

# “Relationships between human resource management practices, employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior in the hotel industry”

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# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, SERVICE QUALITY, AND EMPLOYEE SERVICE BEHAVIOR IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

## Abstract

The hotel industry is critical in developing the economy. Moreover, it is the largest and most rapidly growing industry in Jordan. Employee satisfaction is a crucial element for the success of any organization, particularly in the hotel industry. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of human resource management (HRM) practices since these constructs could influence different outcomes at the workplace, such as employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior in the hotel industry. The study has undertaken five primary HRM practices – recruitment, capability, compensation, performance appraisal, and training and development (T&D) – to measure their impact on employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior. Data were collected from 290 employees and 290 customers of Jordan's hotels across all categories in the four main tourist attractions: Amman, Petra, Aqaba, and the Dead Sea. A quantitative approach was employed using various statistical tools such as mean, tabulation of data, correlation, and ANOVA by SPSS software. The results indicated that HRM practices positively affect service quality, employee service behavior, and employee satisfaction. It was also found that when employees in Jordan's hotel industry demonstrate excellent service behavior, the customer perceptions of service quality increase. Finally, effective human resource management strategy systematically organizes all individual human resource management measures to directly influence employee satisfaction, service behavior, and service quality in a way that leads hotels to achieve organizational success.

## Keywords

HRM, satisfaction, service quality, behavior,  
management, hotel, Jordan

## JEL Classification

O15, M12, J28

## INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry is one of the most important service industries in an economy and significantly contributes to its development (Kubickova et al., 2019). It is also one of the service industries with increasing competition (Agyapong et al., 2018). Hotels are one of the fastest-growing sectors in the tourism industry, and it is critical as accommodation is an essential aspect of any country's development. Studies in HRM with a hospitality and tourist focus are crucial for illuminating industry-specific topics. Employee satisfaction is one of the ways to do modernization and retain existing clients through an encouraging environment for excellent service quality (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Service quality is crucial to the success of any service organization (Choi et al., 2020; Kandampully, 2000). Hotels can increase their market share and profitability if their service quality is strong (Nadiri & Hussain, 2005).

The hotel industry in Jordan employs more than 14,690 employees and is the largest and fastest-growing tourism sector (Al-Refaie, 2015). Over 37% of the workforce in the tourist industry is directly and indirectly employed by it. A successful hotel delivers excellent service to customers, and service quality is considered the life of a hotel (Al-Ababneh, 2016). In a dynamic world, the hotel and tourism industry faces increasing competition (Hussain et al., 2016). Best practices help improve employee behavior since the service sector has unique characteristics, especially in direct face-to-face interaction between employees and clients (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). As a result, the hotel industry requires highly developed service abilities focused on organizational success (Maxwell et al., 2004; Tsaur & Lin, 2004).

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

HRM practices aim to manage the workforce so that any organization may fulfill its objective and preserve its culture. The foundations that define how successful a corporation is are its human resources. The depth and effectiveness of HR management will influence how well these resources can take on the various tasks (Al-Jedaiah & Albdareen, 2020). For example, HR managers may, when done successfully, assist in hiring new workers with the qualifications needed to advance business objectives and train current staff members to achieve goals. HRM practices involve various aspects of human resources, including recruitment, capability, compensation, performance appraisal, and training and development (T&D) (Aburumman et al., 2020). HRM practices are considered to be a method of encouraging employees' satisfaction with their jobs (Mira et al., 2019). It is the composition of various policies, practices, and procedures adopted to manage employees' perceptions, attitudes, and learning (Noe et al., 2006). Numerous views are related to the level of investment in HR in the hotel and tourism industry (Alleyne et al., 2006; Badre, 2021). Tsaur and Lin (2004) explored the relationship among HRM, service behavior, and hotel service quality. Their results indicated that HRM directly affects customers' perceptions of service quality and indirectly affects employees' service behavior.

