

THE FUNCTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN ACCOUNTING IN UNIVERSITY OF BAGHDAD

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to investigate the employees' perception about the effectiveness of human resource management practices in University of Baghdad. Three hundred academic staff, from teaching and support categories, responded to a questionnaire survey comprising the items regarding human resource management functions and university performance. DATA ANALYSIS. The results indicated that human resource management practice have a significantly positive relationship with the university performance. The selected human resource practices belonged to the area of employment, job description, staff training, compensations and rewards, task appreciation and career planning among the university staff. The study may prove helpful in increasing the employee and university performance in post-war Iraq.

Keywords: Human Resource Management Practice, Iraqi University, University Performance, Employee Perception.

INTRODUCTION

In the current age of rapid growth competitiveness and information, organizations aim to increase their performance and sustainability in the market. Education sector is no exception as universities face fierce inter-university competition due to the increased demand of up-to-date education in 21st century (Marginson, 2004). To meet these challenges in an appropriate manner, higher education institutions focus on increasing performance and repute through practicing effective human resource management. To effectively respond to the stakeholder's needs and expectation, these institutions rely on management, human capital and performance via skillful, trained and professionally committed staff (Lew, 2009). Chen et al. (2009) assert that effectiveness of human resource management furnishes the organizational leaders with ample opportunities to incur an increase in performance of universities. This, in turn, builds repute, popularity and sustainability of a higher education institute.

Increased performance of a university encompasses particular areas on which the institution focuses through resource management. The key arenas which human resource management is practiced is recruitment, academic expertise of the recruited staff, university performance, repute of the offered programs, remuneration and rewards system, quality and quantity of research contributed to society and market demand of graduates. The complex and simultaneous operations of these key areas not only increase university repute but also provide employee satisfaction. Employee perception regarding their workplace is quite a significant factor in education sector (Chae, 2010). In fact, employees play a key role human resource management application and university performance increase. In the context of developing countries such as Iraq, the rating of the universities has been affected by the long stretch of war,

and apparently, the higher education institutions in Iraq now aim to rebuild the affected infrastructure (De Santisteban, 2005).

With the rebuild wave, more and more universities in Iraq are trying to focus on and implement human resource management practices. One side of this effort demands to investigate the effectiveness of human resource management and university performance through the perception of university employees. The war-stricken nation requires high-end human resources thus requires an effective implementation of its management. Additionally, the education sector will assist in transforming the weak economic system, and put it on the track of development. High-end human resources, as indicated by Delery and Doty (1996) and Smeenk et al (2006), frequently are implemented in the areas of information dissemination, recruitment, compensation, job description, career planning, staff training, research opportunities, quality of research and decision-making.

Keeping the aforementioned in view, the current study aimed to investigate, in the post-war education of Iraq, the human resource management effectiveness in the University of Baghdad generating the perception of its staff. It performed the investigation including the significant variable of the university performance. Most of the previous research on human resource management has investigated the employee perception (Rowley, 1996) but the context of Iraq lacks focus of empirical research in this area. Thus, this study attempted to contribute to the above-mentioned area. The next section discussion presents the review of the related literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies such as Guest (2002) and Wright et al. (2003) have investigated the effect of human resource management, its implementation in the organization contexts and performance. They conclude that human resource management practice can influence the staff performance and organization outcomes. Effective practice brings about competitive benefits and motivates the staff to enhance their work potential by meeting beyond expectation objectives. Here arises the logical question of the componential features of these practices. In this regard, Pfeffer (1994) identified sixteen human resource management practices, in which the conspicuous factors are quality recruitment, competitive remuneration, introduction of skill development and professional training programs, effective information dissemination, job security, and empowerment through extending democratic leadership behaviour. In this connection, Guest (2002) argues that staffs play a key role in deploying human resource management effectiveness as its impact depends on the response and reaction of the involved staff. To elaborate, positive perception of employees usually has a positive effect on the firm's performance whereas prevalent negativity may impede smooth performance growth. Corroborating Wright et al. (1994) and Guest (2002), Ekaterini (2010) states that employees of an organization are the key to preparing the organization to accept appropriate human resource management and its practice to increase organizational performance. The efficiency of human capital that a firm engages and its subsequent management seems to have a significant relationship with the firm's growth, market sustainability, repute and performance. Seeing this factor from the other but similar perspective, effective human resource management practices increase a firm's performance, and in a similar way, the nature of human capital influences the human resource management practices in the firm (Huselid, 1995).

