

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN CONSTRUCTION: SYNTHESIS OF HRM MODELS

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The performance of the construction industry in Libya can be significantly improved through better organisation and management. The implementation of effective human resource management practices is essential for this country as it strives to keep up with advancements in this area. In order for their managers to efficiently supervise their personnel, it is crucial that Libyan players in the construction industry come up with more sophisticated HRM strategies. It is an established fact that the Libyan construction industry functions in accordance with a time-honoured procurement system. With this system, communication is mostly in an oral rather than in a written form. Predictably, this circumstance gives rise to several drawbacks. While foreign professionals struggle to employ and comprehend the body language involved in such communication, Libyan employees are at a loss when it comes to taking instructions. Although previously conducted investigations revealed a link between HRM strategies and organizational performance, these investigations did not take into consideration the mediating effect of the 'black box'. With this in mind, we examined the relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance while considering the skills, attitude, and behaviour of employees as the 'black box' content. Additionally, we forwarded a hypothetical structure of HRM and organizational performance in relation to the Libyan construction industry. We anticipate that the results derived through this study will pave the way towards improvements in this area.

Keywords: Construction, Employee skill, Employee attitude, Employee behaviour, Organisational performance

I. INTRODUCTION

The business world is currently extremely competitive due to the effects of globalization. In such a situation, the performance of an organization is significantly determined by its capacity to introduce effective HR strategies (Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Danish & Usman, 2010). The construction industry calls for the services of a wide range of professions. These include engineers, architects, construction managers, management personnel and general workers. This circumstance has inevitably led to a rather complicated industry that is heavily dependent on labour. As the pace of urban development in Libya is currently accelerating, the role of an efficient construction industry cannot be underestimated. However, coping with the wide range of skills required in this industry is easier said than done as Libya's construction industry is profoundly reliant on foreign expertise (Ngab, 2007).

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According to (Hokoma *et al.*, 2010), the HRM performance in Libya pales in comparison to that of developed countries.

Previously conducted investigations revealed a link between HRM strategies and organizational performance. Unfortunately, these investigations did not take into account the role of the 'black box' in terms of the influence of HRM on organizational performance. In the opinion of (Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010), the contents of the "black box" need to be further scrutinized in order to establish the HRM-organization performance relationship. This has prompted us to investigate (a) the link between HRM procedures and the performance of an organization, and (b) the mediating role of the contents of the 'black box'. We anticipate that the results from this investigation will not only increase the available information on HRM considerably, but also serve to improve the organizational performance of the Libyan construction industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It ought to be noted that the 'black box' supposition did not come about by chance. Investigators in this domain are relatively uninformed as to the contents of the 'black box' as the occurrences during this phase remain sketchy (Boselie *et al.*, 2005). Although the volume and scope of investigations on various HRM practices can be considered exceptional, studies on the effects of HRM on organizational performance have regrettably been few and far between (Theriuo & Chatzoglo, 2009). While past investigations established the favourable relationship existing between HRM practices and performance, the manner in which these practices influence performance remains largely unexplained (Purcell *et al.*, 2003). Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute (2010), who conceived the 'black box' concept, opined that in order to comprehend the mediating role of the unidentified factors existing between HRM practices and organizational performance, it is essential that the mechanisms involved be ascertained.

The hypothetical structure of this investigation, as illustrated in Figure 1, is based on the 'black box' theory of organization. (Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010) forwarded that in order to establish a credible method of value generation from the features of HRM up to organizational performance, it is necessary that the contents of the 'black box' be identified. Unfortunately, available literature on this subject does not offer any verification on the number of 'black box' elements involved (Raj & Kothai, 2014). Katou (2010), emphasized that in the development of HRM strategies for an effective organizational performance, the skills, attitude and behaviour of employees represent significant factors. Thus, a better comprehension of the link between HRM and organizational performance can be attained by regarding these factors the content of the 'black box' (Katou, 2010; Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute; 2010).

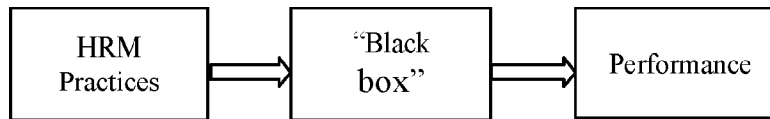


Figure 1: The “Black Box” of an Organisation, Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, (2010)

(A) Human Resource Management Practices in the Libyan Construction Industry

The industries of Libya are dogged by a variety of stumbling blocks. Among them is the lack of an appropriate policy to propel the productivity of these industries (Hokoma *et al.*, 2010; Omran *et al.*, 2011). In recognition of the construction industry’s role in the general development of Libya, the Libyan government is currently focusing on progress in this area. The growth of the cement producing industry represents an example of this progress.

