

The role of organizational commitment in the relationship between human resource management practices and competitive advantage in Jordanian private universities

Hayel Falah Alserhan^a and Mohannad Obeid Al Shbail^{b*}

^aDepartment of Business Administration, Al al-Bayt University, Jordan

^bDepartment of Accounting, Al al-Bayt University, Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Human Resource Management (HRM) has the capacity of influencing the organizational behavior of the employees, thereby ensuring the achievement of the competitive advantage. This study proposes to assess the relationship between human resources (HR) practices and competitive advantage. It is also intended to test organizational commitment as a mediator, between HR practices and competitive advantage among the employees of the private universities in Jordan. The data were gathered from 232 individuals employed at ten private universities located in Jordan. PLS, SEM was performed on the data, using the SmartPLS 3 software. HRM practices result in a statistically significant variation in competitive advantage. Relationship of HRM practices and competitive advantage was partially mediated by organizational commitment. HRM practices resulted in a statistically significant variation in and organizational commitment. Our findings contribute to the existing body of literature of how organizational commitment can mediate the relationships among the HR practices adopted by organizations and competitive advantage. Jordanian private universities should improvise extra attention over HR practices that contribute positively toward the performance of employees.

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1. Introduction

Intellectual capital in light of the competitive economy and the information age is the real capital of organizations as the key factor that plays the main role in the process of innovation, change, creativity, transform knowledge into value and then to a competitive advantage. This means that the center of gravity in the generation of value has shifted from the exploitation of natural (material) resources to the exploitation of intellectual (intangible) assets and from the law of diminishing returns (which applies to material goods) to the law of increasing returns (in terms of knowledge and idea). Based on this resource, the organization can rise to the highest possible performance. Without it, it cannot achieve any goals. It possesses energies and capabilities that other resources do not have. All of this requires appropriate management concerned with human resources and affairs and concerned with their needs and desires. The role of this department lies in creating the appropriate environment, caring for the human element and motivating it to make the greatest possible effort, which leads to improving the performance of the organization through used the policies, technologies, and programs that serve both the organization and the individual (Amos, Pearse, Ristow, & Ristow, 2016). Recently, organizational commitment has received a clear interest in the field of management, because of its relationship with the effectiveness of the organization, and the degree of completion of work. The organizational commitment reflects the individual's direction towards the organization and includes the strong desire to re-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: mohannadobeid87@aabu.edu.jo (M. O. Al Shbail)

main a member. The commitment appears in the worker's effort to make additional efforts at the workplace. Therefore, individuals committed to their organizations are a source of strength to aid their survival and to compete with other organizations (Jafri, 2010).

Hence, the Jordanian universities are witnessing an accelerated quantitative and qualitative development in the field of higher education, as their numbers have increased, the programs and specializations diversified therein, and their educational techniques and patterns have developed, and it is one of the most important institutions of intellectual capital and responsible for producing knowledge through scientific research, and transferring knowledge through the most important functions of universities, which is teaching, then working to spread and market them through the third function of the university, which is to serve society and develop the environment.

The universities are among the organizations that their success depends on providing qualified human cadres and a trainer that can work on the special market based on what this type of organization is witnessing today from intense competition, with instances of it characterized by its dependence on international quality standards and advanced technology in its various activities. Despite all these, the Jordanian universities face several challenges that hinder the investment of intellectual capital; therefore there is a lack of the ability to possess competitive advantages between other universities and therefore it is necessary to make sure of the availability of competencies to advance the burdens of building the educational sector and the kind of workers in these universities, the qualifications of workers that qualify them to work in these universities and achieve a competitive advantage.

Allui and Sahni (2016) emphasize that the developments in the world in the fields of globalization, international competition, innovation and technology have shown the importance of human resources management to achieve competitive advantage, considering that human capital is the most prominent and is the only one achieving this sustainable competitive advantage. For any organization in that changing world than ever before, given that human capital is more important than new technologies or financial and material resources, the result of the changing nature of the work environment - especially technological and organizational developments, and competitiveness - means the enduring pursuit of organizations to attract retention and the provision of qualified personnel adequately for the labor market, and therefore has become a strategic human resource management and talent management concepts increasingly important; because in knowledge-based economies in the twenty one century, the focus is on workers who prepare a key element to achieve competitive advantage.

