

**Using the Human Resource Management Practices to Achieve a Competitive Advantage*****Using the Human Resource Management Practices to  
Achieve a Competitive Advantage******Dr BOUGUESRI Sarra******University of Chlef*****Abstract :**

As the world is becoming more competitive and unstable than ever before, manufacturing-based industries are seeking to gain competitive advantage at all cost and are turning to more innovative sources through HRM practices. The aim of this research study was to examine the role of using HRM practices in achieving comparative advantage in Algerian companies , through a sampling of 70 employees from these companies .The statistical results showed that there is a positive role of human resources management practices and competitive advantage which means that there is a great awareness of the Algerian manager about the importance of human resources management practices to achieve the competitive advantage .

**Key words :** human resources management practices- competitive advantage – Algerian companies .

**Introduction :**

The global market is shifting from the industry era to the knowledge era when it is moving towards knowledge and technological innovation, seeking methods to boost competitive advantage (Roos et al., 1997). Which has led to an increasing interest of firms to seek for newer sources of competitive advantage, one of the most important being human resource management (HRM).( Oya Erdil & Aye Günsel, 2007) . HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic development of a highly committed and capable workforce.( Nibedita Saha, Aleš Gregar ,2012) In the last two decades, several researches began interest to the management of people and significant attention has been directed towards HRM practices.( Harris, L. C. and Ogbonna, E, 2001 ; Oya Erdil & Aye Günsel, 2007).

According to researchers agreed that a company can achieve a competitive advantage and reach its goals by adopting an efficient usage of its personnel(Mourad Mansour),in this research the role of four groups of HR practices to achieve competitive advantage are used to show their role to achieve the competitive advantage . The bundle of HR practices is: recruitment , training , compensation and benefits and appraisal performance .( Oya Erdil & Aye Günsel, 2007) .We will discuss human resource within the criteria of a competitive advantage . The major purpose of this research study was to explore the best HRM practices in Algerian companies, as well as to examine the role of using HRM practices in achieving comparative advantage.

**2, Literature review :**

**2.1 Human resource (HR) as firm resource :** Before talking about the meaning of human resources management , it is useful to clarify the concept of human resource .Patrick .M et al (2000) define human resources as the pool of human capital under the firm's control in a direct employment relationship .This leads to recognizing two aspects of human resources : **first** , similar to Flamholtz and Lacey (1981) and McKelvey (1983) ,here we talk about the know ledges, skills and abilities inherent in the individuals that make up the organization . Flamholtz and Lacey in there theories focus directly to the skills of the human resource , and McKelvey focuses to competencies' human capital , which are found in the model of KSA(knowledge ,skills and abilities ).Both of these theories recognize the importance of companies' membership as a resource of the company.

**Second,** if the company don't utilize the behaviour's employee, it can't create value from the characteristics of human resource .Many researchers have focused on employee behavior , rather

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than on employee skills as mediator in the relationship between a firm's strategy and performance . (Patrick .M et al,2000) .

Moreover , according to the theory of Resource Based View we are shifting from an organizational product perspective to a resource perspective to better explain strategic management of business. (Oya Erdil & Ayşe Günsel,2007).This approach propose that the sustained competitive advantage exists only when other firms are incapable of duplicating the benefits of a competitive advantage (Lippman and Rumelt ,1982 ; Patrick .M et al ,2000) . Thus , a competitive advantage is not sustained until all efforts by competitors to duplicate the advantage have ceased. Therefore ,four criteria must be attributable to the resource in order for it to provide a sustained capital advantage (Barney , 1991 ; Patrick .M et al,2000):

- 1- The resource must add positive value to the firm .
- 2- The resource must be unique or rare among current and potential competitors .
- 3- The resource must be imperfectly imitable .
- 4- The resource can't be substituted with another resource by competing firms

So ,the main resource that helps the company to achieve these characteristics is the human resources .

