

**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF STRATEGIC INNOVATION IN THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES AND
CREATING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION – AN
APPLIED STUDY ON IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN SAUD ISLAMIC
UNIVERSITY¹**

*O PAPEL MEDIADOR DA INOVAÇÃO ESTRATÉGICA NA RELAÇÃO ENTRE AS
PRÁTICAS DE RECURSOS HUMANOS E A CRIAÇÃO DE VANTAGEM
COMPETITIVA NO ENSINO SUPERIOR – UM ESTUDO APLICADO NA
UNIVERSIDADE ISLÂMICA IMÃ MUHAMMAD BIN SAUD*

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¹ This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) (grant number IMSIU-RG23117).

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to identify the current situation and the extent to which strategic innovation contributes to enhancing human resource practices and creating competitiveness for higher education institutions. The problem of the study was represented in the following question: Does strategic innovation in human resource practices create a competitive advantage for higher education institutions? The study adopted a descriptive analytical approach alongside a historical method, and it was applied to the employees of Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, with a sample size of 66 individuals. Using the statistical program (SPSS), the data was analyzed, leading to several results and recommendations, the most important of which are: The study indicated that more than 87% of the participants had not received training courses on strategic innovation, and the same percentage (87%) had not received training courses on competitive advantage. The respondents expressed neutrality regarding several aspects, including: the university successfully promotes a decentralized approach by delegating authority to employees to determine performance levels, and the university is concerned with analyzing data related to competitors to understand their strengths and weaknesses. We also reached several recommendations, including: We recommend that the university administration focus on enhancing training courses for employees, especially regarding competitive advantage enablers such as strategic innovation, agility, and other modern methods to create excellence and improve the university's image globally and locally. There must be clear strategic policies formulated to retain creative individuals, with a necessity to clarify these policies to the employees. Additionally, we recommend the need to respond to labor market requirements and the ideas of business owners to prepare students according to labor market needs.

Keywords: strategic innovation, human resource practices, competitive advantage, higher education institutions.

RESUMO

O estudo teve como objetivo identificar a situação atual e até que ponto a inovação estratégica contribui para melhorar as práticas de recursos humanos e criar competitividade para instituições de ensino superior. O problema do estudo foi representado na seguinte questão: A inovação estratégica nas práticas de recursos humanos cria uma vantagem competitiva para instituições de ensino superior? O estudo adotou uma abordagem analítica descritiva juntamente com um método histórico, e foi aplicado aos funcionários da Universidade Islâmica Imam Muhammad bin Saud, com um tamanho de amostra de 66 indivíduos. Usando o programa estatístico (SPSS), os dados foram analisados, levando a vários resultados e recomendações, os mais importantes dos quais são: O estudo indicou que mais de 87% dos participantes não receberam cursos de treinamento em inovação estratégica, e a mesma porcentagem (87%) não recebeu cursos de treinamento em vantagem competitiva. Os entrevistados expressaram neutralidade em relação a vários aspectos, incluindo: a universidade promove com sucesso uma abordagem descentralizada delegando autoridade aos funcionários para determinar os níveis de desempenho, e a universidade está preocupada em analisar dados relacionados aos concorrentes para entender seus pontos fortes e fracos. Também chegamos a várias recomendações, incluindo: Recomendamos que a administração da universidade se concentre em aprimorar os cursos de treinamento para funcionários, especialmente em relação aos facilitadores de vantagem competitiva, como inovação estratégica, agilidade e outros métodos modernos para criar excelência e melhorar a imagem da universidade global e localmente. Deve haver políticas estratégicas claras formuladas para reter indivíduos criativos, com a necessidade de esclarecer essas políticas para os funcionários. Além disso, recomendamos a necessidade de responder às exigências do mercado de trabalho e às ideias dos empresários para preparar os alunos de acordo com as necessidades do mercado de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: inovação estratégica, práticas de recursos humanos, vantagem competitiva, instituições de ensino superior.

