



The effectiveness of applying the strategic practices of human resource management on the performance of transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract

This study aimed to test the validity of the model of applying the strategic practices of human resource management on improving the performance of transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman and to explore the nature of implied relationships in the hypothesized model of study. The researcher adopted the descriptive approach based on the quantitative analysis of field research to test the hypotheses and verify the extent of correlation among these variables depending on the questionnaire of study. The questionnaire was administered to a random sample of (283) from a population of (1075) representing the Omani employees from all positions. After testing the relationships among the implied factors, the findings showed that applying the strategic practices of human resources affects the improvement of organizational performance levels through the positive role of the organizational behavior of individuals in the researched organizations. Therefore, the study could formulate a theoretical framework valid to be applied in the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate particularly and the Sultanate of Oman generally.

Keywords: Strategic Practices of Human Resources, Best Practices Theory, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Performance

Introduction

The concept of strategic practices of human resource management is relatively recent in Business Administration. It reflects the contemporary and modern practices that draw the organization's long-term deal with the human element in work including his career daily affairs in the organization. These practices catch up with the organization's public policy, conditions and future mission which aims to achieve in the shadow of the surrounded environment and modern technology (Okili,2009). The human resources, according to the world change from the industrial era to modern information technology era, became one of the most important

organizational basics. Individuals are the lonely organizational element who can adopt the new concepts and ideas which enable them to exploit opportunities and encounter the challenges of changes. It is worthy to note that the popular scholar of business administration "Porter" mentioned in his popular book "the competitive advantage" that human resources are one of the essential needs that should be possessed by an organization to achieve its competitive advantage, and these resources have to be an effective and important role in forming and implementing the organization strategy because of their relevance to organizational processes (Durrach & Al Sbbagh,2010). Okili (2009) argued that complete



advantage has a common goal in all establishments which seek to achieve because it is related to its sustainability. Globalization and world openness led to a rise in the competition among organizational entities. Therefore, many organizations face nowadays the ghost of extinction so they struggled to increase its competitive advantage to achieve the highest averages of performance as they changed their strategy, culture, administrative philosophy, and product quality to achieve its sustainability.

Therefore, organizations persisted on enhancing and developing their human resources through experiences and progressed skills to increase their effectiveness, loyalty, and obligation so that they can produce distinguished and creative services to satisfy customers and foster their competitive position to achieve success and sustainability. The continuity of organization's competitive advantage based on its ability to lease human element by modern techniques guarantying basically endeavors to change thinking method from being merely cost to the strategic advantage that can achieve more benefits. Applying the best strategic practices of human resource management leads the organization to achieve the competitive advantage and the highest averages of high-quality production (Arthur, 1994; Boxall & Purcell, 2003). On the other side, Al Salem (2009) asserts that strategic practices of human resource contribute essentially in enhancing the organization's performance and productivity through some techniques such as: possessing labors who have capability, innovation, development and well performance; preparing individuals to deal with modern technology of production and processes, developing loyalty and belonging to organization through improving the work environment and ability to work and supporting desire.

Statement of the Problem

Although there are some studies and research that Pfeffer Model (1998) to verify the extent of its effectiveness in developing countries, the researcher; according to his experience and revision of literature review didn't find any Arabic country applied and this model. In addition, the local environment is still using some traditional practices characterized with lacking the strategic dimensions such as work analysis, employment, training, compensations and wages management which were located basically in public sector and neglected in work sector in the Sultanate of Oman in Dhofar Governorate particularly. The researcher noticed that linking the

application of human resources' strategic practices with organizational performance in the private sector in Dhofar Governorate wasn't given sufficient attention. This fact was proved by some studies and local referendums such as a field study conducted in 2014 about the vacancy searchers' view of work. The findings of this field study showed that (95%) of vacancy searchers prefer to work in the government sector because of some reasons such as occupational safety as the private sector doesn't offer monthly wages relevant with experiences and qualifications as well as fewer compensations and benefits. In addition, the work report in Sultanate of Oman in the year vision 2016 showed in its questionnaire (38%) of respondents which form the highest portion preferred to work in the governmental public sector because of occupational safety only. Hence, the statement of the problem is represented in the following: to what extent can the effectiveness of applying human resources' strategic practices affect the organizational performance of transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman.