### 2.2 Human resource management ( HRM) :

Many researchers define HRM in different way Beer et al, (1984) defined HRM as a tool that relates the decision making of the company by the different practices of the human resources which affects the relationship between the company and employees.( Sola Fajana et al ,2011)

HRM is thought to be a collection of internally steady strategies and practices intended and executed to guarantee that a firm's human capital contributes to the accomplishment of its business objectives (Delery & Doty, 1996 ; Sanad A. Alajmi & Meshref A. Alenezi,2016).

Human Resource Management is a process, which consists of four main activities, namely, acquisition, development, motivation, as well as maintenance of human resources. According to Edwin B. Flippo, —Human resource management is the planning, organising, directing and controlling of the procurement, development, resources to the end that individual and societal objectives are accomplished□. This definition reveals that human resource (HR) management is that aspect of management, which deals with the planning, organising, directing and controlling the personnel functions of the enterprise.HRM is defined as a system of activities and strategies that focus on managing employees at all levels of an organization to achieve the goals of the company . ( Byars L & Rue.L, 2006) . Armstrong (1999) says that HRM 'is concerned with the employment, development and reward of people in organisations and the conduct of relationships between management and the workforce.

Zehra Alakoç Burma ( 2014) defines human resource management is defined as a strategic and coherent approach for the organization's most valued assets behind on the workers, there is no upon description of it. Furthermore according to Coro Strandberg (2009) HRM is an organizational function that deals with recruiting ,managing , developing and motivating people , including providing functional support and systems for employee engagement .

Human Resource Management is a planned approach to managing people effectively for performance. It aims to establish a more open, flexible and caring management style so that staff will be motivated, developed and managed in a way that they can and will give of their best to support departments' missions.( Michael C. C. SZE, 1995)

HRM is an important tool that includes: planning , directing , development and proper utilization of human resources; build public relationship; classify jobs and prepare wage and salary scales; deal with disciplinary problems; negotiate with labor unions and service union

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contracts; develop safety standards and practices; manage benefit programs, such as group insurance, health, and retirement plans; provide periodic reviews of the performance of each individual employee; and finally recognition of employees strengths and their needs for further development.( N. Saha,2012 ; Nibedita Saha & Aleš Gregar ,2012)

As whole . we can say that HRM is process to achieve the company' goals through different practices : recruiting , training, motivating and evaluating the performance of employees .

### 2.3 Human resources management practices :

The HRM practices is defined by the researchers in different forms : Schuler and Jackson (1987) defined HRM practices as a system that attracts, develops, motivates, and retains employees to ensure the effective implementation and the survival of the organization and its members.( Sanad A. Alajmi & Meshref A. Alenezi,2016). HRM practices is also conceptualized as a set of internally consistent policies and practices designed and implemented to ensure that a firm's human capital contribute to the achievement of its business objectives (Delery & Doty, 1996). Likewise, Minbaeva (2005) viewed HRM practices a set of practices used by organization to manage human resources through facilitating the development of competencies that are firm specific, produce complex social relation and generate organization knowledge to sustain competitive advantage.( Cheng Ling Tan and Aizzat Mohd Nasuridin, 2011)

Pfeffer (1998) has proposed seven HRM practices that are expected to enhance organizational performance (Erdil & Günsel ,2007):

- 1) Employment security,
- 2) Selective hiring of new personnel,
- 3) Self-managed teams and decentralization of decision making as the basic principles of organization al design,
- 4) Comparatively high compensation contingent on organizational performance,
- 5) Extensive training,
- 6) Reduced status distinctions and barriers, including dress, language, office arrangements, and wage differences across levels,
- 7) Extensive sharing of financial and performance information throughout the organization.

But Enz and Signaw (2000) classify five HR best practices which are :

- 1) leader development, 2) training and knowledge building, 3) employee empowerment, 4) employee recognition 5) cost management.( Erdil & Günsel ,2007).

