism and corruption generally. It can be seen, especially by those who do not have Wasta, as a means to gain what seems an undeserved advantage or as a mechanism that yields decisions based on connections instead of merit as perceived by the one who is left out in the cold” (p. 42).

“Wasta is an Arabic term that refers to an implicit social contract, typically within a tribal group, which obliges those within the group to provide assistance (favorable treatment) to others within the group. Members of the group have a largely unqualified obligation to provide assistance when asked, and those who ask for assistance have no obligation to provide direct compensation for assistance provided” (p. 41).

Table 3.1: Definition of Wasta

As demonstrated in table 3.1, each scholar has defined *wasta* differently, but they all agreed that *wasta* involves granting deserved or often undeserved privileges to others through personal contacts. To better understand the term, *wasta* is broken down into two categories based on the nature of its activity. The first type is intermediary *wasta*, which is used to resolve relational and in-group disputes by referring to the tribal sheikh (leader of the tribe). The second type, which is the focus of this research, is intercessory *wasta*. Intercessory *wasta* “involves the intervention of a central character or protagonist in favour of a certain individual with the aim of gaining an advantage for that individual, such as obtaining a job, gaining admission to university, or securing a promotion” (Tlaiss & Kauser 2011, p. 470).

Guthrie (1998) stated that the only reason such notion exist is due to lack of institutional support in the terms of strong laws, flexible policies, and transparency that does not guarantee equal opportunities (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009; Weir et al., 2016). This, in turn, drives additional reliance on family connections and *wasta* in providing opportunities (Abuznaid, 2006; Al-Ramahi, 2008; El-Siad & Harrigan, 2009). Since the Arab culture is grounded on personal connections between individuals, it is hard for individuals to say ‘no’ in person without feeling and causing discomfit. As a result, a person is said to “have *wasta*” when he/she requests help from influential people that could make his/her request possible/granted. With the right connection, *wasta* can solve any problem. One commentator, from a research by Feghali (2014), described *wasta* as a magical lubricant that eases the way to employments, advancements, university acceptance, and much more in businesses and governmental practices.
Today, the popularity of *wasta* within the Arab society is considered by many as an intrinsic tool of the culture and a method of doing business transactions (Meles, 2007). As *wasta* evolved, it became intensely rooted in the Arab culture and is often seen as a family obligation. In conclusion, due to being an obligation and daily practice in the Middle East, “*wasta* has [now] become a right and expectation” in Arab societies (Meles, 2007, p. 16).

### 3.1.1 History of Wasta

*Wasta*, also known as “Vitamin W” or “Vitamin WAW”, initially comes from an Arabic origin referring to the middle. As a noun, it refers to an intercessor and is roughly interpreted as a connection, networking, or influence. According to Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993), the term *wasta* originates from the term *waseet*, which means a middleman. The main idea behind middlemen is to act as an intercessor for two individuals. However, in spoken Arabic, the word *wasta* refers to both the act and the person (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993; Ali, 2016). Moreover, the concept of *wasta* is divided into three stages: (1) the requesters of *wasta* (those making claims), (2) the possessors of *wasta* (those agreeing to the claims), and (3) the initial resources (granted claims) (Portes, 1998).

Even though identifying a period when *wasta* first came into existence is very challenging, it has been a custom in many Arab countries for centuries. In Kuwait, since the culture is tribalistic in nature, the tribal system impacts the role of individuals and decision-making in organisations. Thus, connections in the Arab world are affected by the capacity of an individual or an entity in having the ability to move within the right means of power and influence to achieve something (Metcalfé, 2006). To better understand the concept of *wasta*, the evolution and reasons for using it will be discussed.

#### 3.1.1.1 The Evolution of Wasta

Over time, the meaning and use of *wasta* has changed from its original conception. Its main purpose evolved from “defusing tribal conflict to acquiring economic benefits” (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993, p. 209) and the role of the middlemen (*waseet*) was eliminated. Meaning, the requestors of *wasta* went directly to the providers of *wasta*. However, despite the evolution of *wasta*, it is important to state that the wellbeing of
families and tribes remained the main factor in the practice of *wasta*. This has also affected government officials when making certain decisions because they are divided between granting their families and relatives services, and obeying the law. In a Kuwaiti Magazine, Kipco Life, AlAyyar blames his generation, government, and MPs for impacting Kuwait’s development due to *wasta* by stating:

“I declare the failure of my generation to take our country to the next level. We promise more than we can achieve. We love bureaucracy. We encourage *Wasta* (nepotism). We do not know how to stand in line. We waste money, energy, water... but we sing nice songs of how much we love our country! We must blame society, in other words, us. So, I apologize for my generation, for encouraging corruption, for making *Wasta* the way of life and not investing enough in education and work ethics” (AlAyyar, 2014, p. 5).

However, AlAyyar (2014) believed that the situation could be solved and is not hopeless by encouraging the younger and upcoming generations to step up and not be pulled down by his generation, as he states, “do not accept being in the box of government jobs. Do not be discouraged by bureaucracy. Do not fall into the trap of safe jobs. When you vote, do not vote for family, tribe or religion - but vote for the interests of our country” (AlAyyar, 2014, p. 5).

### a. Past versus present

There is a mixed understanding of *wasta* within various cultures, as the concept has evolved with time and its practice has become more common. Hence, it has transformed from what it was in the past versus what it is in the present (Berger et al., 2014; Weir et al., 2016). Traditionally, *wasta* was used as a source of intermediation between families to solve disputes. The head of the family, known as the sheikh or the elder, acts as the waseet (middleman) to reconcile and negotiate any issues between conflicting groups. By doing so, *wasta* improved and maintained the unity, reliability, and status of both tribal groups.

However, today *wasta* is all about personal benefits. Below are a few points of differences between the past versus present in terms of *wasta*.

- Historically, the possessor of *wasta*’s highest reward was respect. Thus, “success
in solving a conflict led to praise and enhanced the popularity and social and political status of the whole tribe” (El-said & Harrigan, 2009, p. 1238). Today, the possessor of wasta considers it as a good deed and the receiver of wasta believes that it is his/her right.

- With the old wasta, it worked from top to bottom and the role of the intermediary (middleman) was important. However, with the new wasta, the role of the intermediary is diminished and wasta works from bottom to the top (Barnett et al., 2013).

- Traditionally, few people had wasta. Today, its practice has become more common since everyone is believed to have some sort of wasta. The new concept of wasta led Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) to describe it as a “contract-based wasta, a process which not only leads to further isolation and exclusion of the poor, but also keeps the doors (and pockets) of officials wide open for bribery and corruption” (p. 14).

b. Reasons for Using Wasta

Most people in the Arab world are aware of the history of wasta, how it evolved over the centuries, and how the purpose of wasta has been taken advantage of. In research conducted by Omar (2012) in Saudi Arabia, respondents admitted to either using wasta or being providers of wasta. However, that does not mean that they are fond of wasta, as one participant stated, “I resent it because it is unfair. It is hard not to use it when everyone else is because the laws don’t necessarily mean you will be treated fairly, and I don’t want my kids to ever get used to using it” (Omar, 2012, n.p.). Moreover, those who are against wasta believe that individuals should face any situation they encounter by following the system instead of finding the easy way out. To support the above statement, Thamer Ali Al Sana’a, a lawyer activist, once said, “the phenomenon of the wasta influence is strongly rejected by a large segment of the Kuwaiti society as a social illness that undermines the values of equality and social justice” (Toumi, 2012, n.p.). Hence, the main question to be addressed is why do people use wasta if they are against it?

According to Adi (2014), the reason why most Arabs started using wasta because some of the systems in the Arab countries became corrupted and wasta-based instead of merit-based due to lacking transparency, accountability, or credibility. That addressed,
“one needs *wasta* in order not to be cheated in the market place, in locating and acquiring a job, in resolving conflict and legal litigation, in writing court decisions, in speeding governmental action and establishing and maintaining political influence, bureaucratic procedures, in finding a bride…” (Al-Ramahi, 2008, p. 36). Additionally, due to injustice, people stopped abiding the law (Allan, 2009). This is because corruption encourages people to depart from founded rules and regulations, and thus people started losing confidence in the system. This, in turn, lead people to disobey rules frequently (Hooker, 2008).

Furthermore, *wasta* emerged due to inequality in the financial system. People believed that if they used *wasta*, they would not be deceived into paying a large sum of money for transaction costs. Hence, having *wasta* could simply reduce or eliminate costs (Brandstaetter, 2014). This is because, “*wasta* take the form of an administrative service that handles procedures and documents” (Hooker, 2008, p. 14) and it is a tool that contributes to personal trust and enhance the chance of having a successful cooperation (Weir & Hutchings, 2005; Leenders, 2012; Abbas et al., 2014; Brandstaetter, 2014). As a result, people seek out *wasta* as a resolution in Kuwait because it is known that well-connected Kuwaitis can influence decision making in a way that benefits them in the short as well as in the long term.

However, many Arab societies believe that *wasta* is benevolent. It is said that *wasta* is a ‘poor people’s weapon’ that they pursue to receive fair treatments when they do not have the right means to deal with authorities efficiently (Whitaker, 2009). Hakim Harb, a film producer, once stated in an interview, “when we live in a real society, progressive, and civilised, and when we live in an atmosphere filled with freedoms, democracy and human rights, everyone will obtain his/her rights and the right people will be in the right places without the need for any form of help” (Whitaker, 2009, p.11). Hence, the hunt for *wasta*, according to Pawelka and Boeckh (2004), does not necessarily signify material benefits, but to immaterial subjects as well such as “advantages and privileges that might enhance the well-being or social status of a person seeking it” (p. 40).

As a result, the phenomenon of using *wasta* is still in practice because it is embedded in the social culture of the society due to weak economic conditions and corrupt political conditions (Adi, 2014). As revealed by Bachkirov et al. (2015), people mainly
started using and giving *wasta* because it is viewed as an expectation and obligation, a source of psychological satisfaction from using one’s power, and a tool of expanding and maintaining one’s network into securing present and future favours. Therefore, people will always seek *wasta* (Bachkirov et al., 2015).

### 3.2 Section 2: Contextual Literature

In Arab societies, the recognition of *wasta* is considered to be an essential strategy. It has been a hidden force until recent years where it became visible in the eyes of Arab societies and is now revealed to the wider world. *Wasta* is much more than just a connection, rather it is the use of social connections to secure personal advantages. As Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) stated, the limitation of *wasta* does not end at a specific sector of human interaction. Instead, it extends to every sector in the country from governments, academics, and health services to business sectors. Ezzedeen and Sweircz (2001) further support the above statement by discovering that 65% of employees were hired for real jobs through *wasta* in the second largest telecommunications company in Lebanon.

Social connections refer to a bond between two individuals with mutual understanding, consciousness, and social communication (Seppala et al., 2013). Having communications means that two individuals are emotionally linked to each other in a sense that it gives a connection a time-based dimension (Seppala et al., 2013). Hence, individuals build connections between one another to access and exchange commodities that were once unattainable to them, since “connections are vehicles for resources and reward exchanges, which in turn create and strengthen power” (Heaphy & Dutton, 2003, p. 269). Thus, strong relationships result from how deep people can acquire valuable commodities (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011). The more individuals obtain such resources, the stronger their relationship will be and vice versa. While connections are made between individuals, their intensity varies from one individual to another, depending on the nature of the activity and the interaction that takes place (O’Donnell, 2004). Hence, connections are like friendships in terms of characteristics, such as trust, honesty, support, encouragement, and social acceptance. For instance, when one person loses trust in his/her friend, they would not depend on him/her again. It is the same with connections.
In addition to that, as the practice of *wasta* became visible, the system in the country depends on *wasta* to get things done (Alenezi, 2013). That said, *wasta* may affect the development of Arab societies in terms of social, political, and economic development (Loewe, 2011). Firstly, in terms of social development, *wasta* may deepens socio-economic inequalities. Previous researchers already concluded that *wasta* is for the privileged segment of the society, as it is unattainable for the poor or the weak segment (Makhoul & Harrison, 2004). People with no or little *wasta* are deprived of many privileges that *wasta* can offer, such as higher income, better education, and better living conditions (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). Consequently, due to not having the right connection, individuals have fewer chances in getting good jobs to improve their living conditions.

Secondly, *wasta* can create or maintain dependencies in political development. Most government services are based on connections rather than merits, as the perpetrators grant favours for the intended beneficiary and receive loyalty in return (Loewe, 2011). The National Democratic Institute noted that in Kuwait, MPs were required to use *wasta* to get things done (Kinninmont, 2012); therefore, distracting them from their governmental and occupational duties by “wasting their time running around different ministries to obtain favours for their constituents, and lamented a lack of focus on a ‘national interest’” (Kinninmont, 2012, p. 9).

Lastly, *wasta* can impact investments, which in turn influences the economic development of the country. Empirical studies argued that connections have a positive effect on investments due to their characteristics, such as trust and exchange of information, and thereby decrease transaction costs (Giannetti & Yu, 2007). Thus, when information is undependable and expensive, investors do not have sufficient inducements to explore distant investment opportunities, and hence they choose to deal with entrepreneurs they know. This above statement is reasonable, as “business people who have good connections trust the state if somebody in the public administration takes care of their concern” (Loewe, 2011, n.p.). As a result, due to unfairness, people with no or little *wasta* might discontinue or reduce the amount of their investments in the future. This, in turn, affects the economic development of the country.

To date, few empirical studies have examined the influence of *wasta* either on organisations that practice it or employees who are affected by it. For many years now,
most studies focused on the negative aspects of *wasta* in different Arab societies (e.g., Loewe et al., 2007; Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008; Mohamed & Mohamed, 2011; Barnett et al., 2013; Sidani & Thornberry 2013; Frijns, 2016; Brandstaetter et al., 2016; Kropf & Newbury-Smith, 2016; Weir et al., 2016). However, *wasta* has its benefits, such as trust building (Weir & Hutchings, 2005; Brandstaetter et al., 2016), accomplishing resources and goals (Carrie & Van Buren, 1999; Flap, 2002), getting jobs (Fernandez et al., 2000), accessing information (Granovetter, 2005), and achieving a better quality of life (Woolcock, 1998). According to Kropf & Newbury-Smith (2016), “it is, however, important not to mistake the frequent complaints about *wasta* by people in the Middle East as a proof that it is an ill only. When it works against them, people in the Arab world condemn *wasta* as readily as they freely use it when it works to their advantage’ (p. 21).

Therefore, even though the concept of *wasta* in general is not new or under-researched, the precise concept of understanding how *wasta* influences employees and organisations is still in its infancy. Although other *wasta*-like notions have been researched, there are few/no research papers that specifically discuss the impact of *wasta* on organisations and employees in Kuwait. To better comprehend *wasta*, the religious background of Islamic principles and the roles of altruism and homophily will be discussed to clarify the social relevance of *wasta* in the Arab world, as the role of such principles defines moral decision-making (Kathawala et al., 2012).

### 3.2.1 Islamic Perspective

One of the most significant and influential sources of cultural values and practices in Arab societies that shape and controls individuals’ behaviour, perspectives, and attitudes is Islam (Kalliny & Gentry, 2007; Shahin & Wright, 2004; Obeidat et al., 2012). Islam significantly impacts social behaviour as well as governmental issues and businesses in Arab societies (Ali, 1992; Bakhtari, 1995; Robertson & Al-Khatib, 2001). Its most prominent accomplishment is joining Arabs and Arab tribes into a single dynamic country (Sabri, 2011). The significance of the family is reflected in the duty of Islam (Rice, 1999), which requests that Muslims cooperate with each other and take care of their relatives (Abuznaid, 2006; Al-Hussan, 2011). The Islamic religion has not only impacted social values and practices, but also the legal system of Arab societies in
which the Islamic Law, Al-Shari'a, has served as a main “religion-administrative force for centuries” (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2002, p. 45).

Islam educates its adherents to have business and work connections that depend on honesty, trust, participation, cooperation, consultation, maintaining of promises, and fulfilment of agreements (Al-Hussan, 2011). The Qur'an and the prophet's prescriptions guide Muslims in conducting their business and family matters fairly (Ali & Azim, 1996). In addition, in the Islamic context, *wasta* benefits people who are in need without harming other parties during the process. However, in Arab societies, *wasta* has become inconsistent with Islamic rules regarding recruitment and other daily business decisions (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011). Islam emphasises the importance of recruitment based on merits and qualifications and not based on *wasta*. In the Quran, it is stated that during the recruitment process, “the best that you can hire is one who is competent and trustworthy” (Quran 28, 26). Furthermore, Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) also stated, “he who is in a leadership position and appoints knowingly a person who is not qualified to manage, then he violates the command of God and His messenger” (Ali, 2005, p. 191).

Moreover, in the Islamic context, *wasta* is considered ethical when all intercessions are used to lift injustice, to deliver the right of the owner, to reconcile the litigants, and to advise others. Basically, it involves having the interest of the requester without causing harm to others (Al-Hussan, 2011). However, *wasta* is seen as unethical when the intercession results in harm, inequality, and injustice to the right of a person, and gives that right to an undeserved-unqualified individual (Al-Jahwari & Budhwar, 2016). Despite its violation of Islam, using *wasta* for recruitment is widely spread in the Arab region. According to Dr. Badran, “that’s how *wasta* spread and gave birth to thousands of unqualified and unproductive employees who do nothing but wait for their salaries at the end of the month” (Whitaker, 2009, p. 10), which could also be explained by the roles of altruism and homophily.

### 3.2.2 The Role of Altruism and Homophily

Since the beginning of modern psychology, psychological philosophers have highlighted the significance of social connections for well-being and survival. Previous researchers have claimed that social connections are crucial psychological necessities and inspiration for development and survival (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hart et al.,
In addition, previous research on social connections now confirms that there is a link between networking, altruism, and homophily (see Singh et al., 2010; Kleinbaum et al., 2011; Curry & Dunbar, 2011; Seppala et al., 2013). According to Festinger (1950), people would tend to use those who they engage and formulate a relationship with as a reference group to advance in their jobs and access knowledge that was once unachievable. This is also confirmed by Burt (1982) and Friedkin (1993). As a result, those with intrinsically similar traits are more likely to have an interpersonal connection and help each other. This, in turn, increases their altruistic and homophilious behaviour towards each other. The section below further addresses the role of altruism and homophily regarding connections.

### 3.2.2.1 The Role of Altruism

To date, there has been little research on the effect of social networks in influencing the act of altruism. Altruism is defined as a behaviour that is aimed to help a certain person in face-to-face circumstances (Smith et al., 1983). Due to networking being viewed as a social value in Arab cultures, individuals within the same inner circle develop a strong emotional attachment to care and help one another, thus creating an altruistic-local behaviour rather than altruistic-distant behaviour. Altruistic-distant behaviour is helping others voluntarily that are not necessarily within one’s circle, whereas altruistic-local behaviour is helping others that are only personally associated to one other (Lee, 2013).

There are several factors that influence the level of altruism. Firstly, the size of the connection. This is where connected individuals are more likely to show more altruistic behaviour towards other members of the network. Secondly, similar to *wasta*, altruism is also influenced by the “expectation of reciprocity and the expectation of future interaction, and is contingent upon others’ continued cooperation” (Curry & Dunbar, 2011, p. 651). Thirdly, the level of altruism does not only depend on the size of the network, but also on individuals’ reputation within the network. Continuously, within such networks, well-connected individuals are under the impression that others are watching them, which might “increase their incentive to reciprocate altruism (in terms of positive reputation), and decrease their incentive to cheat (in terms of negative reputation, and sanctions or punishment)” (Curry & Dunbar, 2011, p. 651). For such reasons, they become more supportive and are more willing to participate in reciprocal
altruism. Nonetheless, it is very possible that social connections facilitate and promote altruism in other ways too, such as helping others simply because of having access to more valuable resources, based on good deeds.

3.2.2.2 The Role of Homophily

Homophily in social connections is widely documented and it is caused by both individual preferences and unequal opportunities for communication. Homophily is defined as the propensity for an individual to associate with others that are like them in terms of attributes (e.g., race, gender) and values (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). Previous organisational scholars have determined the existence of different traits of homophily in businesses (see Ibarra, 1993; Lincoln & Miller, 1979; Mehra et al., 1998). Such traits develop when individuals gravitate towards others based on similar attributes or values. Additionally, homophily, just like wasta, is known to be an influencing factor in performance and career advancement. Within time, people will prefer developing relationships with higher status individuals due to enhancing their access to resources (Ely, 1995; Ibarra, 1995). In this situation, the challenge is to identify an intermediary who could be in power as it is a significant career strategy.

There are many reasons why people engage in homophilous behaviours. The first reason is due to familiarity. For instance, two individuals that share one or more traits, such as age or gender, may prefer to engage with one another due to ease of communication. Another reason is trust. For an example, asking help from a trustworthy individual discloses that the person lacks certain knowledge and exposes oneself to the chance of an unfavourable judgment (Edmondson, 1999). Thus, it is easier to contact someone within the networking circle than someone outside the circle, even if the outsider “could potentially be in a better position to act as an intermediary” (Singh et al., 2010, p. 13). Moreover, one surprising factor for having a positive homophilous behaviour in social connections is the positive effect it has on knowledge sharing. A crucial mechanism through which personal similarities motivate knowledge sharing is the principle that similar people are prone to communicate more extensively and deeply than dissimilar ones. “The more extensive interaction there is between two people, the more opportunities they have for both intentional and serendipitous knowledge sharing” (Makela et al., 2012, p. 442). Accordingly, in organisations, homophily promotes communication, obligation, and trust.
However, homophily limits people’s social interaction in a way by limiting their access to powerful and useful information. This is because people will always be a few connections away from the most ideal information they seek. In addition to benefiting some people more than others, limited connections could adversely impact one’s performance level, career advancements, and pay (Uzzi et al., 2007). The above statement is also supported by previous work done by Granovetter (1973) who discovered that those who are linked to weak connections (i.e. having connections across social, geographical, and other specific identity lines, also known as bridging social capital) have more advantages than those linked to strong/limited connections (i.e. having a very tight-knit network of few close relative/friends, also known as bonding social capital). This is largely because only weak ties are local bridges, which therefore reduces path lengths and speed diffusion (Granovetter, 1973). Figuratively speaking, a local bridge is a link between two nodes in a network that has the fastest and shortest routes for information to travel from person to another (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). This, in turn, increases an individual’s chance of accessing resources and job opportunities. As a result, being in a diffused network enhances one’s chance of reaching a larger number of people, navigating greater social distance, and accessing wider range of information, as opposed to strong ties (Granovetter, 1973).

3.2.3 Wasta and Recruitment

*Wasta* is known to play a critical role in the recruitment process in many Arab organisations. Several studies highlighted the impact of networking on recruitment and career advancement, including those done by Davidson and Cooper (1992), Morrison (1992), Ragins et al. (1998), Cleveland et al. (2000), Singh et al. (2006), and Ogden et al. (2006). The size of the *wasta* network is the primary influence on the extent of unattainable achievements. Milgram (1967, 1969) has studied one aspect of this subject and established that it requires only a small number of intermediary links to connect random pairs of individuals along a chain of personal connections. Thus, it is safe to say that social access depends on the number of people an individual knows.

Furthermore, as the network expands, accessible services through personal networks become quite significant. For an example, due to competition, before one applies for a job vacancy, he/she will seek out *wasta* to improve his/her chance of getting hired. However, because many people have access to *wasta* nowadays, the person with the
strongest *wasta* usually gets the position without considering his/her qualifications (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011; Tlaiss & Elamin, 2016). According to Mohamed & Mohamad (2011), “since having strong *wasta* requires connections, *wasta* may create a reinforcing cycle where the powerful receive the resources while the weak become weaker” (p. 412). That said, *wasta* is one of the reasons for unequal job opportunities, since succeeding or failing depends on the scale and scope of a person’s *wasta* (Berger et al., 2015). As competition increases, the importance of *wasta* also increases. Therefore, there are four elements that contributes to the importance of *wasta* in today’s Arab Societies, which are as follows:

- Many people feel helpless and do not wish to take the trouble to go through the entire administrative processes so they use *wasta* to bypass processes to ensure their success of reaching their goals;
- There are no incentives deterring people from using *wasta*;
- Due to tribalism, people feel obligated to support their family and friends;
- The entire political systems in Arab societies are developed on a hierarchy of social capital as every politician depends on networking to attain power and maintain their position (Loewe, 2011).

Table 3.2 provide examples and explanations of some Arab proverbs that evidently prove the importance of *wasta*. Such proverbs either support the use of *wasta* or praise its advantages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“He who has a back will not be hit on his stomach” (p. 56)</td>
<td>Those who are supported by strong others will not be put down or rejected. Only the unconnected or unsupported are punished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lucky is the person who the governor is his uncle” (p. 505)</td>
<td>People who are related to important others (especially in government) are fortunate, as they will have their demands or needs fulfilled. People serve those that are related to important people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Seek who you know, so that your needs will be fulfilled” (p. 32)</td>
<td>People tend to serve those that they know. Without knowing anybody, you will have difficulty getting the service you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you have a turban, you will have a safe trip” (p. 106)</td>
<td>The turban symbolises a senior respected person. If you know a senior person, your demands will be met. This proverb is similar to the second proverb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No one can escalate except those who have a ladder” (p. 107)</td>
<td>Rising to high levels requires important connections. Receiving important privileges or benefits is contingent upon using the right connections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.2: Examples of Arab Proverbs on Wasta (Source: Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011, p. 415)*
However, the main negative consequence of *wasta* is not based on *wasta*-based hiring, but the failure to train, encourage, supervise, direct, and if necessary, terminate an employee (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1994). Rewards are based on how strong a person’s *wasta* is, overlooking the person’s performance and efficiency in the organisation (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1994). The problem with most Arab societies is not education, but the growth of low-skilled paid jobs that had to prevail due to high unemployment rates (McGinley, 2013). Low-skilled jobs are caused in two ways, (1) there are menial level jobs that need to be done, e.g. domestic services, and (2) due to the growth of service sectors that created many low paid jobs, e.g. retail. The key issue is that Middle Eastern/ Kuwaiti nationals will not do these jobs (Stephenson & Al-Hamarneh, 2017). In the United Arab Emirates, young unemployed youths are waiting for the elimination of *wasta* when it comes to employment (McGinley, 2013). As the UN News Centre (2013) stated, “the real issue is the need for jobs with social dignity rather than jobs that come at the expense of dignity” (n.p.).

### 3.3 Section 3: Related Constructs

This section is divided into four subsections. The first subsection explains social capital. The second subsection examines *wasta* with regards to business ethics. The third subsection explains international comparisons and how they are related to *wasta*. The fourth subsection discusses different concepts of global networking.

#### 3.3.1 Social Capital

Social capital is a significant concept in explaining and understanding how social constructs and informal networks shape political, social, and business practices (Ali et al., 2015). It is a significant phenomenon not only in Kuwait, but in almost every society worldwide (see Kuehnast & Dudwick, 2004; World Bank, 2002). Putnam (1995) identified social capital as a resource coming out of a civic responsibility because it can build community alliances by helping people establish a sense of connection through membership and shared work on civic projects. “To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is these others, not himself, who are the actual source of his/her advantage” (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001, p. 60). The presence of networks and connotations are important for the formation of social capital. Hence, social capital is an informal practice by which individuals exchange resources, such as talents and
favours, for social and economic opportunities. It is often labelled as one of the three categories: intellectual capital, human capital, and organisational capital. Intellectual capital is theorised as all knowledge-based skills used by organisations to gain competitive advantage (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Youndt et al., 2004). Human capital implies to employee’s knowledge, abilities, and aptitudes (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Lastly, organisational capital is the knowledge established within organisational processes that they use to store and recollect (Carmona-Lavado et al., 2009; Hall, 1992; Wright et al, 2001). The theory behind social capital is to provide benefits to others by tapping into resources embedded through such networks (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 1999).

Furthermore, there are three levels of social capital within each network and each level provides a different benefit. At the individual level, social capital can enhance career success (Burt, 1992; Gabbay & Zuckerman, 1998) and opportunities for the formation of intellectual capital (Hargadon & Sutton, 1997; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Thus, belonging to a network makes a person more visible in their occupation for promotions and career advancement. At the firm level, social capital can provide exchanged information, enhance innovation, reduce transaction costs, assist entrepreneurship and the establishment of start-up organisations, and reinforce supplier relations and inter-firm education (Chong & Gibbons, 1997; Hansen, 1998; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). At the national level, social capital influences the economic development and growth of organisations as well as societies (Putnam, 1993; Knack and Keefer, 1997). Despite elaborating on the three levels of social capital, the main concentration of this research is firm and individual levels.

Moreover, there are three basic functions of social capital that are appropriate for multiple contexts: (1) as a source of social control, (2) as a source of kinship, and (3) as a source of preferential treatment through family networks. Additionally, social capital consists of networks that are essential for business contexts in any culture worldwide. This kind of network assists in forming formal and informal organisations. While formal organisations are developed by written guidelines and codes, informal organisations are developed by unwritten authority mechanism that relies heavily on trust through idiosyncratic activities of individuals and kinships (Granovetter, 2005). Since the main characteristic of social capital is trust, when trust exists between members, favours and resources are exchanged (Weir & Hutchings, 2005). In addition
to trust, social support is another important characteristic of networking and social
capital that has been recognised by early researchers. The structure of a social support
affects the function and activities of a certain network. For example, social support
provided by friends is different to that provided by families. According to Wan et al.
(1996), there are four types of social support, which are as follows:

- **Emotional support**: networks of this type value and support a person with
  personal and professional experience. Such support demonstrates itself in
  specified actions, such as trust, anxiety, listening, as well as improving an
  individual’s self-esteem. However, this kind of support is more likely to be
  provided by women than men in most cultures (Campbell & Lee, 1990) and
  relatives than friends (Wellman & Wortley, 1989).

- **Informational support**: networks of this type support individuals into retrieving
  information that will help them enhance their business and reinforce their
  capacities. Such support is demonstrated in actions such as guidance,
  recommendations, and direction (Wan et al., 1996).

- **Companionship support**: friends, acquaintance, colleagues, etc., provide such
  support to ease one’s pain or reduce one’s stress through positive sentimental
  moods. This type of support is demonstrated in actions like spending time with
  them, doing stress-free activities, looking after each other, and providing
  affiliation.

- **Material (tangible) support**: usually relatives provide this kind of support by
  bestowing several types of resources required to run a business. Such support
  includes financial and workforce support.

On top of that, there are three traditional and informal principal types of social capital
that influence the way business transactions and relationships are guided that has been
anticipated as significant but culturally idiosyncratic, which are guanxi in China, wasta
in the Arab World, and favouritism. These practices occur in contexts categorised by
having “high self-enhancement values, low self-transcendence values, and high
endorsement of business corruptibility” (Smith et al., 2011, p. 3). However, before
moving on to international comparisons (subsection 3.3.3), it is best to define wasta
within business ethics. Since wasta evolved over time, perspectives with regards to
wasta began to question whether the practice is still considered ethical. Thus,
addressing the issue within the business context is vital, as the focus of this research is to know how wasta influences organisations and employees.

3.3.2 Business Ethics and Wasta

Business ethics are culturally specific and what is considered unethical in one culture may be considered ethical in another. Business ethics, by definition, is a set of acceptable rules that determine how people or organisations should behave in the business world (Velentzas & Broni, 2010). Determining how to conduct a business correctly can be challenging sometimes. Governments and societies have focused on encouraging appropriate business transactions due to wrongdoings by organisations (Ferrell & Hirt, 2002).

Businesses should not merely focus on profits, but also should consider the social consequences of their actions. Social responsibility is when organisations maximise positive effects and minimise negative effects on societies (Ferrell & Hirt, 2002). However, ethics and social responsibilities do not mean the same thing. Ethics is related to people’s decisions, whereas social responsibility is a wider concept that looks at how organisational activities affect the entire society. Understanding how to acknowledge ethical issues is fundamental to understand business ethics. An ethical issue is when an individual chooses from various actions to deal with an action that might be evaluated as right or wrong, ethical or unethical (Ferrell & Hirt, 2002). In businesses, it is usually weighing benefits against consequences. Clearly, there is no easy way to make such decisions.

Since ethics is related to an individual’s context with regards to making daily decisions and providing reasons for the actions made, it is divided into three areas: (1) Meta-ethics that deals with the nature of right and wrong, (2) normative ethics that deals with values used to govern whether an action is right or wrong, and (3) applied ethics that deals with the actual use of ethical values in a specific situation (Bonde et al., 2009). In general, when addressing an ethical issue, it is quite challenging to define a specific issue as ethical or unethical in practice or even make a good argument about what is good and what is bad. Making a good decision does not necessarily mean following rules and laws because laws are not necessarily always ethical (Duquenoy et al., 2008). For instance, paying minimum wage to full-time employees that do not cover their day-
to-day expenses, leaving them in debt is considered unethical. It depends on how people interpret the meaning of ethics. Most people may have a clear definition of distinguishing between ethical and unethical decisions. However, they often do not know how to explain their course of actions because people base their actions on instincts, wisdom, experience, common sense, etc. (Duquenoy et al., 2008).

Even when people recognise and encounter an ethical issue, it is challenging for them to know what type of action to take and then decide whether the action taken was the right choice (Johnson, 2009). Hence, most of the ethical issues related to businesses are classified with relations to conflicts of interest, fairness and honesty, communications, and business relationships (Ferrell & Hirt, 2002). A conflict of interest may arise when a person must decide whether to advance his or her personal interest over others (Doht, 2017). For instance, *wasta* may be considered as a conflict of interest because it may benefit a person at the expense of others. Additionally, integrity and honesty “are at the heart of business ethics and relate to the general values of decision makers” (Ferrell & Hirt, 2002, p. 35). Honesty refers to telling the truth and acting in accordance with the law, whereas integrity provides a non-discriminating environment where employees have equal opportunities (Ferrell et al., 2009). It is well recognised that business people are expected to follow rules and regulations, but are expected not to harm others through discriminations, dishonesty, and distortion.

Communication is another aspect in which ethical disputes may arise (Vangelisti et al., 2013). For an example, false and misleading information could lead to failure of business transactions. Another aspect is business relationships (Ferrell et al., 2009). The way business people act towards others in the workplace may also raise ethical concerns. Ethical behaviour may involve avoiding unethical behaviour, such as keeping companies’ information private. Managers are particularly responsible for raising such awareness due to their position and power, thus they have the influence of impacting on employees’ actions (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Hence, it is managers’ responsibility to create a working environment that supports organisational goals ethically. Managers who do not offer ethical working environments may witness an increase in deception, conflict of interest, and manipulation between employees (Ferrell & Hirt, 2002). Regarding social responsibilities, it is the organisation’s responsibility towards employees to treat them fairly and equally as well as providing a safe working
environment. Therefore, ethics is a theoretical concept that is unique and an ambiguous topic of discussion. Hence, two ethical theories will be addressed that are useful in making decisions, which are Kantianism and Utilitarianism.

### 3.3.2.1 Ethical theories

#### a. Kantianism

Immanuel Kant developed Kantianism by suggesting that the idea of right or wrong and ethical practices lies within people, and people behave ethically based on whether they could visualise others doing the same act (Kant, 1993). This idea is embedded within a ‘categorical imperative’ arguing that people should make decisions based on maxim (i.e. intentions) and consider what will happen if the actions taken became a universal law based on precedent (Lacewing, 2015). However, Kant (1993) also believed the acts that people view as wrong would always remain wrong no matter what the circumstances are. Accordingly, it is peoples’ underlying motive that determines whether their acts were in fact good or bad (Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2011). Therefore, people should bear in mind three formulae when deciding based on Kant’s theory:

- **Formula of autonomy:** people should act as if their maxim was a universal law of nature (Guyer, 2000). This means that people need to consider what will happen when everyone starts doing the same action.

- **Formula of respect and dignity of persons:** people should treat others rationally and not as a mere means to an end (Sullivan, 1994). This means that people should value others based on who they are and not just use them for their personal benefits. In other words, people should treat others the same way they would like to be treated.

- **Formula of legislation for a moral community:** people should act as if their maxim would “harmonise with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature” (Kant, 1964, p. 436). This means that people should select their values as though they were authorising for a ‘kingdom of ends.’ A kingdom of ends is a world where people treat each other morally and harmony through enforced laws (Aune, 2014).
b. Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism, sometimes called consequentialism, was developed by Jeremy Bentham in 1789 and later modified by John Stuart Mill in 1861 (Bonde et al., 2009). The theory states that an action can be classified as good or bad depending on the amount of happiness/pleasure and/or pain it produces, regardless of social restraints and personal feelings (Eggleston, 2012). A good action is one that produces the most benefit to the greatest number of individuals (Duquenoy et al., 2008). For an example, wasta could be argued as the right action to undertake, if the outcome of wasta was good. Hence, the theory is based on consequences predicted of an act and the act that yields the most negative consequences is the one that is ethically wrong. In simpler words, it deals with the consequences of an act rather than the act itself (Tanner et al., 2008). There are two types of utilitarianism: (1) act utilitarianism, which is the same as the definition of utilitarianism, and (2) rule utilitarianism, which is concerned with the law and equality. Thus, rule utilitarianism seeks the benefit of others with regards to justice and fairness (Ridley, 1998).

However, the problem with utilitarianism is that predicting future outcomes is not easy. Even when using life experiences, no prediction will ever be true (Rainbow, 2002). This uncertainty leads to unexpected desired or undesired results making utilitarianism unethical, if the actions made did not benefit the majority of people (Penslar, 1995). This confirms that even when people make decisions that bring out the most benefit to others with the least harm, some will still be against it and perceive it as a bad decision. Conversely, utilitarianism is the most used approach when making ethical decisions, especially decisions associated with many people (Johnson, 2009). Therefore, there appears to be no correct answer when it comes to ethical choices (Ridley, 1998).

Accordingly, it is very difficult to determine and solve an ethical dilemma. People are never certain when making an ethical choice. Decisions are made through judgments and rational thinking leading to multiple ways of solving a certain problem. Humans by nature are hard to please. Thus, when deciding, people should always follow what they believe is right or wrong by weighing the benefits against the consequences, even when others do not necessarily agree with their choices. Below is another theory that will be argued and linked to wasta to acknowledge where wasta lies within the context of ethics, which is corruption theory.
3.3.2.2 Corruption Theory

Corruption has been around for a very long time and has become more visible in recent decades due to the internet, media, etc. (Dimant, 2013). It has been linked to political uncertainty, economic restraints, lack of or low administrative productivity, and insignificant control structures in countries (Ko & Samajdar, 2010). While corruption is a global concept, its form and behaviour differ from one society to another based on societal norms and the source of power used in a country (Jain, 2011). There are three definitions of corruption. The first definition is taken from Nye (1967), which states that “behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains” (p. 966). In other words, using one’s power to serve and secure preferential treatments for private-regarding. The second definition recognises corruption as an act where one person offers money in an unethical exchange for a favour (Dimant, 2013; Al-Saleh, 2016). In other words, offering bribery to perform or finish one’s request faster, such as finishing paper work. The last definition is the evaluation of a country’s norm (Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000). This is where individuals evaluate corruption behaviour based on accepted and prevailed norms of the country. For instance, finishing paper works through wasta might be regarded as acceptable in certain countries and would not be considered as corruption. Whereas, playing with the legal system, such as discharging speeding ticket fines, through wasta might be regarded as unacceptable in certain countries and would be considered as corruption. Therefore, it all depends upon the country’s norm.

Similarly, Evans (1999) defines corruption as “the act by which ‘insiders’ profit at the expense of ‘outsiders’” (p. 1). In other words, Evans (1999) believed that corruption is divided into classes, and thus separates the ‘insiders’ (privileged) from ‘outsiders’ (unprivileged) when delivering favours. Evans’ (1999) definition of corrupting will be used when compared to wasta, since they are both quite similar in the sense of exploitation. Additionally, Akinseye (2000) acknowledged corruption as the ‘mother of all crimes’ and defined forms of corruption as inducement, graft, and nepotism. Correspondingly, El-Rufai (2003) classified forms of corruption as various types of social misdoing including “fraud, extortion, embezzlement, nepotism, influence peddling, bestowing of favours to friends, abuse of public property, the leaking of
official government secrets” (p. 96). In conclusion, corruption can embrace a wide variety of activities. However, since the opportunity of performing misconduct exists, the degree of corruption varies from one society to another (Caiden, 2001).

a. Characteristics Influencing Corruption

There are three characteristics that might affect corruption in the case of *wasta*, which are culture, religion, and gender. Normally, culture is viewed as “the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society” (Harrison & Huntington, 2001, p. 15). Cultural values shape a person’s mind-set, and if a person lacks one or more of those aspects, he or she may possibly engage in corrupt behaviours (Dimant, 2013). Accordingly, cultural values justify and direct the way in which social institutions operate. It also assists individuals into selecting actions to evaluate, explain, and justify their own behaviour (Licht et. al., 2007). Therefore, if a culture tolerates corruption, then people would view it as socially acceptable.

In terms of religion, it affects the occasion of corruption to some extent (Treisman, 2000). “Religion may shape social attitudes towards social hierarchy and family values and thus determine the acceptability … of corrupt practices” (Dreher, et al., 2007, p. 6). According to previous literatures, major hierarchical religions, such as Catholicism and Islam, are more exposed to corruption due to low or lack of individual and institutional proficiency (e.g. LaPorta et al., 1999; Treisman, 2000). In addition, it has been revealed that such religions do not necessarily follow rules and regulations (LaPorta et al., 1999).

On the other hand, Park (2003) concluded that a society’s corruption level can be predicted through masculinity and power distance. These findings are also supported by Swamy et al., (2001) that men are more aggressive, greedier, and engage in more corrupted acts than women. Lambsdorff (2006) also noted that “low levels of corruption may impose restrictions on male-dominated networks, and provide women with legal recourse and improved access to higher positions” (p. 21). Thus, this would make it easier for women to be in power. Additionally, Gatti et al., (2003) discovered that women and working citizens have less tolerance towards corruption.

b. Relationship between Corruption and Wasta

To best acknowledge the relationship between corruption and *wasta*, the clashing moral values theory will be used. Clashing moral values theory claim that there are specific
values and norms in a society that are directly linked to the values and norms of individuals. This, in return, influences an individual’s behaviour (Graaf, 2007). Since values influence a person’s behaviour, sometimes a clash of values between a person’s public and private role might happen and when this occurs, decisions must be made. For an example, due to received obligations to families and friends, favours must be executed to fulfil personal duties, whether they are right or wrong. Hoffling (2002) defined those duties in terms of micro and macro morality. Micro morality is related to daily values, norms, and moral obligations linked to people in one’s own circle, such as family. These moral obligations are categorised by reciprocity acts (Graaf, 2007), where people expect others to help them the same way they are helping them. By contrast, macro morality is related to the entire world and categorised by “the complementarity of rights and duties as the primal modus of social ties” (Graaf, 2007, p. 54). Therefore, based on both definitions, wasta falls under the micro morality obligation.

According to Hatim (2013), a reporter in a certified newspaper in Kuwait, AlWatan, Kuwait’s new slogan is ‘wasta’ when it comes to Kuwait’s development. This is because all ministries and authorities in the state begins with wasta, hence there is no point for reforms when employees do not even innovate or develop without it (Hatim, 2013). Furthermore, one global organisation originated in the Middle East revealed that the widespread belief of wasta, rather than performance, was the main principle for compensation, incentives, and rewards (Kowske, 2007). Al-Faleh’s (1987) identified the significance of status, position, and seniority being more important than skills and performance. Al-Faleh (1987) also confirmed that relationships and obligations are more powerful than performance. Therefore, wasta places employees and managers in awkward situations, since the tight-knit nature of several Arab business societies makes family or social networks hard to avoid. Besides, since wasta influence decisions regarding career advancement, it gives the notion that wasta is a somewhat an unethical practice functioning within the political and socio-economic systems in Arab societies (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). It also demonstrates a certain image of the Arab culture where people “who are affluent or aligned with the powerful can survive and where those who are not are left to fend for themselves” (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011, p. 14). Wasta also became
the core contribution of Kuwait’s relative developmental decline within recent years due to employing individuals who do not deserve leadership roles in important positions with ease and without considering other employees' expertise and efficiency (Bowramia, 2014). Hence, it seems like *wasta’s* role in the business context is stable and reinforced within the Arab culture.

Additionally, Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994), Loewe et al. (2008), and Kilani and Sakijha (2002) declared that *wasta* became liable for the poor economic performance in the Arab societies and it is becoming a burden on its inquirer, its possessor, and the government. Furthermore, Makhoul and Harrison (2004) described *wasta* as incompetent and alerted people that it might lead to inadequate job performance and economic failure. In fact, there is a clear correlation between the prevalence of *wasta* and high corruption rates in the country (Bowramia, 2014). However, “*wasta* has its advantages and can also be viewed in its innocence and optimality” (Ramady, 2016, p. 8) based on how certain commitments are made by integrity as well as mutual responsibility. That said, if a person was committed into doing a favour based on honour or good faith that does not harm others within the process does that make *wasta* corrupted or an unethical act?

In the Arab world, *wasta* is not regarded as corruption, since it easily provides people with opportunities they once thought they could not reach by simply striving (Barnett et al., 2013). Even if *wasta* could be viewed similarly to corruption, the reason why there is a conflict in viewing *wasta* as corruption is due to people clashing between two roles with different moral obligations (Graaf, 2007). In macro morality, people are required to treat others equally, whereas micro morality requires giving preferential treatment to those in one’s circle (Hoffling, 2002). In addition, regarding utilitarianism theory, people will always seek *wasta* and execute *wasta* favours when they know that what they will get out of it is greater than refraining from doing it. In conclusion, when thinking about ethics and how an act could be categorised as ethical or not all depends on the outcome of the act itself and the societal norms of a country (Tanner et al., 2008).

To conclude, it is therefore not easy to define ethics within the *wasta* context, since ethics include examining appropriate restrictions in the pursuit of self-interest, when such interest impacts others. In addition, as there is little or a lack of research about business ethics and *wasta*, it is difficult to use western research with regards to ethics.
and apply it to the East. This is because, past researchers revealed that managers in Arab organisations perform quite the same as managers in the West. However, they accomplish things differently due to their perspectives, cultural frame, and values when it comes to ethics. Unlike westerners, in the Middle East, most people tend to overlook ethical norms, since connections outweigh socially driven ethical considerations significantly (Izraeli, 1997). This is usually clarified in terms of cultural aspects where relationship ties and obligations expect people to offer preferential treatments to family members or friends. Hence, to better understand ethics, it is crucial to talk about Middle Eastern cultural values.

3.3.2.3 Cultural Values

Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimension theory has been the most cited source in cross-cultural researches. While Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions has been observed to have an impact on many areas, such as innovation and morality (see Hofstede, 1980; Shane et al., 1995; Vitell et al., 1993), few researchers specify the relationship between collectivism and individualism cultures on impacting perceptions and decision-making in organisations (Buchholz, 1977). To recap, along Hofstede’s four dimensions, Arab societies ranked high in power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity, and low in individualism. Two aspects of cultural values regarding work ethics will be discussed in this research, which are the role of religion and wasta.

a. The Role of Religion and Wasta

In many Arab countries, one of the most influential references of cultural value is Islamic work ethics (Ali, 1992). Islamic work ethics is strongly related to the Qur’an. Since Arab cultures are more collectively oriented than western cultures (Ali et al., 1997), their Islamic values are observed in organisations and their religious commitment tend to impact many organisational strategies and rules. Before discussing the ethical system in Middle Eastern countries, it is best to compare it with the West. While there are some similarities, there are also substantial differences in both cultures in terms of business practices.

Western employers would traditionally offer factors, such as concerns for well-being (Kowske, 2007, p. 56) and job security (Rousseau, 1995), in return for an expectation of loyalty. Hence, Western employees understand the consequences of challenging an
employer. Employees can challenge or disagree with their employers, if their employers were wrong or doing/asking for something that is unethical and against organisational practices, although it is not always that simple (Kowske, 2007). For instance, a western employee can refuse a manager’s request for accessing personal data without facing any consequences because the refusal is supported by the European Data Privacy Conventions not allowing access to personal files without authorisation (Kowske, 2007). In the Middle East, if an employee refused a manager’s request, he or she will get fired or experience biased treatment (Kowske, 2007). Other examples of differences in ethical practices between both cultures include recruitment, women’s role in organisations, and employees’ rights.

Hence, management practices are not unique, but culturally specific. In the Middle East, it is vital to acknowledge the important role religion plays with regards to business transactions. To build a business relationship, it is crucial for managers to be aware of the Islamic laws and customs (Willcocks, 2013). It is natural for Islam to play a major role in the lives of Muslim individuals. In Islam, knowledge is a duty, social and political responsibilities should be respected, rulers should be obeyed and duties should be conducted (Weir, 2005). Not to mention, trust is vital in every associations including businesses. This does not mean that Islamic values force tightly-structured and inflexible obligations to be accomplished in a certain way, but that the “diversity of behaviours and practices which do exist have to be explicable within this framework” (Weir, 2005, p. 12).

Social structures that support Islamic values are family obligations and networked societies (Hutchings & Weir, 2006b). The Arabic culture is one of the known cultures that is structured in this way (Peristiany, 1966). It comprises basic details of the ethical foundation of all behaviours that people should follow, including those of management and business practices (Weir, 2005). While they may be detailed, behaviours that are against those foundations are considered as unacceptable. Islam does not make a distinction between religious and national authority in the same way as it is done in the West (Heuvel et al., 2007). Specifically, Islam is a publicly practicable religion. It is, therefore, the expectation that the manifestations of business and management practices to be governed by the principles of Islam (Weir, 2005).

Nonetheless, there are other customs in the Middle East with regards to practices that
are not merely based on religion, rather than on cultural traditions, such as *wasta* (Kowske, 2007). The procedure of *wasta* is complex as it presents a distinctive challenge to define it as unethical. According to Toumi (2010), “if *wasta* is used to get legal rights or to ease complex procedures, then there is a problem with the state apparatus, and if it is used to obtain illegal favours or to beat the system, then, it is a crime” (n.p.). Consequently, as *wasta* is now plaguing numerous segments, there is an analytical need to manage it because it is not a discreet norm anymore. As stated by Adi (2014), “*wasta* is severely embedded in the fabric of Arabic societies and it is visible in everything and everywhere from the way in which governments interact with businesses to the way in which public policy is formulated” (p. 4). As a result, determining if *wasta* is ethical all comes down to the act of *wasta* itself in terms of its activity and scope. For instance, in utilitarianism ethics, the outcome of *wasta* defines its integrity. However, to someone who favours Kantianism approach, it is about the inherent 'rightness' of the act itself and the motivation behind it.

3.3.3 International Comparison

3.3.3.1 Guanxi

Guanxi, also known as *al-alakat* (relationships) or *shabakat al-alakat* (social network of relationships) in Egypt (Shaalan et al., 2014), has been deeply embedded in the Chinese culture as a form of social capital for centuries and has become a predominant factor in constructing the social as well as the business context of the society. Due to the overlapping of both concepts, some researchers defined *guanxi* as a form of social capital (e.g., Luo, 2001; Wang, 2000) and others expressed *guanxi* as a Chinese version of social networks and networking (King, 1991). In business contexts, *guanxi* is an important source of information and a competent method of financial and technical support. It increases market shares, creates competitive advantages, bypasses bureaucratic systems, diminishes risks, and creates affirmative impact on the overall performance of organisations (Cheng & Tang, 2012). However, even though *guanxi* is a necessary aspect for the existence of Chinese businesses, it is not sufficient to assure long-term business success.

It is said that the greater the *guanxi*, the more opportunities/resources are obtainable (Jiang, 2014). Therefore, *guanxi* is a remedy to solve most problems in China.
However, setting up a *guanxi* network is time-consuming and costly (Yi & Ellis, 2000). For instance, troubled organisations may not be sufficient in establishing a new network within a short period of time. Even if they managed to build a new network within time, the allocator may not offer solutions due to the quality of *guanxi*, such as trust. As it is in human nature, people do not trust others in a short period of time, trust is gained within time through actions (see Chua & Morris, 2006). The exception to this is the notion of ‘swift trust’ (see Kramer & Tyler, 1996), based on short term work attachments. Table 3.3 provides several definitions of *guanxi*, as suggested by various scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold (1985)</td>
<td>“Guanxi is a power relationship as one’s control over a valued good or access to it gives power over others” (p.660)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen and Chen (2004)</td>
<td>“An informal, particularistic personal connection between two individuals who are bounded by an implicit psychological contract to follow the social norm of Guanxi such as maintaining a long-term relationship, mutual commitment, loyalty, and obligation” (p. 306)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan (2002a)</td>
<td>“a process of social interactions that initially involve two individuals (A and B). A may or may not have special relationships with B. A asks B for assistance (favor) in finding a solution to a problem. B may have the solution at hand, or more often, has to seek further assistance from other connections, i.e. starts another process” (p. 372)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3: Definition of Guanxi*

**a. Guanxi vs. Wasta**

*Guanxi* and *wasta* are both based on pre-existing relationships that are used to improve and enhance businesses (Kathawala et al., 2012). However, they both differ in terms of recruitment. Below is a list of similarities and difference between *wasta* and *guanxi*.

**Similarities:**

- Selection is highly personal in which people with connections, rather than qualifications, hold leadership positions (Hutchings and Weir, 2006a).
- Under both systems, penalizing employees must be discreet and private to avoid reputational loss. Additionally, conflicts are resolved within networks without including authorities (Kathawala et al., 2012).
Differences:

- In China, when *guanxi* is used to recruit an employee, the employee has an obligation to be more committed and productive in his/her job. On the other hand, Arab societies view prestige, position, and superiority more significant than ability and performance (Al-Faleh, 1987).

