

British Journal of Economics, Management & Trade
4(5): 706-723, 2014

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HR Competencies: Understanding the Impact on HR and Organizational Performance in Saudi Arabia

Sunil J. Ramlall^{1*}, Wafaa A. Al Yafi² and Nayef Ghamri²

¹Strategic HRM Consulting, LLC. Rosemount, MN, USA.

²King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

Received 9th August 2013
Accepted 5th November 2013
Published 16th January 2014

ABSTRACT

The global economy has continued to change the nature of competition and critically, the role of HR in organizations. Saudi Arabia is undergoing many changes from a strategic business perspective and has an implied demand for HR professionals to be an integral part of the changes and develop people strategies to help organizations compete more effectively.

This study focused on HR competencies and the extent to which current HR professionals in Saudi Arabia possess the pertinent competencies as expected in the HR profession. Specifically, the study sought to: (i) determine if competencies are predictive of success in the HR profession, (ii) understand how competencies vary by type of position within HR (entry level, manager, director and executives), (iii) determine if there is a relationship between specific competencies and particular responsibilities of HR professionals and (iv) determine the relationship among education, years of HR experience, competencies and compensation. The data were collected through a stratified sample across industries, education, role in organization and geographic locations.

Numerous areas are identified as gaps between competencies HR professionals should possess compared to current competencies necessary to function effectively as strategic business partners. As Saudi HR professionals continue to advance the HR profession and add value to their organizations, it is necessary for there to be emphasis on having the appropriate education, participate in continuing education and critically measure the

*Corresponding author: Email: sramlall001@gmail.com;

impact of their efforts.

Keywords: HR competencies; HR in Saudi Arabia; strategic HR; HR and firm performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers in the field of strategic human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) have emphasized the view that systems of human resource (HR) practices may lead to higher firm performance and be sources of sustained competitive advantages [1]. For clarification purposes, the discussion of HR practices in this paper will include both HRM and HRD.

HR competencies deal with the knowledge, skills and values that successful human resource (HR) professionals demonstrate in all types of positions, companies and geographies [2]. The techniques help those professionals architect, coach, design and facilitate programs for effective operations resulting in more efficient and content organizations.

In competing in today's tumultuous global economy, there are numerous opportunities and challenges facing Saudi Arabian firms. It is expected that the HR function in these firms partner effectively in helping the firm to create and sustain competitive advantages. To function effectively in HR, Brockbank, Ulrich, & Beatty [3] argued that for HR to be a profession HR professionals must master the necessary competencies and that mastery of HR knowledge comes from knowing the concepts, language, logic, research and practices of HR. Furthermore, mastery of abilities comes from being able to apply the knowledge to specific business settings.

Human resource (HR) practitioners are responsible for easing the impact of changes in their organization and to protect employees against the side effects of these inevitable changes [4]. As companies make changes and as Saudi Arabia continues to make changes in their business practices, HR professionals are expected to be vital partners and in the end help to produce a significant increase in performance at the individual and organizational levels. HR practitioners who are unable to function as change agents will inevitably create a barrier against their becoming a well-integrated strategic partner [4]. Therefore, the role of change agent also mediates the relationship between certain HR competencies and organizational performance. This research seeks to: (i) determine if competencies are predictive of success in the HR profession in Saudi Arabia, (ii) understand how competencies vary by type of position within HR (entry level, manager, director and executives), (iii) determine if there is a relationship between specific competencies and particular responsibilities of HR professionals and (iv) determine the relationship among education, years of HR experience, competencies and compensation. Competence of an individual as defined by [5] is the knowledge, skills, abilities or personality characteristics that directly influence one's performance.

1.1 Literature Review

Leaders expect their HR professionals to anticipate changing conditions and then add value to the business by providing insights and actions on talent, culture and leadership [2]. The

knowledge, skills and abilities of HR professionals to add value to their organizations is what we refer to as the HR competencies.

Human resource management involves continuous improvement activities of all employees in order to achieve organizational mission and goals [6]. As cited in [7] strategic human resource management (HRM) is 'the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable the firm to achieve its goals' (p. 298). They stated that the domain of strategic HRM consisted of 'the determinants of decisions about HR practices, the composition of human capital resource pool, the specification of the required human resource behaviors and the effectiveness of these decisions given various business strategies and/or competitive situations' (p. 298).

