

The impact of HRM practices on faculty members' performance in the higher education institutions in the era of the Covid-19

Dr. Abedallah Farhan¹

abedallah.farouq@gmail.com

Assistant professor – Umm Al Quwain University

Dr. Galal Hatem²

drgalal.hatem@uaqu.ac.ae

Professor – Umm Al Quwain University

Abstract

The UAE is considered a dynamic business environment, the importance of the HRM practices implemented in the HEIs are increasing gradually. The high level of competition among the different HIEs increased the need to investigate the HRM practices that suit the higher education sector in order to recruit and retain the highly qualified faculty members who are considered as the competitive advantage of any university. The UAE is considered one of the best countries dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, the country implemented a set of procedures that speed up the recovery from the pandemic, the higher education sector was also on the top of the country priorities, where the overall situation was divided into three stages, low risk, moderate and high risk. The ministry of education in the country provided the academic institutions with all the needed support in order to maintain a high level of educational quality and to ensure the smoothness educational process (Al Hashmi, Al Zuabi, Hachim, Mannaerts, & Bekdache, 2021). The past and recent literature confirmed the importance of maintaining high quality faculty members, since their high performance will be reflected on the students' performance which will impact the market on the long run. The research utilizes the quantitative approach which is considered as the most suitable methodology for the social science researches, the researcher will distribute 50 questionnaires to faculty members working in different universities. The data collected will be analyzed using SPSS and Smart PLS.

Keywords: Human resource management, faculty members, performance, higher education intuitions

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Introduction

The UAE is considered a dynamic business environment, the importance of the HRM practices implemented in the HEIs are increasing gradually. The high level of competition among the different HIEs increased the need to investigate the HRM practices that suit the higher education sector in order to recruit and retain the highly qualified faculty members who are considered as the competitive advantage of any university. It was confirmed that the universities are striving to attract talented, well-trained, and enthusiastic employees as well as dedicated to their work through carrying out research and training for the development of humanity (Brindha & Rathidevi, 2021). Prior empirical studies revealed that successful and good effective implementation of HRM practices empowers university employees and improves their performance positively.

The UAE is considered one of the best countries dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, the country implemented a set of procedures that speed up the recovery from the pandemic, the higher education sector was also on the top of the country priorities, where the overall situation was divided into three stages, low risk, moderate and high risk. The ministry of education in the country provided the academic institutions with all the needed support in order to maintain a high level of educational quality and to ensure the smoothness educational process (Al Hashmi et al., 2021).

During the pandemic, the HRM plays a vital role in maintaining a reasonable level of performance among the faculty members. The integration of new technologies that support HRM functions and the implementation of innovative HRM practices enhanced the functionality of the daily HRM operations. However, scholars in the field of HRM and organizational behavior stressed the fact that higher education institutions are still struggling with faculty members performance issues (Karabchuk, Shomotova, & Chmel, 2020), especially, the performance of the faculty members are impacting directly the students' performance (Sultan et al., 2021).

There are four main practices belongs to the HRM that cover all the processes of resources management, the first function of HRM is recruitment and selection, where the candidates are filtered according to some requirements placed by the academic institutions, from the candidates' pool, the fittest applicant will be hired taking into

consideration all the administrative and legal aspects. The second practice of HRM is training and development, where the universities are providing the training to the academic and non-academic staff the needed training in order to improve their skills in line with the strategic objectives of the academic institute (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021).

The third function of HRM implemented in the HEIs is the rewards and compensation provided to the employees. According to the previous researches conducted in the field of HRM, the rewards and compensation usually come in different forms such as but not limited to the money, morals, and appreciation for the high performance (Liou, Oliveira, & Pimentel, 2021). To maximize the effectiveness of reward and compensation, academic institutions link the rewards to the last practice of HRM which is the performance appraisal, where faculty members will be rewarded for their high performance at the end of the academic year. These practices if implemented in a proper way impact the performance positively (Farhan, Salamzadeh, & Richardson, 2021).

The faculty members' performance is measured by investigating the main tasks that faculty members are performing regularly. As per the literature reviewed, faculty members are required to teach subjects, do research and provide in and out services to the community of their universities (Chang, Lin, & Song, 2011).

Based on the above evidence and discussion, this research is striving to examine the impact of HRM practices on the faculty members' performance in the higher education sector of the UAE.

Literature Review

As discussed earlier, the HRM practices implemented in the higher education sector of the UAE can be covered by the four main practices which start with recruitment and selection, training and development, rewards and compensation, and finally the performance appraisal. This section includes the literature reviewed for each practice and the hypotheses developed for testing.

