

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN TELECOM INDUSTRY IN SAUDI ARABIA: A CASE STUDY OF PRIVATE SECTOR

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Abstract

The telecom sector of Saudi Arabia holds the largest position in the entire Middle East. After staying dormant until 2000, the telecom sector recorded supernormal growth in the past decade, thanks largely to liberalization of the sector since 2003. Today, the sector is highly competitive, with private players vying for market share by aggressively cutting tariffs—in fact, this has been the trend for five years now. The reason for which Saudi Arabia is so attractive to all the telecom operators is the combination of its population size and wealth. The growing importance of this sector has attracted the attention of the Researchers in the present research paper is to make an empirical study of private sector telecom industry regarding the HRD practices. The case study selected by the Researchers is of Mobily Telecom Company. A survey questionnaire has been constructed and administered among the employees of Mobily at managerial and non-managerial level from the selected districts of regions of Saudi Arabia. The Sample of the study has been undertaken of 85 employees. The study brings out the existing picture of HRD practices in Private Sector Telecom Company and offers suggestions to improve the pace of such practices wherever they need improvement.

Keywords: HR Practice, quality of life, commitment, telecom, training

Introduction

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a process of developing and/or unleashing expertise through organization development and personnel

training and development for the purpose of improving performance (Swanson: 2001). It is the human resource, which works in all departments of the organization and helps the organization to put its thumb mark everywhere. Hence, human resources are the greatest of all our assets (Shah: 1990). Moreover, the skilled, competent and flexible workforce energizes the organization to keep its existence in global storm. Due to this fact the role of HRD in the new economic environment is, thus, becoming important in improving technical, managerial skills and employee motivation to face today's challenges of liberalization (Rao et al.:1994). Needless to say that the Saudi Arabia is one of the new and youngest countries in the world, with around 30 per cent of its population is below 15 years, while about 50 per cent below the age of 26 years (CIA World Fact Book).

In addition, as per World Bank estimates, the Kingdom's population is growing at a rate of about 2.3 per cent (World Bank), which is greater than the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole and also higher compared to emerging countries such as Brazil, China and India. Both these factors of high population growth and the high percentage of youth augur well for the telecom sector. A study conducted by Neilson in 2011 showed that the Saudi youth led their peers in the BRIC countries and even the US in downloads of screen savers and ring tones, and were second only to US in checking e-mails. This data indicates that the current Saudi generation is increasingly IT-literate. Thus, the young population of Saudi Arabia is likely to drive data usage, as the youth are more technology savvy. (Al Rajhi Capital: 2012). It is against this backdrop that the present study has been conducted study the HRD practices and their relationship with the performance of employees in one of private sector Telecom Companies of Saudi Arabia which is the second largest telecom company of the Kingdom, namely, Mobily.

Literature Review

Human resource development is the process of developing the human resource working in an organization by modernizing their knowledge and upgrading their skills, attitudes and perceptions in order to meet out the changing trends of the globalised economy and also to utilize those developments for the attainment of the organizational goals (Michael: 1995). Various research studies have been conducted all over the globe to determine and analyze the factors affecting the HRD climate prevailing in organizations.

Dayal (1989) focused on the patterns of the HRD management and identified the three approaches to HRD, namely, man centered, reciprocal and selective approach that are prevalent in Indian organizations. The author further highlighted those areas of concerns from the management and the

academician's point of view where they need to work out and pay attention. HRD is a shared belief of management that links the organizational development with individual growth. The author also raised some relevant and hot issues regarding the HRD future in Indian organizations. Dave (1997) in his study performed a survey related to the relationships between HR practice and financial performance especially with regard to turnover, productivity and financial results. Rohmetra (1998) studied HRD climate and satisfaction in State Bank of India (SBI) and The Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd. (JKB) and found that HRD climate was much higher in SBI than in JKB. Comparative analysis of the attitudes of employees towards the prevailing development climate revealed that employees in SBI held a much favorable attitude towards the development practices than that in JKB. Consequently, the satisfaction level of employees in SBI is higher than that in JKB.

