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PERCEPTION OF PRIVATE TELECOM EMPLOYEES TOWARDS UNFAIR HRM PRACTICES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract. The aimed of this research paper is to explore the unfair human resource management (HRM) practices in the private telecom company located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The total 120 employees were selected randomly from two private telecom companies to gather the information about the unfair HRM practices for this research. A questionnaire that consists of biographical information blank and unfair HRM practices was administered to the employees to identify the unfair HRM practices. The questionnaire was validated using appropriate techniques and the level of unfair HRM practices among the sample was assessed. The results of the study have provided some interesting findings relevant to the current industries. The investigator has incorporated certain suggestion to implement fair HRM practices so as to create vibrancy and passion among the employees to perform effectively.

Keywords: Telecom sector; Unfair HRM practices; construction and validation; Saudi Arabia

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1. Introduction

The topic of HRM practices attracted the attention of employer and employee in several ways over the decades and it is a universal truth that for any organization human resource is considered as one of the most important pillars and medium to accomplish the competitive advantage. Danish and Usman (2010) opined that success and growth of the organization depend on the employee, who considered employee as a valuable asset in the organization. As we know that human behavior is very complex and managing such behavior is one of the biggest challenges of the manager as compared to others like technology or finance to make the organization more viable, thereby, organization needs structure and such structure should be backed by human resource practices. This

particular research conducted on employees working in private telecom sectors in the Saudi Arabia to explore the understanding of fair or unfair HRM practices. The findings of the research would be added some new value or knowledge in the area of studies such as organizational behavior, organizational development and human resource management. The organizational success totally depends on equity treatment of the employees and development of the human resource. These treatments would help the employees to develop their organizations into ambidextrous ones (Sulphey and AlKahtani, 2017a) and take on the challenges faced by them in current world. Thereby, it can be considered to be the management responsibility to overcome or lessen the unfair HRM practices which are prevailing in any sectors and generate a conducive work environment in the form of fairness in the telecom sectors. These aspects are prerequisites to make the respective organizations have the badly required quality of sustainability (Sulphey, AlKahtani, 2017b; Jurigová et al., 2016). The indispensable role played by HR in creating sustainability in organizations has been highlighted by many studies (Korauš, Kaščáková, Parová and Veselovská, 2017; Prause, 2015). This is all the more important in countries like Saudi Arabia which is striving to make their workforce efficient, effective and productive.

2. Review of literature

On the globe numerous study has been initiated by the researchers on HRM practices with different variables, finally, they observed or suggested that fair HRM practices directly or indirectly increases the performance of the employees, enhancement of job satisfaction & commitment, better career prospects, intention to stay in the organization, lower level of absenteeism, low turnover, minimizing the job stress, feeling comfortable to dealt with senior or junior or peer (Hassan 2016; Al Kahtani et al, 2016; Allam, 2017; Al Kahtani & Allam, 2016; Ali & Allam, 2016; Singh & Kassa, 2016; Allam & Harish, 2010; Tan & Nasurdin, 2011; Al Kahtani & Nawab, 2013; Boxall et al, 2011; Paauwe and Boselie, 2005; Allam, 2007; Lai, Saridakis, Johnstone, 2017; Mura et al. 2018; Katou and Budhwar, 2010).

Katou and Budhwar (2010) jointly conducted a study among 178 Greek organizations to check the impact of HRM on organizational performance. They found five HRM practices such as training and development, job design, employee participation, compensation & incentives and recruitment. They observed positive relationships with HRM practices variable and organizational performance. Tan and Nasurdin (2011) conducted a study among employees working in Malaysia and revealed that HRM practices particularly training were found to be positively related to the dimensions of organizational innovation such as process innovation, product innovation and administrative innovation. Further, they opined that performance appraisal also has a significant impact on administrative innovation and both training& performance appraisal led to associated effectively with knowledge management.

Lai & Saridakis (2013) concluded that HR practices such as training & development and recruitment & selection are designed to improve the overall capabilities of the workforce, however, HR interventions like reward based on performance, incentive payment and appraisal are planned to inspire the employee to stay in the organization and put extra efforts at work to achieve the goals. It is noted that HR practices i.e. adequate training has no association with retention but still considered as one of the most vital components of employee retention and satisfaction (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). Hassan (2016) concluded in their research paper that HRM practices such as career planning, training, compensation, performance appraisal and employee involvement found to be associated positively with performance.