Different researchers focus and assert on different human resource practices. However, the identified practices are largely similar. Lee & Lee (2007) propound that appreciation,

appraisal, training, skills development, job security, remuneration and incentives, human resource planning are a few significant practices. In the same line, Delaney & Huselid (1996) perceive training, professional development, rewards, recruitment and empowerment in the shape of participation as the key role components in human resource management practices of an organization. Laursen & Foss (2003) state that human capital; effective career planning, training and development, work environment and information sharing are a few influential practices in the modern resource management implementation. Hence, the current study takes into account the human resource management practices of selection, job description, compensation, performance, training, appraisal, and career planning and staff participation. The current investigation, in terms of human resource management implementation, revolves around the aforementioned components.

Human Resource Management Practice in Higher Education Context

In the current age of competitiveness and innovation, an exceeding number of organizations is including in their roadmap a consistent assistance of human resources management practices (HRM) to meet desirable performance. These practices are also adopted to seek market sustainability and competitive benefits (McDuffe, 1995; Jackson & Schuler, 2000). Notable researchers (Lee et al., 2010; becker & Huselid, 1998; Rizov & Croucher, 2009; Tessema & Soeter, 2006; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Ichsan et al., 2020; Cherif, 2020; Cumming et al., 2020) conclude that effective HRM practices positively influence a firm's performance. Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert (2020) conclude that training, teamwork, development and planning and appraisal have a direct impact on an organization's performance. Additionally, employee satisfaction and sustainability are significantly associated with the integrated HRM practices that further organizational performance (Green et al., 2006).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Balanced Score Card (BSC) are frequently used to measure the relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance in several notable investigations (Rizov & Croucher, 2009), however, academic especially tertiary level education lacks specificity and consensus on performance indicators. The reason of the lack of consensus is the scarcity of the availability of the relevant literature in academia (Nistor, 2009; Jonen & Simgen, 2006; Stavrakakis et al., 2010; Karathanos & Karathanos, 2005), hence the current study also anticipates to contribute to the area reference. Regarding KPIs in university performance measurement, certain KPIs closely related to the academic context, are usually chosen to relate the performance with HRM practices. The common KPIs, thus, used in academia are largely related to recruitment, training and development, rewards, research and student perception about university. In other words, the KPIs related to growth and performances are usually selected. The KPIs chosen for the current study are discussed below:

Recruitment and Performance of Organization

Recruitment is the process of selecting, on prechosen criteria, the individuals who can perform as employees in an organization. The criteria are frequently based on the individuals' skills and acceptance of appropriate organizational measures (Fisher et al., 1999). By initiating recruitment, organizations seek employees who are identifiable as beneficial for organizational growth and prospective potential of skills development (Noe et al., 2008). According to Bohlander & Snell (2007), organizations, in order to operate sustainability and consistent

growth, tend to select individuals to their better fit as in any case otherwise; organizations cannot properly meet their objectives. In turn, they meet market fiasco. To reduce the risk of market fiasco, organizations seek to attract capable human capital. Storey (2007), in the same line, asserts that organizations, in order to reach beneficial human capital, use short-listing once or twice to be on the safe side, as unsuitable employees can incur problems of downsized performance amount, absenteeism, uncongenial work environment and high turnover. In order to avoid such risks, organizations follow a pre-planned roadmap of sorting out called recruitment.

