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### Exploring Human Resource Development Practices: Insights from the UAE Oil and Gas Industry

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#### Abstract

Human resource development (HRD) is pivotal for companies' competitive advantage, yet its conceptualization varies across studies and industries, often relying more on practice than specific theoretical underpinnings. This knowledge gap is pronounced in developing countries like the UAE, home to one of the world's largest Oil and Gas industries. To address this, a quantitative study surveyed 321 employees within the UAE Oil and Gas Industry via an online questionnaire, aiming to elucidate HRD practices. The findings underscored training and development, coaching and mentoring, and career development as key HRD drivers, highlighting their indispensable roles in fostering continuous organizational growth. This study contributes empirical insights into HRD practices within the UAE Oil and Gas Industry, informing tailored HRD strategies and practices while providing a foundation for future research endeavors in this domain.

*Keywords: Human; Resource: Development: Oil; Gas; UAE*

#### 1. Introduction

Human resource development has been recognized as an important development tool for improving employees' competencies and productivity, which is the proxy for achieving competitive advantage. Study by (Abiwu and Martins, 2023), suggests that talent development driven by training and development, career development and coaching and monitoring has significant positive relationship with employees talent and competencies development. In addition, study by (Gamage, Perera and Wijewardena, 2021), revealed that mentoring and coaching foster professional and personal relationships, enabling individuals to acquire skills necessary for competitiveness in the academic landscape. In a similar vein, research conducted by Cai et al., (2019) underscores that Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, such as career development initiatives, are strategically crafted to fortify employees' attitudes, with a specific emphasis on fostering commitment. This strategic approach invariably leads to amplified levels of employee satisfaction and augmented performance within the organization.

Despite the significance of human capital development on employees competencies and satisfaction, many corporations functioning in complicated, extremely competitive, and dynamic surroundings are having difficulty managing their workers' potential adequately (Malik and Singh, 2020). In addition, competencies development works on dynamic work environment, which make challenge to generalize the finding of some studies to another industry (Sabuhari *et al.*, 2020). For example, in the UAE gas and oil industry, there are several challenges in the implementation of training and development programs to upskill and reskill its employees (Mansoori, Rahman and Kasim, 2020; Ben Yedder, 2021). This because of the complexity of the industry and the type of needed skills, especially in operation department. This leaves a gap of understanding the human

development practices driven by training, coaching and mentoring and career development in the UAE oil and Gas industry. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap based on human resource management practice in the UAE through concertizing training, coaching and mentoring and career development and employees' competencies in the UAE oil and Gas industry.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Perspectives of Human Capital

Human capital accumulation takes place in three ways. The first is formal schooling whereby the individual devotes his whole time to learning (Hernita *et al.*, 2021). Becker (1994) developed a model of individual investment in human capital and (Masiko *et al.*, 2022), argues that human capital investments are expenditures on education, training, health, information, and labor mobility. The landscape of individual careers has transitioned from singular to encompassing multiple organizations (Barley, Bechky and Milliken, 2017), prompting the value of organizational investment in employee development activities (Ferreira, Silva and Dias, 2023). However, little studies investigated the human capital effect of individual levels (Silvia Bagdadli, Rontgen and Gianecchini, 2021). This includes considerations of employee satisfaction and competencies as results of human capital practices. It is essential to explore whether individual career success, both objective (such as promotions and salary) and subjective (such as career satisfaction), is influenced by participation in various human capital development practices (Järnlström, Brandt and Rajala, 2020). While existing research has predominantly focused on the effects of single practices, understanding the cumulative impact of diverse developmental activities on employees' careers remains understudied (Silvia Bagdadli, Rontgen and Gianecchini, 2021). The framework draws upon and integrates the theory Knowledge based view (KBV). A management concept of human capital development known as the knowledge-based view of the firm (KBV) offers businesses strategies for gaining a competitive advantage (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) theory, stemming from classical management theories, is often seen as an extension of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. It asserts that knowledge generated within an organization is a vital asset for gaining sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic market environments. This is due to several reasons: (1) Knowledge-based sources are socially complex and deeply ingrained within the firm; (2) They are difficult for other organizations to replicate; and (3) They continually evolve and are often co-created within the organization (Grant, 1996) (Kraus *et al.*, 2022).