Most universities now operate in a complex, dynamic and highly competitive global environment, in addition to the presence of those trends in globalization, increasing academic mobility, and interest in academic talents in many disciplines, and administrative talents. The universities face special challenges in the presence of many changes in human resource management strategies such as the individual performance systems of employees; thus universities must move to a more professional approach to employee management so that it is more objective, fair and transparent to evaluate performance, and focuses on the employment of talent, and the use of performance indicators that provide for university chiefs, and human resources managers the opportunity to choose the talented employees of their institutions (Brink, Fruytier and Thunnissen 2013, P.181).

Through this, the role of universities emerges in how to select, train, and motivate employees and the impact on their commitment. It is well known that each university has goals to achieve through a set of work practiced by its workers who possess certain qualifications and capabilities. By exerting their efforts to achieve the goals of the university, and in return, they get many benefits that satisfy their needs. Therefore, the relationship between workers and the university is an integration relationship. It has the appropriate organizational climate and contributed to satisfying its various needs.

In this research, we will identify the importance of the practices carried out by human resources management, which guarantees Jordanian educational institutions the effective management of their human resources, and the effect of this on achieving a competitive advantage for this type of institution through their organizational commitment, and activating their role in the national economy. We will clarify the role that human resources management practices can play in Jordanian universities in dealing with their human resources in a way that makes such universities seek to exploit their energies and capabilities to achieve the goals of these universities.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

Human Resources Management is the primary and main element in organizing the relationship between the organization and the employees, through its continuous pursuit of the goals of the organization, by creating and building an effective workforce that can achieve these goals, which requires setting a clear plan for effective practices shared by the human resources management with management of high level (Salau, Oludayo, & Oni-Ojo, 2015).

When talking about individuals, we mean that the human elements are available to the organization, which refers to all workers in the organization regardless of the nature of their work, whether they are permanent or temporary workers, and whatever their job position is, whether they are heads or subordinates. From here, individuals in organizations are seen as their most important resource so that the efficiency and effectiveness of these organizations depend on the efficiency of this element, to the point that many experts and practitioners in the field of management feel that achieving a competitive advantage in the modern organizations, is not based on their possession of natural, financial or technological resources only but, it is based primarily on its ability to provide special types of individuals that enable it to maximize the benefit from the rest of the available resources (Dessler & Varkey, 2005).

Due to the fact that humans are different and each of them possesses special capabilities and characteristics that distinguish it from others, therefore individual differences are the most responsible for making the differences in the competitiveness of the organization since individual differences are responsible for the differences in the best practices that are applied, Due to the fact that the best practices are the primary engine of competition and an essential reason for the difference among organizations. Also, it is the only thing that cannot be imitated and easily copied by competitors. Hence, the role of human resources in carrying out its duties fully through serious and strategic practices far from routine and imitation (Ungan, 2002).

Some researchers pointed out that human resource practices are those that can be described as a set of activities that would put human resource strategies into practice, and that their goal is to improve performance, enhance human resource capabilities and skills and thus achieve the strategic goals of the organization (David & Blandine, 2009). There are some researchers identify these practices as human resource planning, work analysis and design, employment, training and development, compensation, and performance evaluation. Also, there are some researchers believe that it is limited to planning and functional analysis, employment, training, performance evaluation, and compensation (Fota & Al-Qutb, 2013).

Despite this disparity and disagreement about what the practices of human resources management are, but it constitutes with each other an integrated and interactive system, indicating the existence of exchange and complementary relations among it, and that the decisions taken in the field of each practice complement each other, all of which work towards achieving a goal of Human Resource Management: It is to provide an environment, a qualified workforce, trained, and stimulating, with a high level of productivity and organizational effectiveness, and able to achieve and implement the organization's strategy. The most important of these practices that this study adopts are as follows:

HR planning

It is the set of integrated policies related to employment or employees, which aims to identify and provide the numbers and types of human resources required to perform certain actions at specific times and at an appropriate work cost, taking into account the productive goals of the organization and the factors affecting the organization (Anthony & Perrewe, 2009). It refers to procedures and practices that indicate proficiency in selecting and benefiting from employees in order to achieve the goals of the university in light of the specified costs.

Recruitment

Recruitment is defined as a process concerned with searching, selecting, and soliciting distinguished individuals to fill vacancies in the job, attracting a sufficient group of them, and selecting the best among them to form the bases from which the institution's administrative and executive structure is made (Wouter Jan Van Muiswinkel, 2013). It refers to the process of selecting individuals who have the necessary and appropriate qualifications to occupy certain positions at the university, which makes them competitive.

