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**TÍTULO:** Desarrollo de estrategias de recursos humanos utilizando el análisis FODA. Estudio de caso de la Administración de Aduanas de Irán.

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**RESUMEN:** Este estudio se realizó con base en el análisis FODA y la técnica del Proceso de Jerarquía Analítica (AHP), por lo tanto, la matriz FODA inicial se desarrolló con respecto a los antecedentes de la investigación actual, la información obtenida de la Administración de Aduanas de la República Islámica de Irán (IRICA) sobre las fortalezas, debilidades, oportunidades y amenazas de una alineación efectiva de las estrategias de recursos humanos con la estrategia macro de la organización. Los resultados mostraron que las estrategias de recursos humanos en IRICA son satisfactorias, considerando la importancia de los resultados esperados.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Desarrollo de estrategias, recursos humanos (HR), análisis FODA, técnica de AHP, ventaja competitiva.

**TITLE:** Developing Human Resource Strategies using SWOT Analysis. Case study of Iran Customs Administration.

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**ABSTRACT:** This study was conducted based on both SWOT analysis and the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique. Therefore, the initial SWOT matrix was developed concerning the present research background, information obtained from the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to an effective alignment of HR strategies with the organization's macro strategy. The results showed that HR strategies in IRICA are satisfactory considering the importance of the expected results.

**KEY WORDS:** strategy development, Human Resources (HR), SWOT analysis, AHP Technique, Competitive Advantage.

**INTRODUCTION.**

Factors such as today's' unstable and complex world, increasing competitiveness, rapid changes and developments, technological advancements, ever-expanding communications and rapid rate of information exchange distinguish modern from past firms and organizations. In such a condition, organizations need to apply principles of modern planning and management in order to succeed and survive (Chams & Blondon, 2019; Khan, et. al. 2011; Berk, et. al. 2019; Mactaggart, 2016; Molan, 2018; Shakerian, et. al. 2016; Stephen, 2018).

Planning and strategic management have attracted the attention of many organizations over the last few decades. As a transformational process, strategy management refers to the continuation of organizational changes and fixation of the applied changes. In strategic management, integration indicates a close connection between theory and practice. Moreover, an organization's strategy should be oriented towards mission accomplishment and goal achievement and in line with its resources, capacities, environmental conditions and organizational objectives (Gholami et al., 2016).

On the other hand, the strategic process should be in accordance with the strategic interests and opportunities of the business and organizational environments and helpful in avoiding threats to the organization (Berck, et al., 2019). One of the main goals of strategic management is to put the organization in a favorable position for the effective and timely accomplishment of its organizational missions (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2016).

A good strategy is the one that, based on facts and realities of the relevant industry and business, merges the organizational goals, policies, resources, and operations with each other to create an integrated whole. Strategic planning allows an organization to act creatively and innovatively and prevents it from acting passively when shaping its future (Macke & Genari, 2019). HR strategic planning consists of three phases of development, implementation, and evaluation. There are various approaches to strategy development, and each has its advantages and disadvantages (Zarei et al., 2019; Bau, 2017). In this study, the researchers tried to provide a useful model of organizational strategy development by simultaneously making the most of SWOT analysis and an HR-based approach.

Development and improvement of staff performance and alignment of HR activities with organizational goals and missions in order to support and contribute to the improvement of the organization's overall performance are among the primary responsibilities of HR management in every organization. Nowadays, by considering the issue of strategic planning of organizational

performance management, many organizations have become able to improve and assess their employees' performance in order to achieve their organizational goals, and ultimately, significantly enhance the effectiveness of their HR management system by applying a proper performance management system (Chen et al., 2017; Huang, 2013). However, the implementation of a performance management system and the resulting improvement of management and HR indices in an organization is still one of the permanent concerns of every organization (Enhert et al., 2015; Beridson, et al. 2009).

There are various approaches to the development of HR strategies that have their advantages and disadvantages. One of the most important of these approaches is SWOT analysis that simultaneously examines external and internal environments of an organization and formulates strategies based on the analysis of weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, and threats that the organization faces. However, various criticisms have been made against SWOT analysis.