- In China, political networks play a crucial role in recruitment. While in the Arab world, ethnicity, tribe, kinship, and wealth play a vital role in recruitment (Sawalha, 2002).

- In China, employees are obligated to finish training and development programs. However, in the Arab world, training is based on the age and experience of the employee as it is “developed in accordance with attitudes to superiority” (Hutchings and Weir, 2006a, p. 152).

- Managers in the Arab World will be more likely to show higher commitment to relatives and friends, rather than organisational goals and performance. While in China, accomplishing organisational goals through high performance is more important than relationship commitment (Kathawala et al., 2012).

“Though China and the Arab World share cultural similarities in respect to general business practice and the role of the family and networks, they do differ in the connotations they place on networks” (Hutchings & Weir, 2006a, p. 147). In China, *guanxi* is mostly seen as a positive practice, even though it has a seamier side, because corruption and bribery is not associated with good *guanxi*. This is due to the Chinese government imposing strict laws and regulations against corruption (Yunhai, 2005). Hence, while there has been general adjustment to weed out bad *guanxi* in China, the case is not the same in the Arab World (Hutchings & Weir, 2006b). In the Arab World, people generally regard *wasta* as a negative term and only focus on its corrupted side (Hutchings & Weir, 2006b). Though most Arabs want to eliminate *wasta*, they might not be able to get things done without it (Hutchings & Weir, 2006b). This shows that most people are unwilling to accept *wasta*, but still practice it for their own benefit (Kathawala et al., 2012). Therefore, while there is societal stigma, there is also recognition of its advantages (see Lackner, 2016; Talib, 2017).
b. Guanxi and Business Ethics

By briefly discussing the functions of guanxi, it leaves the people to question where guanxi lies within business ethics. In general, as with wasta, it really depends on the sphere and the nature of its activity. While family-based guanxi is generally considered as good guanxi that is ethically acceptable in that cultural context, business guanxi is perceived as unethical. This is because it has “a grey area inevitably associated with favouritism, nepotism, unfair competition and fraud” (Fan, 2002b, p. 367). In conclusion, guanxi is considered ethical if there is no third party affected by the results of guanxi. Moreover, since guanxi is known to be a “synonym for corruption and other wrongdoings” (Fan 2002a, p. 377), it is without a doubt that there is not any business guanxi connection that is not linked to corruption (Fan, 2002a).

3.3.3.2 Favouritism

Favouritism exists everywhere, but it fluctuates from culture to culture (Özler et al., 2007). Frequently, favouritism occurs where kinship between relatives is strong. According to Kayabaşı (2005), some empirical research concluded that favouritism is frequently practiced in less developed countries. Favouritism means showing preferential treatment towards one person or a group of people more than others in regions of employment, career and personnel decisions (Bramoulle & Goyal, 2009). It is occasionally presented according to people’s social and economic status (Jussim et al., 1998) and those who are at the same level of social and economic status grant privileges to each other (Sprinthall & Sprinthal, 1990). It exposes prejudiced treatment in organisations. For instance, those who receive special treatments are granted privileges, whereas others are neglected or disciplined. Another example would be that managers might behave better towards someone they favour by usually giving them positive evaluations, support their career advancement, appreciate them, etc. Consequently, “favouritism shown by managers reinforces the domination of personnel who are treated badly and triggers negative feelings directly or indirectly in organisations” (Aydogan, 2012, p. 4578). This is because people evaluate themselves based on how others view them.

Moreover, favouritism destroys transparency in administration and marks an organisation as a closed or semi-closed structure because it is usually shown privately.
(Aydogan, 2012). Hereafter, the norms of fairness and sincerity, which are important in every administration, can be destroyed. Thus, favouritism is one of the most important causes for organisational inefficiency (Kim, 2005). However, the major problem with favouritism is that most people do not recognise it as a dilemma. There is also a homogenising quality to favouritism. Homogenisation is the main reason for closed or semi-closed organisations (Aydogan, 2012). Such associations initiate on aspects such as race, constituency, religion, sex, etc. Correspondingly, there are two dimensions of favouritism, which are nepotism and cronyism.

**a. Nepotism**

Nepotism is derived from the Latin word *Nepot* (nephew in English). It means favouring a relative by giving them a good job when one has power or a high position (Bute, 2011). Today, nepotism is employed to bestow privileges only for relatives at every level for every position in organisations (Aydogan, 2012). Toy et al. (1988) assumed that nepotism exposes an organisation to family conflicts and creates a damaging image on qualified managers who were not hired because the position has been filled with a person who shares a family name with the superior. Hence, this sacrifices organisational achievements for the sake of assisting families. It also decreases employees’ commitment, motivation, harmony, and loyalty. Striving qualified employees will be de-motivated from working in such organisations knowing that it would be difficult for them to get promoted to higher positions in the company. Therefore, "they may have less of a desire to remain with the organisation if they believe that family connections, rather than merits, influence promotion decisions" (Padgett & Morris, 2005, p. 36).

In addition, resources such as payments, inducements, and welfare can adversely impact employees’ performance. This could, in turn, impact employees’ behavioural intentions, such as resignation intentions and negative word of mouth (Arasli et al., 2006) among friends, relatives, and colleagues that could severely harm the image of the organisation. Nevertheless, nepotism is believed to be an exceptional recruitment method to attract and preserve a somewhat inexpensive, trustworthy, and devoted labour. This is because family members are inexpensive and an accessible source of labour (Abdalla et al., 1998). Accordingly, they are appropriate for new organisations that lack proper recruitment programs.
Often mistaken, many people assume that *wasta* is similar to nepotism. However, it is only a small part of *wasta* (Muhtadi, 2015) because *wasta* has a wider influence than nepotism (Afiouni & Nakhle, 2016). While they both have similar features, they are distinctive in terms of recruitment. Nepotism is bound to recruit relatives and friends, whereas *wasta* is not restricted to such cluster as it may involve recruiting through a *wasta*-based obligation. Therefore, “any time an employee is hired who is related to someone in the organisation the hiring may be considered nepotistic” (Padgett et al., 2014, p. 1), while *wasta* comprises social networks of personal contacts (Hutchings and Weir, 2006a).

b. **Cronyism**

Cronyism is defined as “giving preference to politicians, particularly to cronies (close friends of long standing), especially as evidenced in the appointment of hangers-on to office without regard to their qualifications” (Arasli & Tumer, 2008, p. 1239). Cronyism is one of the most under/unexplored terms in the business context. Both cronyism and favouritism are hard to regulate, particularly in cultures that place high value on personal relations, especially in the selection of political associates (Ashour, 2004). Therefore, favouritism, cronyism, and nepotism form job stress in organisations, which in turn increases employee dissatisfaction.

To conclude, each of the mentioned factors has commonly relied on interpersonal connections that lack formal prestige. *Guanxi, wasta*, and favouritism occur in situations that are normally hierarchical and includes long-term emotional commitment. However, there are other networking concepts that are widely recognised globally other than *wasta, guanxi*, and favouritism, which will be discussed below.

3.3.4 **Global Comparison**

*Wasta* is categorised within the broader concept of networking. Since networking is known to be culturally distinctive, its function serves the same purpose worldwide, which is primarily getting things done by using one’s connections and/or influence. Academics functioning within this theoretical assessment have recognised familiar practices within organisations in countries that they described as unique and critical to society members. These practices are derived from long-term social relations within cultural contexts. The most investigated practices are *guanxi* in Chinese cultural
contexts (Chen & Farh, 2010), Jeitinho in Brazil, and Svyaiz in Russia. These concepts are all expressed as informal influence practices that are relevant within organisations (Smith et al., 2011). However, the question to be addressed is whether these types of practices could be described as indigenous (i.e. only found within one culture) (Kim et al., 2006), or similarly found in another cultural context. To answer the question, four concepts will be described below.

Jeitinho (little way out or adroitness) in Brazil is known to be a strong feature of the society, including business organisations (Duarte, 2006). The concept refers to accomplishing short-term solutions to problems by bypassing bureaucratic rules or avoiding dilemmas in powerful hierarchical contexts. “It will often involve working through others on an egalitarian basis, with persons who may or may not be previously acquainted” (Smith et al., 2011, p. 4). As with Wasta, Jeitinho can be regarded as positive or negative depending on its use.

Svyaiz is a neutral term similar to Guanxi (Batjargal & Liu, 2004) in terms of foreseeing venture capital recommendations that is widely practiced in organisations as an informal tool in Russia. However, what differentiates Guanxi from Svyaiz is that Guanxi networks are more powerful and personal than Svyaiz (Batjargal, 2008), as with Wasta.

Pulling strings is a colloquial expression used in the UK. It is similar to cronyism. It refers to getting favours done mainly through influential people. Such networks may be enduring due to family connections, common education, or may develop from shorter-term associates. In relations to recruitment, pulling strings is extensively disapproved of, with formal measures being perceived as more reasonable. However, such a phrase is not considered as being indigenous, since it is also used in Indian organisations as well (Smith et al., 2011).

Jaan-pehchaan is an Indian concept through which difficulties are resolved informally (Cohen, 2013). It is based on close-knit connections that can lead to efficiency in decision-making. The practice of Jaan-pehchaan has been witnessed to reduce opportunity costs suffered by Indian citizens who try to navigate around the “country’s slow, inflexible, and bureaucratic rules of government, an example of weak formal institutions” (McCarthy et al., 2012, p. 32).
In conclusion, each of these concepts has one thing in common, which is the reliance on personal connections. However, they differ in terms of strength, length, and the type of hierarchical connection between individuals. Guanxi, wasa, and jaan-pehchaan appear in environments that are normally hierarchical and include a long-term commitment (Smith et al., 2011). However, jeitinho, svyazi and ‘pulling strings’ do not necessarily include long-term interactions and hierarchical relationships in environments. Although they may occur at organisational levels, they will not have strong continuing obligations (Smith et al., 2011), unlike guanxi, wasa, and jaan-pehchaan. Table 3.4 represents other roughly similar words to wasa in other languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan African</td>
<td>Ubuntu (Sulamoy, 2010; Lutomia et al., 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian-Portuguese</td>
<td>Pistolão (Graham &amp; Smith, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilean Spanish</td>
<td>Pituto (Contact Chile, 2017) or Compadsrazgo (Sefiani et al., 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>Socialismo (Sefiani et al., 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Piston (Iles et al., 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Vetternwirtschaft (Donaldson, 2004) or Vitamin B (Kropf &amp; Newbury-Smith, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Influenza, Aiutare, Contatti or Clientelismo (Smith, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Giri or Gimou (Brandstaetter, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanesian cultures</td>
<td>Wantok (Smith, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan, Algerian etc. (French colonies)</td>
<td>Ma’arifa (“who you know”) (Smith, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Shrodojisko (Smith, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Blat (Peng &amp; Luo, 2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Global Networking Concepts

3.4 Section 4: Women and Wasta in an Arab Context

Section 4 discusses women and wasa and is divided into three subsections. The first subsection introduces wasa and women in Arab societies. The second subsection explains women’s perception and classification of wasa. The last subsection briefly sets out the differences between men and women in terms of career development and networking.

3.4.1 Introduction

GCC countries, known for being oil-rich states, are ranked in the lower quartile worldwide in terms of gender equality and economic contribution of women. The prospective reasons for the existence of discrimination are patriarchal forms of kinship, resilient gender roles in the Islamic context, tribalism, social and cultural traditions, and
entrenched male dominance (Sharoni, 1997; UNDP, 2005; Metcalfe, 2007; Omair, 2010). In addition, gender inequality has generated substantial ongoing research signifying that the dilemma will not be diminished in the near future (e.g. Charles & Davies, 2000; Cohen et al., 2009; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Davidson & Burke, 2011). However, cultures that are classified as having conservative values and constraints on women’s involvement are considerably changing in terms of social and economic practices with regards to the role of women over the past few years (Alserhan & Al-Waqfi, 2011). This is because women now have equal access to all levels of education in the country (UNDP, 2003).

There is an assumption that gender and ethnic distinctions in the use and perception of wasṭa challenges the principle that lack of knowledge on how to network and connect with others restrains many women from the privileges that are associated with such practice. This might be the cause of the ‘gender gap’. Consequently, the reason for such a gap is due to employment being strongly gender-segregated, with women mostly recruited in education and health industry. However, there has been a recent increase in women’s contributions in technical and scientific sectors (Metcalfe, 2007). As a result of gender inequality and the way in which it impacts decisions in organisations, women’s ability to secure jobs and advance in their careers somewhat depends on wasṭa.

3.4.2 Women’s Definition and Classification of Wastā

Based on women’s perception, the definition of wasṭa means gaining undeserved treatments, which is socially discouraged (Bailey, 2012). They believe that family names and wasṭa are more important than a person’s ability to succeed when hired for a position, which is similar to men’s definition. Bailey (2012) classified wasṭa into three categories when it comes to women, which are high wasṭa, moderate wasṭa, and low/no wasṭa.

- **High wasṭa**: women are believed to gain preferential treatments through connections because their fathers were perceived as being important, either through wealth or respected governmental positions.
- **Moderate wasṭa**: as opposed to high wasṭa, women with some wasṭa are more likely to receive special treatments from friends or colleagues who are not
necessarily linked to their relatives’ or father’s position.

- **Low/no wasta:** women with such kind of *wasta* are seen to have little or no effective networks in securing positions through family connections because their fathers might be categorised as a working class, often employed in another’s family organisation (Bailey, 2012).

As shown from the definitions above, women in high and moderate *wasta* groups are unable to use *wasta* without having to refer to a male member in their families or someone they know. This proclamation is also supported by Bair’s (1998) theory of women having to borrow social capital from men. Moreover, for those in the low/no *wasta* group, their inability to enhance their knowledge about how to improve their personal *wasta* is supported by the research of Hogan (2001) in explaining such psychological barrier. Hogan (2001) acknowledged that lack of access is important in understanding how a person acquires social capital, since having none makes it difficult to attain *wasta* in the first place. Therefore, one reason why women are perceived to lack *wasta* is due to their inaccessibility to social opportunities.

### 3.4.3 Women Versus Men in Career Opportunities

To review briefly, both men and women in Arab societies differ in terms of business traits when it comes to achievement-oriented traits and social- and service-oriented traits (Bakan, 1966). That said, men are considered more hostile, powerful, self-governing, and decisive; whereas, women are considered as sympathetic, supportive, sensitive, and kind to others while doing business (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). This is also confirmed by a recent gender and employment research conducted by the United Nations and World Bank (Metcalf, 2007), which assures that gender and social relations are ruled by traditional patriarchal networks in the Middle East by concluding the following:

- Due to being a family-orientated culture, both men and women have different complementary roles that they are expected to fulfil;
- Men are recognized as the only ‘breadwinner’ in the family;
- “A code of modesty rests on the dignity and reputation of the woman, which constrains the interaction between men and women” (Metcalf, 2007, p. 59);
• There is an unequal balance of power, where power rests in the hands of men, therefore there is no equal opportunity regulations in organisations.

Additionally, the ‘Lack of Fit’ model developed by Heilman (1983, 1995) describes how personnel decisions determine how successful a person will be in the work force. It further explains that a person is viewed as fit for a job when his/her attributes and performance successfully matches the job’s requirement. However, if a person fails to comply with the requirements, then he/she is regarded as poorly fitted. In general, men are seen more favourably and are expected to successfully thrive at their jobs. Whereas, women are expected to fail in ‘traditional male jobs’ because they are seen as poorly fitted for these roles. Moreover, the greater the degree of discrimination or the more ‘male-type’ the job, the poorer the fit and the more undesirable expectations are apt to be (Kehn, 2012). These expectations generate a strong impression towards seeing women as unqualified to accomplish a job proficiently. Furthermore, findings from reliable studies indicate that a successful manager is predominantly labelled by masculine qualities (see Heilman et al., 1989; Powell & Butterfield, 1989; Martell et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, despite the obstacles hindering the acknowledgement of a woman’s success in a ‘male-type’ position, there are circumstances when her success can no longer be undeniable. Thus, when she gets promoted, it is because she is performing excellent work. Even then, women are not seen as competent. As described in research conducted by Heilman (2001), the expectation that women will fail is still preserved by men through treating a woman’s success as an exception/luck that would unlikely happen again. Therefore, this hinders or reduces the chance of women being recruited or promoted in managerial jobs, as the majority of decision makers are men. Thus, as long there is a question about who or what is truly responsible for women’s success, a woman’s success can be denied. If this happens, her services and aptitude will be neither acknowledged nor valued (Heilman, 2001).

Consequently, many Arab women seek wasta as they believe it is an important element in their career choices and advancement because they are aware that they are in a male-dominated field and they are not favoured in managerial positions (Albugamy, 2014; Abalkhail & Allan, 2015). The importance of wasta in women’s career in Arab societies has been highlighted in previous literatures. For instance, Binkhuthaila (2010)
demonstrated that Saudi women find \textit{wasta} an important factor in recruitment. Metcalfe (2007) concluded that women in Bahrain pointed out that opportunities for training and recruitment are based on \textit{wasta} rather than qualifications. Similarly, Omair (2010) found that in the UAE, Arab women in managerial positions consider the absence of \textit{wasta} and family connections a limitation to recruitment opportunities and advancement.

In conclusion, the limited opportunities for women have been highlighted as a global phenomenon (Harris, 2002), since labour market discrimination is mainly related to female and male behaviours, and their fitness for certain professions (Powell, 2000). Correspondingly, today women’s participation in the labour market in the Middle East has been substantially enhanced. The overall female labour participants’ percentage increased to 47% of the total workforce in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), although it remains the lowest worldwide (World Bank, 2003; UNIFEM, 2004). Nevertheless, Heilman et al. (1995) indicated that managers from different industries described women managers as more competent, energetic, and powerful than men managers. As a result, this has lead women to start their own businesses and avoid being devalued by men in relying on family \textit{wasta}, which they personally lack due to restraints on mixed interactions outside the family circle.

\subsection*{3.4.4 \textbf{Wasta is Male Dominant}}

The concept of \textit{wasta} is intensely gendered, as the interactions within \textit{wasta} are channelled via male networks to which women have to turn to in order to attain the needed support. According to Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq (2016), \textit{wasta} is more widespread among males, as they tend to be the ones in powerful positions in society, which is also supported by Karolak (2016). Therefore, thanks to discrimination in Arab societies, even though it has been declining over the past few decades, women are more likely to seek \textit{wasta} through male members of their families for information and/or financial support (Metcalf, 2006; Abalkhail, 2012). Without the support of a male member, Arab women might find it difficult to access and attain resources (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015). According to Al-Hussain and al-Marzooq (2016) research, 54\% of women turn to \textit{wasta} to allow them to succeed in a male-dominated society, even though it might contradict their attitudes towards \textit{wasta}. 
Furthermore, there is an assumption that there is a difference in the perception and practice of networking between genders, which confines women from gaining privileges to which men have access to. Generally, the more networking opportunities, the more social capital people have. For traditional Islamic women, they have few networking opportunities outside their comfort zone, which restricts their ability to network within the business sector (Bailey, 2012). Ali (1995) emphasised the importance of networking by claiming that the political economy recognises the existence of power, control and influence on business decisions by tribal networks in the Middle East. Accordingly, “being associated with these networks will ease much of the pain of doing business, as many of the procedural barriers seem to evaporate in front of powerful individuals” (Alserhan & Al-Waqfi, 2011, p. 409).

Additionally, women coming from high-ranking families find it much easier to accomplish services because of the power and influence associated with male family members (Karolak, 2016). In research conducted by Bailey (2012), participants were asked if they ever saw their mothers use wasta, one participant responded, “my mother uses my father’s name. She calls the doctor when my baby brother is sick and she never waits. She goes right in” (Bailey, 2012, p. 7). In addition, when participants were asked if they could secure such arrangements on their own, they responded that they might if their husbands were well-valued and that it is important to wed someone who would be able to secure such things. According to one interviewee, “Insha‘Allah (I hope), I will marry someone with lots of Wasta!” (Bailey, 2012, p. 8).

However, there are few women who have wasta in general and they are viewed as important in being able to assist their relatives in securing more privileges that would increase their social as well as economic status. Although, it is not a surprise that most business women do not prefer to network with other women, mentioning reasons such as “men are more in control, better connected, and more mobile, and having wider and more influential networks” (Alserhan and Al-Waqfi, 2011, p. 411). Believing in such declaration is the main reason why women are under the impression that they are less powerful, incapable of getting things done alone, and should heavily rely on men due to historical and cultural reasons. In comparison with western societies, most businesswomen recognise the term ‘old boys club’, a network similar to wasta where a group of businessmen call each other whenever they need a favour, such as closing
deals, which has inspired western women to do the same.

More recently, the increase in networking with other women became crucial for business success because networking improves entrepreneurial skills. Western women developed a strategy known as an ‘old girls network’ to further enhance their careers and to build a relationship with the right business individual (Pollard, 2015). The purpose of networking is to build lifetime friendships or connections through ‘giving and taking’ process. Western women believe that connections are never wasted, even if it is not used or there are no direct contacts. “They get that business networking isn't about business, it's about life” (Pollard, 2015, n.p.). For an example, at Dell Women's Entrepreneur Network summit (DWEN), women from various countries come together to share their achievements and failures and give each other advice to become better businesswomen. Such summit encourages women to continue to network by seeing the importance thereof, which many Middle Eastern cultures lack.

Despite the above statements, some Eastern businesswomen do network with other women, where relevant disputes are examined, information is exchanged, and the necessary support/help is provided. This proclamation is beautifully stated by McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003), “networking is important for any businesswoman. It is a cushion for her to fall back onto and for her not to feel totally alone and especially if it is a female networking group” (p. 5). In addition, when there is an absence of businesswomen’s network, such as in the UAE, women would take the initiative to create one by forming a women’s dewaniya.

3.4.5 Women and Dewaniya

As mentioned previously, dewaniya is a fundamental part of Kuwait’s social and business life. The dewaniya culture has existed in Kuwait for a long period and it was known to be a men’s only club. It is the channel through which wasta is practiced and preferential favours are conceded (Redman, 2014). It is inside the institutional setting of the dewaniya that wasta is accessed to evade or secure entitlements (Kilani & Sakijha, 2002). This statement is also supported by Portes et al. (2000) by illustrating that the value of the dewaniya is acknowledged to harness social capital. In addition, based on a published article written in Kuwait’s e-newspaper website, Kuwait Times, people need wasta to enjoy their lives in Kuwait and the place to get wasta is a dewaniya
Without *wasta* and the *dewaniya*, “simple procedures will turn into pure suffering if you do not know someone who can help facilitate the process” (Alruwaih, 2015, n.p.). Additionally, “the purpose of the *dewaniya* is to establish and maintain influence called *wasta* for each family” (Fox, 2014, p. 11). It is where business deals are executed and it brings together business people in one place. An interviewee in González (2013) affirmed that *dewaniya* is a powerful means of *wasta* by stating the following:

“I needed to go see MPs in the past two weeks. I’ve been trying to get appointments with four MPs; I’ve seen one of them in four weeks…. my brother can go see them anytime he wants to in their *dewaniya*. Or in one of their constituent’s *dewaniya*” (p. 133).

However, the *dewaniya* is no longer male oriented due to a trend that emerged a few years ago whereby women started to develop their own *dewaniya*. This is common because of lifestyle changes. Even though women, nowadays, have their own *dewaniya*, their access to *wasta* is still limited. Women still need to return to men to ask for favours because of the gender-segregated culture where women have no access to key positions and decision making (González, 2013). For example, when a woman asks for a favour from another woman, the other woman refers to her husband or any other male member in her family to achieve that favour, making women intermediaries of the intermediates. This disadvantage is due to Kuwait’s society not acquiring ways for women to be efficient at networking because of social habits and customs (González, 2013). As a result, most women view the use of *wasta* as illegal and unfair and even though they would like to enjoy benefiting from *wasta*, “they do not see themselves as being able to reciprocate in a fair manner” (Bailey, 2012, p. 11).

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and explained *wasta* in details. It examined how present *wasta* differentiates from what it was in the past and how it is linked to the Islamic religion. It further mentioned the notion of social capital and other related constructed similar to *wasta*. Lastly, this chapter also discussed the ethical and gender aspects of *wasta*. The following chapter, chapter four, examines organisational performance, the measured variables and the influence of social capital on the variables.
Chapter 4: Organisational Performance

4.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 explains organisational performance regarding HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment and it is divided into two sections. The first section provides background information about organisational performance and the measured variables. The second section clarifies how social capital is related to all the above variables as well as explaining its relationship with social exchange theory (SET) and social conflict theory.

4.1 Section 1: Background Information

Previous literatures have proposed several definitions for organisational performance, yet the word “performance” is unclear because there is no well-defined definition of what performance is or how it is evaluated (Otley, 1999). Since the purpose of this thesis is to explore the consequences of wasta on organisations and employees who are affected by it in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment, the definition of organisational performance should be defined within the context of this research.

Seeing that every organisational goal is to enhance performance and productivity, the success and failure of reaching such objectives depends heavily on employees’ skills, commitment, motivation, and engagement in activities and performances that are associated, either directly or indirectly, with the firm (Sadozai et al., 2012). Organisational performance usually represents how organisations accomplish their tasks by using available resources. Based on the above argument, a well-performing firm is one that usually implements its strategy efficiently and achieves its objectives successfully (Otley, 1999). Social capital, such as wasta, is believed to play an important role in influencing organisational performance (Ali & Kazemi, 2006; Ben Allouch, 2012; Hyndman-Rizk, 2014; Robbins & Jamal, 2015; Weir et al., 2016). It is (1) a source of information, (2) an efficient source of expansion, (3) operates as a supporter, and (4) a method of risk diminution (Cheng & Tang, 2012). These variables influence organisational performance in terms of improving competence and contributes to its expansion when used properly. Below further illustrates how organisational performance could be affected by various factors, such as HRM
practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment.

4.1.1 Human Resource Management (HRM) Practices

Many scholars have previously defined HRM practices in several aspects. Schuler and Jackson (1987) defined HRM practices as a method that attracts, cultivates, influences, and maintains employees to ensure effective application and survival of an organization. Additionally, HRM practices is also hypothesised as a set of internal reliable policies and practices designed and implemented to guarantee that an organisation’s human capital contributes to the accomplishment of its objectives (Delery & Doty, 1996). Similarly, Minbaeva (2005) perceived HRM practices as a set of exercises utilised by an organization to manage human resources by assisting the development of proficiencies that are organisational specific and produce new knowledge to sustain competitive advantage. To further elaborate on the use of HR practices, a review of past literatures proved four mutual practices that have been reliably linked to the success of organisations, which are human resource planning, performance appraisal, reward system, and career management (see Gupta & Singhal, 1993; Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2005; Laursen & Foss, 2003; Shipton et al., 2005), as demonstrated in figure 4.1.

![Diagram](image.png)

As shown in figure 4.1, the dimensions that foster effective and efficient employees and organisational productivity are as follows:
Human Resources (HR) Planning. This strategy involves analysing employees’ needs as well as recruiting individuals that best fit within the organisation to construct effective productivity and achieve organisational goals. Moreover, recruitment that attributes individual-organisational fit is more likely to lead to high performance. To achieve organisational goals, innovation, and creativity, HR planning helps in establishing teamwork that accelerates the development and introduction of new products. Teams are known to perform better than a single individual (Darroch & McNaughton, 2002). In addition, “motivated teams usually accomplish more than individual employees” (Gupta & Singhal, 1993, p. 41). Furthermore, training assists employees to master knowledge and skills that donate to successful performance and creativity in terms of products, processes, and practices in daily operations (see Ding & Akhtar, 2001; Mark & Akhtar, 2003).

Performance Appraisal. This strategy evaluates employees’ performance in terms of innovativeness and achieving company’s profitability. Effectively and efficiently appraising and rewarding employee’s performance is essential for effective HRM. As Paul Cook, founder and CEO of Raychem Corporation, once said in an interview, “we don’t just rewards success; we reward intelligent effort” (Taylor, 1990, n.p.). For instance, performance appraisal motivates employees’ commitment and satisfaction, which in turn leads to greater innovative performance activities. The purpose of performance appraisal is not to reward the innovative employee and punish the others, the idea is to encourage those others to perform better. For further insight, the following literatures propose the importance of using performance appraisal, both in theoretical (see Gupta & Singhal, 1993; Mabey & Salaman, 1995; Mumford, 2000) and empirical studies (see Jackson et al., 1989; Mark & Akhtar, 2003).

Reward Systems. This strategy employs rewards to influence employees to accomplish organisational goals in terms of creativity and profitability. The main purpose of reward systems is to reward creative employees who perform well and to inspire them to resume to excel, however not so much so that the reward would not cease to motivate. In organisations where accomplishing goals is a dynamic force, implementing a successful reward system motivates employees to take risks in developing and creating new products/ideas that assists in sustaining its competitive advantage as well as achieving its objectives. For example, compensation systems, such as financial
payment, promotions, and other recognitions, motivates employees to take a chance in fostering successful new ideas (Guptal & Singhal, 1993). This, in turn, leads to greater organisational innovation and strengthens its competitive advantage within the business field. In relation to the finest reward system for innovation, the following literatures stress the importance of incentives (see Schuler & Jackson, 1987; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2004).

**Career Management.** This strategy balances employees’ career goals with organisational goals. For instance, career management contributes to attaining employees’ career goals and objectives. A progressive and helpful tactic in career development is vital as it supports commitment and productivity, and assists in identifying the most potential employees within organisations (Reed, 2001). Additionally, career management tactics are intended to help employees become more active and effective at handling their careers. When employees are pleased with their career management/development, they will be more motivated to perform higher to achieve organisational goals (see Delery & Doty, 1996).

### 4.1.2 Knowledge Sharing

Increasingly, organisations are becoming aware of the significant purpose of knowledge sharing in organisations to survive and remain within competition (Yusof et al., 2012). According to Toffler (1990), knowledge is viewed as the essential power in the information era. Knowledge sharing is one of the most important key functions in knowledge management “as it transforms knowledge into a valuable organisation asset” (Islam et al., 2013, p. 222). Knowledge management (KM) is how employees transfer knowledge within the entire organisational hierarchy (Spender & Grant, 1996) to enhance organisational goals (Nonaka, 1994). According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), firms cannot create knowledge without people, and unless the knowledge is shared, it is likely that the knowledge will have limited effect on organisational effectiveness. Hence, there are increasing literatures that stresses the importance of knowledge sharing in creating new knowledge, achieving desired performance and organisational learning, and improving innovation capability (see Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). Table 4.1 provides several definitions of knowledge sharing, as suggested by various scholars.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dixon (2000)</td>
<td><em>The movement of knowledge from the person who has it to the person who wants it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwartz (2006)</td>
<td>“An exchange of knowledge between two individuals: one who communicates knowledge and one who assimilates it. In knowledge sharing, the focus is on human capital and the interaction of individuals. Strictly speaking, knowledge can never be shared. Because it exists in a context; the receiver interprets it in the light of his or her own background” (p. 507).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumar &amp; Rose (2010)</td>
<td>“Knowledge sharing is a human behaviour which apprehends activities such as exchanging explicit and/or implicit experiences, embedding ideas and skills that facilitate knowledge for innovation at workplace” (p. 144)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Definition of Knowledge sharing

It is clear from the above definitions that knowledge sharing is the process of exchanging information from one person to another. According to Hooff and Weenen (2004), sharing suggests both giving and accepting knowledge. In this way, it covers both the transmission and the assimilation, permitting the person to assemble new information on the premise of that controlled by others. However, the degree of interpretation and use of the transmitted knowledge depends on the person (Schwartz, 2006). The key qualities of knowledge sharing are promoting employees’ input, fostering creativity, and efficiency of work, which will be further discussed below. In addition, some scholars distinguish the terms *information* and *knowledge* in terms of sharing (e.g., Blackler, 1995; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Pemberton, 1998) by identifying three characteristics. Firstly, knowledge is a function of a specific perception, objective, or attitude taken by individuals, and thus, unlike information, it is more related to principles and commitment. Secondly, knowledge is related to actions. Lastly, knowledge is context-detailed and interpersonal, therefore it is about meaning. However, the sharing of information is also important in knowledge management (KM). It is claimed, for instance, that with ease of access to information and knowledge resources, employees can:

- Execute tasks rapidly and efficiently;
- Access important information that may accelerate innovation in organisational practices;
- Be “liberated from the fear of losing important intellectual assets if valued colleagues leave the firm” (Hall, 2001, p. 139).
4.1.2.1 Knowledge Sharing Process

Knowledge sharing takes place in two forms, the donation of knowledge and the collection of knowledge. Knowledge donation is the process of sharing with others one’s personal intellectual capital, whereas knowledge collection is the process of seeking other employees’ consultation to get them to share their intellectual capital. Ipe (2003) defined four factors that affect knowledge sharing, which are the nature of knowledge itself, employees’ motivation to share knowledge, opportunities to share, and organisational culture in which knowledge sharing is encouraged. However, even though she provides a comprehensive theoretical model based on a well-integrated literature, the research lacks aspects regarding the relationship between the factors and the relative significance of each factor.

In addition, Spender (1996a, b) concluded that a firm’s knowledge, its capacity to produce new knowledge, and ways in which firms transform knowledge into value and information is crucial to achieve competitive advantage. Although several previous scholars argued that knowledge can only exists at an individual level, there are some who disagree in claiming that knowledge can also exist at a social level in forms of collective work-related practices, routines, and presumptions (Collins, 2007; Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2009; Hecker, 2012). According to Spender (1996a), “knowledge is less about truth and reason and more about the practice of intervening knowledgeably and purposefully in the world” (p. 64) and to intervene, individuals should be competent in communicating with others and understand the context of an activity (Kirsimajarja & Aino, 2015).

Therefore, knowledge occurs between individuals and can be tacit or explicit. Tacit knowledge signifies knowledge which people have that influences the way they think and act; while explicit knowledge represents objective knowledge that can be codified into tangible forms and can be easily communicated to others, such as organizational procedures (Hislop, 2013). For Spender (1996a, b), knowledge can be classified into four types as shown in table 4.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Conscious</td>
<td>Objectified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacit</td>
<td>Automatic</td>
<td>Collective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.2: The Different Types of Organizational Knowledge (Source: Spender, 1996a, p. 70)*
As shown in table 4.2, there are two types of knowledge regarding individual explicit-tacit knowledge, conscious and automatic. Conscious knowledge is held by an individual that consists of facts, perceptions, and structures that an individual can store and retrieve from memory (Pike et al., 2002). Whereas, automatic knowledge is personal knowledge held by individuals that “includes perceptions, mental models, values, behavioural tendencies, and kinaesthetic and technical skills that are unconscious or semi-conscious and difficult or impossible to access consciously” (Kirsimarja & Aino 2015, p. 4). People with such knowledge are important for achieving organizational intellectual capital and performance (Cook & Yanow, 1993).

With regards to social explicit-tacit knowledge, there are two types of organizational knowledge, objectified and collective. Objectified knowledge is held by organizations that represents shared amount of codified knowledge (Hislop, 2013). Whereas, collective knowledge represents knowledge that is “embedded in the forms of social and organizational practice, residing in the tacit experiences and enactment of the collective” (Kirsimarja & Aino 2015, p. 4). Individual may be unaware of such knowledge, even though they can access it through interactions (Spender, 1996a; 1996b). Nelson and Winter (1982) defined such knowledge as ‘routines’, and most of the important organizational knowledge exists through this form (Pike et al., 2002).

For any given firm, the four different types of knowledge form its intellectual capital collectively, as they are not independent (Spender, 1996a, b). However, as Spender (1996b) claimed, “collective knowledge is the most secure and significant kind of organizational knowledge” (p. 52). Therefore, it is on the social explicit knowledge and the social tacit knowledge that this research is focused on due to wanting to test and analyse the influence of wassta, one type of social capital, on employees and organizational performance.

Nonetheless, many scholars and academics believe that since knowledge sharing is important, individuals will share all required knowledge. However, in reality, what is viewed by many organisations is somewhat different than what has been stated, as knowledge is personal. Employees’ willingness to share knowledge between colleagues depends on the assets embedded within the organisation’s social relations and structures (Lin, 1999; Von Krogh, 2003). Since knowledge can only be offered, organisations use rewards that best match the value of the shared knowledge as a motivation. This is
because “people’s time and energy are limited and they will choose to do what they believe will give them a worthwhile return on those scarce resources” (Cohen 1998, p. 31).

There are several factors that may influence the lack of knowledge sharing between individuals. One justification that has received attention in literatures is that it is impossible to communicate all knowledge an individual has (Baalen, 2002). Therefore, it is safe to say that people know more than what they communicate (Polanyi, 1983). Besides intellectual limits, other factors include competence rationales and an absence of ‘who-knows-what’. Organisations can only efficiently manage knowledge resources when employees are willing to collaborate with their colleagues. Conversely, employees will feel encouraged to provide knowledge only when they believe that their knowledge will serve a useful purpose to organisations. As a result, the knowledge sharing process is too complex to be explained by one factor. Therefore, to promote effective knowledge sharing, organisations need to focus on four factors:

- Knowledge itself;
- Access of knowledge;
- Engagement of employees;
- A safe organisational environment in which employees are motivated to share knowledge.

4.1.2.2 Relationship between HRM practices and Knowledge Sharing

Today’s market has fierce competition and companies strive for gaining competitive advantages, not only to survive in the market, but also to be remarkable and distinct. KM thrives for knowledge to be shared, maintained and created, thus leading an organisation towards innovation (Edvardsson, 2006). Along with KM, human resources are the core for any organisation’s success and development, as high-involvement HR practices ignite the road of achievements and support organisations in reaching its objectives and goals.

HR practices have been defined in several ways, but they are generally described across the dimensions of capability, inspiration, and opportunity grounded on the principle that performance is an outcome of the three (Prieto-Pastor et al., 2010). Since HRM and employees within organisations play a fundamental role in the process of sharing
knowledge, it is necessary for organisations to change the method in which recruitment relationships are accomplished (see Robertson & Hammersley, 2000; Thompson & Heron 2005). Some authors argued that traditional HRM practices are not utterly suitable for encouraging the creativity and autonomy required for knowledge formation (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011). This concludes that further alternatives in the management of human resource is needed to fuel employees with further motivation to sharing knowledge, which leads to further knowledge creation.

In addition, since organisations use HRM practices to influence employees’ skills, motivation, and behaviour, HRM can be influential in knowledge creation and sharing within organisations (see Currie & Kerrin, 2003; Edvardsson, 2008; Lopez-Cabrales et al., 2011). Two perspectives have reasoned with the fact that HRM practices are what truly and mostly encourages employees towards effective knowledge sharing. The first perspective, which is transaction based, involves HRM practices that promotes exchange of information between employees and their organisations in the short term (Camelo-Ordaz, 2011). The second perspective addresses the involvement of high, long term, and greater HRM practices that encourages efficient innovation by managing knowledge within organisations (see Robertson & Hammersley, 2000; Carter & Scarbrough, 2001; Hunter et al., 2002; Camelo-Ordaz, 2011). Such high involvement practices include appraisal and reward systems based on performance, compensation practices designed to encourage knowledge sharing between employees, developing training and development practices that highlight employees’ continuing growth, team building and the formation of organisational knowledge, etc. (Collins & Smith, 2006; Pare & Tremblay, 2007). Therefore, these kind of high involvement practices are more positively correlated with the organisation’s performance than the transaction or traditional practices.

Due to reward systems, knowledge sharing can be promoted when combined efforts are shared among employees in different areas or departments within organisations (Chang et al., 2007). Since collective efforts, team based rewards, and other rewards systems are needed in creating knowledge, they should be further implemented within the process of knowledge sharing. Previous studies showed that HRM practices that were more team based positively correlate with employees’ willingness in sharing knowledge. Other theories, in contradiction, state that because an individual inherent
characteristic of personal knowledge, these high involvement practices may not be as effective as one would think (Child & Rodrigues, 2001; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). Individual knowledge is an extremely valuable resource that can gain status, power, and competitive advantages over others. Hence, many consider that sharing knowledge will inevitably lead to a loss in all the mentioned attributes, resulting in internal conflict with employees (Storey & Barnett, 2000; Hislop, 2003; Willem & Scarbrough, 2006). This is where HRM is useful to resolve such conflict by using appropriate mechanisms in encouraging knowledge sharing.

**4.1.3 Innovation**

Innovation has been widely considered as being the essential weapon for any organisational success in the business environment and “people, not products, are an innovative company’s major assets” (Gupta & Singhal, 1993, p. 41). Yet, it is a complex concept, as its implementation is affected by many factors. The word innovation refers to two concepts, depending on its utilisation. Some scholars have used the word to describe the procedure of bringing new ideas, equipment, projects, or frameworks into use (Damanpour, 1991); whereas, others referred it to the object of the innovation procedure, that is the new idea, equipment, project, or framework itself (Rogers, 2005). The second term will be used in the present research, as it defines innovation as new ideas, products/services, organisational systems/structures, etc. Hence, organisational innovation is determined by the degree of the implementation of innovation, although some studies have used different measures (Damanpour, 1991).

Organisations with more prominent innovativeness will be more successful in reacting to changing situations and growing new capacities that permits them to accomplish better executions (Montes et al., 2004). Innovation creativities greatly depend on employees' knowledge, skills, and commitment. Since employees are the creators of knowledge, as they play an important role in the creation of knowledge and the innovation process, it is therefore critical for organisations to develop means that are essential in supporting employees with the required knowledge.

**4.1.3.1 The Relationship between HRM practices and Innovation**

“It is widely accepted that a firm’s innovation capability is closely linked to its ability to manage, maintain, and create knowledge” (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011, p. 1443). This
statement is supported by several theorists including Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Madhavan & Grover, 1998; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Smith et al., 2005; Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005. It has been recognised that successful HRM practices are related to positive employees’ behaviours amongst others, which leads to innovation. According to Harter et al. (2002), HRM practices can foster high levels of knowledge, motivation, interaction, and commitment, which leads to the continuous success of organisations in the business environment. Thus, HRM strategy should be focused around continuous improvements of innovation to keep up with the day-to-day changes and worldwide innovations.

Moreover, since HR practices are primary tools that organisations can use to influence and form the skills, mind-sets, and behaviour of individuals (Collins & Clark, 2003), they play a central role in supporting the necessary conditions for mobilising and directing individuals towards the progress of innovative activities (Scarbrough, 2000; Laursen & Foss, 2003). Organisations should, therefore, implement some strategic HR practices to get employees motivated and involved in creative thinking (Damanpour, 1991; Laursen & Foss, 2003).

4.1.3.2 The Relationship between Knowledge Sharing and Innovation

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), knowledge formation and innovation should be comprehended as a procedure by which knowledge restrained by people is expanded and adopted as part of organisational knowledge. The main idea underlying this statement is that knowledge sharing involves learning and amending existing knowledge that continuously improves innovation (Chen & Huang, 2009; Hung, et. al., 2010; Liao & Wu, 2010). In other words, employee’s empowerment, teamwork, and management all encourage independence and knowledge sharing among employees that leads to innovation. However, there will be no or little effect on performance or innovation competence of the organisation, if knowledge was not shared with others. Hence, innovation and new knowledge are generated by the combination of separated, yet related ideas, facts, and information that are admitted by the correct KM and HR practice that motivates knowledge sharing. Thus, there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and innovation. As a result, with the use of HR practices, by understanding the role of knowledge-based capabilities and sharing knowledge
among others within the organisation, it will lead to the formation of new knowledge and innovation outcomes.

4.1.4 Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment has received the attention of many scholars in recent years (see Steers, 1977; Stevens et al., 1978; Mowday et al., 1979). It is known to be a vital variable for understanding employees’ behaviour towards organisations (Mowday et al., 1979; Angle & Perry, 1981). Over the years, commitment has been identified and analysed in various ways (e.g. Mowday et al., 1982; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Morrow, 1993), but all scholars agree that “commitment (a) is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to a target and (b) can be accompanied by different mind-sets that play a role in shaping behaviour” (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 1).

Table 4.3 below, which is taken from Meyer & Herscovitch (2001), represents a set of definitions obtained from previous literatures and provides examples of how authors’ perceptions and interests differ in terms of commitment.

However, the most extensively used definition of organisational commitment in previous literatures is the one that has been identified by Mowday et al. (1974), creators of the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). The authors described organisational commitment as the intensity of employee’s relationship with and participation in an organisation. Organisational commitment can be categorised by three related dynamics: “(1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation” (Angle & Perry, 1981, p. 2). An employee’s decision to participate within any organisation is replicated by their "desire to maintain membership in the organisation" (Angle & Perry, 1981, p. 2) and their persistence to perform well is described by their "willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation" and "belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organisations” (Angle & Perry, 1981, p. 2).
Commitment In general:

“A force that stabilizes individual behaviour under circumstances where the individual would otherwise be tempted to change that behaviour” (Brickman, 1987, p. 2).

“An obliging force which requires that the person honour the commitment, even in the face of fluctuating attitudes and whims” (Brown, 1996, p. 241).

Organisational Commitment

“The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation” (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226).

“A psychological state that binds the individual to the organisation (i.e., makes turnover less likely)” (Meyer & Allen, 1990, p. 14).

Job Commitment

“Refers to the likelihood that an individual will stick with a job, and feel psychologically attached to it, whether it is satisfying or not” (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983, p. 420).

Occupational/Career Commitment

“One's attitude toward one's profession or vocation” (Blau, 1985, p. 278).

“One's motivation to work in a chosen vocation” (Carson & Bedeian, 1994, p. 240).

Table 4.3: Definition of Commitment (Source: Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 302)

In addition, table 4.4, also taken from Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) study, represents dimensions of organisational commitment within numerous multidimensional models. As shown in table 4.4 below, there are some differences regarding the dimensionality of organisational commitment due to diverse purposes and approaches involved in their creation. Such differences include challenges to (a) justify empirical findings (e.g., Angle & Perry, 1981), (b) differentiate between former conceptualisations (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1990, 1991; Jaros et al., 1993), (c) explain commitment within a recognised academic framework (e.g., O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Penley & Gould, 1988), or (d) selected combination of others (e.g., O'Reilly et al., 1991; Mayer & Schoorman, 1992).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Organisational Commitment within Multidimensional Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angle and Perry (1981, p.4)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value commitment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Commitment to support the goals of the organisation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commitment to stay</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Commitment to retain their organisational membership”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O'Reilly and Chatman (1986, p. 493)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compliance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Instrumental involvement for specific extrinsic rewards”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Attachment based on a desire for affiliation with the organisation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internalization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Involvement predicated on congruence between individual and organisational values”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penley and Gould (1988)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Acceptance of and identification with organisational goals”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calculative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A commitment to an organisation which is based on the employee's receiving inducements to match contributions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alienative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Organisational attachment which results when an employee no longer perceives that there are rewards commensurate with investments; yet he or she remains due to environmental pressures”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 67)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“An awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organisation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Normative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A feeling of obligation to continue employment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mayer and Schoorman (1992, p. 673)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A belief in and acceptance of organisational goals and values and a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The desire to remain a member of the organisation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jaros et al. (1993)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing organisation through feelings such as loyalty, affection, warmth, belongingness, fondness, pleasure, and so on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The degree to which an individual experiences a sense of being locked in place because of the high costs of leaving”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing organisation through internalization of its goals, values, and missions”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.4: Dimensions of Commitment (Source: Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 304)*
4.1.4.1 Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model

In this thesis, Meyer and Allen’s (1984-1997) three-component model will be used in justifying the research. Common to all, they state that commitment binds employees to organisations, which in turn reduces turnover. However, what differentiates their model from any other model are the mind-sets associated with commitment. These mind-sets replicate three different arguments, (1) affective commitment to organisations, (2) costs related to leaving (i.e. normative commitment), and (3) obligation to stay (i.e. continuance commitment).

Affective commitment, as Mowday et al (1979) further claimed, is “when the employee identifies with a particular organisation and its goals in order to maintain membership to facilitate the goal” (p. 225). Meyer and Allen (1997) continued to state that employees remain within organisations due to their choice. Thus, affective commitment is characterised by the perception that employees will (a) participate in activities, (b) recognise the value-relevance associated with those activities, and/or (c) develop an identity from their involvement within the organisation or from achieving activities (Meyer & Allen, 1997). On the other hand, continuance commitment is the motivation to stay in an organisation because of the non-transferable investment, such as relationships with colleagues (Reichers, 1985), employees have developed over the years. Accordingly, continuance commitment is characterised by the perception that employees will (a) lose their investments if they left the organisation (Jaros et al., 1993; Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997) and (b) lack of alternatives. However, there are some disagreements on the distinction between loss of investments and lack of alternatives, as some believe that they are the same. Meyer and Allen (1984-1997) assume that both commitments have the same mind-set (perceived cost), but acknowledge that further research is needed.

Moreover, normative commitment is characterised by the perception that employees (a) have adopted a set of standards regarding suitable conduct and/or (b) are the beneficiaries of assistances and skills an organisation needs to reciprocate (Wiener, 1982; Meyer & Allen, 1991). In simpler words, employees with affective commitment stay within an organisation because ‘they want to’, those with a continuance commitment stay because ‘they have to’, and those with a normative commitment stay because they ‘feel that they have to’ (Meyer et al., 1993). Figure 4.2, extracted from the
Meyer et al. (2002) research, presents a summary of the theorised relation between the components and mind-sets (shown on left side of the figure) in terms of antecedents, consequences and correlation (shown on the right side of the figure).

Figure 4.2: A Three-Component Model of Organisational Commitment (Source: Meyer et al., 2002, p. 22)

However, under unsteady conditions in which organisations cannot secure employment, it might not be rational for an organisation to assume that employees will continue to commit. Conversely, other studies examined different outcomes and antecedents of commitment (see Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). One study has demonstrated that tenure, age, education, job satisfaction, distributive justice, job security, role ambiguity, and role conflict are constant antecedents of commitment (Morrow, 1993). Additionally, it has also been proven that commitment is linked to low turnover (Michaels & Spector, 1982; Williams & Hazer, 1986; Mueller & Price, 1990; Jaros, 1997), low absenteeism (Angle & Perry, 1981; Sagie, 1998), better motivation and involvement (Stumpf & Hartman, 1984; Somech & Bogler, 2002), higher performance (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mowday et al., 1974; Steers, 1977), adaptability to changes (Iverson, 1996; Brewer & Hensher, 1998), organisational citizen behaviour (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Schappe, 1998), and ethical business values (Valentine et al., 2002).
4.1.4.2 The Role of the Psychological Contract

Thompson and Heron (2006) concluded that affective commitment mediates between psychological contract and knowledge sharing, which in turn affects innovation. Argyris (1960) was the one who first introduced the notion of psychological contract, however Rousseau's research was very significant in directing modern research (Coyle-Shapiro & Parzefall, 2008). Accordingly, a psychological contract is an employee’s idea of shared obligations between an employee and an organisation (Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). This notion is based on the perception that an organisation is obligated to fulfil their promises, such as paying salaries, providing promotional opportunities, etc., in exchange for an employee’s performance in terms of commitment, skills, knowledge sharing, etc. (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). It involves many unspecified obligations that cannot be explicitly addressed, as it is a social exchange relationship (Aggarwal, 2014).

Guest and Conway's (1997) model of the psychological contract best describes how commitment is related to other concepts. The content of the model is linked to three factors, which are fairness, trust, and the delivery of the deal. Fairness context is linked to factors such as how organisations value employees and reward them for their contribution (Flood et al., 2001). Trust is related to the confidence of an organisation in their employees and their outcomes. Lastly, the delivery of the deal is related to the fulfilment of the psychological contract (Guest, 1998). Continuously, commitment is linked to the attitudinal consequence of the model in which positive psychological contract equals positive organisational commitment and vice-versa. The model also suggests that behavioural consequences, such as effort and intention to stay/quit, play a critical role in the psychological contract model regarding organisational commitment, as shown in the figure 4.3 below.
However, Guest and Conway's (1997) model of the psychological contract has several limitations. Firstly, it does not examine the link between attitudes and behaviours towards knowledge sharing. In addition, their model does not mention other forms of commitment that Meyer and Allen (1997) had discovered. Thus, while Guest and Conway's model of the psychological contract provides an excellent overview of commitment, many authors still criticised it. As a result, Hislop (2003) modified Guest and Conway's original model of the psychological contract by including knowledge sharing (see figure 4.4).
As demonstrated in figure 4.4 above, commitment is shown to impact several attitudes and behaviours linked to management and knowledge sharing, but the direction of the connection, i.e. arrows, is complex and unclear. Nonetheless, within time, a psychological contract may change when the contract is breached or unfulfilled. Following a breach of contract, unfairness and unethical procedures may occur, since the result of the breach has a significant effect on individual, group, and organisational levels (Ahmed & Muchiri, 2013). For instance, Robinson and Rousseau (1994) revealed that approximately 55% of MBA graduate employees alleged that their psychological contract had been breached by their organisation. Some of the violated promises include higher salaries, job security, and promotional and advancement opportunities. This, in turn, increased employee’s sense of deception and wrongdoing as well as impacting their relationship with the organisation. Therefore, negative attitudes and reactions rose due to practical and interactional injustice, as seen in figure 4.5 below.

![Psychological Contract Breach Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 4.5: Psychological Contract Breach (Source: Kickul, 2001, p. 290, Fig 1)**

**a. Psychological Contract vs. Wasta**

Psychological contract and *wasta* are quite similar in the sense of shared obligations and both being an implicit promise. Contrary to an explicit promise, an implicit promise is when something is understood, but not clearly stated. By nature, implicit promises are harder than explicit promises, where individuals do not recognise them as promises until they are broken or lack resemblance to the explicit promise. As Argyris (1960) claimed, the psychological contract is an implicit understanding of exchanged tangible resources between employees and their organisations (Coyle-Shapiro & Parzefall,
In that respect, the psychological contract may only be recognised when it is broken.