As stated by Grifa (2006), the construction industry of Libya operates according to a conventional procurement scheme. With this scheme, verbal instead of written communication is the norm. As mentioned earlier, this circumstance gives rise to problems when it comes to interaction between foreigners and local employees (Shibani *et al.*, 2010). Unsurprisingly, these problems have culminated in the retardation of the Libyan construction industry. Of late, the effects of globalization have made organizations in Libya sit up and take notice of the relevancy of HRM. Nonetheless, (Hokoma *et al.*, 2010), and Ngab (2007) are of the opinion that the present level of HRM practiced in Libya is still leaves much to be desired. The reformation process taking place in Libya necessitates the implementation of efficient HRM strategies in order to keep pace with the fast-changing globalized environment. Hokoma (2010), drew attention to the fact that suitable practices and backing from upper management personnel are essential for the successful implementation of HRM in Libya.

(B) The Black Box

(Purcell *et al.*, 2003), are of the opinion that the ‘black box’ represents the repeatedly vague developments that take place during the conversion of input into constructive output. (Fleetwood & Hesketh, 2008), assume that inputs are converted into outputs within the ‘black box’ with no clarification on what occurs during this process. As such, (Becker & Huselid, 2006), are adamant that the intricacies involved in this process calls for a thorough investigation into the mechanisms that influence the linkage between HRM and performance. For our investigation, the skills, attitude and behaviour of employees represent the content of the ‘black box’.

(a) Employee Skills

Employee skills play a major role in enhancing the performance of an organization. Skilled employees are prepared to devote their time and energy towards meeting organizational goals (Dearden *et al.*, 2006). The expectations in the construction industry in the context of skills differ between the younger and more elderly employees. The employment of young employees who are equipped with a better grasp of modern technology can serve to enhance the strategies for HRM (Boxall & Macky, 2014).

Employers in the construction industry of Libya are responsive towards the aspiration of employees to realize a managerial position by way of the HRM department. The exercise involved is termed an advanced management potential valuation programme. All organizations face difficult decisions when it comes to the promotion of employees, or the termination of their services due to financial and/or structural alterations. In such a situation the HRM department is tasked with simulating the job requirements of employees (Omran *et al.*, 2011). In order to improve the expertise of employees, the construction industry needs to assess the link between mentoring and job satisfaction, as well as ensure that human resource practices are fittingly implemented. The availability of well-motivated employees will pave the way towards improvements in terms of the performance of an industry.

(b) Employee Attitudes

(Harter *et al.*, 2002), are of the view that attitude is a force that holds sway over human behaviour. This force comes into play when an employee is required to carry out a task in the approved manner. Put plainly, an employee with a good attitude will be more successful when it comes to realizing personal goals and organizational objectives. The role of HR in this area is crucial as the management personnel are required to oversee employees in all facets of their profession. Other than maintaining records for all employees, these personnel also need to motivate them so that the goals of the organization are realized.

Employee attitude can be deemed a social-exchange affiliation and an organization needs to be well-informed on the attitude of its employees. A negative employee attitude towards an organization will inevitably lead to an unfavourable outcome in terms of the organization's performance. (Katou & Budhwar, 2010), uncovered a positive and noteworthy employee attitude role between HRM practices and the performance of an organization. The social relationship among co-workers in Libyan industries is recognized as a significant attitudinal influence (Grifa, 2006 & Hokoma, 2010). The industries in Libya need to enhance the level of job satisfaction and ensure the appropriate implementation of HRM in order to achieve a beneficial employee attitude.

(c) Employee Behaviours

An effective HRM process can go a long way towards attaining favourable employee behaviour. In related literature, employee behaviour was recently described from the standpoint of several constructs. Based on the features of the task and the job setting, (Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2006), further separated these constructs into five groups. They labelled these groups organizational image, organizational vision, superiors, co-workers and conditions of work. Armstrong (2006), highlighted the need for inducements to promote the productivity of employees, which in turn will enhance the performance of the organization. In a situation where the different HRM practices are well-coordinated, every employee will be knowledgeable with regards to their roles, while expectations in terms of their work and behaviour will be standardized. Thus, appropriate HRM strategies need to be put in place to cater for each worker's expectations. In due course, these strategies will enable workers to alter their behaviours so that these behaviours are supportive of the needs of the organization.