Research Questions

Based on the previous discussion in the problem statement about discovering the effectiveness of applying human resources' strategic practices affect the organizational performance of transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between the strategic practices of human resources and improving the performance of the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?
2. To what extent can the strategic practices of human resources affect the organizational behavior in the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between organizational behavior and improving the performance of the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?
4. What is the role of organizational behavior as a mediator variable between the strategic practices of human resources and improving the performance of the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?



Literature Review

Strategic practices of human resources management

The researcher, during his quick review of previous studies and literature review, suggested that the theories of strategic human resource management, which are concerned with the development of human resources from all aspects of his life, both functional and social, have been used and have been closely linked to human resource management strategies and organizational performance. There are many theories that focused on the strategic management of human resources, each theory examined the performance of the organization from a different perspective according to the inclinations of their owners and based on their tendencies and what they researched from tests and studies. Delery & Doty (1996), in their famous study of the development of the strategic theory of human resource management, divided it into three main entrances: first was the global approach, the second was the situational inputs and third and finally was the formative input. After that, Richard and Thompson redefined two models that they considered to be the most prominent in terms of interest, research, and studies around them: the situational input was modeled into the optimal alignment model, and the global gateway was modeled to the Idealistic Practices Model, and they maintained the formative input without change (Armstrong, 2006).

One of the most universally accepted theories of best practices for human resource management strategies is the Jeffrey Pfeffer (1998) model which is one of the most important modern human resource theories based on the assumption that some human resource management practices are always better than other practices, and applying best practices will achieve the best performance of the organization, and this will have a positive impact on the behavior of individuals in the organization such as low turnover rate, low rate of absences, maximize productivity, achieving high quality of work, high morale and rising the feelings of organizational citizenship as well as the rise of individuals' organizational satisfaction. Many recent applied studies have confirmed the effectiveness of applying the Pfeffer model as a study (Sagwa, 2014; Ahmad & Schroeder, 2003; Edgar & et al., 2009; Coaker, 2011) as the findings of these studies declared a relationship between the practices of human resource management in an organization and

achieving sales growth, profit, market share, productivity and overall performance of the organization.

Pfeffer (1998) studied the relationship between strategic practices of human resources management directly with organizational performance without addressing mediator variables such as organizational behavior which the researcher seeks to embed in the default model of study. The study adopted the Pfeffer model, but in another way by including concepts and variables aimed at developing the Pfeffer model and testing its effectiveness if applied in the current study environment. Although there are some studies and studies that have implemented the Pfeffer model (1998) and verified its effectiveness in Western countries, the researcher, according to the literature and review of previous studies did not find any Arab countries studied and used this model, in addition to the local environment which is still using some of the traditional practices characterized by lack of strategic dimensions such as work analysis, employment, training, compensation, and wage management; as all of them have been concentrated in the public sector and have not been applied in the business sector in the Sultanate of Oman, particularly in Dhofar Governorate.

Organizational behavior

The aim of studying organizational behavior is to improve the performance, productivity, administrative effectiveness and job satisfaction of the employees in order to achieve the common goals desired by the employee; as an individual and the organization in which he works, whether public or private to achieve the goals of whole society (Al Amina, 2010). It is the field which focuses on studying the views, attitudes, behaviors, and opinions of individuals in organizations and how formal and informal organizations affect the perception, feelings, and achievement of individuals within the organization, and how the environment affects the organization, its human resources and objectives, and finally the impact of individuals on the efficiency of organization (Al-Sawat and Abdul-Ghani, 2003). Stephen & Judge (2015) argued that the concept of organizational behavior examines the effects: the behavior of individuals, groups, and organizational structure within the organization in order to develop the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization in achieving its objectives.

