

Does it Exist? HRM Department in Jordanian Companies

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Abstract

This exploratory study explores the existence of effective HRM in Jordanian organizations and HRM potential challenges. The study targeted all Jordanian organizations listed in Amman Stocks Exchange at the end of (2015), in total 54 companies were surveyed. The study main data collection was the questionnaire which was distributed to 270 HR staff in the targeted companies. Statistical tests within the SPSS were used to analyze the collected data. The results show the concept of strategic HRM is not yet found or existed. There was little evidence in the majority of the surveyed organizations had in term of effectiveness of HRM policies and practices; they were seen as ineffective. Moreover, the results emphasized lack of top management recognition, support and commitment toward HRM policies and activities as one of the obvious HRM challenges. There was a general tendency among participants in all of the surveyed organizations that their HRM staff view their jobs as routine administration, and they lack the influence and credibility to develop and implement an HRM programs. The study includes important implications for the surveyed organizations to get more powerful HR department in place. HRM must meet the basic criteria of both the strategic and the developmental perspectives.

Keywords: HRM; effectiveness; paradigm; barriers; organization; Jordan

1. Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) department is a critical department that aims to integrate all the processes, systems, activities, functions required to ensure that the right, qualified competent people are acquired and used in an effective way. Therefore, HRM includes all activities and functions used to attract and retain employees and to ensure they perform at a high level in meeting organizational goals. HRM in its strategic perspective consider both organizational and the individual needs and objective, it also aims to create motivated, qualified, committed workforce required to perform jobs effectively and achieving organizational excellence through people.

The review of the international (HRM) literature emphasizes the vital role of HRM in many organizations, and in various region of the world (Budhwar and Debra, 2002; Afiouni et al., 2013). In western European organizations and in American companies HRM is recognized as a central player in building better operation for business (Afiouni et al., 2013; Brewster et al., 1992; Wright et al., 2003). Since the mid of 1990 HRM has become considered as a strategic partner in organization affecting organizational success and competitiveness and overall organizational excellence (Becker and Gerhart 1996; Delaney and Huselid 1996; Huselid, et al., 1997; Barney and Wright 1998).

Much attention and efforts have been given to HRM practices as strategic tools for organizational success and competitiveness. However, the value of HRM in many organizations operating in Arab countries including Jordan is still unclear and doubtful. According to Afiouni et al., (2013) in the Arab Middle East, there is still no apparent picture about the current best HR practices. In Jordanian companies also HRM struggles many barriers. In many Jordanian companies there is a department of HRM but it function under personnel perspective and still the strategic HRM perspective is not recognized yet. So the aim of this paper first is to investigate the existence or the absence of effective HRM model in Jordanian organizations. Second, to empirically explore to most common HR practices in Jordanian surveyed companies, third, to shed light on the most dominant HR perspective, and finally to explore the current HRM barriers in Jordanian organizations.

2- Literature Review

2-1 HRM paradigms

HRM has been subject to considerable debate; the concept which is sheltered in managerial publicity and its fundamental philosophy and characters is highly controversial Storey (1995). In the 1990s the HRM literature shifted the focus of traditional HR paradigm "the personnel management" to a focus on HR as a strategic partner. The later literature advocates an emphasis on making HR managers a strategic business partners (Afiouni et al. 2013; Lawler and Mohrman 2003; Ulrich and Brockbank 2005; Wright and Snell 2005).

The main distinctions between HRM paradigm and personnel management paradigm are represented according to Bratton and Gold (1999) by the following:

- First, the term of management, like a language as a whole. With a grown awareness among practitioners of using gender-neutral language, HR has been used by some to avoid gender-bias phrases such as

manpower administration.

- Second, HRM represents a fundamentally different approach to the management of people in work organizations. Personnel management is to be directed mainly at the organization's employees, recruiting, training and rewarding, and is considered as a caring activity. It is concerned with satisfying employee's work related needs and dealing with their problems and issues. In contrast, HRM is considered as a central business concern which more proactive and integrated into corporate management. There is less emphasis on formal and collective modes of management- employees' relations, and a tendency to shift to a more informal individualistic orientation (Storey, 1992).

