



The impact of human resource practices on employee retention: A study of three private higher educational institutions in the United Arab Emirates



Authors:

Sami Alajlani¹ 
Lawal O. Yesufu² 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Finance,
Faculty of Business, Centre
for Business and Economic
Research, Higher Colleges of
Technology, Sharjah, United
Arab Emirates

²Department of Business
Analytics, Faculty of Business,
Centre for Business and
Economic Research, Higher
Colleges of Technology,
Sharjah, United Arab
Emirates

Corresponding author:

Lawal Yesufu,
lyesufu@hct.ac.ae

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Orientation: Human resource (HR) practices have a significant impact on building the perceptions that define the relationships between employees and employers. Hence, it is imperative to develop further knowledge on how these HR practices impact employee retention within the higher education context.

Research purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between various HR practices and employee retention in an organisation. The article also investigates the effect of HR practices across employees of various demographic backgrounds, such as citizens and expatriates.

Motivation for the study: The limited research was conducted on employee retention in higher education despite the fundamental role that higher education institutions play in driving innovation, developing knowledge capital and research and development.

Research design: Descriptive statistical analysis and multiple regression analysis with a sample size of 270 employees working across three higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAEs).

Main findings: The findings showed that HR practices can improve employees' retention, with moderate positive perceptions amongst UAE citizens, but an unsatisfactory level of perception and effect of human resource practices amongst expatriates.

Practical implications: The results indicate a difference in the effects of HR practices across various demographics within the same the section. Hence, HR management should be looking at a unification of HR practices to obtain unified results in loyalty, commitment and employee retention.

Contribution: However, the results also indicated that this gap in employees' retention can be minimised by improving on empowerment and compensation and benefits, with even more enforcements of training.

Keywords: higher education; human resource management; HRM practices; employee retention; UAE.

Introduction

The efforts to improve an organisation's efficiency and its economic management through the relationship between employer and employee birthed what Frederick Taylor termed as 'scientific management' (Taylor, 1911). Scientific management later inspired what is known today as 'human resource management' (HRM), which deals with the organisationally relevant capabilities of a group or individuals (Boselie, Van Harten, & Veld, 2021; Scott-Jackson et al., 2014) based on planned deployments and activities to help the group, individuals, or an organisation to attain its objectives (Boselie et al., 2021; Reina & Scaroza, 2021).

The activities involved in strategic implementation of HRM are called human resource (HR) practices (Reina & Scaroza, 2021). These practices include the systems and policies that influence the behaviour, performance and attitudes of employees who are considered the most valuable assets of any business organisation (Beijer, Peccei, Van Veldhoven, & Paauwe, 2021; Saifalislam, Osman, & AlQudah, 2014). Employee recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and benefits and health and safety of employees can influence their perceptions and retention (Harney, Dundon, & Wilkinson, 2018). The importance of HRM lies in its strategic plan (Boselie et al., 2021). The effective implementation of its practices is a vital

competitive advantage tool for organisations (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019).

The rationale behind the surge in studies on HRM in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Waxin & Bateman, 2016) includes the country's economy, which is amongst the most developed in the Middle East region. The UAE is also categorised as a high-income developing economy and has a popular vision for social and economic development focusing on skilled human capital and other strategic enablers (Mishrif, 2018). Nevertheless, research on HR practices, is still considered a relatively new concept in developing countries (Beijer et al., 2021; Saifalislam et al., 2014).

The significance of this study lies in its focus on HR practices in private higher education institutions in the UAE, its literature and theoretical backgrounds, which were drawn from empirical studies in different backgrounds and the practices that underpinned employers' selection and recruitment processes, training and development, empowerment, compensation and benefits and performance appraisals. This study also checked the impact of HR practices on employee retention in the private education institutions so as to keep up with the rapid organisational and environmental changes in the UAE's higher education sector.

The article opens with an introduction to the research topic, context and objectives that have motivated the research. A critical review of literature relating to the core concepts, variables and context relating to HR practices and higher education is presented. The article includes a hypothetical framework that guides the research, this includes the hypotheses to be measured. The research method is detailed with collected data and analysed. The findings that result from the data analysis and the discussion, comparison of the findings with prior research and the hypotheses are documented. The article culminates with a conclusion on the research and recommendations for further research.

Literature review

Human resource practices

Frederick Taylor's belief with scientific management is that there is a difference between hard work and optimising the way work is performed (Turan, 2015), because whilst the former might seem traditional, the latter is considered efficient as it simplifies jobs and enhances productivity (Trist, 2016). Whilst scientific management was adopted by various companies based on its systematic or scientific approach with most of its focus on machines, the human relation theory was introduced by Elton Mayo (Bruce & Nyland, 2011). Human relations theory prioritises employees for productivity and addresses what was seen as 'shortcomings' of Taylor's scientific management theory, which focuses on machine and not human (employee) (Trist, 2016).

