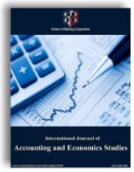
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Research paper



Investigating The Use of GEM2.1 Excellence Model in Contributing to Sustainability in The UAE

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Abstract

In the context of increasing global challenges such as rapid technological changes, globalization, and heightened competition, organizations, particularly in the public sector, must prioritize sustainability to remain viable and effective. Traditional excellence models like the EFQM, Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (BCPE), and the Deming Prize have been widely applied to improve organizational efficiency and quality outcomes. However, these models often fall short of explicitly addressing sustainability, particularly in social and environmental domains. For example, while EFQM improves outcomes and customer satisfaction, its limited focus on employee involvement and sustainability weakens its long-term effectiveness. Similarly, BCPE and Deming Prize models emphasize quality and leadership but do not comprehensively incorporate sustainability concerns. To bridge this gap, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced the Government Excellence Model (GEM) 2.1. Built upon the EFQM foundation, GEM 2.1 emphasizes sustainability and citizen well-being as core components of public sector performance. The model is structured around three key pillars: vision realization, distinctive value creation through innovation, and enabling factors, including leadership, policies, and resource optimization. These pillars collectively support the UAE's strategic goal of aligning public services with sustainable development objectives and improving the overall quality of life.

Keywords: *GEM2.1; Sustainability; UAE; Performance; Customer Satisfaction.*

1. Introduction

In the modern era of rapid technological progress, globalization, and intense competition, organizations, especially within the public sector, are under growing pressure to align their operational strategies with principles of sustainability to ensure long-term success and relevance (Matyushok et al., 2021). These challenges demand a shift from traditional management practices to more integrated and strategic approaches that simultaneously pursue performance excellence and sustainable development. Responding to this demand, various models of organizational excellence have emerged to support public institutions in improving their efficiency and effectiveness while meeting the evolving expectations of stakeholders (AlLouzi, A.S., & Alomari, K. M., 2023). Among the most recognized are the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management), Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (BCPE), and the Deming Prize, all of which focus primarily on enhancing operational quality and customer satisfaction (Bukvič, 2023). However, despite their contributions to institutional effectiveness, these models have shown limitations in fully integrating sustainability as a core objective, often lacking a comprehensive approach to addressing the unique social, economic, and environmental dimensions required by modern governance (AlKhamaiseh, M. A., Allouzi, A., & Karima, K. R. I. M., 2025). To overcome these limitations, the UAE government introduced the Government Excellence Model (GEM) 2.1, a framework tailored specifically for the public sector. GEM 2.1 distinguishes itself by incorporating sustainability and citizen well-being as central pillars. Rooted in the foundational elements of the EFQM model, GEM 2.1 builds upon its predecessor by placing a strong emphasis on value creation, vision realization, and enabling capabilities (Martusewicz Wierzbic & Łukaszewicz, 2024). These pillars reflect a strategic alignment with the UAE's national goals for sustainable development and improved quality of life for its citizens. By integrating innovative practices and focusing on long-term impact, GEM 2.1 supports public organizations in delivering high-quality services while fostering social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and economic resilience.

Central to GEM 2.1 is its recognition of the interconnectedness between governance quality, citizen satisfaction, and sustainability. The model promotes a culture of innovation, strategic alignment, and continuous learning, enabling public sector institutions to remain agile and forward-looking in a constantly evolving environment (Iyer & Malhotra, 2024). Unlike other excellence frameworks, GEM 2.1 explicitly embeds sustainability within its operational and evaluative criteria, thus providing a more robust platform for achieving holistic governance outcomes (Albayati, Y.K., Allouzi, A.S., Abdalaziz, M. M. O., Al-Ali, M., & Yas, H., 2025). The model also acts as an evaluative benchmark, helping organizations identify areas for improvement and implement reforms that align with global best practices. Furthermore, GEM 2.1 reflects the vision of UAE leadership, particularly that of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who has been instrumental in steering the nation toward becoming one of the most competitive and sustainably governed countries globally (Kuriansky, 2024). Since his appointment in 2006, the UAE has made significant strides in government efficiency and public sector innovation, achievements that GEM 2.1 aims to replicate and institutionalize across all government entities. With its focus on sustainability, wellbeing,

