



Developing Management Skills On The Financial Performance Of SMEs Is A Priority In Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to develop managerial skills on the financial performance of small and medium-sized companies as a priority in Iraq, in which human resources management is an important aspect in enhancing the competitiveness of the institution and raising its position. Financial performance in terms of indicators, and the research sample was several companies operating in the Iraqi market for securities. This research came out with several conclusions. The most important of which is that strategic human resource management strategies significantly impact the growth and profitability of small and medium companies, and the research recommends several recommendations. The most important is that future research on this topic examines the impact of SHRM practices on SMEs in many cities with accurate data for SMEs in the same region.

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1- Introduction

As a result of the intense competition in the field of business and globalisation in today's world, the business sectors in general and small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in particular have witnessed this because they play a fundamental role in emerging countries such as Iraq. Human resource management has been highlighted as an important factor in determining the company's competitiveness. It assists companies in identifying the core functions of human resource management responsible for raising the organisation's profile.

Many individuals have questioned whether functional areas can directly help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) achieve their strategic objectives and improve their efficiency, compensatory damages and reward policies, participatory management in governance, performance evaluation, and economic benefit by all these practices to the effectiveness of the organisation.

A study conducted by an Iraqi company involved in financing small and medium-sized enterprises (ICF-SMEs) indicated that SMEs constitute 90% of the total number of operating companies that employ more than 60% of the workforce. This study called attention to the importance of small and medium enterprises as they contribute

35% of the handicraft industry worldwide (Al-Sabah, 2007). However, according to Al-Sabah newspaper (2007), Iraq occupies a low rank in the list of countries in terms of the development and contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises to the national economy in the estimates of the International Monetary Fund compared to other countries in the region.

2- Literature review

SMEs play a very crucial and important role in the economic development of a nation (Hashim, 2005). However, the evolutionary period of SMEs does not allow for a standard definition of the term to be accepted universally. According to Kazmi and Ahmed (2000), PM was upgraded to HRM, which was identified as having a better resource centre. HRM not only served as an alternative to PM but was also viewed as a practice that includes goals integration such as the employees' goals, flexibility and adaptation and job enrichment.

A new and better way to improve organisational performance was provided through the emergence of the concept of SHRM. The research on HRM used several models that explained HRM's effect on firms' performance. Empirical research on the added value of HRM and performance provided evidence that HRM does not

matter (Guest et al., 2003). However, several researchers have found a serious link between HRM and performance.

3- Research Methodology

Organisations have recognised the growing need to embrace the use of human capital to stay competitive by using strategic human resource management. The accumulation of human capital in their employees is crucial in increasing productivity and quality and enabling organisations to remain relevant to the global business environment (Mello, 2006). The studies of Martell (2005) and Cassell (2002) recommended that strategic human resource practices be developed and implemented by business organisations in order to improve their performance. Several studies by Bowen and Ostrov (2004), Singh (2004), and Rashida (2007) revealed that research on SHRM mainly focuses on large organisations with little or no interest in small businesses and MuD firms. The research adopted the descriptive and analytical method

3.1- Research problem

This research attempts to diagnose and know the shortcomings, like the relationship between the development of managerial skills and financial performance. Therefore, the research problem started from the main question: What strategic human resource practices

should small, and medium-sized companies adopt?

Secondly. What is the relationship between SHRM practices and SME performance?

Third. What is the relationship between direct management delegation and SME performance?

Fourthly. What is the relationship between compensation, reward and performance of SMEs?

3.2 Hypotheses

Referring to the above framework for this research, the hypotheses for this research are as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Strategic Human Resources Alignment and SMEs performance.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Line Managers' Devolvement of responsibilities and SMEs' performance.

H3: There is a significant relationship between Training and Development and SME performance. H4: There is a significant relationship between Compensation and Reward and SMEs' performance.

H5: There is a significant relationship between Performance Appraisal and the performance of SMEs.

H6: There is a significant relationship between Employees Participation in Strategic HRM practices and the performance of SMEs.