2-2 Soft versus hard HRM

Within HRM paradigm, there are two dominant approaches (soft or hard). This distinction between soft and hard HRM is best founded in Storey (1992) ; Legge (1995a, p.35; 1995b, pp.66-7); and Boxall (1996). The soft approach reflects the developmental humanist approach. Within the soft approach effective HRM focuses upon activities such as: promotion, motivation, commitment and training and development...etc. Therefore, it recognizes the importance of HRM to the goals the organization, and thus management has to create a work environment that emphasizes employee development, through practices such as training, participation and communication. These programs and activities are essential for having innovative, flexible, committed employees who are valued resources (Kane et al., 1999; Beer et al., 1984a; 1984b; Boxall, 1996; Guest, 1989; 1991; 1992; Noon, 1992; Walton, 1985).

While a hard HRM perspective reflects the situational contingent approach (Boxall, 1996). The hard approach of HRM is, as much aligned with what is often termed as strategic HRM Legge (1995a, p. 34; 1995b, p. 137). Within this approach, HRM is closely integrated with business strategies and goals (Kane et al., 1999; Beer et al., 1984a; 1984b; Boxall, 1996; Kamoche, 1994; Lundy, 1994). Therefore, it considers employees as valuable firm's resource.

2-3 HRM is Arab organizations context

In Jordanian organizations, HRM is still known as personnel department which represents the old approach to HRM. In this vent Altarawneh (2005) found that in some Jordanian banking organizations there was no particular department for HR. Instead, they designate a small section within a department for HR activities, or delegate people issues to other departments like marketing or public relations. Even in those organizations who assign a particular department or section for HR, these departments do not act as HRM department, they are more likely to be personnel management departments. So it can be argued that these organizations have not yet realized the differences between HRM and personnel management paradigms. Murphy (2002) made a case for the need of a fully developed HRM function in the Middle East Countries –Jordan is one of these countries- as opposed to the traditional personnel function. Afiouni et al. (2013) suggested lack of strategic focus for the HR function, lack of HR professional and lack of credible HR leaders (Murphy,2002; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). In addition, Afiouni et al. (2013) argued that few HR professionals in the region have the strategic capacity to really manage and administer HR programs. Murphy (2002) promotes the scheme of careful and selective adaptation of western HR best practices because of the differences between Eastern and Western countries in terms of stability, culture and religion (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007). Afiouni (2007) and El-jardali et al.(2009) highlight a mismatch between HR practices and business strategies in Middle East countires. In addition, international HRM challenges pertaining to the transfer of HR practices as well as diversity management practices were highlighted in (Al-Husan et al. 2009; Forstenlenchner et al. 2011). Rehman and Marouf (2004) investigated organizational arrangements and personnel policies and practices in Kuwait they concluded that IT and HRD professionals could not find staff with the appropriate sets of capabilities which affected the level of professionalism of their respective functions. In the same vent, Kabasakeal and Bodur (2002) examined the need for the development of a professional HR function in the Middle East in light of its unique cultural and economical characteristics.

2-4 HRM Barriers

Internationally, HRM may face many organizational barriers Kane et al (1999) in their study barriers to effective HRM explore barriers to meaningful and effective approaches of HRM. They specified wide range of HR barriers importantly the following barriers: The first barriers is reflected in the extent to which top management has a low priority and short-term view of HRM issues while being more concerned with other issues. In other word, lack of top management support and commitment which explains an absence of a particular department or division for HRM in organizations. Top management support and commitment is very important for effective HRM implementation (Purcell, 1994; Kane et al.1999).