### 2.2 Coaching and Monitoring

Mentoring, defined as association between an experienced individual (mentor) and a less seasoned counterpart (mentee), is a transformative relationship aimed at fostering the mentee's personal and professional development (Mullen, 1994)(Wickramaaratchi and Perera, 2020). According to (Roberts, 2000), mentoring constitutes a structured program wherein a knowledgeable mentor imparts guidance, learning, and motivation to a less experienced individual. In organizational contexts, mentors typically serve as role models, guiding mentees towards career advancement opportunities. Mentoring relationships are instrumental in nurturing both the career growth and psychological well-being of young employees (Mullen, 1994). Additionally, mentors support the career development of younger employees by offering sponsorship, challenging assignments, coaching, exposure, visibility, and advocacy (NOE, 1988). The concept of managerial coaching is defined differently, which depends on perspective, intended, recipients, objective and setting (Park, McLean and Yang, 2021). However, in this research the concept of coaching is defined as "the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective" (Peterson and Hicks, 1996, p. 14). The managerial coaching is not merely limited in practicing times or in targeting the improvement of employees' performance, but also maximizes employees' potential that embedded in the organizational culture., so that managers use everyday opportunities for developing employees (Park, McLean and Yang, 2021). Consequently, coaching in this research considers the interactions between managers and their employees individually and within team members. The Coaching and monitoring forms a good managerial practice, which influence employees' talents and competencies. Study by (Younas and Bari, 2020) revealed that coaching and monitoring improve employees competencies through advancing their knowledge and skills, which shape their attitude to improve the performance. the finding by (Reyes Liske and Holladay, 2016), confirms that coaching improve employees leadership competencies. In a similar vein, (Park, McLean and Yang, 2021) assures that coaching and monitoring enhance personal learning, which helps them to cope with their tasks. As a consequence, it improve employees happiness and satisfaction (Romão *et al.*, 2022).

### 2.3 Training and development

Training with development together is the core of human capital development that complete and explain each other, which provides by the organizations to improve several aspects of employees either at the individual level such as satisfaction (Sesen and Ertan, 2022), behaviour, attitude (Tien Thanh and Thu Ha, 2023)and competencies that support organizational performance (Chaubey, Sahoo and Das, 2022). Training and development could be

offered together or can be directed each one separated from the other, it not essential for them to occur in the same time (Ismael *et al.*, 2021). Most of companies adopt a training and development strategy to improve employees' competencies that are needed to achieve competitive advantages. Study by (Guan and Frenkel, 2019), training and development improves employees' ability to advance their performance. However, study by (Laing, 2021) revealed that employees were not motivated by the training. Therefore, it is important to design training to meet employees' specific skills according to their path. Training is defined as a structured activity aimed at providing information or instructions to enhance the trainee's performance or attain a specific level of knowledge or skill (Elsafty and Oraby, 2022). In contrast, development is an approach to learning wherein managerial employees acquire and apply their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights to fulfill their responsibilities in the most effective and efficient manner (Ismael *et al.*, 2021). Studies (Abiwu and Martins, 2022) (Tumi, Hasan and Khalid, 2022) affirm that training and development represent the most effective talent development practices, enhancing employees' skills, competencies, and knowledge. According to (Sesen and Ertan, 2022), employees' perceived training has positive effect on their job satisfaction.

## 2.4 Career Development

Career development, as analyzed by (Abiwu and Martins, 2022), encompasses both career planning and management. The former involves employees identifying their skills, knowledge, and the ability to align them with their career goals, while the latter encompasses preparing, developing, implementing, and monitoring employees' career plans and strategies (Chetana and Mohapatra, 2017). (Abiwu and Martins, 2023) propose that career development involves effectively managing an individual's career growth and progression. The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners further define career development as "the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions to move toward a determined and evolving preferred future" (Gyansah and Kiende, 2014). Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, including career development, are strategically crafted to enhance employees' attitudes, notably their commitment, thereby leading to improved performance (Cai *et al.*, 2019). (Abiwu and Martins, 2023), affirmed a robust and positive correlation between HRM practices, employee satisfaction, and career development opportunities. Proficient HRM practices not only elevate employee satisfaction and commitment but also strengthen organizational performance, underscoring their dual influence on workplace dynamics and long-term career growth (Cai *et al.*, 2019; Ahmad Prayudi and Imas Komariyah, 2023). In the contemporary era, career development gains particular significance due to technological advancements, intensifying global competition, and the heightened importance employees, especially knowledge workers, place on career growth. Career development, therefore, equips employees with competencies necessary to adapt to the evolving demands of workplaces in various contexts and organizations (Plomp *et al.*, 2016).

## 3. Methodology

A quantitative research methodology driven by online questionnaire was randomly distributed to 321 employees working at operation department in the Oil and Gas industry in the UAE. The human resource practice in the UAE Oil and Gas Industry was developed based on training and development, which was measured by four items adapted from (Abiwu and Martins, 2023), coaching and mentoring, measured by eight items adapted from (Lei, Basit and Hassan, 2018) (Abiwu and Martins, 2023) and career development measured by six items adapted from (Guan *et al.*, 2016). We then conducted validation through rechecking and modifying the items based on the expert opinions from both academic and Oil and Gas industry in the UAE.