Some criticisms have been made about the content of SWOT analysis and others about its application. This has led some scholars to question the utility of SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis has still many advantages despite the scholars' criticisms. One of the advantages of SWOT analysis is its attempt to connect internal and external factors in the process of creating a new strategy. Another advantage of applying SWOT analysis in organizations is that it helps managers better know and analyze the different parts of their organizations and take more effective measures accordingly. Thus, there are many scholars believing that SWOT analysis is one of the most useful ways of HR strategy development.

One of the significant shortcomings of SWOT analysis is its lack of attention to the issue of competitive advantage. There are several frameworks that mostly focus on gaining a competitive advantage when developing organizational strategies (Macke & Genari, 2019; Ehnert, et. al. 2015). One of the most recent and most prominent of these frameworks is the Resource-Based View (RBV).

The RBV focuses on HR and human capabilities in order to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. The proper combination of RBV and SWOT analysis can provide a tool that benefits from both techniques.

The present study aimed to 1) use the RBV to enhance the effectiveness of SWOT analysis in gaining a sustainable competitive advantage, and 2) provide a useful SWOT-analysis-based model of HR strategy development by identifying the disadvantages of SWOT analysis and fixing them using the existing techniques.

## **DEVELOPMENT.**

### **Research methods.**

The present research is applied regarding the purpose and descriptive survey regarding the methodology. This research was conducted with an applied-developmental purpose and based on a descriptive-analytical method. Both library research method and field study were used for data collection. The SWOT model was used to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This research was carried out in two phases: the model design phase and the model testing phase.

At the model design phase, texts were meta-analyzed; i.e., the related studies to the history of HR strategies and organization's macro strategies were investigated, and then, the researcher aligned HR management strategy factors with organization's macro strategy factors based on the integration of previous studies' findings. Then, to assess the validity of the model, an expert questionnaire was designed and submitted to a group of professors, experts and senior executives of IRICA.

At the model testing phase, a set of questions were raised based on the primary research model, and then, the study's research tool (i.e., a questionnaire) was designed. Finally, the target population was surveyed, and effective components in the alignment of HR management strategy with the organization's macro strategy were studied.

The Delphi method was used in the present study. HR strategies questionnaires in three domains of customs employee recruitment, retention, and withdrawal were submitted to the managers and experts. The questionnaires were developed in the form of strengths and weaknesses (for the analysis of internal environment) and opportunities and threats (for the analysis of external environment). Then, they were submitted to HR managers of IRICA and experts, and finally, the needed data for the measurement of performance were obtained.

In the present study, two statistical population existed. Accordingly, 50 experts, university professors with Ph.D. in Management and senior executives of IRICA formed the population for the analysis of SWOT matrix.

Using the Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample size was determined to be 44 people. The samples were selected based on simple random sampling method. In this study, a researcher-made questionnaire was used as the data collection tool.

Asking questions through a questionnaire, in addition to giving respondents more time to reflect better, is more practical and more straightforward, and helps researchers study more samples, and finally, make better decisions.

In this study, the AHP method was used for classifying the factors. The AHP method is one of the most popular multi-purpose decision-making techniques. This method has been initially developed by Thomas, L. Saaty -born in Mosul, in British-administered Iraq- in the 1970s. This method can be used when there are multiple competing choices and decision criteria in a single decision-making situation. Those criteria can be quantitative or qualitative. The basis of this decision-making method is pairwise comparisons.

The decision-making process starts by developing a decision hierarchy tree. The decision hierarchy tree shows factors being compared and competing choices being evaluated. Then, a series of pairwise comparisons will be performed. The comparisons specify the weight of each factor in line with the

competing choices. Finally, the AHP logic integrates matrices, which have been derived from pairwise comparisons, and releases the optimal decision.

## Results and discussion.

Initially, the questionnaire's items were tested via a binominal success test, so that the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats effective in the alignment of HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy were determined. Then, using pairwise comparisons via the AHP method and the EXPERT CHOICE software, the priority of each factor was determined. The strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of HR strategies in line with the organization's macro strategy are presented in (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The presentation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of HR strategies in line with the organization's macro strategy.

