

**LINKING HRM PLANNING TO TQM  
IMPLEMENTATION IN PALESTINIAN PRIVATE  
SECTOR, THE MODERATING ROLE OF COMPETITIVE  
STRATEGIES: A PROPOSED STUDY**

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**Abstract**

*In 21 century Total quality management TQM became a critical factor in the world of business. It has great effect on the surviving abilities of the firm and its competitive situation, besides the more success in TQM implantation the more effectiveness and efficiency in overall firm performance. This paper introduces the concept of TQM implantation through linking HRM planning with the right implementation of TQM. Since, there is a debate in literature about the significant of the relationship between HRM planning and TQM implementation. Based on that, this paper clarifies the role of HRM planning and its dimensions in TQM implementation. Also, it empowers this relationship through the competitive strategies as a moderator to give it more clarification. In addition, it provides a proposed framework for its variables. Further, this paper focuses on Palestinian private sectors and how to help this sector in solving the problems that facing it through applying the right methodology of HRM planning, and through adopting the competitive strategies. In addition, this paper contributes to the literature by using competitive strategies as a moderator between HRM planning and TQM implementation. And it wasn't used before in this situation according to literature review.*

**Keywords: HRM Planning, Competitive Strategy, TQM Implementation**

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## Introduction

The optimal objective of every private organization is to maximize its wealth and minimize its cost effectively (Agarwal et al., 2013). So, companies compete others and sometimes themselves to achieve this destination by using the best practices of the managerial functions to solve their business problems in a creative way and to keep up with every new in the world of business (Filho & Calado, 2013). However, management as an art and science has developed its approaches, processes and tools by successive generations of scientists, one of the major approaches that have used for this purpose is the Total Quality management (TQM) (Oakland, 2003).

Along the same line, the right implementation TQM considered as an engine of producing sustainable competitive advantage of the firms. Besides, it improves the level customer satisfaction (Aghasizadeh et al., 2012). Similarly, the importance of TQM is embodied through its role in achieving organizational objectives, developing performance, improving productivity, empowering quality of products in a continuous and accurate manner (Hawary & Laimon, 2013). Moreover, the success of TQM approach appears clearly when the firms make the quality standards inseparable part of each employees performance and responsibilities, in other words make the quality part of the firms culture (Oakland, 2003).

## Problem Statement

In spite of the importance of TQM implementation, unfortunately the literature about TQM implementation is rare (Djerdjouri et al., 2011), especially in the developing countries (Mellahi & Eyuboglu, 2001). In Palestine also as a developing country, we have the same situation about the scarcity of TQM implementation studies (Baidoun, 2000). Further, according to the World Bank's reports, the current situation of Palestinian economy has many bad indicators. It is exposed to lose its long term competitiveness. Besides, Palestinian economy will lose the ability to compete in global markets, and the added value of its tradable sectors has declined. Since, most of Palestinian exports classified as low value added ones, and the major part of them is exporting to Israel (Worl-Bank, 2013).

So, Palestinians have many problems in dealing with TQM implementation and they need to conduct more researches that focus on TQM implementation (Jones & Seraphim, 2008). Also, the situation of the Palestinian economy on one hand and the need of conducting TQM implementation studies in Palestine on the other hand is the first gap of this paper. Similarly, TQM implementation was studied largely in previous studies, most of those studies talked about TQM implementation through examining the effect of set of critical variables (Haque et al., 2014; Talib et al., 2013; Yazdani et al., 2014). Further, the results of examining the effect of those variables on TQM implementation are varied; some of them have positive and significant effect, while others have small correlations. Further, some of them have no relationship (Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2005; Wilson & Collier, 2000).

Moreover, this paper considers Customer satisfaction as the main indicator of TQM implementation (Lau & Idris, 2001; Lewis et al., 2006). Further, achieving customer satisfaction was the main reason behind Deming's principles. And then those principles became the corner stone of the theory of quality management (Anderson et al., 1994). based on that, TQM implementation is affected by many variables. So this paper examines the effect of HRM planning on TQM implementation for many reasons. First, there is a theoretical relationship between HRM planning and customer satisfaction and TQM implementation, since HRM planning is one of HRM practices and HRM practices is one of critical factors of total quality management according to Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award (Dale et al., 2001).

