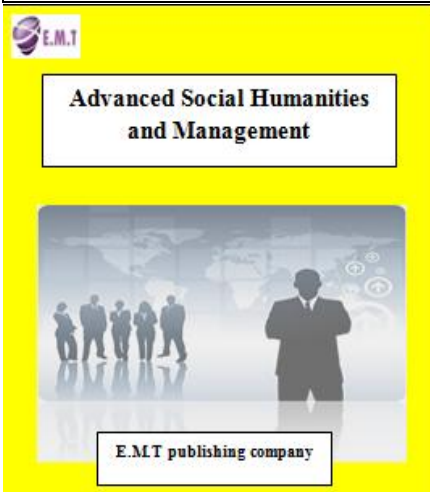




## Designing and validating a strategic human resource management model in an electricity distribution company

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to design and validate the strategic human resource management (SHRM) model in the electricity distribution industry. In this regard, first, we proposed the initial model of SHRM practices, and then validate the proposed model. To do this, the prepared questionnaire was distributed among 168 managers and informed experts selected by stratified random sampling, and initial model was proposed by analyzing data obtained from 144 eligible questionnaires using exploratory factor analysis. Results of this stage reached to a model comprised of 30 dimensions and 5 practices including employment (human resource supplement), employees' empowerment, performance management, compensation, and talent and succession planning. In the second stage, a prepared questionnaire was distributed in a sample of 180 people in order to validate the model. One hundred sixty eight questionnaires were returned and used for confirmatory factor analysis. Results of this stage confirmed the validity of initial model and its practices and related dimensions.

**Keywords:** Strategic Human Resource Management, Electricity Distribution Industry, Employment, Empowerment, Performance Management, Compensation, Talent Management, Succession Planning

### 1.Introduction

Today's companies are seeking for rapid growth, continuous development, effectiveness, profitability, flexibility, preparing for the future, and reaching to a competitive advantage by employing well-qualified human resources. Without these, it is impossible for organizations to operate effectively and competitively (Schuler and Jackson, 2001: 239-253).The organizations' managers are completely informed that the competitive advantage is resulted from a suitable system for recruiting and managing human resources, and so, aligning human resource policies and organizational strategic goals should be emphasized (Darwish, 2009: 2-6).

According to Baron and Kreps (1991: 13), human resource is a key for organization's success or fail. Since, the human resources policies, procedures, and functions should be bounded to organizational strategy, and the organization's managers and leaders should have a right perception of its issues and be sensitive to its outcomes.

Despite the fact that the strategic approach to human resource in the form of SHRM can be considered as an overall process in relation to long-term issues of human resource as a part of strategic management (Doaei and Shahbeiki, 2011: 2), investigating the existing perspectives in the field of human resource management leads to various attitudes. Conducted studies indicating that there is a deep gap between approaches to human resources in the third millennium and what is really done in practice. As argued by Becker and Gerhart (1996: 779-801), common practices for leading and managing the human resources is mostly reflected from traditional perspectives; rather than employees be considered as a source of value creation, are considered as a cost imposed to organizations even better to be reduced. This has led to misunderstanding the role and strategic importance of human resources in fulfilling the organization's mission and objectives and not be utilized as a strategic factor for performance improvement.



Since related theoretical background indicates a strong and significant relationship between human resource's functions and procedures and organizational performance, understanding the importance of SHRM in administrative system of the country not only requires an inherent discussion about employees in the organization, but also requires a comprehensive scientific-based exploration resulting to design and explain the SHRM model (Abbaspoor, 2012).

According to what mentioned about the SHRM and with emphasis on results of the studies investigated the effect of this type of management on the organizational effectiveness, designing and explaining a suitable model for SHRM in the large organizations including the under-study company is emphasized in order to improve the different aspects of organization. Investigating the company's records indicates that a good tendency to human resource's issues is emerged in line with the overall strategies of the company in the last decade. Several research projects conducted in the case of human resources issues indicates the favorites and serious attention of this company's top managers.

Given this fact that there is not a comprehensive research in this regard and considering the positive attitude and tendency of top managers to SHRM system, the purpose of the current paper is to cover this gap and explain the SHRM practices in order to propose and validate a suitable model in this company. Therefore, the main questions of this paper are as follows: 1) how is the appropriate model of SHRM in this company? 2) How much important is each practices of SHRM in this company? 3) Does the extracted model of research have validity?