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing emphasis by researchers and practitioners alike on the importance of human resources as one of the key ways of gaining a competitive advantage for a firm. Consequently, numerous researches have been conducted on business strategy and its effect on human resource management within the context of firm performance [8]. Organizational outcomes include factors such as commitment, satisfaction, motivation, financial performance, return on assets, profitability, etc.

To sustain the transformation of the HR function and foster the intended organizational outcomes, HR professionals must develop and demonstrate a new set of competencies to fulfill their changing roles and responsibilities [9]. In the widely cited and used "Michigan's HR Competency Research," [10] the researchers identified five major competencies expected of HR professionals: i) strategic contribution, ii) personal credibility, iii) HR delivery, iv) business knowledge and v) HR technology Becker et al. [5] suggested adding strategic HR performance management as a sixth competency.

According to Becker et al. [5] the strategic performance management strategies are probably a little different and support the notion that HR managers must think differently about HR. The core dimensions of this competency are: a) critical casual thinking, b) understanding principles of good measurement, c) estimating causal relationships and d) communicating HR strategic performance results to senior line managers. It is argued that with a stronger competency in strategic performance management, an HR professional would be better able to show correlation and causal relationships between HR systems and financial outcomes, customer value proposition and even competitive advantages.

As Ulrich et al. [10] pointed out, HR must be competent with strategic contribution and as Becker et al. [5] noted, HR must be fully competent with strategic performance management. In a study conducted by Wright, McMahan, Snell, & Gerhart [11] the authors found that it is not only HR professionals who see value in HR practices but that top line executives believe that a number of HR activities are critical to the firm's competitive advantage.

A competency model can serve as an integrative framework for an organization's entire HR system. It can help align the HR system vertically with the organization's strategic objectives, or horizontally with other HR functions, to ensure harmony and consistency across the many facets of HR activities that impact human performance [12].

Moreover, taking talent-management expertise forward is central to the future success of the entire HR profession [13]. The authors reiterate that the HR profession "can evolve into a

true decision science of talent and aspire to the level of influence of disciplines such as finance and marketing." To achieve such success as a profession, specific resources and capabilities of a company may be used to permanently influence its goals [14]. In order for these potentials to be developed into competitive advantages, they must be scarce, valuable, and permanent; additionally their ability to be imitated, transferred or substituted must be limited (Wenger, 1999: 53 ff.) as cited in Zaugg & Thom [14].

With a shifting role of HR given the changing business demands, organizations must establish new covenants with customers, manage disruptive technologies, create new forms of engagements with employees and face scrutiny of investors who determine a firm's market value by assessing its intangibles, not just its present or past earnings [15]. Tied to the changing demands of the HR professions are the new competencies enabling HR to be effective in driving firm performance and creating sustainable competitive advantages.

Recent studies related to HRD programs in Saudi Arabia, show that in the private sector especially in small and medium size companies (SMEs) that these programs are not developed structurally or functionally. However, the case is different in large government and private companies [16]. Another recent study shows the need for better HR benchmarking. Kadasah & Al Ahmari (2013) found that the practice of benchmarking in Saudi Arabian organizations' is not in advance level. The sequence of the application of benchmarking is found to be as follows; marketing, operations, quality, finance and human resources, respectively.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study included HR professionals in Saudi Arabia. The authors e-mailed, mailed, and posted surveys online. The study utilized a cross-sectional design collecting data at one point in time versus a longitudinal research where data are collected from a sample at different points in time in order to study changes or continuity in the sample's characteristics [18]. The target population was HR professionals in Saudi Arabia. HR professionals for the purpose of this study include individuals who practice in the field of human resources and hold full-time positions. Forty-six HR professionals responded to the survey.

2.1 Survey Design

The purpose of this study was to i) determine if competencies are predictive of success in the HR profession in Saudi Arabia, ii) understand how competencies vary by type of position within HR (entry level, manager, director and executives), iii) determine if there is a relationship between specific competencies and particular responsibilities of HR professionals and iv) determine the relationship among education, years of HR experience, competencies and compensation. Based on theories, concepts and frameworks discussed in the literature review, the author designed a survey as the primary means of data collection for the study.