The major tasks of HRM are mostly concerned with administrative activities, which include recruitment, reward systems and promotion and are all needed in maintaining

employees for the success of an organisation (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). Human resource management is not the end product but an approach that can be implemented in a strategic way for the employment, development and welfare of the employees (Yesufu, 2016, 2019). It also involves strategic coordination of policies, values and practices to retain, grow and maintain employees' well-being in an organisation (Reina & Scaroza, 2021; Boselie et al., 2021). The aim of any organisational management of HR practices is also to see the employees as valuable 'assets' and to find ways on how employees can add value to the organisation through activities such as recruitment, selection and training (Reina & Scaroza, 2021; Yesufu, 2016, 2019).

There is no consensus on the domains that comprise HR practices (Yesufu, 2016), although Yesufu (2020) and Boselie et al. (2021) have all defined the following domains: career development, training, direct employee participation, development appraisals and mentoring. These domains contribute to employees' positive perceptions of their employers' commitment and thus strengthen their employment relationship (Boselie et al., 2021). These HR domains are also classified into five key areas – these are recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and employee relations and empowerment (Geringer, Frayne, & Milliman, 2002; Yesufu, 2016, 2019).

The five classifications of HR practices are further explained here:

1. **Recruitment and selection:** Recruitment is aimed at the quality required from employees to satisfy the strategic organisation needs (Fahim, 2018), whilst selection is the evaluation of applicants and judging them based on certain criteria, ranging from years of experience to leadership potential and personal capability (Hamza et al., 2021).
2. **Employee empowerment:** It includes the various ways in which organisations empower its employees with a certain level of autonomy and control in their job (Yin, Wang, & Lu, 2019). Empowerment also aims at providing employees with the mechanisms for making important decisions (Yesufu, 2016).
3. **Training and development:** It comprises the formal activities an organisation provides to help its employees acquire the necessary knowledge, develop new skills and gain more experience on what is needed to perform their current or future jobs (Beijer et al., 2021; Fahim, 2018).
4. **Performance appraisal:** It is the process of evaluating the employees' performance and judging their tasks based on a set of established standards (Fahim, 2018).
5. **Compensation and benefits:** The cumulative rewards given to employees in return for their dedication and effort in their jobs and their contribution to an organisation's success are called compensation and benefits (Beijer et al., 2021).

Empirical studies have shown that HR practices do improve management service, employees, managers and customers'

perceptions (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019; Hamza et al., 2021; Mishrif, 2018; Yesufu, 2020). In particular, studies in the UAE have found that HR practices have positive effects on organisational culture, job satisfaction and commitment from the local and expatriate employees (Waxin & Bateman, 2016). Human resource practices enhanced the innovation culture and services of UAE's government agencies (Alosani, Al-Dhaafri, & Abdulla, 2021) and proved their effectiveness in the UAE's education sector. Although Adekoya, Ajonbadi, Okorie and Jimoh (2021) found that there is still need for the reinforcement of HRM regarding the facilitation of work-life balance policies for talent attraction and retention purposes in UAE education sector. This is similar to the findings of Swanepoel and Saurombe (2022) that in the South African context, there deficiencies employee value proposition (EVP), basically an exchange of perceptions of loyalty between employer and employees. The perceptions of loyalty are a two-way process, employees are loyal to retaining their roles as long as they have the perceptions that their employers are equally loyal to the relationship (Yesufu, 2020). However, South African university academics show a positive perception of retention towards their university employers, higher than the average loyalty in other sectors of the economy (Abarantyne, Naidoo, & Rugimbana, 2019).

This study adopted the given categorisation of HR practices because of its importance in organisation improvement in the UAE and as shown from other studies, the practices impact employee retention, which is vital in ensuring the progression of higher education institutions. The categorisation is also in line with the Michigan model of HR practices and organisational strategy based on the full HR lifecycle (Geringer et al., 2002; Waxin & Bateman, 2016; Yesufu, 2016, 2020).