(C) Organisational Performance

Organisational performance has to do with the indicators that reflect the performance of a firm based on its existing business standing. An organization is deemed to be doing well when its HRM performance leads to a profit-making situation. An accurate choice of human resources will serve to elevate the motivational level of the organization's workforce. While the attendance of an efficient human resource system is crucial for any organization, this system which comprises managers and employees falls short when it comes to enhancing the performance of the Libyan construction industry (Katou, 2010).

On the whole, the performance management process for elevating organizational performance involves development, synchronization, technological progression, an enhanced competitive edge, and the capacity to generate economic value. It should be noted, however, that from the perspective of the construction industry, the definition of efficient performance can differ from one firm to another. Thus, each firm ought to focus on the implementation of a performance management system that is most applicable to its situation (Vermeeren *et al.*, 2014). The construction industry links its performance level to management effectiveness. An organization comprising workers who are well-versed with regards to their roles and job descriptions will ultimately be profitable.

III. METHODOLOGY

The emphasis of the research design for this investigation is on the quantitative approach. Literature relevant to this subject is scrutinized for a better understanding of anticipated problems, as well as to acquire a general idea of the linkages between the dependent and independent variables ascertained through this investigation.

Academic journals and printed as well online materials were our main sources of information. Libyan construction organizations represent the respondents for this endeavor. While the unit of analysis is derived from the firms, the data is gathered from workers engaged by these firms. SPSS and AMOS software were employed for the performance of statistical tests.

Literature regarding a range of models representing the relationship between HRM and organizational performance was examined. These models were conceived by (Abdullah *et al.*, 2009; Katou, 2011; Cassoni & Labadien, 2013; Cania, 2014 and Dar *et al.*, 2014). Their models provided a better comprehension of the critical variables required to realize a favourable HRM-organizational performance relationship.

IV. SYNTHESIS OF DIFFERENT MODELS OF RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE METHODOLOGY

The relationship between HRM and organizational performance models conceived by various investigators is portrayed in Figures 2 to 6.

(A) HRM and Business Performance Model by Abdullah *et al.* (2009)

(Abdullah *et al.*, 2009), delved into the impact of HRM on business performance from a Malaysian perspective. They opined that in the context of business performance, it is essential that several factors be taken into consideration Figure 2. They identified these factors as training and development, teamwork, compensation/incentives, HR planning, performance appraisal and lastly employees' security.

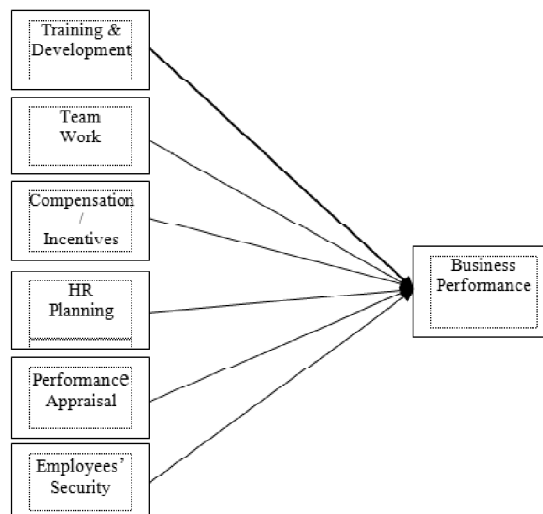


Figure 2: HRM and Business Performance Model for Malaysia. Source: (Abdullah *et al.*, 2009)

These factors were utilized as variables for the gauging of HRM. This is due to the development of HRM into the fundamental component of an organization that determines its general performance level. HRM is involved in a wide variety of management operations. These operations embrace the employment and dismissal of staff, as well as issues related to their salaries. In other words, HRM involves the overall management of workers employed by an organization. For instance, the performance appraisal not only considers the performance level of a worker, but also defines the form of training and development required for the enhancement of his/her skills. The development of employee skills contributes towards an elevation in the organizational performance level. Skilled workers tend to be more enthusiastic when it comes to meeting organizational goals. To be concise, the purpose of HRM is to ensure the placement of an appropriate number of suitable employees at the correct place, and at the correct time. The selection of these employees is based on their capacity to efficiently accomplish the work allocated to them. This process paves the way towards meeting the general goals of the organization.