The key difference between the contract and *wasta* is that *wasta* is a two-way process based on normative and cognitive assumptions that people will follow and apply in certain situations (Alreshoodi, 2016), or what Dabs and Rousseau (2004) call ‘mutuality’. “Mutuality provides both parties the basis to align behaviours with the actual commitments made and accepted in the context of the relationship” (Dabs & Rousseau, 2004, p. 54). For example, when A does a favour for B, both A and B expect B to return that favour at a certain point. This makes *wasta* an on-going reciprocal cycle. Figure 4.6 explains how *wasta* favours work.
As shown in figure 4.6 above, there are no terms and conditions on how *wasta* works or how many time a person performs a favour, or who does the favour; there is no order. There are many possible permutations for the *wasta* cycle that involves many parties, hence it becomes too big and complicated. Therefore, *wasta* is made of various sizes or quantities. Although one thing is certain, once an individual is part of the *wasta* cycle, he or she is expected to help others. In a simple formula, it is an explanatory theory that can be predicted in the sense that when A does a favour for B, there is an expectation of a returned favour. As Kilani and Sakijha (2002) conclude, “voluntarily or out of social pressure… using *wasta* between the citizens and the states is increasing dramatically” (p. 58). The concept of trust and reciprocity (Kassab, 2016) are key elements of *wasta*. However, *wasta* is not a compulsory act, it is a matter of free will; no one is obligated to fulfil any obligation if they do not want to or cannot fulfil it, even if they are being pressurised.

People assume, however, due to their fictitious belief, that *wasta* is an obligatory act and whenever it is not fulfilled, they feel offended. According to Rousseau (1995), a contract breach can be viewed as a person neglecting to fulfil what was promised to another. Nevertheless, there are many individuals who disagree, as many of them believe that if an individual refuse to perform such act, it is due to his/her ethical consciousness in the subject matter or the fear of opening the *wasta* door. Once the door is open, it cannot be easily shut. In addition, there are many people who “wish to escape from this vicious circle” (Whitaker, 2009, p. 14). Therefore, whenever possible, some individuals would rather rest the attached expectation, as they do not like doing something that contradicts their principle because, in some cases, the favour is perceived as unethical, difficult, too expensive, or even too big in relation to the obligation. In addition to that, sometimes, even if “they have a free choice … they have to deal with the facts on the ground … so they find themselves eventually getting into this vicious circle” (Whitaker, 2009, p. 14).

Nonetheless, there are consequences for not being part of the *wasta* cycle or not performing such acts when one asks for a favour (i.e. breach of *wasta*), although there are some people who choose to move on and respect a person’s request for not being part of it. The consequences of a contract breach can be damaging, as it affects an individual’s affection that may lead to negative behaviours (Zhao et al., 2007).
Individuals who refuse to practice *wasta* for their relatives will end up being out-casted and lose support, assurance, and status provided by the *wasta* circle/users (Ronsin, 2010). *Wasta*, in this manner, could shame or shun individuals who refuse to practice *wasta* for their relatives (Ta'Amnha et al., 2016). Hence, it has been established that a breach could lead to hostile behaviours in the purpose of harming (Bordia et al., 2008) the neglected individual, as shown in figure 4.7.

![Potential Wasta and Consensual Breach](image)

**Figure 4.7: Potential Wasta and Consensual Breach**

Even after accepting and understanding a person’s decision for not performing the favoured act, people would still feel offended as to why that person would not just perform a simple favour in their point of view, no matter how complicated or unethical it is. Morrison and Robinson (2004) identified this as incongruence based on the initial assumption about what a person’s expectation and obligation should be. As a result, it appears that *wasta* impacts the development of the psychological contract (Aldossari & Robertson, 2015) in the sense that *wasta* users believe that since they became part of the *wasta* circle, they are expected to fulfil/receive obligations. Hence, when the obligation is not fulfilled/received, users become disappointed and feel that the contract has been breached.

### 4.1.4.3 Equity Theory of Motivation

In the early 21st century, organisations are trying to cultivate a work force that is self-governing. Thus, a sense of justice must exist as it is the glue that holds everything together and supports teamwork (Cropanzano & Kacmar, 1995). For this reason, equity theory has gained more attention from HR specialists, particularly regarding the equity of outcomes. The main idea behind equity theory, developed by Adams (1965), is that when employees work for an organisation, they provide specified skills (input) and
based on their skills, they expect something in return (outcome) (Cropanzano, 1993). Hence, equity theory emphasises two items, outcome and input ratio. Adams (1965) expressed this ratio as outcomes/inputs. However, it is difficult for employees to determine what is fair (equity) and unfair (inequity), thus it forces employees to determine the degree of fairness based on a reference group to see if what they are receiving is reasonable. A reference group (others) could be a colleague, neighbour, friend, etc.

Since HR professionals have many administrative responsibilities for various outcomes, which employees obtain as part of their exchange within organisations, they play a major part in employees’ perceived justice of outcomes (Folger & Cropanzano, 1994). Compensations, incentives, and promotions are some of the outcomes that HRM manages. This part of the equity process is basically a personal evaluation of one’s psychological contract. If an employee realises an inequitable outcome, he or she will act upon it to correct it, either by lowering their production level or the quantity of their job (Miner, 1980). Employees do not view the fairness of the exchange between them and their employers as an economic matter only, but elements of justice are usually involved (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012). Therefore, equity theory helps in identifying factors that motivate employees (Berkowitz, 1965) and it helps to understand organisational behaviour. According to Miner (1980), equity theory has the following features:

- **Prediction of performance**: research evidence confirmed that employees’ performance might be influenced by over-rewards and under-rewards for a short period of time.
- **Prediction of work satisfaction**: equity theory concluded that employees encounter guilt and dissatisfaction feelings when they are over-rewarded, thus they increase their inputs. While in under-reward situations, employees feel angry and offended, which leads to an increase in absenteeism and turnover between employees.
- **Construct validity**: the main construct of equity theory is equity motivation. Other constructs include guilt and resentment reduction. However, the theory lacks accuracy in terms of which factor function as inputs, outputs, and under what conditions.
• **Utility**: is the ability to foresee performance and organisational satisfaction.

• **Falsibility**: this is where employees are differentiated based on who will and will not react to inequity motivation. In addition to factors that are viewed as inputs and outputs, there is also the problem of employees comparing to others, how those others are chosen, and why (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012).

Further to Miner (1980) equity characteristics, Adams (1963, 1965) developed four propositions that apprehend the objectives of the theory regarding perceptions on how employees manage and compare their relationships with others. The four propositions are as follows:

• Employees compare their relationships with others based on outcomes/inputs ratio of their work against the outcomes/inputs ratio of others.

• If the outcome of the comparison is unequal, then inequity exists.

• The higher the degree of inequity an employee experiences, either by being over-rewarded or under-rewarded, the greater the distress he or she will feel (Walster et al., 1973).

• The greater the distress, the more an employee will work to restore equity and, consequently, decrease the distress.

a. **The Equity Sensitivity Construct**

The equity sensitivity construct suggests that people react in consistent, but in different means to both equity and inequity situations, depending on how sensitive they are and the way in which they view their inputs and outcomes (Huseman et al., 1897). Thus, three constructs of employees were developed by Huseman et al. (1897), which are benevolent, equity sensitive, and entitled.

*Benevolent* are individuals who prefer their outcome/input ratio to be lower than the outcome/input ratio of others (Huseman et al., 1897). This construct is usually associated with altruism, although some psychologists are uncertain about the existence of altruism (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1983). It is acknowledged that benevolent have altruistic features because they do not expect anything or little in return when they give, due to the need for social acceptance (Blau, 1964) or to enhance one’s image (Homans, 1961). Benevolent employees are pleased when under-rewarded and feel guilty when
over-rewarded. For further information, Weick et al. (1976) and Rushton's (1980) are good examples of benevolent studies.

*Equity sensitive* refer to employees who prefer their outcome/input ratio to be identical to those of others (Huseman et al., 1897). Equity sensitive employees apply the traditional equity theory model, hence require little detail. Briefly, equity sensitive employees feel offended when under-rewarded and guilty when over-rewarded. They are the only group that experience such feelings.

*Entitled* term is taken from Coles' (1977a, b) work that describes a child who "has much, but wants and expects more, all assumed to be his or hers by right-at once a psychological and material inheritance the world will provide" (Coles, 1977a, p. 85). Entitled employees are the opposite of benevolent. They are known to be exploitative and getters (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1983), where their own income/input ratio exceeds the ratio of others. They experience distress when they do not get more or better than their comparisons.

However, the problem with the equity sensitivity construct, as noted by Pritchard (1969) and Campbell and Pritchard (1976), is the extent to which employees view specific elements as inputs or outcomes. For an example, one employee might consider ‘doing hard work’ as an input, while another employee might view it as an outcome. Those who view elements as inputs will expect higher outcomes and those who view elements as outcomes will produce more inputs (Huseman et al., 1897). Thus, evidently, an employee’s ratio is impacted by their perceived perception of inputs and outcomes.

### b. *Equity Restoration*

Restoring equity can be either actual or psychological (Adams, 1965). Actual equity restoration methods, including modifying inputs or outcomes and psychological restoration, involves acting on or altering the compared group or terminating the connection (Lerner et al., 1976). According to Adams (1965), people will feel angry and dissatisfied when they are getting less than what they expect with comparisons to what they offer (disadvantageous inequity) and feel guilty if they receive more than what they offer (advantageous inequity). Because of that, Adams (1965) hypothesised that observed inequity feels offensive and inspires employees to look for ways to reduce it and “the strength of motivation to do so will vary directly with the magnitude of
inequity experienced” (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012, p. 7). Previous scholars witnessed when inequity exists, it may increase absenteeism and resignation within organisations (Greenberg, 1999). Consequently, Adams (1965) recommended some ‘means of inequity reduction’ techniques to decrease inequity, which are as follows:

- **Changing inputs**: an employee might either increase or decrease his/her inputs depending on whether the equity is advantageous or disadvantageous.
- **Changing outcomes**: an employee might either increase his/her outcome, if others are being over-rewarded and decrease his/her outcomes, if others are being under-rewarded. The second situation is unlikely to happen, unless the employee is benevolent.
- **Distorting one’s inputs and outcomes cognitively**: this is when a person may alter or re-arrange his/her perception of one’s input/outcome to reduce observed inconsistencies.
- **Distorting others’ inputs and outcomes cognitively**: an employee may alter or change others’ inputs or outcomes when inequity exists. For an example, if an employee lacks a certain job skills, he/she may try to persuade others to reduce a similar input rather than increasing his/her own input.
- **Changing comparisons**: an employee might either change the people who he/she compares to or change the item of comparison by finding something that he/she is better at than others to resolve inequity feeling.
- **Leaving the field**: in an employment situation, leaving the field is regarded as means to cope with inequity and usually includes absenteeism, quitting, transferring to another position, etc.

Figure 4.8 below summarises employees’ actions with regards to equity and inequity. In conclusion, employees need to sense some kind of control over their future within organisations, which is why justice is important in organisations. With the existence of unfair system, employees might feel victimised as decisions are made subjectively and the system lacks predictability (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012). As a result, employees will assume that their effort will result in invalid outcomes. Therefore, whether a social exchange is regarded as justifiable or unjust all comes down to an individual’s perception of the link between their inputs and outcomes (Adams, 1963, 1965; Walster et al., 1973; Adams & Freedman, 1976).
4.1.4.4 Relationship between Organisational Commitment and HRM

Former studies proved that there is a connection between organisational commitment and HRM in a sense that HRM encourages commitment within organisations when functioning successfully. The significance of managing HR has been increasing because HRM practices encourage employees to develop their attitudes and behaviours (Meyer & Smith, 2000). Realistically, including organisational resources, individuals are the most vital resources in organisations, although they are the most difficult to regulate (Szamosi, 2006). The capacity of organisations to employ workers and, specifically, to cultivate their engagement, commitment, and loyalty is a factual challenge for HR departments. According to Arthur (1994), a company’s performance may be affected by HR practices through cultivating committed and trusted employees who can use their decisions in performing tasks in ways that are coherent with organisational goals. Other scholars also support this statement by arguing that HR practices may influence a firm’s performance when such practices encourage motivation and employees’ behaviours (see Huselid, 1995; Wright et al., 2001). Due to various criticisms that HR does not enhance organisations’ performance, table 4.5 provides evidence that demonstrates the positive relation between HRM practices and performance.
According to Storey and Quintas (2001), “developing trust, motivation and commitment of workers represents one of the key issues in relation to the management of knowledge worker” (pp. 347-348). The challenge of maintaining employees’ commitment is “accentuated by the tendency for these workers to exhibit greater commitment to their occupations than to particular organisations” (Giauque et al., 2010, p. 187). Thus, it is necessary for organisations, through appropriate and objective HR practices, to improve workers’ employability and provide employees with developmental opportunities in exchange for high performance and commitment. This is important because committed employees will be more motivated to share knowledge, innovate, and are less likely to quit.

However, when HR practices are not competent, effective, and objective, employees will lose their trust, commitment, and loyalty towards the organisation. Lack of trust in organisations may lead to demoralisation of employees (Astrachan et al., 2002). Thus, for this reason, organisations must choose to implement the correct HR practices that best fit their organisational structure to reduce employees’ uncertainty and increase performance (Galbraith, 1973). For further research evidence, studies that have been conducted on the relationship between HRM practices and organisational commitment

<table>
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<th>Author</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paauwe &amp; Richardson (1997)</td>
<td>It is substantiated and corroborated the relationship first, between a range of HR practices and important HRM outcomes, such as satisfaction, motivation, turnover, absenteeism and commitment, and second, between these outcomes and more general performance outcomes at the organisational level, like productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, sales, profit and market value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guthrie (2001)</td>
<td>HR practices are related to turnover and profitability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combs et al. (2006)</td>
<td>An increase of one standard deviation in the use of high-performance work practices (HPWP) is associated with a 4.6% increase in return on assets, and with a 4.4 percentage point decrease in turnover. This fact allows to state that “HPWPs” impact on organisational performance is not only statistically significant, but managerially relevant” (Combs et al., 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boselie et al. (2005)</td>
<td>Much (though by no means all) of the empirical HRM research in its ‘systems’ form has been found to matter (in a positive sense) for organisational performance</td>
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Table 4.5: Approaches to HRM-Performance Link (Source: Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010, p. 427)
throughout the years include work done by Caldwell et al. (1990), Mallak & Kurstedt (1996), and Chang (1999).

4.2 Section 2: Social Capital

In previous studies, social exchange theory has been used to explain the link between social capital and HRM practices, innovation, knowledge sharing, and organisational commitment. Social exchange theory assumes that trust, commitment, and involvement are encouraged through employees’ interaction, since it is based on reciprocity norms. Such norms view gratitude, empowerment, investment in human assets, and others as favours to be returned. Nevertheless, it is important to note that networks differ in size, range, and the strength of the tie. The reason why social capital was included in this research is because *wasta* is one form of social capital, and thus by knowing how social capital influences the four measured variables, based on past studies in different societies, it would give clear directions to carry out the research to see if similar results would be produced when it is applied in Kuwait with regards to *wasta*. Therefore, this section discusses the social exchange theory, social conflict theory, and the relationship between social capital with HRM, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment.

4.2.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is one of the most effective theoretical concepts for understanding workplace behaviour by describing how various resources can be exchanged by specific rules and how exchanges can produce high-quality associations (see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Resources are defined as anything that has been executed in an interpersonal relationship and can be identified as concrete or symbolic, and whether the identity of the benefactor is relevant, with particularistic resources having high benefactor relevance and universal resources having low benefactor relevance (Foa & Foa, 1980). The rules of exchange describe normative explanations of the condition that takes place between exchange members (Emerson, 1976) and can vary from competition to reciprocity to altruism (Gouldner, 1960; Meeker, 1971). Relationships are classified as links between two networking members (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and can be defined in various ways such as support, obligation, and trust (Blau, 1964; Mills & Clark, 1982).
Social exchange relationships (SERs) develop when managers look after their employees, and thus produce positive consequences. In other words, SERs mediate between unbiased transactions between relationships and relationships that produce efficient work behaviour and positive employee attitudes. This line of reasoning has been witnessed by many scholars using Blau’s (1964) outline to explain SERs. According to Blau (1964), “the basic and most crucial distinction is that social exchange entails unspecified obligations” (p. 93). He further claimed that only social exchange “involves favours that create diffuse future obligations…and the nature of the return cannot be bargained” (p. 93) and “only social exchange tends to engender feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust; purely economic exchange as such does not” (p. 94). He also debated that benefits associated in an exchange do not have a price concerning a measurable mode of exchange (Blau, 1964), suggesting that social exchange produces long-lasting social relations. As a result, SET is divided into two parts, (1) rules and norms of exchange, and (2) the quality of exchange, which will be detailed below.

4.2.1.1 Rules and Norms of Exchange

One of the basic principles of SET is that relationships grow within time into loyalty, trust, and mutual commitment. For that to happen, members are expected to follow certain rules of exchange. Norms and rules of exchange are simply guidelines that people obey.

a. Reciprocity Rules

According to Gouldner (1960), the nature of reciprocity within an exchange is differentiated by three kinds of mutuality: (a) reciprocity as an interdependent exchange, (b) reciprocity as a folk belief, and (c) reciprocity as a norm and individual orientation. Reciprocity as interdependent exchanges highlights dependable relationships, where an action by one member reflects the behaviour of another (Swift, 2007). Interdependence exchanges are outcomes grounded on a mixture of members’ effort. This is because an exchange needs a “bidirectional transaction, something has to be given and something returned” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 876). For instance, if one person offers a benefit, the receiver will respond in kind (Gergen, 1969). Thus, interdependence is regarded as an essential element of social exchange that is
continuous and does not include precise bargaining (Molm, 2000, 2003). As a result, such exchange reduces risk and increases cooperation (Molm, 1994).

In addition, reciprocity as a folk belief claims that people somewhat accept the fact that at a certain point, all exchanges will reach a fair equilibrium. People who are not helpful will face future consequences and those who are helpful will be rewarded (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Hence, reciprocity as a folk belief is a cultural expectation that individuals attain what they deserve (Gouldner, 1960). Lastly, reciprocity as a norm and individual orientation has been viewed as a cultural obligation and people who do not obey are disciplined (Mauss, 1967). The main difference between reciprocity as a norm and as a folk belief is that norm defines how people should behave and those that fall under this category are obligated to behave reciprocally (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This line of reasoning has guided Gouldner (1960) to believe that a norm of reciprocity is a widespread belief that is shared by others. Even if reciprocity is universal, it does not mean that people value the same degree of reciprocity (Clark & Mills, 1979). For an example, high exchange orientation individuals are more concerned with reciprocal obligations, as opposed to low exchange orientation individuals (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As a result, even though norms of reciprocity might be universal, the degree of reciprocal application varies across cultures (Gouldner, 1960).

b. Beyond Reciprocity Rules

Meeker’s (1971) model is another framework that best describe the reciprocal concept. Meeker proposed that interpersonal exchanges could be preserved as individual choices, thus people need rules to guide their choices. Hence, Meeker suggested five other notions, excluding reciprocity that guides people’s decisions, which are rationality, altruism, group gain, status consistency, and competition.

- **Rationality**, in Meeker’s (1971) paradigm, is described as the use of logic to determine possible consequences and how people should behave to achieve valued means. Naturally, people do not always act rationally (Shafir & LeBoeuf, 2002), and therefore Meeker added other exchange rules.
- **Altruism** is where people seek the benefit of others, even if it does not benefit them. Previous social psychologists still debate whether such a notion exists (e.g.,
In-group gain is where benefits are grouped together in one place and people contribute when they can and take what they need from this cache, regardless of their contribution (Weimer-Elder, 2013).

Status consistency or rank equilibration is the “allocation of benefits based on one’s station within a social group” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 879).

Competition is the opposite of altruism. It is the process of harming others even at one’s own risk (Meeker, 1971).

4.2.1.2 Social Exchange Mediators: Social Exchange Quality

Justice is usually associated with reciprocal behaviours by cultivating social exchange relationships. The best way to capture reciprocal behaviours is by performing services that obligates others to reciprocate (Blau, 1964). However, “to discharge this obligation, the second must furnish benefits to the first in turn” (p. 89). Likewise, Gouldner (1960) theorised the norm of reciprocity as individuals concentrating on “those who have helped them” (p. 171). Therefore, there are five social exchange qualities that must exist within a relationship, which are trust, commitment, perceived organisational support (POS), and leader-member exchange (LMX).

Trust will be discussed and linked to several aspects in this research, especially with regards to commitment. Both Blau (1964) and Holmes (1981) defined trust as an outcome of a positive exchange, and thus it is important to understand its linkage with such exchange. Trust is also defined as “positive expectations about the words, actions, and decisions of a trustee” (Colquitt et al., 2013, p. 202). In his debate of social exchange, Blau (1964) mentioned the risk associated with such relation by concluding that, “since there is no way to assure an appropriate return for a favour, social exchange requires trusting others to discharge their obligations” (p. 94). Hence, trust is a key factor of the exchange process (Holmes, 1981), as it mediates between justice and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Aryee et al., 2002).

Organisational commitment is another aspect that has been debated in this research. Organisational commitment is the desire to remain an employee within an organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Commitment has been defined as an effective quality of social exchange that is also coherent to Blau’s (1964) proposal that the formation and
preservation of social exchange relationships needs long-term commitment between members for favours to be reciprocated for a long time. With regards to justice, organisational commitment has been positively correlated to procedural justice and distributive justice (Wayne et al., 2002).

*Perceived organisational support (POS) “reflects the degree to which the organisation is perceived to value employee contributions and well-being” (Colquitt et al., 2013, p. 202). In reciprocal terms, when employees view their employers as supportive, they are more likely to return the action. When POS is high, employees are likely to get involved in organisational citizenship behaviour (Lynch et al., 1999), produce higher job performance (Eisenberger et al., 2001), and exhibit lower absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Therefore, scholars have often hypothesised POS as one of the social exchange qualities that takes place between an employee and the organisation. Lastly, *leader-member exchange* (LMX) has also been observed to be an exchange relation between employees and organisations (see Settoon et al., 1996). LMX “reflects the degree to which a supervisor-employee relationship is characterised by mutual respect and obligation” (Colquitt et al., 2013, p. 202). Settoon et al., (1996) concluded that POS predicts organisational commitment, but not performance ratings; whereas, LMX predicts performance ratings and organisational commitment behaviour.

**4.2.1.3 The Link Between Social Exchange Theory and Wasta**

Social exchange theory and *wasta* have much in common, as is evident in the literature. However, the link between them will be briefly discussed so that no repetition of statements would occur. As with SET, *wasta* connections develop into long-term relationships that value loyalty, trust, and mutual commitment. For that to occur, *wasta* falls under the *reciprocity as a norm and individual orientation* rule of exchange. The reason why it is categorised under that rule is because *wasta* is seen by some citizens as an obligation to fulfil and once they are part of the *wasta* cycle, they are obligated to continue the reciprocity process through in-group gain or status consistency.

Additionally, social exchange qualities are also witnessed in the literature to be part of the *wasta* cycle. Trust and organisational commitment has been widely detailed in the literature regarding its linkage with *wasta* in various aspects. In accordance with social exchange qualities, trust is an essential condition to overcome dilemmas between
members (Tennberg, 2007) in the *wasta* cycle. Trust is used in previous literatures to explain why people behave the way they do and why they choose to cooperate with others (Ostrom & Walker, 2003). Moreover, trust enhances cooperation (Lundin, 2007), which in turn enhances commitment. One reason for that is because individuals who value and recognise certain traits, such as fairness and reciprocity, feel bound to encourage more cooperation between each other (Koeszegi, 2004), knowing that trusting others in a relationship could lead to a cooperative behaviour rather than a competitive one (Ferrin et al., 2007). According to Ferrin et al., (2008) there is strong evidence that cooperation “is a critical intervening variable in the development of mutual trust perceptions between individuals and groups” (p. 171). Hence, in agreement with SET, individuals that lack trust will cause a lack of confidence, participation, and commitment between each other. As a result, the link between trust and cooperation is strong (Ferrin et al., 2007), and thus leads to future commitment.

In the case of POS and LMX, a high-quality relationship assists organisations and employees to achieve organisational goals by giving employees the opportunity to advance socially, emotionally, and morally (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Role theory specifies that organisations give employees certain tasks to accomplish (Graen, 1989) and the degree to which employees comply with task demands, with the support of managers, demonstrates the type of LMX (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) and POS relationships that exists within an organisation. For an example, employees who benefit from their manager’s support, such as receiving more resources, will try to reciprocate the favour (Xu et al., 2011) by becoming more committed. According to the social exchange theory, LMX and POS is an exchange theory of leadership (Brower et al., 2000) by nature, and thus it is central that reciprocity feature exists (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Hence, there are three similarities between POS, LMX, and *wasta*. Firstly, LMX, POS, and *wasta* are basically embedded in the personal connection of two entities. Secondly, the LMX and POS theories are parallel to *wasta* in the sense that both tactics emphasise leader-member relationships and organisational support that grows steadily through interactions resulting from the reciprocity principle (Nie & Lamsa, 2015). Finally, both theories and *wasta* underline the significant quality of connections between members.
In conclusion, relationship establishment “is not a matter of a single stimulus-response” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 890), it is more equivalent to climbing a ladder. Exchanges are not about or limited to material goods, but rather about symbolic value. Molm (2003) demonstrated that relationships containing trust and commitment are established from successful reciprocal exchanges. Bishop et al. (2000) and Eisenberger et al. (2002) argued that trust and commitment turn to benefits for future transactions, and thus relationships with others become stronger and further foster potential reciprocal transactions. Therefore, a high-quality relationship that includes the traits of trust, obligation, and respect are highly valued in SET theory and wasṭa.

4.2.2 Social Conflict Theory

Conflicts are inevitable between individuals in organisations (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). The conflict perspective, or conflict theory, was first introduced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848) in which they viewed social life as a competition that resulted in unequal distribution of resources, power, and inequality. Social structures are made because of conflict between contrasting interests, as the control over the social structure is in the hands of the powerful, who for the most part oppose the interests of others (Knapp, 1994). According to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), competitive conflict theory represents competing as a power-driven approach that is high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness (Schaubhut, 2007). Assertiveness alludes to the degree to which one tries to fulfil his or her own objectives and cooperativeness alludes to the degree to which one tries to fulfil the objectives of others (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974, 2007). It is considered as a win/lose relationship where one endeavours to accomplish his/her objective at the expense of another. Such practice might also include the use of one’s power, position, wealth, network, or influence (Eilerman, 2006). The goal is to win or overcome with regards to accomplishing one's desired objective when set against that of another who wants something else.

However, conflict is usually viewed negatively, as it leads to a decrease in performance when the level of conflict increases (Verma, 1998). For instance, it may create poor decisions that affect development. Conflict can waste time and energy, as it can create resentments that harm the entire working environment and reduces cohesiveness. If it persists, it can result in prompt discouragement and lack of care (Thomas & Thomas,
Research led by Woosley (2001), utilising the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, demonstrated that people with reliably competitive identity style are more likely to be males who are extroverted-sensing-thinking-judging (ESTJ) or extroverted-intuitive-thinking-judging (ENTJ), as opposed to females who have compromise identity style. People whose dominant conflict style is competing tend to see distinctions among individuals and they usually believe that they are justified in their working position as well as sustaining those who agree with them, while conflicting with those who disagree (Percival et al., 1992).

Social conflict theory can be linked to social capital. It is argued that social capital is one of the most important sources of conflict in organisations (Comerford, 2002) and it results in the distortion of inducements (Albright & Carr, 1997). As indicated by Coser (1967), conflict is a battle over values and claims to scarce positions, power, and assets aiming at neutralising or eliminating competition. In any case, conflict in organisations exists because employees see each other as competition and not as colleagues working towards a shared objective. Therefore, since society tends to perform favours for those who they know at the expense of others through the practice of power, networking, or connections, employees will seek any form of social capital, such as *wasta*, to eliminate or reduce competition to get what they want. It has been revealed by Chen (2013) that when conflict between employees arise, managers reduce or prevent the cost of conflict through playing favouritism (i.e. satisfying the person he/she is linked it). This, in turn, produce negative individual outcomes, such as resentment, mistrust, anxiety, frustration, and tension (Jehn, 1995), that impact performance. Therefore, with the increased use of social capital, competitive conflict increases to a level that initially reduces the performance of employees.

### 4.2.3 The Relationship Between Social capital and HRM Practices

Aggarwal et al. (2007) suggest that HRM practices influence employees’ attitudes and behaviours. In general, employees are expected to excel in their performance towards achieving organisational goals and along with these expectations comes employees’ rights. Employees’ rights include non-discriminatory treatment, adequate rewards, proper health care, job security, appropriate working conditions, promotional and advancement opportunities, etc. Employment rights are secured by guaranteeing that recruitment and promotion are job-related (Arthur, 1985; Heneman et al., 1986).
Therefore, employees should be treated with justice and respect (Kochan & Barocci, 1985) that is encouraged through appropriate HRM procedures and practices.

However, justice is rarely positively related with the existence of social capital (Fu, 2015). Employees may feel betrayed and offended by the organisation when they do not receive the promised promotion that they were supposed to receive after performing excellent work. Due to unfulfilled agreements, an individual may be more likely to sense deception and wrongdoing that can impact their future performance and relationship with the organisation (Qambar, 2015). Therefore, if HRM practices are not effective and efficient, employees will lack commitment, trust and loyalty, which causes demoralisation of employees in organisations (Astrachan et al., 2002, Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Keles et al., 2011).

To date, there are numerous evidence from previous literatures indicating that there is a possibility of having relationship between some forms of social capital and HRM, either positively or negatively. A study conducted by Arasli et al. (2006) revealed that nepotism, which is one form of social capital, is negatively associated with HRM. In addition, another study by Arasli and Tumer (2008) in North Cyprus disclosed that nepotism has a significant negative effect on HRM. This is due to the unethical impact of nepotism on HRM activities related to recruitment, promotion, selection, appraisal, and disciplinary processes. There has also been a growing investigation on how wasṭa can impact HRM practices in the Middle East in recent years, especially in Jordan, where it has been witnessed that wasṭa can be used to grant people unfair admission to employment that is beyond their abilities, skills, qualifications, and knowledge (Ali, 2016) (also see Branine & Analoui, 2006; Al-Husan & James, 2009, Ali et al., 2015; Afiouni & Nakhle, 2016).

Furthermore, a study in Bahrain revealed that wasṭa is the main reason for recruitment and without it, the chance of getting a hired is small (Karolak, 2016). In the UAE, it has been witnessed that wasṭa is significantly related to human capital variables, especially career development (Al-Ali, 2006; Qambar, 2015). In Saudi Arabia, recruitment and promotion are likely to be based on wasṭa rather merits (Alreshoodi, 2016). In fact, Saudis do not apply for a job, they seek wasṭa for immediate employment (Tlaiss & Elamin, 2016). Hutchings and Weir (2006a, b) clarified that recruitment decisions are influenced by interpersonal connections, which is also supported by the work of Tlaiss...
and Kauser (2011) in discovering that *wasta* impacts decisions on recruitment, promotion, and career advancement opportunities.

Altarawneh (2009) noted that supervisors' relatives and friends are provided with additional advantages in training and development programs in Jordanian banking sectors due to *wasta*. Metcalfe (2006) and Megheirkouni (2014) further supported the above statement by revealing that employees who lack *wasta* do not get certain business-related advantages, for example training opportunities, because such advantages are given to individuals with personal relationships and family networks. In addition, in Saudi Arabia, employees exploit their connections and make sure that managers are aware of their connections to get preferential treatments, especially high performance evaluations (Harbi et al., 2016; Tlaiss & Elamin, 2016). Therefore, the involvement of *wasta* in recruitment decisions sometimes result in hiring unqualified employees in positions where they lack knowledge and results in providing available resources and benefits to *wasta* employees at the expense of others (Megheirkouni, 2014; Ta’Amnha et al., 2016). Working in a prejudicial environment makes employees disappointed and demoralised. This might affect other employees’ performance, as they will begin to lose interest in participating in activities, which in turn affects their productivity (Sadegi & Naharuddin, 2013).

### 4.2.4 The Relationship Between Social Capital and Knowledge Sharing

Individuals rely heavily on social networks when they require access to certain information or knowledge (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). The most common elements found in social network theory are network structure and tie strength. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) elaborated further on the above statement by arguing that social capital can provide access and circulate information efficiently, quickly, and in a less costly manner than formal appliances due to its structure. In addition, shared interests, languages, and norms can also be one of the reasons for the effectiveness of transferring knowledge within the organisation, and therefore increasing an organisation’s intellectual capacity (Reiche et al., 2009, Al-Hussan, 2011).

Furthermore, tie content also influence the knowledge sharing process. Podolny and Baron (1997) declared that “individual’s networks related to his/her formal position are important to transfer task advice and workflow output/input, whereas his/her informal
network and friendships are more important to transfer other information and social support such as job satisfaction and political intelligence” (Zhou et al., 2010, p. 450). One important key element of social capital that ensures such informal network is trust. Trust is the mediating link between networks and knowledge sharing (Qambar, 2015). A study done by Levin and Cross (2004) affirmed that trust arbitrates the relation between tie strength and knowledge sharing (also see Lin’s, 2007). For this reason, academics began to pay attention to trust with regards to the influence of social tie content in terms of knowledge sharing (Cross & Cummings, 2004; Ying et al., 2011; Sefiani et al., 2016). In conclusion, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) proposed three measurements of social capital, which are relational, structural, and cognitive. In other words, knowledge transfer is accelerated by shared trust (relational), effective coordination for communication (structural), and shared norms with organisations (cognitive).

4.2.5 The Relationship Between Social Capital and Innovation

This subsection recognises the significance of social relations and values as an important resource in developing innovative proficiencies. Many previous academics revealed that social capital can affect innovation (Calantone et al., 2002; Hult, 2002; Hult et al., 2004; Lu & Shyan, 2004; Song & Thieme, 2006). This is because having connections within an organisation makes employees feel that they can access more resources, and thus are willing to help others to innovate. Hence, through trust and steadiness, social capital support employees in taking risks to innovate by suggesting and accepting challenges (Camps & Marquès, 2011). Nevertheless, unless employees are willing to network their knowledge, their knowledge benefits the organisation little in terms of innovative capabilities (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005).

Therefore, the level of innovation willingness and competence is analysed based on various levels and drivers of social capital. For instance, at group levels where the level of social capital is high, innovation increases and vice versa (Camps & Marquès, 2011). For further evidence, figure 4.9 below represents a model that links social capital with innovation and knowledge productivity. The model joins Kessels’ (1995, 2001) perception of knowledge productivity with Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) social capital model that is related to organisational innovation. However, Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) model lacked direction in which knowledge creation was happening,
which was later described as collective actions. Collective actions are the process of creating value to new knowledge. However, collective actions were not added as a fourth dimension until 2012 in a study about social capital and innovation by Ehlen et al. (2012).

Note: External conditions are accidental or consciously created circumstances and actions which increase or diminish social capital. Social capital has four dimensions: structural, relational, cognitive, and actions. The Process of knowledge productive is an application of the action dimension, and is defined as the set of learning and designing activities within innovation groups which aim to improve and/or innovate in work processes, products or services. The innovative products of knowledge productivity are also twofold. These refer to new work processes, products, or services for an organisation and to the acquired abilities for future innovation of the professionals involved.

**Figure 4.9: Model of Process and Products of Sustainable Knowledge Productivity (Source: Ehlen et al., 2014, p. 56)**

As shown in figure 4.9, innovation process depends heavily upon four measurements of social capital, especially actions. The four measurements are (1) the ‘structural’ measurement, which tackles the properties of a group, such as ties, position and time spent. (2) The ‘relational’ measurement talks about individual’s relationship features, such as trust, respect, norms, expectations, identity and identification. (3) The ‘cognitive’ measurement focuses on shared language, values, capacities and material resources. Lastly, (4) the ‘action’ measurement addresses collective activities, such as networking, collecting and donating knowledge and innovation. Furthermore, the theory of knowledge productivity provides an outline that further examines these actions.

Knowledge productivity and innovation are keywords in almost every research about organisations in attaining long-term accomplishment in today’s knowledge market. An organisation is required to constantly advance its performance and frequently innovate its products, services, and work procedures (Drucker, 1993; Nonaka & Takeuchi,
The concept of knowledge productivity is used to describe the relation between learning and innovation. Kessels (1995, 2001) described such concept as a process in which new knowledge is created through knowledge sharing that progressively enhances and innovates operating procedures, products, and services. Other authors define the process as knowledge society, knowledge worker productivity (Drucker, 1993, 1999), and knowledge worker (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). As Malhotra (2000) concluded, “knowledge needs to be understood as the potential for action that doesn’t only depend upon the stored information but also on the person interacting with it” (p. 249).

Furthermore, the concept does not only differentiate “the creation of knowledge products but also the creation of personal capacities” (Ehlen et al., 2013, p. 4). Even though development or innovation adds to the economic value, the most feasible value lies within employees’ capabilities in generating such development and innovation in the future (Kessels, 2001). Once the process of knowledge productivity is completed, products of knowledge productivity are created. Products of knowledge productivity includes organisational innovativeness and personal ability. Innovation improvements can either be gradual or radical (Walz & Bertels, 1995). Gradual improvement is when a product or an idea already exists, but is slightly amended by adding additional modification; whereas, radical innovation is based on developing something new. Hence, the outcome of knowledge productivity will be determined based on the improvement and/or innovation of products, services, and processes (Ehlen et al., 2014). Moreover, commitment and participation of employees in this process is a vital requirement for continuous innovation.

4.2.6 The Relationship Between Social Capital and Commitment

The use of social capital, such as wasta, may also influence the concept of justice in organisations influencing satisfaction, motivation, and citizenship behaviour (Qambar, 2015; Ta’Amnha et al., 2016), which leads to a reduction in performance and organisational commitment (Hayajenh et al., 1994; Qambar, 2015; Alreshoodi, 2016). By illustrating previous research on social capital, this study emphasises three dimensions of social capital that are related to commitment, which are explicit interaction, shared vision, and trust.
Explicit Interaction. Since networks deliver insight on what is happening in organisations, they create friendships, social support, provide access to powerful structures, increase an individual’s interaction and attachment to the organisation that leads to effective organisational commitment (Bozionelos, 2008).

Share Visions. Shared vision comprises shared goals and objectives of employees (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998) and informs employees of what is regarded as right and wrong in the organisation (Watson & Papamarcos, 2002).

Trust. By definition, trust is personal and frequently private, and without trust, people are vulnerable/reluctant to collaborate without being controlled (Whitney, 1994). Doney and Cannon (1997) acknowledged two vital components of trust, which are credibility and benevolence. Credibility refers to individuals’ assumption that a trusted party (trustee) is proficient in accomplishing promised commitment, while benevolence refers to the disposition of the trustee to prioritise the welfare of the trustor. In addition, Kramer and Tyler (1996) focused on the role of obligation in social life with regards to social psychology and organisational behaviour and argued that obligations are central in trust. They further explained that the key role of trust is the ability to fulfil a commitment when it comes to all forms of social capital.

Furthermore, Powell (1996) argued that trust is absorbed and strengthened through ongoing interactions. Lewicki and Bunker (1996) further broaden their knowledge about the concept of trust by developing a ‘bandwidth model of trust.’ In their model, they proposed three types of trust for maintaining social relations: (1) Calculus-based trust (economic interchange), (2) knowledge-based trust (a bond that occurs when having enough information about a person to comprehend their behaviour), and (3) identification-based trust (group or familiar interactions). As a result, organisations, hierarchies, and connections all require different level of trust (Kramer & Tyler, 1996), since trust is crucial in successful social networks.

4.2.6.1 The Role of Trust

While searching for factors that contributes to long lasting relationships, many scholars focused their research in identifying the main relational elements of interaction and how those elements interact (e.g. Dwyer et al., 1987; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Wilson, 1995), which formed the relationship marketing concept. Comprehending relationship
marketing requires differentiating between discrete transactions and relational exchange. While discrete transactions have "distinct beginning, short duration, and sharp ending by performance" (Dwyer et al., 1987, p. 13), relational exchanges are linked to "traces to previous agreements [and] ... is longer in duration, reflecting an ongoing process" (Dwyer et al., 1987, p. 13). Hence, relationship marketing relates to all activities with the aim of creating, enlarging, and preserving successful relational exchanges. To better understand relationship marketing, the commitment-trust theory will be discussed.

a. *The Relationship Commitment-Trust Theory*

Morgan and Hunt, one of the most cited sources in Relationship Management, first introduced the Relationship Commitment-Trust theory in 1994. They argued that both trust and commitment are the main mediators in relationship marketing. Additionally, Blois (2003) also commented that commitment and trust are the distinctive features of relationships. Other scholars, such as Sheth (2000), pointed out that trust and commitment “have emerged as building blocks of a theory” (p. 619). Based on Morgan and Hunt's (1994) Key Mediating Variable (KMV) model of relationship marketing, it has been concluded that trust and commitment are the main content that mediates between five antecedents and five outcomes, as shown in figure 4.10.

![Figure 4.10: KMV Model of Relationship Marketing (Source: Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 22, Fig.2)](image)
b. Key Content of Relationship Marketing

There are central mediating variables of relationship marketing, which are relationship commitment and trust. Relationship commitment has been acknowledged in various literatures, such as network theory, social exchange theory, and buyer-seller relationships, as playing a main role in long lasting relationships. According to Berry and Parasuraman (1991), "relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment" (p. 139). Due to that, many scholars focused their research on factors that develop and maintain commitment in which they have identified relationship commitment as a continuing aspiration to maintain a relationship (see Dwyer et. al., 1987; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Geyskens et al., 1996).

In addition to commitment, trust has also generated a substantial amount of attention in various research areas, such as economical (Williamson, 1993), psychological (Tyler, 1990), sociological (Granovetter, 1985), and organisational (Mayer et al., 1995). Hence, with the existence of multiple meanings and dimensions, trust is difficult and complex to define. However, one common definition of trust that many academics agreed on is that trust involves having faith in or depending on someone to achieve a desired obligation (see Anderson & Narus, 1990; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; O’Malley & Tynan, 1997; Nicholson et al., 2001). However, establishing and developing trust requires time and personal experience (Hakansson, 1982) resulting from a confidential belief that the reliable individual is trustworthy and has high integrity, making trust a major component of relationship commitment.

c. Linking Relationship Commitment-Trust Theory to Wasta

The key component that must be found in any wasta cycle to make sure that wasta favours and reciprocity are being fulfilled is a high level of trust and commitment in individuals. This is important because individuals with high level of commitment are unlikely to leave the relationship and will presumably be more pleased to offer more discretionary effort in fulfilling the requested obligation. Having suggested that wasta can be linked to commitment and trust, which is done through revising Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) original model of Relationship Commitment-Trust Theory, it can be theorised that trust and commitment are the mediating link of wasta, which is further explained below.
d. Antecedents of Relationship Commitment-Trust and Wasta

By looking at Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) model, as shown in figure 4.10, it can be postulated that (1) relationship termination costs and relationship benefits directly affect wasta and commitment; (2) Shared values positively affect commitment, trust and wasta; and lastly, (3) communication and opportunistic behaviour directly affect trust and wasta, and indirectly affects commitment through trust.

**Relationship Termination Costs and Relationship Benefits.** Termination costs, costs associated with ending a relationship, have been identified by some academics as a positive reason to preserve relationship commitment (Heide & John, 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Moreover, relationship benefits are described as received benefits, such as time saving, accessibility, friendship, and enhancing decision-making (Palmatier et al., 2006). Individuals fear losing or terminating wasta relationships, as the costs and benefits associated with the termination are extremely high, such as losing future granted favours that once were guaranteed. In other words, individuals fear losing any economic, personal, and social benefit granted through wasta. Therefore, by being committed to relationships, termination costs are reduced/eliminated, while increasing benefits.

**Shared Values.** Shared values are the extent to which individuals have common principles in terms of behaviours, goals, and regulations. To further define shared values, Heide and John (1992) used the term ‘appropriate actions’. Shared values are interpersonal agreements that takes place in the exploration stage of a relationship and act as a guide for future exchanges (Dwyer et al., 1987). Being in the wasta circle means having/sharing common behaviours, goals, and regulations that are considered right/wrong, important/unimportant, etc. As a result, shared values are directly related to wasta and trust, which leads to commitment.

**Communication and Opportunistic Behaviour.** Communication is defined as sharing formal and informal information (Anderson & Narus, 1984, 1990) that cultivates identification (Sindhav & Lusch, 2008). Thus, communication develops trust through wasta by solving disputes and sharing information. Accordingly, Morgan and Hunt (1994) argued that trust would be greatly affected when an individual participates in opportunistic behaviour. Opportunistic behaviour is described as “making false or
empty, that is, self-disbelieved, threats and promises in the expectation that individual advantage will thereby be realised” (Williamson, 1975, p. 26). Such behaviours include activities like deception, breach of contract, withholding information, etc. Consequently, if any opportunistic behaviour emerges, both trust and *wasta* are affected, which decreases one’s relationship commitment.

e. Outcomes of Relationship Commitment—Trust and Wasta

*Acquiescence and Propensity to Leave.* Acquiescence develop when an individual accepts another individual’s request/regulation and complies therewith (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Acquiescence and *wasta* are similar in terms of their purpose, and thus requires commitment. Propensity to leave is the plan to terminate the relationship, due to lack of relationship commitment, in the foreseen future (Bluedorn, 1982). Since there is a negative relationship between organisational commitment and propensity to leave (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), a strong relationship between commitment and *wasta* reduces propensity to leave.

*Cooperation.* Cooperation is when two individuals work together to achieve common goals (see Deutsch, 1960; Anderson & Narus 1990). Anderson and Narus (1984, 1990) defined trust as a factor of cooperation that promotes successful relationships and is the only factor that is influenced by both trust and commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). For example, if A does a favour for B, A must have enough trust in B to wait in obtaining future reciprocation from B (Palmatier et al., 2006). As a result, *wasta* needs cooperation to function properly, with the presence of trust and commitment.

*Functional Conflict.* Functional conflict is the disagreement between two individuals when doing business (Anderson & Narus, 1990). According to Zaheer et al. (1998), trust promotes confidence between two partners, which in turn helps them to confidently exchange information between one another knowing that the exchanged information will not be used against them. Hence, such openness in return decrease conflict. Therefore, as confidence is a major aspect of trust, conflict is influenced by both commitment and trust (Palmatier et al., 2007). By linking it to *wasta*, the existence of trust, commitment and confidence can solve any dispute instantly.

*Decision Making Uncertainty.* Decision-making uncertainty is the extent to which individuals (1) have enough information to make a decision, (2) foresee the outcomes
of those decisions, and (3) have faith in those decisions (Achrol & Stern, 1988). Uncertainty is linked to essential information needed for making decisions, which could be reduced through trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Moorman et al., 1992). Therefore, due to *wasta* and trust in others, a person’s uncertainty in making a certain decision can be reduced/eliminated when others can be relied on.

To sum up, when *wasta*, commitment, and trust exists together, it generates outcomes that encourage productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. This leads to cooperative behaviours that are important for the formation of successful relationship marketing. However, social capital does not ensure that employees will achieve their jobs well and be more loyal as well as committed to organisations just because they are linked to someone. Hence, few practical studies have observed the consequences of other forms of social capital, such as nepotism, either on organisations that practice it or employees who are affected by it. The results of the studies showed that the influence of social capital can bring some unwanted outcomes for organisations, such as impacting job satisfaction (Arasli et al., 2006; Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Padgett & Morris, 2012), organisational commitment (Padgett & Morris, 2005, 2012), motivation (Padgett & Morris, 2012; Alreshoodi, 2016), trust (Keles et al., 2011) and increasing employees’ intentions to quit (Arasli et al., 2006).

### 4.3 Conclusion: Restating the Gap

To summarise, there is a lack of literature illustrating the impact of *wasta* on employees and organisations in Kuwait. Networking is often found at the heart of any employment relationship in the Middle East, especially in Kuwait. Connections, nepotism, favouritism, and *wasta*, all forms of social capital, are ways in which individuals get and keep jobs (Hayajenh et al., 1994; Hutchings & Weir, 2006a, b), since it is all about “who you know”, not “what you know.” According to Ali (1988), Kuwaiti managers are extremely tribalistic, explicitly in the public sector, where their work and behaviour have never been satisfactory (Metle, 2002). Hence, it could be speculated that Kuwait’s culture and norms may influence individuals’ perception towards organisations due to *wasta*. Furthermore, family and tribal networks usually affect HR practices, such as recruitment and career advancement, which is often seen and witnessed by many (Al-Remahy, 1995). Thus, many companies and managers worry about sharing crucial
knowledge with others due to their fear of losing control of their knowledge, position, and power in general (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999), which in turn impacts innovation.

In conclusion, many authors seem to disregard how and in what ways *wasta* impacts employees and organisations when developing their research. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate the influence of *wasta* on HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwaiti organisations, as well as acknowledging how such practices impacts employees. To do so, this research uses a mixed methods approach to capture as much information as possible on *wasta* within the business context, since this research is unique within the knowledge field. Hence, the following chapter, chapter five, discusses in-depth reasons for the chosen methodology.
Chapter 5: Methodology

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapters identified gaps and questions in this study. The next step, according to Crotty (1998), is to consider and justify the methodologies employed in this research. Therefore, this chapter defines the design of the methodology and instruments that were used throughout the exploration to accomplish the desired objectives of the research. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is the research approach. It begins by discussing the purpose and paradigm of the research along with explaining the inductive/deductive approach, research philosophy, and target/sample population. The second section is the research design, which clarifies and explains the chosen methods used in the research. The third section details a description of the instruments, question design, pilot testing, distribution, and interview arrangements. The forth section explains data collection and analysis and the last section discusses the ethical awareness related to the study.

5.1 Section 1: Research Approach

5.1.1 Purpose of the Research

This research is intended to contribute knowledge on cultural differences in terms of organisational performance with respect to the existence and influence of wasta on HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment within different sectors in Kuwait. The aim of this research is to understand the influence of wasta by observing the origins of the problem and trying to find answers. Hence, the Kuwaiti culture was used as a case study to investigate a series of research questions. In addition, it was observed that there is a lack of literature on the subject matter. Thus, for such a complex issue, it is essential to comprehend beyond the immediate factors of the phenomenon to the more primary problem. This has fortified the researcher’s confidence that an investigation is needed. As a result, to meet the purpose of the research and to answer key questions, a combined qualitative and quantitative approach (i.e. mixed methods) was utilised through questionnaire and interviews.
5.1.2 Research Paradigm

Every piece of research should be considered as a systematic investigation, where data is gathered, analysed, and transcribed to recognise, define, control, or predict a phenomenon (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Although the main objective of a piece of research is to create knowledge, the type of knowledge developed from the study depends upon the theoretical framework and philosophical stance (i.e. research paradigm). Research paradigms are illustrated through “how researchers make claims about what knowledge is (ontology), how researchers obtain knowledge (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the process for studying it (methodology)” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). Research paradigms are important and valuable in creating new knowledge as they help in clarifying the appropriate research design to undertake within a study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2003). As a result, before discussing the chosen research philosophy for mixed methods, it is important to acknowledge that they are directed by a set of assumptions, which might be epistemological, ontological, or axiological.

Epistemology is the study or theory of the source, nature, means, and bounds of knowledge (Guralnik, 1984). It questions what constitutes as an acceptable body of knowledge in a research (Saunders et al., 2009). As this research follows the mixed methods route, the epistemological view such approach offers a deeper and more significant information than using one method alone. It could be argued that by using a qualitative approach, researchers could network with people they learn from through interviewing and observing them within the study’s time frame (Creswell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). On the other hand, a quantitative approach questions the relationship of the researcher with the topic being studied (Creswell, 2003). It argues that the researcher should retain his/her distance and be independent from that being researched to reduce and control bias as well as being objective when evaluating a situation (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, the advantage of mixed methods epistemologically is that it avoids using only one method as an approach to gather and analyse data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

Ontology questions the existence, reality, and being of a nature by assuming that things need to be done according to the way in which the world functions (Saunders et al., 2009). While constructivists argue that there are many constructed realities that change
according to who the researcher asks, positivists argue that there is only one single ‘true’ reality, the physical type (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). However, mixed methods ontology approach (pragmatism) believes that for a research to be valid and significant, the researcher should hear and investigate as many people as possible on the issue being researched (Grimstad, 2013). Hence, this signifies that mixed methods acknowledges perception changes depending on which participants are asked and when. For researchers to fully comprehend a study, they need to accept the existence of many realities. Nonetheless, in the mixed methods paradigm, researchers are also aware of the importance of collecting survey data.