## 4. Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the perceptions of employees regarding training and development, coaching and mentoring, and career development within the UAE's Oil & Gas industry.

### 4.1 Training & Development

The training and development survey results indicate that employees within the Oil & Gas industry perceive a clearly defined policy for training and development, with a mean score of 4.352. This suggests a positive perception of the industry's commitment to continuous learning and professional growth. Furthermore, employees express recognition of the availability of diverse learning opportunities within the organization, as evidenced by the mean score of 4.428 for the accessibility of abundant training and development opportunities. Additionally, the industry is acknowledged for offering a platform for knowledge transfer post-training programs, with a mean score of 4.409. These findings collectively highlight the industry's dedication to fostering a culture of learning and development, contributing to enhanced staff creativity and innovation, as reflected in the mean score of 4.492 for the correlation between training and development initiatives and staff creativity and innovation.

Table1: **Training & Development**

| CODE | Items  | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|------|--|-------|----------------|
| TD1  | My corporation upholds a clearly defined policy concerning training and development.   | 4.352 | 1.923          |
| TD2  | Abundant training and development opportunities are readily accessible within oil and gas industry.  | 4.428 | 1.822          |
| TD3  | My corporation offers a platform for the transfer of knowledge once staff members successfully conclude their training and development programs.                                     | 4.409 | 1.964          |
| TD4  | The training and development initiatives implemented at my corporation have contributed to a noticeable enhancement in staff creativity and innovation within their respective roles | 4.492 | 1.842          |

#### 4.2 Coaching & Mentoring

The coaching and mentoring survey results depict a positive environment within the university, with employees perceiving strong support and a focus on development. The institution's implementation of a coaching and mentoring policy receives high praise, indicated by a notable mean score of 5.219, demonstrating widespread awareness and endorsement of formalized practices. Similarly, the decision to hire dedicated professionals as coaches and mentors is well-regarded, with a mean score of 5.1222, underscoring the institution's commitment to providing specialized support for staff development. Coaches and mentors are perceived as actively challenging staff with thought-provoking questions, indicating a dedication to fostering critical thinking and growth. However, there are areas for potential improvement, particularly in effectively communicating staff roles and responsibilities and providing performance feedback in comparison to peers. Additionally, while coaches and mentors are recognized for offering insights into practices at other institutions and sharing personal experiences with university staff, there is room for further development in these areas. Overall, the survey results indicate a solid foundation for coaching and mentoring practices within the university, with opportunities for continued enhancement to ensure a comprehensive and effective support system for staff development.

Table 2: **Coaching & Mentoring**

| Code | Items   | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|------|---|--------|----------------|
| CM1  | My corporation has implemented a coaching and mentoring policy.   | 5.219  | 1.70974        |
| CM2  | Within my corporation, professionals have been hired to serve as coaches and mentors for the staff.         | 5.1222 | 1.73466        |
| CM3  | These coaches and mentors frequently clarify the staff's understanding of their roles and responsibilities. | 4.477  | 1.865          |
| CM4  | They inform staff about their performance in comparison to their peers.                                     | 4.295  | 1.774          |
| CM5  | The coaches and mentors regularly challenge staff by posing thought-provoking questions.                    | 5.1206 | 1.65631        |
| CM6  | They possess expertise in the relevant rules and skills within the Oil and Gas fields.                      | 4.284  | 1.773          |
| CM7  | Coaches and mentors offer insights into practices at other corporations.                                    | 4.356  | 1.782          |
| CM8  | They also share their own experiences with the company staff.   | 4.436  | 1.77           |

#### 4.3 Career Development

The career development survey results offer a comprehensive perspective on employees' perceptions within the UAE Oil and Gas Industry regarding career planning and management practices. The findings indicate an overall positive sentiment among employees, emphasizing several key aspects. Firstly, there is strong endorsement for the presence of a well-defined policy for career planning and management, with a mean score of 4.462, suggesting clarity and structure in guiding career development within the organization. Additionally, positive feedback is reflected in the proactive communication efforts to keep academic staff well-informed about available career opportunities, as indicated by a mean score of 4.439. This ensures employees are aware of potential career paths within the industry, allowing them to make informed decisions about their professional trajectories. The survey also reveals a reasonable level of awareness among academic staff about career planning options and opportunities offered, with a mean score of 4.36, indicating effective communication about diverse career paths available for

development. Moreover, perceived encouragement for academics to enhance their knowledge and skills is evident, with a mean score of 4.557, highlighting the organization's commitment to fostering continuous learning and professional development. While there is recognition for dedicated support provided for career management and development, reflected in a mean score of 4.269, there may be opportunities for further enhancement in this area to better assist employees in managing their careers effectively. Lastly, perceived opportunities for career training within the organization are indicated, though with potential areas for improvement or expansion, as suggested by the mean score of 4.023. In conclusion, the survey results underscore a positive overall perception of career planning and management within the UAE Oil & Gas industry, acknowledging clear policies, proactive communication, and support for continuous learning. Nonetheless, the findings also highlight potential areas for improvement, providing valuable insights for refining career development practices to ensure ongoing satisfaction and growth of the workforce.