(B) HRM – Performance Linkage Model by Katou (2011)

Katou (2011), delved into the linkage between HRM strategies and organizational performance from the perspective of the manufacturing division in Greece. His effort uncovered an indirect connection between HRM and organisational performance. This indirect connection is illustrated in Figure 3.

Katou (2011), also stated that several HRM outputs including employee skills, employ attitude and employee behaviour exert a considerable impact on organizational performance. It is notable that these factors and organizational performance are interconnected variables considered essential for the progression

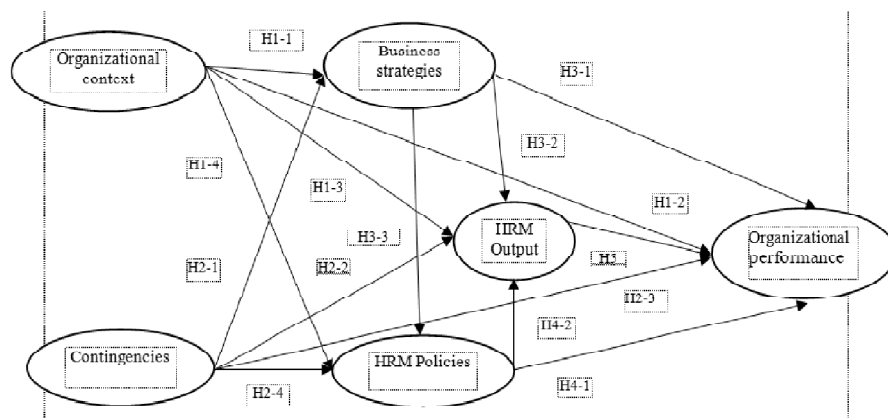


Figure 3: HRM – Performance Linkage Model. Source: (Katou, 2011)

of an organization. It has been established that in a situation where the attitude and behaviour of the employee is not positive, a positive outcome will be beyond reach. An investigation carried out by (Dearden *et al.*, 2006), revealed that well-planned job training serves to prompt an employee towards better productivity. Such a situation will be beneficial for both employee and employer. Katou (2011), recommends an in-depth study on the mediating role of the abovementioned HRM outputs in diverse circumstances and in a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds.

(C) HRM and Organisational Performance Model by Cassoni & Labadie (2013)

(Cassoni & Labadie, 2013), introduced a wide-ranging model in which HRM and organizational performance is directly connected Figure 4. This model entails the separation of HR roles into three groups: HRM calculative practice (founded on skills/experience), HRM collaborative practice (founded on long term goals and objectives) and HRM intermediary practice (founded on referral selection). Their investigations verified a compelling HRM-organizational performance linkage.

HRM calculative practice, HRM collaborative practice and HRM intermediary practice operate in unison to depict the linkage between HRM and organizational performance. HRM is actively involved in the enhancement of organizational performance by ensuring that employees are provided with favourable conditions. In order to cope with the accelerated pace of globalization and technological progression, organizations are compelled to come up with innovative approaches.

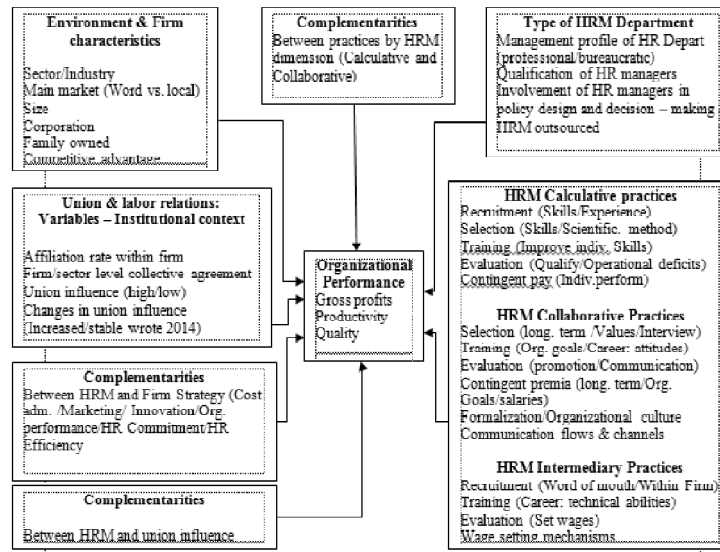


Figure 4: HRM and Organisational Performance Model Source: (Cassoni & Labadie, 2013)

HRM makes certain that employee expertise and know-how are well developed. This will contribute towards the realization of the organization's current and future goals.

