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# HRM Practice in the Palestinian National Authority: A Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

The current study considers the HRM practice as it represents an essential practice for the organizations of developing countries and importantly, it is the most basic approach of HRM practice for the public sector. The current study focuses on HRM practices due to their relevant importance for the organizations of the developing countries. Similar to public sector organizations, PNA organizations employed those particular HRM practice that are similar to public sector organizations practice. PNA organizations really employed those necessary HRM dimensions which generally conducted in similar developing countries organizations. HRM practices are considered to be the most challenging aspects for developing countries. PNA organizations were established to provide services for citizens, to achieve the goals of the PNA. The PNA organizations have been operating under difficult conditions and have established their unique characteristics. Thus, the HRM practices in Palestine has become unique, and a challenging experience. Thus, it becomes clear that the success of the PNA organizations depends on its ability to realize a sustainable HR. Accordingly, the solution to these PNA challenges commences with well-defined HRM processes.

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### 1. Introduction

The concept of the Human Resource Management (HRM) emerges not only from the review of the literature but also from practitioner-related activities worldwide (Ivo, 2006). The authors examined HRM from the perspective of outcomes of organizations by utilizing HRM to reach their strategic goals (Beardwell & Claydon, 2004) and to gain a source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2007). HRM is a proactive process, as it involves the continuous development of policies for the purpose of improving an organization's workforce (Dessler, 2004; Franklyn, 2006).

Usually, conventional HRM is considered the most suitable employee management practices for the public sector organizations. However, HRM practices are considered to be the most challenging aspects for developing countries (Khilji, 2013). Accordingly, these HRM practices should be deemed an essential part of any research conducted in the field of the developing countries. Therefore, the current study focuses on HRM practices due to their relevant importance for the organizations of the developing countries. Importantly, the current study considers the HRM practices within the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) that may lead organization success as well as, could lead to employee competence and improved level of employee performance.

### 2. Background of this Study

From the historical viewpoint of Palestine, the twentieth century has been marked by a long-term military occupation (PCDCR, 2008). The West Bank and the Gaza Strip form parts of Palestine. The Israelis occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip territories in 1967 and they continued the

occupation of these territories from that time until Oslo Agreement in 1993. Based on the Oslo Agreement, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was established in 1994 to govern the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The PNA governs a combined area of about 6000km<sup>2</sup>. The population of the Palestinian territories is approximately 4 million (Palestinian Center Bureau statistics, 2016). The population in the West Bank is about 2.5 million, and in Gaza it is about 1.5 million (World Bank, 2015; PCDCR, 2016). According to the main body of information collected from the Palestinian General Personnel Council records in Gaza (GPC, 2013), the total number of all employees within PNA ministries are 23648. However, those employee servicing 1.5 million population in different kind of services within 24 civil organizations. In general, PNA organizations and it is employees are working under critical condition.

The economy of Palestine is small, as the country is poorly developed and is extremely dependent on Israel, further making the Palestinian economy becoming increasingly less sustainable. Furthermore, Palestine is not rich with economic resources (World Bank, 2013). For the existing PNA organizations, the land is limited, due to the Israeli settlements within the PNA territories occupying an important part of the PNA territories. Furthermore, Israel army imposes constraints on the use of local raw materials. Therefore, there are shortages of the main economic resources and this is combined with the occupation restrictions cause serious economic problems (World Bank, 2013; CPDE Global Synthesis Report, 2015; Al-Madhoun & Analoui, 2003; The Palestinian State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, PCDCR, 2016).

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Palestine state is unique because it is one of the very few places in the world, if not the only one, where organizations were being built from scratch, with challenging condition because Palestine is not yet a fully independent country (Olof Palme International Center, 2016; World Bank, 20015; Sayigh, Shikaki & Rocard, 1999). For that reason, the PNA organizations have been operating under difficult conditions and have established their unique characteristics (Telford, Baker, Kanaan, Mashni, Nashasibi & Assi, 2005). Thus, the HRM practices in Palestine has become unique, and a challenging experience. Thus, it becomes clear that the success of the PNA organizations depends on its ability to realize a sustainable HR (World Bank, 2007). Therefore, organizations ought to regularly move forward to improve their HRM in terms of the recruitment and selection, training, compensation, and performance appraisal (Marwat, Arif & Jan, 2009).