Table 3: Career Development

| Code | Items  | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|------|--|-------|----------------|
| CD1  | My Corporation has a well-defined policy for career planning and management.                               | 4.462 | 1.887          |
| CD2  | Academic staff at oil and gas industry are kept informed about the available career opportunities.         | 4.439 | 1.858          |
| CD3  | Employees at my corporation are well-informed about the career planning options and opportunities offered. | 4.36  | 1.787          |
| CD4  | My corporation actively encourages employees to enhance their knowledge and skills.                        | 4.557 | 1.819          |
| CD5  | Employees at my corporation receive dedicated support for their career management and development.         | 4.269 | 1.84           |
| CD6  | My corporation provides opportunities for career training.   | 4.023 | 1.861          |

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of the training and development, coaching and mentoring, and career development surveys provides valuable insights into the human capital development landscape within the Oil & Gas industry, particularly within the context of the UAE's Oil and Gas sector. Firstly, the positive perception of training and development initiatives underscores the industry's recognition of the importance of continuous learning in a rapidly evolving sector. As noted by (Elsafty and Oraby, 2022), investing in employee development not only enhances individual competencies but also contributes to organizational agility and innovation. Therefore, the industry's commitment to providing accessible and diverse learning opportunities is commendable and aligns with best practices in human resource management (Tien Thanh and Thu Ha, 2023).

Similarly, the findings regarding coaching and mentoring programs highlight the value of personalized support in fostering employee growth and development. According to (Candra Susanto and Nyoman Sawitri, 2023), mentoring relationships facilitate knowledge transfer, career guidance, and psychosocial support, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and performance. Therefore, the industry's emphasis on formalized coaching and mentoring practices reflects a strategic approach to talent management and succession planning (Wickramaratchi and Perera, 2020).

Regarding career development, the positive perception of organizational policies and practices underscores the importance of transparent communication and career planning frameworks. As suggested by (Abiwu and Martins, 2023) effective career management enhances employee engagement, retention, and organizational commitment. Therefore, the industry's efforts to provide clear career paths and encourage continuous learning are vital for attracting and retaining top talent in a competitive market (Gyansah and Kiende, 2014).

However, despite the overall positive sentiment, the surveys also identify areas for improvement, such as clarifying staff roles and responsibilities in coaching and mentoring relationships and expanding training opportunities for career development. Addressing these gaps requires a comprehensive approach that integrates feedback from employees, managers, and organizational leaders to tailor interventions that meet the diverse needs of the workforce (Laing, 2021). In conclusion, the analysis of training and development, coaching and mentoring, and career development surveys in the Oil & Gas industry in the UAE highlights the industry's commitment to fostering employee growth and development. By addressing the identified areas for improvement and leveraging best practices in human resource management, organizations can further enhance their competitive advantage and position themselves as employers of choice in the global market.

## 6. Study Limitations

The study is subject to several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, its reliance solely on descriptive analysis may restrict the depth of understanding compared to utilizing multiple methodologies. Moreover, the findings are based on employees' perceptions, introducing the potential for perception bias influenced by personal experiences and biases, which could impact the accuracy of the results. Additionally, the sample size and representation may limit the study's generalizability, highlighting the need for a larger and more diverse sample to provide a comprehensive understanding of perceptions within the UAE Oil & Gas industry. Furthermore, the response rate to the surveys could affect the validity of the results, with low response rates potentially leading to biased or incomplete data. Finally, the study did not delve into specific contextual factors that may influence perceptions, such as organizational culture or external market conditions, which could provide deeper insights into the findings.

## 7. Recommendations

To address these limitations and enhance future research efforts, a mixed-methods approach combining descriptive analysis with qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups could provide richer insights into employees' perceptions. Longitudinal studies over time would allow researchers to track changes in perceptions and assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving training, coaching, and career development practices. Moreover, efforts should be made to diversify the sample to better represent various levels, departments, and demographics within the Oil & Gas industry in the UAE. Strategies to minimize perception bias, such as ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in surveys, should be employed, and data triangulation from multiple sources could help validate findings. Furthermore, future research could explore underlying factors contributing to perceptions, including organizational policies and leadership practices, to inform continuous improvement initiatives in training, coaching, and career development practices, thereby better meeting employee needs and expectations.

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