Organizational Performance



Organizational performance is the organization's achievement of the goals it has defined in its mission by spending an acceptable level of organizational resources to achieve the organization's long-term sustainability objectives (An & Guillermo, 2002). It is a concept which reflects both the objectives of the organization and the means to achieve it i.e. it is a concept that links the aspects of activity to the goals that these activities seek to achieve within the organization (Abdelmohsen, 2006). It is considered a total of the individual performance and organizational units as well as the effects of social, economic and cultural environment on them. The performance of individuals in an organization is measured by a set of measures through which their performance is assessed to ensure that the systems and means of implementation in each department achieve the maximum possible production with minimal costs and in less time and at appropriate levels of quality. The performance of each department is measured by a set of criteria in the light of its alignment with organization's policy. Due to factors beyond the management of the organization, institutional performance must be measured in the light of external and internal influences (Radwan, 2013). The organizational performance expresses the organization's ability to achieve its objectives in the near and long term which is represented in achieving profits, benefits, continuity, growth, and adaptation to environmental changes by exploiting the organization's resources, human and technological cadres. Organizational performance is the mirror through which the organization achieves its market shares; taking in consideration the customers' satisfaction which enabled them to achieve suitable financial returns with the obligation to the social and ethical responsibility towards environment and society in which the organization is working (Becker & Gerhat, 1996).

Methodology

The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach to study the phenomena in the terms of characteristics, forms, influencing factors and the relationships among their dimensions. The study included the Omani workers in the work sector of transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of from three large companies; as the population of study included (1075) people of which a random sample (238) was selected based on Steven Thompson Equation (2012). The study adopted a field survey based on a questionnaire designed from literature review to collect and measure 14 dimensions. The questionnaire consisted of two parts as the first part

included the demographic factors of population whereas the second part consisted of (65) items measuring the variables of study. To test the reliability and validity of questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted on (30) participants as the findings showed that the instrument was valid and reliable for the study objectives. The Cronbach Alpha of variables ranged from (0.960) to (0.964) and the Cronbach Alpha of research questions' items was (0.962) and showed that the correlational value among phrases of each dimension and the total dimensions was significant which confirmed its validity to measure what it is designed to measure.

Results

The researcher used Structural Equation Modelling using SEM (AMOS version 22) to measure the relationship of the assumptions in Conceptual Model between the independent variable and the dependent variable through the intermediate variable. The AMOS program allows to measure of many hypotheses at the same time as well as the high flexibility in the analysis of these hypotheses. It is based on the analysis of each theoretical framework once, instead of dealing with it separately and separated from each other (Hair, 2017). It can also analyse the theoretical framework through Intermediate Factors the problem of abnormal distribution of the results in the questionnaire is addressed and helps to develop a new theoretical framework for the study by modifying the indicators (Modification Indices) and creating new relationships between factors (Variables) that are theoretically acceptable when the research involves more than one factor and more than one influential factor, it analyzes with all the relationships and shows the effect of these relations on each other.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis:

Table (1) shows all indicators of confirmatory factor analysis of three measurement models **first:** Strategic Practices of Human Resources Management (Model-1), **second:** Organizational Behavior (Model 2), and third Organizational Performance (Model 3). All the indicators of analysis showed that they have a very suitable match for the model according to the directions of the statisticians and that the data are of high quality and can be studied and used in the current study. CFI more than (0.90), RMSEA less than (0.08), mindless than (5.0) of the entire measurements model.