Training

Training is defined as "the continuous activity to provide workers with the skills, experience, and behaviors that enable them to perform their work efficiently and effectively to serve the goals of the organization" (Novkowska, 2013). Training is what organized, planned, and purposeful process through which the performance of human resources increases, which is reflected in the development and improvement of university outcomes and it enables them to achieve a competitive advantage.

Performance evaluation

It is studying and analyzes the performance of workers in their work and observing their behavior during work, in order to judge the extent of their success and the level of their competence in carrying out their current work. Also, judge the possibilities of growth and progress for the employee in the future and bear greater responsibilities or promotion to another job. In this study, we will address performance evaluation in that it refers to determining the efficiency of workers and the extent of their contribution to the accomplishment of the work assigned to them, as well as judging their behavior during work and the extent of progress they make during their work and at all levels of the university starting from the senior management (Chancellor's) and ending with workers in the small departments.

Several studies have examined the impact of human resources practices and strategies on organizations, and the factors influence those organizations' achievement of competitive advantage, but these studies have not addressed a very important topic, which is the role of organizational commitment to workers as a mediating variable in achieving this advantage in private Jordanian universities, which leads to enhancing the ability of these universities to survive and continue in light of the extreme competition that this sector faces. One of these studies, Al-qadi (2012) addressed the impact the practices of human resources on performance, which aimed to identify the impact of strategic practices of human resources management on the performance of private universities in Jordan, and the study concluded that the workers are not given an opportunity to participate in decision-making, the compensation system does not match the expectations of workers in private universities in Jordan, as well as workers do not participate in the recruitment practice and appointment with the manager of human resources. The Fayoumi study (2010) aimed to reveal the impact of intangible assets (human capital, organizational capital, and information capital) in achieving a competitive advantage in light of adopting total quality management standards in Jordanian public and

private universities. The study found that there is a significant impact of the standards of total quality management on achieving the competitive advantage in public and private universities, and the significant impact of intangible assets on achieving excellence based on adopting the standards of total quality management in public and private universities.

Al-Shammari (2014) revealed the degree of availability of intellectual money and its relationship to the degree of achieving a competitive advantage in Kuwaiti private universities based on the faculty member's viewpoint. The results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the degree of availability of intellectual capital in the areas of capital the human, the customer capital, the operational capital, and the degree of achieving a competitive advantage in Kuwaiti private universities. Also, the results showed that the degree of achieving a competitive advantage in Kuwaiti private universities from the viewpoint of the faculty member's was medium.

Essanya (2015) investigated the competitive strategies at the Nairobi Aviation College, used a case study method to obtain qualitative and quantitative data for the study. The study indicated that Nairobi College adopted all competitiveness strategies including cost management, service differentiation, expansion, and marketing. Al-Saleh (2012) aimed to identify concepts, areas, and strategies for building competitive advantage in Saudi public universities, and to know the most important requirements of each field. The study concluded that council members are aware of the concept of competitive advantage at a very high level. Also, he found that the most important areas for building competitive advantage in universities are scientific research, education, technology, and knowledge production. We noted, through a review of previous studies that dealt with the importance and impact of human resources, intellectual and human capital on universities, and the competitive advantage and its causes. Based on the results of those studies we find that it is necessary for any university to make these practices a reality managed intelligently for the purpose of increasing human resource productivity and improving the quality of outputs. It is natural to point out that the various aspects of adopts these practices, such as selection, training, promotion, transfer, incentive systems, and performance evaluation should be carried out in an effective manner that makes these practices able to make full use of resources. As it is the true wealth of it, because material assets erode over time and their market value decreases, while intellectual assets are the only basis for building and developing competitive capabilities and adding value to the university and achieving its competitive balance.

Regarding the organizational commitment of workers, it plays an important role in achieving the competitive advantage, many studies have indicated that, including a study, Al-Khushroom (2011) aimed to identify the level of organizational commitment for workers in technical institutes of the University of Aleppo, and to determine the impact of service climate change on the organizational commitment of workers, as well as to test the impact of job satisfaction as a mediator variable in the relationship between the service climate and organizational commitment. The study has found that the level of organizational commitment of employees was high, and job satisfaction as a mediator variable affected significantly in the relationship between the service climate and organizational commitment. Depending on the results of previous studies, the study hypotheses can be formulated as follows

The first main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of human resource management practices on the competitive advantage in Jordanian private universities.