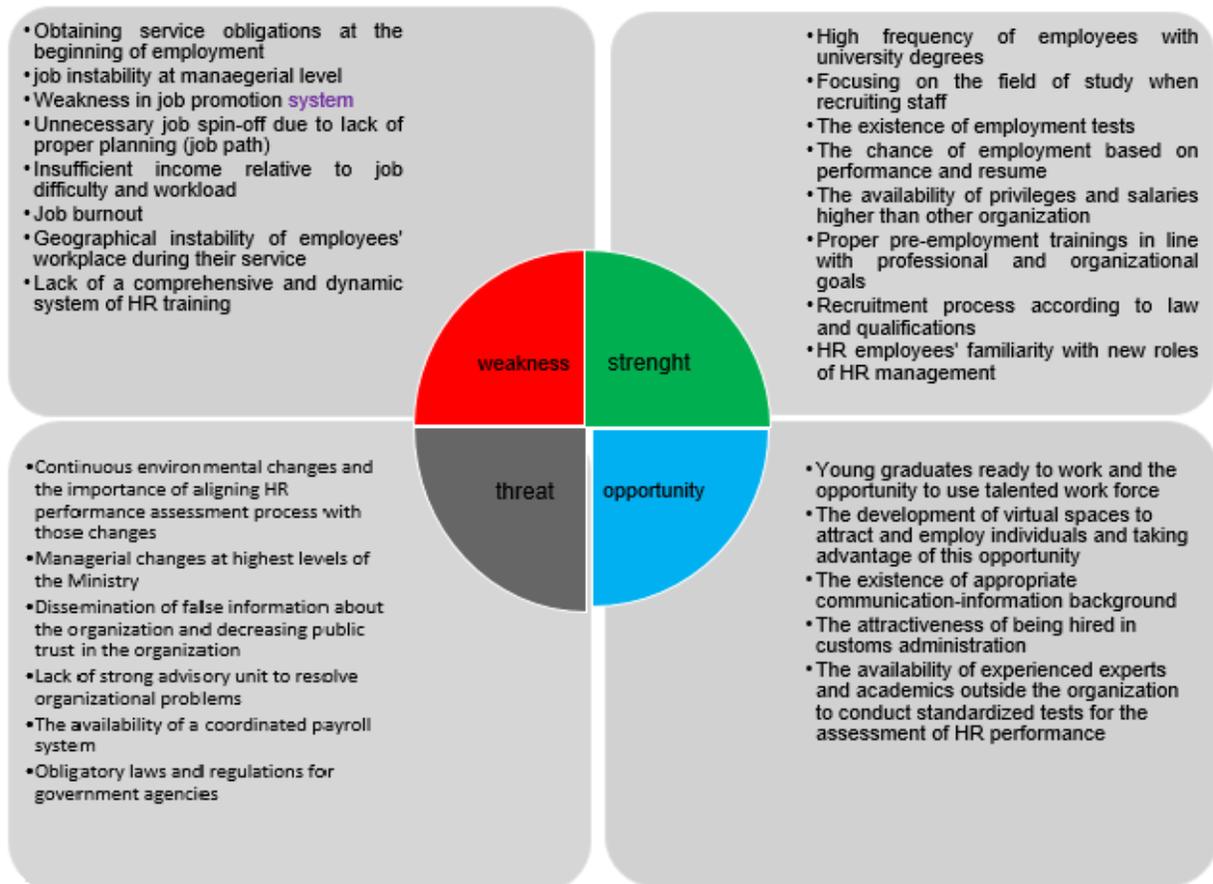


Table 1. Analysis of the identified strengths and weaknesses affecting the alignment of HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy.

