



Strategic Role of Human Resource Management in University Decision-Making: Evidence from Northern West Bank

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in administrative decision-making within universities in the northern West Bank. HRM is a strategic function that influences organizational effectiveness through recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and information management. In higher education, HRM plays a critical role in supporting governance and ensuring decisions aligning with institutional goals and employee needs. This study adopted the analytical descriptive method to achieve its objectives. Data were collected in two ways: semi-structured interviews were conducted with the heads of human resources departments in the above-mentioned universities, and the questionnaire was applied to 164 male and female employees. The research focused on how the organizational level of HR departments and the quality of information they provide affect their participation in decision-making processes. Findings reveal that HRM contributes significantly to administrative decision-making but is often limited to providing information and implementing decisions rather than actively shaping strategic policies. Barriers such as organizational culture, restrictive regulations, and weak interdepartmental communication hinder HR's involvement. The study recommends adopting collaborative structures, improving organizational policies, and implementing motivational strategies to enhance HRM's role in governance. Strengthening HR participation can lead to more inclusive, effective decisions and support sustainable development in Palestinian higher education.

Keywords: *Administrative Decisions; Human Resource Management; Universities in the Northern West Bank*

Background

Human resources are the backbone of all institutions—governmental, private, profit, or non-profit—because they form the foundation for achieving organizational goals. Human Resource Management (HRM) focuses on managing people through strategies and practices that foster teamwork and participation in decision-making, thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness (Sawaiti & Zaid, 2023). HRM plays a vital role in improving productivity and efficiency by addressing employee needs through functions such as recruitment, training, development, and performance evaluation (Al-Hayasat, 2022).

The decision-making process in organizations relies heavily on HR departments, which provide essential information about employees' capabilities to support strategic planning. This involvement ensures informed decisions, promotes employee participation, and creates a competitive advantage (Al-Khateeb, *et al.*, 2023). Universities, as key educational institutions, shape societal progress by producing skilled professionals and leaders. Their success depends on effective administrative processes, including planning, organization, and evaluation. Among these, decision-making is central, as it enables universities to implement activities and achieve goals efficiently. Therefore, administrative decisions significantly influence institutional success, making HRM's contribution indispensable in fostering sustainable development and organizational excellence (Al-Qasrawi, 2016).

Palestinian universities face growing internal and external challenges, yet they play a vital role in shaping human competencies across economic, political, social, and cultural sectors. These institutions produce leaders, professionals, and specialists essential for societal progress. Given this significance, it is crucial to examine the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in administrative decision-making within universities, as HRM serves as a key link in achieving institutional goals (Al-Qasrawi, 2016).

The study focuses on the central question: What is the role of HRM in administrative decision-making in universities in the northern West Bank?

To address this, the research explores four sub-questions:

- Is there a correlation between the organizational level of HRM and its contribution to decision-making?
- Does the quality of information provided by HR influence its participation in decision-making?
- How do organizational level and information quality together affect HR involvement?
- What factors limit HR departments from participating in administrative decision-making?

Literature Review

Human Resource Management (HRM) is considered a fundamental pillar for organizational success, as it focuses on managing people effectively to achieve institutional goals. Sawaiti & Zaid, (2023) emphasizes that HRM revolves around strategies and practices that enhance team spirit and participation in decision-making, thereby improving organizational efficiency. Similarly, Al-Hayasat (2022) highlights HRM's role in aligning employee needs with organizational objectives through functions such as recruitment, training, and performance evaluation. These functions not only improve productivity but also create a competitive advantage for institutions.

The decision-making process in universities is a critical administrative function that determines institutional progress. According to Al-Khateeb, *et al.*, (2023), HR departments provide essential information on workforce capabilities, enabling strategic planning and informed decisions. This integration ensures that decisions reflect both organizational goals and employee welfare. Universities, as

knowledge hubs, require robust administrative systems where HRM plays a strategic role in shaping policies and fostering sustainable development (Al-Qasrawi, 2016).

Previous studies have explored HRM's influence on organizational performance and decision-making. For instance, Kundu and Malhan (2009) found that HR practices such as planning, recruitment, and performance appraisal significantly impact organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Veloso (2010) noted that employees perceive HRM as a vital administrative function that requires specialization and technological competence. In the Palestinian context, Jaber (2015) reported that HRM practices in government institutions moderately align with excellence models, indicating room for improvement. These findings collectively underscore the importance of HRM in creating flexible organizational environments capable of meeting strategic objectives (Jaber, 2015; Asneineh 2017).

The study of Dr. Rib Allah Muhammad (2013) entitled "The reality of participation in decision-making of faculty members in Algerian universities" This study aims to determine the level of participation in decision-making among faculty members in Algerian universities, and whether there are statistically significant differences attributable to the participation of faculty members in decision-making, and the main study body consisted of (320) faculty members, including (130) from the University of Algiers, (69) from the University of Oran, and (121) from the University of Constantine and was selected in a stratified random manner (21%), from the original population of (1476) members. The selection was in a stratified random manner (21%), from the original population of (1476) members. To achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive method was used, and the questionnaire was used as a tool to collect the necessary information to know the level of participation of faculty members in decision-making. Statistical methods were used to equalize the data. This study found that the level of participation in decision-making among faculty members in Algerian universities is generally low (80%), and there are no statistically significant differences between the three Algerian universities (Oran, Algeria, Constantine) due to the change in participation in decision-making among faculty members (Al-Hamad, *et al.*, 2023).