1. Recruitment and selection

As the foundation of the other practices, recruitment and selection play a vital role in the process of the implementation for creating the candidates' pool. The recruitment and selection functions implemented in the HEIs include personal interviews, tests for the candidates, and some other tools that can help the decision-makers to select the fittest applicants. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some changes interacted with this function an example of that is the recruitment channels used after the pandemic. The previous researchers who investigated the importance of recruitment and selection on performance in the higher education sector confirmed that there is a positive relationship between this function and performance. The research of Ahmed, Shahid Khan, Thitivesa, Siraphatthada, and Phumdara (2020) who studied the recruitment and selection role in the era of the covid-19, research results indicated that employers are required to pay more attention to employee engagement and knowledge sharing which can, in turn, support the HRM practices implemented in the organization positively. Another study was conducted in the same area of this research, the study was done by Khudhair, Alsaud, Alsharm, Alkaabi, and AlAdeedi (2020), the authors of the research explored how covid-19 changed the HRM practices, the result of the research showed that the pandemic added some positive adjustments to the HRM practices such as the flexibility of the work location (i.e. remote working).

2. Training and development

The shift caused by the pandemic led to several academic and social concerns for students, such as lack of academic support, lack of adequate resources to support online teaching, lack of socialization, stress, anxiety, and lack of motivation in attending classes. Scholars in the field of HRM confirmed that faculty members working in different universities of UAE require intensive training courses, especially after the new teaching methods that took a place due to the covid-19 situation (Wren, 2021). This fact increased the importance of investigating the training and development among the faculty members.

In the research of Al-Maskari, Al-Riyami, and Kunjumammed (2021), who studied the impact of training and development in the higher education of the UAE, the researcher indicated clearly that a high percentage of the faculty members are not up to the level of the technology needed to produce the targeted quality of education. The HEIs in the UAE are required to implement new technologies and to provide technical support to the faculty members in order to enhance the distance learning skills among the faculty members.

3. Rewards and compensation

Compensation can help employees allocate their time and effort to their work to achieve company goals. The reviewed literature confirmed that rewards and compensation are associated with higher performance, which means that the performance of the rewarded faculty members is higher than those who were not rewarded (Ibrar & Khan, 2015; Sajuyigbe, Olaoye, & Adeyemi, 2013; Siwale, Hapompwe, Kukano, & Silavwe, 2020).

According to Hameed, Ramzan, and Zubair (2014), Compensation is something that an organization or company gives in the form of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to its faculty members as an award for their positive contribution to the academic institute. According to Swallow et al. (2009), there are two types of compensation, financial and non-financial compensations. Financial compensation is monetary received by employees in the form of money or worth the money, it includes salaries, incentives, and allowances, while the non-financial compensation provided by the HEIs includes the work in form of exciting tasks, challenges, responsibilities, recognition, and a sense of accomplishment, the main objective of this kind of compensation is to obtain high-quality faculty members, retain existing faculty members, ensure fairness, reward desired behavior, monitor costs, comply with regulations, facilitate mutual understanding, and further administrative efficiency.

However, it was proven that the Covid-19 made some changes to the rewards and compensation provided, these changes were due to stress, some are putting themselves at risk to keep operations running on-site (McPhee et al., 2020).

4. Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal is describing the system implemented in HEIs to evaluate the performance of the faculty members during an academic year. As stated earlier, faculty members in any academic institute are required to teach, do research and provide services to the community of the HEIs. However, due to the Covid-19 situation, there were some updates to the items of the performance appraisal, this update was due to the new methods used to perform a specific task (Ali, 2020).

The research of Sułkowski, Przytuła, Borg, and Kulikowski (2020), who studied the impact of the performance appraisal on the overall performance of the faculty members, the finding of research found that there is a strong positive relationship between the performance appraisal system and the performance of the faculty members.

Performance appraisal plays a vital role in the academic sector, it should be linked professionally with the other HRM practices in order to generate benefits. As per the evaluation of the faculty members, the weaknesses can be assigned, where the training plans should be built. On the other hand, the appraisal shows the distinguished faculty members who should be rewarded for their efforts, this process can ensure a high level of performance among the faculty members and will be reflected positively in the overall performance of the HEI.

Research framework

The theoretical framework of this research paper will be based on AMO (Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity) theory proposed by Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, Kalleberg, and Bailey (2000) and developed by Boselie, Dietz, and Boon (2005). The AMO theoretical framework is dominant in research on employee-level analyzing HRM's effect on performance.