<b>External Factors Effect: Opportunities &amp; Threats</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Weighted score</b>	<b>Internal Factors Effect: Strengths &amp; Weaknesses</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Weighted score</b>
<b>The existence of appropriate communication-information background</b>	0.250	4	1	High frequency of employees with university degrees	0.139	4	0.556
<b>The development of virtual spaces to attract and employ individuals and taking advantage of this opportunity</b>	0.150	4	0.6	Focusing on the field of study when recruiting staff	0.101	4	0.404
<b>Young graduates ready to work and the opportunity to use talented workforce</b>	0.058	3	0.174	The existence of employment tests	0.780	4	0.312
<b>The attractiveness of being hired in customs administration</b>	0.106	3	0.318	The chance of employment based on performance and resume	0.069	3	0.207
<b>The availability of experienced experts and academics outside the organization to conduct standardized tests for the assessment of HR performance</b>	0.147	3	0.441	The availability of privileges and salaries higher than other organization	0.051	3	0.153

<b>Continuous environmental changes and the importance of aligning HR performance assessment process with those changes</b>	0.053	2	0.106	Proper pre-employment training in line with professional and organizational goals	0.063	3	0.189
<b>Managerial changes at highest levels of the Ministry</b>	0.059	2	0.118	Recruitment process according to law and qualifications	0.53	3	0.159
<b>Dissemination of false information about the organization and decreasing public trust in the organization</b>	0.076	2	0.118	HR employees' familiarity with new roles of HR management	0.082	4	0.328
<b>Lack of a strong advisory unit to resolve organizational problems</b>	0.017	1	0.170	Weakness in job promotion	0.029	1	0.029
<b>The availability of a coordinated payroll system</b>	0.068	2	0.136	Job instability at managerial level	0.053	2	0.106
<b>Obligatory laws and regulations for government agencies</b>	0.016	1	0.160	Obtaining service obligations at the beginning of employment	0.054	2	0.108
<b>Total</b>	1		2.375	Unnecessary job spin-off due to lack of proper planning (job path)	0.010	1	0.010

				Insufficient income relative to job difficulty and workload	0.044	1	0.044
				Job burnout	0.044	2	0.128
				Geographical instability of employees' workplace during their service	0.059	2	0.118
				Lack of a comprehensive and dynamic system of HR training	0.050	1	0.050
				Total	1		2.78

As it is shown in (Table 1), eight strength points and eight weakness points affecting the alignment of HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy were identified and analyzed.

According to the results presented in (Table 1), the total weighted score of internal factors was 2.78, indicating that the identified strength points were more dominant than the identified weakness points.

Also, based on the results of the external factors' evaluation matrix, five opportunities and six threats affecting the alignment of HR strategy with organization's macro strategy were identified and analyzed. According to the results presented in the above table, the total weighted score of external factors was 2.37, indicating that opportunities were more dominant than threats.

For simultaneous analysis of internal and external factors, a tool called the internal-external (IE) matrix was used. The IE matrix is used to determine the position of selecting the best strategy according to the existing conditions. To form this matrix, the scores obtained from the internal and external factors' evaluation matrices were placed in the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the matrix, so that the location of the alignment of organization's HR strategies was determined.

In the four-cell SWOT matrix, scores are determined on a two-part spectrum of major (2.5-4) and minor (1-2.5). If the position of an organization is at WO area, the organization prioritizes a Conservative strategy; if in the SO area, the organization prioritizes an Aggressive strategy; if in the WT area, the organization prioritizes a Defensive strategy; and finally, if in the ST area, the organization prioritizes a Competitive strategy.