Yet, recent studies have concluded that the performance levels of PNA organizations and employees are considered weak (World Bank, 2015). At length, the World Bank predicted that without a substantial lessening of the HRM, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Palestine would gradually continue to drop (Brynen, 2005). In fact, an assessment of the PNA performance was made by donor organizations such as the World Bank, European Union and the United Nation Relief (UNRWA). These donors granted a conditional assistantship to achieve better employee performance (Shahwan, 2003). In reaction to poor performance, the Palestinian Development Plan (PDP) was devised to provide a focus to improve the level of competence and performance of PNA employees. With regard to this in 2007, a government-related PNA reform, entitled the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) was created with the aim of advancing HRM practices as well as improving employee performance. These reforms include different areas such as: conducting a thorough analysis of human resources and preparing a comprehensive human resource development plan; strengthening existing HRM procedures; and pursuing the development of a new HRM system (World Bank, 2007). In this particular issue, PRDP plan (2008-2010) places an emphasis on employees' weaknesses in order to improve their level of competence and performance.

(World Bank, 2006, 2007, 2009) recommends that the PNA should strengthen the capacity of its civil service, creates effectiveness organizational restructuring program, for a convenience HRM across the civil service (World Bank, 2015). Therefore, under the situation described above, the PNA ought to be further developed. In that vein, the international donor organizations such as the World Bank, and the European Union continuously supervise the performance of PNA organizations in order to improve the performance level of both the employees and the organizations.

Under the constraints of the Israeli occupation, and the critical condition that PNA organizations face, the importance of attaining competent employees in PNA organizations are, therefore, justified (Dervitsiotis, 1995; Porterfield & Clark, 2011). Competent employees play a vital role in the workplace, as their well-equipped fundamental capabilities and skill sets, coupled with the correct skills and attitudes that position them to succeed in their occupations and which enable these employees to satisfactorily perform their role in the workplace with the aim to achieve a competitive advantage for their organization (Dervitsiotis, 1995).

Thus, their important contributions to PNA organizations are well recognized, and in addition to this, these competent employees are able to perform well and support the survival of PNA organizations during substantially difficult circumstances (World Bank, 2007).

### 3. HRM Practices in the Palestinian Public Sector

The Palestinian studies concluded that Palestine organizations have the HRM policy and plans in place, and generally these policies are employed (Abu-zayd, 2008; Shorrab, 2007; Al-Oksh, 2007). However, PNA organizations really employed those necessary HRM dimensions which generally conducted in similar developing countries and public sector organizations. PNA actually employed those necessary HRM dimensions which described in developing countries such as India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Iran. Studies conducted at the developing countries suggested the importance of the four HRM elements of recruitment and selection, training, compensation, and performance practices of these developing countries (Marwat, et al., 2009; Aggarwal & Bhargava's, 2009; Chiang, Shih & Hsu, 2014). However, these four dimensions are considered to be the critical dimensions and are important for improving performance and survival of the PNA organizations (World Bank, 2009).

Nothing like private sector organizations, but similar to public sector organization, PNA organizations are focusing on these particular HRM practices were considered most valid to the particular employee performance outcome. These particular practices are described in public sector literature (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Marwat, Arif & Jan, 2009; Marwat, et al., 2006)

Still, some studies recommended that PNA organizations should modernize their HRM practices within the PNA organizations in order for these organizations to conform to the latest updates about developing the HR within the public sector (International Monetary Fund, 2013; Al-Oksh, 2007; Shorrab, 2007). However, a relatively newly established PNA organization was tasked to examine the reasons for dissatisfactory levels of HRM practices. However, taking into account the Palestinian history, it was the first time for the Palestinians to develop their own organizations (World Bank, 2009). In less than twenty years, senior managers, supervisors, and subordinates have been appointed within the organizations of the Palestinian government. Accordingly, it could be considered that there is a lack of HRM experience. Furthermore, another reason for dissatisfactory levels of HRM practices may be attributed to the PNA government, after its establishment, it was forced to work with two different rules and regulations inherited from Jordanian and Egyptian administrative laws (Institute of Law, 2008). Therefore, such duplication of regulations causes confusing work standards that may affect HRM practices. In response to such unsatisfactory HRM practices, PNA government enacted the Palestinian Plan aimed to advancing HRM practices. This Plan helped rationalize the HRM practices of the different PNA Ministries (World Bank, 2007).

Finally, Palestine as an emerging 'State' with the absence of natural resources, thus the role of human resources is crucial. Also, human factor becomes the only means for economic and social development (World Bank, 2011). Therefore, PNA organizations can develop human resources by using a competitive human resource practices. Thus, investigating HRM practice in the context of Palestine is necessary in order to attain better human capital outcomes.