Good HRM practices are also essential to increase effectiveness due to reduced turnover and job satisfaction (Khan et al., 2021). Implementing sustainable human resource management strategies becomes particularly crucial to support employees' secure functioning and well-being. These procedures assist businesses in meeting their employees' demands (Jaskeviciute et al., 2021). Kuslivan (2003) indicated various practices adopted in HRM,

including turnover of employees, their perception, availability of promotion opportunities, and appraisal system. Elrehail et al. (2020) revealed that due to globalization, an employee must be ready to understand the need of foreign as well as domestic customers. Various research has investigated the factors responsible for dissatisfaction with HR. Ng and Sorensen (2008) stated that HRM policies and practices motivate employees and remove the obstacles to employee performance, thereby leading to their satisfaction.

Different employee behaviors might occur at work in every hospitality organization. Employee behaviors are defined as various activity sequences carried out by individuals (Veetikazhi et al., 2022). Customer service conduct is referred to as service behavior (Liao & Chuang, 2004). Examples of good customer service practices include engaging clients swiftly, paying attention to their needs, and offering accurate information. Service behaviors are what employees perform and are essentially employment requirements (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). Several studies in the hospitality and tourist industries contend that how the staff treats customers favors employee satisfaction (Ling et al., 2016; Teng, 2019). According to Bettencourt and Brown (1997), service behavior is the overt action, voice, and attitude of frontline staff when providing customer service. It can be divided into role-prescribed and extra-role service behavior. The term "role-prescribed service conduct" refers to employees acting in a way that is required by their employers and is based on either explicit or implied rules at work (Bayighomog & Arasli, 2019). Extra-role service behavior is the optional customer service actions taken by contact personnel that goes above and beyond their formal role requirements. Future service relationships depend on service behavior, which is also seen as a sign of organizational service quality (Farrell et al., 2001).

Employee satisfaction cannot be understood from just one term since it has a very broad definition. Any business must have satisfied employees to succeed. Lower turnover rates are directly correlated with high employee satisfaction levels. Therefore, maintaining employees' career satisfaction should be a top priority for any business (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2022). Employee satisfaction has been characterized as a pleasant emotional state that results from an evaluation of the person's job and as an affective reaction to and an attitude toward the person's job (Akbar et al., 2016). Employee satisfaction can change over time and between various organizations (Cao & Chen, 2016).

Additionally, organizations will gain more incredible economic benefits with higher employee satisfaction (Chi & Gursoy, 2009; Riyanto et al., 2021). HRM practices increase employee satisfaction and engagement. Incorporating these practices into organizational policies can help a business gain a competitive advantage and maintain a high-performance level (Abubakar et al., 2019). Job satisfaction is not only vital for older employees, but it also attracts new ones to companies. Older employees are always crucial for companies due to their value and knowledge of the company's work (Raab, 2020). Human resource management departments of hospitality companies are often criticized for being cost centers. Outcomes can only be measurable regarding customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and customer complaints (Cho et al., 2006).

The level of service quality assesses how well a corporation meets consumer expectations. This concept of service quality shows that customers have expectations and criteria for how businesses should provide services to meet their demands. On the other side, businesses that do not strictly adhere to customer standards and expectations risk developing a bad reputation for providing poor customer service (Goh & Baum, 2021). There are four primary factors to consider when evaluating the quality of services: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility (Balinado et al., 2021). Many HR scholars have emphasized that in service businesses, quality improvement must be concentrated on recruitment, training, development, and compensation policies (Chand & Katou, 2007). It is also true that an organization's competitive edge in a labor-intensive industry can come from excellent

human resource management (Ajgaonkar et al., 2022; Schneider & Bowen, 1993). Schneider (1994) found a significant relationship between customer assessment of service quality and employee perception of HRM practices. Similar recommendations were made by Hartline and Jones (1996) for hotel contract employees to get the required training in order to provide high-quality service. Tourism and hospitality enterprises understand that frontline staff behavior significantly impacts service quality and is crucial for the success of service businesses (Teng, 2019).