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and innovation, GEM 2.1 provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing public sector performance while addressing the broader challenges of sustainable development Dafri, W., Yas, N., Salem, O., Khalifa, A. A., & AlLouzi, A. S., 2025). This study, therefore, explores how GEM 2.1 contributes to the enhancement of sustainability and citizen wellbeing in the UAE public sector (Yas, N., Salem, O., AlLouzi, A. S., Abdalaziz, M. M. O., Marks, A., & Al-Jumaili, A., 2025). It investigates how the model's pillars drive strategic excellence and evaluates the extent to which its implementation supports long-term governance goals. Through this, the research seeks to highlight the pivotal role of GEM 2.1 in achieving integrated, sustainable, and high-performing government institutions. The Research Aim is study aims to explore the role played by the GEM 2.1 excellence model in supporting the delivery of sustainability and wellbeing within the UAE context.

The Government Excellence Model (GEM) 2.1 is crucial for achieving excellence in government in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, there is a lack of understanding about the intricate interactions between GEM 2.1 implementation and its impact on organizational performance. This study aims to bridge the gap by researching the intricate links between GEM pillars, sustainable practices, and organizational sustainability (Allouzi, A.S., 2024). The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how GEM 2.1 impacts organizational performance and the role sustainability plays in the UAE's socioeconomic and political climate. The GEM 2.1 Excellence Model aims to align well-being and sustainability with public sector objectives, but its use in the UAE public sector has limited features in responding to total sustainability aspirations. This research aims to fill in critical gaps left open by earlier models and fill the gap in empirical research on the GEM 2.1 Excellence Model in the public sector of the UAE (Allouzi, A.S., & Yas, N., 2024). By understanding the complex link between GEM 2.1 and sustainability performance, policymakers, public workers, and organizational leaders can better utilize GEM 2.1 to improve the performance of their organizations and contribute to the excellence in the UAE's organizational and governmental sectors (Shwedeh, F., Yas, N., & Abdijabar, Z., 2024).

1.1. Research objectives

- To explore the contribution of the GEM 2.1 excellence model in enhancing the well-being of its citizens in the UAE public sector.
- To determine the theoretical basis for the integration of wellbeing-related practices with the help of the GEM 2.1 framework in the UAE public sector.
- To evaluate and explore the GEM 2.1 model's "enhancing well-being" contribution to overall sustainability goals.
- To explore the ways through which innovation, enablers, and vision realisation in the GEM 2.1 of the UAE framework enhance citizen well-being and improve sustainability.

1.2. Research question

- How does the GEM 2.1 excellence model contribute to enhancing the well-being of its citizens in the UAE public sector?
- What is the theoretical basis for the integration of wellbeing-related practices with the help of the GEM 2.1 excellence framework in the UAE public sector?
- How does the GEM 2.1 excellence framework, "enhancing wellbeing," contribute to overall sustainability goals?
- What are the ways through which innovation, enablers, and vision realization in the GEM 2.1 of the UAE framework enhance citizen well-being and improve sustainability?

2. Literature review

In the 21st century, organizations are under continuous pressure to enhance performance, and the Business Excellence Model (BEM) has emerged as a critical framework to support this need (Ubaid & Dweiri, 2023). Initially grounded in Total Quality Management (TQM), BEMs now emphasize excellence across all organizational domains. These models assist managers in identifying strengths and weaknesses, aligning strategic decisions with stakeholder expectations and best practices, and fostering long-term success. A key component of BEMs is the "Organisational Profile," which evaluates each entity's strategic context, challenges, and performance improvement approach.