Table 1: Goodness of Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analysis to All Measurement Models

Goodness of Fit index	Indicator Code	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Chi Square	χ^2	730.246	191.358	257.886
Degree of Freedom	DF	328	72	128
P Value	P	.000	.000	.000
Relative or Normed Chi Square	cmindf	2.226	2.658	2.015
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	.068	.079	.062
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	.909	.921	.950

Source: AMOS Program Outputs

Validity and Reliability

Table (2) Shows Validity and Reliability values of all the three Measurements models strategic practices of human resources management, organizational behaviour, and organizational performance. The Results explain that all the models matched with data collected from the study sample and these models are valid for hypothesis testing through structural modelling equation. We not from the

table No. 2 the Estimate more than (0.5), S.E more than (1.964), C.R more than (0.7), AVE (0.5) , but some values in AVE were less than the recommended value (0.5) based on (Barclay, Thompson & Higgins 1995), but according to we can accept it in case the result of composite reliability more than (0.6), that mean the convergent validity of study is enough.

Table 2: Validity and Reliability All Measurement Models

Factor	Estimate	Sstandard Error	Critical Ratio	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	AVE > C.R
Job Security	0.50 >	1.964 >	.785	.785	.482	No
Selection	0.50 >	1.964 >	.887	.887	.664	Yes
Work Teams	0.50 >	1.964 >	.872	.872	.631	Yes
Compensation	0.50 >	1.964 >	.780	.780	.481	No
Training	0.50 >	1.964 >	.852	.852	.590	Yes
Reduce Difference	0.50 >	1.964 >	.791	.791	.631	Yes
Sharing Information	0.50 >	1.964 >	.817	.817	.528	Yes
Job Rotation	0.50 >	1.964 >	.648	.648	.612	Yes
Job Satisfaction	0.50 >	1.964 >	.865	.869	.528	Yes
Organizational Citizenship	0.50 >	1.964 >	.739	.739	.344	No
Finance Indicators	0.50 >	1.964 >	.893	.893	.633	Yes
Customers	0.50 >	1.964 >	.825	.825	.545	Yes
Internal Operations	0.50 >	1.964 >	.844	.844	.575	Yes
Learning and growth	0.50 >	1.964 >	.788	.788	.484	No

Source: AMOS Program Outputs

Structural Equation Modeling

The researcher used Confirmatory Modeling strategy to approved and confirm the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables. The exogenous variable is strategic practice of human resource management and

endogenous variable is organizational performance and organizational behavior as mediator. The structure model shows in Figure (1) that all the Goodness of Fit indices indicated that the structural equation model has met all the acceptable criteria as in Table No. 3.



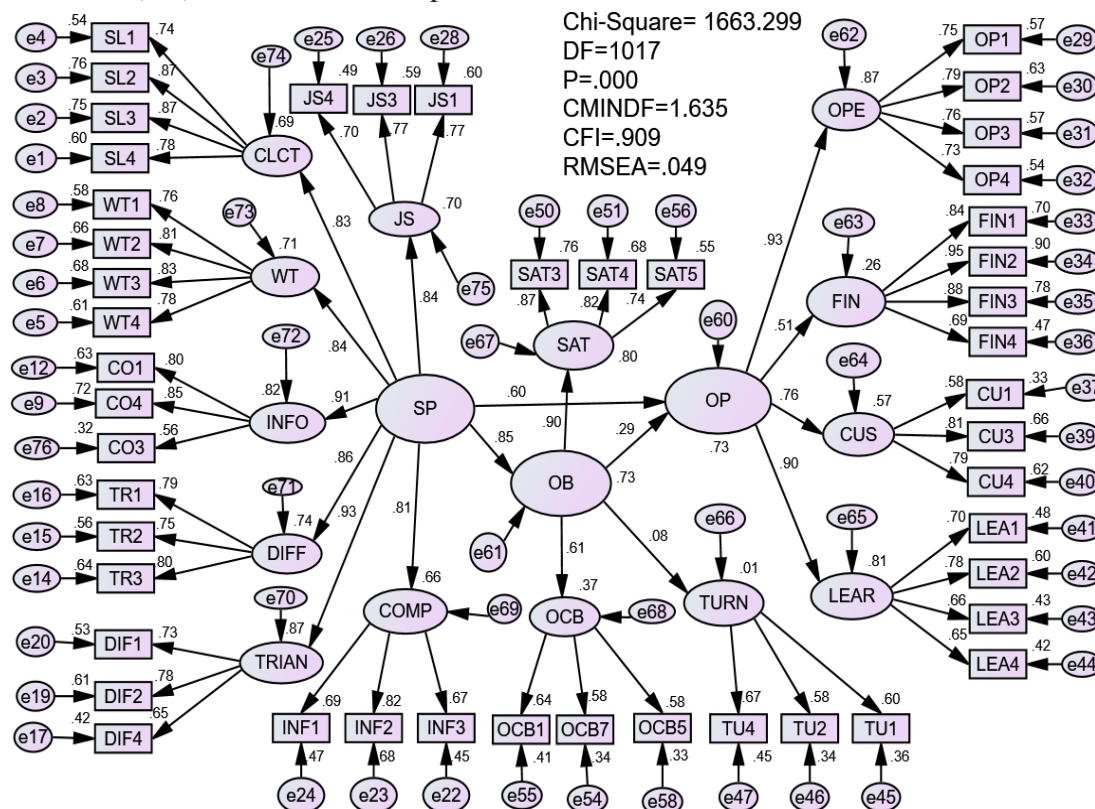
Table 3: Goodness of Fit Indices of Structural Equation Modeling