The second main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of human resource management practices in organizational commitment in Jordanian private universities.

The third main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of the organizational commitment in the competitive advantage in Jordanian private universities.

The fourth main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between human resource management practices and the competitive advantage in private Jordanian universities.

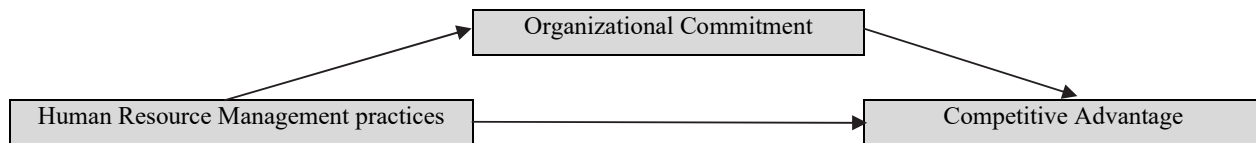


Fig. 1. research model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Respondents

The study population consisted of all 22 private universities in Jordan, according to the statistics of the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education 2019. The study sample included (10) universities distributed in Amman, Irbid, Jerash, Zarqa, and Al-Balqa. As shown in Table 1.

3.2 Measuring Instrument

The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data. It was designed and developed specifically based on the objectives of this study which aims of measuring the impact of human resource management practices on the competitive advantage through organizational commitment as a mediator variable in Jordanian private universities. The questionnaire was designed based on study literature and previous studies. The questionnaire divided into four sections as follows:

Demographic data: It is the personal data of the respondent (gender, age, educational qualification, job grade, years of experience).

Human resource management practices: this research adopts HRM practices such as human resource planning, human resource recruitment, human resources training, and evaluation of human resource performance. Human resources planning measured based on the scale of Guest and Conway (2011). Attracting human resources was measured based on the Mahmood, Iqbal, and Sahu (2014) scale. Human resources training was measured based on a scale of Asad and Mahfod (2015). The evaluation of human resource performance measured based on the Salau et al. (2015) scale.

Competitive Advantage: this construct was measured based on the Gituku and Kagiri (2015) scale.

Organizational commitment: this research developed this section based on the Antony (2013) scale.

The answer was limited to five points, the questionnaire was used according to the Likert five-point scale, ranging from strongly agree (5), and I agree (4), I agree with an average degree (3), disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1).

3.3 Analytical method

To address the data collected according to the purposes of the study, and based on the measurement of variables, the following statistical methods were used:

- Descriptive analysis.
- Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) paired with Partial Least Squares (PLS).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive analysis

Based on the Table 1, we find that the largest percentage of the members of the study sample were males, where they reached (85.3%) of the sample and the percentage of females (14.6%) of the study sample. This result can be explained by the fact that males tend to complete their higher studies are more than women, as well as for female marriage, often after the end of the first university degree. As for the variable of age, it indicates that the largest percentage of the members of the study sample was for the category of (40- less than 50) years, where their percentage (46.55%) of the sample. The explanation is that the study period until obtaining the doctorate is long and until he gets the job, he needs some time. In addition to the universities requiring the experience before employment which this explains the high percentage. As for the age group less than (30) it reached only (5.17%) of the study sample, which is a low percentage where it is still In the postgraduate stage, as well as the requirement of work experience, it makes the number of this group a few, and as a result of the high costs of studying, it makes the youth group delay in thinking about completing their postgraduate studies. With regard to the educational qualification, we note that the largest percentage of the study sample was for those who have a PhD degree, as they reached 88.79%. Also, the lowest percentage was for those who have a bachelor’s degree, where they reached (4.31%) of the study sample. This result can be explained by the fact that the nature of work in these universities requires the presence of PhD holders, while the first university degree is limited to the need for it in some few administrative works. It is also noted that the job title of department manager reached (46.98%), and this is a result of the nature of the organizational structure of universities in a large way.