Khan (2004) emphasized in his research that the challenges posed by the sophisticated consumer of tourist product call for the development of human resources and expertise in tour and travel business due to the fact that they remain in constant touch with the national and international tourist. He further focused on the achievement of global competitiveness in tourism sector through HRD strategies. Rodrigues (2005) opined that a well-trained and a well-educated human resource contributes directly to the development of a country and to improve the knowledge, abilities, aptitude and values of human beings organized HRD practices should be followed.

Hyde et.al (2008) conducted an exploratory survey of HRD climate in private sector banks. The author selected the employees at managerial level from the Bank of Indore (MP). HRD climate survey of 38 items developed by Rao and Abraham was used in the study divided into three categories of general climate, OCTAPACE Culture and HRD Mechanism. Tools applied to test the significance of the responses retrieved statistically was Z-test, and Co-relation analysis have also been applied to validate the dependability of the outcome revealed. The results of the survey were quite positive as the total HRD climate; general climate and OCTAPACE culture in private banks turn out to be highly positive. The researchers further suggested for developing and maintaining the dyadic relations at work and supportive guidance should be provided by seniors to their juniors in creating a congenial working atmosphere which will also help in developing human resource in an organized manner. Rao (2009) stated that the HRD is a process which helps to develop and identify the keen potential of human force. He further suggested that the management in an organization should be generous and should also support their work force emotionally so that it will help the employees to work better and enable them to exhibit their knowledge and skills in a cohesive manner. Mane (2010) observed that HRD practices in

private sector milk processing organizations in Western Maharashtra are still in infant stage; do not serve the meaningful HRD purpose and need to be grownup at mature stage by practicing on a scientific line.

Khan and Tarab (2012) carried out a study to explore the HRD Climate in the private sector of Indian telecom industry to study the relationship between the employee development and HRD climate. They exposed in their research that there exists a positive relationship between the development of employees and the climate of the organization. Javed et al. (2012) studied the relationship between three practices pertaining to human resource i.e. (Training and Development, Rewards, Recognition) and the employee job satisfaction in the government owned organizations in Pakistan. They found that recognition and training and development are a key source of employee job satisfaction in public sector of organizations of Pakistan but rewards do not have any significant impact upon job satisfaction of employees. Singh (2013) covered all the important areas of human resource development in banks. These areas include conceptual clarification about human resource and human resource development in banks, essentials of HRD, the sub-system of human resource development like performance appraisal, training, management development, career planning and development, organization development, participative management, quality circles etc. These primary areas of human resources development have been studied thoroughly to the maximum extent through the means of discussion, interviews, reports, accounts, observations etc.

Research Gap

The foregoing review of literature clearly brings into light that a number of studies have been put forward by several authors regarding the HRD practices at different levels of management in organizations and to value the significance of human resource among other resources of production. HRD climate and general practices of HRD had been studied in different industries in different regions, areas around the globe but no study has been conducted in private sector telecom companies in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, no research paper has ever been seen on the HRD practices in Mobily. Due to that reason, the present study has been designed to look forward towards the analysis of HRD Practices followed by one of the private sector Telecom Companies, namely, Mobily on the basis of its role and contribution in the growth and development of Saudi Telecom Industry.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has been undertaken to pursue the following broad objectives:

1. To assess the perception of employees towards HR practices in private sector telecom organisations of Saudi Arabia.
2. To study the employee performance in the selected in private sector telecom organisations of Saudi Arabia.
3. To examine the impact of HR practices on employees' performance in private sector telecom organisations of Saudi Arabia.

Significance of the Study

The researchers feel that this research project will certainly throw light upon various aspects where the top level management in private sector telecom companies needs to work out. The dimensions chosen for study would cover almost all aspects of HRD practices in these organizations. The findings and conclusions of the study would be of great help in whipping out some of the undesirable issues that are likely to crop up in the implementation of such HRD practices.

