

Exploring the Relationships of Practices of Human Resource Management on Employee Performance in Oman, and the Organizational Justice Moderating Role

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Abstract: - Employee performance plays a significant and noticeable role in the advancement and growth of every organization, as human capital contributes to its success and effectiveness. Notwithstanding its importance, there is limited research in Middle East public sector, suggesting a scarcity of empirical studies on this issue. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to present a conceptual study on the practices of human resource management and its effect on the performance of employees in the Ministry of Oman Agricultural and Fisheries (MAF), in which the moderating role of organizational justice is examined. This research quantitative method and data analysis will use Smart PLS. The sample was determined in advance and the questionnaires will be distributed to the employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the Sultanate of Oman. It is expected that the results of the study will have an enrichment on the scientific and practical context.

Key-Words: - The practices of human resource management; Organizational justice; Employee performance; Oman MAF; Task performance; Contextual performance.

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1 Introduction

Employee performance is considered an important measure of organizational performance and productivity as employees are the main contributors to the success and effectiveness of the organization, [1], [2]. There is a need to conduct a study to verify the performance of employees, there has been a rising interest in research on employee performance particularly in the public sector in different countries. Due to the importance of the performance of employees who are the basis of productivity, the Ministry of Agriculture and fisheries wealth (MAFW) is responsible for spearheading economic development for the country. Due to that, this study aims to discuss the internal context and work environment in MAFW that are instrumental in achieving organizational goals.

Vision 2040 Oman has identified agriculture and fisheries as one of the sectors to be developed as part of the diversification plan. The Fisheries and Aquaculture Vision 2040 described its vision with the statement that the effort is “to create a profitable world-class sector that is ecologically sustainable

and a net contributor to Oman’s economy.” As shown in Figure 1, follows five critical steps to realize the intended goals.

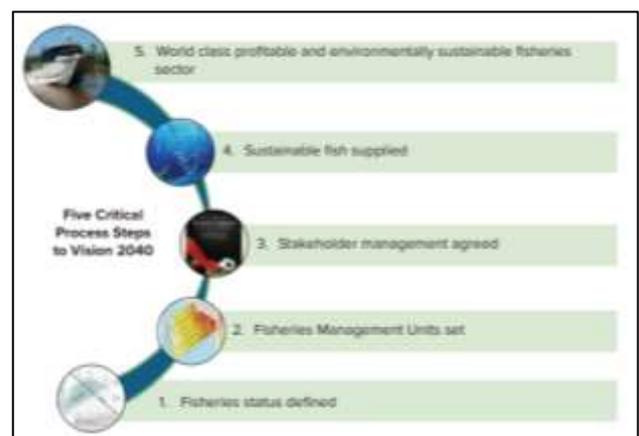


Fig. 1: Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture. Source: World Bank (2015)

However, there are issues and challenges facing the Omani agriculture and fisheries sectors such as lacking clarity in strategic vision, and goals and

weak communication between employees and top management. These challenges must be understood clearly and thoroughly so that the MAFW can perform effectively and efficiently to bring about positive change and contribute significantly to the economic growth of Oman. However, even though there are studies on the agriculture and fisheries sector in Oman, most of these studies are from a technical perspective, [3]. There seems to be a great lack of research from a management perspective. There is also inadequate attention to address management issues at MAFW, particularly in the context of employee performance. Hence, there exists a gap in the literature about employee performance in the agriculture and fishery sectors in Oman.

One of the issues about Oman is the use of traditional HRM practices although a few modern strategies of HRM were applied, [4]. Although several studies have recognized the importance of HRMP in productivity, there is limited understanding of the various HRM dimensions and variables that greatly impact employee performance, [5]. Few countries recognized HRM within the Middle East part in general, [6]. Few studies have been conducted in developing countries such as Oman, [7]. It is important to evaluate the significant HRM factors that impact employee performance by evaluating variables and relationships that influence HRM performance, [8].

