

Cultivating Employees' Organizational Trust through Human Resources Management Practices: The Role of Internal Communication and Employee Engagement in Jordanian Construction Sector

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Abstract

The research aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of human resource management practices (HRMP) on the level of organizational trust among employees in the Jordanian construction sector, through mediating variables of employee engagement (EE) and internal communication (IC) as a moderator. The construction industry is one of the major industries in Jordan and has an impact on GDP as well as employment. It is crucial to apply the people management model of HRMP in working conditions, recruitment, performance management, training, reward, and safety because it is developed to improve trust in organizations. The study also analyses how these practices enhance the degree of trust among the employees in the organization. Further, it examines EE as a mediating variable between HRMP and organizational trust and IC as a moderating variable between EE and trust. This study seeks to propose how knowledge of HRMP, EE, and IC can contribute to how organizational trust can be strengthened, and in effect foster better structures of workforce development and trust.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Organizational Trust, Employee Engagement, Internal Communication, Jordanian Construction Sector

Introduction

Background of the Study

The Jordanian industrial sector is one of the critical sectors of the Jordanian economy. This is because of its contribution to the national economy around one-fourth of ten years ago (Mansour et al., 2023). According to the Jordan Chamber of Industry, 2023, the industry sector is considered the most significant sector that contributes to local production by up to 25% and includes 251 thousand workers, approximately 28% of the total employment volume in Jordan. Within these industries, the construction industry is the most significant contributor

to the percentage of workers, with 8% in the industrial sector 17411 workers, besides a 5% growth realization for GDP. The industry sector in Jordan had the largest share in the volume of investment, about 650 million dinars, which is 60% of the total investments (Al Hussein et al., 2023). Also, the industry sector has the largest acquisition of total national exports by up to 90%, which helps maintain and stabilize the Jordanian currency (Amjad et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, the relatively positive performance reveals the challenging circumstances under which the industrial sector in Jordan must operate to survive and compete effectively (Mohammad & Darwish, 2022). For the past ten years, the Jordanian industrial sector, especially the construction sector, has suffered vulnerability to extraneous competition through internal and external forces. Globalization pressures have been felt across the entire value chain but are more pronounced in labor and energy-intensive industries (Shqair & Altarazi, 2022).

Although the construction sector to which it belongs has great significance, the industry still has to face both fierce internal and external competition that could affect its development and sustainability. Competitors are available locally and give the others a hard time, translating into lower profit margins and other players unable to expand into further international markets. Such competitiveness causes financial performance, operational capabilities, and strategic planning to deteriorate through the effect (Saleh & Al-Nimer, 2022). Recently, technological and social changes have dramatically transformed Jordan's industrial sector, and the business sector has been compelled to take on a more accessible role in response to consumers' ever-changing needs and trends (Al-Khatib, 2022). Hence, practices related to human resource management play a crucial part in improving worker productivity and performance. HR management plays a significant role in developing the organization's competitive benefits, stimulating employees' satisfaction, and guaranteeing the future growth and development of the business (Shrouf et al., 2020).

Human Resources Management practices are designed to develop employee competencies, bring about employee engagement, and, consequently, attain sustainable competitive advantage when entering a market (Saks, 2022). Therefore, corporate trust, or, in a broader sense, multilateral trust between employees and management staff, is highlighted as a critical element within the framework. Trust can be an essential factor in employees' willingness to work together, share information, and cooperate with the organizational strategic objectives and activities (Islam et al., 2023).

The connection between trust and employee engagement in a commercial framework is a core topic that largely defines intra-corporate communication (Markos & Gossaye, 2021). Employee engagement is the degree of common ethos among workers that gives them a feeling of deep commitment toward their organization. A high-trust environment cannot be built (Oliva, 2022). Committed employees tend to be of good quality by contributing to the organization positively, working in teams, and being loyal to the company. These sometimes appear when there are appropriate human resource management practices such as proper working conditions, recruitment, staffing, performance management, development, compensation, and safety and health measures (Adisa et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, it is difficult to maintain a high level of performance and fulfill the set deadlines in the construction sector due to various government barriers across Jordan (Hatamleh et al., 2023). The government has implemented multiple actions, including payment delays, restrictions on expatriate workers, and a rise in unemployment, which negatively affect the sector. This decline in the number of expatriate workers deeply affects the local labor market through a severe shortage of workers in the areas rich in special services, thus creating obstacles to recruitment and staffing due to a lack of the expected skilled workers (Al-Zawahreh, 2023). Moreover, several workers, in most cases the engineers, lack proper training; these deficiencies affect general performance and losses in productivity (Al-Abbadi & Agyekum, 2022). Based on the annual Social Security report states that the construction sector has the highest rate of work-related injuries (Jordanian Social Security, 2022)

The health and safety issues are the top problems in this industry. According to Jordanian Social Security (2022), there were 17,746 work-related injuries were recorded in all sectors, including 78 traumatic deaths in the private sector during the year 2022. In the industrial sector, the highest number of injuries was recorded, amounting to 4,654 work-related injuries, representing 28.8% of the total injuries, and 733 were injured in the construction sector (Jordanian Social Security, 2022).