Besides, resource based view theory also assured the linkages between HRM planning and customer satisfaction (Barney, 1991; Jackson & Schuler, 1999). Second, many previous empirical studies concluded that there is a significant relationship between HRM planning and Customer satisfaction (Dhammika, 2010; Kumari et al., 2013). While, others concluded that, the relationship is not significant (Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Rogg et al., 2001). So, there is a debate between the theoretical side and empirical one about the effect of HRM planning on customer satisfaction and TQM implementation. And this debate is the second gap of the present paper.

In addition, since there is a debate about the role of HRM planning on TQM implementation. So moderator is possibly employed to provide further explanation about how HRM planning affects TQM implementation. And this paper uses competitive strategies as a moderator. Furthermore,

competitive strategies have theoretical linkages with HRM planning and customer satisfaction and TQM implementation according to strategic human resource theory (SHRM). Along the same line, SHRM theory concluded that, firm strategy leads to achieving the organizational goals through employing the human resources of the firm (Milliman et al., 1991; Truss & Gratton, 1994; Wright & McMahan, 1992) , and it is the creator of the competitive advantage of the firm and customer satisfaction (Becker & Huselid, 2006). So, the third gap of this paper is using the competitive strategies as a moderator between HRM planning and TQM implementation, since it wasn't used before in this position according to literature review.

## Literature Review

### Total Quality Management (TQM)

Actually, TQM was defined by many scholars as an organizational strategy to improve the level of customer satisfaction by developing and managing the tools and procedures to reach high quality outputs (Agus, 2004; Harvey Donald & Brown Donald, 2001). It is a philosophy that establishing the principles of continuous improving (Aldaweesh et al., 2013). Besides it became a global strategic orientation, which produces many benefits to the firm, such as; improving the level of customer satisfaction, developing employee focus and motivation, reducing waste and enhancing overall performance of the firm (Omiri, 2012). Also, it is a holistic managerial approach that targets to achieve organizational objectives and satisfy customers' needs through integrating between all organizational functions (Ooi et al., 2012).

In addition TQM has many indicators. Mainly it could be summarized in five points (Agus, 2004; Pandi et al., 2013). First, top management commitment, it is one of the most critical factors of TQM implementation success (Armstrong-Stassen et al., 2005; Mahmood et al., 2006). It means that, managers are involved in development process and they support innovation activities (Rodríguez et al., 2008). Furthermore, top management plays a vital role in TQM implementation, through, creating values, goals and systems to satisfy customer expectations and to develop firm's performance (Agus, 2004).

Second, customer focus, which means transforming from a goal of maximizing firm's profits to a goal of providing super service to the customers in order to maximize the value of our products in the eyes of firm's customers (Chen & Cheng, 2007; Cova & Salle, 2005). Third, benchmarking which means that, searching about the best practices that lead to be superior performance (Badiger & Laxman, 2013). Besides it is a comparison between the performance of the organization against other similar organizations' performance (Costa et al., 2004).

Fourth, training, actually the successful change toward quality took its place with training programs (Agus & Hassan, 2010). Those training programs include all managerial levels (Agus, 2004). Moreover, those training programs must include TQM principles, team working skills, problem solving, communication and other skills (Aquino, 2009). Lastly, employee focus is a crucial factor of TQM. Since, TQM requires high efforts from the firm's management to ensure that, workers are indulged in quality work culture. Beside, management must create a positive corporate image by translate TQM meanings into high level quality services to the customers (Agus, 2004).

To conclude, the previous paragraphs talked about TQM and it was started with the definition that linked between TQM and strategy, besides the components of previous section talked about the role of human resources management in creating TQM culture.