**Figure 2.** SWOT matrix.

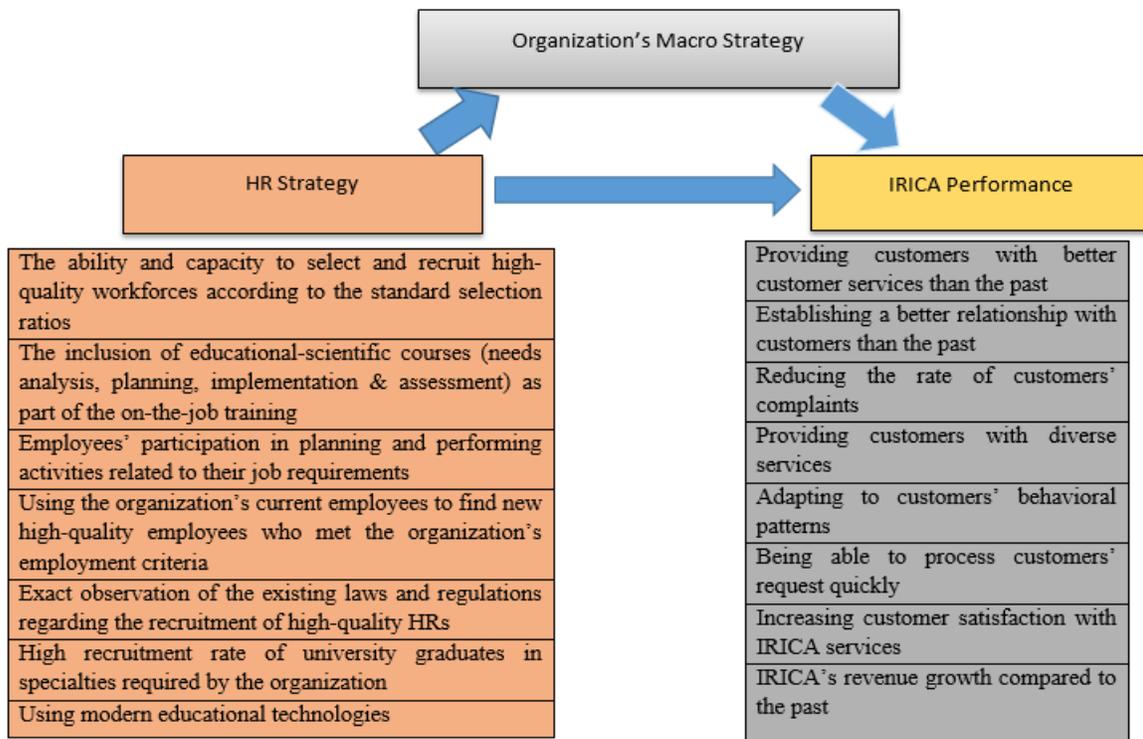
According to (Figure 2), the position of IRICA's HR strategy was in the SO area. Therefore, Aggressive HR strategies were applied in IRICA to align HR strategies with the organization's macro strategy.

Given that the HR strategy of IRICA was located in the Aggressive part of the SWOT matrix, this organization had an Aggressive developmental strategy to maintain its current developing position. In line with its strategy, IRICA needs to strengthen its strengths to make the best of the important opportunities it faces. The most important of those strategies, according to the obtained results and views of the experts, included:

- ❖ The ability and capacity to select and recruit high-quality workforces according to the standard selection ratios.
- ❖ The inclusion of educational-scientific courses (needs analysis, planning, implementation & assessment) as part of the on-the-job training.

- ❖ Employees’ participation in planning and performing activities related to their job requirements.
- ❖ Using the organization’s current employees to find new high-quality employees who met the organization’s employment criteria.
- ❖ Exact observation of the existing laws and regulations regarding the recruitment of high-quality HRs.
- ❖ High recruitment rate of university graduates in required expertise by the organization.

Using modern educational technologies (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** The research Model