Axiology is the role of values in an investigation. It questions what role values play in research methods and stresses the values related to the researcher’s judgment abilities (Saunders et al., 2009). The constructivists view an investigation as value-bound, while the positivists view them as value-free. However, mixed methods axiology (pragmatism) assumes that researchers use their insider perspective to fully grasp the issue being assessed. It includes ensuring that different voices are being heard and used within a study. In addition, interviews should be done in a way that participants should be selected based on obtaining a maximum variety of perspective, “multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important” (Greene, 2008, p. 20). However, that said, Saunders et al. (2009) claims that researchers should ask whether they need to adopt more than one philosophical stance in a study. The rationale reason behind this, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2009), Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), and Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011), is that it is not ideal to use only one stance because some research questions require a combination of methods to answer them.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider and use pragmatism for this research. Pragmatism approach argues that choosing one stance (epistemology, ontology, or axiology) is unrealistic. Hence, researchers should use the research question as a stance determinant (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). Pragmatism is extremely useful when the research question is not sufficiently clear on which stance to employ within an epistemological viewpoint. Therefore, in this philosophical argument, it praises the use of qualitative and quantitative methods together to solve a real-life world challenge. Further justification for choosing pragmatism is discussed in the research philosophy
(subsection 5.1.4). Table 5.1 provides a summarised comparison of research perspectives in social science.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interpretative</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Pragmatism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>Things are socially constructed leading to subjective reasoning which may change with multiple realities</td>
<td>Emphasises that researcher is external, objective, and independent of that study</td>
<td>Researcher is external, multiple, and the view is that chosen to best answer the research questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>Toward subjective meanings of social phenomena, looking at details and realities behind it with motivating actions</td>
<td>Things are observed to prove credibility to facts, focusing on causality and law generalisations thereby reducing phenomena to simplest elements</td>
<td>Either subjective or objective meanings can provide facts to a research question; focus on practical application to issues by merging views to help interpret data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiology</strong></td>
<td>The research is value bound; such that the researcher is part of what is being studied, not isolated from the studied and will be subjective</td>
<td>The research is value free, hence independent of the data and objective in the analysis of the data</td>
<td>Values play a vital role to interpret results using subjective and objective reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Quantitative but can still use qualitative</td>
<td>Uses both qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Mixed or multiple methods</td>
<td>Mono-method but can use mixed in certain cases</td>
<td>Mixed or multiple methods</td>
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Table 5.1: Comparison of Research (Source: Ihuah & Eaton, 2013, p. 938)

5.1.3 Inductive-Deductive Research

Normally in a pure quantitative study, researchers usually follow the deductive approach and in qualitative studies, researchers follow the inductive approach. However, in mixed methods research design, the inductive-deductive research cycle is used (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The cycle of the inductive-deductive research procedure develops and may expose variance or validation of data, flaws, and inconsistencies that could foster new knowledge (Greene et al., 1989; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Studies based on deductive usually proceed from theory observation to data formation and presume that there are connections between independent and dependent variables (Neuman, 2010). On the other hand, the inductive approach begins with data observation leading to theory formation (Neuman, 2010). The inductive theory is useful when the phenomenon being studied cannot be easily measured or
identified (Grimstad, 2013). Figure 5.1 below represents the inductive-deductive research cycle.

![Figure 5.1: The Inductive-Deductive Research Cycle (Source: Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 27)]

As shown in figure 5.1, observations, facts, and evidence are used to induce theory, reasons, patterns, and generalisations. These theories are then used to predict, expect, and develop the hypothesis of a research. However, if the theory was not validated, correction or improvement is needed. It is, therefore, important to have two methods when studying a phenomenon so that clear findings can be obtained (Greene et al., 1989).

### 5.1.4 Research Philosophy

A number of methods could be implemented to address the purpose of this research. However, most mixed methods authors have argued that the most useful philosophy to support mixed methods research is using pragmatism because it is a sophisticated philosophy for mixing perceptions and approaches (see Rorty, 1990; Murphy, 1990; Patton, 1990; Cherryholmes, 1992). Pragmatism is the process of emphasising the research question by using all available approaches to understand the problem (see Rossman & Wilson, 1985). It takes a value-oriented method approach and supports autonomy, equality, and development (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism offers “an epistemological justification (i.e., via pragmatic epistemic
values or standards) and logic (i.e., use the combination of methods and ideas that help one best frame, address, and provides tentative answers to one’s research question[s]) for mixing approaches and methods” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 125). It concentrates on the research problem and then uses varied methods to develop knowledge about the problem (Morgan, 2007). It helps in providing a foundation by avoiding insignificant matters and focus on the truth and reality of a phenomenon that is instinctively appealing (Creswell, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). It is not restricted to any system because it employs the mixed methods approach. Hence, researchers are free in choosing between using either quantitative or qualitative methods (Creswell, 2008). The pragmatic approach acknowledges that every approach has its boundaries and that using different approaches can be balancing. Also, it concentrates on understanding how people acknowledge the society they live in (Angen, 2000), as their perception leads to clarification that results in knowledge and meaning. Once the researcher has defined the gap, a hypothesis is developed and the researcher begins with general questions and goals to comprehend a social phenomenon based on participants’ contribution. That said, the pragmatic method heavily supports the inductive-deductive cycle because it is important to support the inductive approach with deductive thinking to challenge a real-world situation and to fully understand a phenomenon (Grimstad, 2013).

As a result, by using quantitative and qualitative procedures within the same context, pragmatics can merge the strengths of both approaches and understand assumptions that support knowledge and investigations (Al-Mulla, 2012). It is also in a better position to answer “what”, “why”, and “how” questions (Saunders et al., 2009). In addition, the investigation is based on the idea that collecting varied types of data best delivers the purpose of the research objective (Creswell, 2013). Mixed methods research opens the door to several processes, different viewpoints and assumptions as well as different types of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2008). Additionally, using mixed methods data collection increases the chance of analysing data objectively (Saunders et al., 2009). The bottom line is that research methodologies should be mixed in ways that provide the greatest opportunities for answering critical research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Figure 5.2 below summarises the chosen research philosophy of the study. In summary,
as demonstrated in figure 5.2, the philosophical approach chosen for this research is the pragmatism philosophy following the inductive-deductive approach. As this is a cross-sectional research, studying the influence of *wasta* in Kuwait, mixed methods design was chosen using questionnaire and interviews to examine the consequences of *wasta*.

![Research Onion](Source: Ihuah & Eaton 2013, p. 941)

5.1.5 Sample and Target Population

Based on mixed methods approach, snowball sampling technique was used for qualitative date collection and simple random sampling as well as snowball sampling was used for quantitative data collection. Snowball or referral sampling is a method that has been used in qualitative research for the recognition and selection of detailed information related to the researched topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). Hence, it was employed as a data collection approach for all types of interviews in this research. It is a non-probability type of purposeful sampling that is done through “referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981 p. 141). In other words, it involves selecting participants based on a certain purpose related to answering the researched question (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Thus, individuals are selected based on their knowledge about or experience with a researched phenomenon (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011), their availability and willingness to participate, and their willingness to communicate their viewpoints and experience in-depth (Bernard, 2002).
Moreover, snowball sampling is used to evaluate a network of hidden populations that are difficult to identify (Dragan & Isaic-Maniu, 2013). Some populations that fit within the sample criteria for this study can be hard to reach (Babbie, 2010), due to the fear of being socially marginalised, because the focus of the research is about a sensitive issue. Thus, it is difficult to find respondents that are willing to talk about *wasta* freely. Consequently, an acquaintance is required to locate participants for this study. As a result, depending upon the social visibility of the target population (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), which is low in this case due to the sensitivity of the issue, snowball sampling was seen appropriate to use because following such method provides access to respondents that could not be obtained through any other method. However, snowball sampling comes with its own collection of problems. One major limitation is that “referrals can include judgment error and bias” (Blankenship, 2010, p. 89) that needs to be carefully taken into consideration and be aware of when using this method.

Regarding the quantitative data collection, snowball and simple random sampling was used for the questionnaire. Random sampling is suitable when the population of the study is finite and members could be identified (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). It is the most common probability-based sampling method used to select samples from the population (Bajpai, 2011). The reason why simple random sampling has been chosen for this research is because everyone of interest in the target population has an equal chance of being selected and participate in the questionnaire. Hence, it could eliminate any possible chance of sampling bias (McLeod, 2014). However, it is very difficult to achieve as it could be challenging, time-consuming, and may produce samples that do not represent or reflect the characteristics held by the population (Webb, 2002). As a result, with the help of snowball sampling, by sending the questionnaire to known contacts, it could increase the number of participants and response rate of the survey as well as taking into consideration the formation of possible bias.

That said, when targeting the population for the research, several criteria are taken under consideration. (1) They should be current or previous working employees working at private, public or non-governmental sectors, (2) they should hold at least one degree, and (3) the youngest age should be 21 years old. The second criterion is important because having at least some level of degree attains employees with innovation and research and development (R&D) potential mentalities and the third
criterion is essential because the study focuses on employees with some degree of work experience.

Regarding the first criterion, the private sector was chosen as it is the sector that cultivates and promotes knowledge sharing and innovation, as opposed to the public sector (Ferreira et al., 2012). This is because recruitment in the private sector is normally determined by proficiency and qualifications, despite was. In a study done by Kuwait University (2006), “81 percent of private sector companies placed job competency as the top factor when recruiting candidates, followed by 77 percent for experience and 67 percent for educational qualifications” (Salih, 2010, p. 172). Furthermore, private sectors have proved to apply R&D to management, while public sectors have proven to have a shortfall on that end. This was due to the public recruitment policy that has been indiscriminate and did not reflect on the requirements needed when recruiting (Al-Zumai, 1996). Nevertheless, the public sector was chosen because of having high citizen employment rate, due to their attractive job incentives, since they offer high salaries, job securities, and good benefits as well as witnessing a high percentage of was practices and corruption (Devarajan & Mottaghi, 2014). Therefore, the sample includes employees of both sectors due to likely having very different experiences and opinions of was. Hence, it is crucial to get the full range of views and not have responses biased towards a single sector.

With regards to managerial practices, research indicates that private sector managers are different from public sector managers with regards to work related values, personality, and incentive preference (Wittmer, 1991; Steijn & Smulders 2004). Grounded on a study about organisational values in both sectors in Kuwait, Al-Qarioti and Al-Mutairi (2010) concluded that, due to social and cultural factors, both sectors value similar characteristics, but to a different extent, as the degree of differences between both sectors is significant. According to the researchers, traits such as lawfulness, honesty, obedience, and responsiveness were considered valuable and essential within governmental organisations, as opposed to private organisations (Al-Qarioti & Al-Mutairi, 2010). While traits such as profitability, innovativeness, and serviceability were recognised as the most valuable traits in private organisations and absent from governmental organisations (Al-Qarioti & Al-Mutairi, 2010). Nonetheless, there are undeniable resemblances between both sectors as they share similar traits such
as lawfulness and preserving work secrets, and serviceability. In addition, both sectors scored low in terms of impartiality, flexibility, and self-fulfilment, since they are observed to be the least favoured or unimportant values. Other similar traits include professionalism, organisational loyalty, incorruptibility, collegiality, and competition (Al-Qarioti & Al-Mutairi, 2010).

5.1.6 Determining the Sample Size

To determine the sample size (N) for this research, a multiple regression power analysis was utilised because it is related to hypotheses testing. The importance of the power analysis is to prove, through rejecting the null hypothesis (H₀) by getting a statistically significant result, that the phenomenon being studied is true (H₁) (Cohen, 1992). Additionally, because many researchers want a sample size that assures the rejection of H₀, three values must exist: alpha (the probability of committing a Type I error: rejects H₀), power (1-the probability of committing a Type II error (β): accepts H₀), and effect size (the extent to which the outcome variable is linked to the predictor variables) (Green, 1991).

Although by tradition alpha is fixed at 0.05 (Cornis, 2006), values for power and effect size are unclear. The estimated sample size for this research was determined by following suggestions made by Cohen (1988). According to Cappelleri and Darlington, (1994), Cohen’s statistical power analysis is one of the most popular approaches used by researchers in behavioural science. For the regression analysis, Cohen (1988) standardised the effect sizes into small, medium, and large depending on the statistical analysis used. The effect size index are as follows, small: $f^2=.02$, medium: $f^2=.15$, and large: $f^2=.35$ (Chuan, 2006). However, Cohen (1992) suggested the medium effect, since it could present an effect that is likely to be “visible to the naked eye of a careful observer” (p. 156).

As for the power, Thomas and Juanes (1996) indicated that the power analysis is vital in designing surveys and testing results. However, it is never easy to identify a suitable power for a specific study. High (2000) argued that if the power was set too low in a study, the possibility of committing Type II error is high. Nevertheless, if the power was set too high, the results would be significant, “but the size of the effect is not practical or of little value” (Chuan, 2006, p. 81). In addition, extremely high power
would calculate a sample size that is likely to surpass the researcher’s resources (Cohen, 1992). To avoid these dilemmas, Cohen (1992) suggested setting the power at .80 ($\beta = .20$) is recommended in finding the probability that an effect exist. However, the values are not fixed, they could be adjusted depending on the type of research being carried. Therefore, to determine the required sample size, where the relation between the outcome and predictor variables is equal to zero, Cohen’s (1992) recommended values were employed in this research:

- Alpha ($\alpha$) = .05
- Power ($1-\beta$) = .80
- Effect size ($f^2$) = .15
- Number of predictors (i.e. number of independent variables in the research) = 81

To easily calculate the estimated sample size, G*power 3.1 software was used (figure 5.3). The reason for such choice is because it generates almost identical results as Cohen’s (1988) calculations (Faul et al., 2009). G*power is a free flexible power analysis program used to calculate various statistical tests usually by social, behavioural, and biomedical disciplines (Faul et al., 2009). Nonetheless, it has also been used by many other disciplines that utilise statistical tests. For an example, it has been applied in biology (Baeza & Stotz, 2003), tutorials (Buchner et al., 2004), and statistics textbooks (e.g. Field, 2005; Rasch et al., 2006a, b).

![Figure 5.3: G*power 3 Estimated Sample Size](image-url)
Figure 5.3 is a screenshot taken from G*power of the actual study on the 16th of May 2016 that measured the estimated sample size of this research. As shown, it is recommended that the total sample size for this research should be N= 303. Hence, in addition to reliability purposes, anything equal to 303 or above is sufficient in answering the objectives of the study.

5.2 Section 2: Research Design

5.2.1 Mixed Methods Research Design

There are three extensively used methodological approaches when conducting research, qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Mixed methods “involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the research process” (Creswell et al., 2002, p. 212). Although it is not a new concept, it is however a research paradigm that is becoming popular amongst a growing number of scholars that can be seen in various contemporary books (see Creswell, 2003; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The objective of mixed methods research is not to substitute either qualitative or quantitative approaches, but rather to benefit from the strength and reduce the weakness of both methods in a research study (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2000), quantitative methods are used to explain, “phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods, in particular statistics” (Muijs, 2011, p. 1). One of the greatest strengths of quantitative design is that it generates reliable and quantifiable data that can be used to reach a large population (Eli, 2009). It is useful in collecting coordinated and wider information in the form of numerical data. Therefore, from these strengths, one well-recognised quantitative method that is widely used to this day is surveys (Robson, 2002). In addition, data collection using quantitative method is relatively quick as well as providing precise data. Furthermore, analysing quantitative data is less time-consuming, as statistical software is usually used. However, quantitative methods are not without their limits. One limitation of quantitative method is that it does not...
consistently answer the “why” question of a phenomenon (Eli, 2009). Besides, “quantitative methods can decontextualise the role of human behaviour and in doing so variables that could help explain a phenomenon are left out of the statistical model” (Eli, 2009, p. 26). Hence, using quantitative approach alone does not deliver in-depth data and the knowledge generated might be too general.

On the other hand, qualitative research is based on exploring and/or explaining a phenomenon as it happens (Hancock et al., 2009). It is designed to assist researchers in understanding a phenomenon by interacting or observing the selected participants. It involves the use of personal experience, case studies, interviews, introspection, life story etc., that describes a moment or meaning in a person’s life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). Additionally, one of the greatest advantages of qualitative methods is that it generates rich in-depth description of the participants’ thoughts and addresses the “why” of a phenomenon (Brikci & Green, 2007). It describes complex phenomena and data are usually collected in real-life settings. However, as with quantitative method, qualitative research designs are not without their limitations. As Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) point out, “qualitative research is seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalising findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied” (p. 9). Also, it is more time-consuming when it comes to data collection and analysis, and results could be influenced by the researcher’s bias (Rajendran, 2001).

Therefore, mixed methods provide a “more complete picture by noting trends and generalisations as well as in-depth knowledge of participants’ perspectives” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007, p. 33) and it is a “creative form of research, not a limiting form of research” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). There are four types of mixed methods research design; (1) the convergent parallel design, (2) the explanatory sequential design, (3) the exploratory sequential design, and (4) the embedded design. The focus and implemented design in this study is the exploratory sequential design, which is addressed below.
5.2.2 Exploratory Sequential Design

This design is based on the foundation that an exploration is essential due to (1) unavailable measures or instruments, (2) unknown variables, (3) lack of framework or theory guideline (Creswell, 1999; Creswell et al., 2004), or (4) limited resources. The main purpose of this design is that results from the qualitative method can help in developing the quantitative method (Greene et al., 1989). The reason for choosing such design is to help in testing qualitative exploratory findings to see whether they can be distributed to a population and sample. The exploratory sequential design was inspired by Creswell & Plano-Clark’s (2011) original model and it has been modified to a three-stage plan to fit within the context of this research. It starts with collecting and breaking down qualitative information first, then works to the development of the quantitative information from the underlying discoveries. Thereafter, it develops the final qualitative information to further support and justify the discoveries found in stage two, as exhibited in figure 5.4.

![Figure 5.4: Modified Exploratory Sequential Design (Source: Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011, p. 69, Fig 3.2)](image)

5.2.2.1 Modified Exploratory Design Procedures

The adapted and modified version of Creswell & Plano-Clark (2011) exploratory sequential design contains five processes, which are summarised as follows:

- **Designing and implementing the qualitative component.** The first step includes developing and determining the research question and approach, identify the sample, obtaining participants’ consent, performing the interview, and analysing the data using proper transcription software.

- **Using strategies to build on the qualitative results.** The second step consists of modifying the research question or hypotheses, if needed, and determine how the target sample is selected. Subsequently, designing and pilot testing the quantitative design based on the qualitative data results is required.

- **Designing and implementing the quantitative component.** The third step, which
is quite similar to the first step, includes developing and determining the research question or hypotheses based on the findings from the qualitative approach. Next, choosing a sample and obtain permission to carry out the test is needed. Once the method has been carried out, analysing the collected data by use a statistical software analysis, such as SPSS, is essential.

- **Using strategies to further build, design, and implement the qualitative component.** Based on the quantitative data results in step three, the fourth step consists of designing and pilot testing interview questions. After selecting the target sample and carrying out the interviews with permission, analysing the results using transcription software, such as Nvivo, is fundamental.

- **Interpreting the connected results.** The last step contains summarising and interpreting data as well as discussing how the results from the quantitative method support or test the results found in the qualitative method.

### 5.2.2.2 Strengths and Challenges of the Exploratory Design

There are numerous strengths and challenges for choosing exploratory design. Some of the strengths include producing new instruments and assisting in developing quantitative questions, it is also easy to describe, implement, and report (Creswell, 2006). On the other hand, the challenges include deciding which data from the qualitative phase should be used in the quantitative phase as well as ensuring that results generated from the findings are reliable to use. In addition, it is time-consuming and the researcher should decide whether the same individuals could serve as participants in both methods (Camerino et al., 2012).

### 5.3 Section 3: Instruments

This section provides clarification on the development of the instruments, question design, sampling, distribution, and piloting. Since both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used, this section is broken down into four stages based on a chronological order that was conducted to develop the analyses, starting with open exploratory interviews followed by questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and finishing off with in-depth semi-structured interviews.
5.3.1 Initial Open Exploratory Interviews (Qualitative)

Exploratory interviews are particularly valued at an early stage of the research to explore issues and concepts that the researcher was not aware of as well as clarifying and identifying the nature of a problem (Habib et al., 2014). An exploratory interview was used to help diagnose a situation, screen for alternatives, and discover new ideas. In addition, it was used to help design the qualitative and quantitative phases (Zikmund, 1989). Therefore, by targeting participants already familiar with the topic, it provides insight about what wastā is really like. Additionally, being new to the whole interview process, this informational interview was a way to gain experience in doing other interviews. However, this does not mean that it provides conclusive evidence (Habib et al., 2014), as more research is needed.

5.3.1.1 Question Design

Initial exploratory interviews were first used to explore the topic in addition to assisting in developing the questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions. Based on the literature review and previous readings, a clear sense of direction on the type of questions to be asked in relation to wastā in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment was determined. Once the questions were first developed, they were later modified in a better context so that participants could easily understand them. Hence, a total of nine questions were asked to six participants that were chosen for the interview. All questions were self-made based on the overall review of the literature (view appendix 2, p. 340 for exploratory research questions). hence, the questions were divided into four sections.

The first section included participants introducing themselves in terms of age and working experience. In addition, it involved discovering participants’ viewpoint and experience about wastā to comprehend whether they were in favour or not in favour of wastā, as well as understanding who is responsible for allowing wastā in organisations by asking three questions:

1. *What do you think of wastā?*
2. *What is your experience of wastā?*
3. *Who is responsible for hiring people through wastā in companies?*
The second section was to explore the impact of *wasta* on employees and organisations in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment. Therefore, three questions were asked. The first question was “*do you think that *wasta affects knowledge sharing and innovation?*” This question was asked because there are different viewpoints from different scholars. Some scholars argued that knowledge sharing is not affected by connections, whereas others disagree (see Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). In terms of innovation, scholars like Aragón-Correa et al. (2007) agreed that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and innovation, as mentioned in the literature. Thus, the question was asked to see if similar results were generated. The second question was to acknowledge whether employees would remain committed to their organisations regardless of the use of *wasta*. Hence the question was, “*do you think *wasta* impacts commitment in your organisation?*” Lastly, the final question “*do you think that human resources management practices such as promotion, training, compensation etc. are affected by *wasta*?*” was examined to know the extent of *wasta*’s impact on HRM practices.

Additionally, the third section included one question, which is “*how do you foresee the future use of *wasta* in Kuwait?*” The reason this question was asked was to discover participants’ opinion on whether they think that the practice of *wasta* will increase, decrease, or be eliminated in the future. Lastly, the final section consisted of two general question to add insight that the researcher might not be aware of, which were “*if you were to conduct a research on *wasta* what would you mainly focus on and why?*” and “*is there anything more you want to tell me about the practice of *wasta* in Kuwait?*”

### 5.3.1.2 Open Exploratory Interview Arrangements

The interview arrangements were divided in three parts. The first part was contacting participants, who were all personal contacts of the researcher, to set up a time and date for the interview, introduce the nature of the research, and send the participant information sheet and informed consent form (view appendix 1, pp. 335-338) via email. The initial interviews were conducted over the phone. Thus, six participants were interviewed between the 25th and 27th of August 2015. The second part, on the day of the interview, consisted of the interviewer introducing herself and the research topic, clarifying the purpose of the research, assuring confidentiality, and asking permission to record the interview. Lastly, after gathering demographic information, the
interviewer started with an opening question, which was “what do you think of wasta?” as an opportunity to gather contextual perception. In the end, after answering all questions, the interviewer always asked a general question, such as “is there anything more you want to tell me about the practice of wasta in Kuwait?” to capture ideas that the interviewer might not be aware of. Once the interviews were done, the interviewer thanked the interviewees for participating in the interview.

5.3.1.3 Conduct of Open Exploratory Interviews

A digital recorder was used to capture interview data, with the participant’s permission. Before conducting interviews with participants, the researcher discussed the entire interview process step by step with the interviewees and explained the confidentiality issues associated with the research. Interviewees were assured that they would remain anonymous at all times and the data gathered would only be used for research purposes and will be destroyed once the dissertation is completed (for more details about anonymity and confidentiality see Wiles et al., 2006). Once the interview began, the confidentiality matters were restated and participants’ verification of agreement in doing the interview and permission to record the interview was confirmed. After getting participants’ verbal consent for audio recording the interview on the recorder, questions related to the research were asked. Using an audio recorder enabled the researcher to focus and listen to what the participant was saying. Furthermore, to guarantee a successful interview, the following aspects were reviewed:

- Choosing a silent setting to conduct the interview without any disturbance.
- Testing the audio recorder before the interview to ensure that it is working
- Positioning the recorder between the researcher and the phone to record the interview clearly and efficiently.

5.3.2 Questionnaire (Quantitative)

The questionnaire was used to answer ‘who’, ‘what’, and ‘why’ questions (Al-Mulla, 2012) to catch certainties and opinions. The survey permits accumulation of a large amount of information from a wide population, which is satisfying in terms of statistical analysis (Al-Mulla, 2012). A self-managed survey was developed in a way that respondents could answer inquiries without the presence of the researcher. In this way, while planning the questionnaire, the questions were considered in terms of clarity and
simplicity (Lietz, 2010). The vast majority of the survey was made out of closed-ended questions to encourage respondents to answer quickly, easily, and precisely (Cummings et al., 2013). Furthermore, open questions were incorporated within the close-ended questions when clarification was needed. The questionnaire was designed on Bristol Online Survey (BOS) to accelerate data entry and stability of the survey.

5.3.2.1 Question Design

While developing the survey, the language of the participants was considered. Therefore, two versions of the survey were made, one in Arabic and one in simple English (view appendix 3, p. 351, for the English version). The reason for making two versions is because Arabic is Kuwait’s official language (Salem, 2013), therefore many people may have difficulties understanding the survey if it was only done in English. The main idea behind designing the survey was to make it as short and simple as possible without losing valuable information by over simplifying it (Dolnicar, 2003). Therefore, the survey consisted of five sections.

The first section addressed the introduction of the survey. In general, introductions are very crucial in any survey. It explains to participants the reason why a survey is being conducted by clarifying the purpose of the research, the research question, and confidentiality concerns (Gwartney, 2007). In addition, it identifies the researcher of the thesis and ways in which the researcher could be contacted in case of any further questions or concerns. The second section of the survey tackled demographic questions. One reason for having demographic questions is to allow further statistical analysis to be carried out to determine whether specific demographic variables influence attitudes towards (Gwartney, 2007) and experience of wasta. Therefore, seven general questions were asked about gender, age and nationality, education level, working experience, job position and sector. All seven questions were multiple-choice questions in which participants were expected to choose only one answer.

The third and fourth sections of the survey were the main reason why the survey was developed. It discussed questions related to wasta and organisational performance. Based on these two sections, the research question of the thesis, with the help of the interviews, will be answered. The third section consisted of five questions, one multiple choice and four ranking scale questions. The multiple-choice approach was used
because it makes an excellent analytical instrument for identifying conceptions, including misconception (Tamir, 2007). The ranking scale approach was used because it evaluates participants’ preference between a set of discrete statements (Harzing, 2016) as well as leading to a better data quality (Alwin & Krosnick, 1985). However, this type of approach is found to provide unstable and unreliable result due to participants being unable to consistently distinguish between various options (Peng et al., 1997). As a result, the questions were carefully designed to be easy to understand and answer.

Before justifying the questions in section three, it is appropriate to mention that questions one to four were all based on the overall literature review of the history of wasta (refer to section 3.1.1 in the literature). The first question, “how often have you used wasta?” was included because the main topic of this thesis is to determine if Kuwaitis have ever used wasta and how often they have used it. Questions two to four were quite similarly developed. Question two, “if you have used wasta, what have you used it for?” addressed people who indeed have used wasta. The aim of asking this question was to help explain rational reasons behind peoples’ choice of seeking wasta. The question contained four ranking (1= most used and 4= least used) that people were asked to choose from, including the ‘other’ category. The ‘other’ category was used so that people could express other possible reasons for using wasta that the researcher might not be aware of (Frary, 2002).

The third question, “what is your source of wasta?” helped in explaining the type of source people seek, talk to, view as powerful and influential when thinking of using wasta. People were asked to rank seven choices from 1 to 7 (1= most used source and 7= least used source) as well as having the choice of specifying other sources of wasta by including the ‘other’ category. The fourth question, “which of the following best describes the reason why people started using wasta in Kuwait?” is based on a ranking scale from 1 to 5 (1= best describes and 5= least describes) with five choices as well the ‘other’ category. Question four was included to rationalise peoples’ perception on why and how wasta became an important part of Kuwait’s culture. The last question, question five, included five statements and participants were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, neutral, strongly disagree, or disagree with each statement. The statements are as follows:
1. *Wasta is the main source of corruption in organisations.*

2. *Wasta does not affect social justice in organisations.*

3. *Wasta is known to be male dominant.*

4. *Women are equally seen as a good source of wasta as men.*

5. *Unequal opportunities arise between both genders due to unequal access to networking opportunities (i.e. wasta).*

A Likert scale was used in question five because it is easy to indicate people’s agreement and disagreement in addition to being a useful scale for answering research questions. The agreement/disagreement approach does not only measure attitudes and values, but is also a simple way of assessing individual opinions (Johns, 2010). That said, statement 1 was developed based on reoccurring similar comments made by previous scholars that *wasta* fuels corruption (Kathawala et al., 2012; Feghali, 2014). Statement 2 was obtained from previous research developed by Hung and Ho (2006), although it was rephrased to fit within the *wasta* context. Originally, the question was “*guanxi* adversely affects social justice” (Hung & Ho, 2006, p. 23). As noted, ‘*guanxi*’ was replaced with ‘*wasta*’ and ‘adversely’ was replaced with ‘does not’ to make it simple for participants to understand the statement. The reason for including this question is due to finding out if justice is served when *wasta* exists. However, statements 3, 4, and 5 were self-made based on the overall literature review to acknowledge participants’ perception on gender issues with regards to *wasta*, as well as observing whether *wasta* truly is male dominant as stated by Tlaiss & Kauser (2011) and Bailey (2012) (refer to section 4, p. 62).

Section four addressed organisational performance and was divided into 4 subsections, which are HRM practices, knowledge sharing, organisational commitment, and innovation. All questions were designed based on the Likert scale to indicate participants’ views on each statement (Johns, 2010). The first subsection, HRM practices, contained eight statements:

1. *Recruitment in my organisation is strictly based on qualifications rather than wasta.*

2. *Appropriate growth opportunities are not available in my organisation for those who perform well, but rather for those with wasta.*
3. My organisation encourages formal training for everyone.
4. Due to wasta, there is no real competition for promotions in the workplace.
5. My organisation uses performance-based evaluation fairly and accurately.
6. Rewards and incentives are unfairly issued due to wasta.
7. Performance evaluation in my organisation aims at improving employees' performance and strengthening job skills.
8. I do not believe that my management follows policies and practices that serve combined interest of both employees and the organisation.

The above statements were all extracted from a previous study by Narang (2010). As a result of the pilot testing, all statements were somewhat rephrased to simpler wordings for participants to understand. The questions were included to acknowledge how participants perceived their organisational practices regarding HRM practices, such as incentives and performance appraisal, as well as understanding employees’ attitude and behaviour towards them with the existence of wasta. In addition, the aim of these questions is to find out whether HRM practices are affected by wasta the same way they are affected by other types of social capital, such as nepotism (see Ford & McLaughlin, 1985; Arasli et al., 2006).

The second subsection, organisational commitment, consisted of six statements. Statements 1 to 4 were extracted from Meyer and Allen’s (1991) commitment measurement; whereas, statements 5 and 6 were self-created from the literature review on the relationship between social capital and commitment (refer to subsection 4.2.6 in the literature review). The statements are as follows:

1. I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation.
2. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would go for it.
3. I am loyal to this organisation because I have invested a lot in it, emotionally, socially, and economically.
4. Leaving this organisation would require considerable personal sacrifice on my part.
5. When an employee gets recruited due to wasta in an undeserved position it affects my commitment and performance level.
6. A working atmosphere governed by wasta increases job loyalty among employees.
The statements were designed to help address concerns related to employees’ commitment when *wasta* occurs. The researcher would like to understand participants’ viewpoint on how they endure *wasta* governing their organisations by examining the reason why they stay in such organisations, instead of leaving, and how they react to *wasta*.

Subsection three relates to knowledge sharing within organisations. It included seven statements that were designed to assist in concluding how *wasta* impacts the process of knowledge sharing. The researcher would like to know whether (1) employees are reluctant to share knowledge because of the practice of *wasta* within organisations or (2) they share knowledge due to their job requirements and (3) if knowledge sharing process have nothing to do with *wasta*. To be more specific, the researcher sought answers in areas of knowledge access, employees’ intention to share knowledge, and the fear of losing their knowledge power. Thus, two statements were based on the literature review, statement 1 and statement 5. Statement 1 was self-made based on the relationship between social capital and knowledge sharing made by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) (see subsection 3.2.4) and statement 5 was based on the literature review on knowledge sharing by Bartol and Srivastava (2002) (see subsection 4.1.2). Additionally, statements 2, 3, 4, and 7 were obtained from Sulaiman’s (2010) study and statement 6 was taken from Kanzler’s (2010) work. The statements are as follows:

1. *Wasta can spread information efficiently, quickly, and less costly than formal procedures, thus it enhances knowledge sharing.*
2. *I only share my knowledge if people ask me for it.*
3. *I only share my knowledge with a person whom I can trust.*
4. *I do not share knowledge that is not common to others.*
5. *I only share my knowledge to help achieve my organisation’s goal.*
6. *Sharing my knowledge makes me lose my unique value and power base in the organisation.*
7. *In this community, we let people, especially early recruits, learn from their own experiences rather than directly guiding them.*

Subsection four examined employees’ orientation towards innovation that is adopted from Employee Innovation Survey-Analysis Key developed by Enclaria Leadership organisation (n.d.). The subsection contained five statements and each statement
tackled creativity and innovation issues that may exist within an organisation as a result of *wasta* and employees striving for better positions. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, once said at the UAE innovation week event, “governments and companies that do not innovate risk losing their competitiveness and falling far behind” (WAM, 2015, n.p.). If that is the case, is Kuwait still considered as a competitive country with the presence of *wasta*? Do people still try to innovate and do their best or do they just grab anything within their sight due to *wasta*? Are they also valued and rewarded/encouraged when they become creative? Hereafter, the below statements were developed to answer these questions, the statements are as follows:

1. *Innovation is not an essential requirement for doing my job effectively.*
2. *People can innovate and become creative without sharing knowledge.*
3. *My supervisor does not value my ideas.*
4. *My organisation encourages me to think creatively and is willing to take a risk on new ideas.*
5. *I am not rewarded or recognised when my ideas are being applied.*

Finally, the last section of the survey, the conclusion section, contained two open-ended questions, “based on your experience, how would you define *wasta*?” and “is there anything you would like to add or comment on with regards to *wasta* in Kuwait?” to encourage participants to write their own perspectives on the subject matter and their concerns about the existence of *wasta*. “A reason frequently given for using open-ended questions is the capture of unsuspected information” (Frary, 2002, p. 169). Consequently, having open-ended questions will further support developing interview questions to help justify the developed hypotheses.

5.3.2.2 Questionnaire Piloting

The survey was carefully pilot-tested before distribution to reveal flaws and possible causes of misperception that might lead to invalid responses. It is quite challenging to determine the number for pilot testing. According to Connelly (2008), the pilot test should be 10% of the sample proposed. However, as Hertzog (2008) stated, it is not that simple to determine a number of pilot studies to be carried out due to factors influencing the type of research. Nevertheless, Isaac and Michael (1995) as well as Hill (1998) all
suggested that 10 to 30 participants for survey pilot testing would be sufficient. As a result, 10 surveys were distributed to personal contacts via email to validate the fulfilment objectives of the overall study on the 10th of April 2016. Three steps were undertaken when conducting the questionnaire pilot test, which are as follows:

**Pilot Test 1:** Five questionnaires, English and Arabic versions, were given to acquaintances and colleagues who were fully aware of the purpose of the survey. Their critique and feedback was positive, as they understood everything and recommended few changes. For example, one participant recommended adding internship and volunteer as job positions in the survey.

**Pilot Test 2:** Five other questionnaires were given to other acquaintances and colleagues that were not as fluent in English to see if they might have some difficulties understanding the survey. However, their feedback was slightly different from the first five. It was revealed that some of the participants had trouble understanding some English words, such as ‘adequate’, ‘appraisal’, ‘circulate’, ‘distributed’, and ‘objectively’, which were changed to simpler words. Thus, their feedback helped in developing the final version of the survey.

**Pilot Analysis:** The trial analysis assured that the questionnaire would serve the survey’s objectives and generate valid and valuable data to the study. All respondents understood the Arabic version and found it well-defined, hence changes were only made to the English version. Once the survey was fully completed, it was officially launched online and distributed to the target audience.

**5.3.2.3 Distribution**

The questionnaire was distributed online using BOS. This method was an appropriate way to collect a lot of data with little involvement of the researcher and could reach a wider range of participants (Weber & Bradley, 2006). The results of the survey were automatically gathered and analysed in the database. Initially, the survey was sent to well-known contacts and colleagues, ranging from respondents with academic to administrative backgrounds. Acquaintances and colleagues in different professions were asked to distribute the link to help reach a valid response rate. However, since this distribution method is seen as a form of ‘snowball sampling’, it ensured access to social groups beyond the researcher’s social circle (Gorra, 2007). This led to a higher response
rate as well as collecting information across a diverse population. Furthermore, it was clear that researcher's bias might have resulted due to the chosen non-probability sampling method (Katz, 2006). Hence, the researcher also decided to distribute the survey via social media, twitter to be specific, to obtain random responses from people who are out of the researcher’s circle in order to reduce sample bias. The researcher initially contacted well-known Kuwaiti twitter accounts with lots of followers to reach a wide range of people and politely asked them if they could circulate the survey. Many users did not hesitate and acted positively by re-sending the survey, which primarily helped in reaching the estimated target sample size.

5.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative)

Semi-structured interviews are another method used to collect data from participants. It allows researchers to discover factors that support participant’s answers, opinions, and beliefs (Legard et al., 2003). The interview is recognised to be reproductive in a way that new knowledge is likely to be created, depending on the questions asked. In addition, it helps to generate new ideas and suggestions that could be further added to or explored in the research (Holloway & Brown, 2012). It is also more flexible and useful in adding in-depth data to the results gathered from the questionnaire. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to inform participants about the topic clearly that minimises misinterpretations by modifying and re-arranging questions and asking for information in different ways. By doing so, it encouraged participants to speak and justify their point of view freely as well as observing their physical behaviour to evaluate the validity of their answer (Seale, 2004; Bailey, 2008).

The interview exploited techniques from both focused and structural tactics, allowing the interviewer to freely investigate beyond the answers (Alreck & Settle, 1995). The interviewee is given the opportunity to discuss liberally about wasta. In addition, answers from the interviews “can be added, expanded and explain or confirm results from the questionnaire” (Vuttanont, 2010, p. 64). The interviews were planned and conducted over the phone and face-to-face. However, one major limitation from doing interviews is the reliability of the information gathered (Walsh & Wigens, 2003) due to the fear of getting false answers because of the sensitive nature of wasta. Thus, interviewing preparations and techniques of approaching questions was carefully planned.
5.3.3.1 Question Design

Semi-structured interview questions were designed to further support and justify participants’ answers in the survey as well as building a valid argument for the hypotheses. While survey questions helped in providing evidence of patterns among a large number of participants, interviews provide more in-depth vision on participants’ attitudes, assumptions and actions (Kendall, 2008). An interview guide was adopted from Kvale (1996) in which he specified that it is vital to ask questions with ‘how’ and ‘what’ to get spontaneous answers from interviewees. Hence, the interview contained ten questions (view appendix 4, p. 356) that were extracted from three different sources, the literature review, the survey, and previous studies.

Half of the interview questions were self-made based on the literature review. The first question, “how were you employed?” was based on Hutchings and Weir (2006a)’s remark in the literature review that recruitment and selection in the Arab world is highly personal. Hence, this question was included to bring clarity as to how employees were recruited and selected for vacant positions in organisations and to see if Hutchings and Weir quote (2006a) about the Arab world is supported. The second question was self-developed from the overall literature review on business ethics and wasta. The question was designed to understand employees’ reaction towards unfair promotions and evaluations within organisations. The question is “have you ever been a victim of an unfair evaluation or a delay in an upgrade due to lack of wasta?”

Furthermore, questions three and four, “upon the occurrence of any kind of injustice, can you recover your rights legally easily or do you need a personal recommendation from a higher authority?” and “after the occurrence of injustice and lack of compensation, did it affect your performance and commitment level?” were influenced from the literature by Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) and previous literature outcomes such as those by Arasli et al. (2006) and Padgett & Morris (2012). The questions were self-created to understand when injustice occurs within an organisation, how employees act upon it and how it affects their performance level in addition to further acknowledging and supporting participants’ answers in the survey about how, and if, wasta affects commitment. In addition, question five, “why do managers accept employees through wasta?” was extracted from a previous study done by Omar (2012). It was added because of recurring comments in more than one section in the literature review (section
Moreover, questions six, seven, and eight were based on participants’ responses from the open-ended questions (17 and 18) in the survey (view appendix 3, p. 345). Questions six and seven, “can wasta be acceptable when it doesn’t harm individuals or damage their rights?” and “do you see wasta as an ethical or unethical act?” were included to additionally address ethical concerns regarding wasta because ethics was a controversial subject in the literature review and trying to understand where wasta lies within the ethical context is challenging. Question eight, “I don’t think the government is willing to fix wasta because the government is benefiting from wasta in supporting the parliament members they want to win in elections. Without wasta, nobody will vote for them. So, there will always be wasta in Kuwait. How much do agree with this statement?” is a participant’s quote from the exploratory stage of the research that captured the researcher’s attention about how wasta might not be easy to eliminate, and hence would like to know if that perception is seen by others as well.

Additionally, question nine, “should wasta be abolished or remain in place with regulations? If it should be abolished, what should replace it, if anything?” was also extracted from a previous study done by Omar (2012) that was perceived as important to add in the interview questions. It was included to additionally support question eight to see if there is a correlation between both questions in terms of understating if wasta could be eliminated or replaced. Finally, question ten, “do you encourage the use of Wasta?” was developed as an overall review of the entire research to see if participants were against or in favour of the use of wasta and the reason for their choice.

5.3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview Arrangements

The interviews were broken down into 4 stages. In the first stage, before conducting the interviews, the interviewer contacted participants via phone to set up a time, date, and place, in the case of face-to-face interviews, as well as introducing the nature of the research. In the second stage, on the day of the interview, the interviewer started by engaging in a conversation with the interviewee, avoiding the research topic until the interviewee felt comfortable. Once the interviewee became comfortable and ready to
be interviewed, the interviewer introduced the research topic, clarified the purpose of the research, assured confidentiality, and asked for permission to take notes and record the interview.

At the third stage, the interviewer started with an opening question offering an opportunity to collect important contextual insight. Therefore, the opening question was always about employees introducing themselves. This question allowed the interviewee to flexibly and comfortably answer the question before continuing with the rest of the interview questions. At the final stage of the interview, the interviewer asked a final question to clarify that the interview was over. The final question was always about further information or recommendations that the interviewee would like to provide. Once the interview was over, the interviewer thanked the interviewee and demonstrated how their contribution was useful for the research in addition to reassuring the confidentiality of the interview.

5.3.3.3 Conduct of Semi-Structured Interviews

Two aids were used as an instrument during interviews, which are note-taking and audio recording. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2002), note-taking is a vital activity, but might distract participants. Thus, to limit this, the researcher assured participants that notes of answers and information given would be taken during the interview. Moreover, after getting participants’ consent for voice recording, the aspects mentioned in sub-subsection 5.3.1.3 were reviewed to guarantee a successful interview.

5.3.4 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative)

Due to questions raised from the findings in the survey and previous interviews that needed to be further investigated, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted as a follow-up. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as an opportunity to explore themes already identified in greater depth to clarify any uncertainties in addition to taking the research to the next level by answering “what now” questions as well as proposing solutions. They are often used when researchers want rich and detailed information based on an individual’s perception of the issue that is being explored (Boyce & Neale, 2006). They are useful in providing additional context to other collected data by offering a clearer picture of what happened and why (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Thus, to explore deeply social and personal issues (DiCicco-Bloom &
Crabtree, 2006), “systematic recording and documenting of responses coupled with intense probing for deeper meaning and understanding of the responses” (Pereira et al. n.d., p. 1) were executed. Despite the potential of gathering crucial information, in-depth semi-structured interviews analysis can be time-consuming (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

5.3.4.1 Question Design

The researcher had a clear idea of the type of questions to be examined with regards to wasṭa that would better enhance the overall outcome of the research during the in-depth semi-structured interviews. The questions were based on themes arising from the previous research findings and were designed to seek clarification and further in-depth exploration of issues arising. After developing the questions and conducting some pilot interviews, three to be exact, the total number of questions that were finalised for the in-depth semi-structured interviews was twelve (view appendix 8, p. 378). All questions were self-made based on the overall findings of the qualitative and qualitative analyses previously done throughout the research. The questions were divided into four sections.

Based on the findings in this research, the researcher was aware that knowledge sharing needed to be further investigated to grasp a better picture of how it is impacted by wasṭa. Thus, prior to participants introducing themselves, the first question that was asked was “can you detail ways in which knowledge sharing is affected by wasṭa in organisations, either positively or negatively?” Furthermore, questions two to four mainly targets participants’ views and recommendations with regards to how an organisation could improve its overall performance in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, and innovation in addition to acknowledging ways in which organisations can help mitigate against the impact of wasṭa. The questions were asked in terms of a role play to make participants easily open-up based on imagining being managers or someone in power in the organisation. Thus, the questions that were asked are as follows:

1. If you were a manager, how would you encourage knowledge sharing and innovation among employees?
2. What would you want to do differently from usual current practice in Kuwait if you were in charge of the HRM department?
3. If you were the CEO, what would you want to do to improve the overall performance of the organisation?

Moreover, the researcher became conscious about the lack of questions and investigation with regards to the continued use of wasta having on multinational organisations (MNOs) wanting to operate within Kuwait and the impact of phantom employees on organisations. Hence, the researcher developed the questions, “what damage do you think the continued use of wasta will have on Multi-national organisations wanting to operate within Kuwait?” and “what is your opinion on phantom employees in organisations?” The researcher is interested in understanding who are phantom employees, how are they recruited, and ways in which they could be reduced.

The second section included three questions that tackled raised issues based on previous interviews about how interviewees believed that wasta is not related to organisations and how sometimes it could be viewed as something else. This also resulted in exploring whether wasta can be seen or used in a positive way that makes the practice eligible. Therefore, the three questions that were asked were: “previous interviewees mentioned that wasta and work are two separate things and wasta has nothing to do with work. To what extent do you agree with this statement?”, “in your opinion, can wasta be viewed as a job recommendation during recruitment in organisations?” and “people usually talk about the negativity associated with wasta, in what ways does wasta benefit people or organisations, if any?”

Additionally, section three consisted of two questions, “if a law in Kuwait were to be imposed against anyone using wasta, how would people react to it?” and “if you were in power, what kind of law would you impose instead?” The reason why these questions were asked was to discover participants’ opinions about what will happen if a law was imposed in Kuwait against wasta, how people will react to it, and what kind of law they would impose if they were in power. Lastly, the final section contained one general question to further add insight that the researcher might not be aware of, which is “is there anything else you would like to say regarding the impact of wasta on organisations in Kuwait today?”
5.3.4.2 Conduct of In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews and Interview Arrangements

The interview arrangements of in-depth semi-structured interviews are the same as the semi-structured interviews. Therefore, to prevent repetition of words, refer to section 5.3.3.2 and 5.3.3.3.

5.3.4.3 Interviews Piloting

According to Holloway and Wheeler (2002), pilot studies are not usually done in qualitative studies, but researchers could conduct interviews as a pre-exercise. It was also conducted to ensure that if there were any errors, they could be rectified in addition to testing the length of the questions (Simon & Goes, 2011). Hence, the pilot study for all interviews were conducted with three participants who met the selection criteria to familiarise the researcher with the interview procedures. The researcher knew the interviewees; thus, they were directly contacted via phone to participate in the pilot study.

The interviews were also recorded to ensure the right way in using the audio recorder and to check the clarity of the sound level. In addition, as the researcher was the primary data collection instrument, the pilot study enhanced her experience of interviewing as well as ensuring and becoming familiar with qualitative data collection and analysis. The interviews went well in terms of time. However, questions that were not clear enough for the interviewees in terms of clarification were changed and simplified. As a result, the feedback on the clarity of some of the questions were discussed with the interviewees, which led to the modification of the final version of the interview questions.

5.4 Section 4: Data Collection and Analysis

5.4.1 Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection: The link for the online questionnaire was distributed on the 24th of April 2016 (English version) and the 26th of April 2016 (Arabic version) to personal contacts and social media. Participants were politely asked to complete the questionnaire and send it to their acquaintances. One week later, a reminder was sent
to participants stating that in two weeks the surveys would be gathered. On the third week, completed data were collected after receiving a satisfactory number of responses, which was 339.

**Data Analysis:** Questionnaire data were imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 for descriptive statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics involved summarising numeric data and converting them into tables, graphs, or percentages (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). The first step was producing distinctive variable names for each question to classify the information. For example, HRM practices was coded HRMP. Before developing the data entry process, each questionnaire was allocated with a number to enable examining if an error was spotted in the data.

The second step was coding feedback. Each feedback was assigned a numerical code before it was recorded into the SPSS to clarify variables. For example, all answers to questions that had ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neither agree or disagree’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’, were coded from 1 to 5. Questions with straightforward answers like ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ were coded 1 and 2. For the open query that respondents replied in their own words and the variety of the answers were not wholly foreseeable (Fowler, 2009), the researcher established a code for sorting these answers based on categorising them in terms of similarity. Lastly, after coding and entering each data correctly, the data were evaluated to analyse any errors as well as checking for accurate and misplaced values using different statistical tests. Moreover, the authenticity of the scale was also evaluated to identify internal consistency through Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. Preferably, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of scale should be above 0.7 (Pallant, 2010), hence unreliable scales were removed.

**5.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis**

**Data Collection:** For the initial open exploratory interviews, data were collected from the 25th of August to the 27th of August 2015. Six participants were interviewed via telephone. Furthermore, for the semi-structured interviews, data were collected from June until July 2016. Twelve participants were interviewed, some were face-to-face and others were via telephone. Lastly, for the in-depth semi-structured interviews, data were collected from the 26th of November until the 28th of November 2016. Six participants
were interviewed via telephone. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The length of each interview was approximately 10-20 minutes for the exploratory interviews, 15-30 minutes for the semi-structured interviews, and 45 minutes - 1 hour for the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

**Data Analysis:** The interviews were done in Arabic and English; therefore, translation was required. During translation, data cleaning process was executed to ensure that the translation is precise by amending any transcription fallacy (Al-Mulla, 2012). Thus, the interviews were transcribed by using an online transcription software, www.otranscribe.com, to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. Each interview was transcribed and stored individually to be analysed.

There are various types of qualitative data analysis that have been used throughout numerous areas of research. The two most well-known qualitative data analyses used to create a structure that describe and organise qualitative data (Patton, 2002) are content and thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data into themes, sub-themes and codes according to their similarities (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007) by using Nvivo software version 10. There are different steps and phases that needs to be considered when performing thematic analysis. Hence, for this research, the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were adopted, which include:

- **Getting familiar with the data:** transcribing data and taking notes while reading and re-reading the information. The researcher focused on ‘what is said’ rather than ‘how it is said’ (Bryaman, 2008).

- **Generating initial codes:** systematically coding data and grouping relevant information to each code. In other words, key descriptive subjects in the texts were underlined and initial coding categories were assigned (Vuttanont, 2010).

- **Searching for themes:** grouping codes into relevant hypothetical themes. Grouping codes involved using repetitive patterns of data based on two stages. The first stage assessed the data and identified key themes. The second stage focused on defining patterns within the themes identified in stage one. (Ezzy, 2002).
• **Defining and naming themes:** producing well-defined descriptions and names for the themes by continuously analysing the data to improve the aspects of each theme and the final story the analysis concludes.

• **Reviewing themes:** generating a thematic map of the analysis.

• **Producing the report:** writing up the findings.

In following Braun and Clarke (2006) method, all transcribed interviews were imported into Nvivo software and the researcher read all transcripts thoroughly as well as taking notes for potential coding while searching for meanings, patterns, ideas, etc. Hence, data were organised under potential headings (tree nodes). After reading and getting familiar with the data, the second step includes the development of initial codes from the data in terms of what is interesting about them. Boyatzis (1998) defines the process of coding as “the most basic element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (p. 63). Potton (2002) also described the process as a method of looking at “what is there and give it a name, a label” (p. 463). Hence, coding includes merging data into sections, exploring the similarities and differences of the data, and grouping similar data together in relevant nodes (Tuckett, 2005).

In this research, the coding was done using the latent approach, rather than the semantic approach. With the semantic approach, themes are recognised within the explicit meaning of data and the researcher is not looking for details beyond what participants has said, as opposed to the latent approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The coding was also data driven, meaning the theme depends upon the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This is where the researcher read the data for themes connected to *wasta*, HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, commitment, organisational and employees attitude, behaviour and performance, and coded accordingly. After coding all data, similar codes were grouped together. The third step includes searching for themes, the researcher explored the data thoroughly looking for concepts “that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes)” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). This was done by re-reading the coded sections in stage two looking for connections by comparing, combining and correlating similar codes into themes and sub-themes based on their relationship (view appendix 5, p. 358). An example of one extracted theme, sub-theme and codes of the interviews are as follows:
Organisational performance (Theme)

- HRM practices (Sub-theme)
  - Recruitment (Code)

After searching for several themes, the coded sections were reviewed in terms of relevance to see if they fit within the allocated theme as well as reorganizing the themes. Once the themes were reorganized and all relevant codes were allocated, the themes were then named concisely to give a clear sense of what each theme is talking about (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once this was done, a thematic map was generated (see figures 6.1 and 6.14). In addition, the researcher checked the themes against all dataset to examine “how the emerging themes are the true reflection of the original data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91) and that each theme is coherent, distinctive and well-defined. Once stages 1-5 were completed, the researcher then produced a written report based on the findings (see chapter 5). Table 5.2 summaries the approaches used in analysing data from mixed methods research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Method</th>
<th>Nature of data</th>
<th>Method of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Nominal, ordinal and continuous quantitative data.</td>
<td>Statistical tests using SPSS software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Transcribed text.</td>
<td>Thematic analysis coding using Nvivo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Approaches Summary.