3.3- Research objectives

The research seeks to achieve a number of the following objectives

1- Is there a clear perception among the organisation's employees about the strategic human resource practices that small and medium-sized companies should adopt?

2 . Measuring the nature of the relationship between SHRM practices and SME performance

3 . Measuring the relationship between direct management delegation and SME performance

4 . Measuring the relationship between compensation, reward and performance of SM

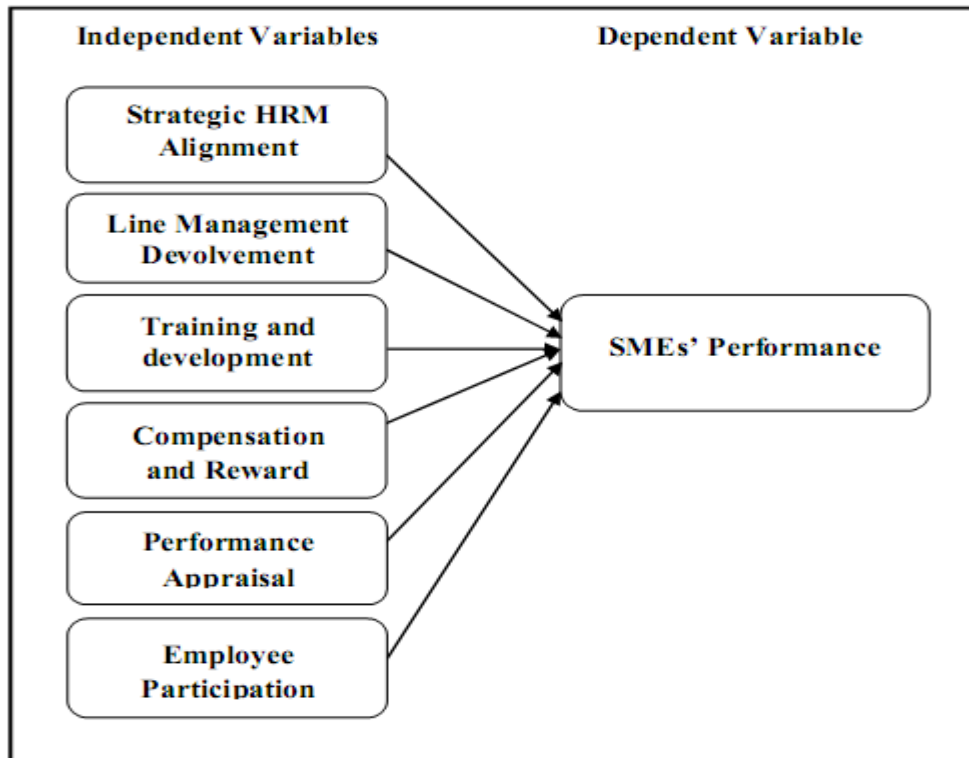
3.4 Research design

The research is divided into four (4) SPSS, the appropriate tools adopted by this research using a descriptive and correlation analysis to analyse the collected data to help achieve the research aims and

objectives. Finally, the last phase of this aspect of the research is the reporting of the collected and analysed data; it includes the research findings, conclusion, recommendation, and future work that can be embarked upon by other researchers who want to take up this research as a basis.

3.5 Research Framework

According to Sekaran (2003), research framework refers to the conceptual model explaining the relationships between the several factors identified as important to the research problem. These factors are the Variables (ViBs) that are categorised as independent and dependent ViBs. The independent ViBs influence the dependent ViBs either positively or negatively, which implies that a relationship(s) exists between these ViBs. Since the purpose of this study is to determine the role of strategic HRM on SME performance, the hypotheses are therefore formulated based on the ViBs and the relationships among the ViBs.



SHRM alignment, line manager's devolvement, and participation are all the elements that built up the independent ViBs in this research. Therefore, the relationship between SMEs' performance and each of the independent ViBs will be investigated.