Research Methodology

The research is a process of refilling human experience for being embodied in the stock of knowledge. The present study is descriptive in nature therefore; the work is largely based upon primary data. Data has been collected with the help of a survey questionnaire in English as well as Arabic based on the guidelines of the model questionnaire developed by Rao (1991) with some modifications, conducted among the employees of the selected company in private sector of Saudi Telecom Industry. The nature of the study gave the researcher no choice other than the convenience sampling method. Questionnaires were distributed to 120 employees of which only 85 was usable, since many employees were apprehensive of filling up the questionnaire. They were unwilling to give the details though they were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and would be used only for research purpose. In spite of name of the employee, name of the branch they were employed were specified as optional entry, the employees were hesitant to complete the questionnaire with complete information.

The questionnaire consists of two parts: first part of the questionnaire containing information of the dependent variables: Quality of Work Life and Welfare Measures, Organizational Development, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal and Rewards and Participative Management and the second part containing questions regarding employee performance. The questionnaire used was of multiple-choice and 5 point likert-scale (5-highly satisfied to 1-highly dissatisfied) was used. Linear Regression test was used to analysis the data by using SPSS 19 version. The findings and observations

have been analyzed and evaluated to derive pragmatic recommendations in the form of suitable suggestions.

Sample

The sample for this research consists of leading Telecom Company of Saudi Arabia i.e. Mobily. HR Managers, Executives and Admin related officers are included in the sample for this research. Simple random sampling has been utilized in order to avoid any biasness. A total of 150 employees (respondents) from the company were drawn but for the only 85 were made to apply the test.

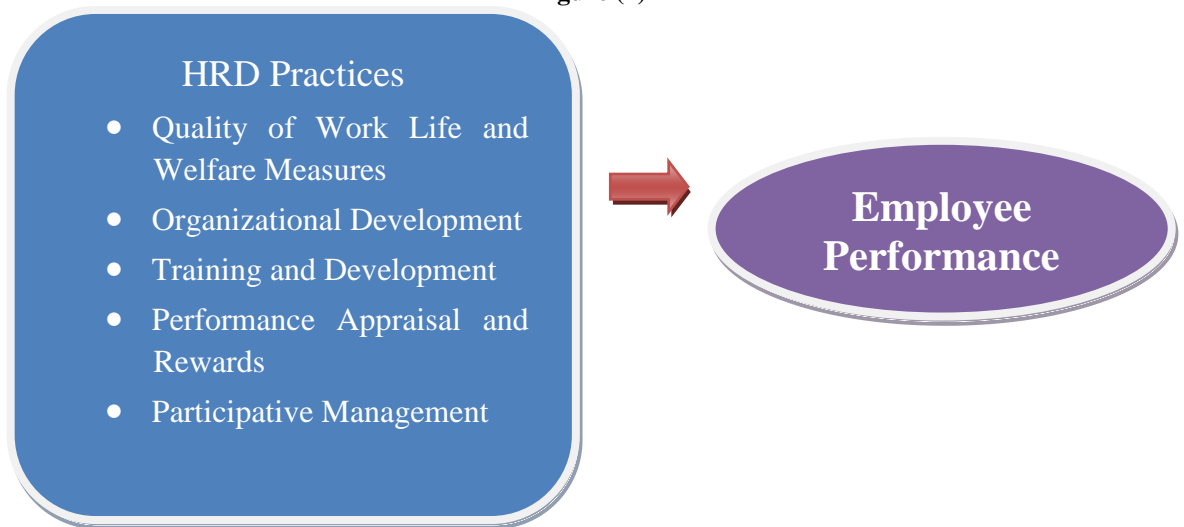
Limitations of the Study

Despite all the earnest attempts made by the researchers to elicit all required data on HRD practices in private sector telecom operators in Saudi Arabia, it is subject to certain limitations due to the fact that the data is based on individual opinion, which may bring in some bias. Undoubtedly, the responses have been collected from the employees of both the organization working at managerial and non-managerial level, but the study has been conducted in some selected cities due to constraint of time. Moreover, the sample size is confined to the responses of 85 employees only; therefore, the conclusions drawn cannot be generalized for all the employees of private sector telecom companies in Saudi Arabia. In addition to this, most of the respondents were reluctant in expressing their opinion freely without any hesitation and showing lack of interest in responding. This has its own impact to certain extent over the validity of the conclusions drawn. Further, the opinion of some of the employees turns out to be influenced by their peer employees or superiors which might lead to their neutral response to a large extent for several statements.