The instrument included multiple sections. The first section focused on information of the participants' position classification (job title), industry, years employed in HR, years in current position and highest educational attainment. The second section of the survey dealt with the participants identifying the competencies, skills and attributes HR professionals should possess and the competencies the participants' employers emphasize in various employment practices. Compensation information will also be included in this section. The

third section of the survey listed 12 specific strategies and activities based on the review of literature and empirical studies [19-21]. A scale of 1 – 5 was used to indicate the level of competence needed in one's job and second, the level of the employee's competence for the specific HR activity

As a way to determine the construct validity of the instrument and to enhance its effectiveness, a pilot study was conducted on a stratified sample of 8 HR professionals including Senior Executives, HR Managers and HR Generalists. Respondents were asked to review the instrument and provide feedback on the utility of the questions, recommend additional questions, eliminate questions and determine if the questions will be able to collect the appropriate data needed to fulfill the purpose of the study. Items that were consistently identified by the focus group were included in the final survey.

2.2 Survey Data Analysis

The main objective of this research was to determine and understand the competencies, skills that human resources professionals in Saudi Arabia possess, and its relations with the management behaviors. Also the study aims to understand the importance of these competencies and the availability of these competencies for the human resources professionals. Also the survey is intended to achieve many other objectives such: to predict the availability of these competencies in predicting and how they participate in predicting the level of success of human resources professionals, determining if there is a significant relationship among specific competency and particular responsibilities, in addition to examine if there is a relation between the variables (education, and experience) with the competencies and compensation. To achieve these aims and objectives, secondary data has been collected by a designed questionnaire. SPSS has been used for data entering, and to analyze the data results.

In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics techniques have been used such as frequencies, percentages, averages, correlations and inductive statistical method such as analysis of variances (ANOVA) and Students' T-test statistics. In addition to that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is used to measure the questionnaire internal consistency.

Based on the above data analysis will proceed as the following scenario:

1. Testing the questionnaire method reliability and validity.
2. Describing the sample of the study according to the variables: (position, industry, years of experiences in HR, years of experience in the current job and education).
3. Determining the competencies, skills and characteristics available to HR professionals.
4. Analysis of the sample attitudes about the importance of the availability of competencies and personal skills for the HR professionals to implement and practice main strategies, activities that related to their jobs.
5. Estimating the percentages of time the HR professional spent on doing his job tasks.
6. Sample responses concerning the importance and level of competencies, skills required for HR professionals to work as strategic partner to executive management in the corporate.

In the following we will proceed forward in data analysis:

First: Questionnaire method reliability and validity.

Table 1. Shows reliability analysis

| Reliability Statistics | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | No. of Items |
| 0.930 | 24 |

From the above Table we noticed that the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is reaching (0.93) which is exceeding the (0.70), the recommended value of the method reliability and validity. Therefore, we believe that the questionnaire method has a high validity, that guarantee the outcomes of the study.

Second: analysis of the sample demographic characteristics

Sample demographic characteristics include: (position, industry, years of experience in HR, years of working in the current job and education level).

Table 2. Sample distributed according to position

| | Position | | | |
|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| employee | 32 | 69.6 | 69.6 | 69.6 |
| manager | 14 | 30.4 | 30.4 | 100.0 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the above, we observed that 69.6% of the participants are employees, whereas 30.4% are managers. Therefore, the employees have the highest percent of participation in our current study.

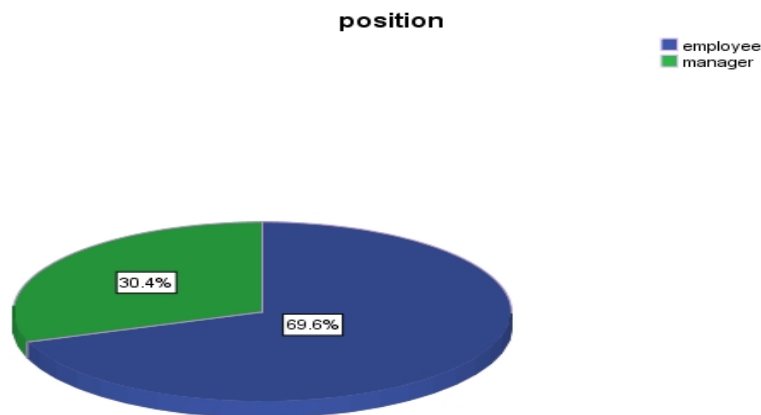


Fig. 1. sample distributed according to position

Table 3. Sample distributed according to industry

| | Industry sector | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Academic | 8 | 17.4 | 17.4 | 17.4 |
| Transformation industry | 7 | 15.2 | 15.2 | 32.6 |
| Commercial | 11 | 23.9 | 23.9 | 56.5 |
| Health care | 8 | 17.4 | 17.4 | 73.9 |
| Construction | 12 | 26.1 | 26.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the above statistics, we noticed that 17.4% of the respondents working in academic establishment, whereas 15.2% in transformation industry, while 23.9% in the commercial sector, where 17.4% in medical services field, while 26.1% working in construction firms.