At first, different aspects of SHRM are identified, and then, the SHRM practices are determined. After proposing the initial model, it is validated and importance of its practices and dimensions is specified.

## **2.Traditional and strategic human resource management**

According to Inyang (2008), traditional human resource management is a set of organizational activities targeted at recruiting, improving, and surviving the effective work force. Most of transactional and administrative activities including the education, motivation, compensation, employees' commitment, performance quality etc. are to reach the collective goals effectively (Inyang, 2008).

However, SHRM is growing and there exists a little consensus among the scholars in providing an agreeable definition (Abdal and Al-Smadi, 2011: 100). Hendry and Pettigrew are of the opinion that SHRM is comprised of four components including the planning, adopting an integrative approach to designing and managing the human resource systems, aligning the practices and policies of human resource management with the strategy of business, and considering the organization's employees as an strategic resource in order to reach the competitive strategy (Kelliher and Perrett, 2001).

Indeed, SHRM is comprised of some organizational functions to provide the appropriate and harmonious human resources in order to reach the organizational goals and influence the employees' skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with their jobs and organizational goals (Collins and Clark, 2003).

According to Becker and Huselid (2006), traditional human resource management and strategic human resource management are different in two ways: first, SHRM is focused on the organizational rather than individual performance. Secondly, SHRM emphasize that the role of human resource management system is a solution for commercial problems rather than individual and separate activities reflecting the shift from emphasis on employees' administrative output to the organizational overall output (Becker and Huselid, 2006: 899).

Given the increasing importance of SHRM as a key factor for fulfilling the organization's strategy, various models are proposed by different researchers each of which considers it from different points of view.

## **3.SHRM models**

There exists several classifications for SHRM models, some of them are theoretical and focused on content, and the others are operational and resulted from conducted researches. Two classifications are discussed here. Content classification includes the models based on the organization's strategy and increasing or real models (Arabi, 2003). Operational classification includes the models based on the organizational effectiveness, the models based on the organizational policies, the strategic human resource management model (comparative model) of David Guest, the



matching model of strategic human resource management, the Analoui's SHRM model, the Wangdheen SHRM model, Rees and Mcbain's model of factors affecting the human resource's strategies and policies, and Wilson's cycle model of SHRM (Beer et al., 1984: 16; Fombrun et al., 1984; Guest, 1992, 1997; Devanna et al., 1984; Analoui, 2002; Wangdheen, 2003; Yorks, 2005: 10).

Each of these models emphasize on one or more practices as the most important practices of SHRM. These practices are discussed in the following.

#### **4.SHRM practices**

Given the mentioned subjects about the strategic human resources, SHRM is considered as a pattern of human resource's practices designed for enabling the organization to reach its goals (Yorks, 2005). In other words, when human resources of a company are consistent with each other (i.e., internal consistency) and consistent with strategic objectives (I.e., external consistency) the organization's performance and outputs will be increased. When the activities of human resource management are in line with the company's strategy, these activities become a precise mechanism for recruiting, developing, and motivating the human capital. In other words, SHRM is concentrated on the "work" that the company performs with human resources, and human resource practices refers to "how" managing these resources. From this perspective, SHRM is particularly comprised of several human resource practices such as performance appraisal, compensation, development plans, etc. these practices lead to employees' appropriate behaviors and enables the managers to reach the long-term goals in order to fulfill the organization's strategy (Schuler and Jackson, 2005).

Some scholars like Schuler and Jackson emphasize the performance improvement in addition to competitive advantage, and believe that the SHRM practices are the same practices as being done by human resource management so far. However, what distinct the SHRM duties is emphasis on these two issues i.e. to gain competitive advantage and improve the performance (Schuler and Jackson, 2008: 2). This is because the developed and skillful human resource is the most important competitive advantage in turbulent and complex environment according to these scholars (Gooderham, 2008: 2).