SME's performance is the only dependent ViBs adopted by this research, and the relationship of all the independent ViBs will be tested. Furthermore, a firm's performance in this research is measured by the growth and profitability of the firm (Muhammad, 2007). Therefore, this research regards the firm's growth and profitability as a measure of the performance of SMEs to determine its relationship with the independent ViB.

3.6 Population and sampling

Population refers to the entire group of elements sharing a common interest, which the researcher wishes to conduct his investigation. Therefore, the unit of the analysis of this research is an organisation-the small and MuD enterprises (SMEs) in Baghdad (Shehab, 2008). The population of this study comprises SMEs in Iraq, which was obtained online via the local business directory. This result was of an inappropriate record for SMEs in Iraq. One hundred twenty lists of Small and MuD Enterprises were sorted out from the business directory. Then, a systematic simple random sampling was applied to draw 90 SMEs by picking every 3rd element from the main population of the study.

Accordingly, the questionnaire was distributed to the SME owner's firms. Line with Sekaran et al. (2001) and Krejcie & Morgan (1970) affirmed that when the study population is within the range of 120, the study sample should be within 92. In all, a total of 90 SME firms were contacted in this study, and these served as the basis of the sample of this study. A total of 90 questionnaires were filled and returned, but only 87 were used in the study. Hence, the actual sample of the study is 92 giving a response rate of 94.56%. Finally, the respondents for the study came from small MuD firms located within the city of Baghdad in Iraq.

4- Data Collection and Response Rate

A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed to the selected SMEs. However, only 87 were analysed, serving as the study's main data. The returned

questionnaires were properly answered with little out layers that were treated properly before the main analysis was done.

This section presents information on the job position of the respondents of this study. Out of the 87 questionnaires, 34 participants (39.1%) are in the position of Head of the HR department, 33 respondents (37.9%) are Senior HR staff, and 15 respondents (17.2) are senior management staff outside the HR department. In addition, 5 respondents (4.6 %) are managing directors of their companies, and only 1 represents others, forming 1.2%. Table 4.1 shows the frequency distribution, with the Head of the HR department having the largest percentage of the respondents' job positions.

Table 4.1 Respondents' Job position/ title

Job Position/ Title	Frequency	Percent
Head of HR department	34	39.1
Senior HR Staff	33	37.9
Senior Management Staff (Outside Hr department)	15	17.2
Managing Director	5	4.6
Total	87	100.0

4.1 Company's Business Sector

Table 4.2 below shows that 52 companies (59.8%) belong to the consumer goods and services sector, 15 (17.2%) are from the utility business sector, 4 respondents represent (4.6%) the health care sector, 7

respondents represent (8 %) the telecommunications sector while 9 respondents representing (10.3%) the financial services.

Table

4.2 Companies' Business Sector

Companies Business Sector	Frequency	Percent
Consumer Goods & Services	52	59.8
Utilities	15	17.2
Health Care	4	4.6
Telecommunications	7	8.0
Financials	9	10.3
Total	87	100.0

4.3 Position of the Company in the System of the Parent Company

Table 4.3 below shows that 18 respondents (20.7%) indicated that their company is the headquarters, 18 respondents (20.7%) belong to a division of their company, and

47 respondents (54 %) belong to a subsidiary of their company. Four respondents (4.6 %) belong to other positions within the parent company system.

Table 4.3 Position of the Company in the System of the Parent Company

(CPWPCS)	Frequency	Percent
Headquarters	18	20.7
Division	18	20.7
Subsidiary	47	54.0
Others (Please specify)	4	4.6
Total	87	100.0

4.4 The number of individuals employed by the firm.

Table 4.4 below shows that 9 respondents (10.3 %) out of the 87 respondents work with companies that have fewer than 10

employees, 15 respondents (17.2 %) have between 11 and 49 employees, 46 respondents (52.9 %) have between 50 and 249 employees while 17 respondents (19.5 %) have more than 250 employees

Table 4.4 the number of individuals employed by the firm

No. of employees	Frequency	Percent
Fewer than 10	9	10.3
Between 11 and 49	15	17.2

Between 50 and 249	46	52.9
More than 250	17	19.5
Total	87	100.0

4.5 HR Department

As indicated by Table 4.5 below, 87 firms representing (89.7%) out of the 87, indicated that their company has an HR

department, while 9, representing (10.3%) of the firms, do not have an HR department.