Table 4. Sample distributed according to number of working years in Human resources

| | working years in HR | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| less than 2 years | 9 | 19.6 | 19.6 | 19.6 |
| 2- to 5 years | 13 | 28.3 | 28.3 | 47.8 |
| 6- to 10 years | 18 | 39.1 | 39.1 | 87.0 |
| more than 10 years | 6 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the above Table, we noticed that 19.6% of the participants working in HR for less than 2 years, whereas 28.3% their working years between 2 to 5 years, while 39.1% working between 6-10 years, where 13.0% their working years in HR is more than 10 years.

Therefore, there are 52.1% their years of working in HR more than 5 years, what would an effect on the evaluation of human resources professionals needed competencies and skills.

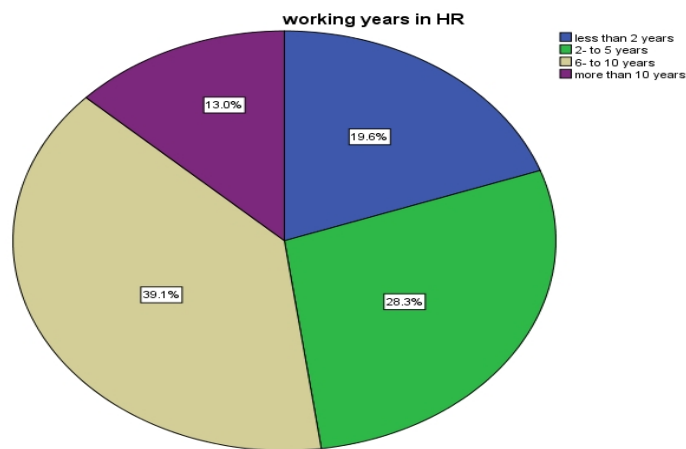


Fig. 3. Sample distributed according to working years in HR

Table 5. Sample distributed according to number of working years in the current job

| | Years of working in current job | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| less than one year | 8 | 17.4 | 17.4 | 17.4 |
| from 1- to 4 years | 20 | 43.5 | 43.5 | 60.9 |
| Valid from 5- to 10 years | 14 | 30.4 | 30.4 | 91.3 |
| more than 10 years | 4 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 100.0 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the above Table, it is clearly seen that 17.4% work less than 1 year in the current job in HR, whereas 43.5% working years between 1-4 years, while 30.4% work from 5- to 10 years, where 8.7% work for more than 10 years.

Thus, it obvious that the majority of participants work in the current job from 1-4 years and they represented 43.5% of the total.

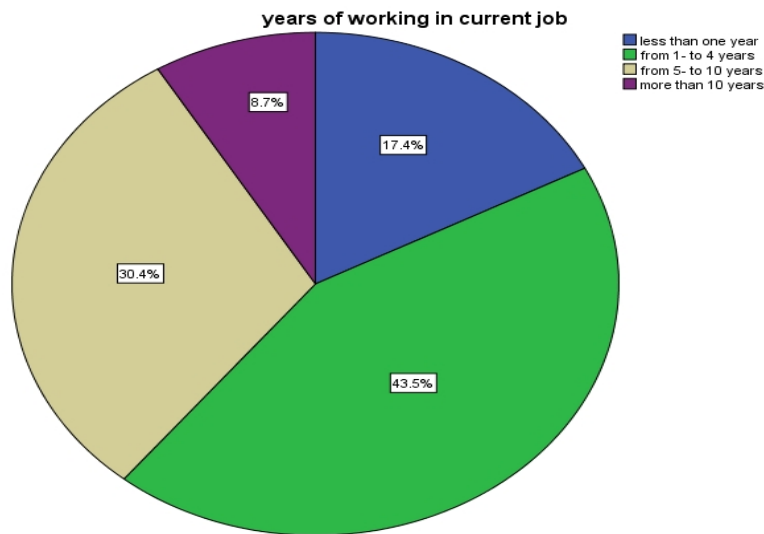


Fig. 4. Sample distributed according to working years in the current job.