Employee retention

Employee retention is defined by Kaur (2017) as 'a process in which the employees are encouraged to remain with the organisation for the maximum period or until the completion of the project'. This definition is in line with studies that have proved that retention strategies have a positive impact on an organisation's ability to connect efficiently with employees so as to increase engagement and boost their support for key organisational initiatives (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). Organisations are forced to realign their priorities to match the increasing demands for a sustainable organisational environment that meets the fundamental human needs of employees in a manner where employment is associated with personal satisfaction and organisational fulfilment (Silva, Carvalho, & Dias, 2019). This prioritisation in realignment implies that employee retention is one of the major challenges faced by different businesses in a competitive environment and is important for retaining organisational talents so as to succeed and remain in business (Kossivi & Kalgora, 2016; Silva et al., 2019). According to Yesufu (2020) and Beijer et al. (2021), different organisations apply HR practices before and after recruiting an employee. The pre-recruitment practices include communication, recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, whilst the practices after recruitment include training,

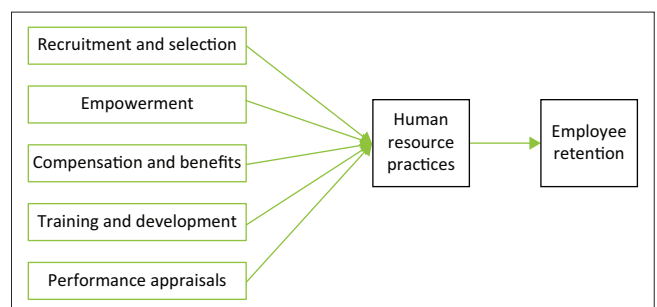
development, empowerment, compensation and benefits (Modau, Dhanpat, Lugisani, MaboJane, & Phiri, 2018; Ngqeza & Dhanpat, 2021; Yesufu, 2020).

Kumudha and Harsha (2016) in their study on the relationship between HR practices and employee retention in a private hospital in the UAE found that the lack of organisational commitment impacts employees' perceptions and sense of belonging to an organisation as most of these employees are unable to relate their career growth to the organisation's path and are dissatisfied with the practices of HR policies. This, in turn, also impacts retention of employees. Another study by Almarashda and Sarpin (2020) on sustainable HR development in UAE's education sector showed that the perception of organisational career support has significant impact on employees' overall job satisfaction. Al Hammadi and Noor (2020) in their study of the role of leadership in employee retention in Abu Dhabi's education sector concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between leadership style, talent management of HR and employee retention and talent management enhances employee retention.

Based on the given literature and the small number of other studies on the effect and impact of HR practices on employee retention in the UAE's private higher educational institutions, this study will contribute to the understanding of the perceptions of local and expatriate employees towards HR practices and employee retention in private institutions. It will also highlight the efforts needed to improve the retention of UAE employees whilst identifying the principal factors that can aid in fulfilling the HR practices.

Hypothetical framework

This study focused on the effect of HR practices on employee retention in the UAE based on the perceptions of local and expatriate employees (Figure 1). This is important because of the empirical links between effective HR practices, organisation success and employee retention (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019; Kaur, 2017; Yin et al., 2019). This study investigates HR practices: recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, training and development, performance appraisals, employee empowerment, and their effect on employee retention in higher education. The follow-up of prior research has indicated that employees' perceptions of various HR practices have impacted



Source: Geringer, J.M., Colette, F.A., & Milliman, J.F. (2002). In search of "best practices" in international human resource management: research design and methodology. *Human Resource Management*, 41, 5–30.

FIGURE 1: Research framework.

TABLE 1a: Background of respondents.

Institution	Retrieved survey
University of Applied Technology, Dubai	100
University of Information Science, Dubai	86
University of Management Sciences, Abu Dhabi	84
Total	270

TABLE 1b: Background of respondents.

Nationality	Freq.	%
United Arab Emirates	144	53.3
Non-UAE	126	46.7
Total	270	100.0

TABLE 1c: Background of respondents.

Education	Freq.	%
Bachelor's degree (or equivalent)	152	56.3
High school	54	20.0
Master's degree (or equivalent)	38	14.1
Postgraduate qualification (non-master's degree)	20	7.4
Doctorate degree (or equivalent)	6	2.2
Total	270	100.0

TABLE 1d: Background of respondents.

Length of career	Freq.	%
0–9 years	178	65.9
9 years and above	92	34.1
Total	270	100.0

TABLE 1e: Background of respondents.

Age	Freq.	%
20 to less than 25	50	18.5
25 to less than 30	46	17.0
Under 20	46	17.0
30 to less than 35	44	16.3
35 to less than 40	34	12.6
40 to less than 45	26	9.6
45 to less than 50	12	4.4
50 to less	6	2.2
Total	270	100.0

TABLE 1f: Background of respondents.

Duration of current job	Freq.	%
0–9 years	224	83.0
9 years and above	46	17.0
Total	270	100.0

TABLE 1g: Background of respondents.