To remain competitive, many organizations adopt frameworks like TQM, BPR, ERP, and BEM. Over the past two decades, BEM and TQM have been among the most widely used approaches. Most national excellence models, such as the EFQM and Malcolm Baldrige frameworks, serve as foundations for awards and widespread TQM implementation (Purba, 2021). Studies suggest that organizations adopting BEMs gain both financial and non-financial benefits, including increased sales, improved operating income, and enhanced asset growth. However, not all research agrees on BEM effectiveness, citing implementation challenges such as a lack of resources, resistance to change, and limited staff engagement. In the UAE, excellence models were adopted in the 1990s, beginning with the Dubai Quality Award and DGEP, both based on EFQM. Over time, these models evolved to suit the changing public sector landscape. In 2015, the fourth-generation excellence model (4th G) was launched to address innovation and smart governance (Sarker & Rahman, 2023). Recently, GEM 2.1 was introduced to integrate sustainability into the excellence framework, reflecting a shift toward broader developmental goals.

The Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (BCPE), developed by the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology, is structured around three core elements: assessment, self-assessment, and foundational principles (Ghafoor, Mann & Grigg, 2021). It includes seven components six categorized as systematic processes and one as performance results. Each category is evaluated out of 1,000 points, equally split between processes and outcomes, with performance classified into stages from "reactive" to "role model." The EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Model, updated in 2020, organizes performance evaluation into three criteria: Direction, Execution, and Results (Fonseca, Amaral & Oliveira, 2021). Each category holds a specific weight: 20% for direction, 40% for execution, and 40% for results. The model emphasizes stakeholder engagement, long-term value creation, and organizational transformation, using the RADAR approach to assess effectiveness and continual improvement (Allouzi, A.S., Alomari, K.M., Maghaydah, S., 2024).

Japan's Deming Prize Model uses a triangular framework comprising three areas: establishing customer-oriented policies, implementing Total Quality Management (TQM), and assessing outcomes (Alauddin & Yamada, 2022). Each location is scored out of 100 points, with a minimum of 70 required in each to qualify for the award (Allouzi, A.S., 2024). The model focuses on strategy, TQM execution, and measurable benefits. The 4P Excellence Model addresses both tangible and intangible organizational aspects and consists of People, Partnerships, Processes, and Products/Services. It integrates soft and hard elements of business through a pyramid metaphor and is adaptable for evaluating departments, processes, or innovation centers. The Government Excellence Model (GEM) 2.1 is built on three pillars: Vision Achievement, Innovation, and Integration. It guides public organizations to align with national strategic plans, optimize services, and

collaborate with stakeholders. Vision achievement involves alignment with national agendas, while innovation emphasizes future foresight and transformative thinking through innovation management and policy development (Rosa et al., 2021).

The Resource-Based Theory (RBT) posits that an organization's internal resources and capabilities are the primary sources of sustainable competitive advantage. Introduced by Penrose, the theory emphasizes managing internal assets to achieve strategic goals rather than depending on external market dynamics (Sousa et al., 2021). It argues that for a firm to maintain a long-term edge, it must possess valuable, rare, and difficult-to-replicate resources (Elyat, M. N., Al Bayati, N. Y., Al Baloushi, N. A., Sarhan, M. I., Marks, A. A., Khudhair, H. Y., & Allouzi, A. S., 2024). Innovation is highlighted as a key resource, essential for creating unique products, improving efficiency, reducing waste, and supporting environmental sustainability. Organizations committed to long-term goals are more proactive in adopting sustainable practices, resulting in improved financial performance, customer loyalty, and employee engagement.

The Stakeholder Theory focuses on the idea that a business exists within a network of relationships involving multiple stakeholders, not just shareholders (Mahajan et al., 2023). These include employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and governments, all of whom influence and are influenced by the organization's decisions. Rather than prioritizing shareholder value alone, the theory advocates for a balanced consideration of all stakeholder interests. It challenges the traditional shareholder-centric governance model and promotes inclusive decision-making. Managers are morally responsible for balancing competing stakeholder needs and aligning business actions accordingly. Freeman, a key proponent of the theory, argues for stakeholder capitalism, where businesses can self-regulate by integrating stakeholder feedback, potentially reducing the need for government intervention. While the theory supports broader participation in corporate governance, it is criticized for potentially complicating decision-making due to conflicting stakeholder interests. Nevertheless, stakeholder theory represents a shift toward more socially responsible and participatory business practices aimed at achieving long-term organizational success.

Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that encompasses how people feel, their material circumstances, and the quality of their social relationships. It includes subjective experiences, such as happiness and emotional stability, and objective conditions, such as health and access to resources (Moro-Egido, Navarro & Sánchez, 2022). The model of wellbeing comprises three core elements: subjective freedom (valued activities and states of being), relational security (social ties), and objective conditions (health, income, environment). Recent developments have expanded the definition to include the relationship between people and nature, showing that wellbeing is not isolated from ecological systems. In the public sector, the importance of well-being has grown, shifting the focus from purely economic or service-based outcomes to people-centered policies. Policies now aim to improve quality of life by addressing mental and physical health, social belonging, and emotional satisfaction. Wellbeing helps create inclusive societies by reducing inequality and promoting equity in access to resources, which in turn fosters social cohesion and individual fulfillment (Khan, 2024). Social cohesion is deeply tied to individual quality of life, with community bonds and social integration acting as both indicators and drivers of well-being. Poverty is increasingly being viewed not only as a lack of income but also as a deprivation of wellbeing (Inglis et al, 2023). This has led to multidimensional approaches to poverty, focusing on what people can do and be rather than what they own. Participatory frameworks further emphasize the voices of people with low incomes in defining and measuring wellbeing.

Sustainable development (SD) also integrates well-being, shifting from focusing solely on meeting needs to fostering human flourishing. It involves balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities while ensuring future generations can thrive. Despite its evolution, SD faces challenges due to unsustainable development outcomes driven by human activity. Thus, well-being now stands at the heart of both social policy and sustainable development goals. Government excellence models are frameworks designed to enhance performance, innovation, and service delivery within public sector institutions (Laban, 2022). These models are built upon strong theoretical foundations to ensure their relevance and adaptability in various government contexts. Experts stress that a deep understanding of such models is essential for effective implementation and alignment with organizational objectives. Notable among these frameworks is the Shingo Model, which emphasizes continuous improvement and operational excellence. (Carvalho et al., 2023) Similarly, the EFQM Excellence Model, rooted in Total Quality Management principles, promotes a holistic approach to organizational performance.

Government-specific excellence models are tailored to address the unique challenges and structures of public institutions. The Project Excellence Model, developed by Westerveld in 2003, ties success factors directly to project success criteria, thereby facilitating more efficient project execution. In the context of the United Arab Emirates, the Government Excellence Model (GEM) is designed to support innovation, goal achievement, and the nation's vision of becoming a global leader in government services and development. The effective implementation of these excellence models hinges on identifying and leveraging key success factors (KSFs). Commitment from senior leadership is frequently cited as a critical success factor (Bagherian, Gerschon & Kumar, 2024). In the UAE, this leadership commitment, combined with a supportive organizational culture and strong public image, plays a significant role in the successful deployment of GEM. In Egypt, research highlights that leadership, human capital development, and performance management are essential for embedding excellence models into the public sector. These models provide more than just an evaluation method; they are strategic tools for transformation. For example, the Business Excellence Model offers organizations a self-assessment mechanism and recognition framework, enabling them to benchmark and improve performance. Government excellence models assess agencies on criteria such as leadership, planning, and resource utilization, fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Ruben, 2023). Overall, excellence models in government act as catalysts for improved accountability, efficiency, and public value. By setting clear standards and performance benchmarks, they promote transparency, responsiveness, and innovation in public service. Moreover, these models encourage a results-oriented mindset, urging public sector entities to strive not only for efficiency but also for effectiveness in meeting citizen needs.

he key elements of government excellence models include a solid theoretical foundation, alignment with organizational goals, and the integration of critical success factors such as leadership, innovation, and culture. These models are not static tools but dynamic systems that evolve with changing public expectations and administrative challenges. Their successful application requires top-down commitment, employee engagement, and a clear focus on measurable outcomes. Ultimately, excellence models serve as strategic enablers that guide government organizations toward superior performance and enhanced public trust. The GEM 2.1 Excellence Model emphasizes goal-setting, innovation, and resource support for public sector organizations. Sustainability is crucial for achieving these pillars, ensuring tangible outcomes. Integrating sustainability into operational strategies improves efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction. The Sustainable Development Goals guide institutions in incorporating sustainability, fostering accountability, trust, and social impact.