The second barrier to effective HRM according to Kane et al., (1999) refers to the extent to which HRM staffs possess the knowledge and skills necessary to implement credible HRM activities within their organization. A number of researchers indicated for the lack of HR professionalism and a lack of HR strategic leaders (Afiouni

et al., 2013; Murphy, 2002; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). In the same vent, Beer (1997) cited in Kane et al., (1999) stated that those people working within the HR function must clearly understand how HRM is different from the old-style personnel management approached and be prepared to support the necessary change. This re-definition of the HR role requires that the HR manager adopt more of a business partner role. Specifically, this role according to Dyer (1999) requires that the HR professional has a clear understanding of how HR fits with, and supports the organization's mission and strategy as well as an understanding of basic business processes. In their research Huselid et al. (1997) also, found that most HR managers were very proficient in the delivery of professional HRM capabilities (or competencies) that relate to traditional technical activities. Strategic HRM capability levels however, that support the business partner role, were lower. The third HRM barrier is reflected in the difficulties to prove the impact of HRM activities on the organizational performance financially. As a result, members of an organization may be doubt the value of major HRM activities. It is a doubt that may be held by both senior and middle management, they are unable to determine tangible and positive performance outcomes related to HRM (Kane et al., 1999). So that their commitment to HRM decreases or, simply fails to materialize, since they are responsible for its actual implementation and their lack of commitment results in an ineffective HRM.

3- Sampling and Data Collection

This exploratory study explores the existence of effective HRM in Jordanian organizations and HRM potential challenges. The study targeted all Jordanian organizations listed in Amman Stocks Exchange at the end of (2015), in total 54 companies were surveyed. The study main data collection was the questionnaire which was distributed to 270 HR staff in the targeted companies. The questionnaire contains important questions aimed to examine the existence of HRM in Jordanian organizations. Importantly, whether the targeted companies have HRM or personnel departments in their companies; is it a specific section or included to another department; whether participants distinguish between HR and personnel management perspectives.

In addition, five point likert scales were used to examine the following scales: effectiveness of HR section; top management attitudes and support; HR staff proficiency; nature of the existed HR sections; and finally the existence of some potential HR challenges in the targeted companies. For items listed in all scales, a response of “5” indicates “strongly agree”, while a response of “1” indicates “strongly disagree”. In the five - point scale used, a mean rating of (3) represents the scale mid-point.

4- Results

For data analysis many statistical tests were used to analyze data drawn from 100 appropriate questionnaires out of 146 received, 46 questionnaires were neglected as they had missed data and some were not filled. Frequencies distribution and descriptive statistic techniques were used for the background questions.

4-1 Sample and organizational Background Results

The results show that three the surveyed organizations fall under three different types of activities: 40% of the participants were from manufacturing industry, 36% were from service industry and 24% worked in finance and banking industry. The study participants were all from HR\personnel sections. (76%) hold a bachelor's degree, 16% master degree and 3% PhD holder, and the rest had no education. However, (48%) of the HR staff hold a non-managerial degrees; their education weren't in management field. The average work experiences for participants was (20) years, while, the average employees numbers in their organizations were (851) employees which indicates that most of the participated organizations were large.

Table (1): organizations and participants profiles

		Frequency	Percent
Organizations sector	Finance and banking	24	24.0
	Service	36	36.0
	Manufacturing	40	40.0
	Total	100	100.0
Participants' education	Less than high school	1	1.0
	High school	5	5.0
	Diploma	8	8.0
	Bachelors	76	76.0
	Master	9	9.0
	PhD	1	1.0
	Total	100	100.0
Participants' academic specialization	Business administration	27	27.0
	Accounting and finance	25	25.0
	Non managerial fields	48	48.0
	Total	100	100.0
Structure of HRM	Specific department	49	49.0
	Division within a department	41	41.0
	Unit	10	10.0
	Total	100	100.0
Name of HR section	HRM department	46	46.0
	Personnel	54	54.0

4-2 Existence of HRM

participants were asked whether they have specific section delegated for HR issues, (49%) declared that they had a specific department for HR issues, but (41%) said that they had sections for HR followed to other departments. Chi-square test showed no significant difference among participated industries in terms of the structure of HR within their organizations ($\chi^2 = 23.767$, $df=20$, $sig=.253$, $p<0.05$). Participants were asked also to identify name of HR section whether it is tagged HRM or personnel department. (46%) declared that the name were HRM in their companies, while (54%) indicated that the name was personnel departments. When they were asked do you think HRM and personnel departments are different or similar, (57%) said "no" they thought no differences, (43%) said yes they know they are different. Next they were asked whether they know the distinctions between HRM and personnel perspectives, unfortunately (94%) said they don't know; and only (6%) said they know.