The analytical report on work injuries issued by the Organization's Department of Occupational Safety, Health, and Work Injuries after an analytical study conducted on work injuries registered and approved by the insurance during the year (2022), revealed that the conditions of occupational safety and health in various establishments are not at the desired level, as the numbers included in the report indicate. The percentage of work injuries approved by the Corporation for the year 2022 has dramatically increased by 13.1% compared to the year 2021. Employees' injury rates are still relatively high in terms of severity, as the Corporation recorded a work injury every 30 minutes in all sectors (Jordanian Social Security, 2022).

However, despite the critical role played by the construction industry in Jordan's economy, some problems require solutions. A competent approach to personnel management can be a vital tool in addressing the factors that may help enhance employee engagement and organizational trust. This study evaluates the role of HRM practices on employee organizational trust by investigating the role of employee engagement as the mediating role and internal communication as the moderating role within the construction sector of Jordan (Hani et al., 2023).

Problem Statement

The study on human resource management (HRM), organizational employees trust, internal communication and employee engagement in developing countries including Jordan, is limited by the lack of empirical studies. The gap in the studies on the public health trends in Jordan can be filled to an extent by the available information whose research focus is mainly developed countries. Construction sector in Jordan is important sector of economy of this country; however, this sector has many problems that negatively affect its efficiency and stability (Sweis et al., 2020). Amongst these challenges are those that touch on employee trust and engagement that are important for organizations.

Although establishing a high trust work environment and engaging the employees are on top of HRM's priorities and practices, the construction sector in Jordan has not successfully implemented all of them. A lack of formal communication structures and low direct employee participation in decision-making also enhances the problem. Therefore, a need arises in-depth studies in the relationship between isolated practices of HRM including recruitment, training, performance management, and compensation on organizational trust through the mediating effect of employee engagement while internal communication moderates the relationship between the variables (Saleh et al., 2023). The resolution of this problem will help to increase employee productivity, enhance the general performance of organizations and further the sustainable competitiveness of the construction industry of Jordan.

Research Objectives

The present study aims at an assessment in terms of how HRM practices affect trust and the role of internal communication and employee engagement within the Jordanian construction sector. The HR practices they consider include working conditions, staffing, recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation, and safety and health. To achieve this primary objective, the following specific objectives were identified:

- RO1:** To examine the relationship between human resource management practices (working conditions, staffing, recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation, and safety and health) and employees' engagement in the Jordanian construction industry
- RO2:** To examine the relationship between employees' engagement and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry.
- RO3:** To examine the extent to which the employees' engagement mediates the relationship between human resource management practices and Employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry.
- RO4:** To examine the extent to which internal communication moderates the relationship between employees' engagement and Employees organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry.

Research Questions

To address the identified research gaps and contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the area of human resource management (HRM) practices on employees' organizational trust within the Jordanian construction industry, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1:** What is the relationship between human resource management practices (working conditions, staffing, recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation, and safety and health) and employees' engagement in the Jordanian construction industry?
- RQ2:** What is the relationship between employees' engagement and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry?
- RQ3:** Does employees' engagement mediate the relationship between human resource management practices and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry?

RQ4: Does internal communication moderate the relationship between employees' engagement and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry?

Significance of the Study

This research study aims to fill in the existing gap in the field of empirical research on human resource management (HRM) practices, employees' organizational trust, internal communication, and employee engagement in the Jordanian construction sector. The importance of this study lies not only in its practicality but also in its theoretical significance, which offers a broader understanding of organizational dynamics in Jordan.

This research gives several beneficial advances that make the high organizational trust and employee engagement within the Jordanian building sector to the stakeholders and the entities of this industry. Through identifying and giving on the HRM practices that work, the research offers opportunities for the HR specialists to take notice of these precious insights. This is an evident practical contribution that is the identification of the specific HRM practices that disclose and develop employees' organizational trust. Identifying and tackling trust-building strategies, HR professionals may implement purposeful efforts that have the greatest impact on trust among employees (Al Shawabkeh et al., 2022).