Sustainability encourages ethical behavior, accountability, and transparency within the public sector. It also enhances the effectiveness of the GEM 2.1 model by rooting organizational efforts in environmentally and socially responsible practices. As organizations align their daily functions with sustainability goals, they contribute more significantly to environmental preservation and societal development. Long-term adoption of sustainable practices is essential for lasting success, especially in today's rapidly changing technological landscape (Al-Emran & Griffy-Brown, 2023). Innovation is a critical driver of sustainability and organizational well-being. Public sector organizations embracing innovative technologies and methods are better positioned to fulfill environmental and social responsibilities. Innovation is closely linked to economic sustainability by helping organizations identify new opportunities and navigate niche markets. The ability to

adapt and innovate can determine an organization's success in maintaining long-term environmental and social viability. A clear and compelling vision is essential in achieving sustainability goals. Governments and public sector leaders must develop long-term visions that incorporate economic, environmental, and social objectives (Miao & Nduneseokwu, 2025). Vision directs strategy and helps prioritize sustainability goals, ensuring that policies and initiatives align with sustainable development principles. Leadership plays a key role in guiding organizations toward sustainability by addressing trade-offs among different objectives and inspiring collective action.

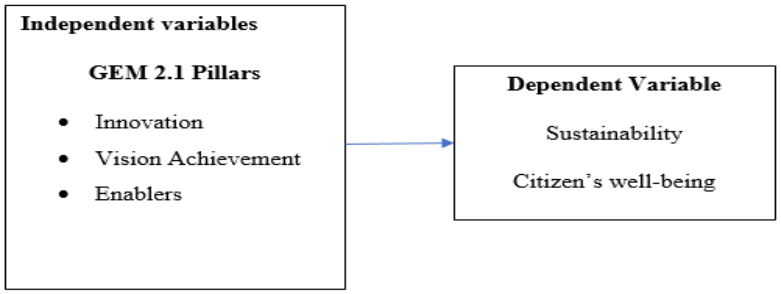


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework.

Hypothesis:
H1: Innovation plays an important role in enhancing the well-being of citizens in the UAE public sector.
H2: Vision achievement has a significant and positive impact on the well-being of citizens and the overall sustainability performance of the UAE public sector.
H3: Enabler has a significant positive impact on the well-being of citizens and the overall sustainability performance of the UAE public sector.
H4: The GEM 2.1 Excellence model supports the integration of wellbeing-related practices in the UAE public sector.
H5: The GEM 2.1 model of "enhancing well-being" contributes to the overall sustainability goals of the UAE.

3. Methodology

The Research Onion is a framework that breaks down research methodologies into six layers, guiding researchers through decision-making. It can be applied to various disciplines and can be used in qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research. The research analyzes the GEM 2.1 Excellence Model's impact on sustainability in the UAE's public sector using both quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires are effective for collecting large amounts of numerical data and are suitable for research comparing population patterns. This study used questionnaires to survey public sector employees on their impression of the GEM 2.1 application in the UAE public sector. However, questionnaires have limitations such as low response rates and participants providing only appropriate answers. To reduce these, completed questionnaires were sent online with confidentiality and brief, comprehensive language. The questionnaires were formulated with closed questions to measure the effects of GEM 2.1 on well-being promotion, sustainable development, and partnership efficiency. The data collection process took eight weeks, with participants filling out online surveys, resulting in a high response rate. The study used focus groups to gather qualitative insights on the influence of a model on well-being and sustainability. Focus groups were more efficient than interviews in terms of time and allowed for more detailed discussions. They were particularly useful for discussing sensitive matters related to incorporating well-being practices into the GEM 2.1 framework.
The interviews focused on the theoretical rationale for implementing well-being practices and practical difficulties. Participants were asked about their experiences and ideas for improving the model's setup. Triangulation was used to analyze the multifaceted research questions, such as how GEM 2.1 benefits well-being and sustainability objectives. Focus groups helped identify behaviors that promote well-being and were more meaningful when translated into statistical form. The study utilized stratified random sampling to gather data from 252 UAE public sector employees and mid-management personnel, ensuring a representative sample. Focus groups were conducted with five participants discussing the challenges and successes of implementing well-being activities within the GEM 2.1 framework. This strategy was crucial for analyzing GEM 2.1's impact on welfare and sustainability.