Introduction

The future challenges facing global organizations in general, and educational institutions in particular, indicate that they are confronted with precise competition standards that are difficult or impossible to address without using modern management methods and techniques. This necessitates that higher education institutions transform towards innovation and knowledge in all fields. Societies have shifted from industrial societies to knowledge-based societies that constantly seek services and products that provide value. This requires production and service institutions to adopt programs and policies that enhance the competitiveness of their outputs. All of this can only be achieved by enhancing the skills of university graduates through enriching knowledge for empowerment and creativity, and building intellectual capital to provide qualified personnel capable of managing institutions and meeting labor market needs according to the latest requirements. Additionally, achieving competitive advantage in light of global rankings of higher education institutions is essential.

Research problem

Strategic innovation and the establishment of policies, standards, and precise mechanisms are among the most important means that enhance human resource performance and achieve competitiveness for higher education institutions. This is essential for formulating policies that enable employees to perform their functions effectively by preparing intellectual capital to implement institutional plans and monitor environmental changes, thereby empowering universities to compete. Accordingly, the problem of the study is represented in clarifying whether strategic innovation plays a mediating role in the relationship between human resource practices and the creation of competitive advantage in higher education institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The study questions are as follows:

1. Does strategic innovation in human resource practices create a competitive advantage for higher education institutions?
2. Is there precise monitoring of excellence, accreditation, and competitiveness standards in the practices of higher education institutions to achieve a competitive position?
3. Do effective programs, policies, and rules for empowering and qualifying employees according to labor market needs and modern organizational practices help create competitiveness in higher education institutions?
4. Will enhancing strategic innovation in human resource practices within higher education institutions strengthen their competitive advantage?

Research objectives

The primary objective of this research is to identify the current situation and the extent to which strategic innovation contributes to enhancing human resource practices and creating competitiveness for higher education institutions. In addition to this main goal, there are several sub-goals represented as follows:

1. To measure and understand the policies and practices of human resources in Saudi universities to enhance performance levels and create a competitive position and advantage for educational institutions.
2. To provide recommendations and proposals for specialists to enhance the role of higher education institutions and suggest more effective policies and standards to improve their performance across all aspects and fulfill their professional responsibilities in meeting labor market needs, thereby distinguishing higher education institutions.
3. To contribute to the development and enhancement of strategic partnerships among faculty members in the field of scientific research to improve the department's output of submitted research.

Research significance

1. The importance of this research stems from the need to understand and enhance strategic innovation and its role in guiding human resource practices towards levels that elevate them to a position of leadership and competitiveness.
2. This study contributes to enriching both Arabic and foreign libraries with information on the research topic, which focuses on strategic innovation in human resource practices and creating competitiveness in higher education.
3. The study emphasizes the role of Saudi universities in the field of scientific research and aims to enrich knowledge through collaboration among faculty members, fostering teamwork in research projects.

Research hypothesis:

The research is based on the hypothesis that there is a positive and significant relationship between strategic innovation as a mediating variable and human resource practices in creating a competitive advantage in higher education institutions.

Methodology

This study employed the social survey method, which is a technique for collecting data from large numbers of respondents through direct or face-to-face contact, telephone, or mail, using questionnaires containing questions that measure the role of strategic innovation in human resource practices and the creation of competitiveness in higher education institutions.

Research Instrument:

The study relies on the use of a questionnaire as a data collection tool because it is suitable for the social survey method and the nature of the research topic. It is one of the most important means of data collection in descriptive and survey studies,

in addition to being the best way to collect primary data. The questionnaire was prepared in its initial form after reviewing studies related to the research topic. The questionnaire included a number of closed-ended questions that test the study hypothesis and the validity of its statements.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

- **Human Boundaries:** The study will involve a number of employees from the Faculty of Economics at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, taking a representative sample of the population to express their views on the research topic. The sample size is 66 individuals.
- **Spatial Boundaries:** The field study will be conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, at Imam University.
- **Time Boundaries:** The study will cover the period from 2021 to 2022.
- **Subject Boundaries:** The study focuses on strategic innovation, human resource practices, competitive advantage, and higher education institutions.

Statistical Methods

To achieve the study objectives, the research relies on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to extract the study results. Percentages and frequencies will also be used.