Table 4.5 HR Department Descriptive Statistics in the Organization

HR Department	Frequency	Percent
Yes	78	89.7
No	9	10.3
Total	87	100.0

4.6 Testing Research Hypotheses

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is appropriate for explaining the relationship between the ViBs (Sekeran 2003). The findings of the correlation hypotheses are discussed below:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Strategic Human Resources Alignment and SMEs' performance.

Table 4.6 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Strategic Human Resource Alignment

ViB	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Std.Beta	t	Sig.
of the Estimate								
SHR Aligmt.	.631	.624	.637	5.7176	1.182	.894	1.087	.000 ^s

* $P < 0.001$, ** < 0.05 , Sig = Significant, NS = Not Significant

The result in Table 4.22 above indicates a high-adjusted R² of 63%, which suggests that strategic Human Resources Management Alignment significantly explain SMEs' performance. According to

the findings of this correlation, it is revealed that the initial presumption of this research hypothesis is right. Table 4.28 shows the correlation between Strategic Human Resources Alignment and SMEs'

performance at the two-tailed level. This could be interpreted that SME's performance in Iraq is related to the Strategic Human Resources Alignment. The result of this hypothesis testing depicts a significant correlation relationship between these two ViBs in Iraqi's context

as it is fully supported by the correlation analysis result $r = .631, p < 0.05$) and the result of the multiple regression analysis (Beta= .894, $p < 0.1$). This indicates that Strategic HRM Alignment should be allowed in the SME industry in Iraq. Thus, hypothesis one is supported and approved.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the Line Manager's Devolvement of responsibilities and SMEs' performance.

Table 4.7 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Line Manager Development

ViB	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Std.Beta	t	Sig.
of the Estimate								
Line Magers	.612	.564	.582	4.127	1.182	.395	1.087	.000 ^S

* $P < 0.001$, ** < 0.05 , Sig = Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 4.23 above indicates a high-adjusted R² of 58%, which suggests that the Line manager's devolvement significantly explains SME's performance. According to the findings of this correlation, it is revealed that the initial presumption of this research hypothesis is right. Table 4.28 shows the significant correlation between the Line Manager's Devolvement of responsibilities and SMEs' performance at the two-tailed level, as it is fully supported by the correlation analysis result $r = .564, p < 0.05$). This could statistically be interpreted in the result of the multiple regression analysis (Beta= .395, $p < 0.1$) that

SME's performance in Iraq is related to the Line Manager's Devolvement of responsibilities. This hypothesis testing shows the true relationship between these two ViBs in Iraqi content. This goes in line with the study of Hutchinson and Purcell (2003) and Currie and Proctor (2001), which indicated that Line Managers should be allowed to take full responsibility in the SMEs'.

H3: There is a significant relationship between Training and Development and SMEs' performance.

Table 4.8 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis in Training and Development

ViB	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Std.Beta	t	Sig.
of the Estimate								
Training.	.721	.672	.691	5.121	1.182	.169	1.087	.000 ^S

**P*<0.001, **<0.05, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 4.24 above indicates a high-adjusted R² of 69 %, which suggests that Training and Development significantly explain SME performance. The findings of this correlation analysis indicate that the initial presumption of this research hypothesis is right. Table 4.28 shows the correlation between Training and Development and SMEs' performance at the two-tailed level. Statistically, the Pearson correlation coefficient $r = 0.672$, $P < 0.05$ could be interpreted that SME performance in Iraq has a significant relationship with the training and development of employees. The result of this hypothesis testing (Beta=

.169, $p < 0.1$) depicts the significant correlation relationship between these two ViBs in the Iraqi context, which is in line with the study of Bank et al. (1987); Bishop (2003) and Cardon and Stevens (2004). The finding of this study indicates that Training and Development programme should be given full attention in order to increase the growth and performance of the SME industry in Iraq.

