

# THE INTERPLAY AMONG ORGANIZATIONAL SOURCING, HRM PROFICIENCY: A MEDIATED-MODERATED MODEL

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## ABSTRACT

*This study analyzed the key interrelation ship between organizational sourcing, HRM proficiency. Upon extending the vast literature, this present study assessed the mediation role of HRM Processes between organizational Sourcing and HRM proficiency, and the moderation role of transactional leadership between organizational sourcing and HRM processes. The study data were gathered from 127 managers sampled across varying organizations in Saudi Arabia. The partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was deployed to test the research hypotheses and the conceptual model. The results obtained from this study for direct impact of organizational sourcing on HRM processes, HRM processes on HRM proficiency. In addition, HRM processes fully mediate the relationship between organizational sourcing and HRM proficiency, while the result fails to confirm the moderation relationship.*

**Keywords:** Arabian, Organizational Sourcing, HRM Proficiency, HRM processes, transactional leadership, Petroleum Industry.

## INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are critical to the performance of organizations all around the world, to stay competitive and obtain access to significant resources, a rising number of these businesses are considering new forms of sourcing tactics. Academic indicators also show that rising competition is forcing businesses all over the world to leverage strategic partnerships with external partners to buy goods and services that were formerly created in-house (Gilley et al., 2004; Bustinza et al., 2017; Al-Qeed et al., 2018; Elrehail et al., 2019; Fuller et al., 2020). According to several studies, outsourcing, particularly human resource outsourcing (HRO), has become a popular business strategy in today's world (Malhotra, 2013; Patel et al., 2019; Bhushan et al., 2018). The majority of the research focused on the firm's overall performance, and empirical studies, in general, have been trying to find a direct correlation between sourcing and firm success for many years. That kind of focus couldn't satisfy the requirement for a deeper understanding of the repercussions on the organization's processes and roles, which are intended to be the primary source of HRM Proficiency (Srivastava & Bhardwaj, 2018; Latukha et al., 2018; Obeidat et al., 2018; Waheed et al., 2019). Proficiency has been claimed to be a key source of competitive advantage since it allows companies to adapt and exploit changes in their business environment, as well as take advantage of chances to employ technical, organizational, and strategic resources in novel ways. (e.g. Porter and Millar, 1985; Barney, 1991; Wright et al, 2001; Alzghoul, 2017; Alhawamdeh & Alsmairat, 2019; Khaddam et al, 2021). The resource-based view (RBV) approach has largely shaped the idea of organizational capabilities. The latter has largely replaced the former as the main paradigm in

strategic human resource management studies (Wright et al, 2001). RBV has its origins in Penrose's work, which describes the company as a "gathering of productive resources" (Penrose, 2009). Barney (1991) proposed the idea that these resources should be used in a way that adds value to the company. The firm's capacity to integrate, create, and reconfigure internal and external capabilities to handle quickly changing environments may be used to enhance value (Teece et al, 1997). Despite the fact that outsourcing has been a common business practice in recent years, there is still a degree of ambiguity about how it affects organizational performance. In this aspect, research yields a diverse range of results. According to some studies, outsourcing can lower manufacturing costs and enhance quality by allowing a company to get access to specialized expertise and so achieve larger economies of scale (e.g. Csoko, 1995; Alder, 2003). On the other hand, Others say that outsourcing can stifle innovation, lead to the loss of tacit knowledge, and subject businesses to contractor exploitation (e.g. Ulrich, 1995; Kotabe, 1998).

Previous organizational sourcing research has been critiqued for emphasizing organizational performance and financial elements while ignoring more long-term results (Stahl et al., 2020; Modak et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Alsmairat & Saydam, 2015)). In order to determine the impact of sourcing methods on organizational performance, deeper levels of analysis inside the organization's content must be focused on. Furthermore, most previous studies did not focus on a particular group of managerial activities, despite the fact that this issue could benefit in a better understanding of the influence of sourcing techniques at the intra-organizational level mentioned earlier (Fisher et al., 2008; Michael, 2019; Armstrong, 2020). As a result, this study focused to see how organizational outsourcing/insourcing, leadership role (transactional activity) of the human resource development (HRD) activities, and HRM processes affect HRM Proficiency. By examining and evaluating some of these recent contributions to the relationship between organizational sourcing and HRM proficiency, to have a deeper understanding regarding intra-organizational content, an explanatory conceptual model was established and utilized within this inquiry, supposing HRM processes to be mediating the relationship between management practices, such as outsourcing/in-sourcing, and their effects on HRM Proficiency, and the moderating role of transactional leadership of the HRD activities between organizational sourcing and its implications on HRM processes. In addition, this research presents an empirical framework for use in a specific industry (Petroleum companies) in Saudi Arabia. This type of design could benefit academics and practitioners in fully comprehending the industrial and environmental aspects that influence the relationship between organizational sourcing and HRM performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