### **HRM Planning**

Human resources planning is a systematic and continuous process, it analyses the human resources needs of the firm, to assure that, the firm has the fair number of employees, and the fit kind of employees to its activities, under different conditions (Dessler et al., 2004). It is a process of matching between the skills and qualifications of employees with tasks to ensure they are fit with the culture, values and goals of the organization (Cuskelly & Auld, 2013).

Furthermore, HRM planning is part of organizational and business planning. It depends on forecasting the future needs of organization in term of human resource and prepares plans for how those needs will be met. It concludes establishing objectives and developing and implementing programs (staffing, appraising, compensating, and training) to assure that, employees are available with the appropriate characteristics and abilities when and where the

organization needs them (Bagade, 2012). Besides, the relationship between HRM planning and TQM could be derived from the relationship between HRM practices and TQM implementation, since HRM planning is one of HRM practices (Kaynak, 2003; Loo & Beh, 2013; Matzler et al., 2004). Further, stakeholders theory as one of customer satisfaction theories built its framework based on resource based view theory (Verbeke & Tung, 2013). And resource based view asserted that; organizations can reach their own competitive advantages, through their own human resources (Barney, 1991; Jackson & Schuler, 1999).

Besides, Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) classified HRM practices as one of the critical factors toward applying effective total quality management (Dale et al., 2001). In addition, many scholars asserted that, there is a strong relationship between HRM planning and TQM implementation and business excellence (Briggs & Keogh, 1999; Soltani, 2003).

So, based on the theoretical and empirical relationship between HRM planning and TQM implementation firms must build their own HRM planning to be effective through collecting and analyzing data to forecast expected need of employees. Setting the human resource objectives based on collected and analyzed data. Formulating and implementing the HRM planning programs to assist the organization in achieving its objectives. And monitoring and evaluating the previous activities of HRM planning (Bagade, 2012).

Along the same line, HRM planning has critical role in creating a sustainable competitive advantage of the firm, this could be happened by integrating HRM with other activities in the firm, to assure the right implementation of the strategies in many disciplines such as growth and customer satisfaction (Lam & Schaubroeck, 1998). Similarly, the effective relationship between HRM planning and TQM requires deep understanding from HRM planners for many things such as, knowing the major customers of the firm now and in the future, and understanding why those customers are buying firm's product and services (Ulrich, 1992).

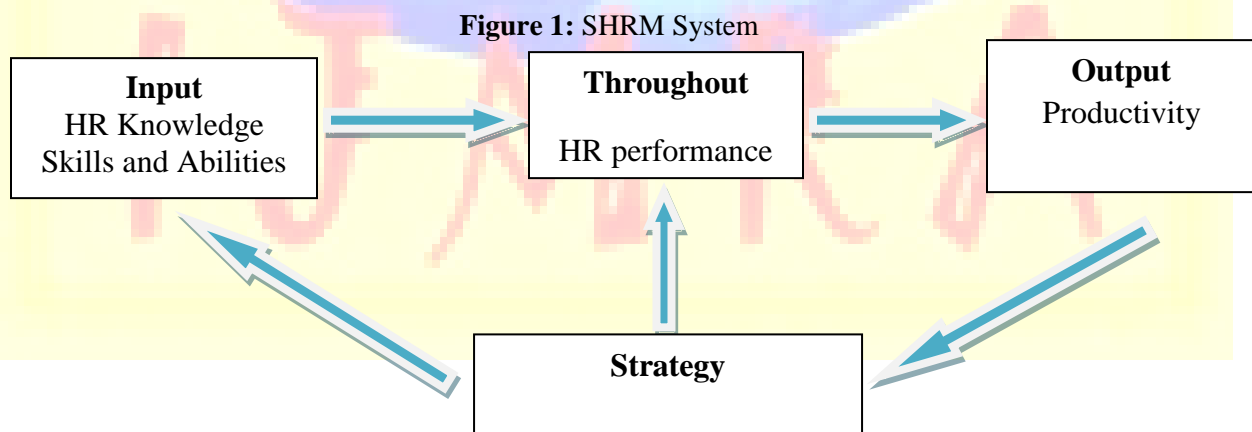
In addition, HRM planning must be consistent with the business strategy. Through, defining the impact of this strategy on each units of the organization, clarifying the skills needed as well as human resources. So, to apply this role of HRM planning, firms must develop action plans to meet the needs. Furthermore, this will help in implementing TQM concepts. Also, HRM planning could help in implementing TQM effectively through empowering the role of human

resource management, and facilitating the role of employees by determining the skills that will be needed to achieve strategic objectives and facilitating the organization's adaptation to its environment (Aldaibat & Irtameh, 2012).