Proposed Research Framework

The study has been conducted to assess the impact of human resource development practices on employees' performance in private sector telecom organizations in Saudi Arabia. The figure (1) given below exhibits the relationship between HRD practices and employees' performance which has been clearly analyzed with the help of data.

Figure (1)



Hypotheses Generation

Following hypotheses have been generated in context with the theoretical framework:

H1: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Quality of Work Life*) leads to high level of employee performance.

H2: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Organizational Development*) leads to high level of employee performance.

H3: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Training and Development*) leads to high level of employee performance.

H4: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Performance Appraisal and Rewards*) leads to high level of employee performance.

H5: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Participative Management*) leads to high level of employee performance.

Reliability Test

Alpha Reliability values were calculated for all the variables involved and they are mentioned in the table below:

Table 1: Showing Reliability of the Instruments

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
Quality of Work Life and Welfare Measures	.730	9
Organizational Development	.677	9
Training and Development	.731	4
Performance Appraisal and Rewards	.744	4
Participative Management	.762	6

Data Analysis

Linear regression was carried out for the testing of the hypothesis involved in the research. In this section only the main table is required to understand the final findings from the linear regression equation procedure, while it was assumed that no assumptions had been violated.

Table (2)

H1: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Quality of Work Life*) leads to high level of Employee Performance.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P value
HRD Practices	.872	.773	.773	2.579E3	.033

a. Predictors: (Constant), HRD

The first table of interest is the **Model Summary** table. This table provides the R and R² value. The R value is 0.872, which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a high degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "*Quality of Work Life*", can be explained by the independent variable, "HRD". In this case, 77.3 per cent can be explained, which is very large.

It is disclosed that 86.2 per cent variation in Employee Performance is due to HRD practices and only 22.7 per cent is due to some other factors. The P value is 0.033 i.e. less than (0.05) which means that Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table (3)

H2: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Organizational Development*) leads to high level of employee performance.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P value
HRD Practices	.942	.716	.716	.224	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), HRD

This table provides the R and R² value. The R value is 0.942, which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a quite good degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "*Organizational Development*", can be explained by the independent variable, "HRD". In this case, 71.6 per cent can be explained, which is a good percentage.

It is disclosed that 71.6 per cent variation in Employee Performance is due to HRD practices. The P value is 0.000 i.e. less than (0.05) which means that Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table (4)

H3: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Training and Development*) leads to high level of employee performance.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P value
HRD Practices	.551	.851	.852	1.75235	0.008

a. Predictors: (Constant), HRD

Above table provides the R and R² value. The R value is 0.551, which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a high degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "*Training and Development*", can be explained by the independent variable, "HRD". In this case, 85.1 per cent can be explained, which is large.

It is disclosed that 85.1 per cent variation in Employee Performance is due to HRD practices and only 17 per cent is due to some other factors. The P value is 0.008 i.e. less than (0.05) which means that Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table (5)

H4: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Performance Appraisal and Rewards*) leads to high level of employee performance.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P value
HRD Practices	.954	.833	.833	1.344	.034

a. Predictors: (Constant), HRD

This table provides the R and R² value. The R value is 0.954, which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a high degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "*Performance Appraisal and Rewards*", can be explained by the independent variable, "HRD". In this case, 83.3 per cent can be explained, which is very large.