Previous studies

The researchers reviewed a large number of previous studies related to the research topic, including:

1. Talal Saleh Al-Hayyassat (2021):

This research aimed to identify the mediating role of quality management in the relationship between human resource practices and organizational performance in the Greater Salt Municipality. To achieve the study objectives, a

descriptive analytical approach was followed. The research sample consisted of 27 respondents from the following departments: the Human Resources Department, the Public Relations Department, the General Secretariat, and the Administrative and Legal Affairs Department in the Greater Salt Municipality.

The main hypothesis of the study posited that there is a statistically significant relationship between human resource practices and their dimensions and organizational performance in the Greater Salt Municipality.

The research yielded several results, the most important of which are: The overall mean for all items measuring the degree of human resource practices across all departments in the Greater Salt Municipality was 4.27, indicating a strong level of agreement among the study sample regarding the measurement of human resource practices. There was a strong degree of employment and selection practices, performance evaluation levels, and the availability of components for implementing a rewards system, as well as training and development practices in the Greater Salt Municipality; however, these practices varied in terms of their preparation and organization.

Additionally, the overall mean for all items measuring total quality management was 4.21, indicating a strong level of agreement among the study sample regarding the measurement of quality management in the Greater Salt Municipality. Finally, the research concluded that there is a significant difference in the role of quality management as a mediating variable in the relationship between human resource practices and organizational performance in the Greater Salt Municipality.

2. Mahmoud Abdel Fattah El-Shanti and Modhdad Hamdy El-Giar (2021):

This study aimed to identify the impact of strategic agility in enhancing the competitive advantage of Palestinian pharmaceutical companies. To achieve the study objectives, the researcher adopted a descriptive analytical approach. The study population consisted of all employees in supervisory positions in Palestinian pharmaceutical companies, totaling 166 employees. The comprehensive inventory method was used by distributing the questionnaire to the study population, and 145

questionnaires were retrieved, with a recovery rate of 87.3%. The SPSS program was used to enter and process the data and test the hypotheses.

Some of the most important findings of the study: The level of availability of strategic agility was at a very high agreement level with a relative weight of 80.22%. The level of competitive advantage was also at a high agreement level, with a relative weight of 75.81%. The results showed a statistically significant effect of the dimensions of strategic agility in enhancing competitive advantage, explaining 58.8% of the variance in competitive advantage, while there was no effect for the dimension of "core competencies". Some of the most important recommendations of the study: Adopting the strategic agility approach, spreading its philosophy and principles, and enhancing its practice at all levels, as it is a fundamental factor of great importance in enhancing competitive advantage by improving product quality, reducing costs, responding quickly, delivering on time, and reducing waste of resources.

3. Study by Jalal Ismail Shabat and Nidal Al-Masri (2019):

This research aims to identify the role of strategic leadership in enhancing organizational memory at the National Telecommunications Company. The study employed a descriptive analytical approach. To achieve the research objectives, the researchers used a questionnaire as a data collection tool, applying the study to a sample of 39 employees.

The research yielded several results, the most important of which are: The overall mean for all items related to strategic leadership and organizational memory was 85.6% and 86.82%, respectively. The results showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of strategic leadership and organizational memory. It was found that the variables affecting organizational memory include: entrepreneurial leadership and strategically managed resources. Additionally, 77% of the variance in organizational memory can be attributed to changes in strategic leadership.

4. Abu Jara (2020):

This study aimed to identify the impact of strategic agility in enhancing entrepreneurial orientation in Palestinian universities in the Gaza Strip governorates. The researcher followed the descriptive analytical approach. The study population consisted of all employees in supervisory positions in the major Palestinian universities (Islamic University, Al-Azhar, and Al-Aqsa), totaling 464 employees. The questionnaire was distributed to 228 employees using the stratified random sampling method, and 199 questionnaires were retrieved, with a recovery rate of 87.2%. The SPSS program was used to enter and process the data and test the hypotheses.

Some of the most important findings of the study: The level of availability of strategic agility dimensions was at a high agreement level with a relative weight of 69.73%. There is a strong positive statistically significant relationship between practicing strategic agility and enhancing entrepreneurial orientation in Palestinian universities in the Gaza Strip governorates. The results also showed a statistically significant effect of the dimensions of strategic agility (shared responsibility and taking actions) in enhancing entrepreneurial orientation.