4-3 HRM effectiveness

To examine HRM effectiveness participants were asked to indicate their answers of HRM effectiveness scale. Table (2) lists mean scores and standard deviations for all the items used the five-point response measuring HRM effectiveness. The results in Table 2 showed that HRM is not generally seen as effective, with overall average 2.66. Moreover, Table 2 shows disagreement among participants for first statement that asked for whether they consider HRM policies and practices to be effective or not. Also they showed participants' disagreement for HRM written policies and plans; impact on employees' motivation; adoption for long-term perspective; proven knowledge in the field of HRM; and lack of strategic integration and alignment with the overall organizational strategies and plans.

Table 2: HRM effectiveness

	HRM effectiveness (Alpha =0.86)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
1	In my organization HRM policies and practices seem to be effective.	2.3800	.92965	100
2	In my organization HRM section has written plans and policies	2.7800	.90546	
3	In my organization HRM policies and practices are effective in terms of increasing employee motivation.	2.1700	.95405	100
4	In my organization HRM policies and practices are effective in terms of increasing employee satisfaction and commitment to organization	3.1900	.97325	100
5	In my organization HRM activities and practices help all employees to develop to their maximum potential	3.2800	1.03553	100
6	In my organization there is proven knowledge in the field of HRM about which HRM policies and practices are actually the best	2.1900	1.16771	100
7	In my organization HRM policies and practices in the various HRM areas are closely integrated with each other	3.1900	1.08892	100
8	In my organization HRM policies and practices seem designed in line with the organization's strategy and objectives adopting a long-term perspective.	2.1600	1.19528	100
	Overall average		2.6675	

1-2.5= disagree, 2.6-3.5= undecided, 3.6-5 =agree

4-4 Top management commitment and support

Participants were also asked to indicate their responses on a scale measuring top management support and commitment toward HRM practices and activities in their organizations. Table 3 shows that for almost most of the top management support statements there were disagreement, suggesting insufficient top management support and commitment and seen as at least moderately supportive to HRM activities with overall average 3.01.

Table 3: top management support and commitment

	Top management support and commitment (Alpha =0.61)		Std. Deviation	Analysis N
1	Our top managers give low priority to human resources issues	3.0500	.92918	100
2	Top management believes that HRM functions are essential to the organizational 's overall performance	2.7700	.97794	100
3	Our top management is not sophisticated in terms of its understanding of HRM	3.7600	.90865	100
4	There is a general lack of trust, support for HRM activities.	2.5800	.92241	100
5	Top management is committed to, supports, and provides all the facilitation to HRM activities	2.5500	1.21751	100
6	HR managers are consultants and participate in the organizational board meeting.	2.6770	1.28594	100
7	There is specified budget for HRM activities	3.9800	.95654	
8	HRM budget is sufficient to achieve HRM plans and objectives	2.7420	.96321	
	Overall average	3.0125		

1-2.5= disagree, 2.6-3.5= undecided, 3.6-5 =agree

4-5 HRM staff proficiency

Participants were asked to identify their responses on scale about HRM staff proficiency, they thought they have the knowledge and skills to develop long range integrated HRM programs, but they almost agree on statement two HRM staff seem to see their job as routine administration instead of attempting to maximize the long-term benefits for the organization and its employees, also agree that they lack influence and credibility to gain resources and top management commitment to implement effective HRM practices. The overall average for this scale was 3.44 suggesting a moderate agreement on HRM staff proficiency.