It is disclosed that 83.3 per cent variation in Employee Performance is due to HRD practices and only 13.4 per cent is due to some other factors. The P value is 0.034 i.e. less than (0.05) which means that Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Table (6)

H5: The effective use of basic HRD practice (*Participative Management*) leads to high level of employee performance.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P value
HRD Practices	.844	.800	.800	2.239E3	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), HRD

This table provides the R and R² value. The R value is 0.844, which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a high degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "*Participative Management*", can be explained by the independent variable, "HRD". In this case, 84.4 per cent can be explained, which is quite large.

It is disclosed that 80 per cent variation in Employee Performance is due to HRD practices and only 20 per cent is due to some other factors. The P value is 0.000 i.e. less than (0.05) which means that Hypothesis 1 is supported.

From the results, it is evident that there exists a relation between the variables of HRD practices (Quality of Work Life and Welfare Measures, Organizational Development, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal and Rewards and Participative Management), employee performance. The above analysis corroborates that apt use of HRD practices vindicates to be a mainstay between an organization and its employees.

Concluding Remarks

HRD plays a very vital role in the success of an organization. It actually affects the performance of the employees directly or indirectly. If the HRD atmosphere is favorable, the company may avail the maximum cooperation of the employees to achieve the organizational objectives. The study brings into light the fact that the HRD climate in the private sector telecom industry consists of a huge of scope for improvement. The results also show that there is no difference in the performance of the employees on the basis of variables, quality of work life and welfare measures, organizational development, training and development, performance appraisal and rewards and participative management. The management of the sample company needs to take some necessary steps to bridge the gap with employees and try to develop a feeling of mutual trust and confidence. A transparent communication process actually helps in the establishment the HRD Climate. All possible efforts should be made to encourage the employees to fearlessly express their feelings and grievances to the management. The feedback should be taken at fixed time span to know the drawbacks in the system. The HR policies of the organization should be designed and implemented in such a manner that these policies encourage the employees to contribute their best. Employees should be authorized so that they can take the right decision at the right time in case of emergencies and exigencies. Management should discourage the stereo types and favoritism. All employees should be treated on equitable basis. Moreover, Team Spirit should also be developed among the employees. These recommendations if implemented properly will go a long way to help the

management of private sector telecom companies in smooth working of the organization.

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APPENDIX-I
Showing Cronbach’s Alpha Value of 32 Statements

S. No.	Statement	Cronbach’s Alpha
1	The top management gives importance to human resource and treats them humanely.	.774
2	The top management of this company goes out of its way to make sure that employees enjoy their work.	.770
3	The top management is willing to invest a considerable part of their time and other resources to ensure the development of employees.	.759
4	The psychological climate in this organization is very conducive for any employee interested in developing himself by acquiring new knowledge and skills.	.772

5	Development of human resource is considered while framing the personnel policies.	.774
6	The organizational climate is favourable for the employees to develop new skills and knowledge.	.764
7	Employee welfare measures are provided to such an extent that employees can save a lot of their mental energy for work purposes.	.775
8	There is accurate job description in the organisation.	.777
9	Job relation in your company is done to facilitate employee's development.	.763
10	Employees in your company are not afraid to express or discuss their feelings with their superiors/supervisors or even with colleagues	.780
11	Employees are encouraged to experiments with new methods and try out creative ideas.	.769
12	When an employee commits any mistake, his supervisor treats it with understanding and helps him to learn from such mistake rather than punishing/discouraging him.	.773
13	There is a good team-spirit and cooperation in the organisation.	.767
14	All the employees are aware of the human resource development policies followed in the organization.	.764
15	Promotion decisions are based on the capability of the person promoted and not on my favouritism.	.786
16	Employees are briefed about the company's future plans so as to develop them for future.	.760
17	Career and growth opportunities are pointed out to juniors to senior officers.	.770
18	There is a well-developed human resource information system in this organization.	.781
19	People lacking competence in doing their jobs are helped to acquire competence rather than being left un attended.	.754
20	Specific training programs are being organized in your organization on regular basis.	.775
21	Employees are sponsored for training on the basis of genuine training needs.	.771
22	Employees, who have been given a chance of sponsored training, take it seriously and utilize the training for development.	.771
23	When an employee does good work the officer take special care in appreciating it.	.770
24	There is a mechanism in this organization to reward good work done or any other contribution made by the employees.	.771
25	The top management makes efforts to identify and utilize the potential of the employee.	.775
26	Performance appraisal reports are based on objective assessment and adequate information and not on favouritism.	.766
27	Seniors guide their juniors and prepare them for responsibilities/roles they are likely to take up.	.783
28	Delegation of authority is encouraged by the managers to enable the employees capable of handling higher responsibilities.	.759
29	When seniors delegated some responsibilities to their juniors, they take it as an opportunity.	.765
30	Weakness of employees they take it seriously and use it for development.	.773
31	When behaviour feedback is given to employees they take it seriously and use it for development.	.770
32	When a problem arises in the company, it is discussed openly and tried to be solved rather than keep on accusing each other.	.756