5.5 Section 5: Ethical Awareness

5.5.1 Ethical Considerations

Before producing the participant information sheet and a consent form, an ethical clearance checklist and conformity with Loughborough University’s Code of Practice was completed. After getting the approval, a participant information sheet and a consent form was developed to assure respondents “are guaranteed certain rights, agree to be involved in the study, and acknowledge their rights are protected” (Ivankova, 2002, p. 63). Furthermore, the questionnaire had an introduction page describing the purpose of the research, assurance of the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the use, storage and disposal of data and the right to withdrawal. The confidentiality of the interviews was ensured orally and the right of the participants to withdraw from participating was explained. Participants were contacted over the phone to get
permission to participate in the interview. During the conversation, the name of the researcher and the university was provided as well as a briefly explaining the purpose of the research, the right of withdrawal, and confidentiality. In addition, before conducting the interviews, a participant information sheet and informed consent form was given to the participants to sign because it signifies their approval to partake in the interview. As a result, the consent letter was provided to avoid any pressure on participants that might influence their answer.

5.5.2 Researching a Sensitive Issue

Most Kuwaitis might feel uncomfortable when being asked about *wasta*, as it is a private matter, even though the degree of reluctance differs between individuals. Respondents might give a normative answer to questions about sensitive topics (Bailey, 2008). Therefore, the risk of getting normative answers, instead of honest answers, is high. As a result, when searching sensitive issues, it is better to make respondents feel calm and comfortable by applying certain techniques, such as small talks, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, choosing a relaxing environment (Vuttanont, 2010) and much more to avoid normative answers. In addition, when interviewing participants, asking questions related to their personal life, such as experiences and background information, encourages a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee as well as creating a more pleasant environment. This will ease the interviewee’s process into a more difficult question (Grimstad, 2013). Hence, showing interest in interviewees creates a better interview result.

5.5.3 Establishing Reliability and Validity

The conditions for judging a qualitative analysis vary from quantitative analysis. In qualitative research, credibility is usually required based on consistency, perception, instrumental effectiveness (Eisner, 1991), and honesty (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through a course of confirmation rather than traditional validity and reliability procedures done in quantitative research. To validate the findings, the credibility of the data must be defined through matching it to reality (Merriam, 1998). Reliability signifies the extent to which data can be replicated when collected at a different time or by another method (Yin, 2003). The approach that was used to establish reliability and validity for interviews (qualitative) was trustworthiness. Trustworthiness defines the degree of
confidence that can be found in the results (Creswell, 2009). It consists of dependability, credibility, and ability in confirming the results. Dependability is similar to reliability. It consists of using the same method for collecting and analysis data, while credibility refers to the establishment of a relationship with the interviewee and the ability to confirm results is developed through objective data collection and analysis (Malallah, 2010).

For the quantitative phase of the study, internal consistency reliability was used. Internal consistency is applied to all quantifiable items to measure various aspects of the same variable. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was considered to measure the internal consistency reliability to produce a single scale (Litwin, 1995). It reflects on how well items balance each other when measured against various aspects of the same variable (Litwin, 1995). Hence, if the reliability coefficient was greater or equal to 0.70, then it is considered acceptable (Neuendorf, 2002). In terms of validity, construct validity was used. Construct validity is the extent to which the correct hypothesis was used during the examination of a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Using the right measure to test a hypothesis is vital. Hence, it is important to employ multiple methods and measures to assess the same construct. Therefore, exploiting both questionnaire and interviews strengthens the reliability and validity of a construct (Malallah, 2010).

5.5.4 Researcher Bias

Qualitative research is “interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (Creswell 2003, p. 184). Hence, researchers must “explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal interests about their research topic and process” (Creswell 2003, p. 184). Furthermore, since the researcher is the main instrument in gathering and analysing data, exercising bracketing is vital to overcome such issues in addition to asking participants to verify and clarify their responses. Bracketing is the process in which the researcher puts aside his or her “preconceptions, prejudices, and beliefs so that they do not interfere with or influence the participants’ experience” (Parahoo, 1997, p. 45).

5.5.5 Researcher’s Role

The researcher’s role during the interview process was to assist the interviewee to speak freely and openly (see Legard et al., 2003). The researcher introduced herself to
participants to establish a connection. Interviewees were informed about the study and discussed the following ground rules:

- No use of mobile phones during the interview.
- Only one person talks at a time.
- Address one another with respect.

These rules were required for a successful interview. Furthermore, managing the interview procedure was considered to certify that important questions were answered in-depth. Hence, more than one probe was used until a satisfactory level of understanding was reached. As mentioned by Spencer et al. (2003), “probes are not meant to be used in isolation” (p. 152), it is not enough to move on to the next question by just asking one probe, such as why? (Spencer et al., 2003). In addition, using follow-up questions obtained a deeper understanding of interviewees’ perception and meaning of their answers in terms of exploration and explanation (Legard et al., 2003).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and explained the choice of using mixed method theory as an appropriate research methodology for this study. In addition, it detailed the instruments, sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures as well as ethical considerations used in this study. Furthermore, a pilot study, two versions of the survey, and a series of interviews were conducted to acknowledge individuals’ perception in relation to *wasta*. The following chapter, chapter six, discusses the results of the data collection and analyses as well as the hypotheses formulation.
Chapter 6: Results
Part 1

6.0 Introduction

After identifying methodological approaches, data collection and analysis of the study, the next step is to appropriately analyse the data collected. Therefore, this chapter defines the examination used to identify and analyse collected data. This chapter is divided in two parts depending on how the data were originally collected due to being a long chapter. The first part is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the qualitative findings by analysing the open exploratory interviews. The second section addresses the quantitative findings by analysing the online survey using SPSS software. The second part addresses the third and fourth sections that details two other set of qualitative findings by analysing semi-structured and in-depth semi-structured interviews using Nvivo software.

6.1 Section 1: Initial Open Exploratory Interviews

By targeting participants already familiar with the topic, interviews were conducted with six participants. As shown in table 6.1, interviewees had a somewhat similar background in terms of workplace, job title and working experience, which gave the researcher a better insight on interviewees’ perspective about wastā.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Job Position</th>
<th>Working Experience</th>
<th>Means of recruitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Marketing Employee</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>PR Employee</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Petroleum Engineer</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>PR Employee</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Financial Controller</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.1: Open Exploratory Demographic Information*

In addition, while thematically analysing the interviews, the researcher defined two main themes, organisational performance and societal awareness. An overview of the thematic analysis findings is presented in figure 6.1 below.
Figure 6.1: Open Exploratory Thematic Mind Map
6.1.1 Organisational Performance

This theme emphasises the four variables of organisational performance, which are HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment, in terms of the major role wasata plays within organisations. The theme is divided into four sub-themes based on the measured variables.

6.1.1.1 Human Resource Management Practices

The findings showed that interviewees alleged that wasata plays a key role when it comes to HRM practices, especially recruitment and unfair promotions and evaluations. Based on the findings, recruitment is believed to be the main HRM practice that is affected by wasata. This is because wasata is usually linked to those who are in power or people who can influence recruitment decisions within organisations.

a. Recruitment

Most of the interviewees stated that those who were usually recruited through wasata are given positions in which they lack the experience and might not be qualified enough for, and hence do not perform well. In addition, since employees were recruited through wasata, interviewees believed that wasata-based recruits could get away with lack of performance, such as not coming to work, and still get special treatments just because of who they are linked to.

“Kuwait is the best place to find out and explore what wasata is. For an example, there are people who get their degree from unaccredited universities and are placed in leadership and sensitive positions because of wasata” (A6).

“Those who are not qualified enough are getting the jobs, while others who have a degree, who actually studied 5, 6 and 7 years of their lives are still sitting at home” (A3).

“For an example, the position that he is hired in, he’s given things to do and he is not doing them because of his wasata, knowing that he got hired by wasata and wasata got his back; so, he does not care about anything” (A5).

“For an example, my sister used to work for this company that is known. She
was always late and did not work properly, and her manager was fine by it because he was related to us. In fact, he gave her a mission to travel outside for a conference that represented the organisation. Even though she was qualified, it was unfair for her hard-working colleagues who deserve that opportunity” (A2).

In addition, when interviewees were asked who is responsible for hiring employees through wasta, their answers ultimately summed up people in power or in high positions that can influence organisational decisions as well as tribes/families.

“In Kuwait, people are responsible. People are expected to perform wasta favours due to their tribes, families, groups etc. They are the ones who hire people in different sectors to remain in control” (A6).

“People in power and high positions such as managers, ministries, etc.” (A5).

“It could also be tribes. We have got Bedouins, this is the strongest tribe in Kuwait, they stick together no matter what. So, if one person from the same tribe needs a job, they will just get him a job because they have got the last family name and they are all related to each other. This is also another problem, people who are related to each other will help each other to rise and become something huge in the country, as opposed to others who are not related to them or do not have powerful relatives in influential positions.” (A3).

b. Unfair Promotions and Evaluations

Other HRM practices that are influenced by wasta according to interviewees are promotions and evaluations. Interviewees highlighted that those who have wasta get promoted faster and have better evaluations than others.

“People would get different evaluation grades because of their connections. For instance, my colleague that does not work at all got the same grade as mine because he knows people in power and this is unfair” (A4).

“When someone is hired through wasta, they will get promoted easier. A normal person gets promoted within 2-3 years, but he will get promoted within
a year and his salary will increase faster than mine because I did not use or have wasta” (A5).

Nonetheless, two interviewees believed that wasta somewhat affects HRM practices. They believed that those who are not qualified are usually the ones who seek wasta to climb the professional ladder at the expense of others just so that he/she does not have to work for it.

“It depends on the person, if you used wasta, you will get promoted faster” (A1).

“Only if you are not qualified enough. For instance, if you are educated and you’ve got your degree and you are good at what you do, then it won’t affect you. But if you don’t have a degree, you’re not qualified and don’t have any experience at all, then yes wasta affects HRM. It’s like how are you going to get promoted, if you can’t do the job?” (A3).

6.1.1.2 Knowledge Sharing

This sub-theme highlights how some interviewees stressed on the influence of wasta on knowledge sharing. Some interviewees believed that wasta does indeed impact knowledge sharing due to being within the wasta circle. Those who are within the wasta circle can know and access unattainable or secretive information that might not be circulated or available to other employees within the organisation.

“Sometimes with wasta, you’re going to have more power than those that lacks wasta at work. For an example, I know a lot of things more than others because of my connections... because the manager is my father’s best friend, so he tells my father everything and my father tells me” (A2).

“People within the wasta circle can get and share unattainable or secretive information between them quickly because they are within the circle and what happens in the circle stays within the circle” (A4).

“Let’s say a member of the parliament wants to access a certain information, he'd hire people in specific sectors so that he could reach that information that is confidential and unattainable to anyone” (A6).
However, a few interviewees highlighted that *wasta* does not impact knowledge sharing by stressing that sharing knowledge within an organisation is an obligation to get things done.

“I don’t think that wasta has anything to do with it because knowledge sharing is a must. It’s not about wasta, it’s about being faithful and loyal to your organisation. You have to share information” (A3).

“In the end, that’s my job and that’s what I’m supposed to do” (A5).

“No, I don’t see how it affects it. I think it depends on the person” (A1).

### 6.1.1.3 Innovation

This sub-theme highlights how interviewees stressed that it was because of *wasta* unqualified employees are recruited in sensitive positions that impacted innovation. The analysis revealed that the country would not further develop as people stopped becoming creative and innovative by depending on *wasta*.

“I think our country won’t be innovated enough because of wasta. If everyone is going to depend on wasta, we are not going to develop our country. It won’t get to where other countries are because people who deserve the position and who are creative enough are not getting the chance to actually do something with their creativity because they are pulled back by those who are a step ahead because of wasta” (A3).

“Sometimes, I feel that the development of our country is stopped because of wasta. Wasta became something essential in our country... we will not develop because wasta took over our society 100%” (A6).

“People are being hired in positions that they have no clue about and start making decisions that have nothing to do with the job that would negatively affect a lot of things” (A5).

“It limits the qualification of the people working at organisations and their knowledge. They don’t even know how to work and do their job because they are hiring unqualified people” (A2).
6.1.1.4 Organisational Commitment

With regards to organisational commitment, some interviewees believed that *wasta* somewhat impacts commitment, as it depends on the employee. Interviewees stressed that even if employees were recruited through *wasta*, it does not mean that they will not work to remain within their organisations due to continuance commitment reasons, such as salaries.

“I will remain at my job because like I said I go there to work, receive my salary and leave. But if I saw that the situation reached its limits, I will leave my organisation” (A5).

“For an example, my organisation practice *wasta*, but I’m only committed to it because of the salary” (A4).

“It depends on the person. If he was employed through *wasta* and does not want to work, then he won’t work. But there are some people who are employed by *wasta* and they do want to work and prove themselves, so it depends on the person” (A1).

However, two interviewees believed that *wasta* impacts commitment because some employees consider resigning when the situation becomes unbearable. One interviewee mentioned that those with *wasta* are more loyal to their connections rather than the organisation.

“Sometimes *wasta* is overused in organisations, which forces some people to resign” (A2).

“For sure it affects employees’ commitment in sectors. If an employee is in a specific sector and his manager or team leader or anyone above him found out who he is or who he knows, then they won’t talk to him or make problems for him because they’ll be afraid of him. Therefore, he could get away with things like not coming to work… those who they hire are usually not up for the place they are in, so that’s why they don’t have any responsibilities towards their organisations because they consider themselves working for the *wasta* provider and not the organisation. Hence, they do not care about the place they are in” (A6).
6.1.2 Societal Awareness

This theme stresses interviewees’ personal experience with *wasta* and how *wasta* became a survival tool in the society. It also highlights the advantages and disadvantages of *wasta* as well as interviewees’ perception about the future usage of *wasta*.

6.1.2.1 Survival Necessity

This sub-theme emphasised that most participants believed that *wasta* became a tool used in Kuwait to survive and maintain one’s status. Interviewees believed that the practice of *wasta* is something that is going to happen, as the country depends heavily thereon.

“I think since Kuwait is a small country, people will always be linked to or depend on one another to get things done. Therefore, people started making connections to benefit from each other and I think that’s how it all started... especially living in a country like ours that depends on *wasta* entirely to get to places, positions or just being employed” (A3).

“I think *wasta* is like all over the world and it’s a tool for people to get their jobs done or to get the position that they want” (A4).

“The country depends on *wasta*, without *wasta* no one can survive” (A6).

6.1.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Wasta

The findings revealed that some participants viewed *wasta* as a positive practice due to reasons such as getting to higher positions, becoming employed, and even attaining unreachable objects faster and effortlessly.

“It’s good and not good. It’s good because I might use it in the future for myself or for my children or anyone who’s close to me... for an example, if I want to work in another position or when I want something that is unattainable or unreachable, I have to use *wasta* to get it” (A5).

“It is beneficial to have a lot of connections to get to higher places that people dream of basically” (A3).
“The pros about wasa is getting things done effortlessly... like, saving time and effort in getting things done” (A4).

However, the disadvantages of using wasa includes recruiting unqualified individuals in positions they lack the experience and knowledge for, and they are getting promoted at the expense of others.

“It’s bad because wasa is part of the hiring process in recruiting people in positions that has nothing to do with the job or the job description” (A5).

“Some people get promoted at the expense of others that deserve the opportunity” (A1).

“Sometimes people would use it in a wrong way and others could actually get harmed by it” (A4).

6.1.2.3 Personal Experience

This sub-theme highlighted participants’ personal experience with wasa in terms of its usage. The findings of this sub-theme revealed that the most common practice of wasa is to secure a job.

“I did actually through my father. To work at a company as huge as mine, you need wasa. So, my father did have to talk to a lot of people to help me get into the company” (A3).

“Wasta is the reason why I got my job at the company and my other jobs” (A2).

“For sure, I've used wasa to get a job because in Kuwait, without wasa no one can survive” (A6).

Furthermore, other interviewees also used wasa to get things done, such as bank paper work and dealing with police issues.

“I got my job through my degree, but I did use wasa in other situations. Like once the police pound my friend’s and my car on the same day. The duration of the pound was supposed to be 45 days, but I used wasa and got my car back after two days... he waited 45 days because he did not use wasa” (A5).
“Yes, I did try it once. My sister used to work in a bank and retired so whenever I go there, they get my work done that usually take 3 days for normal people, but for me, because of wasta, it takes 1 day or within the same day to finish” (A1).

Broadly speaking, there are three levels to wasta, high wasta, medium wasta, and low wasta. In other words, individuals with better wasta are usually in a better position to get want they want. For instance, if two people were competing for a job and they both have used wasta to secure it, the one with the strongest wasta or influencer will usually get the job.

“I tried to apply for a job to up skill myself, but I did not get the job unfortunately because the person who took this job was related to someone in power in the organisation. I got a bit frustrated since they only got accepted because they are related to someone or have a better wasta” (A4).

6.1.2.4 Future Perception of Wasta

This sub-theme highlighted interviewees’ insight about the future practice of wasta in Kuwait. When interviewees were asked to state whether the possibility of the practice could ever decrease, the findings revealed that it might not happen in the foreseeable future. In fact, interviewees emphasised that the practice of wasta might remain the same or increase in the near future.

“Wasta nowadays is not like how it used to be 10 years ago. Every year the practice of wasta is increasing, so I think that it will increase in the future even more” (A1).

“I think it’s either going to stay as it is or increase because wasta is like a weapon that people use in different ways, whether it’s good or bad” (A4).

“Remain the same or even increase because what’s happening in Kuwait is intolerable. Everything is done by wasta, even in universities. For an example, if you want a good grade, you have to use your wasta in order for the instructor to change your grade” (A5).

“It will never ever demolish, maybe it will minimise, but not so much. There
“will always be wasta in Kuwait.” (A3).

“I think in the future everything will be based on family names. For an example, from last name, people will know who your wasta is. I think they will consider wasta more than performance or qualifications and that is what is happening in Kuwait” (A6).

6.1.3 Hypotheses Formulation

The aim of the open exploratory interviews was to test and gather evidence to see if wasta is a problem in Kuwait that needs to be further investigated grounded on recurring themes in literature review. Based on the findings of the open exploratory interview analyses, it can be hypothesised that wasta does impact HRM practices and innovation, and somewhat impacts knowledge sharing and commitment, either positively or negatively. Therefore, confirming that wasta and the measured variables are worthy of deeper investigation. As a result, the proposed research hypotheses that have been developed for this study, based on an observed gap, are as follows:

H1: Wasta will influence the exercise of fair and ethical HRM practices.
H2: Wasta will influence knowledge sharing.
H3: Wasta will influence innovation.
H4: Wasta will influence organisational commitment.

As observed, the hypotheses are based on a two-tailed non-directional approach. The reason for such choice is due to witnessing in the open exploratory analysis that wasta does influence the measured variables, but the direction of the influence was neutral in most cases. In addition, there are several previous scholars that witnessed that social capital can impact the measured variables, either positively or negatively, in the literature review. Hence, since the direction of the effect was not strong enough to specify and base the research on (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009; Mcleod, 2014), it has been concluded that the most suitable approach to use, especially when there is lack of pervious examinations about of the influence on wasta in Kuwait regarding the measured variable, is the two-tailed non-directional approach. Therefore, based on the research hypotheses, the proposed research model is as follows:
As shown in figure 6.2, only three control variables, which are gender, education and working experience, were included because they are the only control variables that made some type of effect on the independent and dependent variables, (also see section 6.2). In addition, as seen from figure 6.2, there is only one independent variable, which is wasta behaviour, to test if and how wasta impacts any of the four dependent variables as witnessed by the open exploratory interviews and based on the literature review.

One of the limitations in this model is that it only contains one independent variable and four dependent variables. The reason for this is because the researcher is primarily interested and only curious in testing, justifying and explaining if, how and in what ways wasta is affecting the measured variables mentioned above without considering other types of aspects, such as trust. According to Knasko (1992) researchers often wants to know how a certain independent variable affects several different dependent variables because it is the variables that the researcher is testing to see its impact on endless other variables. In addition, other reasons include time limitation and other aspects being out of this research scope that could be tested in future studies. Not to mention, trust has not been included as a research variable because it is assumed to be part of the wasta relationship (Brandstaetter, 2014; Brandstaetter et al., 2016), hence it is a sub-component of wasta behaviour that could be the subject of a future study.

In conclusion, open exploratory interviews alone do not give decisive confirmation and end results (Habib et al., 2014), hence more research was required. Therefore, with the help of the findings and the literature review, the questionnaire was developed to better clarify and justify the results found in the open exploratory interviews.
6.2 Section 2: Questionnaire

A developed survey was distributed online using Bristol Online Survey (BOS) and was collected after reaching a satisfactory number of 339 respondents (see section 5.1.7 for sample size information). However, out of the 339 respondents, only 319 respondents were used after screening and cleaning the data from errors due to being inconsistent and incomplete to use (Pallant, 2016) by using SPSS version 23. The examinations that were viewed as appropriate and used for this research are frequency analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and regression analysis that begins with the exploration of the unmodified items, followed by the exploration of the relationship between the modified (i.e. refined) items. In addition, the findings also address the results gathered from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

6.2.1 Frequency Analysis

6.2.1.1 Participants and Sample Proportion

The surveyed participants were 100% Kuwaitis living in Kuwait. Based on 319 surveyed participants, there were more male participants (55%) than female participants (45%). The difference is not that great, since it is only 10% as shown in figure 6.3 (also see appendix 6, pp. 361-366, for all frequency tables).

![Gender Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 6.3: Gender Bar Chart**

In addition, there is a major difference among age groups, 62% of the total gender were between 21-35, 23% were between 26-45, 12% were between 46-55, and 3% were 56 or older. The sample was relatively young in terms of age, irrespective of gender, because the survey was disturbed online, and hence younger Kuwaitis use the internet
more than older Kuwaitis. Therefore, the majority (85%) were less than 46 years old, as illustrated in figure 6.4 below.

**Figure 6.4: Age Bar Chart**

In terms of the education level, the majority of total respondents (55%) held a Bachelor’s degree, irrespective of gender, followed by 19% who held a Diploma degree. Total respondents with higher education level represented 17% of the scale, while the remaining 9% of total participants had a high school degree. The figure demonstrates that Kuwaiti women are more likely to be highly educated than men by presenting higher frequency in Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. This could be explained by some Kuwaiti men would graduate at an early stage to help their families financially or because they do not want to continue studying; therefore, scoring more than women in the Diploma and High school category. However, the figure also shows that Kuwaiti men are more eager to pursue Doctoral degrees than women. This could be explained by women getting married, and hence do not have the time to continue studying or because they are satisfied with only having Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. Figure 6.5 illustrates the frequency of the participants’ education level.

**Figure 6.5: Education Bar chart**
Regarding job positions, the majority of total respondents (74%) were full time employees, irrespective of gender, followed by 15% retired employees. Nevertheless, the least number of total participants were part time employees (6%), followed by interns with 3%, and volunteers with 2% as illustrated below.

![Job Position Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 6.6: Job Position Bar Chart**

With regards to working experience, most of the total participants (41%) had 11 years or more of experience, 39% had 1-5 years of experience and only 21% had 6-10 years of experience working at non-governmental sectors (63%), followed by 20% at public sectors and 16% at private sectors. Male respondents (51%) had a higher working experience than female by scoring more in the ‘11 years or more’ category. Thus, it appears that Kuwaiti men are more experienced than women in the working environment, which could be explained by referring to the education level clarification above. As for the sector, most female and male participants prefer working at non-organisational sectors by scoring 63% in total. The figure also shows that Kuwaiti women prefer working at public sectors more than Kuwaiti men by scoring 30% higher than men. This could be explained by the benefits associated with working in public sectors, such as shorter working hours and better annual leaves, that Kuwaiti women might find appealing considering their way of living, especially married women. Figures 6.7 and 6.8 represents the working experience and sector bar chart.
6.2.1.2 Frequency, Purpose and Source of Wasta

Based on the surveyed participants, the majority (63%) of all participants occasionally used *wasta*, 22% never used *wasta*, 12% frequently used it and only 3% agreed on using it all the time as represented in figure 6.9.
In total, many participants mainly used *wasta* to get jobs (50%) and bypass administrative processes (31%). Figure 6.9 below demonstrates that Kuwaiti women use *wasta* to get jobs more than Kuwait men by scoring 3% higher. This could be explained by women competing in a male-dominant working environment and to secure a job successfully, they seek *wasta*. However, the least purposes for seeking *wasta* are for financial benefits with 14% and gaining a promotion with 11%, as shown in figure 6.10. Other purposes for using *wasta*, based on participants’ statements that were extracted from the ‘other’ category include protecting/receiving legal rights at work, getting driver licenses, avoiding violation tickets, changing/booking governmental appointments, booking doctors’ appointments, receiving scholarships and medical treatments abroad, work fingerprint exemption, transferring to different departments and getting sick leave.

![Figure 6.10: Purpose Bar Chart](image)

However, when participants were asked to explain reasons why people started using *wasta* in Kuwait, by selecting from five options, 65% of all participants agreed that the main explanation for using *wasta* was because it is deeply embedded in Kuwait. 46% believed that it was due to unequal opportunities and 34% said that it was due to cultural expectations, where people are obligated to fulfil *wasta* favours. Nonetheless, the least two reasons that explained the practice of *wasta* were enhancement of social/financial status with 26% and as a solution to solve disagreements with only 22%, as shown in figure 6.11. In addition, participants remarked that there are other reasons why people started using *wasta* such as deterioration of services, political and governmental purposes favouring the government and members of the parliament and social courtesies, which was extracted from the ‘other’ category in the survey.
With reference to participants’ preferred source of *wasta* (i.e. those who they go to and ask favours from), 39% of total participants, especially female, preferred relatives as their first reference, followed by friends (37%) as their second preference. However, by looking at the frequency, it appears that Kuwaiti men’s first choice is friends followed by relatives, as opposed to Kuwaiti women. The reason for their choice is because not only do they feel comfortable asking their relatives and friends for help, but also they know that people close to them would be willing to help them no matter how small or big the request is. In addition, total participants also seek *wasta* from government officials (26%), members of parliament (23%), and the *dewaniya* (20%). After going through family members and friends for help and were not lucky by it, Kuwaitis will try to seek it elsewhere from powerful positioned individuals or from their daily gathering (i.e. *dewaniya*) that they trust. Their last resort would be from former colleagues and business partners due to having a friendly relationship with them, and thus they do not personally know them enough to ask them for favours, as shown in Figure 6.12.

**Figure 6.11: Reasons Bar Chart**

**Figure 6.12: Source Bar Chart**
6.2.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha is the most well-known measure of internal consistency/reliability. It is normally used for multiple Likert questions in a survey that forms a dependable scale. Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale ought to be above 0.7 (DeVellis, 2012). The reliability of a scale depends upon the sample. With short scales, for example lower than ten items, it is normal to find low Cronbach values (Pallant, 2016). In this situation, it might be proper to report the mean inter-item correlation of 0.2 to 0.4, which suggests that the mean is acceptable and reliable to use (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). Accordingly, the results are as follow:

*Wasta Scale:* As shown in table 6.2, the *wasta* scale consists of five items with a very low Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.182 and a mean of 0.040, which clearly makes it an unreliable scale to use. To improve the Cronbach alpha, it was decided to remove WST2 (*wasta does not affect social justice in organisations*) due to having a higher Cronbach alpha value than the original alpha (Pallant, 2016). As a result, the modified *wasta* scale, *WASTA (2)*, was created and Cronbach alpha increased to 0.319, which is still very low, but has a mean of 0.101 that makes it acceptable to use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WASTA</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASTA (2)</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.310</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.2: Wasta Reliability Statistics*

*Human Resource Management Practices (HRMP) Scale:* The HRMP scale has a decent internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.836 and a mean of 0.389, which makes it reliable to use. Table 6.3 presents HRMP reliability statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRMP</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.3: Human Resource Management Practices Reliability Statistics*

*Knowledge Sharing (KS) Scale:* As shown in table 6.4, the KS scale has an acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.686, which is just 0.014 below 0.7, and a mean of 0.240. Hence, it is reliable to use. However as with *wasta*, to improve the Cronbach alpha, KS1 (*wasta can spread information efficiently, quickly and less costly than formal procedures, thus, it enhances knowledge sharing*) was removed due to having a
higher Cronbach alpha value than the original alpha (Pallant, 2016). As a result, the modified KS scale, KS (2), was created and Cronbach alpha increased to 0.698 with a mean of 0.280.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS (2)</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.4: Knowledge Sharing Reliability Statistics*

Innovation (INNOV) Scale: The INNOV scale has a low, but satisfactory Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.599 and a reliable mean of 0.229 that makes it reliable to use, as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INNOV</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.598</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.5: Innovation Reliability Statistics*

Organisational Commitment (OC) Scale: With regards to OC scale, OC6 (*a working atmosphere governed by was*ta *increases job loyalty among employees*) was removed from the scale, as it did not correlate with any individual item in the OC scale as well as any item in other scales, hence it was entirely disregarded from the analysis. Therefore, by only having 5 items in the scale, OC has a low Cronbach alpha of 0.484 and mean of 0.162, which is just 0.038 below 0.2 (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). Therefore, OC scale is acceptable to use for this study, as presented in table 6.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OC</td>
<td>.484</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.6: Organisational Commitment Reliability Statistics*

6.2.3 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r.) measures the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an interval scale. Pearson’s correlation was used to understand whether a relationship between each variable exists. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Below are results of the table (view
appendix 6, pp. 367-368) that include variables that are correlated with each other only, hence any variable that did not correlate was excluded.

*Education:* There was a weak negative correlation between age and education variables \((r=-0.106, \ p<0.005)\). This means the average of age changes in the opposite direction in response to changes in education. For instance, the older the person, the less likely he/she has a high education level.

*Job Position:* There was a weak positive correlation between job position with age \((r=0.160**, \ p<0.01)\) and gender \((r=0.103, \ p<0.05)\). This means an increase/decrease in job position is significantly related to an increase/decrease in age and gender. This could be explained by the fact that as people mature in age, their progress in work and advancement increases as well, regardless of their gender. However, there was a weak negative correlation between job position and education \((r=-0.180**, \ p<0.01)\), hence an increase in a job position is significantly related to a decrease in education and vice versa. In general, it is known that those with higher education levels are the ones that also have high job positions. However, that is not that case here, it could be explained that in Kuwait, those with low education usually have high job positions due to their experience or *wasta*.

*Sector:* There was a weak negative correlation between sector and gender \((r=-0.243**, \ p<0.001)\). This might be because Kuwaiti managers consider gender when it comes to job employment, as they usually prefer men over women. Nonetheless, there is a weak positive correlation between sector and age \((r=0.177**, \ p<0.01)\). This could also be explained by experience, the older the individual, the more experience he/she has, and thus become more desirable to a certain sector.

*Working Experience:* There was a strong positive correlation between working experience and age \((r=0.700**, \ p<0.01)\), but a weak, positive correlation between working experience and sector \((r=0.252**, \ p<0.01)\). Thus, the higher the working experience and age of an individual, the more attractive he/she will be to a certain sector. Nonetheless, there was a weak negative correlation between working experience with gender \((r=-0.273**, \ p<0.01)\) and education \((r=-0.117*, \ p<0.01)\). This might be seen reasonable due to the fact that individuals with lower education levels have higher
experience, since they started working earlier in their periods of life, especially Kuwaiti men to support their families.

**Wasta Frequency:** There was a weak negative correlation between *wasta* frequency and gender ($r=-0.147**$, $p<0.01$), which means an increase in one variable is significantly related to a decrease in the other and vice versa. This could be due to the fact that Kuwaiti men might have access to *wasta* more than women, and thus use it more often than women.

**Total Human Resource Management Practice (TOTALHRMP):** There was a weak positive correlation between TOTALHRMP with gender ($r=0.149**$, $p<0.01$) and education ($r=0.120*$, $p<0.05$). HRM practices are not separated based on gender or education level, thus an increase/decrease in one variable is significantly related to an increase/decrease in another. Nonetheless, there was a moderate negative correlation between TOTALHRMP and sector ($r=-0.304**$, $p<0.01$) and a weak, negative correlation with working experience ($r=-0.171**$, $p<0.01$) and TOTALWASTA (2) ($r=-0.190**$, $p<0.01$), which means a decrease in one variable is significantly related to an increase in another and vice versa. This might be explained by the fact that when *wasta* exist in any organisation/sector, those who are within the *wasta* circle might get preferential treatments and advantages, such as promotions, regardless of their experience.

**Total Knowledge Sharing (TOTALKS) 2:** There was a weak positive correlation between TOTALKS with gender ($r=0.103$, $p<0.05$), *wasta* frequency ($r=0.121*$, $p<0.05$) and TOTALWASTA (2) ($r=0.135*$, $p<0.05$). This means an increase/decrease in one variable is significantly related to an increase/decrease in another. This might be seen as a benefit of being within a network. For instance, regardless of gender, people who are in a network, such as *wasta*, might be favoured in the sense of accessing information that was once unattainable to them, which thus increases their frequency of using *wasta*. However, there was a weak negative correlation between TOTALKS (2) with age ($r=-0.109$, $p<0.05$), sector ($r=-0.180**$, $p<0.01$) and working experience ($r=-0.132*$, $p<0.05$). This means a decrease in TOTALKS is significantly related to an increase in variables and vice versa. For an example, as people mature and become more experienced, they may become more reluctant to share knowledge with others because they fear of being replaced.
**Total Innovation (TOTALINNOV):** There was a weak positive correlation between TOTALINNOV with sector (r=0.187**, p<0.01), working experience (r=0.172**, p<0.01), Wasta frequency (r=0.112*, p<0.05), TOTALKS (2) (r=0.234**, p<0.01) and TOTALWASTA (2) (r=0.124*, p<0.05). This might be seen as the influence of wasta within an organisation. When wasta is practiced, information could be easily accessed and circulated with those who are within the wasta circle, which might help their innovative abilities. However, there was a strong negative correlation between TOTALINNOV and TOTALHRMP (r=−0.502**, p<0.01) but a weak negative correlation with education (r=−0.145*, p<0.05) and gender (r=−0.175**, p<0.01). With the existence of wasta and the role it plays within the HRM department, for an example, positioning an unqualified person in a place that he/she does not deserve or lack experience of, may affect other employees’ creativity, regardless of their gender and education level.

**Total Organisational Commitment (TOTALOC):** There was a weak negative correlation between TOTALOC with TOTALKS (2) (r=−0.228**, p<0.01), TOTALINN (r=−0.385**, p<0.01) and Wasta frequency (r=−0.159**, p<0.01). When people start using wasta, some employees might be less committed to their organisation, which in turn affects their performance level within an organisation. Thus, an increase in TOTALOC is significantly related to a decrease in variables and vice versa. However, there was a moderate positive correlation between TOTALOC and TOTALHRMP (r=0.399**, p<0.01) and a weak, positive relationship with age (r=0.170**, p<0.01) and job position (r=0.130*, p<0.05), and gender (r=0.121*, p<0.05), which means a decrease/decrease in TOTALOC is significantly related to an increase/decrease in variables. For example, as people age and have higher level of job positions, they tend to be more committed to their organisations, irrespective of their gender. Furthermore, when employees are more committed and work hard, they tend to get better evaluations, incentives, etc.

### 6.2.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is an explorative investigation used to identify the components within a set of variables (Pallant, 2016, p. 182). It was conducted to determine the number of factors that affect a variable and to analyse which variables fit together in order to group them into categories to reduce the number of data (DeCoster, 1998). 28 items of wasta and organisational performance questions were subjected to
principle components analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 23, a total of three items were removed. Two items were removed from *wasta* and knowledge sharing scales due to having low reliability and one item was removed organisational commitment scale due to having a higher Cronbach alpha value than the original alpha (Pallant, 2016) in addition to not correlating with any individual item in other scales.

Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis were measured. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presences of many coefficients of 0.3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.811, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974) and Bartlett’s test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix, as shown in table 6.7a. PCA in table 6.7b revealed the presences of eight components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 18.60%, 11.26%, 6.95%, 4.9%, 4.81%, 4.23%, 3.83%, and 3.71% of the variance respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.208</td>
<td>18.602</td>
<td>5.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.947</td>
<td>6.954</td>
<td>1.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.372</td>
<td>4.900</td>
<td>1.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.346</td>
<td>4.806</td>
<td>1.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.183</td>
<td>4.226</td>
<td>1.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>3.831</td>
<td>1.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.038</td>
<td>3.709</td>
<td>1.038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 9         | .955                | 3.412                              | 61.702                           | 177

Using Cattell’s (1966) scree test in figure 6.13, it was decided to retain three or four components for further investigation. However, the results of the parallel analysis in table 6.8 showed only three components with eigenvalues exceeding the corresponding criterion values for a randomly generated data matrix of the same size (28 variables x 319 respondents).
Hence, before reaching on a conclusion on how many factors to retain, as this is an exploratory approach, it was decided to experiment with both factor solutions, 3 and 4, until a satisfactory solution was established (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). According to Box (1976), the solution that best provide estimation to data-generating procedure is useful. In other words, the best number of factors to hold is one that fulfils a given criterion in meeting some explicitly expressed exploratory objective (Preacher et al, 2013). Thus, by looking at the objectives of this study, research question, and analyses, it was decided to retain the four-factors solution. The variables are very much distributed and there is consistency in the distribution (Preacher et al, 2013). In addition to providing the most appealing variable structure that contains better factor loadings, it can also be seen that the four-component solution explains more variance (42%) than the three-component solution (37%). Hence, the four-factors with a cut-off of 0.4 was viewed as appropriate for this study. The decision of the cut-off relied upon the simplicity of interpretation including the complexity of variables being handled (Hooper, 2012). Stevens (1992) proposed that utilising a cut-off of 0.4 was fitting for interpretative purposes, regardless of the sample size, as they present essential values.
that are important in describing the factor (Bradley, 1994).

The four-component solution explained a total of 42% of the variance, with component 1 contributing 18.60%, component 2 contributing 11.26%, component 3 contributing 6.95%, and component 4 contributing 4.9%, as presented in Table 6.9b. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.811 and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at p<0.001, as shown in Table 6.9a. To aid in the interpretation of these four components, oblimin rotation was performed due to the simple structure it produced (Thurstone, 1947) as well as representing valuable information when factors correlate (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.208</td>
<td>18.602</td>
<td>18.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.947</td>
<td>6.954</td>
<td>36.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.372</td>
<td>4.900</td>
<td>41.718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 6.9b: Total Variance Explained

However, to improve and refine the variance, it was decided to delete items with low communalities (e.g. less than 0.3), which are WST3, WST4, WST5, KS7, INNOV5, and OC5, as the fitting of the items are not appropriate with the others (Pallant, 2016). Table 6.10 shows the results of the communalities that are less than 0.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communalities</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Extraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WST3</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WST4</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WST5</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS7</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INNOV5</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC2</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC5</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Note: only values less than 0.3 are presented

Table 6.10: Communalities
As a result, the modified four-component solution, with a principal components analysis of 22 items, has a KMO measure of sampling adequacy of 0.827 and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at p<0.001. The new explained variance increased to 50.4%, with component 1 contributing 22.57%, component 2 contributing 13.26%, component 3 contributing 8.41%, and component 4 contributing 6.15%. The rotated solution revealed components showing several strong loadings, however one variable (HRMP5) loads substantially on two components (view appendix 6 for pattern matrix, p. 269). The cross loading was between components 1 and 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</th>
<th>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approx. Chi-Square</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786.175</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11a: KMO and Bartlett's Test 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.739</td>
<td>4.739</td>
<td>22.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.785</td>
<td>2.785</td>
<td>13.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.766</td>
<td>1.766</td>
<td>8.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.292</td>
<td>1.292</td>
<td>6.152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11b: Total Variance Explained

In order to minimise the cross loading between components, items that load on more than one component was deleted from the analysis, as it questions the reliability of that item (Hooper, 2012). Hence, it was decided to remove HRMP5 from further consideration, as its content was adequately reflected in other items (e.g. HRMP7), and thus its exclusion would not harm construct validity. Therefore, the result of the new principal components analysis of the 20 items, with a four-component solution, is shown in tables 6.12a and 6.12b. The KMO value was 0.804 and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was statistically significant at p<0.001, accompanying the factorability of the correlation matrix. The rotated solution also revealed the presence of simple structure (Thurstone, 1947), with components showing several strong loadings and all variables loading substantially on only one component. The four-rotated component explained 50.2% of the total variance, with component 1 contributing 21.17%, component 2
contributing 13.74%, component 3 contributing 8.83%, and component 4 contributing 6.43%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.748</td>
<td>13.738</td>
<td>34.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.765</td>
<td>8.826</td>
<td>43.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.286</td>
<td>6.429</td>
<td>50.164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 6.12b: Total Variance Explained 4

All items in component 1 relates to *wasta* behaviour, as it reflects employees’ actions and attitudes toward the organisation due to *wasta* and its impact on the organisational performance (view appendix 6, p. 370 for pattern matrix). *Wasta* behaviour was formed by five items, four HRM practices items (HRMP 4, 2, 6 and 8) and one *wasta* item (WST1). The grouping of these items made theoretical sense, as WST1 (*Wasta is the main source of corruption in organisations*) can primarily be dealing with HRMP. That is, when *wasta* is practiced within an organisation, injustice surfaces when HRMP is influenced by it. Hence, the relationship between *wasta* and HRM practices may be the reason why WST1 was a part of component 1.

The items in component 2 can be regarded as knowledge sharing, as it reflects the degree to which an employee participates and engages in work related activities. Five items formed knowledge sharing. All five items were theoretically related to one another, as it measures knowledge sharing (KS 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). Additionally, component 3 was formed by six items, three HRM practices items (HRMP 1, 3 and 7), two organisational commitment items (OC 3 and 4), and one innovation item (INNOV 4). The grouping of these items also made theoretical sense as it explains the successful implementation of several HRM practices in supporting employees’ involvement and encouraging employees to feel valued (Pfeffer, 1998). Thus, this explains the grouping
of INNOV 4 in this component, since it is linked to organisations encouraging employees’ creativity and involvement. Furthermore, grouping OC3 and OC4 in this component was due to the purpose and motivation behind employees’ commitment towards organisations by weighing the pros and cons of leaving. Even though it is more of a personal perception and sacrifice, employees’ resignation will not only affect the employee, but will also affect the organisation as well. For this reason, the component will be named high performance HRM.

Lastly, three items formed component 4, with two items belonging to innovation (INNOV 1 and 2) and one item belonging to organisational commitment (OC1). Basically, the focus of this component is about employees’ interest in their jobs. For instance, those with good attitude will always find a way to improve things and have positive thoughts about their workplace, as opposed to those with negative attitude. OC1 was group with INNOV 1 and INNOV 2 because they are similar in the sense that they are both based on personal perception and engagement. This could be explained by the recruitment law that the Kuwaiti government implemented. Since the government is obligated to hire Kuwaiti employees, Kuwaitis came to believe that innovation and knowledge sharing is not crucial anymore to secure one’s job. This is because Kuwaitis are certain that they could not get fired from governmental sectors, and thus their loyalty decreases towards their organisation. Hence, for this reason, component 4 will be named as innovation and commitment.

6.2.4.1 Modified Reliability of the Components

Based on the results of the PCA and factor analysis, the reliability analysis for the four-factors that were retained are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modified Reliability Analysis Based on EFA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasta Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Performance HRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and Commitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13: Modified Reliability Statistics

*Wasta Behaviour Scale:* *Wasta* behaviour scale contains five items with a decent internal consistency through a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.736 and a mean of 0.353. No
separate items threatened the reliability of the scale by scoring favourably above 0.3 in the ‘Inter-Item Correlation’ matrix and the ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ column, except for WST1 scoring below 0.3. However, there are situations when the ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ less than 0.3 is still considered as valuable, which happens when the scale is short in items. According to Kline (1993), a correlation higher than 0.2 suggests that the item has a good correlation with the criterion. Field (2005) and Everitt (2002) further supported the above statement by recommending that the ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ items should be 0.2 or 0.3 above. Therefore, since WST1 has a ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ of 0.267, it was decided to retain the item because it is viewed to be valuable and contributes to the content validity. In this case, because WST1 positively correlated with Wasta Behaviour, and removing it would not increase the alpha significantly. Therefore, the item was not removed.

*High Performance HRM Scale*: The scale of six items has a decent internal consistency with a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.774 and a mean of 0.362, which makes it reliable to use. No separate item threatened the reliability of the scale, since each item correlated well with the overall scale, scoring above 0.3 in the ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ column.

*Knowledge Sharing Scale*: The scale of five items has an acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.687 and a mean of 0.305, which makes it reliable to use. No item was removed from the scale, since all items were adequately correlated with the overall scale and scored above 0.3 in the ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ column. In addition, the original Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is higher than all scores in the ‘Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted’ column.

*Innovation and Commitment Scale*: Due to having only three items, the alpha was 0.527. However, since the mean is 0.271, which is above the required 0.2 (Briggs & Cheek, 1986), it is reliable to use. By only having three items in the scale, no separate item threatened the reliability of the scale by satisfactorily correlating with the overall scale and scoring above 0.3 in the ‘Corrected Item-Total Correlation’ column. Furthermore, the original Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is higher than all scores in the ‘Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted’ column.
6.2.4.2 Modified Correlation of the Components

After calculating the sum of items in each scale and checking their reliability, correlation was then measured because it will be a good rationale for further research (view appendix 6, pp. 371-372, for the table). Results proposed that there was a correlation between the four scales. The results are as follows:

*Wasta Behaviour:* There was a weak positive correlation between *wasta* behaviour and gender \((r=0.116\*, p<0.05)\). This might be because that even though men use *wasta*, women also use *wasta* and benefit from it. However, there was a weak negative correlation between *wasta* behaviour with sector \((r=-0.270\**, p<0.01)\) and working experience \((r=-0.145\*, p<0.05)\). The less experience people have, the more *wasta* they will use because they still have not secured the job position or any other HRM practices that they are satisfied with, especially in public and non-governmental organisations.

*High Performance HRM:* There was a weak negative correlation between high performance HRM and sector \((r=-0.142\*, p<0.05)\) but a positive correlation with gender \((r=0.1, p<0.05)\) and education \((r=0.119\*, p<0.05)\). This could be explained by the fact that public sectors are more unwilling to encourage employees with fair HRM practices, as *wasta* is more associated with it. Furthermore, as the level of education increases, the higher the practice of high HRM performance will be, regardless of gender. In addition, high performance HRM had the strongest positive correlation with *wasta* behaviour \((r=0.226\**, P<0.01)\) and no correlation with knowledge sharing. This suggests that employees do not necessarily have to share knowledge in order get good evaluations in their organisations. In addition, it seems that the reason for having a positive correlation between *wasta* behaviour and high performance HRM is because some employees, probably those within the *wasta* circle, are more willing to commit to their organisation knowing that they have powerful influencers looking after them. However, those who lacks *wasta* are committed due to lack of alternative choices and because they are used to working in a certain organisation. Thus, as high performance HRM increases, *wasta* behaviour will also increase and vice versa.

*Knowledge Sharing:* There was a weak positive correlation with *wasta* frequency \((r=0.124, p<0.05)\) but a weak negative correlation between knowledge sharing with sector \((r=-0.158\**, p<0.01)\), working experience \((r=-0.122\*, p<0.05)\) and *wasta*
behaviour ($r=-0.117^*, p<0.05$). Due to *wasta*, some employees might feel reluctant to share knowledge or help other employees, regardless of their sector and experience, knowing that their hard work will not be appreciated and those with *wasta* might get preferential treatments and climb the ladder faster than others. Besides, if they did share their knowledge, it will be with those who they trust, which explains the reason for having a negative correlation between both scales. However, the reason for having a positive correlation with *wasta* frequency is because, due to employees being unwilling to sharing information, many individuals will seek *wasta* to access or share knowledge.

**Innovation and Commitment:** There was a weak negative correlation between innovation and commitment and *wasta* behaviour ($r=-0.140^*, p<0.05$), suggesting that employees’ feel that it is not necessary to become creative and innovate to stay in a certain organisation with the existence of *wasta*. Hence, an increase in innovation and commitment is significantly related to a decrease in *wasta* behaviour and vice versa. This suggests that the existence of *wasta* impacts innovation and commitment one way or another. However, there is a weak positive correlation between innovation and commitment with sector ($r=0.161^{**}, P<0.01$), working experience ($r=0.103, P<0.05$), knowledge sharing ($r=0.198^{**}, P<0.01$) and high performance HRM ($r=0.106, P<0.05$). This could be explained by the fact that when employees have a positive attitude towards their organisations, they will be more willing to innovate, share knowledge and commit to their organisations by knowing that they are being encouraged and supported by the management. Therefore, as one variable increases, the others will also increase and vice versa.

### 6.2.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is a more sophisticated exploration technique used to explain the relationship between one dependent variable with several independent variables (Pallant, 2016). Multiple regression analysis was chosen to build clearer fundamental interpretations from observed relations between two or more variables (Abdel-Salam, 2008). In other words, the researcher wanted to test the nature and the type of the relationship between variables in terms of which independent variable is linked to the dependent variable, the strength of the reaction and in what direction, positive or negative.
Previously, the researcher conducted some correlation analyses, in the event that two factors are correlated, the score of one variable will permit the researcher to anticipate the score of the other variable. The greater the correlation, the nearer the scores will be to the regression line, and in this manner the more exact the prediction will be (Brace et al, 2012). Therefore, based on the outcomes of the factor analysis and correlations, interesting findings have come to light. It could be suggested that wasṭa influences HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment, one way or another, either positively or negatively. However, to conclude and verify these findings, regression analysis needs to be done. The results of the analysis are as follows:

6.2.5.1 High Performance HRM

For high performance HRM, one measure was used to predict the variable, after controlling for the influence of demographics, which was wasṭa behaviour. Three demographic variables (gender, education and working experience) were entered at model 1, based on their relationship with high performance HRM in the correlation analysis, explaining 2% of the variance in high performance HRM, which is very low. However, no demographic variables made any statistically significant unique contribution in the first model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors of Model 1</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>16.226</td>
<td>1.249</td>
<td>12.991</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>1.806</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>1.534</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Experience</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.260</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-statistics</td>
<td>6.76*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of observation</td>
<td>287</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependant Variable: High performance HRM  
Note: Significance level \(*p<0.001\)

Table 6.14a: HRM Model 1 Regression Analysis

After the entry of wasṭa behaviour at model 2, the total variance explained was 9%, \( F (4, 286) = 6.76, \ p<0.001 \), which is modest compared to Cohen (1988) proposed R-Squared (R2) values. The control measure explained an additional 6% of the variance in high performance HRM after controlling for demographics, \( R \) squared change= 0.064, which is also low. In the final model, it was shown that wasṭa behaviour was the only variable that made a statistically significant contribution with having a beta value of 0.219, \( p<0.001 \). As noticed, the \( p \) value is significant. This means that the
independent variable is contributing to the likelihood that its relationship with the dependent variable is significant, making this type of information valuable to retain. This is further supported by the T-test in the coefficient analysis, T(286)= 4.479, p<0.001, confirming to retain this information because even if R² is low, it does not mean that the data is unreliable to use, as the p-value is significant (Fenton & Neil, 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors of Model 2</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>13.602</td>
<td>1.344</td>
<td>10.122</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.677</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>1.502</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>1.543</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Experience</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasta Behavior</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>4.479</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = .064
F-statistics = 6.76*
No. of observation = 286

Dependant Variable: High performance HRM
Note: Significance level *p<0.001

Table 6.1b: HRM Model 2 Regression Analysis

Trying to explain such an outcome is quite challenging as it depends on human perception, since everyone perceives *wasta* differently. By looking at the frequency analysis, it can be witnessed that most participants occasionally used *wasta*, endorsing that they are somewhat part of the *wasta* circle. Therefore, when *wasta* behaviour is present in an organisation, those who practice *wasta* usually comprehend high performance HRM positively because they know that, due to their connections, they will get away with several preferential treatments by manipulating with HRM practices making it unfair to others. For instance, if employee A was linked to the manager of the company, he or she could stop coming to work and still get higher evaluation grades or upgrades than B, who is always at work on time. However, B has no other choice than to continue working, as there might be lack of or less job alternatives. Not to mention, B cannot really do anything about it, since A is linked to the manager. That is one example of how *wasta* behaviour and high performance HRM could be positively related to each other. Hence, those with *wasta* will somewhat always be ahead of others, therefore supporting H₁.

6.2.5.2 Knowledge Sharing

One measure was used to predict knowledge sharing after controlling for the influence
of demographics which was \textit{wasta} behaviour. Three demographic variables (gender, education and working experience) were entered at model 1, based on their relationship with knowledge sharing in the correlation analysis, explaining only 2\% of the variance in knowledge sharing, which is very low. However, no demographic variables made any statistically significant unique contribution in the first model.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lrrrr}
\hline
Predictors of Model 1 & B & Std. Error & t & Sig. \\
\hline
(Constant) & 14.404 & 1.312 & 10.975 & .000 \\
Gender & .231 & .487 & .474 & .636 \\
Education & -.005 & .176 & -.030 & .976 \\
Working Experience & -.509 & .273 & -1.863 & .063 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textit{Table 6.15a: Knowledge Sharing Model 1 Regression Analysis}

After the entry of \textit{wasta} behaviour in model 2, the total variance explained was 4\%, $F_{(4, 286)} = 2.58$, $p<0.05$, which is also quiet low (Cohen, 1988). The control measure explained an additional low 2\% of the variance in knowledge sharing after controlling for demographics, $R^2$ squared change= 0.019. In the final model, two control measures were statistically significant, with working experience scoring a higher beta value (beta= -0.586, $p<0.05$) than \textit{wasta} behaviour (beta= -0.126, $p<0.05$). This is further supported by the T-test in the coefficient analysis of working experience, $T(286)= -2.146$, and \textit{wasta} behaviour, $T(286)= -2.39$, with a $p$-value less than 0.05. Thus, confirming that the regression result of knowledge sharing is significant and reliable, even though not a lot of variance is explained due to having low $R^2$ (Colton & Bower, 2002).