Kleiman (2000) states that recruitment is a process that provides opportunities of growth and sustainability to an organization therefore, organizations seeks in individuals the potential and skills that can increase organizational performance. That is why, the process of recruitment and selection is considered a significant HRM practice. Different organizations follow different recruitment roadmaps however, common methods are usually two: Formal recruitment seeks prospective employees through print advertisements, electronic media advertisements, banners, posters, brochures and human capital bank. Contrarily, informal recruitment seeks employees through previously hired staff connections, organizational connections and discussions (Chen & Cheng, 2012). Recruitment has been a hot debate in the relevant research of HRM practices, and several researchers such as Ferris et al. (2002), Zottoli & Wanous (2000), Breaugh (2008), agree that this componential practice of HRM enhances service quality impression and tangible performance of an organization. On another note, many researchers such as Wether & Davis (1996), Zheng et al. (2006), Storey (2007) and Pfeffer (1994) note that the process of recruitment is closely linked with financial benefits as well as performance increase of an organization. Keeping these notable investigations in view, the current study proposed hypothesis 1:

H1: Recruitment, as an HRM practice, has a significant relationship with university performance.

Employee Job Description and Performance of Organization

Marie & Brian (2005) define job description of an employee a sketch provided to the employee about her/his current position. In other words, it is an outline or map that employees are supposed to follow for the execution of their duties. To this map is related the compensation offered to employees in an organization. Manning et al. (2012) further the idea by considering job description as a process of duty listing that is allocated to employees of an organization to streamline their performance. This is the definition of their positions and offices following which employees introduce success, and failing which employees may introduce confusion, disappointment and failed expectations.

Erica & Brain (2002) indicate the significance of job description by stating that it is a definition against which employees should be selected, and in turn, the selected employees must aim and respond to the same while executing their duties. It is because if the duties are executed well up to the listing of job description, the organizational success is raised. Thus, it indicates that job description or definition is related to organizational performance. Manning et al. (2012) notes that if employees at the time of hiring are given proper elaboration of what is expected of them, it increases the chances and opportunities of organizational performance raise. A proper job analysis and elaboration, in this way, introduces to employees a sketch of their duties, hence, providing knowledge of what to do in a particular situation.

Bob (2008) asserts that proper job analysis executed by the organizational leaders and job definition provided to employees provides a blueprint on which employees are required to put in more by performing their duties. Therefore, the quality of job description is related to an

organizational performance. Keeping these views in mind, the current study builds its second hypothesis, which is given below:

H2: The Quality of job description has a significant relationship with university performance in Iraq.

Training/Development and Performance of Organization

DeNisi & Griifin (2001) define training in terms of professional growth of employees. They state that training is those criteria and processes that are adopted to increase the pre-possessed knowledge and skills of employees in order to increase their performance. This way, the pre-owned skills and information is modified using proper standard measures (Herald & Fedor, 2003). In addition to adopting new skills and information, training and professional development changes or modifies the perception and motivation of employees towards gaining new information and striving for increased performance (Paul, 2009). This may provide organizations with fair opportunities of striving for excellence. The present hyper-competitive age requires of employees to handle multiple tasks with increased task-based complexity. In such a state of affairs, it is extremely important to inculcate in employees training for intellectual and professional growth.

Instrumental efficiency of employees adds to the rating, growth and performance of the organization (Mackelprang et al., 2012; Miller & Stevens, 2012; Chang & Chen, 2002; Huselid, 1995). Employees, through efficient training, must be capable of handling both seen and unseen tasks. Tung-Chun (2001) propounds that training that makes employees capable of handling both seen and unseen activities is considered efficient. Training increases the potential and synergy of employees' performance and this in turn is considered to have positive impact and relationship with organizational performance. Consistent increase in employee performance enhances the market sustainability and image of an organization therefore; Paul (2009) states that HRM practices particularly including training and development of employees create positive organizational culture. Carefully selected human capital not only manages enterprise risks but also induces raise in competitive benefit. Based on these views, the third hypothesis of the current study is as follows:

H3: Training, as an HRM practice, has a significant relationship with university performance in Iraq.

Participation and Performance of Organization

Employee participation and contributive behaviour in information and ideas exchange is considered related to organizational outcomes. Antonio et al. (2000) define participation as work dialog among co-workers and leaders. In this way, employees meet democratic leadership behaviour, and play an extended role of indirectly influencing organizational performance. David et al. (2006) argue that employee participation and dialog directly influence decision-making in the higher management. This frequently brings about an increase in firm performance.