Human resource management (HRM), employees' organizational trust, and employee engagement are the most relevant aspects in the context of the construction sector in Jordan, and this study contributes both practically and theoretically. Primarily, the study puts the Social Exchange Theory (SET) as scrutinizing it in a developing country role by considering its significance in studies that depict other places. Also, trust theory indicates the importance of trust between individuals. Expanding the scope of our study to Gabriel's attitude brings a better picture of the way in which the SET phenomenon takes place in non-Western and developing countries (Silva et al., 2023).

The theory is another contribution to understanding by integrating different constructs, that is, HRM practices, internal communication, employee engagement, and employees' organizational trust. An integrated framework model was achieved. The key feature of such an approach is providing a comprehensive perspective on the interactions between these elements and the link between human resource management practices and organizational trust (Baquero, 2023).

The Scope of the Study

This study aims to determine the impact of human resource management practices on employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction sector, with the moderating role of internal communication and the mediating role of employee engagement. This study is limited to construction companies listed on the Jordan Chamber of Industry and limited to employees working in the middle and lower levels who have at least one year of experience. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other sectors. The results cannot be generalized to other countries, as Jordan is considered a developing country. Regarding human resources management practices, this study focuses on the human resources management practices such as working conditions, staffing and recruitment, performance management, training, compensation, and safety measures. Therefore, this study will

contribute to the existing literature on HRM practices, internal communication, and employee engagement to improve employees' organizational trust.

Literature Review

Employees' Organizational Trust

Trust is one of the main aspects that influence the development of organizational culture and plays an important role concerning efficiency and employees' health outcomes at the organizational level (Lay et al., 2020). Employees' organizational trust refers to employees' belief and assurance in the organizations, their managers, supervisors, or specific teams (Kosonen & Ikonen, 2022). The study by Ahmad et al (2020), establishes a link between trust in managers as a predictor of OCB, proving how trust contributes to positive workplace behavior.

According to Schilke et al (2023), trust is peculiar to domains, implying that an understanding of trusting conduct is contingent upon the environment in which it occurs (Zeffane and Connell, 2003). According to the research conducted by Tzafirir and Dolan (2004), the concept of trust within the context of an employment relationship was found to possess three dimensions: harmony, dependability, and care (HRC). The initial component, referred to as dependability, posits that a party placing trust has optimistic anticipations regarding the congruity between the statements and behaviors of the party being entrusted (Nešić et al., 2020). The second facet of trust, known as care, pertains to the concept of self-interest being weighed against the interests of other party/parties (Sullivan, 2020). According to Ben Sedrine et al., 2021, the concept of harmony in the context of the third dimension refers to the presence of a collective identity and shared values.

Human Resource Management Practices

Human resource management (HRM) refers to the processes of managing people and refers to practices and policies that an organization follows to maintain its employees. These practices are central to management's efforts to influence employee perceptions, beliefs, and behavior, determining organizational performance and productivity (Guest, 2020). Recruitment and selection play an important role in ensuring that competent and suitable candidates are hired in an organization in support of the organizational culture. Research has confirmed that there is an increased level of organizational trust when hires are made fairly and in a transparent manner, as this guarantees success and equal opportunities (Cascio, 2016).

Training and development are important not only as an individual contribution to improving the quality of services provided by the employee but also as a clear demonstration of organizational commitment to the professional growth and career progression of its human capital (Boselie et al., 2005). When organizations offer learning and development opportunities, the public perceives them as reliable and supportive, making the workers more devoted and loyal to their organizations (Guest, 2020). Measuring performance is another area that is vital as it helps foster accountability in organizations as well as the management of resources. Since high-performance work systems provide workers with clear information regarding obligations, feedback, and performance criteria, they minimize equivocality and build confidence in managerial decisions (DeNisi & Murphy, 2021). Employee engagement efforts aim to improve an organizational culture that can make employees happy in their

workplace and committed to working towards organizational objectives (Saks, 2017). By creating a culture of positive communication where employees are encouraged to be actively engaged in the organization's affairs and appreciate their efforts, organizations are assured of the loyalty of the workers (Bakker et al., 2015). Maintaining the primary concerns of the employees makes it possible to establish confidence in the management. Measures for the organization's safety, reasonable amount of and quality training, and company culture that is genuinely concerned for the worker's well-being are indicators of a protective approach (Clarke, 2012).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement plays a significant role that impacts organizational performance, especially in the construction sector, where most projects require a high level of employee commitment, motivation, and teamwork (Kular, 2008). Employee engagement can be defined as the extent to which the employees are enthusiastic and devoted to the organization and its objectives (Galanti et al., 2021). Effective employees are also committed to their jobs, energetic in the workplace, and willing to put in extra effort to ensure the success of their companies.