Organizational justice has also sparked the interest of the research communities and practitioners as another factor of employee performance that should be given serious consideration, [9]. [10] observed that justice is increasingly accepted as a core factor in establishing and maintaining a stable society. Organizational justice reflects the fairness of the procedures implemented by leaders for determining the means of distribution, for sharing outputs, or for the combination of the justice of distributing and sharing the outputs, [11].

Likewise, the previous literature shows the significant influence of organizational justice on various employee behavioral outcomes within organizations, [12]. However, the specific role of organizational justice as a moderating variable in the relationship between human resource management practices (HRMP) and employee performance (EP) remains understudied, particularly within the Middle Eastern public sector. Thus, the current study discusses the impact of organizational justice on employee performance and its critical role as a moderating variable. Focusing on the three established forms of justice that have appeared in

justice literature are distributive justice [13]; (fairness of outcomes/rewards), procedural justice [14], [15], (fairness of procedures/processes that are followed to arrive at the outcomes), and interactional justice, [16] (fairness of interactions, the treatment received from those in authoritative positions and interpersonal sensitivity).

As a result of the lack of research on the moderating impact of organizational justice (OJ) on the relationship between the practices of HRM (HRMP), and employee performance (EP), this study explores the extent to which organizational justice moderates the influence of HRMP on employee performance within the chosen public sector setting, particularly in the Ministry of Oman agriculture and fisheries. Thus, the research questions of this study is: To what extent the organizational justice have a moderating impact on the relationship between the practices of human resource management and employee performance in the Ministry of Oman Agriculture and fisheries?

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Oman MAF

It is at the gateway between the Indian Ocean, East Africa, and the Arabian Gulf, [17]. The Sultanate has a large biodiversity, having a unique position between two geographical areas closely resembling both Asia and Africa (the southern part) in its climate and physiographic regions, [18]. It is the second-largest country in the Arabian Gulf, [19].

Oman is an oil and gas producer and its economy relies on these sectors before the intention for diversification of the economy as the Oman government strives to develop new sectors to contribute to GDP since petroleum and gas are non-renewable resources, depleting fast in the last decade, [20]. Vision 2040 shows the seriousness of the government to diversify its oil and gas economic activities to other sources, [21]. The government of Oman is caught in a difficult phase of low oil prices and a low national budget, [22]. Initially, gas and oil revenues form a huge part of the government's revenues, amounting to about 72%, [23]. Located in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman has a population of approximately 5 million, [24].

In Oman, The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth (MAFW) deals with the agricultural and fisheries sectors. The Ministry works towards a vision of sustainable development of the agriculture and fisheries sectors and making

these sectors contribute actively to the national economy and provide distinctive and innovative services. MAFW is the sole authority responsible for managing fisheries resources and agriculture in Oman. This Ministry is responsible for improving fisheries and agriculture-related sectors and also aims to provide sustainable food security for the Sultanate.

2.2 Employee Performance

Previous studies confirm the importance of employee performance in the organizational context. The success of any organization is determined by employee performance, [25], as employees who performed well would assist the organization to remain competitive and achieve strategic goals.

In the context of an organization, there are two main concepts of performance always investigated in research: employee performance and organizational performance which can be differentiated in several ways, [26]. First and foremost, employee performance is measured at the individual level whereas organizational performance is at the organizational level. Employee performance contributes to organizational performance, [27]. Employee performance is also graded according to job performance, [28]. [29], described employee performance as "job-related activities of employees devoting their knowledge, skills, experiences, and innovation to their organizations, making them vital to organizational success. Employees play a big part in making or breaking organizations. The performance of the employees, in terms of quantity and quality, is called employee performance, [30].

According to [31], behavior refers to the people's actions that they take to perform work, while results refer to the impact of a person's job behavior, [32]. [33], observed that performance has various components and the process dimension of performance can be distinguished from expected results at the fundamental level, [34]. Behavioral engagement and expected outcomes are essentially linked in the workplace. Although a correlation between the constructs may exist, its strength and nature are uncertain due to the influence of various factors beyond behavior, such as motivation and cognitive skills, on the expected outcome. Meanwhile, performance is also related to organizational effectiveness. Two types of performance behavior that can increase organizational efficiency are task and contextual performance, [35].