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lrrrr}
\hline
Predictors of Model 2 & B & Std. Error & t & Sig. \\
\hline
(Constant) & 15.912 & 1.446 & 11.001 & .000 \\
Gender & .323 & .485 & .667 & .505 \\
Education & -.002 & .175 & -.009 & .993 \\
Working Experience & -.586 & .273 & -2.146 & .033 \\
Wasta Behavior & -.126 & .053 & -2.391 & .017 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textit{Table 6.15b: Knowledge Sharing Model 2 Regression Analysis}
As for knowledge sharing, the regression analysis supports the EFA correlation analysis in the sense that knowledge sharing is negatively associated with working experience and *wasta* behaviour. This is because, even though those within the *wasta* circle might get access to unattainable information easily, other employees might be unwilling to share knowledge or even help them due to the fear of losing their position or unique value in the organisation. The more experienced an employee, the less willing he/she will be in sharing knowledge. For instance, an employee would be unwilling to help others by sharing certain information to make sure that he/she will remain valuable to the organisation. Sharing knowledge does not necessarily have to be linked with work information, it might be new knowledge that might help the organisation achieve its goals. For example, employee A, who is recruited through *wasta*, is new to the company, whereas employee B has been working for the company more than 4 years. B might be reluctant to help A due to the way A was recruited fearing that someday within a couple of years A will get promoted faster than B or that A might get the credits of B’s work. Therefore, B will hesitate in sharing knowledge with A. As a result, *wasta* behaviour can affect knowledge sharing, and hence supporting H2.

### 6.2.5.3 Innovation and Commitment

The last regression analysis was used to investigate innovation and commitment. The measure that was used after controlling for the impact of demographics was *wasta* behaviour. As with the above, three demographic variables (gender, education and working experience) were entered at model 1, explaining a very low (1.5%) variance in innovation and commitment. However, no demographic variables made any statistically significant unique contribution in the first model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors of Model 1</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.545</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>14.916</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.210</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>-.883</td>
<td>.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-.673</td>
<td>.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Experience</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>1.367</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = 0.15  
F-statistics = 1.446*  
No. of observation = 287  

Dependant Variable: Innovation and Commitment  
Note: Significance level *p<0.05  

*Table 6.16a: Innovation and Commitment Model 1 Regression Analysis*
After the entry of *wasta* behaviour in model 2, the total variance explained was only 3%, $F(4, 286) = 2.21, p<0.05$. The control measure explained an additional small 1.5% of the variance in innovation and commitment after controlling for demographics, $R^2$ squared change= 0.015. In the final model, the only variable that made a uniquely statistically significant contribution was *wasta* behaviour with a beta value of -0.054, $p<0.05$. While having small changes in the variance, the relationship is still considered significant to use since the $p$-value is less than 0.05. In other words, the results indicate that there is a relationship between the dependent and independent variable that should not be ignored (Langbein & Felbinger, 2006). This is also supported by the T-test in the coefficient analysis, $T(286) = -2.095, p<0.05$, confirming that there is a significant relationship between the variable that needs to be retained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors of Model 2</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>10.190</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>14.416</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>-.718</td>
<td>.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-.657</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Experience</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>1.120</td>
<td>.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasta Behavior</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-2.095</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2 = .015$  
F-statistics $= 2.21*  
No. of observation $= 286$

Dependant Variable: Innovation and Commitment  
Note: Significance level *$p<0.05$

*Table 6.16b: Innovation and Commitment Model 1 Regression Analysis*

The regression result also support the EFA correlation analysis that *wasta* behaviour is negatively linked to innovation and commitment. This could be explained by employee’s perception and behaviour. For instance, as the government is obligated to employ Kuwaiti citizens, especially in governmental sectors, they cannot be fired easily, unless under extreme circumstances. Thus, many employees feel reluctant to innovate. In addition, due to over-employment in governmental sectors, many people might believe that innovation is not an essential requirement to remain within a workplace, especially since their effort might lack attention and recognition from managers. Regarding commitment, the results indicated that Kuwaitis believe that there is no need for them to be loyal towards organisations. This is because the only reason they remain within an organisation is mainly due to continuance reasons, such as salaries and lack of alternatives. Therefore, in this case $H_3$ and $H_4$ are met.
In addition to directly affecting innovation and commitment, *wasta* behaviour can also affect innovation and commitment indirectly through high performance HRM and knowledge sharing. To further clarify this statement, *wasta* behaviour is negatively associated with knowledge sharing, but positively associated with high performance HRM. Both knowledge sharing and high performance HRM are positively related to innovation and commitment. Therefore, when high performance HRM and knowledge sharing are affected by *wasta* behaviour, they affect innovation and commitment. Thus, *wasta* can also indirectly affect innovation and commitment as well, hence further supporting **H$_3$ and H$_4$**.

To further elaborate on the positive relationship between high performance HRM and knowledge sharing with innovation and commitment, when HRM and *wasta* are positively related, *wasta* users tend to commit to a certain *wasta* running organisation (i.e. an organisation that embraces, accepts or relies on the use of *wasta*) as it is easier for them to excel in it and bypass usual rules and regulations in addition to accessing information that helps them innovate within their organisation. For an example, let’s say A is hired by his friend, who happens to be the CEO of the company. Therefore, A will remain within the organisation as long as A can acknowledge that it is to his/her benefit to stay in that organisation. Due to employing an acquaintance, A can meet with his/her CEO friend outside of the work place, such as the *dewaniya* (daily gathering), and exchange ideas that will help him/her further innovate and advance in the workplace. This is because knowledge sharing is known to foster innovation (Du Plessis, 2007). Thus, when two people decide to share knowledge, they become more creative at work and come up with ways to improve the organisation, which in turn increases their commitment. Hence, **H$_3$ and H$_4$** are supported.

### 6.2.5.4 Low R-squared (R2) and Low P-value

R-square portrays the extent of the variance in the dependent variable that is clarified by all independent variables (Pallant, 2016). Consequently, it is simply a descriptive analysis. R2 could be low or high depending on the measured predictors in terms of what are they, what is trying to be predicted and how reasonable the predictors are (Grace-Martin, 2013). One reason for having a low R2 in this research could be due to differences in the sample among individuals, as it is hard to explain human behaviours, but that does not mean that the analysis is not valid (Langbein & Felbinger, 2006). In
addition, low R2 values might be associated with variables containing random measurement errors, such as survey instrument (Langbein & Felbinger, 2006).

Diverse researchers have distinctive conclusions on what constitute as a high R2. Falk and Miller (1992) prescribed that R2 values ought to be equivalent to or greater than 0.10 in order for the explained variance to be seen as adequate. Cohen (1988) proposed that R2 values of 0.26 are considered substantial, 0.13 are moderate and 0.02 as weak in explaining a particular construct. In this research, the measured variables generated low R2, however having low R2 does not mean that the results are bad or insignificant to report (Fenton & Neil, 2012). Small effects can be significant and reliable to use, since one or more of the regression coefficient p-values is statistically significant, thus such results should not be disregarded (Grace-Martin, 2013). The significant coefficients represent the mean change in one variable, while holding the rest constant. Such relationship is considered as essential and can be to a great degree valuable, despite the fact that it may not explain a lot of variance (Colton & Bower, 2002).

In conclusion, low R2 and low p-value simply means that the model does not explain much variance in the data, but it is still significant to use (Fenton & Neil, 2012). As a result, even though the results of the regression analysis in this research are modest, the item with the greatest beta weight is washta behaviour and that has the greatest overall influence on the model. In addition, since this set of data is regarded as exploratory and the results were not as initially expected, the conclusions are significantly strengthened by the modified exploratory mixed methods research process conducted in this thesis.

6.2.6 Open-Ended Questions Analysis

At the end of the questionnaire, two open-ended questions (17 and 18) were included. The first question, question 17, revealed that a total of 108 anonymous participants defined washta either as a mean of acquisition, injustice and corruption.

Mean of Acquisition: 32 respondents defined washta as a method by which people get things done, either legally or illegally. Hence, it is a key for solving problems and a method of reaching desired goals.

“Wasta is a word that is commonly used within Kuwait as it has been with us for generations. It is when people get their own way in a quicker and much
faster route without having to work as hard as others who don’t have wasta.”

“It is a social instrument that consists of a cycle of contacts who hold powerful positions that can meet any illegal requirements for individuals, whether they have the required qualifications or not.”

“Wasta became something of gratitude and favour in our society!”

**Injustice**: 38 respondents declared that *wasta* is the main source of injustice in Kuwait. It is a method that hands over positions and power to an undeserving person at the expense of others in addition to breaking laws, regulations, and destroying equality in Kuwait.

“Wasta is a primary cause in undermining developmental progress of our society through appointing unqualified individuals in high-level positions. In brief, it is a social disappointment.”

“It's a way to override some laws for personal benefits, getting undeserved positions and to deal with legal injustice due to the overuse of wasta. It became an endless web where each person justifies its use based on everyone else doing the same.”

“Go beyond the powers of law and taking over the rights of others.”

Furthermore, 12 respondents stated that even though *wasta* is linked to injustice, there is a positive side to it depending on how people use it, such as helping others. However, in general, they all agreed that *wasta* is a negative practice.

“Wasta is a two-edge weapon, good and bad, but the former is prevailing mostly.”

“It could be referred to as a positive method, if it works for your own good and a negative one, if it takes over the rights of others.”

“It can be a helpful method for those who deserve it, if it does not affect others’ interests. Whereas, it could be treated as a crime of corruption, if it fell at the wrong hands.”

**Corruption**: Out of the 108 anonymous respondents, 26 respondents mentioned that
wasta is the main source of corruption, as it is the base on which the deterioration of the country depends on and it is destroying Kuwait by undermining people and corporations.

“Wasta is an instrument of corruption. It is the cause of retardation of nation, identical to bribery in its different forms, it preference the bad over the good and segregates between societal classes.”

“Wasta is the hammer that will destruct the ceiling of the nations.”

“It is a method used by those in power to promote corruption and social injustice by breaking laws regularly.”

The second question, question 18, was asked as a final question before ending the questionnaire. The findings showed that a total of 108 anonymous respondents further went on and commented that wasta became a way of life in Kuwait, it is prejudice that leads to corruption, and should be eliminated by recommending some suggestions.

Way of life: A total of 40 respondents commented that wasta in Kuwait has become so common to a point where everyone has access to it and use it as a survival necessity. According to participants:

“Today, wasta is the main method towards a comfortable life.”

“In Kuwait, people use wasta to overcome rules and regulations to get out of problems or earn something as simple as getting a discount on a product. I guess because they think they are better than others in terms of social, family or economic status. Now, even qualified candidates use wasta to earn their right because without it, they might have to wait years to earn it and sometimes they might not get it at all. From what I see, people who are in charge usually ask qualified candidates to get wasta. I kept wondering why are they asking for wasta? I got the shocking answer. Nothing is for free. They ask for wasta so that in future, they will approach the wasta for another wasta (one for one).”

In addition, respondents are aware of the benefits and consequences associated with wasta, but one of the main reason they use wasta is to claim and protect their rights.

“Wasta - as a principle - is a negative phenomenon. However, wasta can be
used to acquire a right or reach an official to explain a certain overview…”

“Wasta can be divided into two types: the useful type is represented in acquiring a right through a mediator, while the harmful type is represented in taking rights of others.”

Injustice and corruption: 24 respondents agreed that wasta is positively linked to injustice, which further fuels corruption in the country. Respondents believed that there is no point to getting a degree, if those who have access to wasta get preferential treatments and everything they ask for, even if they do not deserve it, which is one of the reasons of corruption.

“It is damaging everything...nowadays (in Kuwait) there is no point in getting a degree when someone unqualified can go and get your desired job with wasta.”

“In Kuwait, wasta is used in a wrong way. It is unfair to give jobs to undeserving people. Nowadays, everyone in Kuwait has wasta, it just depends on whose wasta is stronger.”

“Wasta is the main reason behind corruption of societies.”

“Wasta is like a cancer destroying everything completely. It resulted in unequal opportunities and corruption.”

Elimination and recommendations: A total of 44 respondents cited that wasta should be eliminated because it is destroying the country through unequal opportunities, breaking laws and regulations, and increasing corruption and injustice. As a result, they recommended several suggestions that would reduce wasta, as they believed that wasta is impossible to eliminate, but not impossible to reduce.

“Wasta looks like a disease that should be eliminated. It resulted in lack of productivity and killing competition between people.”

“Wasta is associated with the society due to relationships between its people. Thus, it’s difficult to be eliminated.”
“I hope that reforming institutions and spreading the concept of social justice could get rid of wasta because it is causing a decline in both the society and development of the country.”

“I hope that wasta is no longer used in our society and people can gain anything they want through their effort and this will create justice. Experience and qualification should be above all, not wasta.”

“Enact a law criminalising the use of wasta.”

6.2.7 Conclusion

The purpose of doing a survey was to reach as much Kuwaitis as possible to answer questions in relation to the impact of wasta on organisational performance and employees’ reactions in terms of HRM, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment. The findings from the analyses revealed that wasta, either positively or negatively, is correlated with all variables one way or another. However, the findings do not justify reasons why wasta influences the variables. Therefore, with the help of the above findings and the literature review, semi-structured interview questions were also developed and used to answer the ‘why’ question of the phenomenon in-depth.
6.3 Section 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

The quantitative analysis in section 6.2 clarified the relationship of *wasta* with HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment. However, it does not give answers to "why" questions. Therefore, this section attempts to further investigate the relationship between the variables by using a further round of semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data for this research was drawn from twelve semi-structured interviews (view appendix 7, p. 373, for sample transcript) conducted in Kuwait with employees from various organisations, as shown in table 6.17.

In table 6.17 below, interviewees had a somewhat similar background in terms of workplace, job title, working experience and most importantly their encounter with *wasta*, which gave a better insight on their perspective about *wasta*. In addition, while thematically analysing the interviews, four main themes were identified: organisational performance, social norms, ethical and legal issues, and social judgment. An overview of the thematic analysis findings is presented in figure 6.14 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Job Position</th>
<th>Working Experience</th>
<th>Means of Recruitment</th>
<th>Victim of Wasta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>HR Administrator</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
<td>Somewhat a victim and witnessed others being victimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Financier</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>No, but witnessed others being victimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>Assistant Engineer</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Ambassador</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>No, but witnessed others being victimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>No, but witnessed others being victimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Sales and Service Manager and Coach</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Assistant Undersecretary</td>
<td>More than 13 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Wasta</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.17: Semi-Structured Demographic Information
Figure 6.14: Semi-Structured Thematic Mind Map
6.3.1 Organisational Performance

This theme highlights the four dimensions of organisational performance, which are HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment. It also shows interviewees’ perception on how *wasta* plays a key role within organisations. The theme is divided into the following sub-themes:

6.3.1.1 Human Resource Management Practices

The findings showed that interviewees were either victims themselves or witnessed others being victimised by *wasta* within organisations. The main HRM practice that is most likely to be affected by *wasta* is recruitment. Recruitment is closely linked to managers within the *wasta* circle due to reasons such as societal norms, to benefit from future reciprocation, to satisfy those who they know as well as to accelerate the recruitment process. In addition, interviewees acknowledged the roles *wasta* plays within organisations by significantly linking it to attributes, such as unjust promotions and evaluation practices.

a. Recruitment

Most of the interviewees expressed how they were victims of *wasta* over their years of experience when it came to recruitment and job positions, even though most of them did not use *wasta* to get employed. Several participants faced similar issues by describing comparable incidents where they had witnessed employees being recruited to positions for which they lack the experience and/or degree for. However, that did not prevent them from being awarded the position, due to their *wasta*. In short, managers overlook qualifications when it comes to *wasta*.

“I know someone who is working at the Public Authority and their certificate is, I think, teaching for young students. She does not have a Bachelor’s degree, but had a course of teaching and through *wasta* they’ve positioned her in International Relations department, now why was that? To earn more money and it’s because of *wasta*” (B1).

“There are some girls who were employed by managers that have less experience and education than we do. They have a Diploma degree, and yet they got higher positions and some became our supervisors” (B2).
“A person and I have the same major and graduated within the same year from AUK (American University of Kuwait), but my GPA was a lot higher than hers. We applied for the same position, accountant, at KUNA (Kuwait News Agency). We actually got the same grade on the placement test as well. However, I did not receive a call from the agency at all and she did just because she used her wasta and I didn't. So, she got accepted due to wasta and I didn't because I did not know anyone who could help me” (B3).

“There are many organisations I applied to that I did not get accepted due to lack of wasta” (B7).

“There are a lot of candidates who apply and get recruitment due to their wasta. Some managers overlook qualification for wasta” (B6).

In the case of working for a family member, employees, even distance relatives, are expected to give up their duties and responsibilities to be handed over to a direct family member.

“While I was working in the private sector, I had lots of duties and responsibilities and I loved my job, not because of who I was working for, but because I loved doing what I used to do. However, once my uncle had his daughter working after me a year later, all my duties and responsibilities were taken away from me and it wasn’t because of the lack of input I had, but because it was given to his daughter” (B1).

When interviewees were asked to state reasons why Kuwaiti managers accept employees through wasta, their answers summed up four motives:

1. To accelerate the recruitment process because it is easier for them to hire those who they know than to go through an entire recruitment process, as it is time-consuming. Hence, to save time and money, Kuwaiti managers prefer to recruit someone within their circle.

“People do not want to wait for what they deserve; they use wasta to accelerate the process for everything” (B5).

“They prefer hiring people quickly to avoid wasting any time. Therefore, when a manager needs, for an example an accountant, they will ask around, even though we have a website that has so many people applying for an accounting position. However, they do not want to wait for the interview, check their performance level,
ask for a recommendation letter, or ask their previous work, they prefer someone they know or someone from their family member” (B1).

“It’s easier for them to choose people they know over people they do not know” (B9).

2. It has become a societal norm because citizens became used to having wasta running organisations in Kuwait, as it is sometimes seen as an obligation. In other words, Kuwaitis perceive wasta as a traditional tool used throughout Kuwait in which they expect others to fulfil when being asked for a wasta favour.

“It became a reputation in Kuwait, where you have to use wasta to get recruited in an undeserved position” (B6).

“I believe it’s because they got used to it. It became something normal to the extent that a person not having wasta is not a normal thing. It is not normal for an individual to give his/her all to his/her job and work ethically, its rare” (B4).

“It’s because the bigger authority tells them to do so, such as the CEO of the organisation, ministries, MPs, etc. So, they are obligated to accept employees through wasta” (B3).

3. To benefit from future reciprocal acts because they view individuals as a support system and expect them to return the favour of wasta. In order for a citizen to maintain or build a wasta circle, Kuwaitis need to be assured that the favour being executed will be returned sometime in the future. In simpler words, wasta is seen as a give and take process.

“It’s for sure because of common interest between the asker and provider of wasta. There has to be a common interest” (B3).

“They look at people as if they are a support system and not as an individual” (B10).

“Because it’s a give and take process when it comes to their benefits... they would hire someone knowing at the same time that the person would fulfil a favour for them. That’s why they hire people through wasta” (B2).

4. Last but not least, to satisfy those who they know within the wasta circle as well as their loved ones. Many individuals perform wasta favours to make sure that those
who they know are in a good place and they will always help them when they are in need.

“It’s probably because they want to satisfy who they know at the expense of others” (B12).

“Because they want what is best for their relatives and friends” (B7).

However, there are potential disadvantages and costs associated with hiring individuals through wasṭa. Managers need to think about their decisions before making them. Hiring individuals in positions for which they lack the experience for is a waste of time and energy, not just for the recruiter, but also for other employees who will have to endure the consequences of their actions, such as work overload or nothing to do.

“By getting employed through wasṭa, they honestly do not understand anything related to their position or the entire work, for the matter of fact. In the end, we are the ones who are affected by such recruitment decisions because instead of doing our jobs alone, we are also doing theirs as well and they are just sitting there doing nothing... So, we kept quiet and had to work twice as much while they just sat around, got all the bonuses, overtime incentives and on top of that, they're taking supervision payments that they do not deserve” (B2).

b. Unfair Promotions and Evaluations

Other major HRM practices that have been described by many interviewees as being affected by wasṭa are promotions and evaluations. Most participants were either given late promotions or poor evaluations at the expense of wasṭa favours.

“I was delayed 13 years for a promotion.” (B10)

“I faced several issues regarding promotions and upgrades due to the fact that I did not have wasṭa in the bank” (B12).

“Some people are receiving upgrades and promotions quicker than those who deserve it just because they are related to the manager or someone in power” (B9).

“The first year at NBK, they give me a very low evaluation, I was actually the worst” (B8).
It can be observed that *wasta* plays a key role in unjust promotions and evaluations. Those who are linked to influential people find it easier to climb the professional ladder than those who lack *wasta*.

“Promotions are based on connections. The only reason people are getting promoted in certain positions is due to *wasta* that the person is loyal to, instead of the country, which is destroying the country” (B10).

“The manager of the branch at that time wanted to promote his friends, so they unfairly evaluated me and gave his friends a better evaluation so that they could get promoted faster” (B8).

However, interestingly enough, only one participant stated that the only reason why employees get low evaluations or promotions is because they do not have a close relationship with their managers. Hence, managers do not know how well an employee is performing due to the number of employees that are being supervised by one manager.

“How do employees expect to get promoted if their superiors do not know about their performance? Therefore, those who do not have a good relationship with their managers are the one who are affected the most” (B6).

6.3.1.2 Knowledge Sharing and Innovation

This sub-theme highlights how most interviewees stressed that it was due to lack of interest and over-employment caused by *wasta* that impacted knowledge sharing and innovation. The analysis revealed that when *wasta* is present, employees felt that their effort was useless because there was no real competition. In addition, by over hiring employees and Kuwaiti managers overlooking qualifications, the overall development of the firm is affected.

“The regulation gives the right for citizens to work through the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and ensures that each citizen gets employed, and therefore, unfortunately, there is no competition. It’s like those who attend and does not attend gets treated the same and those who innovate and do not innovate are at the same level as well. It’s better for those who do not innovate because it keeps them safe from getting punished if they were mistaken, and thus gets promoted due to their *wasta* and exceeds others” (B10).
“All they are doing is over employing people just because of their connections. What they need to do is hire suitable individuals in order to further develop the public sector” (B2).

6.3.1.3 Organisational Commitment

In reference to commitment, interviewees believed that due to washa, their performance level dropped significantly and the consequences of using washa even resulted in outcomes, such as resignation. Participants lost interest in performing well due to knowing that they would not get what they deserve.

“It did affect my performance and commitment level because it is unjust to get the lowest evaluation grade just because I did not know anyone” (B8).

“They are only working because they have no other job alternatives. They also develop these hatred feelings towards their work” (B4).

“When they started to abuse washa and hire unqualified supervisors and team leaders, I had enough, I couldn't take it anymore. I did not want to work, I was like why should I work for someone that does not value my work and present my work as if it was theirs the entire time, when they are actually not working at all and provide favours for those who they want or would benefit from” (B2).

“Some Kuwaitis would love going to work, not doing anything and still get paid for it. I'm not that type of a person, so I quickly resigned. I couldn’t stay in that place a minute more knowing that my presence is not useful” (B1).

“It made me upset. I honestly stopped going to work properly and my commitment level dropped significantly” (B9).

“Yes, a lot! It affected my commitment towards my work. I stopped going early to work. I was always late, I stopped shaving and caring about my looks... So, I stayed for another year before resigning when I saw there was no hope anymore and applied at another bank” (B8).

“I’ve experience such phase where I was not committed to my work and did not arrive on time, but it was not only because they were unjust” (B3).
Nevertheless, interviewees who were not affected by *wasta* believed that *wasta* has nothing to do with work, as *wasta* and work are two separate things. “*Work is work and I do not allow my emotions to get affect by such a thing and in the end, I'm working to excel*” (B12).

“They are two separate things. My work is something and my evaluation is something else. I never mix my work with my feelings” (B5).

### 6.3.2 Social Norms

This theme stresses the government’s role in the encouragement of the use of *wasta* and how it has become a disadvantage to the society. This is where citizens have come to believe that nothing can be done through traditional procedures anymore, and hence refer to *wasta*. Furthermore, it also highlights participants’ views on *wasta* in terms of tolerance and encouragement.

#### 6.3.2.1 Governmental Practices

The findings revealed that most participants blamed the government in terms of encouraging the use of *wasta*, since the government also benefits from *wasta*. Therefore, due to deterioration of the system in the country, participants believed that the government is unwilling to do something about *wasta*, especially during election periods. Accordingly, the government thinks that only a few people will vote for MPs and without *wasta*, MPs will not succeed.

“The country, government, institutes and executives in the country should not depend on *wasta* or give it any value. When it became visible in recent years, it became an indicator on how deterioration the governmental system is” (B6).

“It is impossible for the MPs to succeed without *wasta*... because of *wasta* people are unfairly treated and that is how the country is supporting injustice” (B12).

“People actually use and abuse this matter during elections. MPs do not really look after people’s wants and needs, they just want to use people to protect their power and position. Whoever has the better *wasta* is the winner” (B9).

In addition to that, participants also highlighted the fact that the only reason why citizens vote for certain MPs is due to the give and take process of *wasta* that is seen as a win-win situation to both sides. This is where a citizen votes for a certain MP and expects that MP to do him/her
a favour in return, regardless of his/her qualifications and experience. This, in turn, affects the performance of the country.

“The society is only supporting those who they know and do not care about performance, innovation and the development of the country” (B11).

“Nowadays, people use wasta for elections to get those who they want in powerful positions to guarantee their favours being executed. Not to mention, the government is benefiting from it as well” (B10).

“In Kuwait, people do not vote for reputation, they vote for those who provide the most wasta favours” (B12).

“Wasta is a reciprocal process. For example, if you want something to get done, you go to an influential person. If that person elects himself, you are obligated to vote for him to return the favour” (B5).

“When an MP wants to hire his friend through wasta, the manager that will recruit the MP’s friend will agree so that the manager could exploit the MP’s power in the upcoming future by asking for wasta favours and other privileges” (B8).

Therefore, for the reasons mentioned above, many MPs became known as ‘MPs of services’, meaning those who provide wasta favours for others. The consequence of using wasta does not stop when an MP becomes elected. The favour will continue until his/her time as an MP comes to an end. Without performing favours, an MP will know that his/her future at the parliament will cease to exist.

“If wasta has nothing to do with the MPs, no one will even vote, look or listen to them” (B2).

“There are some MPs that are known to provide preferential favours to others and they became known as “Members of Services” (B11).

“Today, it’s all about wasta favours, not qualifications. It is based on who grants wasta favours more. Some MPs became known as ‘MPs of services’, they are known for doing favours for others” (B5).

“In Kuwait, the MPs perform wasta favours just to secure their positions because they know that once they stop doing such favours no one will vote for them
However, one interviewee offered the view that it is not because the government is unwilling to fix the system in Kuwait, but it is because they cannot stop a widely-spread practice, such as *wasta*, that is deeply rooted in Kuwait’s society. Therefore, the government should not be blamed.

“The government cannot stop *wasta*, not because of how much they benefit from it, it’s because *wasta* is something that is so big that it is really hard to control. Since there are people with high authorities that no one can tell them what to do, they will recruit people through *wasta* whenever they please. So, the government won’t be able to control it due to some people having high positions that no one controls them” (B3).

### 6.3.2.2 Societal Problems

Interviewees also highlighted the issue of how Kuwaitis in general believe that *wasta* is a survival necessity in the country, and therefore started abusing its power to get things done. In addition, some interviewees also stressed the fact that because Kuwaitis recognise the benefits associated with *wasta*, they will continue using it.

“*Wasta* exists in Kuwait, it became a societal sickness that we cannot deny its existence” (B6).

“In Kuwait, everything gets done through *wasta*, like opening a restaurant or having the electricity powered to your new built house” (B11).

“The society got used to using *wasta*. The problem is that they got used to it to the extent that they are not willing to let it go… It is used everywhere and for everything. If it wasn’t the upper management that uses it, the lower management will… Some might use *wasta* to get accepted because they fear that they’ll get rejected and others might use it before the entrance exam so that they do not need to do the exam and get accepted straight away. There isn’t any specific time for *wasta* to be used, it is used at any time for anything” (B12).

“Today, we are obliged to use it. It became a way of living, if you want something done, you have to talk to someone” (B5).
“I do not think we can live without wasta. We love getting things done faster” (B1).

6.3.2.3 Acceptance

This sub-theme emphasises that the practice of wasta can be seen as acceptable when it does not harm individuals or damage their rights. Some interviewees concluded that the use of wasta is just unacceptable in all circumstances, as it is unjust and usually involves harming others during the procedure.

“Since someone is getting something through wasta, believe me, there are others who are harmed. There is no such thing as getting what you want without anyone being harmed, either directly or indirectly” (B11).

“There is no way a person won't be affected by the wasta process. It’s just impossible” (B5).

“Wasta is always harmful… a person would not seek wasta unless he or she knows that they are not worthy or deserves the position they are applying for. If they were qualified, they wouldn't have used wasta” (B7).

However, most of the interviewees were neutral in terms of their perceptions. They believed that wasta is categorised both as good and bad. Good wasta is seen as acceptable, which usually involves not harming others during the process, as opposed to bad wasta. Therefore, it depends on how wasta is being used and the outcome of its practice.

“Wasta can be good and bad. A good wasta is when people use it, for an example, to recommend, not force, a qualified person for a certain job and it is up to the management to decide whether that person should get recruited. But that’s not the case in today’s society, it is used in a negative way, people became obligated to do favours for others just because they are their cousins, nephews, for elections, so much more” (B10).

“I feel that wasta sometimes is good and could be ethical when I know that I did not exceed someone or took another person’s position or harmed someone during the process. However, if I did not deserve a position, for an example, by having a low GPA or I was not qualified for the position, then no, wasta is unacceptable and unethical” (B4).
In addition, a few interviewees also pointed out that it is acceptable to use *wasta* because it can be viewed as an alternative for recommendations. It is only tolerable in cases where the person that used *wasta* is qualified and well-fitted for the position for which he/she is applying for.

“For an example, no one knows about me, but let say that I’m very promising and my personality is good for a certain position, so my manager recommends me for that position by saying that I’m really good and suitable. Few days later, I get that position. It might be seen as a recommendation and not wasta, but in Kuwait, wasta and recommendation are seen as the same thing” (B8).

“Sometimes a person is eligible and able to get the job, but requires a recommendation, so here wasta could be positive” (B9).

### 6.3.2.4 Encouragement

In spite of interviewees’ perception about the acceptance of the *wasta* practice, findings emphasised that almost all participants do not encourage the use or future use of *wasta* due to the associated consequences, such as prejudiced recruitment.

“Never, it’s a big mistake. If you had the rights and qualification, then why use wasta? If it was your right under the law, then why do you have to use wasta to get it? Why should I use wasta to get my right? That’s a major question to think about” (B10).

“I do not encourage the use of wasta. I’m against whoever uses wasta to get something done just because of whom they know. It is unfair. I prefer things to be done the right way. We are all equal. I think we need to stop wasta” (B1).

“No, I do not encourage the use of wasta. I have one principle, which is to never harm someone at the account of my benefit” (B12).

“If you had to go through the entire recruitment process to get the job, then everyone has to go through it as well, fair and square. Skipping a process to get what you want is not acceptable” (B9).

However, there are usually cases where interviewees are neutral about the question being asked. In this case, interviewees stated that even though they do not wholly encourage *wasta* or even view it as acceptable, there comes a time where the use of *wasta* is needed, especially in a
wasta-based country such as Kuwait.

“I do not encourage it 100%, but sometimes you need to use wasta. In Kuwait, we need it” (B2).

“To recruit the right person for the right job, yes I do not mind. But for a person that doesn't work and receive a salary while staying at home, then no.” (B8)

“Based on ethics, no I don't encourage people to use wasta. But today, we are obliged to use it” (B5).

6.3.3 Ethical and Legal Issues

This theme stresses the legal and ethical issues of wasta. It highlights how participants categorise wasta based on their own experience and ways in which they have solved any encounters they faced due to wasta. It is divided into two sub-themes, ethics and claiming rights.

6.3.3.1 Ethics

The findings of this sub-theme concluded that almost all participants emphasised that wasta is unethical because it harms others by claiming a position unlawfully. Interviewees also pointed out the way wasta is used in Kuwait made it unethical due to performing favours just to satisfy acquaintances.

“People are using it unethically because of preferential treatments” (B10).

“It is unethical because it’s like you are cutting a queue and taking peoples’ place just because of who you are linked to or who you know” (B9).

“It’s an unethical act because many people will be harmed like how I was harmed in the KUNA situation. But in the end, they chose to recruit people who are unqualified, let’s say, just because of their wasta” (B3).

“What is happening in Kuwait and how it is used, it is unethical. It is all based on family names and wasta, even if a person does not deserve a position. People are recruited to benefit from wasta favours, that is what’s mostly happening in Kuwait now” (B8).
However, some people are obligated to use it, even though they know it is unethical to acquire things that are hard to reach.

“It’s more of an unethical act. But in reality, some people are obligated to use it, for an example, for abroad medical treatments that is very hard to get without seeking wasta based on my own personal experience” (B5).

Nonetheless, there are cases where wasta can be regarded as ethical, such as hiring the right person for the right job. This is when the act is seen as a win-win situation for the employee, the wasta provider, and the organisation.

“There are cases where a qualified person gets recruited due to wasta that benefits the organisation and everyone, which is ethical. No one was harmed during the process. On the contrary, it’s a win-win situation” (B8).

It should be borne in mind that does not mean the recruitment decision that has been made was the right decision, as it involved wasta during the process. A successful manager is a manager that makes an ethical decision and judgment that will benefit the organisation by hiring the best-fit employee for the position, regardless of his or her connections.

“There are cases where a qualified person gets recruited due to wasta that benefits the organisation and everyone, which is ethical. No one was harmed during the process. On the contrary, it’s a win-win situation” (B8).

6.3.3.2 Claiming Rights

This sub-theme discusses how employees recover their rights when it comes to wasta within organisations. The findings revealed that employees rarely claim their rights when they are mistreated due to wasta. The sub-theme is divided into three codes in terms of rights recovery, which are legal, through wasta, and no actions taken.

Some interviewees explained that there is no need for wasta, since an employee could claim his/her right legally by filing a complaint to the legal department within their organisation.

“I filed an online complaint. There is an email that is sent to the administration regarding complaints. This is where you write your name, your position at work...”
and the problem you are facing at the branch and that’s what I did” (B12).

“I turned to legal actions honestly. I used to get lower evaluations than what I deserve, so I filed complaints and win them every time” (B5).

“I think that today all problems could be solved legally. There is no need for wasta. Legal departments have solved many problems, such as promotions. Many employees file complaints to the legal department and wait 40 days before claiming their rights” (B7).

On the contrary, a few interviewees stressed that they seek wasta to recover their rights, believing that it is the only way to claim one’s right, especially after filing a complaint and no actions were taken, which is a huge problem.

“To be honest, in Kuwait, the only way that you could actually recover your rights is by using wasta” (B9).

“For an example, let’s say it’s time for your promotion to a new position, they would say that you do not deserve that position and place someone with less experience than you. In this situation, you need wasta to recover what you deserve” (B7).

“In the end, it’s a problem. If I cannot recover or receive my rights only by using wasta then that’s a huge problem” (B11).

However, the majority of the interviewees claimed that they do not do anything to recover their right due to wasta being the subject of their mistreatment. Interviewees highlighted that most of the employees stopped caring about recovering their rights in addition to accepting the fact that wasta always win in every situation. The stronger the wasta, the less chance they have in claiming what is rightfully theirs. Furthermore, most of the wasta users are Kuwaiti managers in organisations, which makes it harder for employees to file a complaint against them.

“What I’ve witnessed, there are a lot of people who stopped caring and stopping fighting for their rights. They just accepted the fact that wasta is in control and do not speak about it because no matter what they do, wasta always wins” (B4).

“The problem is that we can't do anything about it. We are talking about wasta here... they were hired directly from upper management, so no one can talk to
“When I worked there in the beginning, I knew it’s a family business. Therefore, decisions and actions were taken personally rather than considering the business interests and everything in any type” (B1).

“Since it was the manager of the branch, who was looking after his friends that unfairly evaluated me, how can that manager give me back my right and what I truly deserve?” (B8)

6.3.4 Social Judgment

This theme discusses whether wasfa should be eliminated or remain in place with regulations, and if it should be eliminated, what should replace it. In addition, interviewees’ recommendations on how organisations and the country could be improved were included. Therefore, the theme is divided into two sub-themes, decision-making and recommendations.

6.3.4.1 Decision-Making

Interviewees were given the chance to choose between eliminating, replacing, or preferring wasfa’s continued existence. The findings revealed that even though interviewees want wasfa to be eliminated, they question its elimination. The reason is because it is hard to eliminate wasfa, since wasfa has been embedded in Kuwait’s society for so long. Hence, this sub-theme is divided into two codes, elimination and replacement.

a. Elimination

Most of the participants highlighted that injustice is highly associated with wasfa, which affects the country as well as the performance of organisations. Thus, interviewees stressed that the best way to serve justice is by eliminating wasfa from its roots, once and for all. Moreover, interviewees also questioned the existence of efficient rules and regulations by concluding that if they were efficient, then wasfa would not have been born.

“Eliminate it of course. If you are talking about a society that is running under an institutional system, then wasfa should be weak here. Unfortunately, we pretend that a system exists in Kuwait, but implementations and executions state otherwise” (B10).
“I do not prefer wasta, honestly. If there are rules and regulations, then why don't we just follow them? Using wasta is not fair. There are procedures that needs to be followed. If I'm following those procedures, then why am I not getting my work done faster? So, I think that wasta should be eliminated and people should work fairly with one another. No one is better than the other” (B1).

“I prefer it to be eliminated... I'm against it very much due to the unfairness it is causing” (B12).

“If wasta was eliminated, justice would be served were those who are qualified would be hired in right positions, which is something good that benefits both organisations, private and public sector, and the country itself” (B3).

Additionally, interviewees also highlighted that there is no regulation that could ever control wasta because it is hard to do so. They believed that even if people tried, they would fail, as it has already happened before. Therefore, participants determined that eliminating wasta is the best solution for the country.

“Can they eliminate it? That's the real question. It’s really hard to control” (B3).

“How will regulations control it? There is no way wasta could be controlled” (B5).

“The Ministry of Interior did that, he imposed a regulation against wasta and each manager is required to write, for an example, your name and his, when providing a wasta favour and what happened, nothing. People started to forge everything. So, you cannot regulate wasta because wasta has to do with a person's personality and ethics. Hence, you either eliminate it and everyone abides to the regulation and everything becomes fair or leave it as it is and everything becomes worse. It is better to just eliminate it” (B8).

However, there are cases in which participants believed that wasta should not be eliminated, such as the good wasta. In addition, some people are obligated to use wasta under certain circumstances when all doors are closed and the only way to open them is through wasta.

“When it comes to positive wasta, I would like it to remain in place with regulations, honestly. However, eliminate the negative wasta” (B2).
b. Replacement

Some interviewees suggested that *wasta* should be eliminated and replaced by something else, as controlling it would be impossible. They suggested that the best replacement, especially within organisations, is efficiency, fair regulation, and unbiased HRM practices. Thus, efficiency is needed in Kuwait to improve the country.

“Efficiency, that’s one major limitation in Kuwait” (B10).

“We all should follow the rules. There should be more regulation and efficiency” (B1).

“I want things to be fair like more regulations, efficiency and equality” (B9).

“Fair evaluation, efficiency and promotions based on your performance, qualification, experience, age and position” (B7).

6.3.4.2 Recommendations

As a result of the elimination and replacement of *wasta*, interviewees proposed some suggestions on how to improve the efficiency of the country and organisations. They believed that by changing Kuwait’s system and further developing it, it would generate better results and productivity for the country. Furthermore, they recommended that organisations should start to act ethically towards employees and individuals by recruiting, promoting, and evaluating them fairly based on qualifications, experience, and performance.

“There are a lot of systems in Kuwait that still follow old regulations. We are in 2016 now, everything has developed and changed since past generations” (B4).

“The organisation should set specific requirements and if candidates meet those requirements, then the organisation becomes obligated to recruit him/her without selecting the unqualified over the qualified for the country to succeed and further develop” (B6).

“Promotions should be based on performance, recruitment should be based on qualifications, and abroad medical treatments should be based on the patient’s cases and so on” (B5).

“The only place that people do not make a fuss about during recruitment is the fire
stands because they fairly recruit candidates. When candidates pass all exams and tests, managers randomly pick recruits through a random drawing in front of all candidates. The names that get picked are recruited and everyone is satisfied with the process because there is no wasta taking place” (B12).

6.3.5 Conclusion

The aim of doing semi-structured interviews was to provide and justify in-depth the findings gathered from the questionnaire. The findings from this analysis supported the findings gathered in the questionnaire and open exploratory interviews by further providing evidence on how wasta influences employees’ and organisational performance. In addition, the findings did not only answer the research question of the study, which is does wasta influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?, but it also raised other questions that needs to be further investigated. Hence, this brings us to the last set of data collection and analysis executed in this thesis, which is in-depth semi-structured interviews.

6.4 Section 4: In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

The quantitative and qualitative analyses in sections 6.2 and section 6.3 clarified that there is indeed a connection between wasta with HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment, either positively or negatively. However, the findings of both analyses triggered new uncertainties that needs to be answered as well as answering the “so what?”, “what now?” and “what can be done?” questions. Therefore, this subsection attempts to further investigate the relationship between the variables using in-depth semi-structured interviews. The in-depth semi-structured interview data were analysed based on six interviews conducted via telephone that lasted between 45 minutes - 1 hour each. Table 6.18 shows demographic information about the interviewees in terms of gender, age, sector, workplace, job position, and working experience.
As shown from the table above, interviewees had somewhat similar backgrounds in terms of workplace, job position, and experience, which increased the chance of getting different understanding and perspective on *wasta*. Furthermore, while thematically analysing the interviews, four main themes were defined: organisational performance solutions, *wasta* and work, legal solutions, and societal conclusion. An outline of the thematic analysis results is presented below in table 6.18.

### Table 6.18: In-Depth Semi-Structured Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Job Position</th>
<th>Working Experience</th>
<th>Means of Recruitment</th>
<th>Victim of Wasta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>No, but witnessed others being victimized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Investor Service Employee</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td><em>Wasta</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Licensing Department Employee</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td><em>Wasta</em></td>
<td>No due to family name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td><em>Wasta</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Organisational Performance Solutions
   a. Knowledge sharing and Innovation
      a. **Problem:** Wasta impacts KS through accessing information such as
         o Entrance exams and interview questions during the recruitment process.
         o Work related information.
         o Private employee information.
      b. **Solution:**
         o Knowledge Management Systems (KMS).
         o Develop a friendly working environment that encourages employee involvement through
           team work, trust building activities, weekly meetings, etc.
      a. **Problem:** Phantom employees
      b. **HRM Practices Solution:**
         o For phantom employees:
           - Observe organisations.
           - Impose laws.
         o For early recruiters: Fair Recruitment system.
           - Make it anonymous and electronic.
           - Based on qualifications and requirements.
           - Better recruitment scoring system.
         o For current employees:
           - Fair promotions and evaluation based on their output.
   c. Overall Performance
      a. Fair HRM practices
         o Hire qualified employees.
         o Treat employees with respect and give them what they deserve.

2. Wasta and Work
   a. **The correlation between work and wasta is mainly recruitment**
      1. Positive Impact.
      2. Negative Impact.
      3. Depends on the person and situation.
   b. **Wasta as a form of job recommendation**
      a. Wasta can be viewed as a form of a recommendation when managers are not forced to recruit
         employees.
      b. However, some interviewees say wasta is wasta and people will call it as they please.
   c. **The impact of wasta on MNOs**
      a. Time issues.
      b. Communication issues.
      c. Bureaucracy issues.

3. Legal Solutions
   a. **If a law was to be imposed by the Government**
      a. Some people will be pleased about it, as justice will be served.
      b. Some people will dislike it because they are used to having wasta around.
      c. Some people will demand justice.
   b. **Recommended law to be imposed**
      a. Strict recruitment law.
      b. Impose severe consequences such as fines.

4. Societal Conclusion
   a. **Benefits of Wasta**
      a. Hire the right person for the right job.
      b. Avoid obstacles.
      c. Claiming rights.
   b. **Overall Solution**
      a. Change the system.
6.4.1 Organisational Performance Solutions

This theme highlights some solutions to improve a firm’s overall performance in terms of fair HRM practices and how to encourage knowledge sharing and innovation. It also shows interviewees’ perception about phantom employees and how they play a key role within organisations by further adding to the corruption in the society. The theme is divided into three sub-themes: knowledge sharing and innovation, HRM practices, and overall performance.

6.4.1.1 Knowledge Sharing and Innovation

The findings showed that wasta is also associated with sharing knowledge within organisations. Many candidates and employees use their connections to access certain information that is hard for them to reach without the use of wasta. Interviewees further emphasised the fact that many candidates tend to use wasta during recruitment processes to better enhance their chance of being accepted.

“I believe that wasta can affect knowledge sharing in several ways. For instance, if a person wants to apply for a job, whether they are qualified or unqualified, his/her wasta circle within the organisation can access and share detailed information about the process, such as giving away interview questions or a version of the exam, in order for them to be prepared, do well and get the job” (C4).

“What I have witnessed over my 2 years of working experiences and what I’ve of heard from people around me is that if you have wasta, you can attain certain type of information easily. For instance, let’s talk about recruitment, during the interview process, if you have wasta, you can easily know the questions, if the questions were structured, and they would be easy on you. However, if you don’t have wasta, they will be hard on during the interview and will make you fail in any way possible” (C3).

Furthermore, interviewees also stressed that wasta impacts work-related information in the sense that some employees could use their connections to access classified work information that is not meant for the public to know. In addition, it has been pointed out that each wasta circle can access, obtain, and circulate information between each other in addition to other circles in exchange for favours or information.
“I believe that wasta has a negative effect on knowledge sharing in organisations. For instance, 70% of wasta recruits do not have the knowledge of being recruited in organisations, but benefit from their wasta in accessing information” (C5).

“Wasta exists in Kuwait, which is something we can't deny. It plays a huge role in recruiting employees in positions that they do not deserve in addition to playing a key role in other organisational processes, such as knowledge sharing. We have reached a period in which people can access classified information because of wasta, which is wrong and is negatively affecting the organisation and the society in addition to discriminating between employees based on their connections. Each connection group can access, obtain and share different knowledge between each other that they are unwilling to share with outsiders” (C6).

In addition to accessing work-related information, wasta also has the power to invade one’s privacy by accessing private information about employees that is not work-related.

“First of all, I'm against wasta and do not think that there is any positive factor associated with it in terms of knowledge sharing or any factor. Secondly, there are a lot of people who are harmed because of wasta in terms of knowledge sharing, especially in ministries. People who are within the wasta circle can access private information, such as private employees background in terms of who they are related to, how much is in their credit cards, for marriage purposes, etc., that has nothing to with work. It is like they are invading employees’ privacy just to perform favours to others” (C1).

However, even though wasta recruits have the power in accessing information, they do not have the power to force their colleagues to share their expertise or knowledge with them. Many employees are reluctant to share knowledge due to the fear of losing their competitive advantage, since they know that wasta recruits have a better chance in career advancing.

“What they will not benefit from is the expertise and knowledge of his/her colleague who will be unwilling to share it with them because they know that they were recruited due to wasta and have a better chance of advancing” (C5).
“With regards to knowledge sharing, there are many employees, especially in my organisation, who do not share knowledge or expertise amongst others because they are afraid that the person with connections can use it and advance before them, since they consider knowledge as a competitive advantage. Hence, employees do not share knowledge so that they do not compete with those who have wasta in the future for a position because they know that the wasta person could get it easily. So why make the wasta person more knowledgeable when I can keep it to myself and protect my competitive advantage? If the person has wasta, I have knowledge” (C2).

Consequently, interviewees proposed two solutions to solve knowledge sharing and innovation problems within organisations. The first solution is through a healthy friendly working environment by making employees feel as if they are a one big family that encourages employees’ involvement. This could be done through trust-building activities, listening to their ideas, executing well-developed ideas, supporting teamwork, proposing weekly/monthly meetings, etc.

“I will encourage monthly meetings to increase knowledge sharing, innovation and team work between employees in terms of how to improve the organisation and make everyone pitch in with ideas and work with each other on chosen ideas” (C5).

“I would encourage knowledge sharing by making the working area more open and making it easy for employees to engage with each other in addition to doing activities, team building exercises, maybe meet after work to get to know each other better and have a friendly relationship with each other. I think that this might help increase knowledge sharing between employees, which in turn increase innovation. If employees felt like they are friends and could rely on each other, then they would share knowledge with each other easily” (C4).

“I would make a friendly environment for the employees by making them feel like they could talk to me easily as well as encouraging team work and build trust between employees. I think by doing so, when employees feel comfortable and trust each other, innovation and knowledge sharing will increase” (C3).
The second proposed solution is developing and implementing a Knowledge Management System (KMS) throughout organisations in Kuwait. KMS is a system in which employees will be obligated to share their new and old knowledge, so that other employees could benefit from it. By doing so, it will increase innovation as well as monitoring employees’ productivity progress.

“First of all, I really believe that knowledge management system in organisations should be a requirement. For instance, my organisation tends to hire foreign employees to mentor and coach our employees. However, foreign employees usually do not fully mentor or share knowledge with our employees knowing that they have a time-period contract and once the contract ends, they will leave. Therefore, knowledge management system is a system in which all employees should be obligated to store any knowledge, training, expertise, etc., they have so that other employees would benefit from it. I think by applying this system, knowledge sharing and innovation would increase within organisations” (C2).

“Developing a service or system in which employees are obligated to share their knowledge in that system. If they do not share, that means they did not do their job. So basically, it is like a tracking system to see who is working, how much they have produce and what new knowledge they have gained throughout the week” (C6).

6.4.1.2 Human Resource Management Practices

This sub-theme highlights how most interviewees emphasised that it is unjustifiable to hire phantom employees within organisations, as they do not only harm organisations, but the entire society as well by getting undeserved money that they do not earn at the expense of hiring a true candidate who wants to work. Interviewees believed that phantom employees are only hired due to the imposed law by the government. The law conditions that for organisations to benefit from tender contacts, they need to hire at least 40% of Kuwaiti employees. However, most organisations are unwilling to hire Kuwaiti employees due to a perception that Kuwaitis are inactive and less productive than foreign employees, which led to the phantom employee phenomenon.

“I'm definitely against phantom employees. It's unacceptable that they are embezzling governmental monies, while not producing anything for the country.
It is unfair that we wake up in the morning and go to work, while they receive their salaries effortlessly. The only reason why they exist is because there are some organisations who would like to get some tender contracts from the government and to be eligible for such contracts, they need to hire at least 40% of Kuwaiti employees. However, since those organisations do not want to hire Kuwaiti employees, they would contact their friends or anyone they know, mostly women, to list their names under the organisation as if they are working there to get the contracts” (C2).

“They are harming the company, the progress of the country and everyone by stealing money from the country and being unproductive. They are just recruited to increase the number of Kuwaiti employees in organisations” (C4).

“Unfortunately, I know a lot of phantom employees, most of them are my family and friends. I actually feel sorry for them. They literally have zero ethics and humanity by taking money that they do not deserve” (C1).

However, every problem has a solution. According to interviewees, the best way to solve or reduce phantom employees is through random site checking, increasing attendance fingerprints or cameras, and applying the minimum wage law. The minimum wage law obligates organisations to pay from their own budget a minimum wage to each employee within the organisation. Note that phantom employees only take money from the government, not the organisation, by providing the government with a proof of employment and the government gives them support labour wage.

“There is a solution for it, but no one is applying it in Kuwait, which is the minimum wage law. If the government applied this law in which all organisations are obligated to give each employer a minimum wage of 600KD per month, then I guarantee you that no organisation will hire phantom employees and pay them 600kd per month from their pockets just so that they could benefit from governmental contracts. So, by applying this law, it could reduce such problem considerably” (C6).

“I believe in order to reduce their existence, the government needs to set site visits, cameras or even fingerprints in all organisations” (C5).
“I think by sending an external employer to randomly check if everyone is truly working at the organisation” (C3).

Nonetheless, there were a few participants who believed that phantom employees could not be reduced or solved as long as *wasta* is practiced in Kuwait. In addition, it depends on one’s ethics to reduce or solve such problem. For an example, if people view the practice of *wasta* as acceptable, then they will not be convinced that it is ethically wrong, since they are benefiting from it by effortlessly receiving money and vice versa.

“I don't think there is any way the problem could be solved” (C3).

“Phantom employees do not only affect organisations, but also affects the country, its budget, and development as well. I honestly do not believe we can stop them because it depends on their ethics. If they are fine with it, then you can't stop them” (C1).

Moreover, interviewees also proposed solutions in terms of improving overall HRM practices, mainly recruitment, promotions, and evaluations, with regard to reducing the effect of *wasta* upon it. In terms of recruitment, interviewees recommended three solutions:

1. Develop an anonymous and electronic recruitment system based on serial numbers. That way, when a *wasta* provider approaches managers, managers will have no idea who they are talking about due to applications being anonymous.

   “I would make everything anonymous based on serial numbers to prevent any *wasta* favours and fight against injustice. By doing so, even during interviews, no one will know who you are, and hence they wouldn't know who this person is linked to, so that might reduce *wasta* recruiters” (C2).