For the construction organizations in Jordan to sustain and enhance high levels of employee engagement, the following measures can be taken. In this case, leaders should be equipped with skills in transformational leadership to influence their entourage (Sonnentag, 2017). They should also be available to the employees and encouraged while also offering feedback from time to time and appreciating the employees' efforts (Ayob, 2019). Organizations must work on cultivating a culture of trust, civility, and teamwork in the workplace. This can be done by doing team exercises, making people work fewer hours if possible, and making sure that the organization's values are compatible with those of the employees (Crawford et al., 2013).

Internal Communication

Internal communication is a form of communication involving the exchange of information inside an organization. It is known to have a positive effect on the level of employee engagement and trust (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2016). In this case of the Jordanian context of construction, internal communication acts as a major enabler of the environment required in that industry due to its complexity and volatility (Verčič, 2012).

The purpose of internal communication in the construction industry concerns the exchange of information within the company, the control over the time information is released to the public, and the delivery of important information via different communication channels (Johari, 2022; Verčič et al., 2015). A lack of internal communication may harm employees' perceptions of their roles in the organization because they might feel insignificant and, therefore, perform and produce sub-optimally (Qin & Men, 2023). Lack of effective communication also poses a risk to organizational relationships through negative effects. Ultimately, effective internal communication guarantees that the right messages get to the employees to lower the chances of confusion or misinformation.

Underpinning Theory

In this research, Trust Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET) are adopted to explain the literature review on human resource management (HRM) practices, employee trust, employee engagement, and internal communication in the Jordanian construction industry.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a framework that aims to evaluate the quality of exchange relationships in the individual and/or organizational context (Cropanzano et al., 2017). One of the key assumptions underlying SET is the reciprocity norm, according to which social interactions are voluntary activities that stem from how an organization treats its employees (Lay et al., 2020). According to Lollo et al. (2020), any organization that extends certain benefits to its employees will have such employees respond in kind depending on how they have been treated by the organization. This mutual exchange of resources and rewards based on social interactions highlights the usefulness of SET in explaining how HRM practices can enhance employee motivation (Mishra, 2018).

In the context of this study, SET postulates that proper internal communication strengthens the employees' trust in management since it shows that the organization is also concerned about them. This sense of trust and care thus generates a condition whereby the employees feel compelled to reciprocate with loyalty and engagement. According to Meng (2023), the perceptions of HRM practices are influenced by internal communication, thereby affecting the levels of organizational trust among employees.

Trust Theory

Trust Theory complements SET by focusing on the factor of trust in the relationships between entities in an organization. According to Trust Theory, trust is an essential concept of organizational management as it determines employee involvement, commitment, and productivity (Legood et al., 2021). Therefore, trust is gained when there is consistent, reliable, and reliable communication that is in tune with SET.

Organizational trust can be defined as the level of confidence employees have in their leaders and managers as well as the company that they are working for. This perception is created by internal communication, where all employees are kept informed, and their complaints and inputs are considered (Qin et al., 2023). In the Jordanian construction sector, both projects are intricate and entail extensive cooperation and communication, and thus, trust is of paramount importance.

The equity hypothesis, associated with Trust Theory, is more focused on equity in aspects of organizational relationships. Workers tend to compare their input to outputs in their workplace and thus determine if they have been treated fairly or not (Prasad et al., 2020). When employees feel that they are fairly treated within the organization, trust in the organization is enhanced, hence improving commitment and organizational engagement (Schilke et al., 2023).

Gaps in Literature

Several gaps remain in the literature regarding the relationships between the contextual variables of HRM practices, employees' organizational trust, employee engagement, and internal communication, as well as their effects on the Jordanian construction industry. These

gaps indicate that more research is needed to close the knowledge gap for a better understanding and examination of the relationship between these constructions and organizational results.

There are two major areas that are not significantly covered in the literature, and this is the specific industry context in which the research is being conducted: the construction sector in Jordan (Sidabutar, 2020). However, there is a lack of understanding of how these principles apply to the construction industry in particular because of its flexible methods of work such as project-based, hazardous nature of some jobs, and a highly diverse workforce (Snell, 2009). This is significant due to the adoption of temporary project teams and the extensive use of subcontractors during construction projects, which makes it challenging to provide continuous and consistent HRM (Setar et al., 2014).