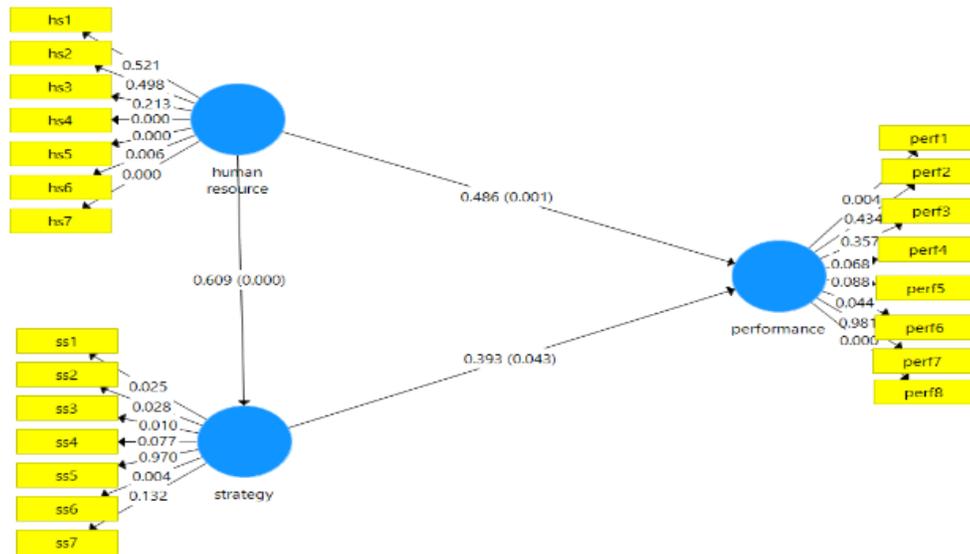
After identifying the most critical factors, forming the SWOT matrix, and recognizing the organization’s strategies, the relationships between those strategies and the organization’s performance were examined.

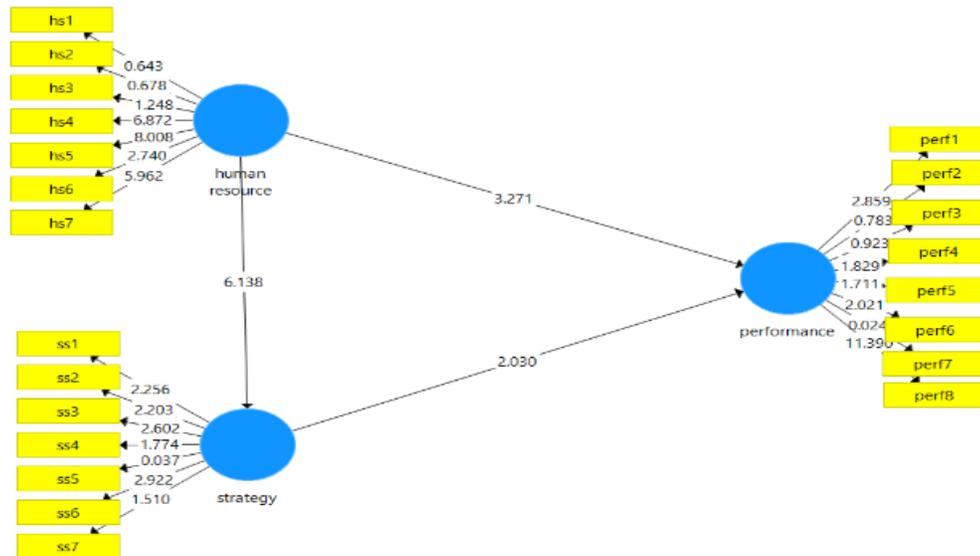
Results of the final analysis and presentation of the study’s model via structural equations were examined using the PLS software (the results are presented in the Appendix, tables 4 to 11). Given that all the fitting indices of model were very good, the validity of the proposed model for determining the alignment of HR strategies with the organization’s macro strategy to improve its performance was confirmed. In the following (Table 2), the goodness of fit indices of the study’s model are presented.

**Table 2.** Goodness of fit indices FOR the final model.

Index	Variable			R2	F2	Communality	Result
	<b>HR strategy</b>			0.000	0.393	0.596	Very good
	<b>Performance</b>			0.604	0.000	0.600	Very good
<b>Organization’s macro strategy</b>	0.356	0.257	0.673	Very good			

**Figure 4.** Results of testing the study’s conceptual model in the states of significant coefficients and factors loadings.





In (Figure 4), the results of testing the study's main hypotheses via the use of structural equation modeling are summarized in (Table 3).