### ORGANIZATIONAL SOURCING, HRM PROCESSES, AND HRM PROFICIENCY

HRM proficiency ability of a company to maximize its resources by developing and sustaining internal processes that show flexibility, creativity, and competence in order to adapt to business needs and provide value to the company (Chaudhuri, 2007; Boon & Kalshoven, 2014; Alzghoul et al., 2018). Measuring proficiency might be difficult without a clear explanation of the procedures that these procedures go through, many studies have been presented thus far, and many of them encompass various elements (e.g. Ray et al., 2004; Schreyögg & Kliesch-Eberl, 2007; Oliver & Holzinger, 2008; Collis, 2013; Mert et al., 2021). The dynamic nature of HRM proficiency should be demonstrated by obvious organizational features that aid the company in creating and maintaining value in order to fulfill business expectations. This study focuses on three major components that stand out in terms of current organizational capacities in general,

and HRM proficiency in particular: innovation, flexibility, and competence. HRM proficiency improves the ability of the organization to react to change (demonstrating flexibility). HRM proficiency provides the organization with a competitive advantage over its competitors (demonstrating competence). HRM proficiency allows the organization to come up with new ways to solve organizational challenges (demonstrating innovations). Most studies emphasize these three characteristics as common areas to define and assess organizational proficiency, therefore we've chosen to focus on them (Barney, 1991; Wright & Snell, 1998; Peteraf & Bergen, 2003; Chanal, 2004; Schreyögg & Kliesch-Eberl, 2007; Nasution & Mavondo, 2008; Wright & Snell, 2009; Ravichandran, 2018; García-Sánchez, 2018). The methods of HRM proficiency indicate that the source of this proficiency can be found in a variety of organizational strategy and structure choices, including outsourcing or in-sourcing strategies, as well as the type of organizational structure used in conjunction with the sourcing strategy. Organizations are more than just an acquisition of resources and financial processes; they are an interconnection of structures, operations, expertise, capabilities, and individuals all working together in a complementary integrative manner to improve the firm's dynamic capabilities and generate value (Teece et al, 1997). This assumption is consistent with our goal of examining the impact of organizational sourcing strategies on HRM proficiency from a strategic standpoint. Furthermore, the HRM proficiency perspective emphasizes the critical impact of internal skills and knowledge in enabling companies to successfully execute outsourcing.

Another research showed some interest in how outsourcing affects HRM performance (Gianecchini, 2006). The importance of complementarities between HRO and HRM processes was discussed in that study, which was limited to medium and large businesses in the northeast of Italy. However, it did not consider the investigation's specific industrial context. Furthermore, they included various HRM processes in the outsourcing-performance connection without elucidating the influence on HRM knowledge and procedures based on the features of outsourced HRM processes. As a result, complementarities between HRO-performance connections are not well understood. Using data from Indian and international businesses, Singh (2009) attempted to offer a conceptual model to explain the link between outsourcing, capabilities, and performance. According to the study findings, market orientation and outsourcing both help to create skills, and outsourcing also helps to improve business performance. However, the conceptual model given in that study did not account for the intra-organizational level, which is represented by organizational structure. Susomrith & Brown (2017) explore a variety of HR outsourcing procedures used by Australian businesses and how they relate to outsourcing outcomes. Valverde & Gottardello (2018) investigate the link between HR outsourcing and the transfer of HR tasks to line managers in Spanish companies, according to surveys and conversations with HR external providers, the usage of HRO has increased in recent years, coinciding with the trend of devolving more HR responsibilities to line managers. Apart from the contradictory findings, there is a dearth of conceptual and practical data relating to Organizational Sourcing and HRM Processes and Proficiency across Arabian businesses. Following are hypotheses that have been proposed:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Organizational Sourcing has a significant effect on HRM Processes;*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *HRM Processes has a significant effect on HRM Proficiency.*