(D) The Relationship between Strategic HRM and Organisation Performance Model by Cania (2014)

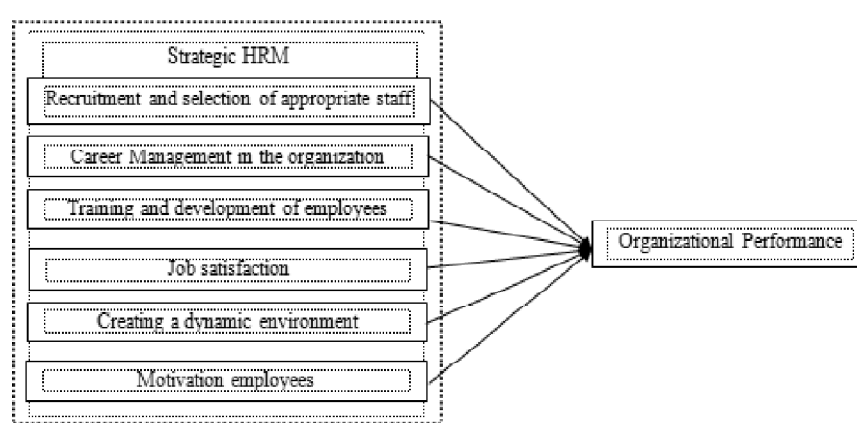


Figure 5: Relationship between Strategic HRM and Organisation Performance Model Source: (Cania, 2014)

Cania (2014), explained the manner in which strategic HRM affects organizational performance Figure 5. In this researcher's opinion, strategic HRM steers the employee's roles and responsibilities in the context of skills (expected to have), attitudes (expected to do), and behaviours (expected to be). HRM ensures sufficient arrangements for employee compensation and benefits. However, the incentive structure of organizations has undergone considerable changes in order to adapt to present-day situations. The employee evaluation exercise is looked upon as a difficult process. As such, organizations need to employ effective strategies and precise instruments to manage a situation in which the workforce is varied. Organizations have to consider that an efficient human resource department can be exceedingly beneficial for both employer and employee. In order to facilitate the adaptation of employee behaviour, it is essential that effective HRM policies be put in place. This is to ensure that employee behaviour is in line with company objectives.

Cania (2014), emphasized on the alliance of HRM and organizational policy. The accelerated pace of changes in this domain calls for more wide-ranging HR policies. These policies should cover the areas of recruitment, career management, training, job satisfaction, the work setting, and employee motivation. It is anticipated that with effective policies in place, organizational performance will be enhanced.

(E) Post-Selection HRM Practices and Organisational Performance model by Dar *et al.* (2014)

In this study (Dar *et al.*, 2014), came up with a HRM model that portrayed the mediating role of employee motivation between HRM and organisational performance Figure 6. They stated that the post selection HRM practice takes into consideration training and development, performance evaluation, career development, as well as extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. It is anticipated that such rewards will encourage employees to improve their performance, and this in turn will improve the performance of the organization.

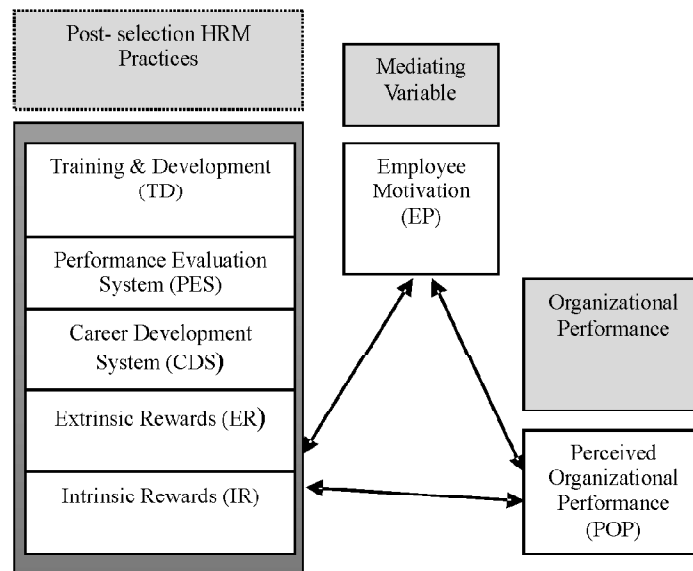


Figure 6: Post-Selection HRM Practices and Organisational Performance Model. Source: (Dar *et al.*, 2014)