Goodness of Fit index	Indicator Code	Recommendation of statisticians
Chi Square	χ^2	1663.299
Degree of Freedom	DF	1017
P Value	P	.000
Relative or Normed Chi Square	cmindf	1.635
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	.049
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	.909

Source: AMOS Program Outputs

According to the finding in figure (1) all the relationships include in hypothesis are accepted. There is strong direct affect between strategic practices of human resource management and improving the performance of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman (0.60), in same time there is a strong direct positive relation between the strategic practices of human resource management and organizational behavior (0.85) because the effect values more than (0.2), There is a direct positive

correlation between the organizational behavior and improving the performance of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman. Finally there is an indirect positive relation between the strategic practices of human resource management in improving the performance as mediated by organizational behavior of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman (0.25).



Source: AMOS Program Outputs
 Figure 1: Final Structural Equation Modeling



Table 4: Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Effect Size	Decision
H1: There is a direct positive correlation between the strategic practices of human resource management on performance of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman.	0.60	Accepted
H2: There is a direct positive correlation between the strategic practices of human resource management on organizational Behavior of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman.	0.85	Accepted
H3: There is a direct positive correlation between the organizational Behaviors on the performance of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman.	0.29	Accepted
H4: There is an indirect positive correlation between the strategic practices of human resource management on the performance as mediated by organizational Behavior of the transport sector in Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman.	0.25	Accepted

Source: AMOS Program Outputs

Discussion of findings

This study aimed to verify the role of workers’ organizational behavior in the relationship between applying the strategic practices of human resources and improving the performance of the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman. Therefore, the study determined the fourth hypothesis of study which expressed the initial answer that helped the researcher to verify this relationship by reviewing the findings of previous studies in the fields of human resource administration and organizational behavior which explored the causative relationship between the variables of the fourth hypothesis; preparing for its verification applicable in the population of study.

The statistical analysis and showed that there is indirect effect of human resources’ strategic practices on the organizational performance through organizational behavior as multiplying the effect of human resources’ strategic practices variable (0.85) by the effect of variables of organizational performance and organizational behavior (0.29) equals (0.246) which is higher than Threshold Value (0.08), and the Critical Ratio Value (2.333) which is

higher than Criterion value (1.964); which confirms the existence of indirect effect and verification of moderator role of organizational behavior as a moderator between building the human resources’ strategic practices and organizational performance according to Baron & Kenny (1998) because the Structural Modeling Equation doesn’t show the freedom degree but only the value of effects. Therefore, statistic scholars suggest using Sobel Test in the case of evaluating the indirect relationships among study variables as it tests the value and freedom degree of indirect effect. If the score of Sobel Test is more than (1.964) and significant value (P) is less than (0.05), it means that the organizational behavior has a moderator role in the relationship between the human resources’ strategic practices and organizational performance. The score of Sobel Test was (2.333) which was greater than Criterion value (1,964), and P value = (0.0196) which was less than (0.05) and hence, the fourth hypothesis of the study was verified.