Table 4: HRM staff proficiency

HRM staff proficiency (Alpha =0.75)				
1	HR staff lack of knowledge and skills to develop and carry out long-range integrated HRM program	2.2400	1.10206	100
2	HRM staff seem to see their job as routine administration instead of attempting to maximize the long-term benefits for the organization and its employees	3.8600	1.22532	100
3	HRM staff lack the influence and credibility to gain the resources and management commitment to implement effective new policies and practices	4.2200	1.19070	100
Overall average		3.4400		

1-2.5= disagree, 2.6-3.5= undecided, 3.6-5 =agree

4-6 HRM problems and challenges

Participants were asked about the presence of some other important HRM challenges and problems they showed agreements on the following challenges for HRM in their organizations: Some senior managers do not believe in the importance of HRM activities; lack of long-term plan for HRM; poor co-operation and co-ordination between the various departments and the HRM department; and difficulties to evaluate HRM outcomes

Table (5): HR current problems and challenges in Jordanian organizations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
management does not support HRM activities and programmes	100	2.9100	1.29564	
Some senior managers do not believe in the importance of HRM activities	100	3.9400	1.22944	
Lack of long-term plan for HRM	100	4.2000	1.29490	
Poor co-operation and co-ordination between the various departments and the HRM department	100	3.6700	1.28279	
The organisation does not link HRM programmes with its business plan	100	2.9800	1.25513	
Lack of professional in the HRM department	100	2.9700	1.29845	
Insufficient time and budget to execute HRM activities	100	2.7000	1.20492	
Difficulties to evaluate HRM outcomes	100	4.8900	1.07210	
Valid N (listwise)	100			

1-2.5= disagree, 2.6-3.5= undecided, 3.6-5 =agree

4-7 Differences among participated industries

A number of differences among participants and their organisations were of interest in this study. So it was necessary to test the differences among participated industries. Tables 6 and 7 show for all measures except the HRM nature scale, there was no statistical significant differences between scale scores and organizational industries.

TABLE 6 ANOVA, Differences among organisations industries

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Effectiveness	Between Groups	111.652	2	55.826	1.812	.169
	Within Groups	2988.708	97	30.811		
	Total	3100.360	99			
Top management attitudes	Between Groups	70.111	2	35.056	1.037	.359
	Within Groups	3280.639	97	33.821		
	Total	3350.750	99			
HRM staff	Between Groups	31.579	2	15.790	1.920	.152
	Within Groups	797.581	97	8.222		
	Total	829.160	99			
HRM nature	Between Groups	54.284	2	27.142	2.932	.058
	Within Groups	897.906	97	9.257		
	Total	952.190	99			
Other items	Between Groups	445.551	2	222.776	2.118	.126
	Within Groups	10202.289	97	105.178		
	Total	10647.840	99			

TABLE 7 Multiple comparisons differences among organisations industries, Tukey HSD

			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
Dependent Variable	(I) organ-sectors	(J) organ-sectors				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Effectiveness	Financial	Service	1.9583	1.46277	.377	-1.5234	5.4400	
		Manufacturing	2.7083	1.43321	.147	-.7030	6.1197	
	Service	financial	-1.9583	1.46277	.377	-5.4400	1.5234	
		Manufacturing	.7500	1.27521	.827	-2.2853	3.7853	
	Manufacturing	Financial	-2.7083	1.43321	.147	-6.1197	.7030	
		Service	-.7500	1.27521	.827	-3.7853	2.2853	
Top management attitudes	Financial	Service	-.0694	1.53254	.999	-3.7172	3.5783	
		Manufacturing	-1.7500	1.50158	.477	-5.3241	1.8241	
	Service	Financial	.0694	1.53254	.999	-3.5783	3.7172	
		Manufacturing	-1.6806	1.33604	.422	-4.8606	1.4995	
	Manufacturing	Financial	1.7500	1.50158	.477	-1.8241	5.3241	
		Service	1.6806	1.33604	.422	-1.4995	4.8606	
HRM staff	Financial	Service	-1.1111	.75565	.310	-2.9097	.6875	
		Manufacturing	-1.4250	.74038	.137	-3.1873	.3373	
	Service	Financial	1.1111	.75565	.310	-.6875	2.9097	
		Manufacturing	-.3139	.65876	.883	-1.8819	1.2541	
	Manufacturing	Financial	1.4250	.74038	.137	-.3373	3.1873	
		Service	.3139	.65876	.883	-1.2541	1.8819	
HRM nature	Financial	Service	-1.1111	.80177	.352	-3.0195	.7973	
		Manufacturing	-1.9000	.78557	.046	-3.7698	-.0302	
	Service	Financial	1.1111	.80177	.352	-.7973	3.0195	
		Manufacturing	-.7889	.69896	.499	-2.4526	.8748	
	Manufacturing	Financial	1.9000	.78557	.046	.0302	3.7698	
		Service	.7889	.69896	.499	-.8748	2.4526	
Other items	Financial	Service	-5.0972	2.70260	.148	-11.5300	1.3356	
		Manufacturing	-4.7833	2.64800	.173	-11.0861	1.5195	
	Service	Financial	5.0972	2.70260	.148	-1.3356	11.5300	
		Manufacturing	.3139	2.35607	.990	-5.2941	5.9219	
	Manufacturing	Financial	4.7833	2.64800	.173	-1.5195	11.0861	
		Service	-.3139	2.35607	.990	-5.9219	5.2941	