2.3 Human Resource Management Practices

HRM practices influence employee behavior and performance once they are adopted by the organization. This allows employees to develop their skills by learning appropriate practices, new skills, and behaviors. Thus, theories suggest that HRM practices influence the skill and motivation of employees, and ultimately improve organizational performance. [36] suggested that organizational lucrativeness depends on the quality and performance of human resources.

Furthermore, in light of global market complexities and uncertainties, many organizations have focused on HRM to overcome challenges and gain competitive advantage, [37]. HRM can improve organizational skills, knowledge, development, collaboration, dedication, and performance. HRM is central to achieving various organizational objectives, [38]. It is also a mechanism that sets the environment and the behavior of employees and creates the relationship between employer and employees, motivating employees to make greater efforts in terms of creativity and innovation, [39]. With changing circumstances, HRM can address different challenges by offering various strategies to boost performance, [40]. These practices help improve organizational performance. [41], stated that human resources are more likely to enhance employees' skills than other factors. Hence, [42], suggested that HRM practices are organizational assets that help organizations sustain their effectiveness. Furthermore, HRM is a set of rules, procedures, and regulations that govern the attitude and performance of employees, [43].

Hence, HRM practices play an important role in the achievement of organizational objectives. The effective use of HRM practices has a positive impact on employer and employee commitment. These practices comprise among others, recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and benefits, and performance appraisal, [44].

2.4 Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is the fellows' view of being treated fairly, [45]. Organizational justice is the term commonly applied by organizational psychologists to describe the just and fair manner in which organizations handle their employees, [46].

The concept of organizational justice has been researched in Western organizations for decades, as they strive to make workplaces more equitable.

Much has been achieved and employees have somewhat developed a realistic understanding of their organizations. Previous researchers stressed the importance of fairness in the workplace in terms of outcomes and bonuses, [47] and the processes involved in determining these results. Justice is a very sensitive psychological and social term that causes people in different cultures to have different interpretations and expectations, [48]. Individuals are concerned about fair treatment, but cultural variables decide how they view justice, [49]. Most of the literature on justice has come from the West, [48]. Very few studies on organizational justice involved Arab communities, [50], [51]. [52] conducted an extensive literature survey and found that the Middle East is one of the least examined regions on the subject of organizational justice.

The research gap relates to research questions or problems that have not been explored fully and comprehensively in a specific field of study, [53]. Previous studies have shown that there are many variables related to employee performance. It is also evident from empirical studies that some of the popular variables that are still relevant in the field of research include HRM practices and organizational justice. Due to that, this study considers the adoption of these variables as the predictors of employee performance. Nevertheless, there is a great lack of research that addressed employee performance based on these four variables in Oman, and more specifically concerning MAFW.

Hence, this study focuses on the MAFW in Oman since there is a lack of studies in this sector in Oman, particularly to understand the employee's performance. Most recent studies have focused on describing the agriculture and fisheries sector in Oman from non-administrative aspects, [54]. There have been no recent studies to understand employee performance and productivity in Oman. Hence, this study helps to bridge the gap in the existing literature because empirical evidence is limited in the context of MAFW in Oman, [55].

Another gap identified in this study is concerned with the interrelationships of the predictors to influence employee performance. As the concept of equality and equity become more prominent in ensuring good governance of public organizations such as MAFW, organizational justice has emerged recently as a variable given greater consideration in practice and research. However, the interplay of existing variables like HRM practices with organizational justice has not been widely investigated. Nevertheless, organizational justice seeks to bridge the gap between employee objectives and organizational goals and catalyzes

new initiatives. According to [56], organizational justice serves as an indicator of working values, organizational behavior, and the administrative processes in the organization. Meanwhile, [57], explained that organizational justice has a significant impact on employee performance.