On this basis, human resource management practices refers to those tasks and duties implemented in both the large and small organizations to provide the appropriate and harmonious human resource in order to fulfill the organization's goals. In this regard, Fombrun et al. (1984) have suggested five practices of employment, empowerment, compensation, rewards and benefits, and management development for SHRM. Guest (1992) has emphasized on five practices of employment, extensive work design, rewards and benefits, and seeking for human resources. Mazen and El-Kayaly also suggested 6 practices of planning, selecting and employing, educating and developing, rewards and benefits, security and health, employees and work relations, and seeking for human resources (2004: 5).

Furthermore, Rees and Mcbain (2004) have proposed four duties of employment, education and improvement, performance appraisal, and rewards and benefits. Wilson (2005) has emphasized on 10 practices of employment, education and improvement, empowerment, performance appraisal, extensive work design, performance-based payment, rewards and benefits, security and health, employees and work relations, and seeking for human resources for SHRM. Using the indices that are emphasized by Pfeffer (1994), Hung and Chang (2005) have mentioned seven practices of employment, education and improvement, compensation, flexible work plans, employees' effective communications, equal job opportunities, and management development (as cited in Afjeh and esmaeilzadeh, 2009). In addition, Chen and Huang (2009) have introduced five practices of recruitment, education, performance appraisal, compensation, and employees' participation for SHRM.

#### **5.Designing the initial model**

In order to identify the latent variables (SHRM practices) and design the initial model, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized. In EFA, researcher is to detect the fundamental structure of a relative large set of variables. In this research, 47 items were considered for dimensions related to SHRM practices, five factors (practices) and 30 dimensions were identified, and validity of the questionnaire was confirmed.



First, to ensure that the existing data can be subject to EFA, KMO index and Bartlet test were used. As it can be seen in table 1, results of KMO and Bartlet test indicate the appropriateness of data for Conducting EFA.

Table 1. KMO index and Bartlet test

<b>KMO</b>		.947
<b>Bartlet test</b>	Chi-square	9125.200
	df	1081
	sig	.000

Given the communalities values, 17 dimensions of communalities lower than .50 were excluded from the analysis step by step. Finally, 30 dimensions with factor loadings of greater than .50 were remained that comprised the main dimensions of SHRM.

As it can be seen in table 2, 30 remained items (dimensios) were classified in five factors (practices) and named according to related literature. These five practices are as follows: performance management, Employees' empowerment, compensation, talent management and succession planning, and employment (human resource supplement).

Table 2.extracted factors and rotated factor loadings

No.	Dimensions	practices				
		Performance management	Employees' empowerment	Compensation	Talent management and succession	employment
1	Human resource planning					.821
2	Selecting					.750
3	Recruiting					.743
4	Supportive work environment (top managers' support)		.901			
5	Optimizing the processes and work procedures		.907			
6	Clarity of objectives, responsibilities, and authorities		.865			
7	Precisely defining of performance dimensions	.944				
8	Linking the performance dimensions to fulfilling the stakeholders' expectations	.923				
9	Measuring the employees' performance	.903				
10	Providing feedback and leading the employees performance	.951				
11	Designing the compensation system			.881		
12	Classifying and evaluating the jobs			.859		
13	Paying fairly and equitably			.919		
14	Insurance benefits			.881		
15	retirement			.944		
16	Precisely determining the education needs and objectives consistent with the work and worker		.882			
17	Accurately implementing the education plans		.950			
18	Improving the knowledge and job skills		.920			
19	Management commitment to creating an open climate for organizational learning		.899			
20	Systemic approach and knowledge integration		.885			



21	Optimal allocation of tasks to employees		.871			
22	Diversity extent of job skills		.957			
23	Emphasizing on group working		.858			
24	Creating a trusted climate for employees		.820			
25	Maintaining health and safety in the workplace			.802		
26	Implementing the health and sport plans			.818		
27	Identifying the key posts				.835	
28	Specifying the needed knowledge, skill, and competencies for taking the key posts				.961	
29	Identifying the capable and talented people				.981	
30	Preparing people for recruiting and appointment				.960	

Given the results of EFA, the initial conceptual model was proposed as figure 1.