   “The first thing I would do is change the recruitment system by making it electronically and contains a filtering service that helps eliminate anyone who does not meet the requirements and will be based on serial numbers without mentioning any names. By doing so, it might reduce *wasta* favours” (C6).

2. Recruit employees based on qualifications and requirements by refusing *wasta* recruiters and making the recruitment system fair by giving everyone the chance they deserve in terms of entrance exams and interviews. This will reduce discrimination by employing the best-fitted employee that will better enhance the organisation.
“I won't accept anyone through wasa. I will look at CVs thoroughly and interview the ones that seem to be qualified in meeting all requirements because what is happening in Kuwait, especially private sectors, is that they do not look at CVs and in order to get interviewed, you have to use wasa, which I have personally experienced unfortunately” (C5).

“wasa can have a positive effect on HRM practices in terms of cutting down the bureaucracy that is happening and speeding up the process. However, if I was held in charge of the HR department, I would definitely recruit strictly based on qualifications and requirements. In addition, each candidate would be interviewed differently in terms of questions so that other candidates wouldn't know the type of questions that will be asked” (C4).

3. Enhancing the recruitment scoring system. Many organisations put a lot of weight on interviews, which increases a wasa recruiter’s chance in getting accepted. Therefore, modifying the scoring system by putting less weight on interviews and more on exams will reduce connection-based recruiters who are not qualified for the job when they do not pass the exam.

“I would also put less weight on interviews and more on exams, so that wasa will not have a huge effect on recruitment decisions and it will be up to the candidate to prove his/her self by doing well in the entrance exam” (C2).

“During the recruitment process in my organisation, they give 2 set of exams and an interview. However, if you did not have wasa, you would have a small chance of getting interviewed, even if you were capable and qualified for the job. Hence, if I was held responsible of the HR, I will enhance the scoring system of the interviews as well as the exams and based on the results, I would accept candidates fair and square” (C3).

Regarding promotions and evaluations, an interviewee proposed that current employees should be promoted and evaluated fairly based on their output and productivity, rather than looking at their attendance, as it is the output that matters the most.

“In terms of existing employees, I will evaluate them based on their productivity, effort, gained knowledge and one’s own development in the workplace and not like how most organisations in Kuwait do, where they mainly focus on employees’
attendance. Attendance is not everything. There are many employees who attend early, but do not produce anything” (C1).

6.4.1.3 Overall Performance

As a result of the overall recommended solutions of improving HRM practices, knowledge sharing, and innovation, interviewees emphasised that in order to actually improve the overall performance of an organisation, organisations need to focus on implementing fair HRM practices. Interviewees suggested that if they were in charge of the entire company, the first thing they would do is hire qualified candidates for the job by taking into consideration everything that candidates have to offer and decline recruiting employees based on wasta. This is because they are looking for productive and innovative employees who are willing to put an effort in their work. One interviewee also mentioned hiring an external company to do all the recruitment procedures to avoid wasta taking place. In addition, they believed that evaluations, upgrades, promotions, incentives, etc. should be based on effort rather than connections.

“If I was a CEO of a company, I would run the organisation passionately and aim into succeeding by employing right employees who are qualified, deserve the position and are knowledgeable about what they are doing. I will not recruit employees based on wasta or let wasta run my organisation, even though I believe that there are no way organisations can reduce wasta or eliminate it in general. However, what they could do is try to improve the organisation through productivity, effort, innovation, etc., as much as they can” (C1).

“I prefer that during the probation and training period, which is 3 months in my organisation, a qualified mentor should give a set of tests to early recruiters and evaluate them individually. In the end, based on the evaluations and test scores, I will reconsider whether I should keep or lay off the recruiter before permanently hiring them. By doing so, this will help in recruiting the most qualified individual for the position” (C2).

“I would maybe employ an external company that has no connections in Kuwait whatsoever to take control of matters when it comes to recruitment and HR processes so that no one could get any preferential treatment since the external source does not know anyone, which will reduce discrimination and increase performance” (C4).
“I will be fair with everyone. Every employee will be treated with respect and will receive what he/she deserves in terms of achievements, evaluations, promotions, upgrades, etc. Organisations need to stop hiring undeserved wasta recruiters if they ever want to advance and improve their performance” (C5).

6.4.2 Wasta And Work

This theme discusses the correlation between wasta and work and whether wasta could be viewed as a job recommendation. In addition, it also stresses how multinational organisations (MNOs) wanting to operate within Kuwait are impacted by wasta based on interviewees’ perception. The theme is therefore divided into three sub-themes as follows:

6.4.2.1 Correlation Between Wasta And Work

Interviewees underlined that there is a strong correlation between wasta and work, either positively or negatively. They alleged that wasta and work go hand in hand, since wasta plays a major factor in recruiting employees within organisations.

“Wasta and work are related because wasta is one of the main reason for hiring employees, which might be good and bad” (C6).

“Wasta and work are very much related to each other. They are not two separate factors” (C3).

“Wasta is the basic foundation of jobs and work” (C1).

In addition, interviewees believed there are several ways for wasta and work to correlate, hence the correlation was divided into three classifications, which are:

Positive Impact: Interviewees believed that there is a positive correlation between the variables in the sense that wasta could help in accelerating processes in addition to hiring some qualified employees.

“For instance, if you have a bureaucracy system, wasta can speed up processes” (C4).

“Not all wasta recruited employees are inactive and do no work. On the contrary, there are many employees who are hired through wasta that are good at working and give their all and vice versa. This is just one reason how wasta and work are
related” (C6).

Negative Impact: Most interviewees agreed that the correlation between the variables is negative due to reasons such as hiring unqualified employees and diminishing applicants’ chances of getting hired because of wasta.

“Wasta and work are correlated. Most of employees are hired through wasta, especially in private sectors, and might not be capable for the job, which negatively impacts organisations” (C5).

“... but at the same time speeding up processes can have consequences such as recruiting unknowledgeable and inexperienced individuals just for the sake of his/her connection” (C4).

“As soon as a person uses wasta to get a job, they denied a qualified person the position, and hence it is unjust and there is no equality in the recruitment system, which in turn impacts the performance of the organisation” (C2).

 Depends on the Person and Situation: A few interviewees believed that the nature of the correlation between wasta and work depends on the person and the situation for it to be considered as good or bad.

“Wasta and work go hand in hand. Sometimes wasta and work can have a positive correlate and sometimes they can harm each other depending on the situation and who is using wasta” (C4).

“Wasta recruited many employees throughout Kuwait, which sometimes affect and does not affect organisations because it depends on the person honesty if he/she wants to work or not” (C3).

6.4.2.2 Wasta as a Job Recommendation (i.e. Reference)

The findings revealed that wasta can be viewed as a job recommendation in cases where managers are not forced into hiring a certain candidate based on his/her connection. In addition, interviewees suggested that it is acceptable to use wasta to alert Kuwaiti managers about qualified candidates.

“Wasta can be viewed as something else such as a recommendation because I did
not force whoever is in charge to hire the person. I just gave them my opinion and it’s up to them if they want to hire him/her. Basically, I’m just directing them to the person” (C1).

“Wasta can sometimes be seen as a recommendation because, for an example, if a person passed all exams and the interview and just needed that push to actually get accepted, he/she will seek wasta just to guarantee the job by reminding managers of his/her existence” (C3).

“For instance, for management positions, it might be seen as a recommendation and a good idea to mention someone’s name, if he/she was qualified for the job without forcing them to hire or promote that individual. There are many good employees that needs such recommendation in order to be seen that other managers might not be aware of, which I think is acceptable to do so only in specific positions and only if the person deserves it” (C2).

However, there are a few interviewees who disagreed and identified wasta as wasta and it cannot be something else. People will call wasta as they desire, depending on who is and is not benefiting from it. But in the end, a wasta act remains as wasta.

“I can understand how some people view wasta as a recommendation. However, I still view it as wasta since someone spoke on your behalf to get you to an upper position” (C4).

“Honestly, everyone will call it as they like. For instance, you would call it as a job recommendation, while I might well call it as wasta. We will never agree on anything. People call it as they please, whoever benefits from it will always see it as a good thing, while others will view it as a negative thing and will never accept it” (C6).

6.4.2.3 Wasta and Multinational Organisations (MNOs)

The findings revealed that there are three potential harms to the continued use of wasta on MNOs, which are time, communications, and bureaucracy issues, due to lack of wasta. Some interviewees suggested that it would be better for MNOs to not even consider operating within Kuwait because it will be pointless and a waste of time to try and open a branch in Kuwait, since everything operates with wasta in the country.
**Time Issues:** Many interviewees believed that, due to lack of connections and being newcomers in Kuwait, MNOs will face difficulties in getting things done in addition to taking a longer period to finish their paperwork.

“Firstly, the time limit to operate within Kuwait would double for multinational organisations, since they are newcomers and do not have wasta. For instance, finishing paperwork and getting licences would take months or even a year, instead of weeks, if you did not have any connections. Honestly, to summarise everything, those organisations or owners would hate themselves for thinking of operating in Kuwait without having connections because of the long procedures and inactive Kuwaiti employees that rarely show up for work on time or show up at all. Hence, if you do not have wasta in Kuwait, do not think about opening a business here” (C1).

“They will be more pressurised when trying to open or operate within Kuwait because everyone in Kuwait somehow is linked to one another and the best/easiest way to get things done is through wasta. Therefore, if they did not have it, it will be hard for them to finish their papers because those who are responsible for managing and signing paperwork in ministries are rarely available” (C5).

“Firstly, it would take months for them to finish their paper works and many of the processes might get rejected due to not having any connections. It is not because they are not good enough to operate within Kuwait, it’s because other organisations might use wasta to get things done easily while they don’t. We've basically reached a point where whoever makes the call, gets their things done in Kuwait” (C6).

**Communication Issues:** One interviewee mentioned that MNOs could face communication issues because organisations recruit unacknowledged and unqualified employees. Thus, MNOs might have a hard time in communicating with organisations and understanding their operations and requirements to operate within Kuwait efficiently.

“The problem that multinational organisations might face could be communication problems. For an example, local organisations that hire employees through wasta won't be able to communicate effectively with multinational organisations, as the person that is hired might not be qualified
enough or understand the investment procedures to effectively communicate it, which would cause some frustration and problems in the future. Therefore, to succeed, multi-national organisations need to have good connections, great quality and services” (C2).

Bureaucracy Issues: MNOs might also face bureaucracy issues. This could happen in cases when MNO decide to operate with the help of a Kuwaiti partner, and hence could deal with problems, such as unfair recruitment systems.

“I think they will face bureaucracy issues. For an example, let’s say if they had a Kuwaiti partner that Kuwaiti partner will always try to keep his/her recruited friends and family in higher positions, whether they are qualified or not, which will affect the performance of the organisation” (C4).

6.4.3 Legal Solutions

This theme emphasises legal solutions to wasta. It highlights interviewees views about peoples’ reaction if a law was imposed against wasta and the kind of law they would impose if they were in power.

6.4.3.1 Governmental Law

Participants believed that if a law was to be imposed by the government, many citizens would react positively and negatively towards the law depending on which side of the wasta circle they are on. They believed that those who are within the wasta circle will be unhappy because they are used to having wasta and will do anything to terminate the law. However, those who lacks wasta will be happy because of opportunities that will be developed thereafter in addition to demanding justice. Thus, the imposed law will benefit the society.

“If the law was imposed it would be really good for all organisations and citizens. Some people will of course react badly as they are used to having wasta around. But in the end, people would react in a positive way, if the law was imposed in the right way” (C5).

“They will use wasta to get out of that law. They will definitely have a negative reaction, but in the end, the overall outcomes will be positive” (C4).

“There are people who will be happy about it and others who will make a huge deal out of it. Those who will be against the law are usually the ones who benefit
and live through wasta, and therefore will do anything they can to eliminate the law” (C6).

“Most people would react badly because they will not be able to use wasta again and those who will be happy about it is due to the opportunities that the law would create” (C3).

### 6.4.3.2 Recommended Law

As a result of the governmental law, interviewees were asked to suggest a law if they were in power. The findings revealed that they would impose two laws that would develop the country as well as improve organisational performance, which are as follows:

**Strict Recruitment Law:** Many interviewees suggested changing the recruitment system in the country by making it severely recruiting the most qualified and well-deserved candidate for the vacant position. In addition, the law will reduce discrimination and improve the output of the organisation, which in turn enhances the overall performance of the country.

“The first thing I would do is change the recruitment system. I would recruit employees based on the person and his/her effort. I will not accept wasta recruiters. Actually, that’s the only thing I would change, as it is a huge problem in Kuwait. So, I would only impose a law for fair and equal recruitment opportunities” (C1).

“I will develop a system that will be based on requirements when it comes to recruitment and make sure that only those who are eligible will be recruited, other than that no one will be recruited. We need to develop. I will not accept wasta favours. I will not hire people at the expenses of others” (C6).

“I believe that recruitment is one major factor that is affected by wasta, hence I would impose a strict recruitment law stating that if a candidate was eligible for the job, then he/she will get the job and vice versa. It is that simple. There is no need to recruit a fresh graduate for a managerial position just because of wasta, which might negatively impact the performance of the organisation” (C3).

**Severe Consequences:** Interviewees also believed that imposing severe consequences, such as fines, would discourage organisations and governments from using wasta.
“I would put fines against companies who employ people through wasta. Not just companies, also governmental authorities as this is something that the government should have dealt with a long time ago” (C5).

“I would try to eradicate wasta from organisations and impose severe consequences to those who use wasta especially within organisation. For an example, if I knew someone used wasta, I would either fine them, degrade them or even lay them off, it depends on the wasta act” (C4).

6.4.4 Societal Conclusion

This theme highlights the benefits associated with wasta and participants’ solution to the corruption caused by wasta.

6.4.4.1 Overall Benefits and Solutions to Wasta

The findings showed that the only benefit that is associated with wasta is hiring the right person for the right job as well as avoiding obstacles and claiming rights.

“Basically, hiring well-fitted employees to the right job. That’s all I can think of honestly” (C5).

“The only benefit of using wasta is to avoid obstacles that you are wronged of, such as promoting others at your expense” (C4).

“Maybe people might mention reasons such as hiring the right person for the right job or claiming rights” (C2).

However, most interviewees emphasised that wasta has no benefits and it is negatively embedded within the society due to harming many people during the process through discrimination, lack of justice, and development.

“There isn't anything positive associated with wasta. The only thing that wasta is doing is taking us backwards instead of forward as a society. The entire country isn't developing because of wasta and there isn't anything we can do about it. It is basically corrupting us” (C1).
“I do not think there is any benefit linked to wasta because if there was equality, there is no need for wasta. I do not believe that there are positive wasta traits and if there was, I think that the negative traits outweigh the positive traits” (C2).

“The only person that benefits from wasta is the wasta receiver” (C6).

All in all, participants assumed that the only way that the government could improve organisations and the country is by changing the system, having monitoring bodies tracking the progress of organisations in Kuwait, and alerting people of the harmfulness that is caused by wasta. For the system to be effective, people need to unite and become one, try to make the system work, and stop recruiting people based on connections and family names. People need to be aware that with benefits come consequences.

“I hope that wasta would be eliminated and people start using their brains as well as opening their eyes and realising that what we are doing is wrong. We need to stop using wasta” (C6).

“Unfortunately, a lot of people use wasta in organisation to get recruited and organisations mostly look at family names before recruiting someone, which is one of the main reason for our corruption” (C5).

“I really hope that the society would change for the best and the next generation would eliminate wasta by triggering their ethics and conscience. We are the future. We need to develop and enhance our society. We need better regulations and rules that everyone should follow. One hand does not clap, we need to unite” (C1).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and explained the findings that were gathered through four sets of data collection, which are open exploratory interviews, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth semi-structure interviews. The findings that were generated successfully addressed the research question of this study, which is does wasta influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?, by concluding that wasta impacts the following mentioned variables. Therefore, the following chapter, chapter seven, provides clarification, justification, and evidence from the literature review to support the findings in this chapter.
Chapter 7: Critical Discussion

7.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the results and initial analyses, when set against existing literatures. The overall aim of this study is to examine the influence of *wasta* on employees and organisations in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovating and organisational commitment in Kuwait through modified exploratory mixed methods research design. In an effort to explain the impact of *wasta* on the measured variables, the study concluded that Kuwaitis have a solid belief regarding the practice of *wasta*. Kuwaiti participants were consistent in their agreement about *wasta* influencing the measured variables, either positively or negatively. Hence, the structure of this chapter will be broken down based on key quantitative and qualitative findings aimed in answering the main key issues of this research followed by other interesting results discovered during the analyses phase.

7.1. Section 1: Key Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The key quantitative and qualitative results are the main and important results in answering the research question. During the quantitative analysis, it has been discovered through the modified correlation analysis and regression analysis that *wasta* behaviour and HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment are in fact correlated with one another. The correlation is either positive or negative, as shown in the table 7.1. However, to avoid repetition, the explanation of the correlation will be related and discussed with the qualitative results, as they go hand in hand. Hence, this section will be broken down based on the research question of this thesis, *does wasta influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?*, in a chronological order.

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*Table 7.1: Quantitative Analyses results*
7.1.1 Wasta will influence the exercise of fair and ethical HRM practice

The findings in this study related to the influence of *wasta* on employees and organisations in terms of HRM practices in Kuwait suggest that *wasta* indeed influences the exercise of fair and ethical HRM practices, supporting H₁. Firstly, the results revealed that *wasta* impacts HRM practices in terms of recruitment. As noted in the literature review, there is a wide body of literatures that already exit that demonstrates the influence of *wasta* on HRM practices, hence the finding is not new. Scholars such as Al-Ali (2006), Qambar (2015), Alreshoodi (2016) and Tlaiss & Elamin (2016) already concluded that *wasta* impacts HRM practices in other Arab countries. This view is also shared by Tlaiss & Kuaser (2011), Karolak (2016) and Ali (2016) that *wasta* affects recruitment and without it, some people might have trouble in finding employment. According to one semi-structure interview respondent, “people do not want to wait for what they deserve; they use wasta to accelerate the process for everything” (B5). Thus, the finding of this study clearly supports the literature review that there is a strong connection between *wasta* and HRM practices. However, what differentiates this finding from other scholars’ findings is the cultural context in which this research was conducted, which is in Kuwait, but also supports that *wasta* in most Arab cultures function the same when it comes to HRM practices.

Secondly, the results also revealed that *wasta* impacts HRM practices in terms of unfair promotions and evaluations. As previously revealed by a semi-structured interview respondent, “promotions are based on connections” (B10), which is also supported by an open exploratory interview respondent by affirming, “when someone is hired through wasta, they will get promoted easier” (A5). Hence, those who are within the *wasta* circle get preferential treatments, such as high evaluations and quicker promotions, just because they are connected to the right people. According to an anonymous surveyed participant, “wasta is a way of promoting opportunities without following instructions or the necessary standards.” This is also supported by a semi-structured interview respondent in concluding, “some people are receiving upgrades and promotions quicker than those who deserve it just because they are related to the manager or someone in power” (B9). These findings are in harmony with those of researchers, such as Kowske (2007) and Rachel (2004), in stating that *wasta*, rather than performance, was the main principle for recruitment, compensation, incentives, advancement, and rewards in an Arab context. This statement has also been confirmed by Alta rawneh (2009) and Harbi et al., (2016) in noting that *wasta* provides certain advantages to its users, which is
further supported by Metcalfe (2007) and Megheirkouni (2014) in declaring that those who possess *wasta* get certain business-related advantages. Thus, those who are within the *wasta* circle can easily be promoted to a higher position, regardless of their experiences, just by contacting the right person. This statement is also consistent with previous literatures, such as those done by Festinger (1950), Burt (1982) and Friedkin (1993), in concluding that people usually engage and formulate connections with those in power to achieve unattainable resources.

It has also been evident that the main reason people perform *wasta* favours in terms of HRM practice is due to family obligations. This finding is broadly in line with those of Al-Remahy (1995) in affirming that families and tribes usually impact HRM practices. As further confirmed by an open exploratory interview respondent, “*people are expected to perform wasta favours due to their tribes, families, groups etc. They are the ones who hire people in different sectors to remain in control*” (A6). Hence, Kuwaiti managers tend to accept people based on *wasta* because of obligations and to accelerate the recruitment process. This finding is further supported by those of previous scholars, such as Ioannindes and Loury (2004), Ponzo & Scoppa (2010), Megheirkouni (2014) and Ta’Amnha et al. (2016), in declaring that the role of family and social ties assist people in recruitment and accelerate the process, regardless of their qualifications, because they are socially connected to them. As mentioned by one semi-structured interview respondent, “*it’s easier for them to choose people they know over people they do not know*” (B9).

Being socially connected to someone makes it hard to reject their request, especially if they are family members seeking help. This could be interpreted by referring to ‘the role of altruism’ (see sub-subsection 3.2.2.1) in explaining that people within the same reference group develop strong emotional attachments to help others that are personally connected to them, hence creating an altruistic-local behaviour, which is also supported by Lee (2013). Therefore, the provider of *wasta* will usually execute any offer asked by the requester, even when the provider knows that the requestor of *wasta* is incompetent for a certain position due to being connected to them and feeling uncomfortable to reject their request. Not to mention, the provider does not want to jeopardise his/her reputation within the family and to avoid the consequences of rejecting the act, such as having the elders of the family contacting them, being stigmatized by family members, not receiving future preferential treatments, etc.; hence, he/she will agree to perform the *wasta* favour. This could be explained by referring to the ‘role of the psychological
contract’ (see sub-subsection 4.1.4.2) in clarifying that most people will usually execute favours to decrease negative attitudes, such as damaging reputation and punishments, by refusing to practice *wasta* (see figure 4.7, p. 88), which is also supported by Bordia et al. (2008), Ronsin (2010), Curry & Dunbar (2011) and Ta’Amnha et al. (2016). In addition, it could also be interpreted by referring to Dabs and Rousseau (2004) ‘mutuality’ theory (see sub-subsection 4.1.4.2, p. 86), which is the degree to which both parties acknowledge and perceive the level of obligation developed within such processes. Furthermore, due to human nature, people always try to satisfy those who they know at the expense of others just to make them happy, especially if they share the same tribal ancestry, which is also confirmed by semi-structured interview respondents (see sub-subsection 6.3.1.1, p. 202). These findings are consistent with previous research done by Al-Faleh (1987) in stating that, due to tribalism, relationships and obligations are more powerful than performance, which is also supported by other scholars such as Loewe (2011), Harbi et al. (2016) and Tlaiss and Elamin (2016).

However, the results of the analyses revealed two consequences of the impact of *wasta* on HRM practices. The first consequence was the increased phenomenon of phantom employees. Many organisations began to hire Kuwaiti employees to benefit from governmental contracts and, in return, those employees do not have to be physically present at work, as confirmed by an in-depth interview respondents (see sub-subsection 6.4.1.2, p. 223). This finding is broadly in line with those of Salih (2010) who blames the government and MPs for spreading and encouraging the phenomenon of phantom employees by employing their friends and relative in companies to benefit from the extra money without having to work for it. This view has also been revealed by an in-depth interview respondent in concluding, “they are recruited in organisations by the MPs to profit from the labour support granted by the government without going to work” (C6).

The second consequence of unfair recruitment is work overload or no work at all, which is also confirmed by McGinley (2013) in the literature. In other words, when an undeserved person is given a managerial position for which he/she lacks the experience for, his/her team usually endure the consequences by having to work twice as hard to finish not only their work, but also the work of the manager who is either incompetent or not working, as previously revealed by a semi-structured interview respondents (see sub-subsection 6.3.1.1, p. 203). The finding is also consistent with the previous research of Ta’Amnha et al. (2016) in stating that the involvement of *wasta* in recruitment decisions could result in hiring unqualified employees in
positions where they lack the knowledge and experience due to benefiting those who they know at the expense of others. This statement is also consistent with those claimed by an open exploratory interview respondent in affirming, “those who are not qualified enough are getting the jobs, while others who have a degree, who actually studied 5, 6 and 7 years of their lives are still sitting at home” (A3). This could also be interpreted by referring to Heilman’s (1983, 1995) ‘lack of fit model’ mentioned in the literature (see subsection 3.3.3, p. 62) confirming that individuals are regarded as poorly fitted when his/her attributes and performance does not match the job requirement. According to a semi-structured interview respondent, “there are some girls who were employed by managers that have less experience and education than we do... yet, they got higher positions” (B2). Therefore, they do not know how to excel in the appointed position.

In conclusion, to answer the research question with regards to HRM practices, the findings of this study clearly support the literature review and analyses that there is a strong connection between wasṭa and HRM practices. It was also revealed through modified correlation that high performance HRM had the strongest positive correlation with wasṭa behaviour. This is further supported by the regression analysis by indicating that HRM practices was the only variable that made a positive statistically significant contribution to wasṭa behaviour (see sub-section 6.2.5.1). Thus, by looking at the overall conclusion, \( H_1 \) has been supported.

7.1.2 Wasta will influence knowledge sharing

The findings in this study related to the influence of wasṭa on employees and organisations in terms of knowledge sharing in Kuwait suggest that wasṭa can influence knowledge sharing, and hence supporting \( H_2 \). The main key result that has been revealed regarding wasṭa’s impact on knowledge sharing is information access. This is where people use their wasṭa to access legal or illegal information without having the need to go through formal procedures. As previously mentioned by an in-depth interview respondent, “his/her wasṭa circle within the organisation can access and share detailed information” (C4), which is further supported by another in-depth interview respondent in affirming, “if you've got wasṭa, you can attain certain type of information easily” (C3). The finding of this study also supports Spender’s (1996a, b) ‘collective tacit knowledge’, also known as “routine” by Nelson and Winter (1982), in stating that knowledge depends heavily on socially constructed interactions and can exist within various types of communities, sizes and characteristics. Previous research, such as those of Granovetter (1973), Burt (1992), Ely (1995) and Ibarra (1995), also confirm the above
statement in noting that people usually develop connections with people in power and rely heavily on social networks to enhance their access to resources. This view is also shared by Podolny and Baron (1997) in the literature clarifying that people’s informal networks are more important in information transfer than formal networks, which is further supported by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998).

This could also be interpreted by the fact that one of the reasons why people exchange information is due to the obligation of being within the wasta circle and to benefit from reciprocal future acts. In other words, each wasta circle can help another circle or individual in obtaining information in exchange for future favours or information. As supported by an in-depth interview respondent, “each connection group can access, obtain and share different knowledge between each other” (C6). The above statement could be explained by referring to the ‘social exchange theory’ (see subsection 4.2.1) indicating that wasta could be classified as a ‘reciprocity as a norm and individual orientation’. This means that reciprocity is viewed as an obligation and wasta users are expected to perform and return wasta favours. The findings are also broadly in harmony with those of researchers such as Heaphy and Dutton (2003), Reiche et al. (2009) and Al-Hussan (2011) in confirming that individuals build and maintain connections to access, exchange, and provide resources that were once unattainable. This statement is also shared by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) in the literature specifying that networks can access and circulate information more proficiently, rapidly, and effortlessly than formal networks due to their structure. This is because networks involve a web of relationships with multiple connections across many wasta circles, as can be seen in Kuwait via the existence of wasta circles. According to an open exploratory interview respondent, “people within the wasta circle can get and share unattainable or secretive information between them quickly because they are within the circle” (A4).

Hence, connections in Kuwait are affected by the capacity of an individual in having the ability to move in the right means of power and influence to achieve something. Since Kuwait is known to be a tribalistic and a high-context culture, the tribal system influences decision access and making in one’s life. This could be explained by referring to ‘the role of homophily’ (see sub-subsection 3.2.2.2) in confirming that having positive homophilous behaviour in social connections increases knowledge sharing due to personal similarities, which is also supported by Makela et al. (2012). Therefore, people prefer developing connections with those who can enhance their access to resources, since it is easier to contact someone who they trust within
the networking circle. This finding is also consistent with those of Spender (1996a), Cross & Cummings (2004), Ying et al. (2011), Makela et al. (2012), and Sefiani et al. (2016) that the more trust and interaction, the higher the opportunity of sharing, which in turn reduces decision making uncertainty. Hence, *wasta* supports the existence of hidden knowledge sharing processes, and thus lack of transparency in business decision making.

However, there are not many studies that examine the downside of using *wasta* to access information. Even though *wasta* users could access certain data through their *wasta* circle, they do not have the ability to pressurise individuals who are not inside their sphere of influence to disclose information. Many employees are reluctant to share information with their colleagues due to the fear of being replaced or losing their competitive edge, which is also consistent with the findings of Pfeffer and Veiga (1999). An example of such knowledge could fall under what Spender (1996a, b) calls ‘objectified explicit knowledge’, which represents codified knowledge related to work activities such as formalized organizational routines that some employees keep to themselves to remain valuable within organizations. This statement is also shared by a semi-structured interview respondent in stating, “*since they consider knowledge as a competitive advantage... employees do not share knowledge so that they do not compete with those who have wasta in the future for a position*” (C2). This line of reasoning is also coherent with those of Cohen (1998) in the literature affirming that people will do what brings them the most benefit. This statement is further sustained by Lin (1999) and Von Krogh (2003) in stating that knowledge is personal and employees’ willingness to share knowledge depends upon available resources in any organisation’s social relations and structure. Hence, people fear sharing significant information because of the fear of losing control, as previously witnessed by Pfeffer & Veiga (1999), Storey & Barnett (2000), Hislop (2003), and Willem & Scarbrough (2006). This could also be interpreted by referring to Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument, ‘competitive conflict’ (see subsection 4.2.2). This is where individuals will use any source of connection to maintain and achieve their objectives at the expense of others. The goal is to overcome or win with regard to accomplishing a desired objective as a result of maintaining one’s competitive edge. The higher the competition, the lower the cooperation, which in turn reduces production in organisations.

In conclusion, to answer the research question with regards to knowledge sharing, the findings of this study clearly support the literature review and analyses that there is a strong connection between *wasta* and knowledge sharing, thus supporting \( H_2 \). It was also revealed through the
modified correlation that there is a weak negative correlation between knowledge sharing and *wasta* behaviour. This is further supported by the regression analysis indicating that *wasta* behaviour made a negative statistically significant contribution to knowledge sharing and working experience. The more experienced a Kuwaiti employee, who has no or weak *wasta* connections, the less likely he/she will share their knowledge and expertise to remain valuable in an organisation that encourages the practice of *wasta* (see sub-subsection 6.2.5.2 about knowledge sharing).

### 7.1.3 *Wasta will influence innovation*

As illustrated in the literature review, there is a wide body of literatures that demonstrates the influence of social capital, such as *wasta*, on innovation. Scholars such as Calantone et al. (2002), Hult et al. (2004) and Song and Thieme (2006) already suggested that social capital plays a major role in the development of innovation. The findings in this study related to the influence of *wasta* on employees and organisations in terms of innovation clearly supports the literature review suggesting that *wasta* impacts innovation in Kuwait, supporting H₃. It has been discovered from the findings that *wasta* influences not only a company’s or employees’ innovativeness, but also the innovation and development of the entire country. This finding is broadly consistent with those of Hatim (2013) and Bowramia (2014) in affirming that ministries and authorities in Arab societies function through *wasta*, resulting in the lack of creativity in employees and a decline in the development. This is because, Kuwaitis usually disregard the present and future consequences of using and performing *wasta* favours at the time of an accomplishment, as their main concern is to execute the favour and please the requestor. This statement could also be explained by referring to participants comments on classifying *wasta* as a ‘way of life’ (see subsection 6.2.6, p. 194) in the quantitative analysis. In other words, Kuwaitis execute *wasta* favours to maintain or live a comfortable life as well as benefiting from the “give and take” process associated with *wasta*. As previously mentioned by an anonymous surveyed participant, “*wasta is the main method towards a comfortable life.*” This line of reasoning is also consistent with those of Cunningham & Sarayrah (1993) and AlAyyar (2014) in concluding that *wasta* is embedded in all Arab cultures and is a significate element in decision making since *wasta* is a way of life.

Furthermore, the findings also revealed that because of *wasta*, employees are reluctant to innovate as well as working or cooperating with other employees. This might be because employees know that their effort is wasted due to lack of competition from overemploying
unqualified candidates. This view has already been shared by a semi-structured interview respondent in mentioning by overemploying candidates “there is no competition...It’s like those who attend and does not attend gets treated the same and those who innovate and do not innovate are at the same level as well” (B10), which is also further supported by another semi-structured interview respondent in affirming that all managers do “...is over employing people just because of their connections” (B2). Northam (2001) already confirmed that such act discourages citizens in working hard and innovating. These statements are consistent with those concluded by Al-Saleh (1996), Al-Shemeri (1997) and Bowramia (2014) by accusing the spread of *wasta* in employing unqualified and unneeded people in various departments without considering their qualifications and experiences that resulted in the developmental decline of organisations. Thus, if employees are not willing to work, then organisations will not benefit from their productivity in terms of innovation.

However, the findings of this research contradict with those of Camps and Marques (2011) who found that social capital supports innovation through encouraging employees to take risks, bearing in mind context almost certainly plays a role. The reason for such contradiction could be explained by the unjust working system and environment caused by *wasta* that makes employees feel demotivated and victimised, as decisions are made subjectively. Thus, being in such surroundings, employees will begin to lose interest in participating as their effort is perceived as meaningless. This could be explained by referring to one of the qualities of social exchange theory, ‘perceived organisational support’ (POS) (see sub-subsection 4.2.1.2, p. 99), in concluding that if employees experience low or lack of POS due to organisations not valuing their contributions and well-being, they will result in lower job performance. This finding is also consistent with those of Eisenberger et al. (2001), Colquitt et al. (2013), and Sadegi & Naharuddin (2013) in clarifying that working in an unjust environment makes employees disappointed, which affects their performance and productivity.

In conclusion, to answer the research question with regards to innovation, the findings of this study clearly support the literature review and analyses that there is a connection between *wasta* and innovation. It was also revealed through the modified correlation that there is a weak negative correlation between innovation and *wasta* behaviour. This is further supported by the regression analysis indicating that *wasta* behaviour made a statistically significant negative contribution to innovation (see sub-section 6.2.5.3). Thus, by looking at the overall conclusion, \( H_3 \) has been supported.
7.1.4 Wasta will influence organisational commitment

As mentioned in the literature review, previous research, such as those done by Padgett & Morris (2005, 2012) and Arasli et al. (2006), already presented that other forms of social capital can influence organisational commitment. The findings of this research disclosed several explanations that clarified how *wasta* influences commitment in terms of affective, normative, and continuance commitment. The first explanation is that, due to *wasta*, some employees felt the need to resign when the *wasta* situation becomes unbearable, thus clarifying that employees are not organisationally committed. This is because when employees work in an unjust organisation, they become dissatisfied and produce negative individual outcomes, such as anxiety, resentment, mistrust, etc., if they saw their rights being taken away from them and handed over to the *wasta* possessor. This, in turn, could adversely affect their performance and their intention to remain within the organisation. This statement has already been shared by a semi-structured interview respondent in declaring, “*it made me upset. I honestly stopped going to work properly and my commitment level dropped significantly*” (B9). This is further supported by an open exploratory interview respondent in stating, “*sometimes *wasta* is overused in organizations, which forces some people to resign*” (A2).

These findings could also be interpreted by referring to the equity theory of motivation features (see sub-subsection 4.1.4.3, p. 89), ‘prediction of work satisfaction’ and ‘leaving the fields’, in confirming that inequity environments increase dissatisfaction that leads to an increase in absenteeism and turnover among employees. This line of reasoning is also supported by previous scholars, such as Adams (1965), Walster et al. (1973), Miner (1980) and Greenberg (1999), in concluding that thinking of leaving the organisation or a department is how employees cope with inequity. Therefore, this concludes that Kuwaiti employees lack normative commitment, which means that they do not feel the obligation to continue working if they are thinking of resigning and were not satisfied in their workplace. These findings are broadly in harmony with previous research of Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) and Angle & Perry (1981) in concluding that employees remain committed in a workplace due to their choice and their decision to participate is replicated upon their desire to maintain employed in the organisation.

Secondly, the findings also exposed that some employees are not actually loyal to the organisation itself, but are more loyal to their *wasta*, hence that is the only reason they go to work. In simpler words, they are *wasta* committed and not organisation committed. As
mentioned by an open exploratory interview respondent, “they don't have any responsibilities towards their organisations because they consider themselves working for the wasta provider and not the organisation. Hence, they do not care about the place they are in” (A6). In some cases, it has been noted from the findings that some employees would observe a significant change in their performance level, where they would stop putting an effort into their performance. As mentioned by a semi-structured interview respondent, “my performance level dropped considerably, I stopped giving my all” (B3). This is further supported by another semi-structured interview respondent in stating, “when they started to abuse wasta and hire unqualified supervisors and team leaders, I had enough, I couldn't take it anymore. I did not want to work” (B2). This is because employees know that well-contacted individuals are well-looked after in organisations. Meaning, being in the wasta circle comes with a boost, advantage, and preferential treatments, as opposed to lacking one. These finding are consistent with those of researchers such as Hayajenh et al. (1994), Qambar (2015) and Alreshoodi (2016) in concluding that wasta leads to a reduction in performance and commitment. This could be explained by referring to Meyer and Allen’s (1991, 1997) affective commitment approach (see sub-subsection 4.1.4.1, p. 81) in concluding that individuals become affectively committed by developing an identity from participating and valuing activities. However, what is observed from the findings is that Kuwaiti employees lack affective commitment, since they are more committed to their wasta, because wasta could secure anything for them.

The findings also discovered that employees go to work because there are no other alternatives, hence they attend for the sake of the salary and nothing else. This is also confirmed by an open exploratory interview respondent in declaring, “I will remain at my job because like I said I go there to work, receive my salary and leave” (A5). This could be interpreted by referring to Rusbult and Farrell’s (1983) ‘job commitment concept’ in the literature (see table 4.3, p. 79) in stating that individuals will stick to a certain job, even if they were not satisfied, which is what Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) call “continuance commitment”. According to Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997), continuance commitment is the extent to which one feels the need to stay. Thus, many employees go to work, not because they are loyal to their organisations; on the contrary, it is because of lack of alternatives and compensation reasons, which is also consistent with previous research of Jaros et al. (1993). This is further supported by a semi-structured interview respondent in concluding, “they are only working because they have no other alternative or job to go to” (B4). Therefore, most Kuwaiti employees only have continuance
commitment towards their organisations. However, they would not hesitate to resign if they found a better job elsewhere.

In conclusion, to answer the research question with regards to organisational commitment, the findings of this study clearly support the literature review and analyses that there is a connection between *wasta* and organisational commitment. It was also revealed through the modified correlation that there is a weak negative correlation between commitment and *wasta* behaviour. This is further supported by the regression analysis indicating that *wasta* behaviour made a negative statistically significant contribution to commitment (see sub-section 6.2.5.3). Thus, by looking at the overall conclusion, $H_4$ has been supported.

7.2 Section 2: Other Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Other unexpected findings were discovered during the qualitative analyses and roughly through the quantitative phase of this research that sought to make a significant impact in this research. Thus, the unexpected outcomes are divided into four subsections:

7.2.1 Wasta and Gender

In the quantitative results, it has been discovered that men occasionally use *wasta* more than women. The finding is consistent with previous research done by Al-Hussain & Al-Marzooq (2016) and Karolak (2016) in concluding that *wasta* is more widespread among males, as they tend to be the ones in powerful positions in society. This view is also supported by Alserhan and Al-Waqfi, (2011) in affirming that men are better connected and have more influential networks than women. In addition, Kuwaiti women’s main source of *wasta* are relatives and Kuwaiti men’s main source of *wasta* are friends. The reason why women refer to relatives is because they know that their relatives might be well connected, hence it is easier for them to ask for their relative’s help than asking someone outside their family members.

Furthermore, the reason why men usually refer to friends more than relatives could be explained by referring to Granovetter (1973) ‘bridging social capital’ concept (see sub-subsection 3.2.2.2, p. 37) in concluding that having even weak connections outside one’s limited inner circle increases one’s chance of accessing more resources. In other words, friends could be better connected and have more advantages than relatives in terms of knowing people, including their relatives, across various social, geographical, and other specific identity lines that could enhance one’s chances of getting their *wasta* favour fulfilled. Therefore, Kuwaitis,
in general, usually go to those who they trust for a favour knowing that they will try to help them in turn, which is also supported by Weir and Hutchings (2005). This finding is also broadly in line with those of researchers, such as Holmes (1981), in stating that trust is the major key in any exchange processes, hence friends and relatives are always people’s first choice. As a result, Kuwaitis will always protect and look after each other and that is why Kuwaitis usually turn to those who are close to them for help, which is also consistent with previous research done by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005).

However, what is quite interesting in the findings is that the dewaniya is one of the least favoured source of \textit{wasta} in Kuwait. This finding, to some extent, is at odds with previous literatures, such as Redman (2014) and Kilani & Sakijha, (2002), in concluding that the dewaniya is the channel through which \textit{wasta} is practiced and preferential favours are conceded. This statement is also supported by Fox (2010) and Alruwaih (2015) in the literature affirming that the place to get \textit{wasta} is the dewaniya. Although the finding is generally compatible with previous scholars in the sense that some Kuwaitis (20%) refer to the dewaniya when seeking \textit{wasta} favours, there are several interpretations why the percentage is not as strong as expected. The first explanation could be due to geographical reasons and data collection period. Previous scholars published their work around 2002-2015 in various geographical locations. This research was conducted in Kuwait and the questionnaire data were collected in 2016. Hence, people’s point of view might differ from one culture to another. For instance, in one cultural setting, dewaniya may be an important source of \textit{wasta}, as opposed to Kuwait. Not to mention, social attitudes change on a timely basis due to changes in cultural values and practices within time. For instance, today an individual might be against \textit{wasta}; whereas, in a month’s time, he/she might be in favour of \textit{wasta}. Another explanation could be technology. Nowadays, technology is a mediator in the way people interact with one another. In the past, the dewaniya was more important where people used to get together and ask for favours. But today, there is no need to be physically present at a setting place, such as the dewaniya, to ask for a \textit{wasta} favour. People could simply just call the \textit{wasta} provider and ask for a favour over the phone.

It has also been discovered that the main reason Kuwaitis use \textit{wasta} is to get jobs and bypass administrative processes. These findings are broadly in line with previous scholars such as Al-Humoud (1996) who cited that due to the increasing number of Kuwaiti graduates, recruitment seems to be the main reason why many people seek \textit{wasta} to ensure their employment. This
view is also shared by Hooker (2008) and Loewe (2011), among other scholars, noting that *wasta* is known to handle administrative procedures and services due to Arabs not wanting to take the trouble to go through the entire processes. Hence, Kuwaitis use *wasta* to speed up processes. Additionally, what is significant about this finding is that Kuwaiti women mostly use *wasta* to get jobs, whereas Kuwaiti men mostly use *wasta* to get jobs and bypass administrative processes. The reason why women use *wasta* to get jobs is due to the traditional gender roles and patriarchal networks in the Middle East. Meaning, both genders have different societal roles that they are expected to fulfil. In addition, since men are viewed the ‘breadwinners’ of the family, they are desired more in organisations due to reasons such as unequal power distribution and perceived lack of fit in traditional social attitudes. For instance, some male managers would perceive women as being incompetent in managerial positions because of their loving nourishing personalities, hence viewing them lacking the characteristics and abilities for what it takes to become a successful manager. This finding is consistent with Kehn’s (2012) research in northern California concluding that women are expected to fail in ‘traditional male jobs’ because they are seen as poorly fitted to accomplish jobs proficiently. The above statement revealed that such dilemma is not limited to Kuwaiti or Middle Eastern women alone, but it is also witnessed by women in other cultural settings as well.

In the case of Kuwait, this could also be interpreted by referring to the ‘GLOBE theory’, concluding that Kuwait has a low egalitarianism score (see subsection 2.2.3). In other words, the culture is more male-driven and overlooks women’s success by giving them secondary roles. This line of reasoning is also supported by other scholars in the literature such as Heilman et al. (1989), Martell et al. (1998), and Liddell (2005). Consequently, Kuwaiti women seek *wasta* to allow them to succeed because they became aware that they are in a male-dominating field, hence limiting their recruitment opportunities. This finding is also broadly in harmony with those of researchers such as Metcalfe (2007), Omair (2010), Binkhuthaila (2010), Albugamy (2014), Abalkhail & Allan (2015), and Al-Hussain and al-Marzooq (2016) in the Middle East about the importance of *wasta* in women’s careers in terms of recruitments, advancements, trainings, evaluations, and promotions.

Therefore, the findings clearly support the literature review and the correlation analyses with regards to gender and *wasta* (refer to subsection 6.2.3 and sub-subsection 6.2.4.2). In the correlation analysis (subsection 6.2.3, p. 175) it has been concluded that *wasta* frequency is negatively associated to gender. *Wasta* frequency is related to the amount of time people use
Despite the modified correlation analysis (sub-subsection 6.2.4.2, p. 184), it has been concluded that *wasta* behaviour is positively associated with gender. *Wasta* behaviour reflects peoples’ attitude and behaviour towards *wasta*. In other words, even if men use *wasta* more than women due to their frequent access to *wasta*, women benefit from using it as well.

### 7.2.2 Wasta and Work

During the semi-structured interview analysis, initial results were unclear on the connection between *wasta* and work. Interviewees who were not affected by *wasta* raised the issue that *wasta* and work are two separate concepts that do not correlate with each other, which was only concluded by some male interviewees. The reason why some Kuwaiti men believe such declaration could be due to their widespread access to it more than women. These findings are also consistent with previous research of Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq (2016) and Karolak (2016). Hence, further investigation was undertaken through in-depth semi-structured interviews and the results proposed that both genders agreed that *wasta* and work are in fact strongly correlated, either negatively or positively in impact, depending on the person and situation, since *wasta* plays a major role in recruitment. According to one in-depth interview respondent, “*wasta is definitely linked to jobs*” (C2). Furthermore, the findings also exposed that people usually associated *wasta* with injustice in terms of work because it is the method that people sought to get recruited in positions that they might not deserve, regardless of other better candidates. 32 anonymous questionnaire respondents defined *wasta* as a mean of acquisition. As reported by an anonymous surveyed participant, “*wasta is very powerful. It gets you what you want without any effort, whether you deserve it or not, by overstepping on other people rights.*”

In addition, some participants, mostly female, believed that *wasta* could be seen as a job recommendation (i.e. reference) in cases where the candidate is eligible for the position that he/she is asking for and when managers are not forced to hire that candidate. This finding is in line with those of Balderrama (2010) in declaring that networking and connections have the influence to find employment and without having someone who can put a decent word for the candidate, their chance of getting hired is probably low. Therefore, the reason why female respondents in this study might express this view is because women in the Middle East usually seek *wasta* to get recruited in companies and positions they want/deserve by meeting all the requirements but lacking *wasta*. This could also be explained by referring to the ‘informational support’ concept (see subsection 3.3.1, p. 41) in indicating that individuals use their network.
to be provided with information that will enhance their capacities through guidance, recommendations, and direction. Hence, by using *wasta* as a job recommendation, it might assist into securing desired positions. According to an anonymous survey participant, *wasta* is “the easiest way to increase the chance of getting accepted in any desired institution.” Nonetheless, other interviewees disagreed and argued that a *wasta* favour is at the end of the day a *wasta* act that will always be viewed as unacceptable since asking for a favour might affect the selection of a better suited candidate, unless they happen to be the beneficiary.

Furthermore, not only local companies are affected by *wasta*, but also MNOs wanting to operate within Kuwait. The findings of the in-depth interviews exposed that the continued use of *wasta* impacts MNOs. Interviewees stated that MNOs will have difficulties finishing paper works at the same pace as a *wasta* users, as it will take them longer to get things done due to the lack of *wasta*. According to an in-depth interview respondent, “it would take months for them to finish their paper works and many of the processes might be reject due to not having any connections” (C6). Furthermore, in-depth interviewees highlighted that since Kuwaiti managers hire unqualified employees in sensitive positions, those employees might lack the knowledge on how to communicate properly with international companies, and therefore might poorly communicate the necessary procedures. As noted by one in-depth interview respondent, “…the person that is hired might not be qualified enough or understand the investment procedures to effectively communicate it with the multinational organisations, which would cause some frustration and problems in the future” (C2). The findings also stressed that MNOs might face the possibility of bureaucracy issues, such as unfair recruitment system, if they partnered with a Kuwaiti individual. As a result, some participants recommended that it would be better for MNOs to not, by any means, consider working inside Kuwait because it will be inconsequential and a waste of time in attempting to open a branch in Kuwait. As one in-depth interview respondent cited, “I think in order for multinational organisations to survive in the country, they need to have connections. Other than that, I do not believe they have a chance because operating in Kuwait is kind of impossible for newcomers” (C3).

### 7.2.3 Social Norms and Awareness

During the interviews, Kuwaitis, regardless of their gender, acknowledged *wasta* as a survival necessity in the country, as they believe *wasta* became a tool of survival and to retain one’s position, and thus started abusing the power of *wasta*. As supported by one semi-structured interview respondent, “people breached *wasta’s* rules a long time ago and abused its power”
(B10). This finding is in line with those of Meles (2007) and Loewe (2011) in the literature affirming that *wasta* became an expectation in which the system is based on hierarchy of social capital, as every influencer depends on networking to maintain their power and positions. In other words, many people depend on *wasta* to maintain their status within the society in addition to it becoming a give and take process. The finding is also consistent with those of Bachkirov et al. (2015) in revealing that people started using *wasta* as it became an expectation, an obligation, a source of psychological satisfaction from using one’s power, and a tool of maintaining and expanding one’s network. The finding could also be explained by referring to Hoffling (2002) ‘micro morality’ concept (see subsection 3.3.2, pp. 48-49) in stating that moral obligations are related to one’s own circle and such obligations are categorised by reciprocal acts that people expect others in the circle to fulfil. The stronger the *wasta*, the higher the chance a person can achieve his/her means of acquisition efficiently and effectively. As mentioned by an anonymous survey participant, “*wasta is often used when there is a position and many people are applying to it, the stronger the wasta the better chance you can get this position.*” According to a total of 40 anonymous questionnaire respondents, *wasta* became a way of life that people got used to practicing in order to maintain a comfortable living through overcoming rules and regulations, solving problems, and getting unreachable acquirements.

However, it has been addressed in the findings that not all *wasta* is bad *wasta*; there are some good *wasta*. The classification of *wasta* as good or bad could be linked back to Kant’s (1993) concept ‘Kantianism’ (sub-subsection 3.3.2.1, part A) in suggesting people will classify *wasta* according to whether they could visualise others doing the same act. For instance, people will classify getting a job through *wasta* as the good kind of *wasta* because it is easy to visualise other Kuwaitis using *wasta* to get hired. This finding is consisting with those of Ramady (2015) in noting that *wasta* has its benefits and can be seen in its purity and optimality. The findings of this study also revealed that good *wasta* is acceptable to some people. The good *wasta* is classified as the *wasta* that benefits not only the individual, but others as well, such as hiring the right person for the right job, claiming rights, and avoiding obstacles. On the other hand, the bad *wasta* has been classified as the *wasta* that achieves favours at the expense of others, such as recruiting unqualified individuals, and getting undeserved promotions. According to a semi-structured interview respondent, “*there are different kinds of wasta. Let say there are two candidates, one that is bad for the position and the other is good for the position. Usually those with power, hire people with knowledge, but what is truly happening is that those who are unqualified for the position get accepted. This is the negative way of doing wasta.*
But sometimes a person is eligible and able to get the job but requires a recommendation, so here wasata could be positive” (B9). These findings are also broadly in line with Omar’s (2012) study in clarifying that wasata is acceptable when it does not harm anyone and vice versa. However, due to the damages that wasata causes, some participants in this study viewed wasata as unacceptable under all circumstances.

Furthermore, the findings also uncovered that people blamed the government as far as empowering the utilisation of wasata, since the government benefits from it. In this way, because of deterioration of the system in Kuwait, participants believed that the government is unwilling to take care of wasata, particularly during election periods. This is because the government knows that only few individuals will vote in favour of the MPs that the government want and without wasata, the MPs might not succeed. According to an anonymous surveyed participant, “wasata has been implanted in our society by the government’s policies without exception.” Notwithstanding that, participants highlighted that the main reason why they vote in favour for specific MPs is because of the give and take procedure of wasata that is seen a win-win situation to both sides. As mentioned by one semi-structured interview respondent, “not only the government or parliament members benefits from wasata, everyone in Kuwait, one way or another, benefit from using it. It is a give and take process” (B4). This finding is in line with those of researchers such as Al-Saleh (1996) and AlAyyar (2014) in blaming the government and MPs for the spread of wasata. Therefore, due to being in a wasata-based country, it has been revealed that it is hard to refrain from using wasata, which is also confirmed by Omar (2012) and Loewe (2011).

7.2.4 Ethical and Legal Issues

As far as ethics is concerned, the findings concluded that both genders recognised wasata as unethical because it harms people by claiming a position unlawfully, which is also consistent with previous research by Al-Jahwari and Budhwar (2016). As one semi-structured interview respondent mentioned “it is definitely unethical, since people are harmed during the process” (B7). This finding could also be explained by referring to the ‘utilitarianism’ theory (see sub-subsection 3.3.2.1, part B) in concluding that the act that yields the most negative consequences is the act that is ethically wrong. Hence, wasata could be viewed as morally unethical due to the consequence it yields during the process. This finding is also consistent with those of Toumi (2012) by declaring that it is due to the unfairness and injustice of wasata that makes it unethical, since people view it as a social illness that weakens the principles of equality and justice.
Additionally, the way *wasta* is utilised as a part of Kuwait’s culture makes it unethical because it results in the low quality of the business environment by flagging regulatory procedures and increasing injustice in managerial choices, as already confirmed by Adi (2014). This statement is further supported by a semi-structured interview respondent by stating that “here in Kuwait, the way they are using it made it an unethical act” (B2). In any case, there are situations where the utilisation of *wasta* can be viewed as ethical, for example, hiring the correct individual for the correct occupation. However, that does not mean that the recruitment choice that has been made was the correct choice, as it included *wasta* during the procedure. According to a semi-structured interview respondent, “we are against *wasta* and against the fact that it exists. Choosing a qualified person over a non-qualified candidate is not a sane decision” (B6).