### **Mediating Role of HRM Processes**

According to HRM literature, HRM processes may be a key success factor (Barney, 1991; Ulrich, 1998; Salleh et al., 2020; Aburumman & Arabiat, 2021). However, HRM

processes were classified as administrative throughout the early and middle decades of the twentieth century focused on routine and control/bureaucratic processes (Guest and Peccei, 1994; Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; AL-Qudah et al., 2014; Aburumman et al., 2020). This critique has faded fast over time; the HRM processes has evolved into a critical component of organizational performance, moving away from the conventional scientific management techniques that were prevalent in the past (Guest, 1987; Qeshta et al., 2021). As a result of this transition, HRM models evolved from a constrained view of personnel management to a more open and dynamic vision of strategic HRM. Storey (1995) defined the nature of HRM as a distinct approach to employment management that attempts to gain competitive advantage via the strategic deployment of extremely dedicated and talented personnel, utilizing an integrated array of cultural, organizational, and personal approaches. Vrchota & Řehoř (2019) study focuses on the application of HR strategy in SMEs and the evaluation of HR process importance. The relationship between HR strategy and the function of human resource procedures was found to be poor. These shifts in HRM's nature and purpose necessitate corresponding adjustments in HRM's organizational structure and implementations. We may conclude that these new viewpoints have encouraged the trend of outsourcing some HRM processes by looking closely at the factors that define modern HRM. Because, in order to make HRM processes more strategic, organizations must liberate HRM processes from administrative chores by delegating part of these obligations to a specialist provider and delegating some of the jobs to line managers (Boxall and Purcell). Similarly, Brewster et al. (2007) believe that in order to meet today's corporate issues, modern HRM processes must make particular adjustments.

According to Wallo & Kock (2018), HR processes are increasingly being outsourced to outside labor market intermediaries by SMEs. HRM outsourcing has now become a widespread approach that its influence on the organizational structure may often be seen. Both research and practice propose that HRM outsourcing would result in the HRM function being downsized, more responsibilities being delegated to senior managers, the development of shared services centers – usually a step before outsourcing – and higher use of automated HRM implementation applications. The following hypothesis is presented, based on the existing theoretical arguments:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *HRM Processes mediate the relationship between Organizational Sourcing and HRM Proficiency.*

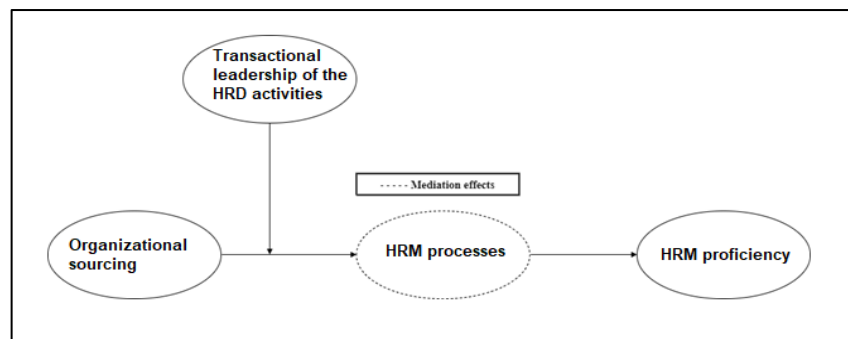
### **The Moderating Role of Transactional Leadership of the HRD Activities**

Tremblay et al. (2008) found that certain organizational and transactional features, such as complexity and asset specificity, are positively associated with the intensity of HR outsourcing in Canadian organizations. Although the transactional and organizational features of HRM were included in this study, the focus was only on the influence of these factors on HRO decision-making. In other words, it didn't look at how these factors influenced the link between Organizational Sourcing (HRO) and HRM processes or structure. Singh (2009) attempted to offer a conceptual model to explain the link between outsourcing, capabilities, and performance. according to the study findings business orientation and outsourcing both help to create skills, and outsourcing also helps to improve business performance. However, the conceptual model given within this study did not account for the intra-organizational level. according to Gospel and Sako, 2010, the shift from shared services centers to outsourcing has an impact on the allocation of capabilities between consumers and providers. They assume that the more time spent internally transforming procedures, the greater the user firm's ability to retain skills. They also concluded that outsourcing without first establishing an internal shared services center might lead to a higher reliance on the supplier's skills. According to Gubbins et al., (2018), senior