Table 6. Sample distributed according to education level

| | Education | | | |
|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Bachelor | 32 | 69.6 | 69.6 | 69.6 |
| Master | 4 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 78.3 |
| diploma | 4 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 87.0 |
| secondary | 2 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 91.3 |
| high diploma | 2 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 95.7 |
| Phd | 2 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 100.0 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the above statistics, it is obvious that the majority of the participants education level is bachelor degree, whereas 8.7% hold master degree, while 8.7% diploma, where 4.3% for secondary, high diploma and Phd. Successively.

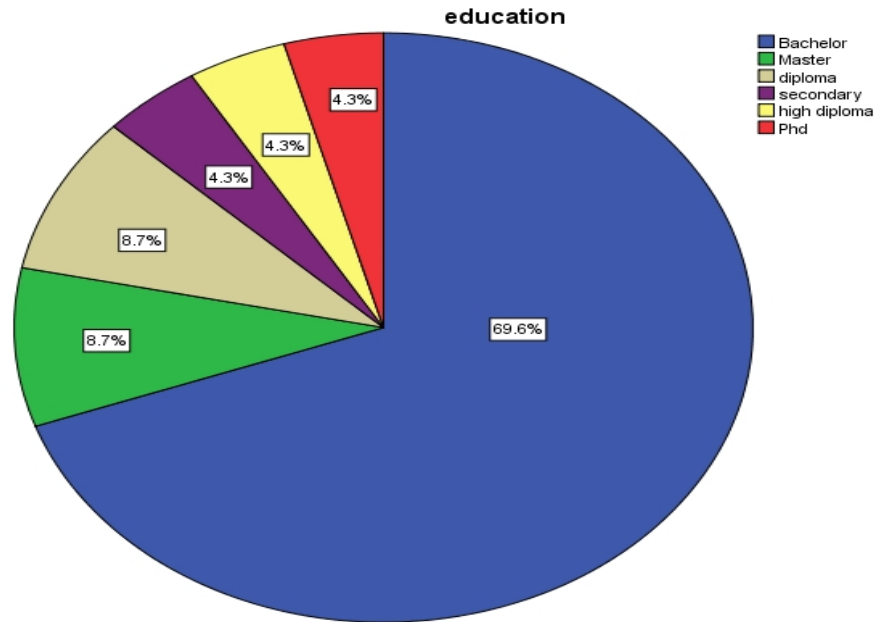


Fig. 5. Sample distributed according to education level.

Determining the competencies, skills and characteristics available to HR professionals.

Table 7. Shows the most important competencies, skills and characteristics that HR professionals possessed to work as strategic partner to executive management in the their companies

| Competencies, skills | Frequencies | Percent % |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Leadership | 6 | 13.0 |
| Communication skills | 2 | 4.3 |
| Strategic planning | 7 | 15.2 |
| Interpersonal skills | 25 | 54.3 |
| Working experience | 6 | 13.0 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 |

From Table 7, it is obviously seen that one of the most important competency that HR professional possess in order to work as professional in HR, is the interpersonal skills with 54.3%, followed by strategic planning with 15.2%, while working experience and leadership have comes in the same rating with 13.0% each, whereas only 4.3% for communication skills.

Table 8. Shows correlation relationship between competencies & skills of HR professional and salary

| Correlation coefficient | P-value |
|-------------------------|---------|
| -0.385** | 0.01 |

*** correlation is significant at the (0.01) level.*

From the above Table, it is obviously seen that the value of Person's correlation coefficient is reaching (-0.385) with negative sign and statistically significant at (0.01), which indicated that there is a significant inverse relationship between competencies, skills and the salary. That means, the salary has negative effects on HR professionals to possess the needed competencies.

Table 9. Shows the most important competencies, skills and characteristics that company take into consideration when selecting, rewarding and promoting HR professionals to work as strategic partner to executive management in the corporate

| | Frequencies | Percent % |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Knowledgement competencies | 18 | 39.1 |
| Management relationship | 6 | 13.0 |
| Organizational competencies | 15 | 32.6 |
| Evaluation competencies | 7 | 15.3 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 |

From Table 9 it is obviously seen that the most important competency that the company take into consideration when selecting, recruiting a human resources professionals is the acknowledgement competency with the percent 39.1%, followed by organizational competency with 32.6%, while evaluation competencies come in the third rating with 15.3%, then management relationship with 13.0%.