The study of Subhash Kundu & Divya Malhan (2009), entitled "Human Resource Management Practices in Insurance Companies - A Study of Indian and Multinational Companies". This study aimed to assess the human resource management practices applied in insurance companies operating in India, by evaluating practices related to human resource planning and recruitment, performance appraisal, incentives and compensation and assessing the difference in the perception of human resource management practices between male and female insurers. The research sample consisted of (400) respondents from four insurance companies. Two multinational branches and two Indian branches, 54.5% of the returned questionnaires were suitable for analysis. 123 questionnaires included 26 female respondents from Indian companies and 195 questionnaires included 15 female respondents from multinational companies, and all respondents were of Indian origin (Kundu, 2009).

Methods

This study employed a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in administrative decision-making within universities in the northern West Bank. Data collection was conducted through two primary methods: semi-structured interviews with HR department heads and a structured questionnaire distributed to 164 employees across Birzeit University, An-Najah University, Arab American University, and Zaytuna University. The questionnaire measured variables such as organizational level, quality of information provided by HR, and participation in decision-making. Purposive sampling ensured representation from different administrative levels. Data was analyzed using statistical techniques to determine correlations and significance levels, focusing on the relationship between HRM practices and decision-making effectiveness.

Results & Discussion

The study highlights both practical and scientific significance. Practically, it contributes to improving the Palestinian university education system by clarifying the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in administrative decision-making. Understanding the link between HRM, organizational level, and the quality of information provided helps universities adopt strategic planning practices that enhance sustainability and efficiency. This, in turn, improves HR performance, employee satisfaction, and fosters inter-university cooperation to overcome decision-making challenges (Al-Qasrawi, 2016).

Scientifically, the research fills a knowledge gap by examining HRM's influence on decision-making in universities of the northern West Bank. It explores how organizational structure and information quality affect HR participation, identifies barriers such as organizational culture, and enriches academic literature with new insights. These findings open avenues for future research on HRM's strategic role in higher education governance.

The study also defines HRM as managing individuals to achieve organizational goals through job analysis, recruitment, training, and evaluation (Sawaiti & Zaid, 2023; Al-Khateeb, *et al.*, 2023). Decision-making is described as selecting the best alternative among options, influenced by leadership values and organizational processes (Sawaiti & Zaid, 2023; Al-Khateeb, *et al.*, 2023). Limitations include thematic, spatial, human, temporal, and conceptual boundaries focused on universities in the northern West Bank during the 2024–2025 academic year.

Universities hold a pivotal role in societal development by preparing skilled human resources capable of driving progress. Their significance lies in shaping individuals for high-level professional functions, contributing to intellectual and scientific advancement. Achieving these goals requires an effective management system that coordinates human efforts and optimizes resources (Abdul Aziz, 2020).

In Palestine, despite decades of challenges, universities have managed to meet the educational needs of younger generations. Initially established under difficult conditions to resist oppressive policies, Palestinian universities have made significant strides in both quantity and quality of education. These institutions have provided opportunities for scientific and technical studies, enabling students to keep pace with global technological progress while preserving Palestinian and Arab identity. Universities in the West Bank and Gaza are categorized into public, private, and government institutions, overseen by bodies such as the Higher Education Council and the Ministry of Education. Each university operates under an internal administrative system comprising presidents, boards, faculties, and departments (Abu Snehneh, 2017).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is central to organizational success, aiming to acquire, develop, and retain talent effectively. HRM ensures efficiency and sustainability, as organizations lacking effective HR practices risk failure (Al-Za'noon, 2019). Its objectives span organizational, functional, humanitarian, and social dimensions—promoting cohesion, fulfilling employee needs, and aligning with labor laws (Abu Snehneh, 2017). The human element remains the primary driver of productivity, making investment in employees crucial for organizational growth (Abdulaziz, 2020; Al-Sarayrah & Al-Gharib, 2010).

HRM also plays a strategic role in decision-making. Effective resource planning and HR involvement create flexible organizational cultures that support strategic objectives. Thus, HRM should not merely adapt to decisions but actively participate in shaping them, given its impact on competitive advantage (Al-Qasrawi, 2016). Administrative decisions, particularly in educational institutions, involve selecting optimal solutions from multiple alternatives through structured procedures. In Palestinian universities, this process varies across institutions but remains essential for achieving organizational goals (Al-Khateeb, *et al.*, 2023).

Several studies have examined Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and their impact on organizational performance and decision-making. Kundu and Malhan (2009) found that both multinational companies (MNCs) and Indian firms have significantly improved HRM practices, particularly in performance appraisal, training, benefits, HR planning, and recruitment. However, Indian companies demonstrated stronger performance appraisal systems compared to MNCs, while both were similar in HR planning, selection, and recruitment practices (Sawaiti & Zaid 2023; Asneineh 2017).