Previous HRM studies have focused on the fact that in the service industry, employee perceptions of organizational HR practices and customer evaluations of the effectiveness of the organization's services are positively correlated (Babaei et al., 2015). Service quality also depends on the interaction between employees and clients. Therefore, service quality depends on employee behavior, which is a result of employee satisfaction (Prentice et al., 2020; Schneider & Bowen, 1985). A more productive team and collaborative environment could arise from employee behavior that aligns with the Jordanian organizations' aims (Harahsheh et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2022). According to Pascual-Fernández et al. (2020), the hotel industry's success depends on employees' quality and their management to achieve the organizational objective.

For most service industries, service quality can be judged through the service rendered. Service quality is dependent on the HR practices adopted by the firm. Fey et al. (2000) stated that policies related to salary, training and development (T&D), and selection significantly related to service quality of the employees working as managers and those working as non-managers in the hotel industry. Service quality also depends on the customers' perception of the service provided. High quality in service depends on the better training provided by the hotel industry (Johnson et al., 2018). Employees' positive perception of the HR practice and conduct of management employees is always vital in service quality as employees devote all their efforts to delivering the service (Bell & Menguc, 2002).

Employees play a crucial role in attracting customers and retaining them. It is also essential in influencing customers to render services to a particular

company (Nasir et al., 2021). Therefore, customer satisfaction depends on employees' ability to serve customers. Logically, customers evaluate service quality based on frontline employees' behavior rather than on the HR practice (Peng et al., 2022). In conclusion, employee behavior is not only the major factor in customer satisfaction but also their capabilities in customer satisfaction. Based on the above, it is possible to assume that relationships between HR practices and service quality will continue to improve hotel staff capacity to provide better service to guests, adhere to their commitments, and increase efficiency in service delivery. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are developed:

- H1: Employee service behavior is not closely related to HRM practices.*
- H2: Employee satisfaction is not closely related to service quality and HRM practices.*
- H3: Service quality is not related to HRM practices.*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives, the study deployed a quantitative approach based on a survey study design. The primary quantitative tool used to gather data was a questionnaire. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire to test the hypotheses. Perceptions regarding service behavior and service quality have been obtained from the employees working at the front line and hotel in Jordan. To collect the data, various companies have been approached to participate in interviews. This study surveyed 290 hotels across all categories in Jordan's four main tourist attractions – Amman, Petra, Aqaba, and the Dead Sea – due to the small number of classed hotels and to ensure a representative sample. Therefore, 290 respondents participated in the survey. The lists of hotels received from the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority and the Jordan Hotel Association were used as a sample frame. The former was chosen since it has extensive information, including all Jordanian hotel locations and their phone numbers, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses.

The scale adopted by Khatri (2000) has been used to measure employee perception of the HR practices used by various hotel and tourism industries. Four aspects of HRM practices were assessed: recruitment (three items), T&D (five items), compensation (four items), and performance appraisal (three items). Employee service capability is also judged through the required knowledge and skills to offer services to consumers. A five-point Likert scale has been used to rate the services provided by hotels. Service quality measures of perceived service quality items are sourced from Lee et al. (2005) and Maxwell et al. (2004). Out of the 22 items in SERVQUAL, 15 (three for each of the five dimensions) were chosen to shorten the questionnaire. Two items were generated to measure the sensory dimension, and an index score (i.e., the mean of the items) was created to reflect the construct. A five-point scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" and "7 = strongly agree" was used to grade the service quality of each item. The scale adopted by Dotson and Allenby (2010) has been used to measure employee satisfaction. The study asked employees to describe their satisfaction with six items, e.g., "satisfied with how the organization addresses internal issues impacting services and products." Scales adapted to measure employee service behavior were developed by Bettencourt and Brown (1997), comprising six items.