Hence, we conclude that the most important competencies for companies when selecting, recruiting HR are the knowledge competencies and organizational competencies.

The statistics in the Table 10 shows the participants responses concerning the importance of the of competencies and skills that HR professionals should possess to practice the strategies, activities to work as strategic partners with the senior managers in company, the statistics have shown that the competencies, skills are extremely moderate important for HR professionals in Saudi Arabia firms to implement the following strategies and activities:

- possesses adequate technical competencies in HR.
- understanding the business.
- manage changes effectively.
- participates in strategic planning.

The previous responses are supported by the average means values comes as follows : (3.98, 3.80, 3.76, 3.60, and 3.57).

Moreover the competencies and skills are moderately important to HR professionals to implement the following strategies and activities:

- understands and uses marketing strategies
- stays abreast with applicable research findings
- reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis.

The responses to the above items of strategies and activities are supported by the average means values (2.96, 2.87, and 2.78).

Thus, we conclude that HR professionals or the management in Saudi firms don't take careful attention to the competencies, skills HR professionals must possess to help in implementing the strategies and activities that make the firms succeed.

The statistics in Table 11 displays the participants responses concerning extent of availability of competencies, skills and personal experiences for HR professionals to implement the strategies, activities that considered as standard to HR professionalism. The statistics have shown that the only competencies, skills that are extremely moderate available for HR professionals in Saudi Arabia firms related to the following strategies and activities: manage changes effectively and understanding the business.

While the competencies, skills to implement the following strategies and activities are moderately available as the means value ranged between (3.39 to 2.72):

- possesses adequate technical competencies in HR
- deliver human resources practices
- possesses adequate competencies in OD
- understand and uses management accounting concepts and practices
- participates in strategic planning
- manage cultures effectively
- measures HR practices to determine effectiveness
- understands and uses marketing strategies
- also from Table 11, we noticed that the competencies including : stays abreast with applicable research findings and reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis are less moderately available to HR professional working in Saudi firms.

Table 10. Participants attitudes in concern with the extent of importance of the competencies to enable HR professionals to be effective in practicing the following strategies, activities that drive the firm performance

| Strategies & activities | High | Extremely moderate | Moderate | Less moderate | Low | average |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|
| understanding the business | 16(34.8) | 12(26.1) | 12(26.1) | 5(10.9) | 1(2.2) | 3.80 |
| deliver human resources practices | 12(26.1) | 8(17.4) | 20(43.5) | 4(8.7) | 2(4.3) | 3.52 |
| manage changes effectively | 16(34.8) | 11(23.9) | 13(28.3) | 4(8.7) | 2(4.3) | 3.76 |
| manage cultures effectively | 10(21.7) | 8(17.4) | 19(41.3) | 7(15.2) | 2(4.3) | 3.37 |
| participates in strategic planning | 16(34.8) | 8(17.4) | 10(21.7) | 10(21.7) | 2(4.3) | 3.57 |
| possesses adequate technical competencies in HR | 20(43.5) | 9(19.6) | 14(30.4) | 2(4.3) | 1(2.2) | 3.98 |
| possesses adequate competencies in OD | 6(13.0) | 6(13.0) | 10(21.7) | 3(6.5) | 0(0.0) | 3.60 |
| understand and uses management accounting concepts and practices | 14(30.4) | 10(21.7) | 12(26.1) | 8(17.4) | 2(4.3) | 3.57 |
| understands and uses marketing strategies | 8(17.4) | 7(15.2) | 13(28.3) | 11(23.9) | 7(15.2) | 2.96 |
| measures HR practices to determine effectiveness | 10(21.7) | 12(26.1) | 14(30.4) | 7(15.2) | 3(6.5) | 3.41 |
| stays abreast with applicable research findings | 7(15.2) | 6(13.0) | 13(28.3) | 14(30.4) | 6(13.0) | 2.87 |
| reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis | 7(15.2) | 8(17.4) | 10(21.7) | 10(21.7) | 11(23.9) | 2.78 |
| Total | | | | | | 3.43 |