### Moderating Role of Competitive Strategies

As this paper showed earlier, some empirical studies asserted that, the significance of the relationship between HRM planning and TQM implementation is relatively low (Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Rogg et al., 2001). So, in such cases moderator could be use to give more understanding and clarifying for this kind of relationships (Al-Shuaibi et al., 2013). Based on that, this paper used the competitive strategies as a moderator since it affects the HRM planning and TQM. Also, it wasn't used before in this position according to literature review.

Similarly, Strategy is a group of decisions and actions that firm's managers make and take to reach a superior performance compared to its rivals (Teeratansirikool et al., 2013). It is an integrated concept that clarify how the organization will achieve its objectives (Kar & Kalyani, 2011). It is a set of procedures and actions that executed by the firm to develop a competitive advantage in its marketplace (Kuratko et al., 2001). Moreover, the following paragraphs will talk about the relationship between strategy and HRM planning and TQM.



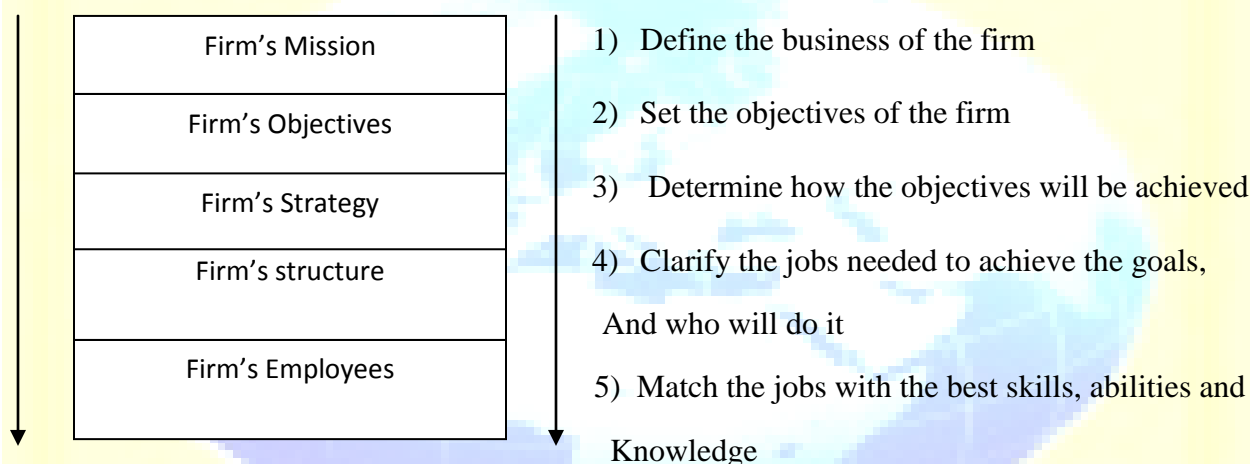
Source: Wright & McMahan, 1992

Moreover, according to SHRM theory, the linking between HRM and strategy is very important, in order to develop organizational performance and outcomes (Truss & Gratton, 1994). Thus, SHRM theory is looking to reach the organizational objectives by deploying the human

resources of the firm. Moreover, according to SHRM theory, the linking between HRM and strategy is very important, in order to develop organizational performance and outcomes (Truss & Gratton, 1994). Thus, SHRM theory is looking to reach the organizational objectives by deploying the human resources of the firm. Besides figure 1 clarified the work of SHRM system.