The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

5-Discussion

It was found that in terms of HRM approach, concept and effectiveness in most of the Jordanian organizations the concept of strategic HRM is not yet found or existed. Most of these organisations compete through simple cost minimization and thus, it was necessary to include the hard, aspects of HRM in addition to, a link with strategy and objectives. While, the soft approach which represents the strategic approach to HRM is still not found in any surveyed organisations.

Moreover, there was little evidence in the majority of the surveyed organisations had in term of effectiveness of HRM policies and practices; they were seen as ineffective. Participants demonstrated a tendency to rate their organisations' HRM policies and practices as being generally ineffective. These results are generally consistent with concerns about the state of HRM practices discussed in the earlier analysis of the HRM literature.

Moreover, the results emphasized lack of top management recognition, support and commitment toward HRM policies and activities as one of the obvious HRM challenges. The lack of top management support and commitment for HRM may be referring to two factors noted earlier. First, HRM function lacks representation and therefore, power and influence among senior management within an organization. Such a suggestion would appear to be in line with the widely held views among the study participants, that top managers were more concerned with their own power and maintaining control than the real needs of the organizations. The need that might require enhancement of HRM inputs and influences to the organization's strategy and performance. It also requires greater delegation of power and control to line managers in relation to the management of employees. Second, as participants indicated, it may be also refer to the fact that top management consider a short-term perspective on HRM, since they believe that the evidence of the impacts of HRM on individuals or organizations performance is unclear.

Further barrier to the implementation of effective HRM approach identified in the earlier review of

HRM literature, relates to the ability of some HRM staff to undertake additional proactive roles. In this study, there was a general tendency among participants in all of the surveyed organisations that their HRM staff view their jobs as routine administration, and they lack the influence and credibility to develop and implement an HRM programs. These perceptions were closely related to perceptions of overall HRM effectiveness; suggest that this barrier is a very real problem in many Jordanian organisations.

6- Conclusions

The most important implications for Jordanian surveyed organizations is that HRM policies and practices must be in place, more powerful HR department must exist not for appearance sake but for organizational sake. HRM must meet the basic criteria of both the strategic and the developmental perspectives; that is, HRM policies and practices must be long term in focus integrated with one another and in line with the organisation's strategy and objectives. The distinction between HRM effectively offering traditional services to both managers and employees and adopting a strategic role was supported by the results.. While this is an encouraging sign that HRM staff is effectively performing basic operational duties, these staff were also often seen as having the knowledge and skills but lacking influence, credibility to perform their roles effectively and to develop and implement more strategic HRM programs. In terms of the barriers facing the effective HRM in Jordanian organizations, the results revealed three major underlying factors that were: top management attitudes and commitment; the above mentioned deficiencies of HRM staff; and difficulties with the current state of HRM. The first two factors were highly related to HRM effectiveness, which generally supports the concern about them expressed in prior work.

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