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## The Relationship between Employee Participation, Careerplanning, Training and Development, and Private University Performance: The Mediating Role Of Organisational Learning

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### Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of organisational learning in the relationship between employee participation, training & development, career planning, and private university performance. It proposes a conceptual framework to analyse these relationships. The framework is based on key theories and relevant literature in human resources management practices and organisation performance. The framework can be used to empirically test the above relationship. Data will be collected through a cross-sectional survey. Methodologically, the framework will be tested using a quantitative method and SmartPLS will be used for data analysis. The proposed framework is predicted to have major managerial implications for the private higher education system seeking to improve its competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Private University Performance, Employee Participation, Training and Development, Career Planning, Organisational Learning

### Introduction

The performance of public and private universities are almost always different. Generally, an educational institution faces many challenges from their stakeholders, namely students, employees and members of the faculty (Tsai et al., 2019). According to Villano et al., (2018), private higher education systems face major challenges in maintaining their performance. Therefore, effective collaboration among their stakeholders for better performances and a learning environment is crucial. Educational institutions nevertheless are showing progress to support the learning processes and this is greatly attributed to the performance of their employees (Chienwattanasook et al., 2019).

The university as a training and research institution requires employees with adequate training and motivation in order to contribute to national development (Sal & Raja, 2016). Studies have indicated that efficient application of human resource management (HRM) practices increases the level of commitment of university employees to result in better organisational performance (Chen et al., 2009; Amin et al., 2014). According to Lew (2009), implementing appropriate HRM practices promotes university performance as their employees serve to promote to elevate the ratings of the organisation in major areas, such as

research quality, academic recognition of faculty, academic programme quality, research contribution for betterment of society, preparing future leaders and quality of graduates.

The performance of a university is central to its objective of turning out quality graduates (Navimipour et al., 2018). Performance is a set of financial and nonfinancial indicators which point to the organisation's objectives and results (Gavrea et al., 2011). Therefore, the university employs distinct strategies in order to enhance its performance and distinguish themselves from their competitors. Human resources is an important asset to the university due to their contribution towards the latter's growth and success (Singh & Kassa, 2016). Malik et al (2010) stated that in a globalised world characterised by innovativeness, human capital must be enhanced to enable organisations to be prolific and responsive to meet up with globalisation-induced changes as well technological, political and environmental changes. Further, employees are key to realising objectives and aims of the establishment (Navimipour et al., 2018)]. In fact, organisations understand that human resource is the most vital component that can lead to optimal performance. Fulfilling organisational tasks is the core duty of its staff and their performance has a great effect on organisational performance (Navimipour et al., 2015)

In line with its vision 2030, Saudi Arabia for example, sought to achieve a developed economy by providing opportunities for all through creating an education system which aligns with market requirements, and producing economic opportunities for the entrepreneur. The country aimed to see no less than five out of its 34 universities (25 public and 9 private) ranked among the top international universities (Alshuwaikhat, Adenle, & Saghir, 2016). The country also pledged to work with private universities to ensure that educational outcomes are in line with the requirements of the job market in order to provide apprenticeship and new skills for the industry, and large private companies. As a result, it became imperative to strategise human resource management practices to improve university performance (Alshuwaikhat et al., 2016).

In Saudi Arabia educational attainment level is yet to meet up with the developed markets OECD (2020). In 2018, 85.5% of students were enrolled in public institutions, while 4.8% were enrolled in private universities. According to 2018 data, 89.3% (325,547 students) of high school students continue to study at university. However, it was projected that by 2035, about 27,638 students will enroll in university education (Hamdan et al., 2020). Therefore, As the government lifts subsidies for public university education, there is a demand for the private higher education sector to replace existing facilities.

More than 1200 top universities were included in the 2019 world university rankings based on research, knowledge transfer, teaching, and an international perspective. Six Saudi universities were found with rankings at the international level in each published group, and they were all public universities (Al Kuwaiti et al., 2019).

Some studies on private higher education in different countries, including Saudi Arabia, were undertaken to analyze the effectiveness of private university administration and whether high-quality higher education can be provided through private universities (Kashisaz & Mobaraki, 2018; Hiyam, 2016; Jamgoom, 2012). Management difficulties such as adequate staffing, financial capacity, facilities, and equipment were discovered to influence the success of private universities.