Table 1
The study sample descriptive

University name	vice-chancellor	Dean	Unit manager	Department manager	Total
Al-Ahliyya Amman University	1	10	5	14	30
University of Applied Sciences	1	9	3	11	24
Isra University	1	12	4	13	30
Middle East University	-	10	4	11	25
University of Philadelphia	1	11	2	12	26
Zarqa Private University	1	8	3	13	25
Irbid National University	-	7	2	11	20
Wall University	1	12	3	13	29
Jerash University	-	10	2	11	23
Total	6	89	28	109	232

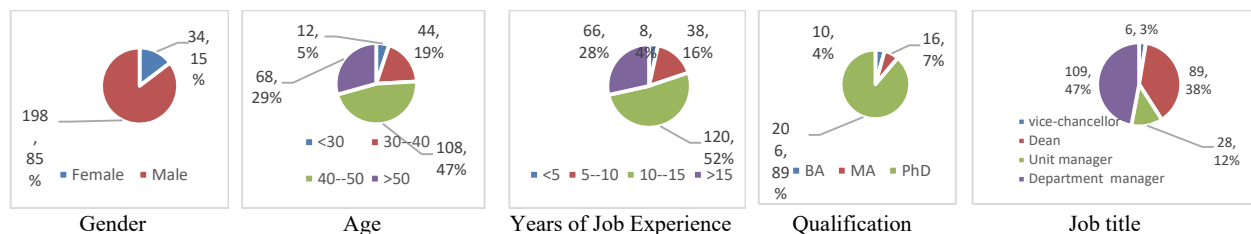


Fig. 2. Demographic data for respondents

The present study exposed the gathered data to statistical analysis, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) paired with Partial Least Squares (PLS). More importantly, PLS-SEM appeared to be the most suitable for an exploratory study, modeling reflective and formative constructs alike (Hair Jr et al., 2017). PLS-SEM is also known for its flexibility with both theory and practice (Richter et al., 2016) and therefore, to make sure that data fit was established with proposed theory, the researcher conducted a thorough evaluation of the measurement models as suggested by Alfoqahaa (2013), Barclay, Higgings, and Thompson (1995), Chin (1998), and Compeau, Higgins, and Huff (1999). More specifically, this study employed a bootstrapping procedure, with 5000 sub-samples to confirm the statistical significance of path coefficients in the model following Al-Shbiel et al. (2018) and Hernández-Perlines, Moreno-García, and Yañez-Araque (2016).

The study also analyzed the obtained data using PLS to confirm the research model's nomological validity and this involved a two-step analytical method. In the first step, the study evaluated the measurement model to confirm its measures validity and reliability and in the second one, the study evaluated the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables in light of their strength and direction. The entire scales psychometric properties in the structural model were assessed, using discriminant validity and reliability tests.

4.2 Measurement model

This study ensured that the internal consistency of the constructs were established by using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indicators, which based on the rule of thumb provided by Hair Jr et al. (2017) should lie between 0.7 and 0.9. As for convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) values have to reach at least 0.50 to indicate that the construct explains 50% of the variance of its respective indicators.

Table 2
Measurement model

Construct	Items	Loadings	C. Alpha	CR	AVE
Human resource management practices	HRMP-1	0.726	0.920	0.922	0.605
	HRMP-2	0.794			
	HRMP-3	0.787			
	HRMP-4	0.791			
	HRMP-5	0.810			
	HRMP-6	0.808			
	HRMP-7	0.743			
	HRMP-8	0.724			
	HRMP-9	0.759			
	HRMP-10	0.818			
	HRMP-11	0.765			
	HRMP-12	0.773			
	HRMP-13	0.736			
	HRMP-14	0.756			
	HRMP-15	0.836			
	HRMP-16	0.814			
	HRMP-17	0.728			
	HRMP-18	0.729			
	HRMP-19	0.807			
	HRMP-20	0.822			
	HRMP-21	0.741			
	HRMP-22	0.835			
	HRMP-23	0.765			
Organizational commitment	OC-1	0.842	0.944	0.947	0.699
	OC-2	0.803			
	OC-3	0.781			
	OC-4	0.753			
	OC-5	0.762			
	OC-6	0.737			
	OC-7	0.896			
	OC-8	0.865			
	OC-9	0.887			
	OC-10	0.911			
	OC-11	0.858			
	OC-12	0.896			
	OC-13	0.829			
	OC-14	0.893			
	OC-15	0.836			
	OC-16	0.824			
	OC-17	0.830			
	OC-18	0.819			
Competitive advantage	CA-1	0.855	0.931	0.935	0.681
	CA-2	0.780			
	CA-3	0.899			
	CA-4	0.874			
	CA-5	0.856			
	CA-6	0.826			
	CA-7	0.759			
	CA-8	0.775			
	CA-9	0.768			
	CA-10	0.813			
	CA-11	0.779			
	CA-12	0.891			
	CA-13	0.837			