HRM practices such as, training and development, performance appraisal encourage the employees to work better.( Hassan.S, 2016) ,in our research we will study the five HRM practices as follows :

#### 2.3.1 Recruitment :

Recruitment is the process of searching the candidates for employment and stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organisation.( B. Renuka Dev & P. Vijaya Banu , 2014)

It is the process that make the company able to find, attract and keep the best people on the market.( Bizagi, 2014). Recruitment can usefully be defined as "those practices and activities carried out by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees" (Barber 1998; MARC ORLITZKY et al )

#### 2.3.2 Training :

Training has been defined in various ways, including the following : Training is characterised as an instructor-led, content-based intervention leading to desired changes in behaviour'(Sloman, 2005;

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Mousa Masadeh). It is a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behaviour through a learning experience to achieve effective performance in any activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy current and future manpower needs of the organisation' (Manpower Services Commission (MSC), U.K., 1981; Mousa Masadeh) .

Training is a process of organizational improvement that attempts to make beneficial changes through modifying employee's skills and attitudes which refers to activities ranging from the acquisition of simpler motor skills to the development and change of complex socio emotional attitudes. (Bass & Vaughan, 1966 ; Usha Valli Somasundaram & Toby Marshall Egan, 2014)

Training and development is defined as a process of systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise in people for the purpose of improving performance. ( Swanson & Holton, 2001 ; Usha Valli Somasundaram & Toby Marshall Egan, 2014) .

### 2.3. 3 Compensation and Benefits:

Bratton and Gold (2007) state that reward refers to 'all of the monetary, non-monetary and psychological payments that an organization provides for its employees in exchange for the work they perform. ( Mourad Mansour)

Compensation" refers to money received for work, such as wages, salaries and tips. Some types of compensation depend on the employee's work performance while other compensation is a flat rate Jobs that require an advanced skill set or a college degree often have higher compensation than jobs that require little or no skills and education.. Compensation programs need to seem fair to employees. Workers in the same position should receive similar pay. The formula for salaries and wages should be uncomplicated. Most employees are paid by the hour, by the piece of work or on a weekly, biweekly or monthly schedule. . ( Martin Doornhein, Linda Evertsen, 2014)

"Benefits are the additional non-cash items or service that nonetheless have financial value and therefore are sometimes referred to as indirect pay. Examples include pension contributions, health insurance, crèche facilities, subsidized meals, company housing or paying for relocation. ( Martin Doornhein, Linda Evertsen, 2014)

Researchers state that the reward strategy is used by the companies to increase employee's satisfaction , then realize the effectiveness of the company .

### 2.3.4 Performance appraisal:

Performance appraisal is a formal system of review and evaluation of individual or team task performance. A critical point in the definition is the word formal, because in actuality, managers should be reviewing an individual's performance on a continuing basis. According to Nathalie Abi Saleh Dargham (2008) performance appraisal refers to the process by which an individual's work performance is assessed. It is the formal process of observing and evaluating an employee's performance (Erdogan, 2002; Nathalie Abi Saleh Dargham 2008). Kenneth Chukwuba defines performance appraisal as a process of determining how well employees do their jobs compared with a set of standards and communicating that information to those employees.

## 3. Competitive advantage :

3.1 **Definition** : Competition is at the core of the success or failure of firms. Competition determines the appropriateness of a firm's activities that can contribute to its performance ,such as innovations, a cohesive culture , or good implementation .Competitive strategy aims to establish a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition .(Porter M , 1998) . Competitive advantage is unique position against for an organization's rivals with the efficient use of resources, it is caused most widely.( Shahmansouri S et als ,2013) . Porter (1985) argued that competitive advantage is a key determinant of superior performance. The superior performance of a firm arises from sustainable competitive

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advantages that are the result of either monopoly rents, Ricardian rents or Schumpeterian rents (Hui-Ling Wang,2014) .

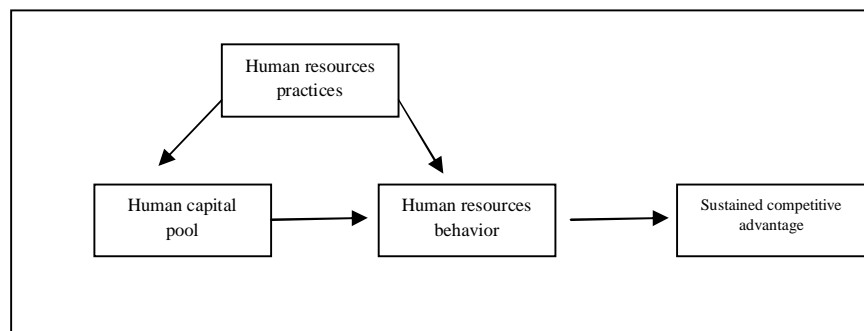
### 3.2 Human resource practices and competitive advantage :