Employment status	Freq.	%
Full-time	234	86.7
Part-time	36	13.3
Total	270	100.0

TABLE 1h: Background of respondents.

Gender	Freq.	%
Female	148	54.8
Male	122	45.2
Total	270	100.0

UAE, United Arab Emirates.

employee satisfaction levels and their willingness to remain in the employment (Beijer et al., 2021; Okbagaber, 2019).

The general purpose of HR practices in the educational setting is to attract, develop, retain and motivate staff of an educational institution in order to meet the organisation's mission (Adekoya et al., 2021; Javed, Javed, Ahmed, & Anjum, 2019). Thus, this study conceptualised that the HR practices such as recruitment, selection, empowerment, compensation and benefits, training and development, performance appraisals can all impact the employees' retention in private higher institutions in UAE directly and indirectly. These activities have been dubbed as the best practices by Geringer et al. (2002), and Yesufu (2020).

In addition, the given framework acknowledges the different practices that HR consists of and the various strategies or practices used by organisation managers to recruit and select, develop, utilise, reward and maximise the potential of HRs in an organisation. The HR practices conceptualised in the given framework have all been confirmed in empirical studies to relate to each other and have significant effects on firm performance and employee satisfaction (Kumudha & Harsha, 2016; Tangthong, Trimetsoontorn, & Rojniruntikul, 2014). This implies that the management of any organisation needs to improve the employees' compensation, training and development in order to develop their skills and advance their knowledge, abilities, attitudes and behaviour (Adekoya et al., 2021; Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018; Kakar, Raziq, & Khan, 2015), which in return will motivate the employees to feel attached to the organisation and offer their loyalty to its improvement and success (Javed et al., 2019).

The employee retention in this research is the dependent variable, whilst the independent variable is the HR practices. These practices (recruitment and selection, empowerment, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits) are considered essential for private educational institutions' financial income, employees' growth and well-being. The following hypotheses were proposed based on the studies that relate employees' retention to the effectiveness of HR outcomes:

H1: Recruitment and selection practices have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention.

H2: Empowerment has a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention.

H3: Compensation and benefits have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention.

H4: Training and development have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention.

H5: Performance appraisals have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention.

H6: The HR practices improved the perception of retention among UAE and expatriate employees.

Methodology

The population of this study is the employees in three private higher educational institutions in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. These institutions (see Table 1) are given pseudo names to protect their anonymity and identity. These institutions are

TABLE 2: Results of Cronbach's alpha.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Human resource practices		
Recruitment and selection practices	0.803	5
Empowerment practices	0.782	5
Compensation and benefits	0.846	5
Training and development	0.829	5
Performance appraisals	0.814	5
Employee retention	0.952	5

University of Applied Technology and University of Information Science, both of which are in Dubai and the University of Management Sciences in Abu Dhabi. The population of the employees in each institution is approximately 400 local and expatriate employees. Hence, the population of employees across the three institutions is approximately 1200. A random sampling method was used to identify a sample for the study. The survey questionnaire was distributed through an online survey builder to 350 respondents and a total of 270 complete responses were received from employees (locals and expatriates). This amounts to 77% response rate after removing incomplete submissions. The total responses were from three different private higher educational institutions in UAE. The results in Table 1 show that the responses from the universities were as follows: 100 responses from University of Applied Technology, 86 from University of Information Science and 84 from University of Management Sciences.

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire survey based on 5-point Likert scale of (1) not at all, (2) slightly, (3) somewhat, (4) moderately and (5) to a great extent. The instrument of HR practices was adopted from Geringer et al. (2002), whilst the employee retention instrument was adapted from literature and previous studies on employee satisfaction. The overall instrument has two sections: Background of respondents (Section A); HR practices (Section B) with five factors and 30 items, such as recruitment and selection (five items), training and development (five items), performance appraisal (five items), compensation and benefits (five items) and empowerment (five items). Section B also included the employee recruitment (dependent variable), which has only five items.

Whilst the reliability and validity of the instrument of HR practices were not reported by Geringer et al. (2002), the instrument's usability and reliability were confirmed by Yesufu (2016) in his study with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.88. This study also confirmed the reliability of the instrument as presented in Table 2 by computing the Cronbach's alpha of each factor in the Statistical Package for Social Science software (SPSS version 25). The results indicated that the alpha coefficients of the HR practices range from 0.782 to 0.846 and the employee retention value is 0.952. Thus, the reliability was achieved as these coefficients are between the recommended values by Ursachi, Horodnic and Zait (2015).

The analysis method used in this study is inferential statistics because of the established literature and findings of previous

studies on the relationship between HR practices and employee retention and the impact of the practices on employee retention. The inferential statistics also aid in checking the proposed hypotheses, performing regression analyses and generating the basic descriptive results, such as the mean scores and standard deviations of items of HR practices and employee retention.