Comparing the current study with previous studies, we find that previous studies differed in terms of spatial, temporal, and subject boundaries. The first study was conducted in the municipality of Salt and focused on the role of quality management between human resource practices and organizational performance. The second, third, and fourth studies were conducted in Palestine. The second focused on pharmaceutical companies in Palestine and focused on strategic agility and its impact on enhancing competitive advantage. The third focused on the Ooredoo mobile company, while the fourth focused on strategic agility and its impact on enhancing entrepreneurial orientation in Gaza Strip universities. The current study, on the other hand, focused on the education sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Field study procedures:

The researchers relied on the historical approach in studying the mediating role of strategic innovation in the relationship between human resource practices

and the creation of competitive advantage in higher education—a practical study on Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University. The historical approach provided the theoretical framework for the study and the research literature, as a wide range of historical sources was used to provide these frameworks. The descriptive inductive approach was also relied upon to formulate the questionnaire as a primary source for collecting data and information related to the research and study, which was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 to infer results based on a set of statistical methods (frequency tables, frequency percentages, descriptive statistics measures, measures of dispersion, Likert scale for response patterns, and inferential statistical methods such as analysis of variance, correlation coefficients, and mean analysis) to derive results that can be generalized to the study population. The inferential methods depend on measuring the statistical significance (Sig), predetermined at a value of 5.0%. Results from tests where the statistical significance value is less than 5.0% indicate the validity and significance of the results obtained.

Personal data analysis:

Table 1 – Shows personal information related to demographic aspects

Response		N	%
Age	Less than 30 years old	2	3.0
	From 30-40 years	27	40.9
	Older than 40 years	37	56.1
Marital status	Married	59	89.4
	Single	7	10.6
Educational level	Secondary	1	15
	University	9	13.6
	Postgraduate	56	84.8
	Less than 5 years	4	6.1
Years of experience	From 5-10 years	17	25.8
	More than 10 years	45	47.8
Have you taken any training course in strategic innovation?	Yes	8	12.1
	no	58	87.9
Have you received training courses on competitive advantage?	Yes	8	12.1
	no	58	87.1

Source: Prepared by the researcher, the outputs of the questionnaire analysis using a SPSS V26 2022.

From Table 1 above, we find that the demographic characteristics of the research sample are distributed according to the mentioned variables as follows:

1. According to the age variable, most responses were from individuals over 40 years old, accounting for 56.1% with 37 cases recorded as the highest response. In contrast, the percentage of responses from individuals under 30 years old was 3.0%, with only two cases. The percentage of responses from individuals aged 30 to 40 years was 40.9%, with 27 cases out of a total of 66 responses.
2. According to the marital status variable, most respondents were married, accounting for 89.4% with 59 cases, while the percentage of single respondents was 10.6%, with 7 responses.
3. According to the educational level variable, most responses selected the postgraduate option, with a percentage of 84.8% and 56 responses, while the least selected option was secondary education, with only 1.5%, corresponding to just one response.
4. According to the experience variable, 47.8% of respondents confirmed that they had more than ten years of experience, with 45 cases, while 6.1% of respondents indicated that their years of experience were less than 5 years out of the total responses.
5. According to the variable "Have you taken any training course in strategic innovation?", the highest response rate was "No" at 87.9%, corresponding to 58 cases, while the "Yes" response rate was only 12.1%, with 8 cases.
6. According to the variable "Have you received training courses on competitive advantage?", most responses were "No" at 87.9%, with 58 cases, while the "Yes" response rate was 12.1%, with only 8 cases. We notice a similarity in the responses to the variables of receiving training courses on strategic innovation and competitive advantage, which is a negative indicator of the need to strengthen training courses in both fields to keep pace with the current situation and create competitiveness for the university.

Results and discussion

Descriptive Distribution for Measuring Opinion Trends Using the Likert Scale

The following will calculate the descriptive statistics for each axis of the study in order to understand the general trend for each hypothesis of the axes and subsequently determine the overall trend for the hypothesis axis.