Similarly, (Alharbi, 2016) in this study, researchers identified difficulties with university performance by utilizing indexes such as output quality, research productivity, and accreditation. This research identified a number of significant problems affecting the success of private universities, including challenges meeting the increasing demands to enroll more

students, difficulties providing graduates with quality training in accordance with workforce requirements, insufficient resources due to their excessive reliance on student fees, and a lack of qualified teachers.

Private higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia need to focus more on their HRM practices because there are significant issues with the development of human capital, particularly among faculty members (Allui and Sahni, 2016; Alwhaibi, 2020). These issues have an impact on how well these institutions perform.

Generally, organisational learning is considered as “a principal means of achieving the strategic renewal of an enterprise” (Crossan et al., 1999). There is consensus that organisational learning is a multidimensional concept (Jerez Gomez et al., 2004, Chiva et al., 2007, Tohidi et al., 2012). Aragon et al (2014) affirmed that “organizational learning is a complex, multidimensional construct occurring at different cognitive levels and encompassing multiple sub-processes”. Studies have argued employees must be involved in all plans in order to boost performance of the learning institution because their knowledge and skills are vital for social development (Sadlak, 2000). In the era of globalisation, economic competitiveness often depends on the extent to which a country can participate in improving its university performance which will be reflected in its producing quality graduates for the nation (Blondal et al., 2002).

Budhwar et al (2019) in their review on HRM studies in the Middle East concluded that majority of these studies are focused on western states (Saridakis and Cooper, 2017; Jashari and Kutllovci, 2020; Aguta and Balcioglu, 2015; Della Torre, 2019) with fewer studies on their Asian counterparts.

There is an observable lack of studies that centered on organizational learning, (Sari et al., 2018; Ali et al., 2020) and the use of organisational learning as a mediator in employees' participation and university performance and the necessity of deploying training in the development of the organization as a whole in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, this study will attempt to fill in the theoretical and managerial gap of all the previously mentioned studies.

## **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### **The Relationship between Employee Participation and Organisational Performance**

Employees are pillars of organisational sustainability, performance as well as its market reputation. Their active participation is necessary for organisational performance (Butali et al., 2018). Specifically, their participation is driven by their effective commitment which has a moderating effect on performance. An earlier study has suggested that that teamwork and decision-making processes of the employees are linked with behaviours that promote organisational performance (Khattak et al., 2013).

Studies have also proven the positive relationship between employee participation and organisational performance (Odero & Makori, 2018). Tchapchet et al. (2014) noted that employee participation is positively related to effectiveness, efficiency and performance of universities in South Africa. Mildred (2016) found that in Kenya, employee participation was responsible for 73.4% of the variations in performance, thus, suggesting there is a positive and significant relationship between employee involvement and organisational performance. Motyka (2018) claimed that organisations can accomplish their goal by involving their employees in their decision-making process. Business organisations can use effective management practices to enhance the engagement of their workers by enabling them to access information to make independent decisions. In the contrary study by Jashari &

Kutllovci (2020), reported that employee participation has less impact on performance compared to other HRM practices. Also, a study by (Uribetxebarria Andres et al., 2020) has concluded that there is no effect of employee participation on performance while others claim that the effect is not straightforward (Mullins et al., 2019; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019) therefore, inconsistency in these findings requires further investigation.

### **The relationship between career planning and organisational performance**

Employees' knowledge and career plans are linked to improved organisational output. Clifton et al (2019) mentioned that regular performance reviews and feedback by leaders and supervisors are important for employees to learn from their mistakes and improve their performance. Performance reviews work in identifying the needs of the workers in terms of training and guidance, as well as strengthening the relationships with their organisation as it creates opportunities for them to develop their careers (KENJO, 2022). Both the private and public sectors have increasingly acknowledged the need to strengthen the systems to introduce career-related programmes. Satisfied employees in turn will work hard to improve their performance to benefit the overall growth of the company (Ali et al., 2019). In the current scenario, employees are looking for better opportunities and benefits that will motivate them to give their best (Wang et al., 2020). Good career pathways means the employees can see options for growth in the organisation and this will help them develop extra skillsets which would eventually contribute to greater productivity (Ozair, 2019). Recruiting skilled staff helps the organisation in initiating new projects at both national and international levels (Majid, 2020). It ultimately serves in the expansion of the business. In contrast, other studies found a weak relation between career planning and performance, such as Safdar (2021); Hasan (2021); Jashari & Kutllovci (2020) additionally, a study by Suryani et al (2017) established that career planning has no direct influence on organizational performance. Inconsistency in these findings requires further investigation between these relations.