management has higher perceptions of HR and HRD professionals' skill, kindness, honesty, and the possibility of strategic business collaboration when HRD professionals employ evidence-based methods. Having a strategic business partner position that is closely connected with the board of directors boosts credibility and increases upper management's acceptance of HRD as a profession (Wright et al., 1998; Abd Halim et al., 2017; Khaddam et al., 2021; Shibly et al., 2021). Unluckily, taking this position may lead to a disregard for employee needs, eroding employee trust and losing any credibility HR may have derived from its ethical and social duties inside the company (Harrington et al., 2012; Wylie et al., 2014; Alnawafleh et al., 2017; Alsheikh et al., 2019; Alsmairat & Aldakhil, 2021). Researchers need to establish deeper grounds for researching the influence of Organizational Sourcing on HRM Processes through various levels of management content to gain a better grasp of sourcing implications. Such a foundation would obviously begin with a thorough assessment of the complete influence of organizational sourcing on HRM processes. Similarly, most prior studies did not focus on a particular set of management activities, despite the fact that this problem might aid in a better understanding of the influence of sourcing methods at the intra-organizational level. The following hypothesis is presented, based on the existing theoretical arguments:

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Transactional Leadership moderates the relationship between Organizational Sourcing and HRM Processes.*

The following research model is provided based on the proposed hypotheses:



**FIGURE 1**  
**PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL**

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample and Data Collection Procedure

Primary data has been collected directly from the research sample of oil and gas organizations in Saudi Arabia. Since the unit of analysis in this study is the business unit at the firm level, namely the HRM unit, human resource representatives at these organizations have been considered as the main source for primary data. Quantitative approaches were used in this research. Based on the research design and framework, the targeted sample represents different managerial levels, or different managerial titles, including HRM Senior, HRM Managers, HRM Heads and HRM Consultants. The research sample has been chosen to complete the survey according to the “convenience sampling” method. A convenience sample is chosen by the researcher because it is the most appropriate source that can provide data about the topic under

investigation (Grimm & Wozniak, 1990). Overall, 127 questionnaires were collected via the internet.

## Research Instruments

The survey was the main empirical research tool, and it was used mainly to collect quantitative data from the research sample. As a method, the survey usually relies on a substantial number of respondents, the magnitude of which should typically enable the application of a reasonably varied range of statistical techniques. In a social science such as management, the survey draws upon people's perceptions rather than on collecting hard data (de Leeuw & Dillman, 2008), and the results thus obtained fit the epistemological assumptions of the research and its approach. The questionnaires items were developed to collect data on each research indicator in line with specific research objectives. The questionnaire was in form of a Likert scale where respondents evaluated different statements about independent, dependent, moderate, and mediating variables. A scale of 1-5 was used. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher to all the respondents. Organizational Sourcing items are adapted from Gilley & Rasheed (2000), Mohr & Spekman (1994), Gainey & Klaas (2003). HRM Process items are adapted from Brewster et al (2007), Ulrich & Brockbank (2005), and Pettigrew et al (2003). HRM Proficiency items are adapted from Laursen & Foss (2003). Transactional Leadership of the HRD activities items are adapted from Williamson, 1991,1993).

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 3 was applied to test the research hypotheses and the conceptual model. Following Sarstedt et al., (2016) and Hair et al., (2013), the PLS-SEM is a composite structure that analyses mediation correlations. The PLS-SEM is suitable for analyzing correlations among constructs derived from a huge number of indicators (Hair et al., 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2016).

### Measurement Model Assessment

According to Hair et al., (2017), default settings for PLS algorithm can be applied with a weighting scheme set to Factor. Consistent internal reliability can be determined using Cronbach's Alpha and loadings of individual indicators, which should exceed 0.6 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), whereas average variance explained (AVE) should exceed 0.5 to ascertain convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All indicators in this study exceeded the threshold values, while Table 1 summarizes the final validity and reliability of this study.