Findings

Demographic data

The complete received survey questionnaire was 270 employees, 77% of distributed surveys. The demographic data indicate responses comprised female employees ($n = 148$, 54.8%) and male employees ($n = 122$, 45.2%). The higher number of female employees is a representation of the fact that there are more female employees than male employees in the UAE higher education sector. It might also be because of the efforts of the UAE government and other private organisations in empowering women and intensifying their employment in the country. In addition, 152 of the employees ($n = 152$, 56.3%) hold a bachelor's degree (or equivalent), followed by high school certificate ($n = 54$, 20%), master's degree or equivalent ($n = 38$, 14.1%), postgraduate qualification and non-master's degree ($n = 20$, 7.4%) and doctorate degree or equivalent ($n = 6$, 2.2%).

Majority of the respondents in the study were citizens of the UAE ($n = 144$, 53.3%), followed by expatriates ($n = 126$, 46.7%). Also, most of the respondents had been in their current job for up to nine years ($n = 224$, 83%), followed by those who were in their current job for more than nine years ($n = 46$, 17%). In terms of their employment status, most of the respondents were full-time employees ($n = 234$, 86.7%), followed by the part-time employees ($n = 36$, 13.3%).

Perceptions of human resource practices and employee retention

The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. The mean scores of HR practices and employee retention were between the range of 3.00 and 4.31, whilst the standard deviations of their items scored between the range of 0.932 and 1.577. Also, employee retention (dependent variable) has a mean score of 3.53 (on a 5-point scale), whilst recruitment and selection of HR practices have the mean score of 4.02; followed by empowerment (3.64); compensation and benefits (3.59); training and development (3.62) and performance appraisal (3.83). These mean scores indicate that, in general, there were moderately positive perceptions of HR practices in the three private higher institutions in the UAE that formed part of the study, although recruitment and selection practices have the highest mean score and the best positive level of performance perception amongst other factors.

Furthermore, the mean scores of all items in Table 1 indicate that some aspects of HR practices performed better than others, as employees agreed more on the selection of

TABLE 3: Results of descriptive statistics of items and Cronbach's alpha results (DV: Employee retention).

Numbers	Items	Mean	SD
Recruitment and selection practices		4.02	0.827
1	A person's ability to perform the requirements of the job	4.31	0.932
2	A personal interview	4.21	0.996
3	Having the right connections (e.g. school, family, friends, region, government, etc.)	3.68	1.309
4	A person's ability to get along well with others already working there	4.02	1.045
5	The organisation's belief that people will stay long with them (e.g. 5 years or longer)	3.87	1.205
Empowerment practices		3.64	0.918
6	I have the opportunity to determine how I do the job	3.06	1.489
7	I take appropriate action without waiting for approval	4.19	0.974
8	My work makes good use of my skill and ability	3.33	1.392
9	I decide on the implementation of new products and services	3.80	1.165
10	I believe that I am empowering my colleagues	3.83	1.201
Compensation and benefits		3.59	1.06
11	I am satisfied with the pay that I receive	3.71	1.283
12	I earn more than others who do similar work at other organisations	3.71	1.318
13	My pay encourages me to improve the quality of my work	3.54	1.292
14	I will receive a reward if I do something to improve my work	3.25	1.577
15	The non-monetary benefits that I receive are better than in other similar organisations	3.72	1.241
Training and development		3.62	0.972
16	I am given the training to attain higher educational and professional qualifications	3.71	1.295
17	I have received sufficient training to do my job effectively	3.00	1.436
18	I am trained in quality improvement skills	3.34	1.394
19	I am arranged with a mentor to facilitate career planning	4.19	1.076
20	I am given training on regular basis	3.88	1.058
Performance appraisals		3.83	0.951
21	The quality of my work is an important factor in evaluating my job performance	3.61	1.393
22	I am regularly given feedback on my job performance	3.75	1.260
23	I am satisfied with the existing performance appraisal system	3.99	1.144
24	The performance ratings were performed periodically	4.19	1.105
25	The performance rating is helpful to identify my strength and weakness	3.63	1.356
Employee retention		3.90	1.114
26	I am prepared to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected to help this organisation to be successful	4.11	1.148
27	I plan to make this organisation my career	3.74	1.253
28	I feel a lot of loyalty to this organisation	3.95	1.214
29	This is the best organisation for me to work for	3.74	1.253
30	I would recommend this organisation to a friend who is looking for a job	3.95	1.214

SD, standard deviation.

employees based on their ability to perform the requirements of the job (item 1, mean score: 4.31), conducting a personal interview during the recruitment and selection process (item 2, mean score: 4.21), recruitment based on person's ability to get along well with other employees (item 4, mean score: 4.02), employees taking appropriate action without waiting for approval (item 7), employers' arrangement of a mentor for employees to facilitate career planning (item 19), and periodic performance ratings (item 24), which all have the mean scores of 4.19, respectively. In addition, whilst the descriptive results showed that the recruitment and selection process is relatively above moderate, the results also indicate the need for improvements in the areas of

TABLE 4a: Regression analysis (all employees).