Another gap is the lack of research that focuses on the moderating effect of internal communication on the relationship between HRM practices and employees' organizational trust (Sullivan, 2020). While HRM practices and internal communication are known to contribute to the development of employees' organizational trust, the relationship between the two has not been studied extensively. Knowledge about this mediating process could enhance the comprehension of how organizations can enhance the design and execution of HRM practices for increased levels of trust and employee engagement (Verčič, 2022).

Most of research investigated the impact of HRM practices on employee outcomes or the role of internal communication in organizational performance (Yu et al., 2022). This segmented strategy disregards synergy whereby combining HRM practices and effective internal communication can influence employees' organizational trust and organizational outcomes. Perhaps there are other opportunities to improve theories about improving employee engagement and organizational outcomes (Yulia et al., 2023).

There is also a research gap in the long-term effects of HRM practices and internal communication on employees' trust and employee engagement level (Winda, 2017). Most studies conducted previously are cross-sectional, meaning that they show the dynamics of relationships only at one point in time. Ideally, future research should adopt a longitudinal research design to capture changes in these relationships and understand the long-term effects of HRM practices and internal communication on the trust of employees and organizational performance (Sumayya, 2019).

Research Framework

The framework used in this study encompasses the antecedents and consequences of HRM practices, internal communication, and employees' organizational trust based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Trust Theory. The purpose of developing this integrative model is to explore the relationships between these essential concepts in light of the Jordanian construction industry.

Based on the presented research framework, it could be concluded that the relationship between HRM practices and internal communication has a substantial influence on the level of employees' trust. Higher trust results in positive organizational performance, which includes improved employee commitment, increased production, and fewer employees

quitting. Thus, this integrative model gives an insight into how the best practices of strategic human resource management coupled with internal communication foster a trustworthy organization and would yield positive results to the employees and organization in the Jordanian construction Industry.

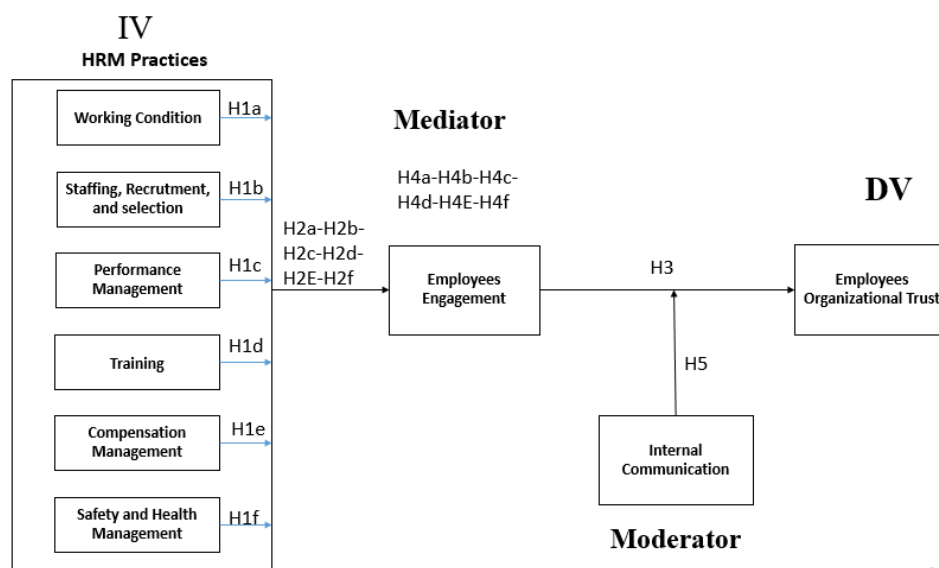


Figure 0.1 Research Framework

Hypotheses Development

This research focuses on the moderating effect of employee engagement between HRM practices and organizational trust. It improves the knowledge of how HRM practices, organizational trust, and internal communication affect employee engagement.

H1: There is a positive relationship between human resource management practices and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry.

H2: There is a positive relationship between human resource management practices and employees' engagement in the Jordanian construction industry.

H3: There is a positive relationship between employee engagement and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry.

H4: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between human resource management practices and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry.

H5: IC has moderated the relationship between employees' engagement and employees' organizational trust in the Jordanian construction industry

Conclusion

There are many challenges facing companies in Jordan, especially the problem of organizational trust for employees. Human resource management practices are used to improve employee trust by using internal communication as a moderating variable and also employee engagement as a mediating variable.

A scientific framework was developed in this study to solve the issues in the Jordanian construction sector. The authors hope that this framework will bear results that are useful for the construction sectors in Jordan in improving the current situation. In addition, it is hopeful

that the framework of this study will also assist the Jordanian government in improving its policy regarding the employees' working condition.

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