4. Theories related to the study

4.1. Based on view theory

Resource-Based Theory (RBT) is a model for managing an organization's resources, diversification, and business opportunities. It is based on the Theory of the Growth of the Firm and aims to identify and predict core elements of business performance and competitive advantage. RBT emphasizes internal organizational resources, which are imperfectly replicable but potentially generate long-term competitive advantage. It asserts that a company's performance and longevity are primarily determined by its resources and capabilities. Innovation is considered a key resource/competency due to its inherent value and potential scarcity. It enables firms to create unique goods and services, enhancing efficiency, reducing waste, and improving environmental performance. A well-defined strategy related to sustainability and commitment to achieving long-term goals encourages investment in sustainable practices and proactive measures. Organizations that prioritize sustainability exhibit superior financial performance, reputation, customer loyalty, and employee engagement.

4.2. Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory suggests that businesses are like ecosystems with various stakeholders, all working together to maintain survival and generate revenue. Long-term shareholder value is dependent on strong relationships with other stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, employees, and communities. Stakeholders are those affected by an organization's choices and actions, whether positive or negative. Freeman advocated for a stakeholder approach to strategic management, describing stakeholders as those with an interest in a business's success, critical observers, or those the organization would not exist without. The term "stakeholder" can mean different things depending on the situation, such as community-based stakeholders.

5. Analysis and discussion

The descriptive statistics section begins with demographic information, which helps to frame the context of the findings. Gender distribution reveals that out of 252 participants, 158 were male (62.7%) and 94 were female (37.3%). This demonstrates a notable gender imbalance, with male participants being the majority. This gender distribution is significant because it may influence the interpretation of the data, especially about how different genders perceive organizational changes and sustainability initiatives. Understanding gender dynamics is crucial in a study involving organizational behavior, as men and women may have different experiences and attitudes towards structural transformations and quality management systems like GEM 2.1. Age distribution is another vital element of the demographic data. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to over 56 years old. Most respondents fell within the 26 to 45 age group, which constituted 61.1% of the sample. Specifically, 66 respondents (26.2%) were aged between 26-35, and 88 respondents (34.9%) were aged between 36-45. The study's participants, primarily mid-career-aged professionals, have extensive work experience and influence within their organizations, providing a solid foundation for evaluating the GEM 2.1 model's sustainability role.

Further analysis of job positions shows a balanced representation among managers, supervisors, and executives. Specifically, there were 101 managers (40.1%), 89 supervisors (35.3%), and 62 executives (24.6%). This even distribution among different hierarchical levels within organizations ensures that the data reflects a range of perspectives on the GEM 2.1 model from various operational angles. Managers may provide insights into strategic alignment and high-level planning. At the same time, supervisors and executives can shed light on day-to-day operations and the practical challenges of implementing sustainability initiatives. This diversity enhances the credibility of the data, as it encapsulates feedback from individuals at multiple organizational tiers. Work experience among participants further enriches the data. A significant portion of respondents, 119 individuals (47.2%), reported having 11-15 years of professional experience. An additional 69 respondents (27.4%) had 6-10 years of experience. These figures indicate that most of the participants are seasoned professionals who are well-positioned to comment on long-term trends and impacts of sustainability initiatives within their organizations. Their insights are particularly valuable for assessing the effectiveness and challenges of implementing the GEM 2.1 model, as they draw from years of industry practice and have likely witnessed various organizational changes over time. Additionally, the inclusion of a few participants with 1-5 years of experience and those with over 16 years of experience provides a broader perspective, capturing both fresh and veteran viewpoints.