The idea that human resources can serve as a competitive advantage is not new , However , existing research has taken a practice-oriented perspective, emphasizing the value of HR practices rather than the quality of HR pool.( Patrick .M et al,2000)

Ulrich (1991) discussed how human resources practices can be used by firms to develop strategies that will lead to sustained competitive advantage ,stating that there must be a focus on the relationship between human resources , strategies and competitive advantage .Ulrich partially relied on the resource –based theoretical perspective in describing human resources as a competitive advantage by expanding Porter’s model of competitive advantage to include organizational culture ,distinctive competence and strategic unity as mediators in the strategy-competitive advantage link.

In order for a resource to serve as a source of sustained competitive advantage , it must be rare, inimitable , and non-substitutable .If one were to focus on superior human resource practices as a source of sustained competitive advantage , then these practices must be evaluated against these four characteristics .Clearly ,human resources can be valuable (e.g. , the value from human resource programs as demonstrated in utility analysis models). However ,it is virtually impossible for human resource practices to be rare , inimitable and non –substitutable .For example ,a variety of ability tests exist for assessing one’s intellectual human capital ,which makes ability testing neither rare ,inimitable nor non-substitutable. Similarly , training programs , performance evaluation systems are readily available to be purchased .Thus, human resources practices have little potential for being a source of sustained competitive advantage, but they play an important role in developing sustained competitive advantage through the development of the human capital pool , and through moderating the relationship between this pool and sustained competitive advantage by affecting human resources behavior as seen in figure 1 .( Patrick .M et al,2000)

figure 1 :A model of human resources as a source of sustained competitive advantage



Source : Patrick .M et al(2000)p 318

### 4. Methodology and research design :

This study examines whether there exists a relationship between human resource practices and the competitive advantage of companies in Algeria. The data used in this research was collected primarily from a questionnaire which indicates the extent to which their company used the following HR practices :recruitment, training , compensation and benefits and performance appraisal. A total of 70 surveys were collected. The Questionnaire included statements. Respondent had to just encircle the appropriate choice. Where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

**Using the Human Resource Management Practices to Achieve a Competitive Advantage****4-1 Hypothesis research :**

**H<sub>1</sub>**: There is a positive relationship between recruitment and competitive advantage .

**H<sub>2</sub>** :There is a positive relationship between training and competitive advantage .

**H<sub>3</sub>**:There is a positive relationship between compensation and benefits and competitive advantage

**H<sub>4</sub>**: There is a positive relationship between performance appraisal and competitive advantage.

**4-2 Statistical tool :**

According to the study of Saloni P & Ramesh Chander D ( 2012 ), Factor analysis was used as statistical tool to analyze the data collected.

**4-3 Sample Description**

The key demographic characteristics of respondents were summarized in Table 1. The gender split of the sample was 61,4% (43) for male and 38,6%(27) for female. In term of education, 5.7%(4) had graduate school degrees and 52,9%(37) were educated to university level. A total of 42,9 percent were 31~40. In term of experience, 52,9 percent(54) had experience more than 5 years . By looking at the results of the demographic analysis, respondents reflected general demographic information and provided similar results to a previous study.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

	Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%		Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	43	%61,4		Middle school	29	41,4%
	Female	27	%38,6		University	37	%52,9
Age	25-30	11	%15,7	Education	Graduate school	4	%5,7
	31-40	30	%42,9		Less than 5 years	12	%17,1
	40-50	16	%22,9	Experience	More than 5 years	37	%52,9
	More than 50	13	%18,6		5years	21	%30

**4-4 Data Analysis:**

The responses collected were processed to look for both direct and moderating effects using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 17.

**4-5 Reliability**

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency or reliability of the items in each variable of the questionnaire . Table 2 summarizes the Cronbach's alpha coefficients with respect to each of the eleven variables. All eleven variables had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.755 and 0.917 and were therefore considered acceptable for further analysis.