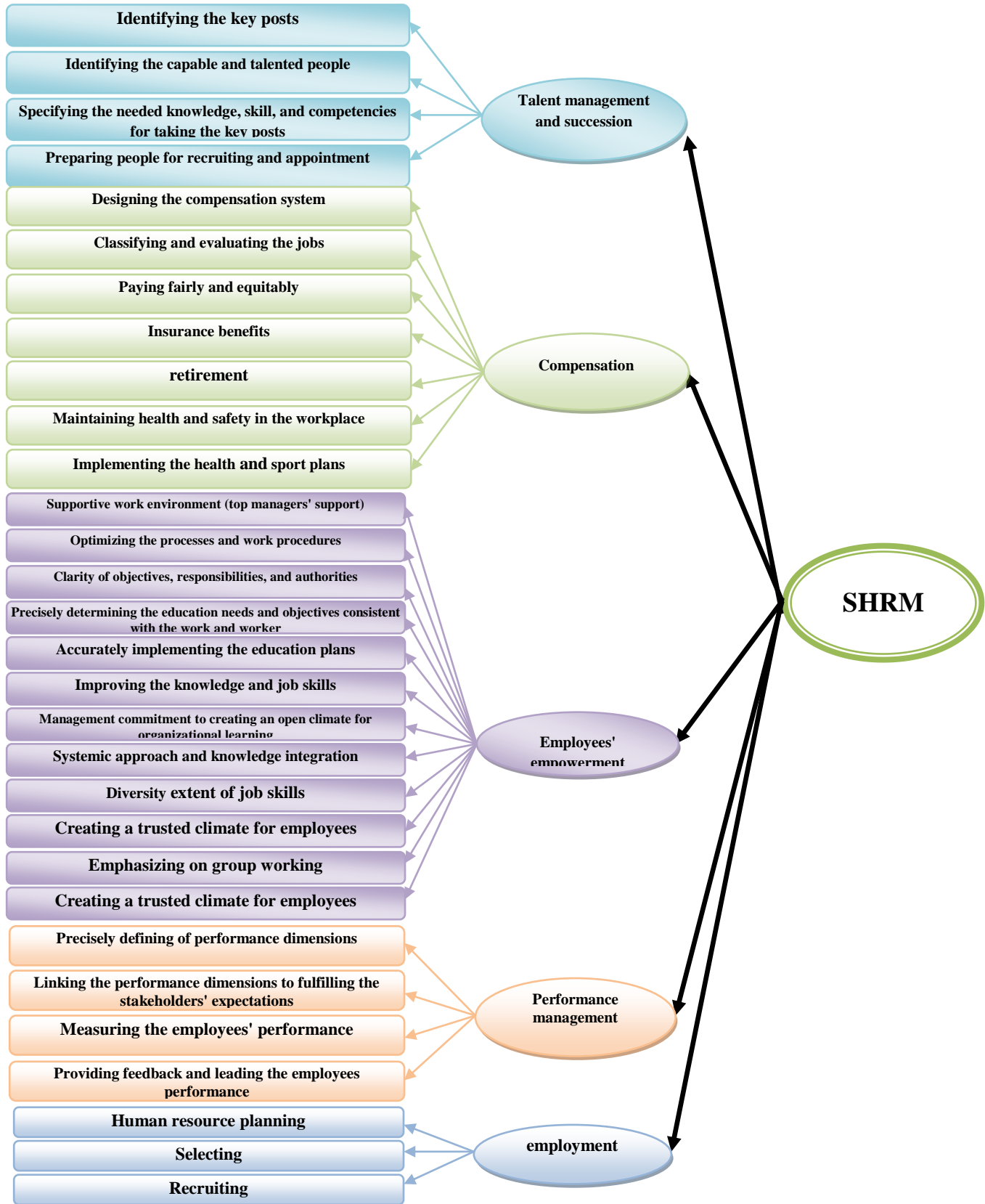


Figure 1.conceptual model of research



### 6. Validating the research model

In order to measure the validity of model, a new questionnaire with 30 dimensions and 5 practices was designed and distributed in statistical sample. This was done by Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the Amos software. Results for CFA are provided in the following.

CFA was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the factor loadings significance of SHRM dimensions were investigated, and in the second stage, the factor loadings significance of five proposed practices were investigated as the SHRM practices.

At first, the normality of gathered data should be investigated for conducting the CFA. This was accomplished by indices of kurtosis and skewness in Amos software. The values for kurtosis should be between  $\pm 7$  and for skewness between  $\pm 3$ . Then, the construct validity of model is investigated using convergence and discriminant validity. In convergence validity, the items' factor loadings should be greater than .50. In discriminant validity in order to investigate the non-overlapping of constructs, the correlation between each two constructs should not be greater than .90. finally, the model fitness is investigated using the appropriate indices.