Among the responsibilities of the HRM department are the indiscriminate picking and employment of competent personnel to fill vacant positions. This department facilitates the achievement of company objectives through the development of farsightedness, ventures and objectives, as well as the identification of immediate and future targets. It is essential that those directly involved in HRM be proficient at introducing alterations to keep pace with the fast-changing environment. The fashioning of effective HRM strategies will go a long way towards realizing a high-performing workforce. This in turn will lead to an enhancement of the employees' in-role and extra role behaviour.

V. PROPOSE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We employed a hypothetical structure to depict the HRM-organizational performance linkage from the standpoint of the Libyan construction industry. This hypothetical structure portrays a range of linkages among a variety of variables Figure 7.

As displayed in Figure 7, while the dependent variable (HRM) comes with five factors: hiring, firing, payroll, management of people and HR development, the independent variable (organizational performance) comes with four factors: profit-making, current growth technological improvement and competitive advantage. In order to fill the void in the ‘black box’, we included employee skills, employee attitude and employee behaviour as the mediating variables. Employee skills come with five factors: salary and wages, training and development, use of technology, highly skilled environment and mentoring. Employee attitude comes with four factors: good attitude, motivation, career opportunities and social relation. And lastly, employee behaviour comes with five factors: organisational image, organisational vision, superiors, co-workers and conditions of work. The abovementioned variables are based on the hierarchy of needs theory conceived by Maslow (1954). It is our hope that this contribution will enhance the knowledge available regarding the HRM-organizational performance linkage in Libya.

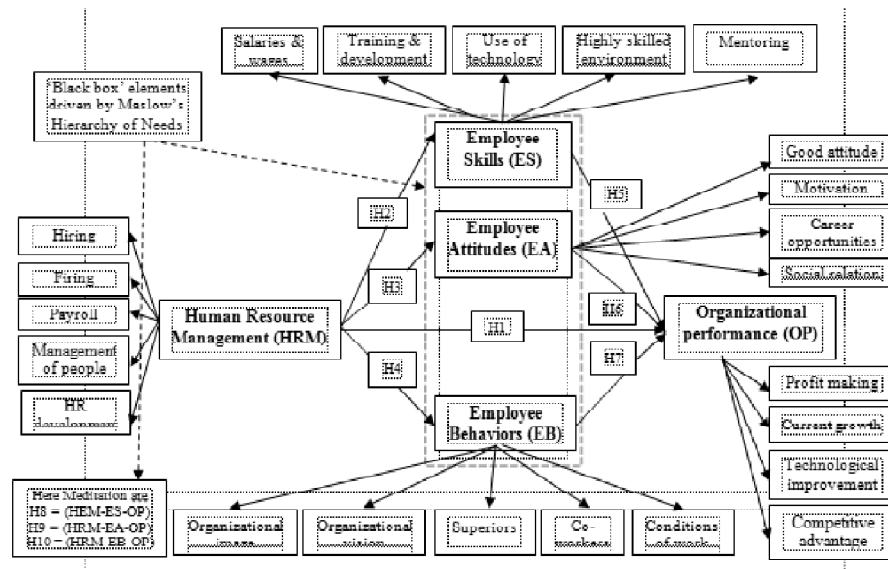


Figure 7: Proposed Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between HRM and Organisational Performance

VI. CONCLUSION

Studies conducted in the past have verified the significance of the linkage between the variables of HRM and organizational performance (Sheehan, 2014 & Silva, 2014). What is more, investigations conducted on the linkage between HRM and employee skills, employee attitude and employee behaviour also revealed that these variables are positively linked (Boxall & Macky, 2014; Raj & Kothai; 2014). We conducted an investigation on the mediating roles of employee skills, employee attitude and employee behaviour between HRM and organizational performance. We are optimistic that the outcomes from this investigation will contribute towards increasing the information available with regards to this subject.

The purpose of this endeavour is to provide Libyan managers in the construction industry with an avenue for improving their performance. Managers equipped with a good understanding of HRM strategies will be successful at administering their human resource for the benefit of the company. They will also be adept at generating and adapting organizational policies for the management of human resource recruitment, employee selection, as well as employee training and development.

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