The measurement items factor loadings, according to Hair et al. (2017) should exceed 0.70. Table 1 tabulates the Cronbach's alpha values, composite reliability values and the factor loadings and AVE values and they all met the threshold criteria. With regards to discriminant validity, it refers to the level to which the measures of the constructs are dissimilar from each other, and for this validity, the study used the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations method as well as Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion. The latter assumes that a construct with enough level of discriminant validity should share higher variance with its indicators compared to other model constructs. Stated clearly, the AVE square should be higher compared to the values of its correlations with other model constructs (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Meanwhile, HTMT indicates the average of the Heterotrait-Hetero method correlations, which are the correlations of the indicators throughout constructs that measure various phenomena in relation to the average of Monotrait-Hetero method correlations, which are the correlations of the indicators of a single construct. In this regard, the value of HTMT should be lower than one, with the ideal being <0.85, for the distinction between two factors (Al Shbail, Salleh, & Mohd Nor, 2018; M. O. Al Shbail, Salleh, & Nor, 2018; Henseler, Hubona, & Ray Pauline, 2016; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). In this study, the variables met the criterion put forth by Fornell-Larcker as well as those of HTMT. Each AVE square root is higher than the correlations among the constructs with reflective items, while the HTMT ratios for a pair are <0.85 as presented in Table 3. Therefore, the entire constructs are independent of each other and the results established and confirmed discriminant validity.

Table 2

Discriminant validity

Fornell-Larcker criterion			
	1	2	3
Competitive advantage	0.825		
Human resource management practices	0.501	0.778	
Organizational commitment	0.578	0.419	0.836
HTMT criterion			
	1	2	3
Competitive advantage			
Human resource management practices	0.493		
Organizational commitment	0.576	0.406	

4.3 Structural model

Before the hypothesized relationships were tested, the study initiated the inner model assessment by obtaining the predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). In particular, the blindfolding procedure, coupled with cross-validated redundancy is generally used to illustrate that each Q^2 value is higher than 0. Used in this study, the results showed that the Q^2 values of the constructs are as follows; for organizational commitment it was 0.107 and for competitive advantage, it was 0.251. Moving on to Cohen's effect size f^2 (Cohen, 1988) the entire values tabulated in Table 3 for significant paths were higher than the recommended value. Meanwhile, the SRMR of the model was 0.067, which is lower than the 0.08 value (Henseler et al., 2016). Furthermore, the model's NFI value was deemed to be acceptable at 0.91 (NFI>0.90) as recommended by Henseler et al. (2016) and presented in Table 3.

Following Hair et al.'s (2017) suggestion, the study made use of bootstrapping procedure to confirm the significant levels of the path coefficients, with 5000 bootstrap samples and 207 cases, and no changes in sign. Table 4 tabulates the values of path coefficients, t-statistics, significance level, p-values and bootstrap confidence intervals at the rate of 95%. From the results, HRMP had a positive and significant influence on both organizational and competitive advantage ($\beta=0.419$; 0.314, $p<0.05$ respectively). In addition, organizational commitment had a positive influence on competitive advantage ($\beta=0.446$, $p<0.001$) (refer to Fig. 3), and the model succeeded in explaining 17.6% of organizational commitment and 41.5% of competitive advantage.

Table 4

Structural model results

Constructs	R ²	Adj.R ²	f^2	Q ²	SRMR	NFI
Human resource management practices	-	-	0.213-0.139	-	-	-
Organizational commitment	0.176	0.165	0.280	0.107	-	-
Competitive advantage	0.415	0.400	-	0.251	0.067	0.908

Table 5

Assessment of path coefficients (direct relationship)

Structural path	Path coefficient and (T-Statistics)	Percentile 95% confidence intervals		P-Values	Conclusion
		95% LL	95% UL		
H1: HRMP→OC	0.419 (4.504)	(0.245 ; 0.602)	Sig	0.000	Supported
H2: HRMP→CA	0.314 (3.096)	(0.085 ; 0.492)	Sig	0.002	Supported
H3: OC→CA	0.446 (3.667)	(0.203 ; 0.679)	Sig	0.000	Supported

Note: HRMP = Human resource management practices, OC = Organizational commitment, CA = Competitive advantage.