Table 3. Results of CFA for questionnaire dimensions (First stage)

variable	dimension	Kurtosis	Skewness	Regression weight	sig	result	Combined validity
employment	1	.558	-.038	.329	.000	significant	.789
	2	-.089	-.341	.312	.000	significant	
	3	1.670	-.603	.644	.000	significant	
empowerment	4	.559	-.824	.609	.000	significant	.871
	5	.033	-.324	.695	.000	significant	
	6	1.389	-.946	.551	.000	significant	
	7	1.682	-.246	.681	.000	significant	
	8	.461	-.713	.636	.000	significant	
	9	.019	-.791	.775	.000	significant	
	10	.736	-.392	.578	.000	significant	
	11	.697	-.402	.583	.000	significant	
	12	.658	-.571	.746	.000	significant	
	13	1.983	.508	.451	.000	significant	
	14	2.415	-1.321	.646	.000	significant	
	15	2.421	-.824	.736	.000	significant	
Performance management	16	.470	-.824	.844	.000	significant	-
	17	-.037	-.692	.592	.000	significant	
	18	-1.348	-1.406	.628	.000	significant	



	19	-.743	-.962	.628	.000	significant	
compensation	20	.291	-.761	.626	.000	significant	-
	21	1.654	-1.360	.610	.000	significant	
	22	-.479	-1.002	.549	.000	significant	
	23	-.409	-.867	.660	.000	significant	
	24	-.267	-.745	.808	.000	significant	
	25	-.071	-.969	.823	.000	significant	
	26	3.980	-.894	.843	.000	significant	
Talent management and succession	27	.459	-.486	.428	.000	significant	.784
	28	-.811	-1.097	.761	.000	significant	
	29	.249	-1.553	.780	.000	significant	
	30	.295	-.997	.690	.000	significant	

These results along with the goodness of fit indices for the overall measurement model indicating the fitness of model are provided in tables 3, 4, and 5 and figures 2 and 3. In addition, the fitness indices of CFA model along with their desirable values are provided in table 6. These indices indicate the desirable fitness of measurement models and factor significance of each observed variable loaded to related latent variable were confirmed.