Also, the success in strategic human resources planning needs analyzing the internal and external environments of the firm (Cenzo & Robbins, 1998; Dessler et al., 2004). Further, the following figure shows the process of linking HRM with the strategic plan of the firm:

**Figure 2:** The linking between HRM planning and firm's strategy.



Source: Cenzo & Robbins, 1998

The previous figure clarifies the relationship between HRM planning and the firm strategy, which can be called the strategic human resources planning. So, the purpose of this planning is to furnish current and future human capital needs of the firm, in consisting with its strategic plan (Bagade, 2012; Cenzo & Robbins, 1998).

Along the same line, firm strategy is a critical factor in TQM implementation. Further, Yunis and others in their study concluded that, there is a direct effect of strategy on the TQM components. A strategy that intends to produce unique and distinct products and services is expected to use the TQM principles and practices, either hard or soft, to attain a competitive advantage (Yunis et al., 2013). Similarly, other studies concluded the same results (Krumwiede & Charles, 2014; Tamayo-Torres et al., 2014). Moreover, this relationship is consistent with the resource based view theory which asserted that attaining and maintaining a sustained competitive advantage



requires the availability of strategic resources that are heterogeneous in nature, not perfectly mobile, not imitable, and non substitutable without great effort (Barney, 1991; Yunis et al., 2013).

But, which one of firm strategies fits TQM implementation. To answer this question this papers shows different kinds of competitive strategies. Actually, this paper adopts Porter's model of competitive strategy because of its popularity (Teeratansirikool et al., 2013). According to Porter's model of competitive strategy the two main typologies are cost leadership and differentiation (Khvtisiashvli, 2013; Pulaj & Kume, 2013).

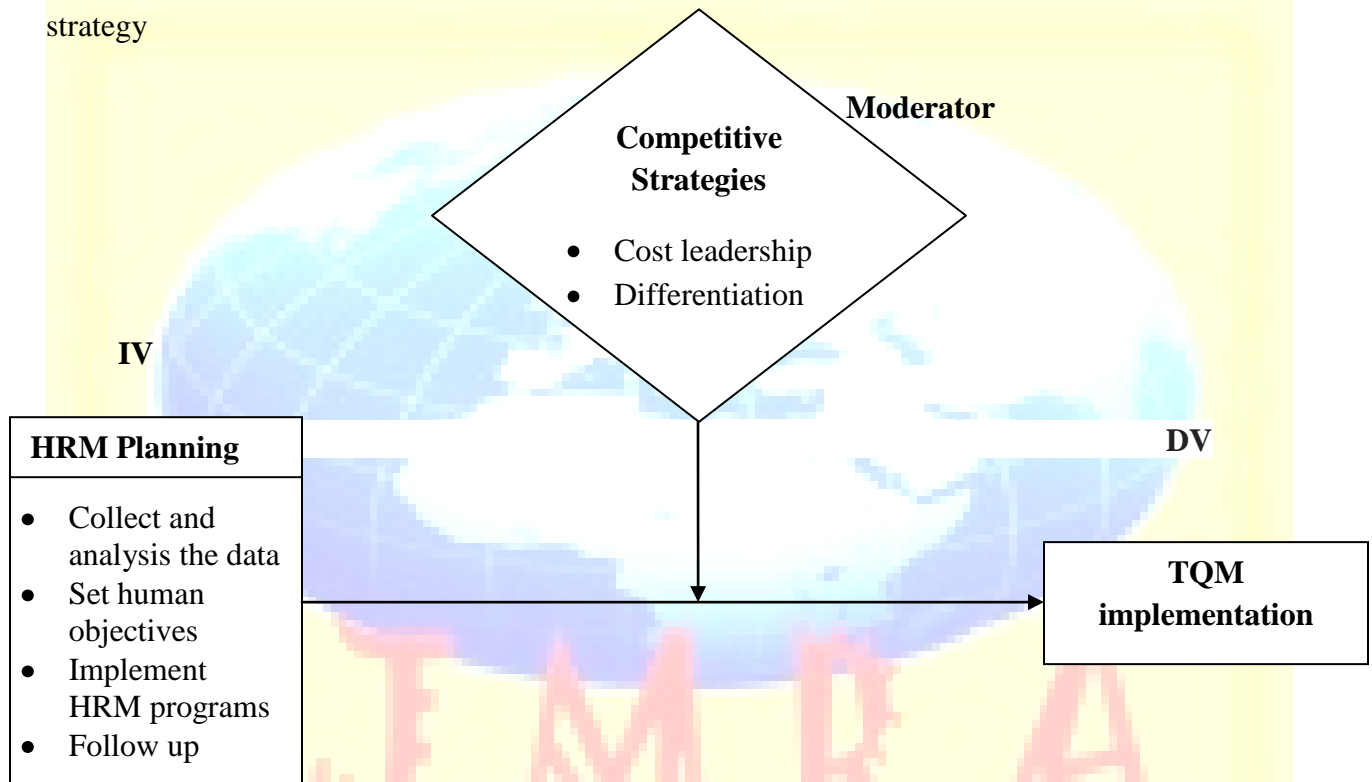
Along the same line, cost leadership strategy is a set of actions taken to produce goods and services with unique features that are sold to customers at the lowest cost compared with competitors or at reduced cost to achieve superior profitability (Teeratansirikool et al., 2013).it allows the firm to compete on lower prices but it implies more radical modifications than the economic-efficiency strategy. It includes a completely revisiting the products or services and even entering new industries (Marchi et al., 2013). Moreover, many scholars examined the role of cost leadership strategy on the competitive advantage of the firm. They found that, the overall low-cost cluster has the highest average return on assets (Dess & Davis, 1984). Also, it gives a statistically significant performance advantage (Powers & Hahn, 2004). Besides, cost leadership strategy has direct relationship with organizational performance (Allen & Helms, 2006).