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta		
Coefficients [†]					
1 (Constant)	0.146	0.218	-	0.672	0.502
Recruitment and selection	0.062	0.069	0.046	0.898	0.370
Empowerment	0.142	0.068	0.117	2.077	0.039
Compensation and benefits	0.155	0.074	0.147	2.103	0.036
Training and development	-0.197	0.082	-0.172	-2.411	0.017
Performance appraisals	0.820	0.074	0.700	11.152	0.001

[†], $p < 0.05$; [‡], $p < 0.01$; [§], $p < 0.001$.**TABLE 4b:** Regression analysis (all employees).

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>n</i>
Model summary					
1	0.797 [†]	0.635	0.628	91.850	270

Note: Predictors (Constant) are recruitment and selection, empowerment, compensation and benefits, training and development, performance appraisals, Dependent variable: employee retention.

[†], $p < 0.05$; [‡], $p < 0.01$; [§], $p < 0.001$.

training and development of employees, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and empowerment.

Similarly, the perception level of the employee retention is not as high as the recruitment and selection process. Based on the 5-point Likert scale, the mean scores for items under the employee retention were between somewhat (3), moderate (4) and to a great extent (5); the employees' rating of their organisations in terms of work (item 29) had the lowest mean score of 3.74, followed by employees' plan to make the organisation their personal career (item 27, mean score: 3.74), employees' loyalty to their organisation (item 28, mean score: 3.95) and their perception of recommending their organisation to friends looking for a job (item 30), which scored 3.95.

Impact of human resource practices on employee retention (all employees)

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to first check the general impact of HR practices on employee retention based on the perspectives of all the employees in the studied private higher institutions in UAE. The results of the regression analysis (Table 4) showed that 63.5% of the variance in employee retention was explained by the five practices of HR in the private higher institutions in UAE ($R^2 = 0.635$, $F[270] = 91.850$, $p < 0.001$).

The given results between employee retention and HR practices also showed that not all the practices had significant impact on employee retention in the higher education institutions; only performance appraisals had the highest strong and positive significant impact ($\beta = 0.820$, $p < 0.001$), followed by weak impacts from empowerment ($\beta = 0.142$, $p < 0.039$) and compensation and benefits ($\beta = 0.155$, $p < 0.036$). Also, recruitment and selection was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.062$, $p < 0.370$), whilst training and development was negatively significant ($\beta = -0.197$, $p < 0.017$). Thus, it could be said that whilst performance appraisals, empowerment and compensation and benefits are significant

TABLE 5a: Multiple regression results for United Arab Emirates citizens and expatriates.

Nationality	Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta		
UAE Citizens	1 (Constant)	-0.069	0.235	-	-0.296	0.768
	Recruitment and selection	-0.161	0.091	-0.123	-1.776	0.078
	Empowerment	0.242	0.091	0.189	2.655	0.009
	Compensation and benefits	0.418	0.108	0.364	3.878	0.001
	Training and development	-0.365	0.113	-0.298	-3.224	0.002
	Performance appraisals	0.909	0.091	0.751	9.953	0.001

TABLE 5b: Multiple regression results for United Arab Emirates citizens and expatriates.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>n</i>
Model summary					
1	0.871†	0.758	0.749	86.517	138

†, $p < 0.05$; ‡, $p < 0.01$; §, $p < 0.001$.**TABLE 5c:** Multiple regression results for United Arab Emirates citizens and expatriates.

Nationality	Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta		
Expatriates	1 (Constant)	0.557	0.416	-	1.340	0.183
	Recruitment and selection	0.141	0.111	0.099	1.271	0.206
	Empowerment	0.078	0.100	0.071	0.785	0.434
	Compensation and benefits	0.024	0.101	0.026	0.240	0.811
	Training and development	-0.077	0.116	-0.072	-0.659	0.511
	Performance appraisals	0.712	0.117	0.643	6.075	0.000

TABLE 5d: Multiple regression results for United Arab Emirates citizens and expatriates.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>n</i>
Model summary					
1	0.704‡	0.496	0.475	23.623	120

UAE, United Arab Emirates.