Table 11. Sample attitudes in concern of the extent of availability of competencies, skills for HR professionals to implement the strategies, activities that considered as standard to HR professionalism

| Strategies & activities | High | Extremely moderate | Moderate | Less moderate | Low | Average |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|
| understanding the business | 10(21.7) | 14(30.4) | 14(30.4) | 4(8.7) | 4(8.7) | 3.48 |
| deliver human resources practices | 7(15.2) | 14(30.4) | 14(30.4) | 6(13.0) | 5(10.9) | 3.26 |
| manage changes effectively | 9(19.6) | 16(34.8) | 15(32.6) | 1(2.2) | 5(10.9) | 3.50 |
| manage cultures effectively | 9(19.6) | 8(17.4) | 14(30.4) | 8(17.4) | 7(15.2) | 3.09 |
| participates in strategic planning | 8(17.4) | 11(23.9) | 11(23.9) | 10(21.7) | 6(13.0) | 3.11 |
| possesses adequate technical competencies in HR | 9(19.6) | 13(28.3) | 14(30.4) | 7(15.2) | 3(6.5) | 3.39 |
| possesses adequate competencies in OD | 2(4.3) | 7(15.2) | 10(21.7) | 5(10.9) | 0(0.0) | 3.25 |
| understand and uses management accounting concepts and practices | 9(19.6) | 9(19.6) | 13(28.3) | 10(21.7) | 5(10.9) | 3.15 |
| understands and uses marketing strategies | 4(8.7) | 7(15.2) | 14(30.4) | 14(30.4) | 7(15.2) | 2.72 |
| measures HR practices to determine effectiveness | 2(4.3) | 11(23.9) | 16(34.8) | 10(21.7) | 7(15.2) | 2.80 |
| stays abreast with applicable research findings | 1(2.2) | 8(17.4) | 12(26.1) | 11(23.9) | 14(30.4) | 2.37 |
| reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis | 6(13.0) | 6(13.0) | 6(13.0) | 9(19.6) | 19(41.3) | 2.37 |
| Total | | | | | | 3.04 |

Table 12. Explain the estimated time in percentages the HR professional stays in thinking about and practicing the following tasks

| Tasks | Average mean | Standard deviation | Std. Error |
|--|--------------|--------------------|------------|
| change agent | 7.85 | 5.9 | 1.6 |
| administrative tasks | 34.1 | 18.6 | 2.8 |
| staffing | 19.0 | 15.7 | 2.6 |
| compensation | 11.4 | 10.5 | 2.2 |
| assessing organizational needs | 8.7 | 7.1 | 1.4 |
| design HR strategies and initiatives | 9.2 | 6.9 | 1.3 |
| implementing HR strategies and initiatives | 11.3 | 7.4 | 1.3 |
| serving as an internal consultant | 8.8 | 9.9 | 2.7 |
| intervene with legal issues | 12.1 | 11.6 | 3.0 |
| partnership with senior executives on strategy formulation | 10.7 | 6.5 | 1.5 |
| engaged with labor relation issues | 16.6 | 13.1 | 2.6 |
| other tasks | 17.9 | 9.7 | 2.5 |

The above statistics showed the average estimated time the human resources professional stays in practicing the above tasks and it is obviously seen that the most important tasks the human resources professional spent time to practice include: administrative tasks, staffing, other task and engagement with labor relation issues.

Table 13. Examining relationship between competencies and number of years working experience in Human resources management

| | Chi-Square Tests | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 9.569 ^a | 12 | .654 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 12.374 | 12 | .416 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .004 | 1 | .948 |
| N of Valid Cases | 46 | | |

From the above Table we noticed that as the value of Person Chi-Square is equal to (9.57) Approximately and statistically not significant at (0.654), this indicated that there is no significant correlation relationship between the competencies, skills that assumed to be possessed by human resources professionals and their working experiences. This also mean that the working experience has no effect on the possess of HR professional to the required competencies help them to carry their tasks, and responsibilities.

Also we examine if there are significant differences between competencies related to working years experiences as shown in ANOVA Table 14 below:

Table 14. Analysis of variances results

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-------------|
| Competencies required for HR professional | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 52.300 | 15 | 3.487 | .486 | .913 |
| Within Groups | 107.700 | 15 | 7.180 | | |
| Total | 160.000 | 30 | | | |

From the above Table, it is clearly seen when conducting analysis of variances techniques to detect if there are significant variation between HR professionals possessing of competencies attributed to differences of working experiences, it obvious that there is no significant variations as the F value is equal to (0.486) and statistically not significant.

To test for this relation between competencies and education level, Chi-Square technique has been performed as shown in the below Table 15.