APPENDIX-II
Showing the Mean Scores of Employees' Opinion on different Dimensions

Questions		
DIMENSIONS		Mean Score
Quality of Work Life and Welfare Measures		
1	The top management gives importance to human resource and treats them humanely.	4.01
2	The top management of this company goes out of its way to make sure that employees enjoy their work.	3.29
3	The top management is willing to invest a considerable part of their time and other resources to ensure the development of employees.	3.63
4	The psychological climate in this organization is very conducive for any employee interested in developing himself by acquiring new knowledge and skills.	3.27
5	Development of human resource is considered while framing the personnel policies.	3.15
6	The organizational climate is favourable for the employees to develop new skills and knowledge.	3.61
7	Employee welfare measures are provided to such an extent that employees can save a lot of their mental energy for work purposes.	3.29
8	There is accurate job description in the organisation.	3.06
9	Job relation in your company is done to facilitate employee's development.	3.41
Organizational Development		
10	Employees in your company are not afraid to express or discuss their feelings with their superiors/supervisors or even with colleagues	3.55
11	Employees are encouraged to experiments with new methods and try out creative ideas.	3.87
12	When an employee commits any mistake, his supervisor treats it with understanding and helps him to learn from such mistake rather than punishing/discouraging him.	3.30
13	There is a good team-spirit and cooperation in the organisation.	3.36
14	All the employees are aware of the human resource development policies followed in the organization.	3.55
15	Promotion decisions are based on the capability of the person promoted and not on my favouritism.	3.16
16	Employees are briefed about the company's future plans so as to develop them for future.	3.01
17	Career and growth opportunities are pointed out to juniors to senior officers.	3.57
18	There is a well-developed human Resource information system in this organization.	3.49
Training and Development		
19	People lacking competence in doing their jobs are helped to acquire competence rather than being left un attended.	4.07
20	Specific training programs are being organized in your organization on regular basis.	3.38
21	Employees are sponsored for training on the basis of genuine training needs.	3.70

22	Employees, who have been given a chance of sponsored training, take it seriously and utilize the training for development.	3.38
Performance Appraisal and Rewards		
23	When an employee does good work the officer take special care in appreciating it.	3.28
24	There is a mechanism in this organization to reward good work done or any other contribution made by the employees.	3.28
25	The top management makes efforts to identify and utilize the potential of the employee.	3.98
26	Performance appraisal reports are based on objective assessment and adequate information and not on favouritism.	3.88
Participative Management		
27	Seniors guide their juniors and prepare them for responsibilities/roles they are likely to take up.	3.41
28	Delegation of authority is encouraged by the managers to enable the employees capable of handling higher responsibilities.	3.40
29	When seniors delegated some responsibilities to their juniors, they take it as an opportunity.	3.76
30	Weakness of employees they take it seriously and use it for development.	3.70
31	When behaviour feedback is given to employees they take it seriously and use it for development.	3.08
32	When a problem arises in the company, it is discussed openly and tried to be solved rather than keep on accusing each other.	3.42