Since the variable representing the options (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree) is an ordinal scale in the Likert Scale, the cutoff points between each option on the scale are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Shows the cutoff points for the options of the Likert Scale

Response (Level, Option)	Weighted Average
Strongly Disagree	1.00 - 1.79
Disagree	1.80 - 2.59
Neutral	2.60 - 3.39
Agree	3.40 - 4.19
Strongly Agree	4.20 - 5.00

Source: Prepared by the researchers, 2022.

The following are the analysis results:

Description of the hypothesis components of the scale

Promoting strategic innovation in human resources practices and creating competitiveness

Table 3 – Shows the descriptive statistics for the scale items: Promoting strategic innovation in human resources practices and creating competitiveness

Statements	Mean	Response Intensity	SD	Opinion Trend	Significance
1/ The university follows clear strategic policies to determine human resources needs	3.2424	3	.76582	Average	Strong
2/ The university's employment policies are satisfactory and clear to everyone	3.0758	3	.75060	Average	Strong
3/ Individuals who possess the skills and knowledge required to fill the position are selected and appointed according to the scientific job description	3.1970	3	.82685	Average	Strong
4/ The university has clear policies and plans to determine human resource needs in light of work plans to avoid disguised unemployment	3.0303	3	.76399	Average	Strong
5/ University employees are characterized by agility and strategic thinking	3.0152	3	.66777	Average	Strong
6/ The university follows strategic policies to maintain creative and distinguished human resources to ensure the provision of high-quality services	2.9848	3	.71236	Average	Strong
7/ The university follows strategic policies to maintain creative and distinguished human resources to ensure the provision of high-quality services	2.9697	3	.80326	Average	Strong
8/ The university has an organizational climate that supports and encourages obtaining knowledge and building intellectual capital to enhance the university's competitive position.	2.8939	3	.78699	Average	Strong
9/ The university has clear policies to involve employees in formulating some creative initiatives in accordance with the university's vision	3.1515	3	.74920	Average	Strong
10/ The university administration believes that formulating the operational plan for the administrative units with the involvement of employees contributes effectively to creating creative initiatives	3.0758	3	.79053	Average	Strong
11/ The university's career path planning programs help discover talented and qualified individuals to assume high leadership and	2.9394	3	.76216	Average	Strong

administrative positions.					
12/ The university's policies and procedures for wages, salaries, and rewards are linked to organizational goals	2.7879	3	.71285	Average	Strong
13/ The university conducts a continuous review of wages and salaries policies in line with competing universities.	2.7424	3	.80976	Average	Strong
14/ The university's wage and salary policies are linked to performance	2.7727	3	.76047	Average	Strong
15/ The university uses the compensation system, both financial and non-financial, to improve motivation and productivity at work by raising employee morale.	3.1212	3	.75478	Average	Strong
16/ Performance is evaluated using clear criteria that are satisfactory to everyone.	2.9697	3	.78387	Average	Strong
17/ Training needs are determined using scientific methods to build intellectual capital	3.3182	3	.72662	Average	Strong
18/ The university has clear training policies by providing specialists to follow up the training process and reduce job stagnation for employees	3.2273	3	.71888	Average	Strong
19/ The university responds to employers' suggestions and ideas regarding educational programs and developing workers' skills in accordance with labor market developments	3.4848	3	.66199	Average	Strong
20/ The university has future orientations and plans to transition to a digital university by intensifying training programs to digitize human resources in line with educational requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.5455	3	.61223	Average	Strong
21/ The university leadership believes that the commitment of higher education institutions to preparing skilled and creative national cadres in accordance with international standards supports and achieves the goals of Vision 2030.	3.1970	3	.76901	Average	Strong
22/ The university is working on conducting scientific studies to determine the competitiveness of university graduates in the labor market and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the outputs.	3.4394	3	.68228	Average	Strong