†, $p < 0.05$; ‡, $p < 0.01$; §, $p < 0.001$.

HR practices that contributed to employee retention, only performance appraisals had the most important impact, which makes it the most critical predictor of retention amongst all the employees (local and expatriates) in the studied institutions in UAE.

Impact of human resource practices on retention of local employees (UAE citizens)

The impact of HR practices on employee retention based on the nationality of the employees (locals and expatriates) was also checked. The results in Table 5 show that for the local employees (UAE citizens), 87.1% of the variance in employee retention was explained by HR practices ($R^2 = 0.871$, $F(138) = 86.517$, $p < 0.001$). The top HR practices that impacted employee retention of the local employees were performance appraisals ($\beta = 0.909$, $p < 0.001$), followed by compensation and benefits ($\beta = 0.418$, $p < 0.001$) and empowerment ($\beta = 0.242$, $p < 0.009$), whilst recruitment and selection ($\beta = -0.161$, $p < 0.078$) and training and development were negatively significant ($\beta = -0.365$, $p < 0.002$).

Also, the results in Table 4 indicate that whilst recruitment and selection and training and development had negative coefficients with employee retention in the perspectives of UAE employees, empowerment, compensation and benefits and performance appraisals were significant HR practices that contributed to employee retention amongst UAE

citizens. Performance appraisals were also the most important practices and critical predictors of retention amongst all the UAE employees (citizens) in the studied higher educational institutions.

Impact of human resource practices on retention of expatriate employees

For the expatriate employees in the studied private higher education institutions in the UAE, the regression results in Table 5 show that 49.6% of the variance in employee retention was explained by HR practices ($R^2 = 0.496$, $F(120) = 23.623$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that HR practices generally had an impact on the retention of expatriate employees in the institutions. They also showed that, for HR practices amongst expatriate employees, performance appraisals were the only practices that had a significant impact on employee retention ($\beta = 0.712$, $p < 0.001$), whilst recruitment and selection ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.206$), empowerment ($\beta = 0.078$, $p < 0.434$), compensation and benefits ($\beta = 0.024$, $p < 0.811$), training and development ($\beta = -0.077$, $p < 0.511$) were all less significant. Thus, performance appraisals were the most important HR practice and the most critical factor of retention amongst all the expatriate employees in the studied institutions.

Finally, Table 6 presents the conclusions from the hypotheses, which indicate that all the proposed hypotheses were supported in this study, except for hypotheses 1 and 4 –

TABLE 6: Hypotheses presentation.

Hypothesis	Result	Conclusion
Human resource practices have an effect on perceptions of employee retention in UAE	Yes: ($r = 0.797, p < 0.001$) Significant	Supported
H1: Recruitment and selection practices have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention	No: ($B = 0.062, p = 0.370$) Not Significant	Not Supported
H2: Empowerment has a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention	Yes: ($B = 0.142, p = 0.039$) Significant	Supported
H3: Compensation and benefits have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention	Yes: ($B = 0.155, p = 0.036$) Significant	Supported
H4: Training and development have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention	Yes, Negative: ($B = -0.197, p = 0.017$)	Supported (Negative)
H5: Performance appraisals have a significant impact on perceptions of employee retention	Yes: ($B = 0.820, p = 0.001$) Significant	Supported
H6: The HR practices improved the perception of retention amongst UAE and expatriate employees	Yes: ($r = 0.871, p < 0.001$) Significant	Supported

HR, Human resource; UAE, United Arab Emirates.

the recruitment and selection practices of HR had no significant impact on the retention of all the employees (UAE citizens and expatriates), whilst training and development had a negative significant impact on perceptions of all employee retention.

Discussion

The focus of this study was to explore the perceptions of employees in three private higher institutions in UAE on HR practices and retention and to check the impact of HR practices (recruitment and selection, empowerment, compensation and benefits, training and development and performance appraisals) on employee retention. This study examined the critical activities and practices of HR that contributed most to employee retention, whilst it also examined the impact of employee retention on HR practices based on the employee nationality (UAE citizens and expatriates).

Firstly, the descriptive results show that in general there were weak-to-moderate positive perceptions of HR practices and employee retention in the studied higher institutions in UAE, whilst some of these practices also performed better than others. Recruitment and selection had the highest and best positive level of perception, which might be because of the positive feeling from the employees that they were recruited based on their skills, capability and other considerable factors. The mean scores of the items of recruitment and selection practice supported this assertion and are in line with other studies of HR practices in different settings, such as the studies of Harcourt (2016) and Bogatova (2017), which all found that the channels (online recruiting, social media, newspapers and others) and process used in finding candidates and selecting them can influence the employees' perceptions of their job, organisation and its management.