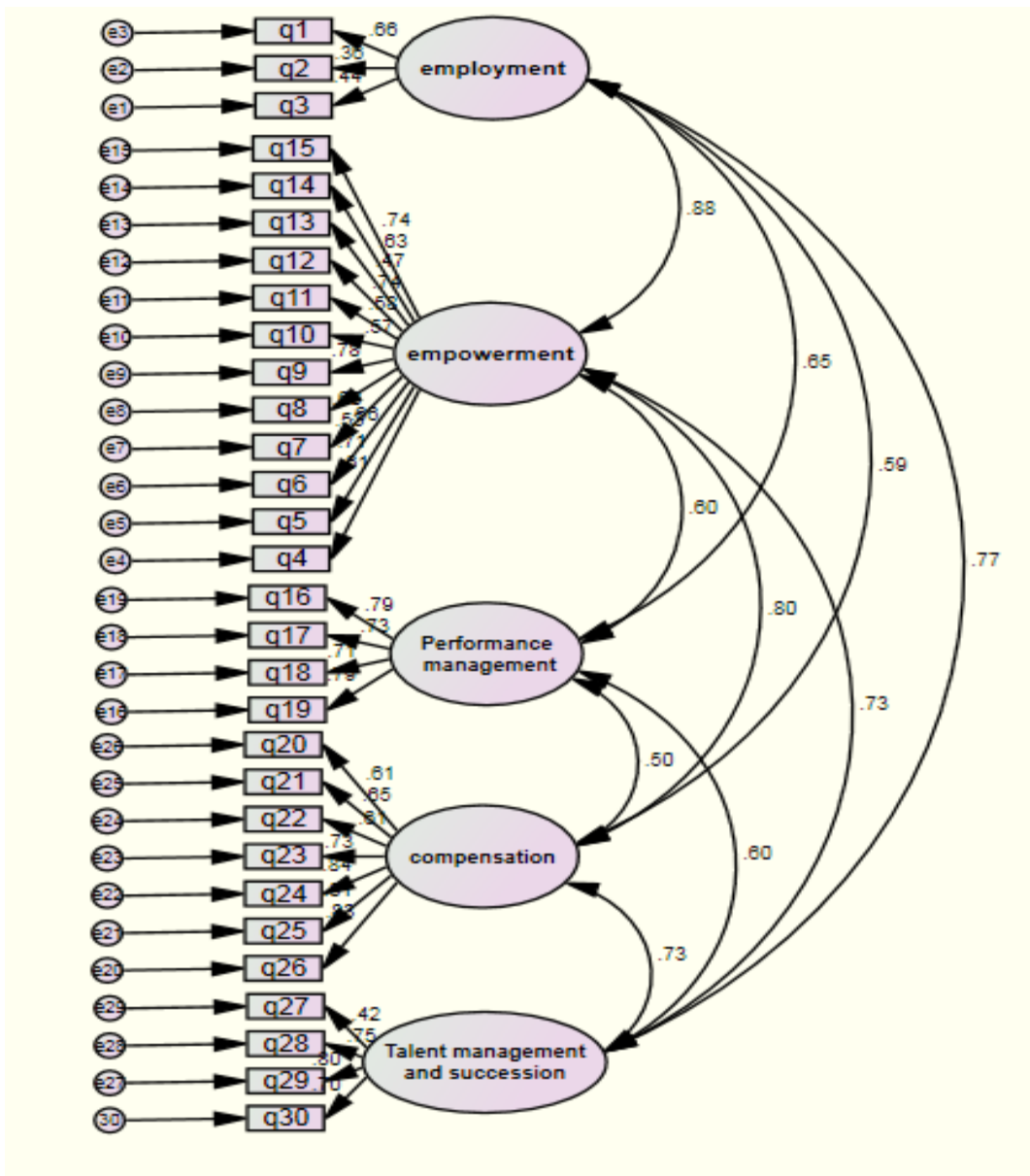


Figure 2. Final model of SHRM practices and related dimensions (stage 1)

As it can be seen in table 3, all the kurtosis values are between  $\pm 7$  and their skewness between  $\pm 3$  indicating the normality of data.

In relation to amount of factor loadings, it can be said that all the items and practices are significant. The basis for significance of items and practices is that their significance level is lower than .05. In addition, in order to greater certainty for the items with factor loadings of lower than .50 the combined validity was also calculated. The values for combined validity of all the constructs were greater than .70.



Table 4. Results of CFA for SHRM practices (stage 2)

practices	Kurtosis	Skewness	Regression weight	Sig	Result
Employment	-.704	-.739	.736	.000	significant
Employees' empowerment	-.813	-.508	.899	.000	significant
Performance management	-.805	.160	.825	.000	significant
Compensation	-.789	-.618	.930	.000	significant
Talent management and succession	-.833	-.462	.939	.000	significant

Regression weight of each extracted practices for SHRM is determined in figure 3. This figure indicates that the two practices of talent management and succession, and compensation have the greatest regression weight, and employment has the lowest one.