The study uses qualitative data analysis to understand how individuals perceive and interact with the GEM 2.1 model in the UAE's public sector. It identifies themes like leadership support, employee engagement, resistance to change, and adaptability. The findings are crucial for developing recommendations for sustainable development through structured excellence models. The analysis presented in provides a detailed overview of the educational background of the 252 respondents who participated in the study. The distribution of educational attainment reveals that the largest proportion of participants, 95 individuals representing 37.7% of the sample, hold a bachelor's degree. This finding signifies a dominant trend among the surveyed individuals to pursue undergraduate education, making it the most attained level within this population (Maloy et al., 2023). Following this group, 73 participants, or 29.0%, have achieved a master's degree, indicating that a significant subset has continued their academic journey beyond the undergraduate level to pursue graduate education. This suggests a strong inclination toward advanced education and reflects the commitment of the participants to professional and personal development. Diploma holders account for 18.7% of the sample, totaling 47 respondents. This group represents those with post-secondary but non-degree qualifications, often associated with vocational or technical training. Finally, the smallest segment of the sample consists of individuals who have attained a PhD, making up 14.7% or 37 participants. This finding highlights that while a relatively small proportion have reached the highest levels of academic achievement, they still constitute a meaningful portion of the population studied. When viewed cumulatively, 56.3% of participants have a bachelor's degree or less. In comparison, a substantial 85.3% have education levels up to a master's degree, clearly showing that most of the sample population has attained at least a bachelor's or master's qualification.

The study's Cronbach's alpha for the 20-item scale was 0.900, exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.70. This high alpha coefficient indicates the items are interrelated and consistently measure underlying constructs, enhancing the credibility of the findings. The complete dataset, excluding any missing cases, ensures the quality and dependability of the data collected, ensuring sound measurement instruments in subsequent analyses. The data's suitability for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO value of 0.720 indicates a moderate level of sampling adequacy, indicating the data is suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a highly significant chi-square value, confirming the variables' interrelationship for factor analysis.

The correlation matrix offers critical insights into the linear relationships among the study variables: Sustainability, Vision Achievement, Innovation, and Enablers. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Sustainability and Vision Achievement is 0.012 with a p-value of 0.848. This result indicates an extremely weak and statistically insignificant relationship between the two variables, implying that higher scores in vision achievement are not associated with sustainability levels among the participants. A similar pattern is observed in the correlation between Sustainability and Innovation, where the coefficient is 0.016 with a p-value of 0.806. Again, this demonstrates no meaningful linear relationship between these two variables, highlighting that innovation, as measured in this study, does not have a direct influence on sustainability perceptions or outcomes. However, the correlation between Sustainability and Enablers is more notable, with a Pearson coefficient of 0.283 and a significance level of 0.000. The study indicates a moderate positive correlation between organizational support, resources, and strategic alignment, suggesting that these enablers positively impact sustainability outcomes.

Table 1: Correlations

		Sustainability	Vision Achievement Scale	Innovation Scale	Enablers
Sustainability	Pearson Correlation	1	.012	.016	.283**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.848	.806	.000
	N	252	252	252	252
Vision Achievement Scale	Pearson Correlation	.012	1	.961**	.899**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.848		.000	.000
	N	252	252	252	252
Innovation Scale	Pearson Correlation	.016	.961**	1	.942**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.806	.000		.000
	N	252	252	252	252
Enablers	Pearson Correlation	.283**	.899**	.942**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	252	252	252	252

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between the Vision Achievement Scale and the Innovation Scale is extremely high at 0.961, with a p-value of 0.000 (Abdelmoamen, El Dahshan & El-shall, 2023). This strong positive and statistically significant correlation implies a near-linear relationship, suggesting that respondents who score highly in one of these dimensions also tend to score highly in the other. The two constructs may be closely linked in practice or measurement, indicating some overlap in the items used or the concepts they capture. Similarly, the Vision Achievement Scale and Enablers correlate at 0.899, and the Innovation Scale and Enablers correlate at 0.942, both of which are strong and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. These high correlations reflect tight interconnections among vision achievement, innovation, and enablers, which could be interpreted as collectively forming a broader construct related to organizational effectiveness or strategic capacity. These strong interrelations suggest that vision and innovation are not isolated phenomena but are deeply embedded in and supported by enabling factors, which may include leadership support, strategic resources, or cultural alignment. The model reveals a strong positive correlation between predictors and the dependent variable, with a correlation coefficient of 0.799. The R-squared value of 0.639 indicates that 63.9 of % variation in sustainability can be attributed to Enablers, Vision Achievement Scale, and Innovation Scale, demonstrating high explanatory power (Table 3).