23/ The university is interested in collecting and analyzing data on competitors and their strengths in the labor market to provide 24/7 compatible educational services and enhance the excellence and competitiveness of outcomes.	3.1970	3	.66146	Average	Strong
24/ The university administration effectively supports the efforts of employees who are distinguished by strategic intelligence and create change	3.1364	3	.65366	Average	Strong
25/ The university promotes the decentralization approach by successfully delegating authority to determine levels of achievement for employees.	2.9545	3	.71105	Average	Strong
26/ The university sets realistic performance standards and metrics for each job without experiencing job burnout.	3.0303	3	.65562	Average	Strong
27/ The university uses up-to-date and flexible indicators and standards that lead to continuous improvement and excellence.	2.9697	3	.74358	Average	Strong
29/ Innovation and excellence in human resources practices lead to creating competitive advantage in higher education institutions	3.1515	3	.68483	Average	Strong
The entire hypothesis	2.98683 7931			.7326365517	Average

Source: Prepared by the researchers, outputs of the questionnaire analysis using a SPSS 2022 SPSS.

From Table 3 above, we find that most of the averages of the statements and the opinion trends of the respondents were "Agree," with the response averages falling between (3.5455 - 2.7424) according to the Likert scale used. The overall mean was (2.99) with a standard deviation of (0.73). According to the weighted arithmetic mean of the hypothesis axes, the degree of agreement was noted. The response rates were high in the items (20, 19, 22, 17, 1, 18) respectively.

Objective tests

1. One-Sample T- Test to Test the Significance of the Factors and the Hypothesis

A T-test was conducted at a significance level of 5%, relying on the p-value (sig) of the calculated t-test statistic, which gives $t = \frac{x-\mu}{\sigma}$. The acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis was determined based on the criterion that if the p-value (sig) of the t-test statistic was less than 5%, the validity of the stated hypothesis was confirmed by measuring the difference between the actual mean of the statement (MA) and the response unit (MO). The results of the test are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Shows the results of the t- test for the phrases on the scale: Promoting strategic innovation in human resources practices and creating competitiveness, individually and for the entire scale

Statements	t Statistic	N	Significance Level (Sig)
1/ The university follows clear strategic policies to determine human resources needs	34.397	65	.000
2/ The university's employment policies are satisfactory and clear to everyone	33.290	65	.000
3/ Individuals who possess the skills and knowledge required to fill the position are selected and appointed according to the scientific job description	31.411	65	.000
4/ The university has clear policies and plans to determine human resource needs in light of work plans to avoid disguised unemployment	32.223	65	.000
5/ University employees are characterized by agility and strategic thinking	36.682	65	.000
6/ The university follows strategic policies to maintain creative and distinguished human resources to ensure the provision of high-quality services	34.040	65	.000
7/ The university follows strategic policies to maintain creative and distinguished human resources to ensure the provision of high-quality services	30.035	65	.000
8/ The university has an organizational climate that supports and encourages obtaining knowledge and building intellectual capital to enhance the university's competitive position.	29.874	65	.000
9/ The university has clear policies to involve employees in formulating some creative initiatives in accordance with the university's vision	34.174	65	.000
10/ The university administration believes that formulating the operational plan for the administrative units with the involvement of employees contributes effectively to creating creative initiatives	31.609	65	.000
11/ The university's career path planning programs help discover talented and qualified individuals to assume high leadership and administrative positions.	31.332	65	.000
12/ The university's policies and procedures for wages, salaries, and rewards are linked to organizational goals	31.772	65	.000
13/ The university conducts a continuous review of wages and salaries policies in line with competing universities.	27.514	65	.000
14/ The university's wage and salary policies are linked to performance	29.621	65	.000
15/ The university uses the compensation system, both financial and non-financial, to improve motivation and productivity at work by raising employee morale.	33.595	65	.000
16/ Performance is evaluated using clear criteria that are satisfactory to everyone.	30.778	65	.000
17/ Training needs are determined using scientific methods to build intellectual capital	37.099	65	.000
18/ The university has clear training policies by providing specialists to follow up the training process and reduce job stagnation for employees	36.471	65	.000
19/ The university responds to employers' suggestions and ideas regarding educational programs and developing workers'	42.767	65	.000