The alpha coefficient was used to examine the reliability and internal consistency. The alpha coefficient value range is high for the components of HR practices, service behavior, and service capability of employees. Therefore, alpha values always provide insight into the suitability of reliability and consistency of data (Nunnally, 1978). Multiple regression analysis has been applied in this study to examine the hypotheses. In addition, various sets of statistical measures in the form of mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and correlation were also used.

## 3. RESULTS

Tables 1 and 2 exhibit the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the survey. Out of 290 employees, 165 are male, and 60.34% are married. The majority of employees are below the age of 30 years, and 63.14% have the working

experience below three years. 58.27% of customers are male, and most belong to the age group below 30 years. 63.13% are married, and 201 participants belong to the income group below 50,000.

**Table 1.** Demographics of hotel employees

Category	F	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	165	56.89
Female	125	43.11
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	175	60.34
Unmarried	115	29.66
<b>Age</b>		
Below 30	142	48.96
30-39	84	28.96
40-49	64	22.06
<b>Experience</b>		
Less than 3 years	186	63.14
More than 3 years	104	36.86

**Table 2.** Demographics of hotel customers

Category	F	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	169	58.27
Female	121	41.73
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	186	64.13
Unmarried	104	35.87
<b>Age</b>		
Below 30	152	
30-39	72	
40-49	66	
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Less than 50,000	201	69.31
More than 50,000	89	30.69

Table 3 reveals the mean and SD values of the data set. The maximum average value is shown by employee satisfaction, with an SD value of 0.791. The mean value of HRM practices is 2.912, 3.003 for employee service behavior, and 3.052 for service quality.

**Table 3.** Mean and SD values

Variables	Avg. value	Std. dev.
Service quality	3.052	0.784
Employee service behavior	3.003	0.835
Employee satisfaction	3.102	0.791
HRM practices	2.912	0.825

Correlation is used to measure the association between the variables. Table 4 indicates positive and significant relationships among the variable se-

lected for the study. For example, service quality, employee service behavior, employee satisfaction, and HRM practices are correlated with each other positively.

**Table 4.** Matrix of correlation

No.	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Service quality	1	-	-	-
2	Employee service behavior	0.425	1	-	-
3	Employee satisfaction	0.392	0.643	1	-
4	HRM practices	0.402	0.421	0.402	1

The study can compare the means of two groups on the dependent variable using the t-test or ANOVA when analyzing the relationship between the variables (Green & Salkind, 2010). The primary distinction between a t-test and ANOVA is that whereas ANOVA may be used to compare two groups or more, a t-test can only compare two groups. The analysis of the first hypothesis (employee services behavior is not closely related to HRM practices of the hotel and tourism industry) indicated a positive and significant effect of the independent variable (HRM practices) on dependent variables (services quality, employee service behavior, and employee satisfaction). R square value is 0.69 (69%) at the significance level of 0.05 (5%). Thus, the first hypothesis is rejected and shows a significant effect (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Test of the first hypothesis

HRM Practices	Coeff.	t
Capability	0.386	3.312
Performance appraisal	-0.0821	-0.792
Compensation	0.298	2.526
T&D	0.384	3.417
Recruitment process	0.362	3.412
F-stat.		11.142
R <sup>2</sup>		0.692
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>		0.621

The second hypothesis (employee satisfaction is not closely related to service quality) has been rejected at the significance level of 5% (p-value < .05). The hypothesis indicated that employee satisfaction is also related to service quality. The study also found that employee satisfaction (Capability, service performed, and service details) is closely related to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance of HR practices (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Test of the second hypothesis

