

The Conceptualisation of Strategic Talent Management for Oil and Gas Companies in the UAE

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Abstract—Issues concerning the workforce have been a concern in the Oil & Gas sector, in which the UAE is one of the leading global players. Most local companies heavily depend on foreign experts' knowledge and skills for their competitive advantage. In this case, job roles localisation (Emiratization) has become imperative, and efforts need to be made to lure the local workforce to be part of the local companies. Therefore, there is a need to propose a Strategic Talent Management (STM) so that the local employees can contribute productively to the country's economic growth. This study aims to address the issues of the shortage of the skilled domestic workforce by proposing an STM practice to enhance job performance among local employees in Oil & Gas companies of the UAE. In the initial investigation stage, this paper presents the conceptualisation of strategic talent management and its relationship to job performance. Drawn from the analysis of the existing literature, dimensions of strategic talent management that have a relationship with job performance have been identified, namely, career development, talent attraction and selection, talent acquisition, talent recruitment and mentoring and coaching. The conceptualisation of strategic talent management will be used as the construct for further investigation of the role of strategic talent management that can enhance the job performance of the local employees in the oil and gas companies in the UAE.

Keywords—*conceptualisations, job performance, strategic talent management*

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I. INTRODUCTION

OIL farming is a vital industry in Malaysian aquaculture as it is a highly profitable business and constitutes & Gas commerce is the most prominent source of the economic evolution in the UAE, where active participation of the local workforce contributes positively to both financial growth and the nation's productivity. The UAE and its neighbouring countries have initiated efforts to reduce oil dependency through economic diversification [1]. It is known that the UAE is one of the main producers and strong partners in global energy markets [2], in which oil exports contribute 25% of its gross domestic product. In 2017, Abu Dhabi held 94 per cent of the UAE's oil reserves offshore and onshore [3]. Considering this situation, it is pertinent for oil and gas companies to ensure effective human resources to ensure a competitive advantage of the oil and gas companies.

Considering the importance of human resource for competitive advantage, there have been a significant number of foreign workers in the UAE. However, the increased number of foreign labourers has resulted in many social, political and cultural implications and demographics [4]. Due to these factors, the UAE heavily depends on foreign labour with some national unemployment levels. Besides, the Oil & Gas industry in UAE has been facing high employee turnover [5]. As the oil industry has such a significant role in the UAE economy [4], the assessment of the impact of the nationalisation policy on human capital development is an important consideration.

According to [6], job role localisation is becoming an imperative in the oil & gas industry; however, it is a big challenge to nationalise job

roles in this industry. In addition to the high turnover rate [5], [7], the oil & gas industry faces moral problems and skill imbalance in the human resource area [8]. This situation alters the domestic skill workforce shortage requiring the need to focus on Strategic Talent Management (STM) of UAE nationals' competencies in this industry. For the STM, [9] suggested a competency-based approach to reduce the skills gaps within the organisation. Although there are studies that found the importance of leveraging the workforce force as a competitive weapon for organisations [10], [11], there have been very limited works that analyse the relationship between strategic human resource management and the competencies of workers in the organisation [12]. According to [13], companies are focusing on developing STM as a talent mindset that has helped organisations in recruiting the best talents [14], [15]. However, [15] argued that it is difficult to develop talent competencies among workers within a company as it needs strong administrative support and commitment. In this case, human capital management can be adopted for enhancing workers' talents emphasising the attraction, development, deployment, and retention practices [16]. Additionally, a complete set of processes that identify, employ and manage individuals towards successful implementation of business strategy is important [17].

In this regard, there is a lack of study in human capital competency [18]. A study by [19] identified generic talent management issues, such as difficulties in identifying and replicating tacit knowledge and the shortage of essential skills. Currently, there are studies that suggested the need for effective AL-SHAMItalent management strategies, particularly empirical research [19]–[22]. Furthermore, research on STM has not kept pace with the research on multinational companies (MNCs) [23]. Likewise, understanding and investigating STM practices in organisations for sustainable competitive advantage is necessary [24].

Thus, this paper aims to present a conceptual framework to investigate the role of strategic management in enhancing the job performance of the local employees in oil and gas

companies of the UAE. Drawn from an analysis of existing literature, a conceptualisation of strategic talent management that has a relationship with job performance is proposed. This paper's discussion focuses on the STM's conceptualisation concerning job performance. The conceptualisation of the job performance is beyond the scope of this paper. The presentation of this paper is organised into four sections. After the Introduction Section, the second section presents a methodology for the conduct of the literature review. The third section discusses the conceptualisation of strategic talent management that consists of five dimensions. This paper ends with a conclusion, highlighting future work.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To propose a conceptualisation of STM, the study reviewed the journal articles published between 2014 – 2018. The review of the related work involved three stages: First, the keywords for the literature search were defined. The keywords used in the search were 'talent management and 'human capital'. Second, academic databases were utilised to identify the relevant papers: Scopus and Google Scholar. The third step is to determine specific criteria to filter the identified articles. In this step, the researchers examined the abstract of articles to determine whether these papers were relevant. The fourth step was to evaluate the reference lists of the shortlisted papers to make sure that there were no duplications. Any duplications will be omitted from the list of references. Finally, the researchers reviewed and read closely the content of each article to extract the relevant information for the analysis. This study has found 170 articles in the field of talent management. However, only 23 articles related to the study were analysed