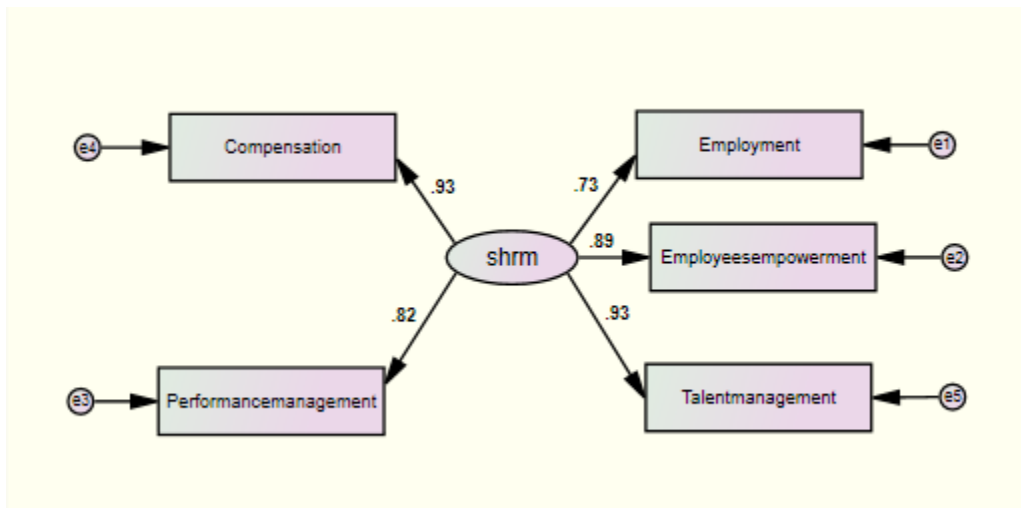


Figure 3. Final model of SHRM practices (stage 2)

As previously mentioned, correlation between each two constructs should not be greater than .90 in discriminant validity. This was fulfilled using the covariance relationships indicated in figure 3. Table 5 indicates the results of discriminant validity for questionnaire constructs.

Table 5. Results for discriminant validity

	Practices	correlation
<b>employment</b>	Employees' empowerment	.880
	Performance management	.651
	Compensation	.586
	Talent management and succession	.771
<b>Employees' empowerment</b>	Performance management	.598
	Compensation	.779
	Talent management and succession	.729
<b>Performance management</b>	Compensation	.503
	Talent management and succession	.601
<b>compensation</b>	Talent management and succession	.726



As it can be seen, the correlation of all practices in above table is lower than .90 indicating the non-overlapping of practices with each other.

Table 6. Goodness of fit indices for CFA model

indices	Desired value	Model 1 (dimensions of SHRM practices)	Model 2 (SHRM practices)
$\chi^2$	$2df \leq \chi^2 \leq 3df$	268.432	205.541
p-value	Greater than .05	.081	.093
$\chi^2/df$	Lower than 3	1.45	1.326
GFI	Greater than .90	.95	.96
RMR	Lower than .09	.06	.062
CFI	Greater than .95	.98	.97
RMSEA	Lower than .08	.03	.045

Fitness indices resulted from CFA are discussed in the following. Chi-square index is one of the absolute indices. The smaller the chi-square, more satisfying the developed model will be. If p-value is greater than .05 the chi-square value of the model is acceptable. Given this fact that the model p-value is greater than .05, it can be concluded that the model chi-square is acceptable.

One of the general indices is the normed or relative chi-square, which is calculated by dividing the chi-square to degree of freedom. Values from 1 to 3 are often accepted for this index. As it can be seen in the table, this value for desired model is 1.45 that is appropriate and acceptable.

GFI index is one of the comparative indices that should be greater than .90. This value for proposed model is .95 indicating the fitness of model. Residual matrix is one of the common matrixes that can be used for evaluating both the overall fitness (developed model) and partial fitness (parameters defined between two variables). Root mean square residual (RMR) index for developed model is .06 that is lower than critical value.

Comparative fit index (CFI) is one of the comparative indices that the values from .95 to .97 are considered acceptable and values greater than .97 are considered satisfactory. This value for developed model was .98 indicating the satisfactory fit to data.

Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is based on analysis of residual matrix similar to RMR. This value is lower than .08 for acceptable models. This value is .03 for developed model indicating its goodness of fit. According to above subjects and fitness quantitative indices, it can be concluded that the CFA model is acceptable.

### 7. Prioritizing the SHRM practices and their dimensions

In order to investigate the priorities of SHRM practices, Friedman test was conducted which its results are presented in table 7. The Rank of each practice is shown in this table. The higher the mean rank, the higher its importance will be.

Table 8. Results of Friedman test for practices

practice	rank	priority
Talent management and succession	3.45	1
Compensation	3.12	2
Employees' empowerment	3.01	3
Performance management	2.82	4
employment	2.06	5



Amongst the five identified practices of SHRM, talent management and succession is the most important and employment is the least important practice. Compensation practice is placed in the second rank, employees' empowerment in the third rank, and performance management in the fourth rank.