### **The relationship between training & development and organisational performance**

Training and guidance are the important components that serve the employees in reducing their weaknesses and learning new skills. Training and development approaches help the employees in gaining the right abilities and skills to perform better and thus improve their performances (Halawi et al., 2018). Past studies and literature discussed that the training and learning environment in the workplace is based on the interest and willingness of the employees (Lee, 2022; Soomro et al., 2020). The attitude and behaviour of the employees in performing their duties are important factors that are necessary for better organizational output (Ahmad et al., 2021). The organization management and training programs have the same aim to improve the employees' participation and organizational output (Sandamali et al., 2018). Training and development show positive relation with the employees' performances. The pandemic of COVID-19 has affected organizational performances and the employees' performances due to several reasons such as poor knowledge, scarcity of resources and poor management skills (Ahmed et al., 2020). Reportedly, the organizations that offered training programs to their employees for remote working have sustained their positions in the crisis period (International Labor Organization, 2020). Amegayibor (2021) stated that the training and developmental plans by the organization improve the service deliveries. In another study, Rashed (2019) observed that not all types of training significantly affect organizational performance. Collins & McNulty (2020) found that employee job training



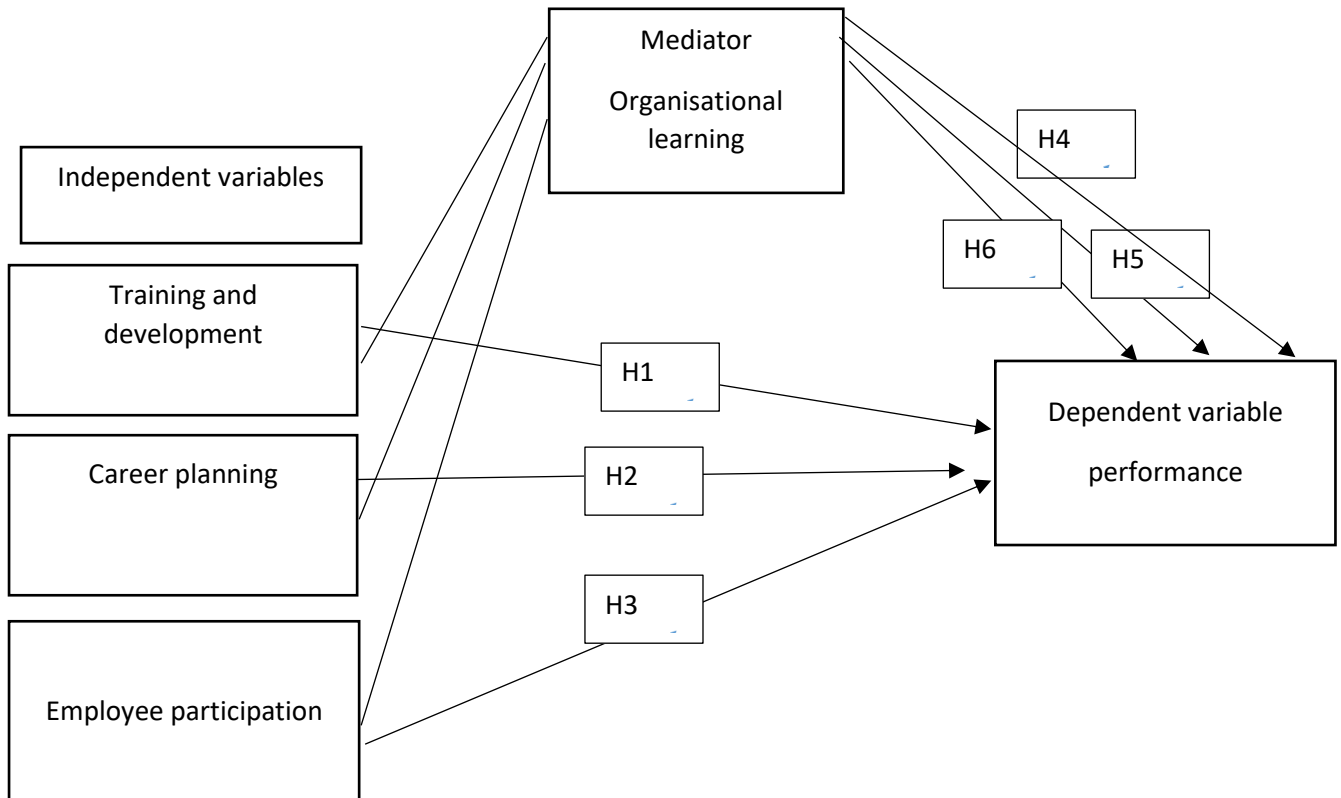
shows no role in improving organizational performance. In a study on training impact in Saudi Arabia, Alwekai (2015) called for further study to establish localized evidence on this relationship. Therefore, there is a need to study this relationship further.