skills in accordance with labor market developments			
20/ The university has future orientations and plans to transition to a digital university by intensifying training programs to digitize human resources in line with educational requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.	47.047	65	.000
21/ The university leadership believes that the commitment of higher education institutions to preparing skilled and creative national cadres in accordance with international standards supports and achieves the goals of Vision 2030.	33.774	65	.000
22/ The university is working on conducting scientific studies to determine the competitiveness of university graduates in the labor market and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the outputs.	40.954	65	.000
23/ The university is interested in collecting and analyzing data on competitors and their strengths in the labor market to provide 24/7 compatible educational services and enhance the excellence and competitiveness of outcomes.	39.265	65	.000
24/ The university administration effectively supports the efforts of employees who are distinguished by strategic intelligence and create change	38.980	65	.000
25/ The university promotes the decentralization approach by successfully delegating authority to determine levels of achievement for employees.	33.757	65	.000
26/ The university sets realistic performance standards and metrics for each job without experiencing job burnout.	37.550	65	.000
27/ The university uses up-to-date and flexible indicators and standards that lead to continuous improvement and excellence.	32.446	65	.000
29/ Innovation and excellence in human resources practices lead to creating competitive advantage in higher education institutions	37.386	65	.000
The entire hypothesis	33,4428 62069		0.000

Source: Prepared by researchers, outputs of questionnaire analysis using a SPSS February 2022.

From Table 4, we find that the values of the t-test statistic are accompanied by a significance level of less than 5.0%. Therefore, the validity of the statements under examination is confirmed, and the researcher infers that these statements are valid. It is also noted that the statistical significance level of the t-test statistic for the statements is less than 0.05%, confirming that these statements support the hypothesis. Additionally, there is statistical significance and substantial differences that validate their accuracy.

Conclusion

Through the presentation and analysis of the data, the following results and recommendations were reached:

The percentage of respondents aged over 40 years is more than 65%.

According to the marital status variable, more than 84% of respondents are married.

The study showed that more than 84% of respondents have an educational level above university.

The study revealed that more than 47% of respondents have more than ten years of experience.

The study indicated that more than 87% have not received training courses on strategic innovation, and the same percentage (87%) have not received training courses on competitive advantage.

The study confirmed that the majority of respondents exhibited a neutral attitude towards several statements, with significant percentages for statements such as: "The university promotes the decentralization approach by successfully delegating authority to determine levels of achievement for employees," "The university is working on conducting scientific studies to determine the competitiveness of university graduates in the labor market and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the outputs," "The university is working on conducting scientific studies to determine the competitiveness of university graduates in the labor market and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the outputs," and "The university follows strategic policies to maintain creative and distinguished human resources to ensure the provision of high-quality services."

The study revealed that employees had positive attitudes towards several statements, including: "The university conducts a continuous review of wages and salaries policies in line with competing universities," "The university's wage and salary policies are linked to performance," "The university has an organizational climate that supports and encourages obtaining knowledge and building intellectual capital to enhance the university's competitive position," and "The university

leadership believes that the commitment of higher education institutions to preparing skilled and creative national cadres in accordance with international standards supports and achieves the goals of Vision 2030."

The study indicated that employees had negative attitudes and did not agree with several statements, including: "The university enhances its reputation and works to improve its image in the community by providing more targeted research and obtaining global rankings and awards," and "The university responds to the suggestions and ideas of employers in preparing educational programs and developing employees' skills."

The study confirmed that strategic innovation plays an important and mediating role between human resource practices and enhancing competitiveness in higher education institutions.

We recommend that the university administration focus on enhancing training courses for employees, especially on the drivers of competitive advantage such as strategic innovation, strategic intelligence, agility, and other modern techniques for creating excellence and improving the university's image globally and locally.

It is necessary to formulate clear strategic policies to retain creative employees, while ensuring that these policies are communicated to all staff.

We also recommend responding to labor market requirements and the ideas of employers to prepare students according to market needs.

We recommend the necessity of focusing on establishing strategic partnerships with employers in the field of preparing educational programs and enhancing students' field training to create job opportunities for graduates.

We also recommend encouraging and funding scientific research to contribute to finding and providing scientific solutions to society's problems, in addition to striving to obtain local and global rankings to improve the university's image.

We recommend that higher education institutions enhance strategic innovation in human resource practices and policies to create a competitive advantage for higher education institutions in the Kingdom.

We recommend preparing scientific research on the role of strategic intelligence in creating competitiveness for Saudi institutions.

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