Rizov & Croucher (2009) conclude that there is a significant relationship between employee participation and company performance. Zheng et al. (2006) investigated this relationship and found that the nature of the relationship was significantly positive. Furthermore, David et al. (2006) argue that an organizations innovative progress, market sustainability and performance are related to ideas and brainstorming of its employees. Employee suggestions are important as they know the mechanics of the environment in which they render their services.

Jan Kees & Michiel (2002) note that organizational performance and decision-making is related with the participation of the organizational employees, and incurs tangible benefits for the firm. Based on these ideas and conclusions is the current study's fourth hypothesis, which is given below:

H4: Employee Participation has a significant relationship with university performance in Iraq

Appraisal and Performance of Organization

In a task flow and execution, appraisal about how employees executed duties is quite necessary to create a dialogic and progressive environment. Appraisal is defined as a process through which employees are intimated about and reported on the quality of their job execution (Young et al., 1995). This feedback provides employees with the opportunities to assess and modify or improve their performance, which, consequently, increases company performance (Byars & Rue, 2004).

John & Steven (2000) note that task or job appraisal, in fact, has generally meant the annual dialog between a firm leadership and employees, the objective of which is to provide and take feedback from employees. The core idea behind such dialogs and meetings is to inform employees on how successfully they have or have not met leadership expectations with a report on improvement or appreciation, consequently to increase firm performance (Giles et al., 1997). Chang & Chen (2002) and Lee & Lee (2007) also conclude that job appraisal seems to have a significant relationship with organizational performance. Keeping in view these studies, the current study presents its fifth hypothesis, which is given below:

H5: Job appraisal has a significant relationship with university performance in Iraq.

Compensation and Performance of Organization

Fisher et al. (1999) states that organizational performance is fairly and directly linked with its compensation, incentive and reward system. DeNisi & Griffin (2001), thus, define reward or compensation system as the remuneration and incentive that an organization offers to its employees as a result of their task performance. Fisher et al, in this regard, asserts that proper and attractive reward systems motivate employees of a firm, which contributes to organizational performance increase.

Previous literature (Chang & Chen, 2000; Tessema & Soeter, 2006; Katou & Budhwar, 2006; Giorgio & Arman, 2008; Shin-Rong & Chin-Wei, 2012) largely indicates a fair positive relationship between employee compensation and organization task flow and performance. Mayson & Barret (2006) further these ideas and argue that organizational performance is increased if it is capable of attracting, selecting, motivating and rewarding human capital, and the aforementioned factors frequently center around organizational reward system. In today's competitive enterprise environment, company use attractive reward systems to attract skillful and capable employees (Denis & Michel, 2011). Thus, the current study forms its sixth hypothesis, which is stated below:

H6: Compensation has a significant relationship with university performance in Iraq.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This section presents the methodology and data collection of the current study. This study used the quantitative research approach, according to which the research data were quantitatively collected and analyzed to discern the respondents' opinion.

The University of Baghdad was the research setting of the current study. A total of 300 academic and supporting staff was approached by convenience sampling based on non-probability technique. A questionnaire was hand-delivered to them, which was adapted from Singh (2004). The questionnaire had three core sections namely the section of the demographic data, the section of HRM practices, and the section of university performance, which was the research organization of the current study. The HRM practices enlisted in the questionnaire were as follow: Recruitment, Job Description, Training and Development, Employee Participation, Employee Job Appraisal and Compensation. The items in the questionnaire were close-ended and followed a 5-item Likert scale. On the other hand, the demographic information has the components of gender, age and employee type.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A total of 200 academic and support staff responded to the hand-delivered questionnaire. As the researcher supervised that the questionnaire should be duly and completely filled in therefore, no outlier was spotted. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were performed on the collected data using SPSS V.26. Table 1 presents the detailed demographical information of the respondents:

Background Information	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	102	32.7
	Male	198	66.2
Age	Below 30 Yrs	114	38.1
	30 – 40 Yrs	86	31.8
	40 – 50 Yrs	75	27.3
	Above 50 Yrs	25	11.9
Employee Type	Academic Staff	138	46.0
	Supporting Staff	162	54.0

Table 1 shows that 102 female and 198 male respondents were included in the study whereas, out of 300 respondents, 138 were academic staff, and 162 were supporting staff of the university. It shows that the respondents were categorized in 4 age ranges, that is, below 30 years, 30-40 years, 41 – 50 years, and above 50 years. Respectively, the percentages against the age ranges are 38.1, 31.8, 27.3 and 11.7.