So, next section in depth will illustrate PNA HRM practice in terms of recruitment and selection, training, compensation, performance appraisal practices.

### **3.1 Recruitment and Selection Practices in the Palestinian Public Sector**

Many Palestinian professionals continue to migrate and leave the PNA organizations and this is termed as a 'brain drain' from the Palestinian territory. This is partly caused by the confidence of their competence and professionalism to find better opportunities to secure employment and a safer lifestyle outside Palestine (World Bank, 2007). There is, therefore, a challenge in recruiting, and selecting qualified professionals in PNA organizations. However, the PNA government has written policies and procedures to organize recruitment and selection processes which are able to achieve the selection of proper employees (Jarghoun, 2009).

Unlike private sector, PNA organizations are employed these recruitment and selection practices that more familiar in developing countries as well as public sector organization (Soomro, et al., 2011). In context of recruitment and selection, the PNA organizations implemented previous mentioned recruitment and selection practices such as written examination in the employment test and interview (Civil Services Law, 2005). As these particular practices were considered most valid to the particular employee performance outcome (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Furthermore, most recruitment and selection practices begin with the job analysis, web-recruitment, university-recruitment, written exams, essential interviews, medical exam, and the final appointment (GPC, 2011). Thus, in order to advance recruitment and selection in the PNA context, the researcher came up with the literature recommendations that may make the process of selection and recruitment more effective in the PNA context. Some of these recommendations include creating scientific criteria for the processes of recruitment and selection (Al-Farra & Al-Zanoun, 2007; Jarghoun, 2009).

### **3.2 Training Practices in the Palestinian Public Sector**

Generally, in the Palestinian context, similar to the Arab and developing countries, employee development and training efforts have become an increasing concern, and an increased level of effort is required to increase the efficiency and to upgrade the employee performance (Madhoun & Analoui, 2003). However, unlike private sector, PNA organizations are employed these training practices that more familiar in public sector organization (Johnson, et al., 2011; Marwat, et al., 2009). As well, similar to public sector organization PNA organizations, Palestinian Development Plan (PDP) was conducted to focus on the development of human capital. This plan was heavily financed by the general budget. As a result, many training programs were established. The PDP has included government training programs intended to developing the PNA organizations. Training departments in ministries, the national center for public administration, and professional training organizations are tasked to deliver training. The training programs outlined in the PDP (2008-2010) are essential learning programs which are crucial for employees' professional development and for improving the level of employee performance and also their level of competence. Accordingly, as more training programs were carried out, the Palestinian agencies (PECDAR) claimed that the training responsibility was headed towards developing employee performance (Al-Madhoun & Analoui, 2002).

With respect to training practices within the PNA organizations in 2010, the PNA organizations offered a public

training diploma program. However, this program was proposed for those employees who have already demonstrated an improvement. Furthermore, until 2011 this program conducted 28 training courses benefiting 7766 employees, while in 2012 the program held 14 training courses benefiting 821 employees (GPC, 2011).

The studies which have measured the effect of these training programs have revealed that the training programs need to be upgraded. Palestinian managers stress that these programs ought to give more attention to the issues related to Human Resource Development (HRD) (Al-Madhoun & Analoui, 2002). In addition, the establishment of a modern training centre providing the state's training objectives, would also be able to conduct a strategic plan and link it with educational outcomes. Such a center could adopt modern training methods in the delivery of the training courses, and would be able to conduct the final training test (Abu-Utwan, 2008).

### **3.3 Performance Appraisal Practices in the Palestinian Public Sector**

Regarding performance appraisal practices, the PNA organizations utilize appraisal practices as described by Bradley (2003). However, unlike private sector, PNA organizations are employed these appraisal practices that more familiar in public sector organization (Shim, Kwon, Park & Hwang, 2011; Baloch et al., 2010; Marwat, et al., 2009; Soomro, et al., 2011).

In context of appraisal practices, supervisors within PNA organizations are required to complete their subordinates' annual performance appraisal reports, in order to determine their job performance. Accordingly, managers ought to have a clear view with respect to the performances of their subordinates, in order to decide on their performance score. In examining the overall success scores, the level of 65% and above is considered as a minimum score for acceptable performance. Rewards can be offered to those employees with high performance scores of above 85%. The sources of information concerning employee performance can be obtained from the employee's file, achievement reports, the supervisor's remarks, and the record of office hours worked. The employee performance appraisal form comprises five categories for rating: (1) does not meet expectations; (2) needs improvement; (3) meets expectations; (4) exceeds expectations; and (5) mastery. An appraisal in this form provides the basis for examination of three performance categories and they are: (a) efficiency and productivity; (b) personal behaviors and attributes; and (c) attendance at work (Palestinian Civil Service Law (PCSL) (2006).