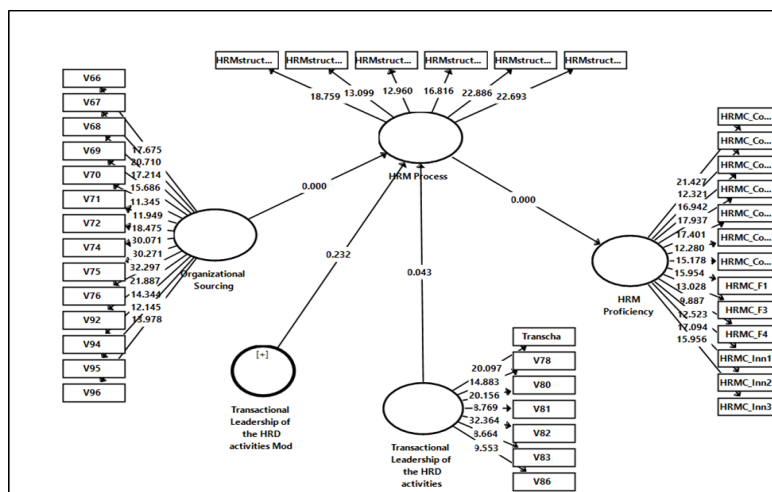
<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
HRM Process	0.840	0.883	0.557
HRM Proficiency	0.918	0.930	0.505
Organizational Sourcing	0.943	0.950	0.576
Transactional Leadership of the HRD activities	0.856	0.889	0.537

Discriminant validity, which identifies the degree to which latent variables are distinct from one another (Hair et al., 2017), is determined via cross-loadings and Fornell-Larcker criterion with cut-off points of 0.90 and 0.85 as the acceptable values, respectively (Hair et al., 2011; 2019). Cross loadings verify that each indicator possesses the highest loading value with the construct to which it is assigned, whereas the Fornell-Larcker criterion verifies that the square root of the AVE of each construct exceeds the highest correlation with any other construct (see Table 2).

<b>Construct</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
HRM Process (1)	0.746			
HRM Proficiency (2)	0.763	0.71		
Organizational Sourcing (3)	0.762	0.781	0.759	
Transactional Leadership of the HRD activities (4)	0.505	0.504	0.529	0.732

The PLS algorithm was run first to estimate path coefficients. Next, bootstrapping with 500 bootstrap re-samples was executed to identify the significance of the effects. The value of  $R^2=0.599$  for HRM Process denotes that > 50% of the variance in HRM Process is explained by the model. Tables 3 tabulate the significance of the path coefficients.

<b>Path</b>	<b>Original sample</b>	<b>Sample mean</b>	<b>T statistics</b>	<b>P value</b>	<b>Hypothesis result</b>
Organizational Sourcing >> HRM Processes	0.679	0.675	12.071	0	Accepted
HRM Processes >> HRM Proficiency	0.763	0.768	18.868	0	Accepted
<b>Indirect Path</b>					
Organizational Sourcing << HRM Processes << HRM Proficiency. Mediation	0.518	0.519	9.078	0	Accepted
Organizational Sourcing << Transactional Leadership << HRM Processes. Moderation	0.058	0.048	1.198	0.232	Rejected



**FIGURE 2  
ANALYSIS RESULTS**

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results obtained from this study for hypothesis 1 as reported in Table 4 and figure 2 above, show that organizational sourcing has a significant direct impact on HRM processes (path coefficient = 0.679 &  $p \leq 0.05$ ). The research has produced some new and enlightening results in pursuit of this goal, a contribution that is anticipated will benefit the discipline by addressing and putting to the forefront the internal and dynamics of the intra-organizational level, which has gotten little attention in prior research. The statistical study reveals that relationship quality has a substantial impact on organizational structure, as evidenced by HRM processes, size and expenses, strategic HRM positions, and the preservation of firm-specific HRM knowledge. These beneficial improvements in HRM organizations result in a more strategic focus and, as a result, improved HRM processes. The findings indicated that the firm's investment in organizational sourcing had a favorable influence on its HRM proficiency, with HRM flexibility and competence being the most noticeable benefit. The higher the firm's organizational flexibility and competencies, the more it spends in its HRM sourcing strategies, in the sense of building solid relationships with dependable suppliers. There was evidence that investing in HRM outsourcing has a positive influence on innovation. The findings indicated a consistently significant link between outsourcing intensity and HRM innovation, implying that this element is considered a major factor in increasing a company's capabilities through outsourcing.