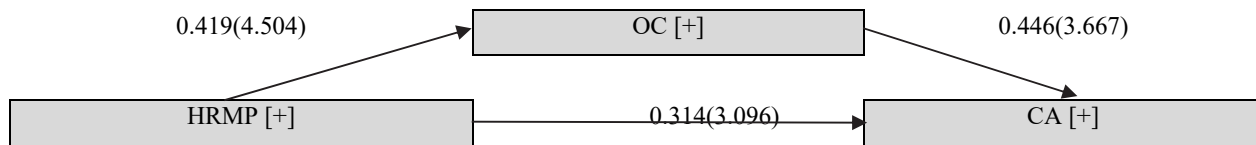


Fig. 3. Proposed model coefficient paths

The next step involved the assessment of the indirect effect significance, and this called for the use of SEM's assessment of the proposed model, enabling the evaluation of the model's variables relationships and the testing of the proposed hypotheses. The assessment of the mediating role of organizational commitment was carried out using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method as it has been extensively utilized recently in empirical studies and guidelines established in PLS studies (e.g., Hair et al., 2017; Nitzl, Roldan & Cepeda, 2016).

The method involved including the mediating variable (organizational commitment) in the model after which computations were made. Based on the results, HRMP had a positive and significant influence on organizational commitment ($\beta=0.419$ and $t\text{-value}=4.504$) and on competitive advantage ($\beta=0.446$ and $t\text{-value}=3.667$), supporting hypotheses H1 and H3 respectively. As for the indirect effect, it was found to be positive and significant [$0.419 \times 0.446 = 0.187$ and $t\text{-value}=2.565$; $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, based on $t(4999)$, one tailed test], supporting hypothesis H4. The significance valuation was conducted using confidence intervals (CI) and for the result to be significant, the value of 0 should not be present (refer to Table 5). The results also indicated a positive and significant direct influence of HRMP on competitive advantage ($\beta=0.314$ and $t\text{-value}=3.096$), supporting hypothesis H2. After the inclusion of organizational commitment in the model as the mediating variable, the path coefficient between HRMP and competitive advantage decreased, indicating that organizational commitment acquires part of the HRMP effect on competitive advantage (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, the VAF value is calculated by dividing the indirect effect 0.187 by the total effect 0.501 equating to 0.373 (37.3%), which falls between 20-80%. This shows that the mediating effect was partial according to Hair et al. (2017).

Table 6

Mediating effects test

Hypothesis	β . (a*b)	Total effect	Percentile 95% CI		VAF ^a	Conclusion
			95% LL	95% UL		
HRMP→OC→CA	0.187*	0.501	(0.076 ; 0.348)		37.3%	Partial mediation

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ^aVAF=Variance accounted for, HRMP = Human resource management practices, OC = Organizational commitment, CA = Competitive advantage.

5. Conclusions

Employees with organizational commitment will be able to contribute to enhancing competitive advantage. Jordanian universities must be able to enhance their competitive advantage through the strengthening of human resource management based on their organizational commitment. Superiors must be supportive of the employees and work together to meet organizational goals and objectives. Employees and managers must have good cooperative skills and work in the field as a team to overcome the problems and increase commitment. Compatibility between human resource management practices is very important to increase the commitment of employees. Managers must understand and support the commitment for successful strategic implementation and they must insist that careful attention is paid to the organizational commitment of first-rate priority of the organization strategy. They personally must be able to lead the process of implementation and execution of human resource management practices. Developing strategic objectives, linking the motivation and reward structure directly to achieve the result, and initializing policies and procedures for proper implementation of strategies are crucial for the organization.

Findings indicated that since human resource management practices are a strong factor for organizational commitment, there is a need to give attention to the benefits of human resource management practices, and evaluation of human resource management practices in the organization. Since the research was analyzed based on the perception of low and middle-level managers who are also part of employees in the organization, top management must share experience and knowledge with its subordinates to improve the commitment and competitive advantage.

The main implication for managers is that human resource management practices must be in line to increase the commitment of employees. From the validation of the framework, it is obvious to make sure that the human resource management practices are following increasing competitive advantage along with the organizational objectives. Thus, operating in a stable and dynamic environment, managers and employees need to work as a team to develop new knowledge for sustainable competitive advantage. At an organizational level, the managers must understand different practices favoring both the firm and the employees. Thus, efforts should be undertaken with more case studies linking the relationship between managers and employees toward the importance of human resource management practices for commitment in the higher education sector. In future research, thus instead of limiting the survey to top-level management, it is suggested to focus on the opinion from employees throughout the higher education domains and perform a comparison of the results.

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