The studies examining PNA performance appraisal practices criticizes at the confidential appraisal report conducted by the supervisors (Awwad, 2005; Alnono, 2004). It is claimed that this method could lead to an individual bias. Additionally, the appraisal process takes place only once a year, therefore, the organization might inadvertently become involved in the time appraisal bias because insufficient time is spent on the employee evaluation (Awwad, 2005; Alnono, 2004).

Furthermore, studies have investigated the effectiveness of the PNA performance appraisal practices. Awwad (2005) assessed the performance appraisal system for employees in the Palestinian National Authority in Gaza. The Awwad's study confirmed that the performance appraisal practices were intended to improve the level of the employee performance. However, the study illustrated a shortfall in the appraisal practices as the appraisals were performed by the

supervisors only once a year. Additionally, it is recommended that senior-level management ought to be committed to this appraisal process to make it effective, and more trustworthy. Similarly, Alnono (2004) provided a number of recommendations regarding the appraisal practices which are as follows: that these practices ought to depend on more different sources for the evaluation practices; that attention should be given to analyze the performance appraisal results; and that the importance raised in providing an employee feedback process (Alnono, 2004).

### 3.4 Compensations practices in the Palestinian Public Sector

Unlike private sector, PNA organizations are employed these compensation practices that more familiar in developing countries as well as public sector organization (Shahzad, Bashir and Ramay, 2008; Soomro, et al., 2011; Khatibi, Asgharia, SeyedSaleki & Manafi, 2012).

According to the Palestinian Civil Law, the employees in the public sector are entitled to get financial support and incentives. Furthermore, the PNA organizations employ compensations which include monetary and non-monetary rewards, which an organization exchanges for the contributions of its employees in both job performance and personal contributions (Miaari, 2009). Additionally, Shorrah (2007) claimed that the PNA compensation practices were intended for the attainment of employee performance. The compensation practices included standard wages and salary, in addition to intangible practices. In this context, Al-Oksh (2007) added that compensation practices were utilized to provide incentives and rewards, and promotion. Furthermore, Bassiso (2009) identified financial compensation and calculated that several compensation practices utilized job allowances, salary, bonuses, promotions, benefits associated with end-of-service and retirement. Abu-Alrous and Alsaggah (2010) identified compensation practices to be related to retirement and end-of-service financial benefits, and more recently Abu-sultan and Habil (2011) examined the compensation system in term of employees' salary, insurance and pensions.

Studies by Abu-sultan and Habil (2011) and Al-Oksh (2007) which assessed the PNA compensation practices indicated that the employees classify the pensions as the most valuable compensation practices, as employees prefer to feel secure professionally in the long term rather than the short term. On the other hand, employees considered that insurance is proper, but a monthly salary is the least effective compensation practice (Abu-sultan & Habil, 2011). Al-Oksh (2007) suggested that PNA organizations ought to update the compensation system, as improvement is required in order to match the expectations of the employees as well as to conduct the compensation practices with the appraisal system for more effective compensation practices. Of note, for PNA organizations, it is crucial to provide the best compensation practices as there is a trend to standardize salaries rates among private sector competitors (Miaari, 2009). Additionally, Bassiso (2009) indicated that the compensation system needs more important improvements to be effective. In that vein, the PNA government is to set a reliable standard to be fixed in the law of the Civil Service, and the government to improve its contribution in the fund insurance and pensions.

Reviewing the compensation system of PNA organizations, Abu-Alrous and Alsaggah (2010) suggested to make it more appropriately related to the job, salary, bonuses

and benefits associated with end-of-service and retirement as well.

### 4. Conclusion

The authors described HRM from the perspective of PNA organizations to gain a source of success for PNA organization. HRM is a proactive process, as it involves the continuous development of policies for the purpose of improving an organization's workforce. PNA organizations are considered the most well-known HRM practices for the public sector organizations. Accordingly, these HRM practices should be deemed an essential part of any research conducted in the field of the developing countries. The current study focuses on HRM practices due to their relevant importance for the organizations of the developing countries. Importantly, the current study considers the HRM practices within the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) that may lead to employee outcomes and improved level of organization performance. These public sector organizations must establish relevant HRM practices to achieve better employee output and achieve their goals since their success should strengthen the survival of the PNA.

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