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Among the 170 reviewed journal articles, 23 articles that discussed talent management practices as presented in Table 1. consist of five dimensions, as presented in Table 1.

Eight of these articles simply identified the career development [25]–[31]; five articles discussed talent attraction and selection [26], [30], [36], [37]; six article discussed talent acquisition [27], [38]–[42]; four articles discussed talent recruitment [28], [43]–[45]; and seven articles discussed mentorship and coaching [28], [29], [31]–[35] as a talent management practice in the organization. Drawn from the analysis is the conceptualisation of strategic talent management that relates to job performance. The following are the discussions related to strategic talent management dimensions: career development, attraction and selection, acquisition, recruitment, and mentorship and coaching.

TABLE I. STRATEGIC TALENT MANAGEMENT DIMENSIONS

No.	Talent management practices	Author(s)	No of Papers
1.	Career development	[25]–[31]	8
2.	Talent attraction and selection	[26], [30], [36], [37]	5
3.	Talent Acquisition	[27], [38]–[42]	6
4.	Talent Recruitment	[28], [43]–[45]	4
5.	Mentorship and coaching	[28], [29], [31]–[35]	7

A. Career Development

One of the dimensions of the STM is career development. Practitioners focus on the career development of talented employees that enhance organisational performance. Talent development is a process of upgrading the skills and attitude of employees [26]. Most industry players identified career development as the key to HRM practices required for talent management [44]. To be responsive to the continuous change in business, technology, business model, and strategy, organisations need to enhance the knowledge of the employees. In this respect, practitioners must consider the integration and strategic fit between current talent and employee skills. Although Employees face difficulties identifying opportunities for stable career development [11], they prefer traditional work benefits such as promotion, development opportunities, high pay rates, job security, and mutual employer-employee

loyalty [46]. According to [47], leaders need to nurture organisational talents with the support of career development, policies and practices. A study by [31] reported that employees are managed based on their different expectations, needed feedback or coaching, the prospect of career development opportunities, the balance between their private and professional life and trust in their superiors. Moreover, [48] claimed that career development activities motivate employees, including "empowerment, delegating tasks from leadership, confidence/competence building activities and designing a working environment that provides enrichment and fulfilment". This situation indicates that significance of career development as strategic talent management to enhance job performance.

B. Talent Attraction and Selection

The second dimension is talent attraction and selection. [49] found that talent selection and attraction affect talent management practices in the organisation. Nevertheless, the attraction and selection of talent management become more difficult and costly due to the shortage of talented employees in labor market [36]. According to [50], the factors affecting talent attraction are (1) company reputation; (2) working conditions; (3) compensation and benefits and; (4) good employment practices. Additionally, [51] recommended that organisations should ensure an attractive work environment that drives employees and leads to better performance. A study by [37] found that talent attraction is statistically significant in explaining organisation performance and recommended that managers realise the importance of talent attraction for their business objectives' success. This situation implies that managers must seek employees with competencies and abilities to contribute considerably to their teams. Another study by [26] found that appropriate selection and attraction of the organisation create value for the competitive advantage of the organisation. Therefore, the study argues that talent attraction and selection are related to job performance.

C. Talent Acquisition

The third dimension is talent acquisition. Talent management focuses on acquiring talented employees [38], and talent acquisition is a part of the talent management process because it provides the impetus for related talent management activities [27]. Talent management practices are designed to develop and gain experience [16], [36], [46]. Another study by [36] concluded that the skilled workforce shortage in the construction industry drives the players to implement building information modelling (BIM) with appropriate talent acquisition to address the talent gap in the industry. However, the problem with this talent acquisition approach is the costly and time-consuming credentialing process [40]). The real importance of talent acquisition recognises that a business cannot grow without the right talent. According to [41], a talent acquisition strategy has five principles; (1) user-centred; (2) co-creation; (3) sequencing; (4) evidencing and (5) holistic. Moreover, [42] identified talent acquisition key drivers based on the previous scholar; (1) payment/salary; (2) job security; (3) career advancement; (4) learning and development and (5) work challenge. Globally, the industry requires competent, credentialed employees to function effectively. Since local talent may not be qualified to practice in a suitable position, industrial players may require acquiring talent from foreign sources. Therefore, the study argues that talent acquisition enhances job performance.