**Table 3.** A summary of the relationships found in the final model.

Factor loading	Standard coefficient	The relationship found in the model	Result
<b>0.486</b>	3.271	HR Strategy-Performance	Confirmed
<b>0.393</b>	2.030	Organization's Macro Strategy-Performance	Confirmed
<b>0.609</b>	6.138	HR Strategy-Organization's Macro Strategy	Confirmed

**The presentation of an alignment model of HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy to improve IRICA's performance.**

Finally, a practical model for aligning Strategies with the organization's macro strategies to improve its performance was depicted. Alignment refers to linking HR strategies to business strategies that results in retaining and encouraging the personnel.

An organization can achieve superior performance if it takes HR management measures to align its personnel's behaviors with its organizational strategies. According to the proposed model in the present study, IRICA is recommended to align its identified HR strategies with its organizational macro strategies to improve its performance.

As specified in the proposed model, the ability and capacity to select and recruit high-quality workforces according to the standard selection ratios, the inclusion of educational-scientific courses (needs analysis, planning, implementation & assessment) as part of the on-the-job training, employees' participation in planning and performing activities related to their job requirements, using the organization's current employees to find new high-quality employees who met the organization's employment criteria, exact observation of the existing laws and regulations regarding the recruitment of high-quality HRs, high recruitment rate of university graduates in specialties required by the organization and using modern educational technologies are necessary factors for improving IRICA's performance in providing effective customer services, improving its interactions, better processing its customers' demands, increasing its revenues and export rates, and reducing the rate of its customer complaint.

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

The main criticism of strategic HR management and organizational performance is that there is no proper theoretical foundation that explains the applications of HR management.

In an effort to expand the theoretical foundation of the applications of HR management, researchers have invited their colleagues to examine interfaces between strategic HR management and organizational performance. Furthermore, a better understanding of the role of strategic HR management in creating and maintaining organizational performance and competitive advantage can be achieved by developing a robust theory and collecting more empirical evidence (Waiganjo et. al., 2012).

Results of the present study showed that HR strategies in IRICA are in a favorable condition. According to experts' views, the most important HR strategies of IRICA were the inclusion of educational-scientific courses (needs analysis, planning, implementation & assessment) as part of the on-the-job training (4.2695), using modern educational technologies (4.1881), exact observation of the existing laws and regulations regarding the recruitment of high-quality HRs (4.2955), high recruitment rate of university graduates in specialties required by the organization (4.2955), using the organization's current employees to find new high-quality employees who met the organization's employment criteria (4.1591), the ability and capacity to select and recruit high-quality workforces according to the standard selection ratios (4.4058), employees' participation in planning and performing activities related to their job requirements (4.1591).

The results also showed that IRIC's macro strategies are in a favorable condition. The most important macro strategies of IRICA were the increased wealth creation capacity of the country by improving the business environment concerning transnational trades and non-oil exports (4.3636), sustained government financing and reduced government reliance on oil revenues (4.6136), active and effective participation in policy-making and lawmaking (4.4091), strengthening financial/administrative discipline, health, and transparency (4.5909), promotion of intra-organizational synergies and trans-organizational cooperation through bilateral or multilateral, regional and international agreements (4.2500), creation and integration of management and operational systems via information-communication empowerments (4.5909), and targeted development of human and organizational capital (4.3636).

**Table 4.** Means of strength points of the alignment of HR strategy with organization's macro strategy factors.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>High frequency of employees with university degrees</b>	4.9773
<b>Focusing on the field of study when recruiting staff</b>	4.0000
<b>The existence of employment tests</b>	4.8864
<b>The chance of employment based on performance and resume</b>	4.5682
<b>The availability of privileges and salaries higher than other organization</b>	4.8636
<b>Proper pre-employment training in line with professional and organizational goals</b>	4.0682
<b>Recruitment process according to law and qualifications</b>	4.6364
<b>HR employees' familiarity with new roles of HR management</b>	4.2500

**Table 5.** Means of weakness points of the alignment of HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy factors.