Furthermore, this study showed that there is some level of retention amongst all the employees of the studied private higher institutions, as they have moderate to weak perceptions of these organisations' ratings in terms of work, plan to make the organisations their personal career, loyalty to the organisations and recommending them to friends looking for a job. This is consistent with the findings of Kumudha and Harsha (2016) in their study of the relationship between HR practices and employee retention in a private hospital in Dubai, as it showed that the head of an organisation needs to be more conscious of his leadership and managerial styles, fairness in dealing with employees, giving them a

clear understanding of the management expectations and considering their emotions and feelings about their work.

Secondly, this study showed that HR practices in general influenced and improved retention amongst all the employees, as the overall practices have strong impact on employee retention ($R^2 = 0.635$), thus supporting the literature and previous studies that had been reviewed. The regression results also revealed that amongst all the five practices, only performance appraisals have a highly significant effect on retention amongst all the employees, whilst empowerment and compensation and benefits have weak significant effects. These findings are in contrast with the study of Abutayeh and Al-Qatawneh (2012) about HR practices in private companies in Jordan, which found selection of staff to be the practice with the highest impact.

However, the non-significance of the impact of recruitment and selection and the negative significance of the impact of training and development on employee retention could mean that these practices are not performed to enhance retention of employees or that the focus of the management is on the motivation-enhancing practices (e.g. performance appraisal, empowerment and compensation and benefits). Empirical studies of HR practices and employee retention in public sectors (Fahim, 2018; Otoo, Assuming, & Agyei, 2018), commercial banks (Eva, 2018), higher education sector (Javed et al., 2019) and government agencies (Alosani et al., 2021) have all shown skill-enhancing practices (recruitment and selection, training and development) to be more important in the public sector, whilst motivation-enhancing practices are more focused on in the private sector.

Thirdly, the results of the impact of HR practices on employee retention based on the employees' nationality indicate that these overall practices influenced the retention of local employees (UAE citizens) more than the expatriates: the overall practice influenced the retention of expatriate employees with a moderate effect ($R^2 = 0.496$), whilst empowerment, compensation and benefits and performance appraisals were the practices that had significant influences and impacts on retention of the UAE employees. These findings are consistent with that of Alosani et al. (2021) in their study of HR practices in UAE government agencies.

Conversely, for expatriate employees in the studied private higher institutions, the only practice that had a significant

influence and impact on employee retention was performance appraisals. The reason behind these disparities between the perceptions of UAE citizens and expatriates might be because of the difference between how the organisations treat expatriate employees compared with how they deal with citizens and what HR practices the expatriates considered important compared with what the organisations are focused on. These are in line with Abutayeh and Al-Qatawneh (2012), Austin, Chapman, Farah, Wilson and Ridge (2014), and Shayah and Sun (2018), as they all indicate that many organisations tend to adopt a favourable approach towards local employees and observe activities that expatriate employees might consider biased even though these activities are in line with the organisations' goals, such as the goal of achieving the Emiratisation process and governmental requirements in the UAE.

The implication of this research for practice is that HR practitioners should be able to fairly manage both local and expatriate employees despite the disparity of policies for locals and expatriate workers. The need to protect and build the local citizen workforce is known and acceptable; however, employers should seek to build a perception of mutual loyalty between them and their expatriate workforce. Hence, there is a need for further research on employee satisfaction in the UAE higher education with a larger sample and data size from public and private institutions. Further research could apply the psychological contract principles in a bid to develop on the knowledge of building of perceptions of loyalty and its implication on retention.

Conclusion

This study concludes that HR practices influenced employee retention in the studied private higher educational institutions in UAE. Although this study's findings are in contrast with previous studies in the sense that performance appraisals, empowerment, compensation and benefits are the top practices that contributed to the retention of all the employees (UAE citizens and expatriates). Performance appraisals are also the most important practice and critical predictor of retention amongst all the employees (UAE citizens and expatriates). The lack of influence and impact from HR practices such as empowerment, compensation and benefits, and training and development, on expatriates' retention mean that higher educational institutions need to carry out targeted and focused improvements in their various HRM because these factors motivate employees to stay with the organisations and continue their jobs.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

Both the authors worked jointly in the conceptualisation of the research topic, in the direction, the design and distribution

of survey, the write-up, analysis of data, report and interpretation of data and the final report. The proof reading was carried out by both authors to update, correct and agree on best wordings and final submission.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

The data used were obtained via survey, the data are represented in the manuscript in Tables 1–5.

Disclaimer

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