The researcher attributes this result to the transportation sector’s awareness of the importance of applying the best human resources’ strategic practices which are represented in enhancing the feeling levels of



occupational safety, intensive training to provide the skills that enable them to catch up with sudden changes in their work nature and labor, motivating them through the policy of compensations and rewards, legalizing differences of organizational levels which are considered from the most important concepts of organizational justice which is equity, sharing data and important information pertaining to their organizations which enable them to make high-quality decisions; which will lead definitely to fostering the organizational individual's positive situations, attitudes and behaviors either inside or outside the organization which undoubtedly influence positively improving the organizational performance and achieving good averages satisfying the stakeholders. This finding is supported by the findings of (Katou & Budhowar, 2010; Becker, 1997; Gust, 1997; Becker & et al., 1997; Boxll & Porcell, 2008; Richard & Johnson, 2001; Guthrie, 2001).

The findings of this study corroborated with Boxll & Porcell (2008) as it proved that adopting positive policies in an organization including its overall leadership and administrative levels aligning with the aims of its human resources will definitely improve the individuals' positive attitude towards the organization generally such as feeling organizational satisfaction and obligation that results in a big improvement in the quality of financial performance, social work and total organizational performance.

Brenda & Ben and Bram (2013) asserted the importance of the role of one of the organizational behavior dimensions in this study such as organizational satisfaction as a mediator variable. The study investigated (6253) responses from the employees in the local governorates in the Netherlands as the findings showed that organizational satisfaction plays a mediator role between human resource management and organizational performance. These findings are attributed to the increasing importance of general administration in governmental organizations which aligns with finding long-term financial alternatives and solutions to provide its services efficiently and effectively.

The findings of this study also corroborated with Richard & Johnson (2001) as it declared that employment rotation had a positive role in applying the human resources' strategic practices and financial performance of an organization. Guthrie (2012) showed that the phenomenon

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of employment rotation had an effective role in the relationship between the human resources' strategic practices and the organizations' productivity. Gust (1997) suggested that feeling occupational safety, compensations, legalizing the differences in organizational levels, training and choosing individuals affected investment profits and returns through the cycle of organizational citizenship. Furthermore, the findings of this study corroborated with (Pfeffer, 1998;=Pfeffer &Veiga, 1999; Delery &Doty, 1996; Javed, 2012; Ghandaghi et al., 2011, ;Alhowaish, 2013) which proved the effectiveness of applying the practices of compensations, rewards, training, and occupational safety helped in raising the averages of organizational performance of labors from one side and total organizational performance form the other side.

The most important contribution of this study from the theoretical and cognitive aspects is that the effects of seven strategic practices of human resource management as mentioned in Pfeffer Model, the dimensions of organizational behavior, employment rotation, organizational satisfaction, and organizational citizenship affect greatly if they are practiced altogether than individually. Therefore, they cooperate altogether to improve the performance of transportation sector greatly; which wasn't implied in Pfeffer Model as it didn't take in consideration the organizational behaviors and regarded it as indicators to measure performance. Therefore, the practitioner of human resource management in the transportation sector in Dhofar Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman should take in their consideration the mediator variable organizational behavior and its reflections on the process of organizational performance.

Conclusion

The study discussed the relationship between strategic practices for human resource management and organizational performance and the role of organizational behavior among employees that affects organizational performance. The study found that there is a direct impact of HRMP on organization performance and on employees' behavior. There is an indirect effect of HRMP and organization performance by organizational behavior. This has been proven by previous researches and studies. These results lead us to develop the relationship between strategic practices and organizational performance by adding mediator's variables that help to influence this relationship.



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