Recently Lai, Saridakis, Johnstone (2017) observed positive association between HR practices and financial performance which has been differed among SMEs with the higher level of job satisfaction and low job satisfaction. Also studies have revealed that the association declined in SMEs with due to high job satisfaction. The researcher indicated that HRM practices have complementary and synergistic effects on the attitude of the

workforce those surpass their individuality effects (El-Ghalayini, 2017). Further, he emphasized that there are positive effects of some HRM practices on attitudinal consequences. A study by Sandhya and Sulphrey (2014) examined the influence of the previous work experience on HR practices and the psychological contracts of employees and found them to be associated. A fair review of the literature could identify only scant literature related to unfair HR practices.

3. Objective of the study

As stated earlier there is no dearth of literature about HRM practices and innumerable studies have been conducted across the globe. However, a fair review of literature failed to identify studies about unfair HRM Practices. No suitable tools to assess unfair HRM practices were also found. The present study is intended to bridge this gap in literature. It is aimed at exploring the attributes of unfair HRM practices prevailing in the private telecom sectors in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Towards this a suitable tool to assess unfair HRM practices is also sought to be constructed and validated, It is also an objective to identify the relationship between perceived unfair HRM practices and various demographic factors.

4. Methodology

Sample of the study:

The data for the current research were collected from 120 employees selected randomly from two different private telecom sectors namely Zain (47.5%) and Mobily (52.5%), in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.). All respondents were male with varying experience and age. The details pertaining to the demographics of the sample are also presented.

Tools:

A fair review of literature could not identify a suitable standardized tool to assess the perceived unfair HRM practices. As such it was decided to construct and validate an appropriate tool to assess the level of unfair HRM practices. Many classical studies have provided the various scientific processes that could be used to construct strong tools (Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Hinkin, 1998; Worthington, and Whittaker, 2006). Kumar & Beyerlein (1991) in his pioneering study identified the steps to be taken for item selection, reduction; as well as the reliability and validity of the tool. The pioneering study by Schwab (1980) presented the stages of item generation, the development of the scale and its psychometric evaluation. Worthington, and Whittaker (2006) has also elucidated how to develop scale in similar lines. The present study has taken cues from the above studies to construct the tool.

Creation of item pool

The items for the present study were gathered after review of the literature on the topic. Hinkin's (1998) guidelines about how to develop a tool was born in mind while doing this. Though in the initial stage many items were developed, based on the related literature, 10 items were identified after purifying the initial pool.

This was done based on the opinion of Hinkin (1995) about the importance of the length of the scale. He opined that both too long and too short scales would deliver "negative effects on results". Earlier studies, for instance Anastasi (1976) and Schriesheim & Eisenbach (1991) viewed that an effective way of solving problems associated with demands of time is to maintain the scale short. It also has the advantage of minimizing the problem of response biases, and respondent boredom and fatigue. Substantiating this Carmines & Zeller (1979)

opined that if the number of items is increased, beyond a certain limit it will not have any further impact on the aspect of reliability. Further Hinkin (1995) also states that proper scale length will minimize a host of response biases, and guaranteeing internal consistency. Based on these studies all required safeguards were taken to maintain the length of the scale at a fair length. 10 items were thus pooled after doing away with double barreled type questions. Another important area that requires care and caution is In order to have face validity, the items were presented in clear, well-organized, and in a manner understood by the respondents.

Scaling is an aspect that requires the exercise of care and caution. Hinkin (1995) opines that a scale must have the quality of generating the required variance between respondents so that statistical analysis is possible. Lissitz & Green (1975) states that the Coefficient alpha of Likert-type scales normally increase up to five points. However, after this it could level off. Based on this a five point scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) was used in this study. In addition to this scale, the biographical blank sheet was also used in the study to gather the information pertaining to age, gender, marital status etc.

Care has also to be exercised while deciding on the sample size. This is all the more important when Factor Analysis has to be done. In this regard Schwab (1980) identified item-to-response ratio of 1:10. As against this Rummel (1970) stated a requirement of 1:4 and Hoelter (1993) 200. Taking a mean view of these studies the present study collected data from 120 samples.