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.799a	.639	.634	1.883	.639	146.138	3	248	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Enablers, VisionAchievementScale, Innovation Scale.

The standard error of the estimate, which shows the average difference between the model's anticipated and actual sustainability figures, is 1.883. Nonetheless, this figure is justified in this instance since it indicates a reasonable level of imprecision. Additionally, the change statistics showed an F Change of 146.138 and a 0.000 significance value, indicating that the overall regression model was highly significant. This further supports the viability of the individual predictors in your examination by showing how crude the model was in predicting sustainability when compared to individual predictors alone. The ANOVA table is used to assess the regression model's overall significance. The variance in sustainability caused by our model is considered by the regression sum of squares (RSS), which is 1555.150 (Table). On the other hand, the residual sum of squares (RSS) is 879.707, indicating that it captures some characteristics that our model has missed. Finally is the total sum of squares (TSS), which defines all sustainability variants as equal to 2434.857. This highly significant result, which has an F-statistic of 146.138 and a corresponding p-value of 0.000, indicates that the use of this regression model has significantly improved sustainability prediction when compared to a model with no predictors. This high significance suggests that predictors composed of the Innovation Scale, Vision Achievement Scale, and Enablers have a good impact on sustainability.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.738	.843		7.997	.000
	Vision Achievement Scale	.146	.144	.140	1.013	.312
	Innovation Scale	-3.335	.254	-2.358	-13.109	.000
	Enablers	3.153	.151	2.378	20.933	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability.

6. Recommendations

Public sector organizations should adopt GEM 2.1 as a strategic framework to integrate sustainability and citizen well-being into their core operations. Leadership must prioritize vision realization by promoting clear goals and wellness-focused programs, such as flexible work policies and mental health initiatives. Investment in innovation, including project management and data systems, is crucial to streamline tasks and enhance employee satisfaction. Additionally, fostering interdepartmental collaboration and ensuring sufficient financial and technological resources will strengthen sustainability outcomes. Performance evaluations should include well-being metrics to align staff welfare with organizational success. Finally, continuous training and feedback mechanisms should be institutionalized to support a culture of growth, engagement, and responsiveness, ensuring public organizations remain adaptable and citizen-centered in a rapidly evolving governance landscape.

7. Conclusion

This study contributes significantly to the theoretical understanding of how public sector excellence models, particularly GEM 2.1, enhance sustainability and citizen wellbeing. It offers a novel integration of public administration theory (PAT) with sustainability and wellbeing practices, establishing GEM 2.1 not only as a performance-enhancing tool but also as a framework that aligns organizational objectives with broader social, environmental, and economic goals. By incorporating wellbeing metrics into performance evaluation, GEM 2.1 demonstrates a holistic approach to sustainable governance in the public sector. The findings show that citizen and employee well-being improves through initiatives like feedback mechanisms, mental health support, flexible work arrangements, and training programs. These practices not only boost satisfaction but also contribute to organizational sustainability. Vision realization, supported by leadership and a clear strategic direction, enables the implementation of wellness programs and fosters a work environment that is responsive to employee needs. Enablers such as top management support, financial resources, infrastructure, technological advancement, and interdepartmental integration play a pivotal role in achieving sustainability outcomes (Hutto & Shaikh, 2024). Innovation, particularly in project and data management systems, reduces manual workloads, enhances communication, and promotes efficient task execution, thereby improving employee well-being and organizational productivity. The research confirms that GEM 2.1 is a comprehensive model that integrates well-being into sustainability goals, aligning public sector operations with global standards. It offers a roadmap for future development, recommending that organizations adopt GEM 2.1, prioritize vision realization, invest in innovation, foster interdepartmental collaboration, and include well-being metrics in performance evaluations. Continuous training and feedback mechanisms are also essential for adaptability and responsiveness in a rapidly evolving governance landscape.

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Data availability

The datasets used during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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