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Obtaining service obligations at the beginning of employment</b>	4.7045
<b>Job instability at managerial level</b>	4.8409
<b>Weakness in job promotion</b>	4.8333
<b>Unnecessary job spin-off due to lack of proper planning (job path)</b>	3.6364
<b>Insufficient income relative to job difficulty and workload</b>	4.5227
<b>Job burnout</b>	4.4318
<b>Geographical instability of employees' workplace during their service</b>	3.8636
<b>Lack of a comprehensive and dynamic system of HR training</b>	4.0000

**Table 6.** Means of opportunities of the alignment of HR strategy with organization's macro strategy factors.

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Young graduates ready to work and the opportunity to use talented workforce</b>	4.9545
<b>The development of virtual spaces to attract and employ individuals and taking advantage of this opportunity</b>	3.7273
<b>The existence of appropriate communication-information background</b>	4.8636
<b>The attractiveness of being hired in customs administration</b>	4.0682
<b>The availability of experienced experts and academics outside the organization to conduct standardized tests for the assessment of HR performance</b>	4.1818

**Table 7.** Means of threats of the alignment of HR strategy with organization's macro strategy factors.

Threats	Mean
Continuous environmental changes and the importance of aligning HR performance assessment process with those changes	4.9545
Managerial changes at highest levels of the Ministry	4.8409
Dissemination of false information about the organization and decreasing public trust in the organization	4.5227
Lack of a strong advisory unit to resolve organizational problems	4.8636
The availability of a coordinated payroll system	4.3409
Obligatory laws and regulations for government agencies	4.8636

**Table 8.** Status of IRICA HR strategy.

Number	Components of HR aggressive strategy	Mean	t-value	Sig.
1	The ability and capacity to select and recruit high-quality workforces according to the standard selection ratios	4.4058	12.895	0.000
2	The inclusion of educational-scientific courses (needs analysis, planning, implementation & assessment) as part of the on-the-job training	4.2695	9.992	0.000
3	Employees' participation in planning and performing activities related to their job requirements	4.4091	12.882	0.000
4	Using the organization's current employees to find new high-quality employees who met the organization's employment criteria	4.1591	7.983	0.000
5	Exact observation of the existing laws and regulations regarding the recruitment of high-quality HRs	4.2955	10.095	0.000
6	High recruitment rate of university graduates in specialties required by the organization	4.2955	10.435	0.000
7	Using modern educational technologies	4.1881	8.746	0.000

**Table 9.** Dimensions of IRICA macro strategy.

Number	Components of the the organization's macro strategy	Mean	t-value	Sig.
1	Increased wealth creation capacity of the country by improving the business environment concerning transnational trades and non-oil exports	4.3636	13.203	0.000
2	Sustained government financing and reduced government reliance on oil revenues	4.6136	17.315	0.000
3	Active and effective participation in policy-making and lawmaking	4.4091	14.198	0.000
4	Strengthening financial/administrative discipline, health, and transparency	4.5909	18.088	0.000
5	Promotion of intra-organizational synergies and trans-organizational cooperation through bilateral or multilateral, regional and international agreements	4.2500	9.886	0.000
6	Creation and integration of management and operational systems via information-communication empowerments	4.5909	14.545	0.000
7	Targeted development of human and organizational capital	4.3636	12.594	0.000

**Table 10.** Dimensions of IRICA performance.

Number	Components of performance	Mean	t-value	Sig.
1	IRICA's service delivery to its customers has improved over the past years	4.3409	11.464	0.000
2	IRICA communication with its customers have improved over the past years	4.7500	23.776	0.000
3	The rate of customers'/clients' complaints has declined	4.2045	10.054	0.000
4	IRICA services to its customers have become more diverse	4.3864	13.341	0.000
5	IRICA can adapt to customers' behavioral patterns	4.5909	18.088	0.000
6	IRICA can handle customers' demands	4.5682	20.760	0.000
7	Customer satisfaction with IRICA services has increased	4.6818	21.530	0.000
8	The revenue of IRICA has significantly increased over the past years.	4.1591	9.909	0.000

**Table 11.** Results of testing the alignment of HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy.

Variables	Number	Correlation coefficient	Sig.
HR strategy with the organization's macro strategy	44	0.542	0.000

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