D. Talent Recruitment

The fourth dimension is talent recruitment. The majority of the industry players identified recruitment as the key human resource management practice required for talent management [44]. The recruitment function of an organisation serves as the engine focused on winning this war and providing a competitive advantage [43]. Thus, without applying a clear human resource management strategy, firms will be unable to find the often-quoted "war for talent" and lose competitiveness in a volatile labour market. Besides, in talent recruitment, competitive employees create high costs for organisations [44]. As a result, highly valued

talent forms a highly mobile talent pool. However, employers have difficulties retaining valuable employees in their organisation. For that reason, the study argues that recruitment impacts job performance.

E. Mentorship and Coaching

The fifth dimension is mentorship and coaching. Mentorship is widely used and conceptualised differently in different fields and heading to a more specialised and comprehensive process [52]. Coaching and mentoring components have received increased recognition for capturing and preserving knowledge and intellectual capital [29]. Mentoring and coaching behaviours related to enhanced task-related work to achieve career success [53]. A study by [28] stated that mentorship is an effective way to engage highly-skilled senior employees and helping organisations to retain knowledge by transferring it to less experienced employees. The work done in [32] found that mentoring offers an appropriate approach for leadership development as it capitalises on internal and specific knowledge of the organisation, can be developed as broad or as a target group, and be tailored to meet the organisation's goals and objectives. She added that mentoring could be leveraged to competitive advantage concerning the strength of existing leadership and developing readiness for a future leader. Likewise, [34] found that mentoring and coaching are positively associated with talent development to give the best service in the clinic. Still, the mentor role in practice assessment was not identified as highly important, and it should well evaluate the mentorship program [33]. Additionally, a study by [35] found that informal mentorship is more valuable and accessible to mentees than formal mentorship. Mentorship and coaching can be a valuable element of any strategic talent management program, as it benefits the new and older worker, and company; hence it has a significant relationship with job performance.

Based on the analysis, five dimensions of strategic talent management that have a relationship with job performance are conceptualised as shown in Fig. 1

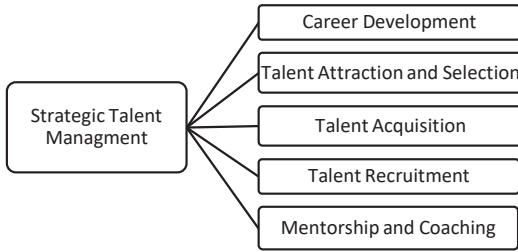


Fig. 1. Conceptualisation of Strategic Talent Management

Talent management practice within the organisation is an international human resource strategy that seeks to identify, develop, deploy and retain talented and high-potential employees [51], [54]. There is little doubt that the area of talent management has become one of the fastest growing areas of academic work in the management field over recent decades [31], [55], [56], while the strategic importance of talent management research shows it is increasing at a slow rate [57]. Moreover, many articles on talent management are rather descriptive, mostly attempting to define what talent management is or distinguish it from traditional human resource management practice [58]. Additionally, many leaders attach great value to talent and talent management, but little is known about how and how well talent management works in practice [20].

To achieve organisational performance, STM is required to bridge the gap [59]. It emerged due to the efficient recruitment-based system [60], [61]. These practices will measure the extent of job performance when the entities apply the practice. It is a core functional unit of an organisation to enhance performance [54]. The study by [62] found that a talent management program was important in organisational growth because of its effectiveness in daily operations to determine the right talents. Furthermore, a study by [63] shows the same result, indicating that STM makes company succession and STM practice on recruitment, training and development are directly linked with job performance in the oil sector indicated that talent management is the main core of human resource management and the main factor of organisations' success where STM is related to job performance. Therefore,

this indicates the relevance of formulating a hypothesis that STM has a significant positive relationship with job performance.

IV. CONCLUSION

With the world's seventh largest proven crude oil reserves, the UAE is a responsible producer and an essential partner in global energy markets. Nevertheless, the UAE heavily depends on foreign labour in the Oil & Gas industry with a high employee turnover rate. Hence, the oil and gas industry faces challenges in managing its human resources and talent to achieve a competitive advantage. Based on the literature review, it was found that the STM practices have not been widely researched empirically to present the real impact if ex-pats in critical positions leave the country. Therefore, this paper presents a conceptual framework for strategic talent management and its relationship to the job performance of the Oil & Gas industry. This study will contribute to the existing knowledge on talent management by examining how the concept of talent will be understood through STM. The conceptualisation of the strategic talent management framed within the five dimensions will be used to investigate the role of strategic talent management in enhancing the job performance of the critical positions in the oil and gas industry of the UAE.

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