The tool used in the present investigation was in English language, which was translated into Arabic. The reason behind to translate the questionnaire was to make the respondents understand each item systematically with meaningfulness, and to avoid biases. The researcher took the permission from the company to administer the questionnaire to their employees in advance. Clear instructions were provided to the subjects so as to avoid any confusion with the items. Moreover, the researcher also assured the respondents that the responses would be used for academic purposes and would not be revealed to any higher official at any circumstances. The demographics of the respondents are presented in the following sections (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3).

Table 1. Age profile of the respondents

Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
18-25 years	36	30.0
26-30 years	33	27.5
31-35 years	30	25.0
36-40 years	12	10.0
41-50 years	6	5.0
51 years and above	3	2.5
Total	120	100.0

Table-1 shows age categories of the employees working in two different sectors. Out of 120 employees 30% employees fall under the age categories of 18-25 years, 27.5% respondents were in the 26-30 years categories, 25% respondents observed in the case of 31-35 years groups, having 6 respondents in the age categories of 36-40 years which constitutes 10% respondents and 51 years and above contains only 3 respondents with 2.5%. It is observed from the table that most of the employees employing in the company were younger in age and fewer were in older in age groups.

Table 2. Marital status of the respondents

Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
Married	78	65.0
Unmarried	42	35.0
Total	120	100.0

It can be seen from the table 2 that 65% employees were married (N=78) whereas, unmarried (N=42) were 35%. The findings revealed that some of the employees were unmarried in the age groups between 18-40 years which constitutes the 92.5% of the respondents.

Table 3. Work experiences of the respondents

Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
1-5 years	57	47.5
6-10 years	48	40.0
11-15 years	9	7.5
16-20 years	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

From the aforesaid table 3, it is observed that most important experience categories are between 1 to 5 years which consists of 47.5% respondents followed by 6-10 years which consists of 40% respondents. 11-15 years experienced groups are having 7.5% respondents, whereas, only 5% respondents shows in the 16-20 years of experience of categories.

Tool refining

A variety of statistical techniques are found used for tool refining and purification. The most frequently used techniques are inter-item correlation and Factor analysis (Boyle, 1991; Henson and Roberts, 2006 Hinkin, 1995, 1998). This method has been used by a number of earlier studies (Sulphey and Nisa, 2014; Sulphey, 2015). The present study used both these. According to Boyle (1991) items have to be eliminated if the inter-item correlations exceed .7. According to him “this could help in avoiding too much redundancy and artificially inflated estimates of internal consistency”. Based on this no items were eliminated from the pool.

Thereafter Factor analysis was done. The principal component axis method and Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization was conducted. The rotations converged at three iterations. Qualification criterion, according to Hinkin (1995) for the judgment factor loading is .40. Since all the items had factor loading value of over .40 no items warranted exclusion. The analysis provided two factors. The details are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Items and factor loadings

No	Item	Factor loading	Item to total correlation
Factor 1			
1	Job analysis practices	.603	.577**
2	Recruitment and selection practices	.627	.769**
3	Training and development	.917	.564**
4	Performance appraisal	.615	.882**
	Eigen value		6.45
	Per cent of variance explained		64.49
	Cronbach Alpha		.804
Factor 2			
1	Compensation and benefit	.889	.895
2	Working conditions	.866	.907

3	Security and health	.750	.757
4	Communication practices	.829	.859
5	Peer relations	.860	.883
6	Intention to stay	.900	.828
	Eigen value		1.10
	Per cent of variance explained		11.03
	Cronbach Alpha		.949

Reliability

Some of the ways in which reliability is assessed are inter-item correlations, Cronbach Alpha and Split-half (Hinkin, 1995). According to Hair et al. (2006) the rule of thumb for inter-item correlation is that it should exceed 0.50. Cronbach Alpha is another method used for internal consistency reliability, for which the suggested α is .70 (Nunnally, 1978). In the present case both the factors had α values over the stipulated minimum of .79 (Table 4). Kumar & Beyerlein (1991) suggests that a high α value would suggest the consistent responses for all the items by the subjects. The factor wise items-to-total correlations also suggest high internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2006), for both factors. These findings suggest a high reliability of the tool. The scientific construction of a tool to assess unfair HR practices has succeeded in providing a further impetus for further research in this area. It is hoped that this tool will stimulated further researches about unfair HR practices.