Not surprisingly, organizational justice has been researched in the West for decades, with the objective of workplace equality. Much progress has been made to the extent that employees have developed fair perceptions of their organizations. Previous researchers emphasized the importance of organizational justice in the distribution of outcomes and incentives and the evaluation processes that decide such outcomes, [58]. Organizational justice is one of the main research topics in organizational behavior and human resources. Furthermore, many scholars have noted that cultural differences can affect employees' perception of justice.

There are, however, scant studies on organizational justice involving Arab countries [59], [60]. [61], conducted a systematic literature review and found organizational justice is the least researched in the Middle East. The previous literature shows that organizational justice plays a crucial role in explaining a lot of behavioral outcomes in organizations, [62]. Furthermore, organizational justice is linked to various other organizational concepts, issues, and problems. Hence, more research is needed especially in the Middle East.

Previous studies have not explored the organizational justice moderating role to explain the correlation between the variables identified earlier. Hence, this research examines the impact of organizational justice and its moderating influence on the relationship between the independent variables of this research the practices of human resource management with employee performance. There are nil or few studies that have investigated the organizational justice moderating role on the relationship between the practices of HRM and employee performance. [63], used organizational justice as a mediator that affected the relationship between HRM and organizational citizenship at the Alborz Insurance employees in Golestan Province. This correlational study used a sample size of 120 and confirmed the role of organizational justice as a mediator. In another study, [64], explored the role of Islamic human resources management (iHRM) to enhance organizational justice and employees' commitment at Resalat Qard al-Hasan bank in Tehran, Iran. In this case, organizational justice likely has the potential to become a mediator between iHRM and employee commitment because

four dimensions of iHRM i.e., recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and performance evaluation were strongly linked to organizational justice.

Based on these arguments, the following research hypothesis to assess the moderating role of organizational justice on the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance is proposed:

H1: Organizational justice significantly moderates the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance. The research conceptual model for this study is represented diagrammatically based on the relationships of the research constructs and their order of influence shown in Figure 2.

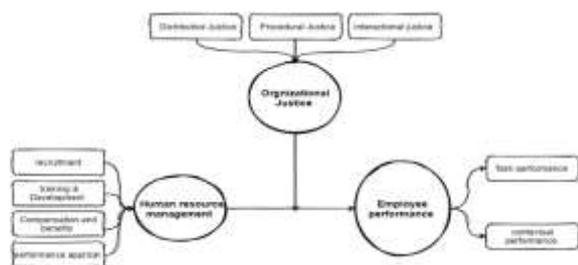


Fig. 2: Research framework
 Source: Created by the authors

3 Conclusion

This study will discover that methods of human resource management and its effect on employee performance based on a review of prior research. The findings of this study are important to various stakeholders such as leaders, human resource professionals, organizational improvement practitioners, and HRM employees. The positive effects of human resource management practices on employee performance provide ample empirical evidence to highlight the importance of these variables in an organizational context. Since the effects of these variables on employee performance are significant, the importance of organizational justice can be enhanced to improve both organizational, and employee productivity and performance. This study also contributes to further research by analyzing the effect of organizational justice as a moderator on the effect of HRM on employee performance. This helps to foster a greater in-depth understanding of the issues both academically and practically. It encourages the need for organizational justice within organizations. It can be embedded in the human resources function becoming an agreed organizational goal. The study's findings can guide management in the MAF; as the main organization responsible for the

development of these sectors. This study opens various avenues for future studies and helps to complement other research studies in the same field. Studying these variables assists with understanding the pattern of performance.

The importance of this study is due to the subject matter being researched namely "the effect of human resource management practices on employee performance with organizational justice as moderator" at Oman's MAF. The study's conclusions hold significance for a range of stakeholders, including executives, HRM staff members, practitioners of organizational enhancement, and human resource specialists. The benefits of HRM techniques on worker productivity when organizational justice is used as a moderator will yield a wealth of empirical data demonstrating the significance.

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