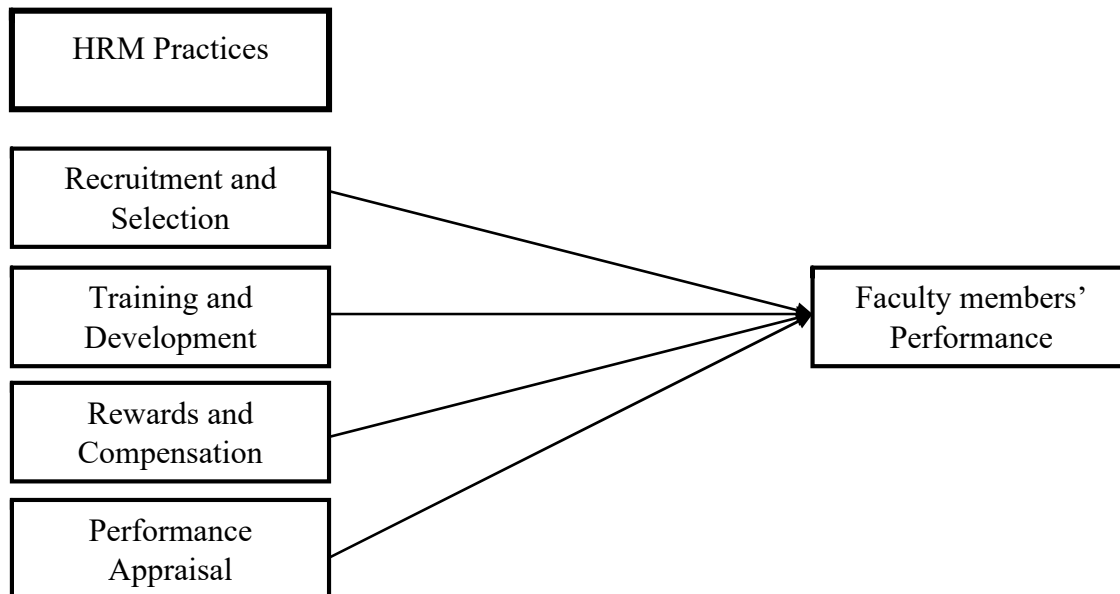


Figure 1. Research Framework

Research Hypotheses

According to the previous studies in the field of HRM, the researchers developed the below hypotheses for testing:

H1: Recruitment and selection have a positive impact on the faculty members' performance.

H2: Training and development have a positive impact on the faculty members' performance.

H3: Rewards and compensation have a positive impact on the faculty members' performance.

H4: Performance appraisal has an appositive impact on the faculty members' performance.

Methodology

Three research approaches can be used in social sciences researches; quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method. This research utilized a quantitative approach; a quantitative approach that can be dominant in the social science field. It deals with the use of numerical, statistical, and summaries to make inferences regarding the factors that impact an outcome or to understand the best predictors of outcomes (Bryman, 2017).

The questionnaire will be distributed to 50 faculty members working in different universities in the country in order to investigate the impact of the HRM practices during the Covid-19 on the overall performance.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire used to collect the data, the researchers built the questionnaire to collect the HRM data by dropping the Covid-19 situation on the questionnaire's items. The researcher built the questionnaire of the faculty members' performance based on the main areas of duties (teaching, research, and community services) in the light of Covid-19.

Analysis

The study questionnaire was sent by email to the faculty members, the online survey facilitate the process of data collection, the data was uploaded to the SPSS for the analysis, then the data file was taken to the Smart-PLS. The below table shows the gender distribution of the respondents:

| Female | Male | Grand Total |
|--------|------|-------------|
| 16 | 34 | 50 |

Table 1. Gender Distribution

As the faculty members are the questionnaire respondents, the respondents academic ranks were distributed as below:

| Academic Rank | Number |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Assistant Professor | 24 |
| Associate Professor | 11 |
| Full Professor | 7 |
| Lecturer | 8 |
| Grand Total | 50 |

Table 2. Academic Rank Distribution

Using the Smart PLS, data was analyzed, due to the low factor loading, one item was deleted (Compensation and reward).

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, H1 was developed to examine the relationship between the recruitment and selection with the faculty members performance, the results shows that this hypothesis was accepted, this finding is in line with previous studies in the same field Ahmed et al. (2020). The second hypothesis built in this research was developed to investigate the relationship between the training and development as on of the HRM practices and the performance of the faculty members, the result of the data analysis showed that this hypothesis was also accepted, the finding of this hypothesis is consistent with findings of Al-Maskari et al. (2021), who studied the impact of training and development in the higher education of the UAE, the researcher concluded that training and development is considered one of the most important practices that can uplift the performance of the faculty members to the next level.

The third hypothesis included in the study was to test the relationship between the compensation and rewards as one of the HRM practices and the performance of the faculty members, the result obtained showed that this hypothesis was rejected, this result can be justified in the light of two points, First, the lack of compensations and rewards during Covid-19 pandemic, where the faculty members performance was not impacted positively. Second, there was a clear policies of compensation and rewards. However, that was not impacting the faculty members during the pandemic situation.

The last hypothesis developed in this research was to examine the relationship between the performance appraisal and the performance of the faculty members, the finding shows that this hypothesis was supported, this result is consistent with findings of the previous researchers who investigated the same relation in different circumstances, the research of Ali (2020), who investigated the relationship between the performance appraisal and the performance, the result of the study showed that there is a positive relationship.

In conclusion, HRM plays a vital and central role in any organization, its role can enhance the performance of the staff members and can improve the productivity.

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