The study also intended to find out the level of perceived unfair HR practices among private telecom employees of KSA. Towards this the sample was classified into three groups based on the following grouping:

Those having total score above Mean + $\frac{1}{2}$ Standard deviation :: High

Those having total score below Mean – $\frac{1}{2}$ Standard deviation :: Low

Those samples having scoring between the above two scores were classified as medium group. Thus those having scores over 31.20 were considered as high group and below 22.69 as low group. Those having scores between 31.20 and 22.69 were of the medium group. Based on this the distribution of the sample was as under (Table 5).

Table 5. Classification of the sample

No	Grouping	Number	Per cent
1	High group	36	30.0
2	Medium group	33	27.5
3	Low group	51	42.5
	Total	120	100

From the table it can be seen that 30 per cent of the sample (36) perceived that their organizations had unfair HR practices. It is however, heartening to note that 41 (42.5 per cent) of the sample perceived that their organization is not having any unfair HR practice. Those in the medium group numbered 33 (27.5 per cent). Those in the medium group could on a later stage, based on their change in attitude have the propensity to move to either high or lower group.

It was another objective to examine if there is any relationship between perceived unfair HR practices and the various demographics of the sample. The details are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Data and t-value based on marital status

Marital status	Number	Mean	SD	t-value
Married	78	27.78	9.25	1.492NS
Unmarried	42	25.36	6.85	

Note NS: Not significant

The results of the t-test show that there is no significant difference between married and unmarried employees regarding their perception about unfair HR practices. However, the mean value of married is found to be higher denoting that they perceive that their organizations had unfair HR practices. This may be due to the higher demands of married people with respect to their specific needs due to their marital status.

An attempt was made to find out if there existed any difference between the samples regarding their perception of unfair HR practices in their respective organizations based on age. Towards this ANOVA was done and the results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. ANOVA Results based on demographics

Based on age				
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F
Between groups	3035.841	5	607.168	12.273*
Within groups	5639.696	114	49.470	
Total	8675.467	119		
Based on family size				
Between groups	418.145	2	209.072	2.962 \$
Within groups	8257.322	117	70.575	
Total	8675.467	119		
Based on qualification				
Between groups	1403.800	4	350.950	5.550*
Within groups	7271.667	115	63.232	
Total	8675.467	119		
Based on experience				
Between groups	294.182	3	98.061	1.357 \$
Within groups	8381.285	116	72.252	
Total	8645.467	119		

Note: * Significant at 0.01 \$ Not significant

The Analysis of Variance has provided some very interesting results. It shows that while there are significant differences in the perception about unfair HR practices with respect to Age and Qualification, no significant difference was found with respect to family size and experience. This result is to a certain extent intriguing, especially the findings regarding age and experience of the respondents.

5. Conclusions

This particular research conducted on employees working in private telecom sectors in the Saudi Arabia to explore the understanding of fair or unfair HRM practices. Large number of studies have been conducted on the theme HRM practices on the globe but rarely seen by the researchers initiated a study pertaining to unfair HRM practices. Thereby, the aim of the was to explore the attributes of unfair HRM practices existing in the private telecom sector in K.S.A. 30 per cent of the sample (36) perceived that their organizations had unfair HR practices and 41 (42.5 per cent) of the sample perceived that their organization is not having any unfair HR practice. Albeit, 27.5 per cent were in medium group and those medium group could change the attitude in the later stage towards either higher or lower group. This indicates that unfair existed in the sector. Further the result showed no

significant difference between married and unmarried employees but married employees mean scores are high indicating unfair HRM practices is prevailing in the company.

6. Suggestions and limitation of the study

It is observed from the findings that private telecom company in the Kingdom have overall fair HRM practices but unfair also existed in a marginal level. As noted by Guest (2011) that success or failure of HRM practices implementation depends on manager skills and ability. Hence, it is the responsibility of the manager to provide clear job description, adequate training, fair recruitment and selection, security and health practices working condition, well-planned performance appraisal system etc. in the organization to motivate them to perform in an extraordinary manner and to eliminate unfair practices. This research paper has certain limitation like other empirical research. This particular study initiated only on male and small sample size so findings cannot be generalized across the population. It would be better to take adequate sample and different population to make the study more informative to the audience. Finally, the study sparked some new value to the knowledge of study to know the consequences of unfair HRM practices in the telecom sector in the Kingdom.

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