### **Organisational Learning as a Mediator**

The learning environment is important for better output and more productive results. Organisational learning in fact has a mediating role in enhancing organisational performances by developing a learning culture and boosting employee job satisfaction (Valamis, 2022). Satisfied employees generate greater output, display increased efficiency and ultimately boost profits (Wahyudi, 2017). Further, organisational learning is related to cognitive learning process which leads to skills improvement and creation of efficient and appropriate methods as well knowledge to achieve organisational goals. An earlier study pointed to the moderating role of organisational learning in the relationship between academic decision-making skills and employee participation (Tran et al., 2019). It suggests that the relationship between employees and the organisation will be stronger if organisational learning is improved. Learning culture in the business organisation can lead to improved employee participation for greater productivity. According to Potnuru et al (2018), employees value the knowledge and skills shared by their mentors which can contribute to creating of effective learning culture. Numerous studies have pointed to a positive relationship between organisational learning and the success of business organisations. Gomes and Wojahn (2017), who studied the success of 35 business organisations found that organisational learning is their main contributor. Training sessions by team leaders and the managers additionally are beneficial to improve organisational success rates (Farahnak et al., 2020). Customers these days pay attention to the reputation and the behaviour of the organisation with their employees (Reddy et al., 2022). The negative image may pose hindrances for organisations to overcome future challenges. In the study of organizational performance, organizational learning is usually overlooked. According to (Turi, 2019), most of the empirical research on organizational learning has focused on business and industry rather than the educational system. According to (Kezar & Holcombe, 2020), few studies have been conducted on organizational learning in multi-institutional change projects or on the particular problems of facilitating learning in multi-institutional systems. However, (Massoud & Ayoubi, 2021) his research concluded that there is a lack of research on organizational learning in developing countries.

### **The Proposed Model**

This research has proposed a conceptual framework based on the assumptions that organisation performance is affected by HRM practices/determinants, namely employee participation, training & development and career planning which are independent variables. The dependent variable is organisational performance and organisational learning is a mediating variable. The theories employed to study this link are: experiential learning, adaptive and generative learning, and assimilation. The following diagram describes the framework of the study.



### Hypotheses Development

Based on review of earlier literature, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: There is a relationship between training and development, and private university performance.
- H2: There is a relationship between career planning and private university performance.
- H3: There is a relationship between employee participation and organisational performance.
- H4: Organisational learning mediates the relationship between training and development and private university performance.
- H5: Organisational learning mediates the relationship between career planning and private university performance.
- H6: Organisational learning mediates the relationship between employee participation and private university performance.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, especially the literature review, it is clear there is a lack of suitable framework to study the current topic, namely addressing organisational learning challenges in private universities in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the current study's framework contributes to the existing literature to examine the effects of selected HRM practices and organisational learning on the latter's performance. Further, the framework is expected to fill the gap in the literature by suggesting a new model in the context of the private universities sector.. The findings of this study will help with governance and provide a door for the development of a new learning culture inside the organization. This ensures that competence, innovation, dynamic capabilities, and management quality at private universities continue to improve.

Additionally, the findings of this study will provide their private universities a competitive edge, faculty and staff will be guided to increase their learning through a better understanding of the interaction between the aforementioned factors.

It can assist policymakers in enhancing or restructuring existing policies as well as establishing new policies to improve organisational learning in private higher education institutions. The proposed framework, in particular, is predicted to have major managerial implications for the private higher education system seeking to improve its competitive advantage. Future researchers are encouraged to add more constructs to this model to uncover numerous causes that drive organisational learning and performance.

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