Jaber (2015) investigated HRM in the Palestinian government sector using the European model of excellence. The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach with a sample of 173 senior supervisory employees across 31 ministries and institutions. Results indicated that HRM practices achieved a moderate level of excellence, with an arithmetic mean of 3.252 and a relative weight of 65.039. Statistically significant differences were observed based on job title and age, suggesting that demographic factors influence perceptions of HRM effectiveness (Jaber, 2015).

Veloso (2010) explored workers' perceptions of HRM functions in six Portuguese small and medium-sized enterprises. The study revealed that employees clearly understand HRM's role as an administrative function and recognize its importance in organizational structure. It emphasized that HR managers should communicate the specialized nature of HR roles, highlighting the need for knowledge and technology in managing human resources effectively.

Collectively, these studies underscore HRM's critical role in organizational success and strategic decision-making. They highlight variations in HRM practices across contexts and emphasize the importance of performance appraisal, training, and effective communication. Furthermore, the findings reveal challenges such as limited awareness of HRM's strategic role and demographic influences on HRM perceptions (Sawaiti & Zaid 2023). These insights enrich the theoretical foundation of HRM research and provide practical implications for improving HRM practices to enhance organizational efficiency and competitiveness (Asneineh 2017).

The study underscores the critical role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in administrative decision-making within universities in the northern West Bank. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, data from 164 questionnaires covering various administrative levels were analyzed. Findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between HRM and decision-making, with a correlation coefficient of 0.848 and a significance value of 0.000, indicating a strong positive link (Al-Qasrawi, 2016). Despite this, HR departments primarily function in information collection and decision implementation rather than active participation in strategic planning (Al-Qasrawi, 2016).

The research highlights that HRM's influence depends largely on its relationship with senior management. A one-directional relationship limits HR's role to executing decisions, which risks failure due to lack of employee engagement. Conversely, a bi-directional relationship integrates HR into all decision-making stages, ensuring human resource considerations are factored in, thereby improving acceptance and implementation success.

Detailed Findings Include:

Table 1. Key Findings on HRM and Administrative Decision Making in Northern West Bank Universities (Salehzadeh, & Ziaeeian, 2024)

Measure / Theme	Operationalization / Description	Value / Result
Sample size (questionnaires)	Number of employees who completed the survey	N = 164
Data collection methods	Semi-structured interviews with HR heads; structured questionnaire to staff	Interviews + Questionnaire
HR Department Organizational Level	Perceived clarity/independence, experience, responsiveness	Mean = 3.25; SD = 0.95 (Moderate)
Quality of HR Information	Accuracy, timeliness, relevance ("formal utility")	Mean = 3.58; SD = 0.72 (High)
Link between HRM & Decision-Making	Association of HR role with administrative decisions	Strong positive relationship ($r = 0.848$; $p = 0.000$)
Dominant HR Role observed	Stage(s) where HR most involved	Primarily info collection & decision implementation (limited strategic input)
Relationship with Senior Management	One-directional vs. bi-directional linkage	One-directional → limited HR role; Bi-directional → HR integrated across stages
Key barriers to HR participation	Organizational and relational obstacles	Organizational culture; internal regulations; weak interdepartmental ties; director–staff disconnect

Notes: Values reflect the article's reported descriptive statistics and thematic results; universities listed are those included in the study.

1. Educational Level – HR departments demonstrated moderate effectiveness (mean = 3.25; SD = 0.95), attributed to clear organizational positioning and experienced staff who respond effectively to requests and provide accurate HR-related data.
2. Information Quality – Rated high (mean = 3.58; SD = 0.72), with decision-makers trusting HR-provided data for its accuracy, timeliness, and relevance to administrative needs.
3. HRM Methods – HR practices serve as vital tools for monitoring and evaluation, enabling timely and informed decisions aligned with institutional goals.
4. Barriers – Organizational culture, rigid internal regulations, weak interdepartmental relationships, and poor communication between HR directors and staff hinder HR's active participation in decision-making.

Overall, the study concludes that enhancing HR's strategic involvement requires addressing structural and cultural barriers, fostering collaborative relationships, and improving organizational policies to empower HR departments in shaping effective administrative decisions.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes the need to strengthen Human Resources Management (HRM) as a strategic partner in administrative decision-making within universities in the northern West Bank. To achieve this, policies that foster a positive organizational culture and review restrictive administrative laws are essential. Improving collaboration between HR departments and other units, as well as enhancing communication between managers and staff, will create an enabling environment for HR participation. Universities should adopt motivational policies, develop strategic plans, and continuously improve organizational structures and information quality standards to support effective decision-making. Additionally, establishing an ethical charter for administrators and reformulating regulations that limit HR involvement are recommended. These measures will empower HR departments to contribute meaningfully to institutional governance, ensuring decisions are inclusive, efficient, and aligned with human re-source considerations, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and sustainability.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research process.

Conflicts of Interest: Not Applicable.

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