Table 15. Examining relationship between competencies and education level

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 31.555 ^a | 20 | .048 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 25.754 | 20 | .174 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.537 | 1 | .060 |
| N of Valid Cases | 46 | | |

From the statistics, we noticed that the value of Person Chi-Square is equal to (32.56) with significant level less than (0.05), therefore, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between the education level and competencies availability to HR professionals. This means that as the human resources professionals acquired high level of education they are supposed to have sufficient competencies help to manage to human resources in the company and participate actively in the all activities.

Table 16. Testing the relationship between scores on competencies and the abilities of HR professionals to implement the strategies and activities related to their jobs

| Correlations | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| | | Average scores of strategies and activities | Total scores of human resources possessing of competencies |
| average scores of strategies and activities | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.543 ^{**} |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .001 |
| | N | 46 | 32 |
| Total scores of human resources possessing of competencies | Pearson Correlation | -.543 ^{**} | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | |
| | N | 32 | 32 |

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the above Table, it is obviously seen that the Person Correlation coefficient is equal to (0.543-) at significant level less than (0.01), this indicated that there is a negative relationship

between statistically significant at the (0.01) level. This may be interpreted as that low possessing of the required competencies has a negative effect on HR professionals to carry on their assigned tasks and responsibilities.

Thus we conclude that HR professionals in Saudi organization don't possess the required competencies that support them to implement the strategies and activities, and thus they are unable to work as strategic partners in the companies they work for.

2.3 Final Findings

Based on data analysis of the study, we concluded with the following findings:

1. The study revealed that the most important competency that HR professionals possessed is the interpersonal skills with 54.3% percent.
2. The study detected that there is a statistically significant and inverse correlation relationship between competencies and salaries obtained by HR in their organizations at (0.01) significant level. That means, the salaries affect negatively on HR professionals to possess the needed competencies.
3. The study showed that the most important competencies participants employers' emphasize and take into consideration in various employment practice (selection, recruitment, promotion) are acknowledgement and organizational competencies, with 39.1%, and 32.6% successively.
4. In response to the importance of competencies that HR professionals should possess to practice the specific strategies, activities and work as strategic partners with the senior executives in the firm, the study showed that competencies are extremely moderate important for HR professionals in Saudi Arabia firms to implement the following strategies and activities:
 - possesses adequate technical competencies in HR.
 - understanding the business.
 - manage changes effectively.
 - participates in strategic planning.
5. The study revealed that the competencies including: stays abreast with applicable research findings and reads academic and practitioner journals on a regular basis are less moderately available to HR professional working in Saudi firms. Where for implementation of other strategies are extremely moderate and moderate.
6. The study clarified that, most important tasks the human resources professional spent time to practice include: administrative tasks, staffing, other task and engagement with labor relation issues.
7. The study didn't detect any significant correlation relationship between the competencies, skills that assumed to be possessed by human resources professionals and their working experiences. This also means that the working experience has no effect on possessing of HR professional to the required competencies help them to carry their tasks, and responsibilities.
8. The results proved that there is a significant relationship between the education level and competencies availability to HR professionals. This means that as the human resources professionals acquired higher level of education they are supposed to have sufficient competencies help to manage to human resources in the company and participate actively in the all activities.

9. When testing to find if there is a significant relationship between Total scores of human resources possessing of competencies and the level of availability of competencies to implement strategies and activities that assumed as standard to HR professionalism, the study showed that there is an inverse correlation relationship.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

It is suggested that high performing HR professionals think and act from outside/in which means that HR must turn outside business trends and stakeholder expectations into internal actions. Effective HR professionals are reportedly credible activists which involve doing what they promise, building personal trust relationships and being relied on [21]. As Saudi Arabia continues to focus on strategic HR and building organizational capabilities through people, the HR function becomes an even more critical player.

Although the strategic human resource management literature has emphasized the value of the integration of human resource management into strategic management, the mechanism through which the strategic integration of HR functions contributes to the improvement of firm performance is relatively unknown [22]. This paper helps to provide some understanding of HR in Saudi Arabia and critically, areas in which HR professionals should be focusing on to become strategic business partners.

Strategic participation is important for HR professionals who wish to have increased influence in their organizations [23]. In future studies, we intend to examine how different HR practices in Saudi organizations impact firm performance and to also examine the demographics of HR professionals and the relationships to their performance.

With the results, it is the hope that HR practitioners will be able to utilize the information to enhance practices in organizations to enhance firm competitiveness and researchers will be able to build on this knowledge base to create additional new knowledge on HR competencies and the impact on firm performance.

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