Similarly, differentiation strategy is a set of actions taken to produce goods or services with acceptable level of cost, in which customers perceive that, firm's goods and services have an important differences in relative to its rivals (Teeratansirikool et al., 2013), it means that, firm develops its products and services with added advantages, perceived to be unique or different in eyes the customer (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012). Too, many scholars examined the role of differentiation strategy on the firm competitive advantage. They found that, it has a significant and positive relationship with firm's market share (Phillips et al., 1983). And it is more likely to enable firms to sustain (Banker et al., 2014). So, firms choose either cost leadership strategy, or differentiation strategy to establish and defend their desired strategic position against rivals. Similarly, Porter concludes that firms that adopt and implement generic strategies achieve sustained competitive advantage (Teeratansirikool et al., 2013).

### The Proposed Framework

As this paper showed earlier, HRM planning as independent variable has great effect on TQM implementation but this relationship was empowered through adding moderator, which is the competitive strategies, and specifically cost leadership strategy or differentiation strategy. Further, the following figure shows the proposed framework of this paper.

**Figure 3:** linking HRM planning to TQM implementation, moderating role of competitive strategy



### Conclusion

Globally, TQM has seen great focusing from academicians and practitioners, since it has huge effect on the results of the firms, and the right implementation of TQM helps in achieving the organizational objectives. Unfortunately, the situation of TQM implementation in Palestine is suffering from many problems. This paper focused on those problems and provided a proposed framework through clarifying the role of HRM planning in TQM implementation. Since the right HRM planning through collecting and analyzing data to forecast the needed abilities and

characteristics of employees, and setting the human resource objectives based on collected and analyzed data.

Then, formulating and implementing the HRM planning programs to assist the organization in achieving its objectives. And monitoring and evaluating the previous activities of HRM planning. Through this employment of HRM planning, HRM department helps its firm to implement TQM effectively and efficiently. Besides, this paper contributed to the literature of TQM implementation by moderating the competitive strategies between HRM planning and TQM implementation. It described two kinds of competitive strategies, cost leadership strategy and differentiation strategy. Lastly, it provided a framework to summarize the relationships between its variables.



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