H4: There is a significant relationship between Compensation and Reward and the performance of SMEs.

Table 4.9 Summary of Compensation and Reward Multiple Regression Analysis

ViB	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Std.Beta	t	Sig.
of the Estimate								
Compensation	.413	.387	.395	3.047	1.182	.212	1.087	.000 ^S

**P*<0.001, **<0.05, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 4.25 above indicates a high-adjusted R² of 39 %, which suggests that Compensation and Reward significantly explain SME performance. Furthermore, the correlation analysis of this research reveals that the initial presumption of this

research hypothesis is right. Statistically, the Pearson correlation coefficient $r = 0.387$, $P < 0.05$ in Table 4.28 below shows a significant relationship between Compensation and Reward and the SME's performances. Furthermore, the multiple

regression analysis result (Beta= .212, $p < 0.1$) depicts that a significant relationship exists between the two ViBs as Iraq is concerned, which goes in line with the study of Som (2008), indicating that compensation and reward a significant relationship with firm's performance and

can improve the performance of SMEs in the context of Iraq.

H5: There is a significant relationship between Performance Appraisal and the performance of SMEs.

Table 4.10 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Performance Evaluation

ViB	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Std.Beta	t	Sig.
of the Estimate								
Perf Apprsl.	.410	.340	.389	4.052	1.182	.097	1.087	.000 ^S

* $P < 0.001$, ** < 0.05 , Sig = Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 4.26 above indicates an adjusted R² of 38 %, suggesting that Compensation and Reward significantly explain SMEs' performance. The findings of the correlation analysis for this research reveal that a statistical correlation exists between Performance Appraisal and SME performance in Iraq. This is statistically shown by the Pearson correlation coefficient $r = 0.340$, $P < 0.05$, as shown in Table 4.28 below, showing that the result

depicts the approval of the hypothesis of this research. The result of the multiple regression analysis in this research (Beta= .097, $p < 0.1$) indicates the approval of hypothesis H5.

H6: There is a significant relationship between Employees Participation in Strategic HRM practices and the performance of SMEs.

Table 4.11 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Employee Participation

ViB	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Std.Beta	t	Sig.
of the Estimate								
Emp. Partp.	.597	.575	.579	2.631	1.182	.529	1.087	.000 ^S

* $P < 0.001$, ** < 0.05 , Sig = Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 4.27 above shows a high adjusted R² of 57%, suggesting that employee participation significantly explains SMEs' performance. The correlation analysis of this research reveals a significant relationship between Employees Participation in Strategic HRM practices and SMEs performance. The Pearson correlation coefficient r statistically shows this = 0.575, P < 0.05, as shown in Table 4.28 below. The result of the multiple regression analysis conducted by this

research (Beta= .529, p<0.1) goes in line with the findings of the study of Verma (1995) and Farham (1997), indicating that a statistical correlation relationship exists between Employees Participation in SHRM practices and the performance of SMEs in the context of Iraq. This depicts that employees should be allowed to participate in the Strategic HRM practices of a firm to improve the firm's growth and productivity, thereby approving the hypothesis of this research.