To investigate the relationship between the HRM practices and organizational performance of University of Baghdad, a correlation analysis was performed on both the variables. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix of the involved HRM practices and university performance:

	R. T.	A.	P.	J.	C.	UP.	
R.	1						
T.	0.584	1					
	0.000						
A.	0.598	0.648	1				
	0.000	0.000	0.000				
P.	0.482	0.483	0.610	1			
	0.000	0.000	0.000				
J.	0.492	0.428	0.581	0.551	1		
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000			
C.	0.479	0.476	0.543	0.546	0.489	1	
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
UP.	0.512	0.491	0.534	0.501	0.508	0.541	1
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

(Correlation significant at 0.00 (one-tailed); R= Recruitment; T= Training; A= Appraisal; P= Participation; J= Job Description; C= Compensation, and UP= University Performance)

Table 2 shows that recruitment has a positive relationship with university performance at 0.512; Training has a positive relationship with university performance at 0.491; Appraisal has a positive relationship with university performance at 0.534; Participation has a positive relationship with university performance at 0.501; Job Description has a positive relationship with university performance at 0.508 while compensation has a positive relationship with university performance at 0.541. It is notable that in the HRM practices in the university, Compensation has the highest positive correlation with university performance whereas Training has the lowest positive correlation with the university performance.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between the HRM practices and university performance in the context of University of Baghdad. After performing descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, it was found that the selected HRM practices namely Recruitment, Training, Job Description, Participation, Appraisal and Compensation were positively related to the university performance. This proves all the hypothesis of the current study as correct and implies that the selected HRM practices are attributable to the performance of University of Baghdad. The results, thus, are consistent with the investigations of (Huselid, 1995; Rizov & Croucher, 2009; Tessema & Soeter, 2006; Georgio & Arman, 2008).

Based on the previous investigations and results of the current study, we can fairly assume that universities, for increasing their performance, should have a fair plan on recruitment process. Academic leadership such as registrars, deans, heads of departments and HR personnel must be involved in the whole process to seek and attract skillful employees. Potential candidates must be shortlisted once or twice to maintain standard skill-hunting. Those candidates must be selected who could incur performance increase by contributing their own performance to the process (Chen & Wang, 2009). Training plays an important role in this regard as this study also revealed that training and development are positively related with university performance increase (Table 2). The prospects of training not only motivate employees to build intellectual

skills and growth but also results in an active system of performance increase, sustainability and repute.

The results of the current study also manifest the significance of quality job description (Table 2). Elaborated job definition impacts the performance of employees in a positive way, consequently leading them to serve in an efficient way. This, in turn, fulfills the leadership and market anticipations while increasing organizational performance (Bozena, 2002). Quality recruitment, ample training and professional development, and appropriate job definition also raise university image allocating it a good rank in quality institutes lists.

In the integrated system of performance increase, one of the significant components is employee participation. The more employee feedback is inculcated into the organizational system, the more the increase in the organizational performance. It is due to the positive impact of business feedback that comes in the shape of suggestions and risk management owing to which universities decide how to positively operate the academic system on the performance track. It is notable that training of employees results in employees utilizing opportunities of feedback in an appropriate way (Chen et al., 2009).

The last but not the least is the HRM practice of Compensation, which manifested as in the highest positive relationship with the university performance. The system of rewards and compensations must have an elaborate and satisfying structure so that employees can work without financial stress. Appraisal and compensation, when appropriate, can save employees from burnout and disappointment while increasing employee and university performance (John & Steven, 2000). This implies that all the selected HRM practices are found in University of Baghdad and play a significant role in increasing the university performance.

CONCLUSION

The current study concludes that HRM practices such as recruitment, employee training and professional development plans, job description, participation on the part of employees, appraisal and feedback, and system of compensation have a positive impact on university performance. Higher education institutions, in the current era of information and research, need to maintain market sustainability and repute while imparting quality education. In this connection, it is necessary to adopt an elaborate and quality system of HRM practices as these components function to increase university performance.

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