Table 8. Results of Friedman test for prioritizing the dimensions of SHRM practices

practice	dimension	rank	sig	priority	practice	dimension	rank	sig	priority	
Employment	1	2.13	.000	1	Performance management	16	2.47	.000	3	
	2	2.08		2		17	2.35		4	
	3	1.78		3		18	2.51		2	
Employees' empowerment	4	7.89	.000	1	compensation	19	2.67	.000	1	
	5	6.25		7		20	3.95		5	
	6	7.53		3		21	3.60		6	
	7	7.06		4		22	4.51		1	
	8	6.00		9		23	4.19		3	
	9	6.78		6		24	4.29		2	
	10	6.85		5		25	4.01		4	
	11	5.49		11		26	3.46		7	
	12	5.76		10		27	2.78		.000	1
	13	4.37		12		28	2.43			3
	14	6.18		8		29	2.59			2
	15	7.82		2		30	2.20			4

Table 8 presents the priority results for dimensions of each SHRM practice. As Friedman test shows, the significance level for all dimensions is lower than .50. Therefore, it can be concluded that the dimensions are different in terms of rank and importance. The rank and priority for dimensions of practices are presented in table 8.

### 8. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the SHRM practices in the electricity industry. Results indicated that a 5-factor model is more consistent with data. These factors are also emphasized in previous studies such as Fombrun et al. (1984), Guest (1992), Mazen and El-Kayaly (2004), Wilson (2005), and Chen and Hung (2009). Given the literature and previous studies, EFA was conducted in different forms, and finally, the highest fitness was related to 30-item model with 5 factors. Although the fitness for the models in which some items were loaded to two or three factors was higher than the models in which the items were loaded to only one factor, they were not suitable and acceptable. Finally, after eliminating some items that were loaded to more than one factor, the 5-factor model with 30-item was confirmed.

Special feature of developed model is that it is seeking for a comprehensive model in relation to SHRM practices in the two levels. Related literature indicated that practices and dimensions introduced by researchers are not comprehensive and each study is concentrated on a part of SHRM practices. The current study is conducted with emphasis on results of previous studies and included approximately all the activities in the field of human resource management.

Since these activities are identified by exploring the related theoretical and practical literature, they can be used in similar organizations. Furthermore, extracted dimensions are also existed in some other researches. However, two practices of performance management and talent management and succession are not proposed by existing models, and so, the current study is innovative in this regard. In total, it can be said that the activities and dimensions of SHRM presented in this research cannot be seen in previous studies.

Data were analyzed in the two levels of practices and dimensions using the Friedman test. Results of this test indicated that some practices and some dimensions are more important than the others are.

Amongst the five identified practices for SHRM in the Under-study Company, talent management and succession planning was the most important and employment practice was the least important practice. This result indicates



that the under-study company is concerned of talented people who can be replaced with existing employees if needed and the time required in order to reducing the effect of experts' absence on the company's performance. Despite the fact that this practice is the most important in this company and from the opinions of managers and experts, cannot be seen in related literature and proposed models. However, with a little ignorance it can be seen in the process of supplying human resource from inside the organization in some models such as Beer et al. (1984). Furthermore, the importance level of dimensions related to five practices was determined by Freidman test. According to results of this test, amongst the three identified dimensions of employment practice, human resource planning was the most important and recruiting was the least important dimension. Amongst the 12 identified dimensions of employees' empowerment practice, supportive work environment was the most important and job skills' diversity was the least important dimension. Amongst the four identified dimensions of performance management, providing feedback and leading the employees' performance was the most important and linking the performance dimensions to fulfilling the stakeholders' expectations was the least important dimension. Amongst the 7 identified dimensions of compensation, fair payment was the most important and implementing the sport plans was the least important dimension. Amongst the four identified dimensions of talent management and succession practice, identifying the key posts was the most important and preparing people for recruiting and appointment was the least important dimension.

Validity of initial model was confirmed by conducting a CFA. In a comparison between the results of EFA and CFA, it was determined that the model could be limited to five overall factors. EFA primarily indicated that each of items is more appropriate for what factor, and secondarily, specified the items loaded to more than one factor. CFA also indicated that the 5-factor model is confirmed and if 17 items of loading to more than one factor are eliminated the probability of model confirmation is increased to a great extent.

Although the results of this study is overlapped with results of the other researchers, particularly and in a different context (Iran's electricity distribution industry) has proposed a 2-level model of five SHRM practices including the employment, employees' empowerment, performance appraisal, compensation, and talent management and succession, and 30 related dimensions.

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