In addition to injustice, *wasta* has also been linked to corruption. A total of 88 anonymous questionnaire respondents linked *wasta* to both injustice and corruption. Respondents believed that *wasta* is the main source of corruption in Kuwait as many individuals began breaking laws and regulations because of unequal opportunities that *wasta* caused that further help in corrupting the country. As previously claimed by Hooker (2008), corruption promotes people to break laws and regulations due to losing confidence in the system of the country. According to an anonymous surveyed participant, “*wasta* is an instrument used when the state gives the corrupted ministries and officials the chance to control the matters of citizens.” This finding is also broadly in line with those of researchers, such as Bowramia (2014) and Park (2003), by declaring that there is a high correlation between *wasta* and corruption, especially in cultures that emphasise masculinity and power distance qualities. These findings have already been supported by Swamy et al., (2001) that men engage in more corrupted acts than women. Hence, since Kuwait is known to be a high-power distance country, it has a high chance of being correlated to corruption. Therefore, due to corruption and injustice, Kuwaitis classified *wasta* as mostly unethical.

As for legal issues on how employees recover their rights with regards to *wasta* within organisations, the findings uncovered two ways employed mainly by male participants. The first way is legally through documenting a complaint to the legal department within their organisations. As stated by a semi-structured interview respondent, “*many employees file complaints to the legal department.... before claiming their rights*” (B7). The second way is through *wasta*, trusting that it is the best way to claim one's privilege. As mentioned by a semi-structured interview respondent, “*the only way that you could actually recover your rights is*
by using wasta” (B9). This finding has also been supported by the quantitative analysis in which people stated that the main reason why they started using wasta, excluding recruitment reasons, is to protect or claim their rights. According to an anonymous surveyed participant, wasta is “one of the necessities required to carry out legal services that officials made it difficult to do by ordinary people,” which is further supported by another anonymous surveyed participant claiming that “sometimes wasta can be used by an employee and became the only available solution to get his right.”

The majority of the participants, especially female, concluded that they do not claim their rights when they are abused because of wasta on the grounds that most of the wasta users are Kuwaiti managers. Thus, it is harder for employees to file a complaint against Kuwaiti managers. With regards to female participants not claiming their right might be due to their lack of networking access and because of Kuwait being a low gender egalitarianism culture, as observed by the GLOBE theory (see subsection 2.2.3). Therefore, many Kuwaitis just give up and do nothing if they knew wasta was the reason behind their injustice, which is a huge problem in Kuwait.

7.3 Social Capital Theory and Wasta

One of the most vital contribution in the research is revisiting the social capital theory and linking it to wasta in terms of how to the study and its findings contribute to, expand or challenges the social capital theory in terms of the measured variables. Due to the fear of repetition, this section will be addressed briefly. In section 4.2, it was witnessed that wasta and social capital are quite common in terms of building a long-term relationship that values loyalty, trust and mutual commitment. In addition, social capital was included in this research and was linked to the measured variables to compare the results of the study with previous social capital literatures.

Henceforth, with regards to social capital and HRM practices, previous social capital literatures expanded on how justice is rarely associated with the existence of some forms of social capital and how it is one of the main reasons of recruitment, promotions, and other types of HRM practices (Arasli et al., 2006; Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Fu, 2015; Ali, 2016; Karolak, 2016; Alreshoodi, 2016) (see subsection 4.2.1). This finding is also confirmed by this study that wasta also impacts HRM practices in the same manner as social capital (see subsection 7.1.1). Therefore, the finding confirms and adds to the literature of social capital that both social capital and wasta generates similar results with regards to HRM practices, regardless of the
country, religion, and type of social capital. In terms of knowledge sharing, previous social capital literatures, such as Qamaber (2015) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), suggested that social capital can access information and people rely on their networks to attain certain information (see subsection 4.2.2), which is also confirmed by the findings of this study with regards to wasta. Hence, this finding also confirms and adds to the literature of social capital that wasta and other forms of social capital have similar outcomes with regards to its practice when it comes to sharing knowledge within organizations. In addition, this study also expands on the literature of social capital by explaining the consequences of using wasta on knowledge sharing, such as how some Kuwaitis feel the need to refrain from sharing knowledge to protect their competitive edge (see subsection 4.2.2 for further elaboration).

However, regarding innovation, the findings between social capital and wasta are quite different. Previous social capital literatures concluded that innovation is increased through accessing resources with the practice of some types of social capital (Calantone et al., 2002; Hult, 2002; Song & Thieme, 2006). In simpler words, social capital supports innovation. Nonetheless, the findings of this study challenge the results of previous scholars, as witnessed in subsection 7.1.3, in concluding that with the presences of wasta, Kuwaitis will lose their motive to innovation and hence, will reduce their performance due to employing and promoting unqualified employees in managerial or sensitive positions. Lastly, in terms of organizational commitment, previous social capital literatures confirmed that the practice of some types of social capital reduces performance and commitment due to injustice (Qamaber 2015; Alreshoodi, 2016). This finding is also confirmed by this study in terms of Kuwaitis being wasta committed rather than being organizationally committed. This study also expands the literature on social capital in terms of linking wasta to Meyer and Allen’s (1991,1997) commitment theory by concluding that Kuwaitis lack normative and affective commitment. However, they are only continuously committed due to lack of alternatives (see subsection 7.1.4 for further information).

In brief, the findings of this study confirm that wasta and social capital are to some extent similar in terms of its relationship between the measured variables except for innovation. Hence, this study challenges and expands the literature of social capital on how wasta impacts innovation differently in addition to further adding to social capital literatures about how a particular type of social capital, known as wasta, in the Middle East impacts the measured variables in depth using a multi-stage multi-method research design.
7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter aimed at answering whether *wasta* influences HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait. The overall findings of the analyses, with the support of previous literatures, revealed that the use of *wasta* in Kuwait is a noticeable problem as it impacts not only organisational and employees’ performance, but also the overall performance and development of the country; therefore, answering the research question and supporting all hypotheses of this study. The following and final chapter, chapter eight, addresses the conclusion of the entire study as well as specifying the contribution of knowledge, limitations of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

The previous chapters examined the results and discussion of the qualitative and quantitative analyses. This chapter details the conclusion of this research. It aims to deliver a summarised overview of how *wasta* influences employees and organisational performance. Thus, this chapter begins by briefly overviewing the main findings followed by a recommendation section before ending the chapter with an overall conclusion section.

8.1 Section 1: Objective Findings Summary

As revealed by the quantitative analysis, it appears that many Kuwaiti citizens (63%), who are full time male employees with more than 11 years of experience, occasionally have used *wasta* throughout their lifetime. This is because *wasta* has been historically deeply embedded in Kuwait’s culture, hence people view it as a cultural expectation. According to an anonymous surveyed participant, “*wasta is highly embedded in the Kuwaiti society, hence it cannot be abandoned easily. It must be used otherwise, you won’t get to the place you want.*” Therefore, Kuwaitis started using *wasta* due to unequal opportunities in the country.

With reference to the influence of *wasta* on HRM practice, the results of this study indicated that *wasta* possessors have an influence on recruitment, promotion and evaluation decisions. The findings are consistent with declarations made by previous scholars, such as Harbi et al. (2016) and Tlaiss & Elamin (2016), in concluding that employees ensure that managers know of their connections to get preferential treatments. This view is also supported by Hayajneh et al. (1994) and Hutchings & Weir (2006a, b) in stating that connections are ways in which individuals get and keep jobs. However, this finding is not new, as it has been previously witnessed that *wasta* or other types of social capital effect organisational decisions and processes, such as those done by Adi (2014), Ali & Kazemi (2006), Ben Allouch (2012), Hyndman-Rizk (2014), Robbins & Jamal (2015) and Weir et al., (2016). Hence, by looking at the overall analyses, it is concluded that *wasta* influences the exercise of fair and ethical HRM practices ($H_1$), either positively or negatively, depending on the outcome of the *wasta* act.

Regarding knowledge sharing, the only issue that has been revealed by the findings in this study concerning knowledge sharing and *wasta* is information access. Many participants tackled the issue of how *wasta* can be used to access unattainable information, making decision
making predictable in the sense that nearly all decisions are carried out publicly through *wasta*, which reduces decision making uncertainty. This finding is in broad harmony with those of previous scholars, such as Mogran & Hunt (1994) and Achrol & Stern (1988), in noting that decision-making uncertainty is linked to the extent of having enough information to make, foresee, and trust in making certain decisions. Hence, *wasta* supports the existence of hidden knowledge sharing processes, and thus a lack of transparency in business decision making. Nevertheless, due to the fear of losing power or value in the organisation, some employees that do not have or lack *wasta* will be unwilling to share their insight because of the anxiety of losing their competitive edge. As a result, by looking at the overall analyses, it can be concluded that *wasta* influences the act of knowledge sharing (**H2**), although adversely for the most part, as it can help in accessing unattainable and otherwise confidential information.

With regards to innovation, previous studies, such as those done by Calantone et al. (2002), Hult et al. (2004) and Song and Thieme (2006), already concluded that social capital plays a major role in the development of innovation. The findings of this study revealed that *wasta* impacts not only a company’s or employees’ innovativeness alone, but also the innovation and development of the entire country. The finding is consistent with those of Hatim (2013) in concluding that all ministries and authorities in Kuwait utilities *wasta*, resulting in the lack of inspiration in employees. This view has also been witnessed by Bowreamia (2014) by confirming that *wasta* is the main cause of Kuwait's declined development. The results of the study also stressed that it was due to lack of interest of current employees and over-employment caused by *wasta* that impacted innovation. Many participants felt that their effort and creativity was either not acknowledged or is useless, as there is no real competition with the existence of *wasta*, since *wasta* users get all the credits and benefits.

The findings also disclosed that due to Kuwaiti managers hiring unqualified individuals in sensitive positions in which they have no experience, those hired individuals might make all the wrong decisions that might impact the performance of the organisation. This, in turn, will further impact the development of the organisation. The findings are consistent with those of Putnam (1993) and Knack and Keefer (1997) that social capital impacts the economic development and growth of organisations and societies. Hence, by looking at the overall analyses, it can be concluded that *wasta* influences the act of innovation (**H3**) through developing unwanted outcomes due to undeserved job positions, over-employment, and lack of competition.
Finally, regarding organisational commitment, the overall analyses concluded that *wasta* influences organisational commitment ($H_4$), although adversely for the most part, in the sense that when *wasta* exists, many employees would either want to resign or a substantial drop in their performance is witnessed. This statement is also in line with those of Ta’ammah et al. (2016) in stating that the use of social capital impacts the idea of justice in organisations that impacts satisfaction, motivation, and much more, which leads to a reduction in performance and organisational commitment. Furthermore, it has been concluded from the findings that organisations do not benefit and lack the positive kinds of commitment (affective, normative) because Kuwaitis are only continuously committed due to the nature and key role that *wasta* plays within organisations. As a result, it is concluded that Kuwaitis are not organisationally committed, but are more *wasta* and job committed due to continuation reasons, such as payment and lack of alternatives.

**8.2 Section 2: Recommendations**

It has been highlighted from the findings that injustice is very much connected with *wasta* influencing the productivity of country. Subsequently, the findings revealed that all participants, male and female, viewed the most ideal approach to serve justice is by eliminating *wasta* from its roots. This is because there is no regulation that would ever control *wasta*, as it is a widely-spread practice. According to the quantitative analysis, a total of 44 anonymous questionnaire respondents cited that *wasta* should be eliminated. Thus, the best solution to try and eliminate the practice of *wasta* is through strict laws and by imposing severe consequences, such as fines. In addition, other recommendations that aim at improving organisations and the country include:

*Designing and implementing a fair recruitment system* that is anonymous and electronic that aims in acting ethically towards employees as well as candidates by recruiting, promoting and evaluating them fairly based on qualifications, experience, and performance. As mentioned by Arthur (1985) and supported by Heneman et al. (1986), this would ensure that recruitment and promotions are job-related to protect employees’ rights. The electronic recruitment system could be based on codes given to each candidate once an online application form has been completed, in which no name or civil ID is provided. The software will allow candidates to be ‘blindly evaluated’, meaning that the recruiter knows nothing about the candidate in terms of family names or inner circle. Thus, candidates will be judged based on skills, experience, and
qualifications. However, the anonymous recruitment system would not eliminate *wasta*, but it could help reduce it significantly.

*Designing and implementing Knowledge Management Systems (KMS)* that each employee is obligated to use and share their knowledge. The system aims at increasing knowledge sharing within organisations. It could be implemented by getting together a dedicated team with an experienced manager to design and direct the project successfully. In addition, making sure that the organisation is equipped with the necessary data and technology that will assist in the development and management of the software. After the system is designed and successfully evaluated, the next step is to prepare employees for the transition phase by increasing their awareness about the system, teaching them how it could be used effectively, and informing them about the consequences of not sharing. Once the system is installed and employees are fully aware of it, the last step is to link employees’ knowledge to the software by ensuring that all employees share their work-related knowledge through the system.

*Developing a friendly working environment* that encourages participation by sharing knowledge between employees through team work, trust building activities, weekly meetings, etc. Managers should be responsible for making sure that employees are involved in work-related activities and are responsible to organise weekly or monthly meetings to be updated with employees’ performance as well as answering any queries or concerns. Managers should treat everyone with respect by developing a positive attitude and encourage effective communication. In addition, it should be their responsibility to ensure that employees are satisfied in their jobs and if a problem exists, they should be up to date with it and find solutions to solve the problem.

*Imposing a law against companies that hire phantom employees as well as observing organisations through unexpected check-ups* in the hope of reducing the number of phantom employees. The government should be responsible in developing and imposing a ‘Ghost Employment Law’ declaring that any organisation that practices such fraudulent conduct will be severely punished through appropriate and effective penalties depending on the amount of ghost employees. Such law should be considered as a criminal and civil law offence. In addition, the government should be responsible in developing and imposing a ‘Minimum Wage Law’ that obligates organisations to pay a minimum wage from their budget to their employees. This, in turn, will help to reduce phantom employees in organisations. Furthermore, the
government should do unexpected monthly check-ups to see if organisations are abiding the law.

However, to implement these recommendations in Kuwait, some cultural changes need to take place. One culture change that could be implemented by organisations is restructuring the entire association by removing managers that encourage the practice and use of *wasta*, especially those who are responsible for recruitment, and employ fair and ethical managers that care about performance rather than connections. This could be done by employing or investing in foreign organisations or employees to oversee the recruitment process in Kuwait to avoid *wasta* recruits. By doing so, not only will it reduce the phenomenon of phantom employees, but it will also reduce hiring incompetent employees in sensitive positions.

Another cultural change that could be implemented by organisations is creating an organisational culture where cross training of employees is a routine as well focusing on employees’ contribution. In doing so, managers will know who is preforming and who is not preforming well. In addition, employees will gain more knowledge and experience in other areas, making them more valuable to retain by the organisation. Employees who are not performing as should be could either be fired or given a warning to increase their performance, as the organisation is looking for people with good performance. It is important for managers to comprehend that each employee has a unique contribution to offer. A successful manager will be able to efficiently evaluate these contributions for the success of the organisation. Therefore, Kuwaiti managers should support and maintain a friendly working environment.

Overall, *wasta* is a huge challenge, as the perceptions of *wasta* in organisations have many consequences that can lead to various negative outcomes. Hence, since efficiency is needed in Kuwait to improve the country, changing Kuwait’s system and further developing it would generate better results and productivity for the country in which every individual is obligated to follow. With some of the suggested cultural changes and recommendations, it could be possible to succeed in reducing *wasta*, if Kuwaitis are willing to give up *wasta*. However, organisations may face some implications when trying to implement such changes from powerful well-known Kuwaiti businessmen/influencers, who are not willing to give up the practice of *wasta*, because it will hinder the way they do business in Kuwait. Therefore, if Kuwaitis will not sacrifice the practice of *wasta*, organisations will not develop or innovate as fast and strong as other companies in non-*wasta* based countries.
8.3 Section 3: Overall Conclusion

The aim of this section is to provide and determine the overall conclusion of the thesis and it is divided into four subsections. The first subsection addresses the achievements of the study. The second subsection discusses the challenges of the study and the third subsection demonstrates the contribution to knowledge. The final subsection of this section addresses recommendations for future research.

8.3.1 Achievements of the Study

This research is one of the few studies conducted about wastā in the Middle East. The main aim of this research was to explore and address if and in what ways wastā impacts organisations and employees in Kuwait in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment. The research was split into five objectives aimed at:

- Analyse the historical development of wastā;
- Define and evaluate related forms of social capital and determine how they are related to wastā;
- Critically evaluate literatures on factors and theories related to different forms of social capital to examine how they influence HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment within organisations. In addition, exploring if wastā would generate similar results as social capital with regards to HRM practices, innovation, knowledge sharing, and commitment in Kuwaiti organisations.
- Investigate how Kuwaiti employees perceive wastā to determine whether wastā effects HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment by using mixed methods approach.
- Provide recommendations on how to reduce the influence of wastā on employees and organisations, if a problem exists.

The first three objectives were achieved through investigating and analysing previous studies related to wastā and other forms of social capital to garner as much information as possible to explain, justify, and support the reason why wastā was chosen as a research topic. In addition, establishing what is already known about the subject and to identity the research gap. Furthermore, the researcher also reviewed how other forms of social capital effect the measured variables in order to see if similar results would be generated with wastā. Hence, chapters 3 and 4 accomplished the objectives thoroughly. It offered a contextual literature review of wastā.
and organisational performance by critically reviewing background information, related constructs, and a comparison of *wasta* in addition to its impact on women and organisational performance. It also reviewed how social capital influences the measured variables of the study based on past studies, which aided in the development of this research.

Once enough information was gathered, explored and criticised to build understanding and knowledge, the fourth objective was successfully achieved through investigating how Kuwaiti employees perceived the influence of *wasta* on HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment by utilising mixed methods approach. The methodological, chapter 5, placed this research in the pragmatism approach, showing the importance of mixed methods design chosen for this research. The objectives and research question of the study were answered by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The methods included interviews and a questionnaire that were combined through a modified exploratory sequential technique to understand Kuwaiti employees and managers’ opinions about the process and influence of *wasta* on organisations and performance. The research was aimed at all Kuwaiti employees in all sectors in Kuwait to see if different results of *wasta* would generate from one sector to another. Therefore, the purpose of this study was accomplished by answering the research question *does wasta influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?* through collecting and analysing mixed methods data. In addition, based on an observed gap in the research, the research objectives, and research question, four main hypotheses were developed that helped in fulfilling the research question:

- **H₁**: *Wasta will influence the exercise of fair and ethical HRM practices.*
- **H₂**: *Wasta will influence knowledge sharing.*
- **H₃**: *Wasta will influence innovation.*
- **H₄**: *Wasta will influence organisational commitment.*

The hypotheses were tested by presenting data based on a total of 343 individual responses, 319 responses from the survey and 24 responses from the overall interviews. The quantitative data were analysed by using frequency, reliability correlation, EFA, and regression analyses via SPSS software, while the qualitative data were analysed using thematic coding via Nvivo software. The results and discussion chapters (6 and 7) demonstrated that *wasta* does affect the exercise of fair and ethical HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment within all organisations in Kuwait similarly. After highlighting and supporting
the hypotheses, the fifth objective was achieved through recommending several suggestions that aimed at reducing the unwanted influence of *wasta* on organisations in this chapter (refer to section 8.2).

In conclusion, the desired aim, objectives, and research question of the study have been accomplished. The conducted analyses successfully answered the research question and generated further unexpected results that additionally supported and strengthened the thesis. However, several limitations were faced while conducting the research, which will be addressed below.

### 8.3.2 Limitations of the Study

As with any study, this research faced some complications and limitations. These limitations are summarised into three categories:

* Lack of Secondary Data. The lack of secondary data was quite a challenge to the preliminary research design, since there was a relative lack of prior empirical research concerning *wasta* and its relationship with employees and organisational performance with regards to knowledge sharing, innovation, and commitment in Kuwait, or any other Arab country.

* Research Model. Another limitation in this research is the research model (see figure 6.2) due to containing one independent variable and four dependent variables. The literature suggests that there are other variables, such as trust, that could be included in the research model in testing how it impacts the measured variables, but it was not included in the model or tested through the analyses. However, as the other variables where not the primarily purpose of this research, they could be tested in future studies.

* Qualitative Data Collection. The topic of *wasta* is very sensitive and a key issue in a country like Kuwait. Therefore, it was difficult to collect qualitative data through random sampling. As a result, due to the nature and sensitivity of the topic, snowball sampling was used since Kuwaitis felt more comfortable talking to someone who they trust. However, during the process, it was challenging to not affect participants’ answers due to the fear of biased answers. Thus, it was necessary to listen more and only speak when clarification was needed as well as putting aside any presumptions and beliefs that might interfere with or influence answers.

* Quantitative Design and Data Analysis. The greatest limitation of all was the design and
analysis of the questionnaire. One main limitation was the reduction of organisational commitment (OC) questions in the drafted survey while developing the final survey. Based on the final survey, the commitment scale had six items. However, due to the reliability analysis, it was discovered that one item in the scale, *a working atmosphere governed by was**ta** increases job loyalty among employees* (OC6), did not match any other item in all scales, not just commitment (refer to subsection 6.2.2). Hence, the researcher decided to remove it completely from this study (Pallant, 2016), leaving only five items in the scale. Additionally, during the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), it was further exposed that commitment was indeed poorly measured by having only three out of five commitment items in the analysis (refer to subsection 6.2.4). The reason for reducing the number of questions in the original survey was because the researcher feared that the original survey seemed too long for Kuwaitis to complete. Thus, to improve the response rate of the study, the final survey was developed with fewer questions and such action was taken without thinking about the consequences, which is a weak commitment scale. As a result, to mitigate the effects of the shortcoming in original data collection, OC was better measured and focused on during the qualitative analysis. Another challenge was the results of the regression analysis. The outcomes of all measured variables were much less strong than initially expected. However, the outcomes were later strengthened and supported by the multi-stage multi-method research process conducted in this research.

8.3.3 Contribution to Knowledge

The contributions accomplished throughout this thesis covers theoretical, methodological, and practical implications, which are as follows:

*Theoretical Contribution.* There is currently a lack of published research on the impact of *wasta* on employees and organisations with regards to HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment, especially in a country like Kuwait that is driven by a set of cultural values. The role of cultural values on *wasta* became visible in cultures where collectivism is high, individuals are dependent and have strong connection ties. Hence, this study fills this gap through empirical evidence reported in the literature and contributes to new knowledge on the impact of *wasta*. The knowledge provided helps to understand the constraints held upon employees and organisations regarding *wasta* in Kuwait. Hence, this study has contributed new knowledge theoretically by explaining the phenomenon through answering ‘*what is the phenomenon?*, ‘*how is the phenomenon affecting organisational performance and the variables being measured?*’, and ‘*why is the phenomenon occurring?*’ It also makes an
important contribution in addressing the consequences of *wasta* on career development, employee development, organisational development, goal setting, staff retention, and innovation among employees in organisations. The findings of this study clarified the influence of *wasta* on performance by emphasising the importance of adequately recruiting employees based on qualifications, rather than *wasta*. The findings also clarified that *wasta* could lead to mistrust in organisations, reducing organisational engagement, innovation and commitment of employees.

Furthermore, another important contribution in this research is the gender aspect. As a Kuwaiti woman, it was challenging in doing a research about a male-dominant practice, since men have more knowledge about *wasta* and how it works. It was also challenging in researching about a sensitive topic and getting as many detailed information as possible about the topic, especially when the researcher is a Kuwaiti woman with less contacts than Kuwaiti men in general. Therefore, in order to reach a satisfying number of participants that help in answering the research question, snowball sampling was used. However, it has been pointed out that *wasta* affects everyone, regardless of gender. Nonetheless, *wasta* has its own advantages, such as preferential treatments for both genders. This is where Kuwaiti women use *wasta* to secure jobs and Kuwaiti men use *wasta* to bypass administration processes as well as securing jobs. Yet, that does not mean that Kuwaitis are happy with its existence, even Kuwaiti men, as *wasta* results in the reduction of performance in terms of innovation, knowledge sharing, and organisational commitment.

In addition, this research also contributed new knowledge by linking social capital to *wasta*, developing five theoretical research models as well as modifying a previous model that aims at helping people understand how *wasta* impacts organisations. The first model that has been developed is the ‘Potential Wasta Cycle’ (figure 4.6) that explains the nature of the *wasta* cycle and how *wasta* favours are executed. The second model is the ‘Potential Wasta and Consensual Breach’ (figure 4.7), which explains what will potentially happen if a person violates a *wasta* contract and the consequences associated with the breach. The third and fourth models are the thematic mind maps of the interviews (figures 6.1 and 6.12) that outline the analysed themes, codes, and sub-codes in an easy and understandable way. Moreover, Creswell & Plano-Clark (2011) ‘Exploratory Sequential Design’ model (figure 5.4) has been modified to a three-stage plan to fit within the context of this research, which will be further addressed in the methodological contribution. The last model is the ‘Research model’ (figure 6.2) that was
developed based on the hypothesis that explains the independent and dependent variables used in this study. Thus, since the models proved to be extremely useful in understanding *wasta*, it can be used in guiding future research studies.

*Methodological Contribution.* Since the strength of the relationship between *wasta*, the measured variables, and organisational performance in the philosophy of the business environment is not clear, the researcher explored the relationship to add further insight and awareness to the business environment by contributing methodologically using a modified exploratory sequential mixed methods research design. The research is significant as it is the first multi-stage multi-method research developed in addressing the issue of *wasta* in Kuwait. The present study involved a quantitative questionnaire analysis of 319 Kuwaiti employees and a qualitative interview analyses of 24 Kuwaiti employees. The design starts with collecting and analysing qualitative data first, then builds up the quantitative data from the underlying discoveries in stage one followed by the development of the qualitative data to further support and justify the discoveries found in stage two. In other words, this research initially began by conducting and analysing (1) open exploratory interviews that helped in developing the (2) questionnaires, which further helped in developing (3) semi-structured interviews followed by in-depth interviews. Due to new questions raised by the survey and semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews were conducted to answer those questions thoroughly. The qualitative data were analysed using Nvivo Software and the quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software.

Another methodological contribution of this thesis is splitting the quantitative data results based on gender to visualize and perceive varied perception of both genders with regards to *wasta*. Also, an additional methodological contribution was the development of all mixed methods question design that empowered the gathering of information related to *wasta* from a single country in the Arab world. Some of the questions were self-made based on the literature review, whereas others were extracted and modified to fit within the context of this research from other studies. For more information on the design of all questions, see sub-subsections 5.3.1.1, 5.3.2.1, 5.3.3.1 and 5.3.4.1. Therefore, by using mixed methods, the study was able to assemble a complete picture and broader understanding of *wasta*. The technique demonstrated the effectiveness in answering the research question and objectives when combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, it provided a varied perception about *wasta* from top managers to employees.
Practical Implications. Several important practical implications can be drawn from this study. An important practical implication reflects that the theoretical framework of the influence of *wasta* on organisational performance in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment is particularly beneficial for the business environment in terms of understanding how *wasta* influences performance. It identifies areas related to the importance of fair and ethical HRM practices, employee knowledge and commitment, career development, attitudes and behaviour of Kuwaitis in organisations. As demonstrated, the influence of *wasta* is mostly negatively associated with performance and commitment, thus the task of management and government should be to identify the relevant negative factors within organisations and manage them by enhancing or eliminating them through effective strategies and implementing some of the suggested recommendations. The study also examined why it is essential to recruit a candidate with specific set of attributes that can be viewed as a resource to organisations. Hence, this research will help organisations to focus on employees’ skills and knowledge, since skills and knowledge are essentials to achieve innovation. It also helps organisations to encourage performance and commitment by identifying employees’ training needs as well as focusing on the areas that they are lacking to accomplish their future expectations.

Thus, this thesis can be used by governments and organisations as a strategic support tool to raise awareness among people in power of key elements that empower or obstruct organisational performance. In addition to assisting the development and enhancement of organisations, this thesis acknowledges ways in which organisations can improve their processes in Kuwait through the findings and recommendations sections. Also, it could help with global business relations with regards to business transaction and exchanges, as it increases awareness and acknowledgement in terms of behavioural differences and similarities between countries. Lastly, it could also assist Kuwaitis in recognising ways in which *wasta* is affecting the performance of employees, local and multi-national organisations, and the country. Therefore, by increasing Kuwaitis’ awareness about the consequences of *wasta* in organisations, it could help in developing a required fair system that citizens are seeking. This, in turn, could support in reducing *wasta* favours.

To sum up, this research is thorough as it fills the gap of the study by successfully answering the aims and objectives of this research through continually collecting and analysing data and using different techniques until reaching saturation. It also highlights theoretical blind spots
and adds significant discoveries that can be utilised in the development of sustainable and efficient systems in Kuwait. Consequently, this research is critical in benefiting the society as well as establishing a hypothetical research model that can direct future research studies, such as uncovering new drivers, with the help of the existing research to further improve organisational performance.

### 8.3.4 Future Research

This research has highlighted some cultural values and practices that affect organisational and employees’ performance. However, the research was limited to Kuwait’s culture, and therefore an expansion of this research to a cross-cultural level would provide a good comparison of the consequences of *wasta* in different Arab countries. The investigation of this research in different Arab countries would also help to support as well as test the validity of the findings and conclusions reached by this study. In addition, other suggested future research includes:

- Focusing on one measured variable in-depth to provide a more thorough and detailed picture of how *wasta* impacts the researched variables.
- Centring thoroughly on how *wasta* impacts gender, especially women, and the psychological contract in Kuwait and other Arab countries.
- Future researchers could also focus on the Islamic and ethical perspective of *wasta* in-depth to acknowledge how and in what ways *wasta* is perceived in the Islamic and ethical context.
- Further research is also recommended to see how trust mediates between *wasta* and the measured variables.
- As recommended by many participants in this study, it would be beneficial to focus on finding the positive aspects of *wasta*.
- As this research weakly measured commitment, it is recommended for future research to better measure the commitment scale.
- Further research is also recommended to see if *wasta* might expand or change in terms of values or becoming more embedded in the future, and whether people will be more liberal or traditionalist towards *wasta*. 
REFERENCES


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Sharoni, S. 1997, Women and Gender in Middle East Studies: Trends, Prospects and Challenges. Middle East Studies Networks.


Swift, M., 2007. The social exchange of knowledge: The role of knowledge goal orientations in shaping knowledge source sharing behaviors. University of Colorado At Boulder.


APPENDIX 1
The Influence of Wasta on Employees and Organisations in Kuwait
Participant Information Sheet

Name of Main Investigator:Abrar Al-Enzi,
Email address: A.Alenzi@lboro.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you
to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. The information sheet
contains 12 questions, which would take approximately 4 minutes from your time to read. If
there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information on, feel free to contact
the main investigator. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part. This is your copy of
this information sheet to keep for future reference.

Thank you for reading this.
1. **What is the purpose of the study?**

This study investigates the role of the popular utilization of wasta within Arab societies, as it is deeply embedded in Arab cultures. To date, there has been little in-depth organisational research on the impact of wasta either on organisations that practice it or the employees who are affected by it, especially in Kuwait. Therefore, this research aims to address the following question: *does wasta influence human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment in Kuwait?*

2. **Who is doing this research?**

This study is part of a Student research project supported by Loughborough University. Abrar, the main investigator, will be conducting the research under the supervision of Prof. Louise Cooke and Dr. Andrew Rothwell.

3. **Are there any exclusion criteria?**

No

4. **What will I be asked to do?**

You will be invited to take part in an **interview or a questionnaire**. This should take no more than **10 minutes, if it was a questionnaire, or approximately one hour, if it was an interview**, of your time.

5. **Once I take part, can I change my mind?**

Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. However, once the dissertation has been submitted (expected to be by December 2018), it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

6. **Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?**

No

7. **What personal information will be required from me?**

Demographic question, such as gender, age, degree, nationality, work of experience, etc.; as well as questions related to the study of wasta.

8. **Are there any risks in participating?**

No, as the participant will be anonymous at all times.
9. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymized before the data is presented in the thesis, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles.

10. I have some more questions; who should I contact?

You should contact the main investigator, Abrar, for any further information. You may also contact either of the supervisors of the study, Prof. Louise Cooke (L.Cooke@lboro.ac.uk) or Dr. Andrew Rothwell (A.T.Rothwell@lboro.ac.uk)

11. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this research will be written up and presented for assessment.

12. What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact Ms Jackie Green, the Secretary for the University’s Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee:

Ms J Green, Research Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: J.A.Green@lboro.ac.uk

The University also has a policy relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which is available online at http://www.lboro.ac.uk/committees/ethics-approvals-human-participants/additionalinformation/codesofpractice/.
The Influence of Wasta on Employees and Organisations in Kuwait
Informed Consent Form

(To be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed for further knowledge and all procedures have been approved by Loughborough University Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee. Yes ☐ No ☐

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others. Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm that the researcher can use any information taken during the interview/questionnaire to only be used for this study. Yes ☐ No ☐

I accept that the researcher could use an audio recorder during interviews. Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm to participate in this study. Yes ☐ No ☐

Your Name
________________________________

Your Signature
________________________________

Signature of Investigator
________________________________

Date
________________________________
APPENDIX 2
Initial Exploratory Interview Questions

1. What do you think of wasta?

2. What is your Experience of wasta? (Provide a real-life situation)

3. Who is responsible for hiring people through wasta in companies?

4. Do you think that wasta affects knowledge sharing and innovation? If so, how?

5. Do you think wasta impacts commitment in your organisation? Can you link this to your own experience?

6. Do you think that human resources management practices such as promotion, training, compensation etc. are affected by wasta?

7. How do you foresee the future of wasta in Kuwait?

8. If you were to conduct a research on wasta what will you mainly focus on and why?

9. Is there anything more you want to tell me about the practice of wasta in Kuwait?
APPENDIX 3
The Influence of Wasta on Employees and Organisations in Kuwait

Introduction

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in this important survey measuring the influence of wasta on employees and organisations in Kuwait by exploring its impact on human resource management practices, knowledge sharing, innovation and organisational commitment. This study is part of a student research project supported by Loughborough University. Abrar Al-Enzi, the main researcher, will be conducting the research under the supervision of DR. Louise Cooke and DR. Andrew Rothwell.

This questionnaire has been developed to gather feedback regarding your perception of wasta. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your honest and detailed responses are valued. Please be assured that responses are voluntary and anonymous. All information provided is for study purposes only and all data will be dealt with confidentiality and will not be shared or distributed; it will be presented as statistics and analysis.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Abrar, via Email (A.Alenzi@lboro.ac.uk).

Please click ‘next’ to begin

Sincerely,

Abrar Al-Enzi
Demographic Questions

Please click the box that best describes your answer.

1. What is your nationality?

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

3. What is your age?
   - 21-35
   - 36-45
   - 46-55
   - 56 or more

4. What is your highest level of education?
   - High School degree
   - Diploma degree
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Master’s degree
   - Doctoral degree

5. What is your current job position?
   - Full-time employee
   - Part-time employee
   - Internship
   - Volunteer
   - Retired

6. Which sector do you work in? (please answer if applicable)
   - Private
   - Public
   - Non-governmental organization

7. How long is your working experience? (Please answer if applicable)
   - 1-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11 years or more

Waste Questions

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each statement by clicking the box that best describes your answer.

8. How often have you used waste? (Required)
   - Never
   - Occasionally
   - Frequently
   - All the time

9. If you have used waste, what have you used it for? (Rank the following from 1 to 4, where 1 = most used and 4 = least used). (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Getting a job</th>
<th>Gluing a promotion</th>
<th>Financial benefits</th>
<th>Bypassing administrative processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. q. If other, please specify (Optional)
### 10. What is your source of waste? (Rank the following from 1 to 7, where 1= most used source and 7= least used sources. (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government officials.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of parliament.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business partners.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former colleagues.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewaraya.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11. Which of the following best describes the reason why people started using waste in Kuwait? (Rank the following from 1 to 5, where 1= best describes and 5= least describes). (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waste is deeply embedded in Kuwait today.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to cultural expectations, people are obliged to fulfill waste favors.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal opportunities.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement of social and financial status.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution to solve disagreements.</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
<td>ґ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 12. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each statement by clicking the box that best describes your answer. (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waste is the main source of corruption in organizations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste does not affect social justice in organizations.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste is known to be male dominant.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are equally seen as a good source of waste in Kuwait.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair opportunities arise between both genders due to unequal access to networking opportunities (i.e., waste).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organisational Performance Questions

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each statement by clicking the box that best describes your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment in my organization is strictly based on qualifications rather than waste</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate growth opportunities are not available in my organization for those who perform well, but rather for those with waste.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My organization encourages formal training for everyone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due to waste, there is no real competition for promotions in the workplace.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization uses performance-based evaluation fairly and accurately.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards and incentives are unfairly issued due to waste.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation in my organization aims at improving employees’ performance and strengthening job skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not believe that my management follows policies and practices that serve combined interest of both employees and the organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 14 Knowledge Sharing (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I only share my knowledge if people ask me for it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not share knowledge that is not common in others.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only share my knowledge with people whom I can trust.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing my knowledge makes me lose my unique value and power base in the organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this community, we let people especially envy each learn from their own experiences rather than directly guiding them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 16 Organizational Commitment (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I get another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would go for it.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am loyal to this organization because I have invested a lot in it, emotionally, socially, and professionally.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving this organization would require considerable personal sacrifice on my part.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When an employee gets executed due to the waste in an undeserved position it affects my commitment and performance level.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A working atmosphere governed by waste increases job loyalty among employees.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 15 Innovation (Required)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation is not an essential requirement for doing my job effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can innovate and become creative without sharing knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My supervisor does not value my ideas.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization encourages me to think creatively and is willing to take a risk on new ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not rewarded or recognized when my ideas are being applied.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conclusion

#### 17 Based on your experience, how would you define waste? (Optional)

[Blank]

#### 18 Finally, is there anything you would like to add or comment on with regards to waste in Kuwait? (Optional)

[Blank]
APPENDIX 4
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How were you employed?

2. Have you ever been a victim of an unfair evaluation or a delay in an upgrade due to lack of wasta? Explain.

3. Upon the occurrence of any kind of injustice, can you recover your rights legally easily or do you need a personal recommendation from a higher authority?

4. After the occurrence of injustice, did it affect your performance and commitment level?

5. Why does manager accept employees through wasta?

6. Can wasta be acceptable when it doesn’t harm individuals or damage their rights?

7. Do you see wasta as an ethical or unethical act? Explain.

8. “I don’t think the government is willing to fix wasta because the government is benefiting from wasta in supporting the parliament members they want to win in elections. Without wasta, nobody will vote for them. So, there will always be wasta in Kuwait.” How much do agree with this statement? Explain.

9. Should wasta be eliminated or remain in place with regulations? If it should be eliminated, what should replace it, if anything?

10. Do you encourage the use of Wasta? Explain.
Semi-Structured Nvivo Sample

AZ: eliminate it of course. If you are talking about a society that is running under an institutional system, then wasta should be weak here. Unfortunately, we pretend that a system exists in Kuwait, but implementations and executions state otherwise.

totally eliminate wasta but use it only under certain circumstances.

I believe if it was eliminated it would be better as justice would be served in many organizations.

honestly, if it was a public sector, I prefer that wasta is eliminated once and for all.

I do not prefer wasta, honestly. If there are rules and regulations, why don’t we just follow
APPENDIX 6
# Frequency Analysis

## Demographics

### Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Kuwaiti</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Gender

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<td>3 46-55</td>
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### Education

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<td>4 Volunteer</td>
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Missing System 25
Total 319
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### 2. Frequency, Usage and Source of Wasta:

#### Frequency:

**How Often Did You Use Wasta?**

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<td>3 Frequently</td>
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<td>4 All the time</td>
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#### Purpose (Q: If you have used wast, what have you used it for?):

**Getting a Job**

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**Bypassing Administrative Processes**

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## Gaining a Promotion

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**Reasons (Q: Which of the following best describes the reason why people started using wasta in Kuwait):**

### Wasta is Deeply Embedded in Kuwait Today

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<td>8.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.8</td>
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### Unequal Opportunities

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### Due to Cultural Expectations, People Are Obligated to Fulfil Wasta Favours

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### Enhancement of Social/Financial status

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### Solution to Solve Disagreements

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### Source of Wasta:

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### Government Officials

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## Former Colleagues

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## Business Partners

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### Original Correlation Analysis

(***Note:*** highlighted/bold numbers represent statistically significant correlation between variables)

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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
a. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.
**Exploratory Factor Analysis Pattern Matrix**

**a. After Removing Low Value Communalities (e.g. less than 0.3)**

*(Note: only loadings greater than 0.40 are shown)*

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<td>Due to wasta, there is no real competition for promotions in the workplace.</td>
<td>HRMP4</td>
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<td>Appropriate growth opportunities are not available in my organisation for those who perform well, but rather for those with wasta.</td>
<td>HRMP2</td>
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<td>Rewards and incentives are unfairly issued due to wasta.</td>
<td>HRMP6</td>
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<td>I do not believe that my management follows policies and practices that serve combined interest of both employees and the organisation.</td>
<td>HRMP8</td>
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<td>I only share my knowledge with a person whom I can trust.</td>
<td>KS3</td>
<td>.749</td>
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<tr>
<td>I only share my knowledge to help achieve my organisation’s goal.</td>
<td>KS5</td>
<td>.726</td>
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<td>Sharing my knowledge makes me lose my unique value and power base in the organisation.</td>
<td>KS6</td>
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<td>I do not share knowledge that is not common to others.</td>
<td>KS4</td>
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<td>I only share my knowledge if people ask me for it.</td>
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<td><strong>High Performance HRM</strong></td>
<td>I am loyal to this organisation because I have invested a lot in it, emotionally, socially, and economically.</td>
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<td>Leaving this organisation would require considerable personal sacrifice on my part.</td>
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<td>Recruitment in my organisation is strictly based on qualifications rather than wasta.</td>
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<td>My organisation encourages formal training for everyone.</td>
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<td>Performance evaluation in my organisation aims at improving employee performance and strengthening job skills.</td>
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<td>My organisation uses performance-based evaluation fairly and accurately.</td>
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<td>My organisation encourages me to think creatively and is willing to take a risk on new ideas.</td>
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<td><strong>Innovation and Commitment</strong></td>
<td>Innovation is not an essential requirement for doing my job effectively.</td>
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<td>I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation.</td>
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<td>People can innovate and become creative without sharing knowledge.</td>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 17 iterations.
### Wasta Behavior

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### Knowledge Sharing

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<td>I only share my knowledge with a person whom I can trust.</td>
<td>KS3</td>
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<td>I only share my knowledge to help achieve my organisation’s goal.</td>
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<td>Sharing my knowledge makes me lose my unique value and power base in the organisation.</td>
<td>KS6</td>
<td>3  .647</td>
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<td>I do not share knowledge that is not common to others.</td>
<td>KS4</td>
<td>4  .602</td>
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<td>I only share my knowledge if people ask me for it.</td>
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### High Performance HRM

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<th>Original Question</th>
<th>SPSS Code</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<td>I am loyal to this organisation because I have invested a lot in it, emotionally, socially, and economically.</td>
<td>OC3</td>
<td>1  .769</td>
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<td>Leaving this organisation would require considerable personal sacrifice on my part.</td>
<td>OC4</td>
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<td>Recruitment in my organisation is strictly based on qualifications rather than wasta.</td>
<td>HRMP1</td>
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<tr>
<td>My organisation encourages formal training for everyone.</td>
<td>HRMP3</td>
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<td>Performance evaluation in my organisation aims at improving employee performance and strengthening job skills.</td>
<td>HRMP7</td>
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<td>My organisation encourages me to think creatively and is willing to take a risk on new ideas.</td>
<td>INNOV4</td>
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### Innovation and Commitment

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<td>Innovation is not an essential requirement for doing my job effectively.</td>
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<td>1  .677</td>
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<td>I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation.</td>
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<td>2  -.662</td>
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<td>People can innovate and become creative without sharing knowledge.</td>
<td>INNOV2</td>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 17 iterations.
## Modified Correlation Analysis Based on EFA

*(Note: highlighted/bold numbers represent statistically significant correlation between variables)*

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<th>Education</th>
<th>Job position</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Working Experience</th>
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<th>Wasta Behavior</th>
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
a. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.
Interviewer: Hello.

Interviewee: Hi.

Interviewer: How are you?

Interviewee: I’m good and you?

Interviewer: I’m good, thank you. Before starting I would like to introduce myself. My name is Abrar Al-Enzi. I am a research student at Loughborough university in the school of business and economics. The aim of the research is to examine the consequences of warata on organisations and employees who are affected by it in terms of HRM practices, knowledge sharing, innovation, and organisational commitment. As it is explained in the participant information sheet that I have sent to you. Did you have a chance to read and sign it?

Interviewee: Yes, I did. I will email it right after the interview.

Interviewer: Thank you in advance. The reason why you were chosen to participate in this interview is because I am aware that you are an employee and you might have experienced the influence of warata at some point in your life. Hence, I want to find out a little more about your personal experience with warata. I am not expecting the interview to last long, it should take about 15-30 minutes. I just need to check a few things with you before we start.

Interviewee: Ok.

Interviewer: The whole purpose of doing this interview is for research purposes only, therefore are you still ok with being a participant and for the interview to be audio recorded?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: It is also important to tell you that if you want to stop at any time or take a break or even withdraw from this interview, please feel free to do so, as it is a voluntary participation. In case of withdrawal, the information gathered from this interview will be removed from the data and it will be disposed. Before we start, do you have any questions for me?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself?

Interviewee: My name is…., I am 33 years old and I’ve been working for the military for more than 7 years now.

Interviewer: Is this your first job?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you mind me asking how you were employed?
Interviewee: No, not at all, I used *wasta* to get employed.

Interviewer: Could you further elaborate on how you have used *wasta* to get employed?

Interviewee: When I first applied for the military collage, I came to realise that the minister, MP's and sheikhs (rulers of the country in English) only accept a limited number of applicants each year. Hence, my uncle, who used to be a manager at a department in the collage, spoke to them to ease the recruitment process from me; in addition to granting my acceptance.

Interviewer: When you were employed there, did you encounter any sorts of injustice, such as unfair evaluation, lack of promotions etc.? Or was everything ok, due to being recruited through *wasta*?

Interviewee: I did actually. I faced a couple of issue, especially with my annual evaluations. I never told anyone or spoke to anyone regarding my issue and therefore, I used to get bad evaluations.

Interviewer: Why did you not tell anyone about it? Why did you not talk to your uncle?

Interviewee: Because I am not a kid that turns to *wasta* every time I face a difficulty. It is bad enough that I’ve used it to get recruited.

Interviewer: When you were facing such issue, did you do anything about it? Did you try to recover your rights?

Interviewee: Honestly, when it came to my evaluations, I did not do anything about it because promotions were not affected even with bad evaluations, so I did not care about it that much. There is a time for upgrades and when its time, we will get promoted to higher positions. For an example, my friends and I were recruited at a certain year and within 4 or 5 years, we got promoted and only those who had security problems do not get promoted.

Interviewer: When you were facing those problems, did it affect your performance and commitment level at work?

Interviewee: Yes, it did. When I see a person within the same department, whom I might be better than, gets a better evaluation just because he might look like that he performs better or knows the manager, whereas I did not know anyone at the time, is really unfair. It did affect my performance and commitment level because it is unjust to get the lowest evaluation grade just because I did not know anyone.

Interviewer: How did it affect your performance and commitment level?

Interviewee: I stopped giving my all. I do not perform as good as I use to before. I came to believe that there is no reason to be committed in a workplace or perform well, if *wasta* gets you to better positons and places.

Interviewer: Why do you believe manager accept employees through *wasta*?

Interviewee: Listen, the country became a give-to-take society. For instance, if I want something from a person, I would go and talk to him. However, in the future, I am expected
to reciprocate that favour when he wants something back. If not from me directly, it might be from someone I know. Just like how that person helped me out, I am obligated to help him.

**Interviewer:** Just to clarify, you're saying that managers accept employees due to future reciprocal *wasta* favours?

**Interviewee:** Yes, that is exactly what I am saying.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that it is acceptable to do so?

**Interview:** No, I do not.

**Interviewer:** In your opinion, do you think that *wasta* can be acceptable when it doesn’t harm individuals or damage their rights?

**Interviewee:** Honestly, no. I perceive *wasta* as something that is really bad.

**Interviewer:** Even if no one is harmed during the process?

**Interviewee:** Since someone is getting something through *wasta*, believe me, there are people who are harmed. There is no such thing as getting what you want without anyone being harmed, either directly or indirectly. There are many other problems I’ve encountered due to *wasta*.

**Interviewer:** Do you mind talking about the problems?

**Interviewee:** I am now continuing my studies at a university and it’s been three years since I am trying to apply for a scholarship from my work. However, each year they denied my request just because I do not have *wasta*. Literally, the first year I applied for the scholarship and they saw my name, the first thing they asked is ‘who is my *wasta*?’ when they saw, I had no *wasta*, they scratched my name right in front of my friend. The year after, I also got rejected. The interesting part is, in the third year, a colleague of mine within the same department and I applied for the same scholarship, which I am more qualified for, had more experience and better matched the requirements of the scholarship. He got the scholarship and I did not just because of his *wasta*. After what happened. I had enough and used *wasta* to get the scholarship.

**Interviewer:** Why didn’t you use your *wasta* when they asked for it?

**Interviewee:** Because I did not think that *wasta* is a primary factor in Kuwait. but, in the end, it’s a problem. If I cannot recover or receive my rights only through using *wasta*, then that’s a huge problem.

**Interviewer:** In general, do you think *wasta* is regarded as ethical or unethical?

**Interviewee:** Definitely unethical because of the negative consequences associated with it like I’ve mentioned before.

**Interviewer:** I am now going to read to you a statement that a survey participant said, "I don’t think the government is willing to fix *wasta* because the government is benefiting from *wasta* in supporting the parliament members they want to win in elections. Without *wasta*, nobody
will vote for them. So, there will always be *wasta* in Kuwait” how much do agree with this statement?

*Interviewee:* It is absolutely true. There are some MP’s that are known to provide preferential favours to others and they became known as “members of services”. For instance, they can provide abroad medical treatments, employments, if someone wants their child to enter the police or military force or work at an oil company, they just ask them. That is their job. That is what they do. There is one parliament member who proudly spoke about recruiting 93 officers from his family tribe. In this case, he is definitely not looking for qualified recruits, he is looking up for his friends and tribe. So, the society is only supporting those who they know and do not care about performance, innovation and the development of the country.

*Interviewer:* Should *wasta* be eliminated or remain in place with regulations?

*Interviewee:* In my opinion, totally eliminate *wasta* but use it only under certain circumstances. In Kuwait, everything gets done through *wasta*, like opening a restaurant or having the electricity gets to your new built house. Can you imagine, that you need *wasta* to get electricity faster to your house that you've built with your own money, which is something provided by government in the first place? That is a huge problem.

*Interviewer:* Based on our discussion, do you encourage people to use *wasta*?

*Interviewee:* No, I don't encourage people using people. I don't even want to use it, I prefer not using it.

*Interviewer:* Why is that?

*Interviewee:* Because of the injustice that is associated with *wasta*.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by injustice?

*Interviewee:* *Wasta* is all about unfairness. If one person use it, the other person gets harmed. *Wasta* does not affect only one person, it affects all of us. People should not recruit or promote others just because of *wasta*, they need to look at qualifications and experience. The bias treatment needs to stop.

*Interviewer:* What do you propose to do to stop *wasta*?

*Interviewee:* Develop a *wasta* free system through imposing strict law and fines against anyone who use *wasta*.

*Interviewer:* That is not a bad idea. I hate to end this conversation, but we have come to an end. Would you like to add or comment on anything about *wasta*?

*Interviewee:* No, I think that is it from me.

*Interviewer:* Thank you very much for participating, I really appreciate it.
APPENDIX 8
In-Depth Interview Questions

1. Can you detail ways in which knowledge sharing is affected by wasta in organisations, either positively or negatively?

2. If you were a manager, how would you encourage knowledge sharing and innovation among employees?

3. What would you want to do differently from usual current practice in Kuwait if you were in charge of the HRM department?

4. If you were the CEO, what would you want to do to improve the overall performance of the organisation?
   a. How can organisations mitigate against the negative impact of wasta?

5. What damage do you think the continued use of wasta will have on Multi-national organisations wanting to operate within Kuwait?

6. What is your opinion on phantom employees in organisations?
   a. Who are they?
   b. How are they recruited?
   c. How can we reduce or solve such dilemma?

7. Previous interviewees mentioned that wasta and work are two separate things and wasta has nothing to do with work. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

8. In your opinion, can wasta be viewed as a job recommendation during recruitment in organisations?

9. People usually talk about the negativity associated with wasta, in what ways does wasta benefit people or organisations, if any?

10. If a law in Kuwait were to be imposed against anyone using wasta, how would people react to it?

11. If you were in power, what kind of law would you impose instead?

12. Is there anything else you would like to say regarding the impact of wasta on organisations in Kuwait today?