As for H2, HRM processes exhibited a significant direct impact on HRM proficiency (path coefficient = 0.763 &  $p \leq 0.05$ ). According to the data, there is a substantial link between HRM processes and HRM proficiency. HRM processes, as previously said, are at the foundation of the study model, which has been black-boxed in earlier investigations. This study demonstrates that the HRM processes have been appropriately positioned inside the research model, allowing it to better explain the model's foundation and interactions between its components. Furthermore, this research found that predicted that HRM processes fully mediates the relationship between organizational sourcing and HRM proficiency (path coefficient = 0.518 &  $p \leq .05$ ) providing empirical support for hypothesis 3. This result backs up evidence that companies in the petroleum industry have found it critical to base their business practices on collaboration. This is reasonable given the sensitive nature of field operations in this industry, which drives firms to establish and acquire the finest HRD sourcing agreements possible. Finally, hypothesis 4 predicted that transactional leadership moderates the relationship between organizational sourcing and the HRM process. The results fail to confirm this prediction (path coefficient = 0.058 &  $p = 0.232$ ). The findings show that when making substantial changes to HRM processes in the petroleum sector, HRM representatives do not prioritize transactional leadership, such as asset specificity or volume uncertainty. Instead, the understanding of the significance of developing a strategic collaboration with the HRM supplier appears to be the primary motivator. In other terms, regardless of the characteristics of HRD activities, HR managers are focused on making investments in developing strategic relationships with their HRD provider.

### Theoretical and Practical Implication

This thesis offers a useful conceptual framework for understanding the link between sourcing strategies and organizational structure and capabilities on the one hand, and organizational structure and capabilities on the other. Although the focus of this study was on HRM sourcing, the concept may be used for a variety of management tasks. The study model's architecture allows researchers to test hypotheses about the direct and indirect links between sourcing methods, organizational capabilities, and/or other intra-organizational activities.



Organizational Sourcing and HRM Proficiency have been linked in just a few research. Various approaches to causation between HRM practices, leadership, and business sourcing emerged as a result of the lack of studies in the research stream. The moderating role of transactional leadership of HRD activities between organizational sourcing and its implications on HRM processes is discussed in this paper, which goes beyond the traditional view of HRM processes as a mediator of the relationship between organizational sourcing and HRM Proficiency.

The purpose of this research is to present an alternative model that links the influence of organizational sourcing as a catalytic process that affects petroleum organizations' HRM proficiency. Despite the fact that most prior research has focused on company performance, this study attempts to uncover the missing link between sourcing techniques and firm performance. The intra-organizational level, rather than overall performance, should be the primary unit of study in such outsourcing-related research. At the intra-organizational level, the effects of outsourcing or in-sourcing on the organizational structure should be taken into account. Because these procedures are the initial source of capabilities, the focus should be on the organizational processes, roles, and expertise that would stay in-house. Because capabilities are mostly internal, they should be included in the intra-organizational examination. We can come closer to measuring the influence of sourcing methods on firm performance if research can explain the link between sourcing and structure and capabilities. This study represents a critical turning point in strategic thinking from a management standpoint. It goes beyond prior outsourcing-related studies by offering managers reasons and chances to maximize their HRM sourcing methods. It does this by emphasizing the significance of integrating the HRM sourcing strategy with particular changes in the internal HRM structure, as reflected by strategic HRM insights and organizational structure theory. Firms must take this into account in order to maximize the beneficial effect of their HRM sourcing methods, and therefore their organizational capabilities.

### **Limitations and Future Work**

Both the technique used and the empirical work done are expected to generate true generalizations that will be beneficial to HRM theorists and practitioners. Of course, those using these generalizations as a guide should take into account that the findings were based on a study limited to petroleum industries in Saudi Arabia and should be aware of variables that could affect their truthfulness in some ways, depending on the sectors, countries, or managerial/organizational functions involved. Future studies might concentrate on other nations and practices. HRM practices vary substantially depending on the organization's outsourcing and nature of the organizational context; for example, management procedures in new ventures and IT firms differ significantly from those in the petroleum industry. A comparison of organizational sources and the nature of human resource management practices in small and medium businesses, which differ in numerous aspects, is another promising subject for future research. Future research could benefit from attempting to build a longitudinal set of data to assess a structural inter-temporal framework that would enable defining both the non-linear, dynamic system and reverse causality characteristics of the relationship between HRM sourcing, HRM processes, and organizational capabilities. Also, investigate deeper layers of moderator and mediator factors that might have a substantial influence on the impact of HRM sourcing on organizational capabilities. Most prior studies focused on the direct influence of sourcing by categorizing factors as dependent or independent, but the links between HRM sourcing and organizational structure and competencies are more complex, necessitating the separation of several categories of study variables. The uniqueness of the theoretical reasons and thorough

evaluation of the study model and framework are required to determine the optimal grouping of these factors.

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