Service Quality	Employee Satisfaction							
	Tangibility		Reliability		Responsiveness		Assurance	
	Coeff.	t	Coeff.	t	Coeff.	t	Coeff.	t
Capability	0.312	0.953	0.301	0.894	0.296	0.895	0.301	0.965
Service performed	0.412	1.253	0.614	1.254	0.567	2.963	0.621	2.587
Service details	0.398	2.132	0.296	2.874	0.452	1.987	0.416	2.012
F-stat.	10.214	–	8.698	–	9.654	–	10.241	–
R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	–	0.54	–	0.36	–	0.45	–
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.31	–	0.55	–	0.39	–	0.48	–

The examination of the third hypothesis (service quality is not related to HRM practices) indicated that service quality offered also depends on the HR practices adopted by the hotel industry. The results showed a significant impact of HR practices on the service quality offered. Therefore, the null hypothesis has been rejected at the significance level of 5% ( $p$ -value  $< .05$ ). The study revealed that employees' capabilities, performance appraisal, compensation, and T&D are related to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance of service offered (Table 7).

The current analysis used Multiple regression analysis has been applied to this study to examine the hypotheses. The numerical values of the test are elaborated in Tables 5, 6, and 7. Table 5 shows that the employee services behavior is not closely related to HRM practices ( $R^2 = 0.69$  and  $p < 0.05$ ); therefore, H1 is rejected. Further, Table 6 shows that employee satisfaction (Capability, service performed, and service details) is not closely related to service quality (Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance) of HR practices ( $R^2 = 0.42$  and  $p < 0.05$ ); therefore, H2

is also rejected. Table 7 shows the third hypothesis, service quality (Tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance), is not related to HRM practices (Recruitment, capability, compensation, performance appraisal, and T&D), ( $R^2 = 0.36$  and  $p < 0.05$ ); therefore, H3 is also rejected.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Simple regression was conducted to test the hypotheses. Considering the first hypothesis, Table 5 indicates that HR practices correlated positively with employee satisfaction, including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. Findings illustrated that the independent variable explained 69% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.69$ ) at the significance level of 0.05 (5%). The  $f$ -value is meaningful when the level of significance is 5%. In addition, the  $t$ -value between HR practices and employee satisfaction is all significant ( $t > 1.95$ ). Employees' positive perceptions about the human resource practice increase their satisfaction with their organization. These findings are consistent with Elrehail et al. (2020), who assert-

**Table 7.** Test of the third hypothesis

HRM Practices	Service Quality							
	Tangibility		Reliability		Responsiveness		Assurance	
	Coeff.	t	Coeff.	t	Coeff.	t	Coeff.	t
Capability	0.321	1.251	0.687	1.652	0.487	1.968	0.541	3.214
Performance appraisal	0.296	1.321	0.864	1.871	0.652	0.985	0.698	2.951
Compensation	0.351	1.981	0.785	1.658	0.451	2.324	0.784	0.985
T&D	0.293	0.967	0.564	0.698	0.984	0.894	1.021	2.651
Recruitment process	0.321	0.867	0.674	0.879	0.698	1.562	2.351	1.984
F-stat.	1.921	–	2.365	–	3.874	–	4.215	–
R <sup>2</sup>	0.231	–	0.425	–	0.481	–	0.285	–
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.212	–	0.341	–	0.491	–	0.321	–

ed that employees would be satisfied working in a hotel when they believe they can expand their knowledge and skills. Therefore, organizations should strive to have good HR practices in place and keep all employees satisfied. The findings of this study are also in line with those of Edgar and Geare (2005), who found that HRM practices had an impact on staff attitudes, including organizational commitment and job satisfaction in New Zealand. Additionally, HRM (represented by their managers) provides suitable conditions for increasing employee satisfaction and service quality through appropriate awarding, which are based on the actual evaluation of performance and T&D according to employees' capabilities, aiming to satisfy them.