Table 4.12 Analysis of Correlation

		SMES' Performance
SME Performance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	87
SHRM Alignment	Pearson Correlation	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	87
LM Devolvement	Pearson Correlation	.564**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	87
Training Development	Pearson Correlation	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	87
Com Reward	Pearson Correlation	.387**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	87
Performance Appraisal	Pearson Correlation	.340**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	87
Employee Participant	Pearson Correlation	.575**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	87

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.13 Regression Analysis (a): Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.850	2.390		3.284	.002
	HRM Alignment	.792	.257	.894	3.088	.003
	LMD evolvement	.407	.199	.395	2.044	.044
	Training Development	.166	.169	.169	.983	.029
	Com Reward	.138	.104	.212	1.329	.038
	Performance Appraisal	.097	.151	.097	.645	.021
	Employee Participant	.496	.280	.529	1.773	.045

a. Dependent ViB: Performance

Table 4.29 above presents an overview of the findings. It also shows the beta for all the ViBs. Overall, HRM alignment shows a higher beta of .89, followed by employee participation with a beta of .53 and then line manager with a beta of .39. HRM alignment indicates a higher contribution in the overall model.

Conclusion:

It has been shown that strategic human resource management strategies significantly impact SMEs' growth and profitability. Furthermore, the results of this study show a strong link between SMEs' success and SHRM alignment, line manager devolution of tasks, training and development, compensation and awards, and employee engagement in decision-making.

This research is confined to Baghdad and other Iraqi cities. Furthermore, this study used a non-probabilistic strategy for sampling respondents since there were no precise records of SMEs in Iraq, which might prevent the generalisation of the findings. As a result, the researcher suggests that future research on this subject look at the impact of SHRM practices on SMEs in many cities and with precise data for SMEs within the same region. Nevertheless, this study has demonstrated the benefits and merits of strategic human resource management strategies in Iraqi small and MuD businesses.

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Supplement1

In the name of Allah the Merciful

**Subject /
questionnaire form**

Honorable Respondent.

Peace, mercy and blessings of God .

This form is part of a research project in business administration entitled "Development of management skills on the financial performance of small and medium companies in Iraq."

We kindly ask you to please choose the answer that you deem appropriate for each question, bearing in mind that the recorded data are confidential and scientific and there is no need to confirm the name, we thank you for your kind response.

I wish you continued
success in your business.

Data related to the respondent on the form.

First: General data. Data about the company.

1. Company name
2. Type of public sector () private () mixed ()
3. The date of incorporation of the company
4. The division or division

1. Position (career position)
2. Length of service in the current position.
3. Academic achievement.
4. Academic specialisation.
5. Age (20-25) (25-30) (31-35) (36-40) (41-45) (46-50) (50 and over)
6. Gender: male () female ()

Phrases	Agreed Strongly	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Second : Developing management skills					
a. Strategic alignment.					
1 Our organisation focuses on harmonising the internal and external environment					
2 Our organisation seeks to understand the needs of customers about the services provided to it because it is a strategic partner					
3 Our organisation is interested in developing working methods					
b Authorisation of directors					
4 Senior management works to delegate managers with the aim of developing powers					
5 Managers work as a team to get things done					
6 Ease of communication between managers and employees					
c training and development.					
7 Our organisation seeks to use modern training programs					
8 Our organisation spends high costs on training					
9 Senior management views training as a competitive advantage					
d compensation and reward					
10 Top management awards rewards to encourage employees					
11 Equity in incentives and wages					
12 Senior management works to compensate workers for any damage					
E performance appraisal					
13 Our organisation is constantly evaluating performance					

14 There are practical foundations for performance appraisal					
15 Keeping abreast of recent developments in evaluation					
F employee participation					
16 Our organisation works on the method of management by objectives					
17 Our organisation encourages sharing information with employees					
18 Our organisation encourages the feedback method					
Third: Financial performance					
19 Our organisation emphasises constantly improving financial performance					
20 Our organisation provides suitable working conditions that enable the improvement of financial performance					
21 All our employees participate in improving financial performance, each according to the nature of his work					
22 Our organisation is interested in ways to improve financial performance					
23 Our organisation works to provide devices and equipment that enable improving financial performance					
24 Our organisation uses scientific methods to improve financial performance and reduce costs					
25 Our organisation seeks to provide innovative financial services that improve financial performance					
26 Our organisation adopts improving financial performance as a competitive priority					
27 Our organisation makes profits through modern customer relationship management					
28 Our organisation is constantly making deliberate improvements to its services					