CULTURE AND DEMOGRAPHICS’ IMPACT ON
PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY PRACTICE
IN AFRICAN ARAB COUNTRIES: LESSONS FROM LIBYAN
OIL FIRMS.

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Abstract

Using a sample of managers and Chief Executives from large urban oil firms, this
correlational survey examines culture and demographics’ impact on HRM policy practices in Libya. Cultural values revealed by earlier studies in the Arab world are used to draw
inferences on policy practices for thirty-seven HR design statements. Analysis is based on a
sample of 270 employees from eight oil companies. The study reveals three key human
resource policy practices namely: Strategic HR Practice, Employee Influence and
Performance Orientation toward the Reward System. The results indicate that such practices
are not widely practiced in the sampled oil companies. However, there seem to be some form
of employee influence in practice due to collectivist orientations of Arabs. Relationships were
exhibited when correlating HR policy practice with demographics like company origin, levels
of education and nationality of employees. It is also inferred that cultural values play a role in
the way managers perceive the existence or none existence of these HR policy practices in their
organizations. Multiple regression analysis shows the results of the combined effects and
overall relationship of the three human resource policy practices with demographics. When
taking all the HRM policy practice variables and demographics many of the relationships
suggested by zero-order correlation become non-significant, but only two remain significant at
p< .01 or better. Results indicate that only education level and nationality have significant B
effects.

Keywords: Arab Countries, Cultural Value Orientations, Libyan Oil Firms, Human Resource
Policy Practice, Demographics.

Introduction

Management in Africa has been referred to ‘cross-cultural’ management because of the internal
dynamics of inter-ethnic cross-cultural differences and diversity (Jackson, 2002). Jackson
recommends that the objective of research in Africa should be in understanding the complex
cross-cultural dynamics in African countries and their variations. In recent years there has been
increasing interest in researching Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in
developing countries. A major focus in these studies has been HRM interventions in other
contexts (Roberts and Boyacigiller, 1984; Adler and Boyacigiller, 1995). Human Resource
Management is now not a new concept as it has been over twenty years since it first became a