Results illustrated in Table 6 considered the independent variable and explained R<sup>2</sup> for all the dimensions, which were significant. ANOVA result shows that the F-stat between service quality and employee satisfaction is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . The study also indicated that employee satisfaction is positively related to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance of HR practices (Table 6). In terms of service quality, it was found that employee satisfaction increases service quality. Employees treated well by HRM practices in the four components of recruitment/selection, T&D, performance appraisal, and compensation/benefits may "pay back" their organization by being more amiable, polite, and helpful to customers (Babaei et al., 2015). The current study also found that satisfied employees provide better service to customers. In addition, this study showed evidence of the positive relationship between HRM practices and higher levels of employee service behavior in tourist hotels. When employees demonstrated excellent service behavior, the customer perceptions of service quality increased. It has been argued that customers will perceive higher service quality in the hospitality industry due to better employee service behavior (Hartline & Jones, 1996). Thus, the findings suggest that HRM practices and service quality are incredibly beneficial in employee satisfaction relationships. According to several studies, improving employee satisfaction will ensure good service, resulting in satisfied customers (Ali et al., 2021; Kanyama et al., 2022). These studies also con-

tend that customer satisfaction surveys should be used to gauge customer satisfaction rather than employee satisfaction.

Table 7 shows that service quality is not related to HRM practices. On the other hand, HRM practices, including recruitment, capability, compensation, performance appraisal, and T&D, were found to be positively correlated with service quality (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility). Findings illustrated that the independent variable explained R<sup>2</sup> for all the dimensions, which were significant. The f-value is statistically significant. Therefore, H3 is rejected as the data do not support this hypothesis. According to the empirical study of the relationship between HRM practices, service behavior, and service quality, "extra-role" service conduct has a positive effect on the dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Babaei et al., 2015; Chand & Katou, 2007). The research finding showed that HRM practices directly and indirectly impact service quality through service behavior. Customers' perceived service quality could be enhanced, specifically through the excellent service behavior supplied by HRM practices. According to Bettencourt and Brown (1997), it is worth examining why certain employees are more eager than others to provide recommendations to assist the company in enhancing its service and what aspects of HRM procedures influence contact personnel to enthusiastically recommend the services provided by the company. Therefore, based on the literature review and practical assessment, the variable of service conduct is considered highly meaningful.

Future researchers can also specify the relationships between HRM practices, employee satisfaction, and service quality from a customer perspective. Moreover, since the sample was just limited to the hotel industry, analysis of other areas can be done in the future. This study found that good HRM practices are essential to increase employee satisfaction and offer better service. However, there are a lot of other organizational factors that can contribute to higher customer and staff satisfaction. Thus, other characteristics that improve employee satisfaction and service quality might be the subject of future research.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigates the role of HRM practices in employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior of hotel industry employees. Due to the importance of the hotel industry, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing employee satisfaction in this industry. The results showed that HR practices correlated positively with employee satisfaction and service quality adopted by the industry. In addition, service quality depends on employee behavior, resulting from employee satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of the industry depends on employee satisfaction and the service offered. The results of this study provide recommendations for hotel management to improve employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior. Employees should be encouraged to be more active and innovative, facilitate achieving desired results, and review feedback. HRM practices help employees and customers develop skills that maximize their effectiveness due to reduced turnover and job satisfaction. It contributes to understanding the mechanism for employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior among knowledge workers. Thus, these findings are helpful for hotel employees to adopt effective and targeted measures to improve communication between employees and customers.

This study also has certain limitations that can serve as an important avenue for future research studies. First, this study used a sample from only Jordan. Future studies can take employees from different nationalities and analyze the impact of cultural factors on employee satisfaction. Second, this study used a sample size of 290 respondents, thereby limiting its generalizability. Future research endeavors can take bigger sample sizes from different regions to make the results applicable to a larger population. However, with all the limitations mentioned, the Jordanian hotel industry can benefit from this study by adopting such HR practices that lead to employee satisfaction, service quality, and employee service behavior. In this way, hotels can position themselves in the highly competitive market by having a workforce that goes beyond the call of duty due to their satisfaction and motivation.

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