**Table 2 :Results of Validity and Reliability Analyses**

Variables	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Recruitment	3	0,755
Training	4	0,917
Compensation and Benefits	4	0,881
Performance appraisal	3	0,839

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Table 3 shows that the mean values for each variable are between 4.34 and 5.45, indicating that all items scored in the affirmative with mean values greater than 3.0. The Pearson correlation coefficients between the independent variables (i.e., human capital, social capital, organizational capital and service/product quality) and between dependent variable (customer satisfaction) were less than 0.90, indicating the data are not affected by serious collinearity problem. These correlations also provide further evidence of validity and reliability for measurement scales used in this research.

**Table 3. Correlation between Variables and Descriptive Statistics(New model )****Pearson Correlation**

Variables	Mean	StD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1- Recruitment	3,805	0,977	(1)										
2-Training	3,656	1,296	0,923	(1)									
3-Compensation and Benefits	3,891	1,139	0,819	0,54	(1)								
4-Performance appraisal	4,038	1,046	0,923	0,902	0,33	(1)							
5- Competitive Advantage	4.34	0.56	0.57	0.34	0.45	0,68	(1)						

Note: All correlation values are significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Mean values, standard deviations and inter-correlations were summarized in Table 3. On a bivariate level, competitive advantage was positively related to recruitment, training, Compensation and Benefits and Performance appraisal. So the results showed that there is a positive relationship between Human resource management practices and the achievement of competitive advantage.

Factor analysis is used to identify latent or underlying factors from an array of seemingly important variables. All the factors have been given appropriate names according to the variables that have been loaded on each factor. The five factors are discussed below:

**Table4 :Factor analyses**

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
<b>1- Recruitment</b>					
R <sub>1</sub>	0,740				
R <sub>2</sub>	0,828				
R <sub>3</sub>	0,760				
<b>2-Trainnig</b>					
T <sub>1</sub>		0,942			
T <sub>2</sub>		0,314			
T <sub>3</sub>		0,656			
T <sub>4</sub>		0,942			
<b>3-Compensation and Benefits</b>					
CB <sub>1</sub>			0,717		
CB <sub>2</sub>			0,912		
CB <sub>3</sub>			0,514		
CB <sub>4</sub>			0,862		

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<b>4-Performance appraisal</b>					
PA <sub>1</sub>				0,842	
PA <sub>2</sub>				0,857	
PA <sub>3</sub>				0,700	
<b>5-Competitive Advantage</b>					
CA <sub>1</sub>					0,517
CA <sub>2</sub>					0,657
CA <sub>3</sub>					0,512

Source :from SPSS

Factor 1 which is recruitment dimension, includes three items with internal consistency reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0,755. Factor 2 which is training dimension, includes four items with internal consistency reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0,917. The internal consistency estimate of all other four HR practices and their components were all at acceptable levels: **Compensation and Benefits** (four items) alpha= 0,881; **Performance appraisal** (three items) alpha= 0,839; feedback on competitive advantage (three items) alpha= 0,643.

**5-Discussion and conclusion :**

The finding of this research showed that there is a positive relationship between human resource practices and competitive advantage , which is associated with the results of (Oya Erdil & Aye Günsel,2007) and the study of (Saloni P & Ramesh Chander D , 2012 ).the results showed also that the managers of human resources in the Algerian companies have an awareness about the importance of the human resources practices to attract and maintain the talented employees through the recruitment , training , a good compensation system and the performance appraisal in result to lowering the employee' satisfaction which can increase the ability of the company to achieve a competitive advantage . This findings of this study were convenient with the pervious studies which found that the training , composition and performance appraisal are the primary factor that effect the achievement the competitive advantage .

The Algerian competitors believe that they can achieve a competitive advantage through their human capital . Recruitment and selection methods for effective hiring decisions are considered to be important for managers. The finding that there exists a positive link between training and firm performance is consistent with the human capital perspective. Therefore, we suggest that managers should develop training-focused HR practices to achieve competitive advantage.

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