REPLACING EXPATRIATES WITH LOCAL MANAGERS: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION INTO OBSTACLES TO LOCALIZATION IN OMAN'S PRIVATE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Localization also Known as Omanization aims to increase the number of Omani workforce in both public and private sectors in Oman. This study aims to determine the factors perceived to hinder localization practices in Oman's private sector. The research design is exploratory research. This research adopted quantitative research methodology. The study targeted the employees working under occupation of administrators, managers, and directors in Oman's private sector. The sample size is 84 respondents selected randomly. The study found that there is a strong positive relationship between leadership orientation and manager's localization. Also, Local managers having the ability of identifying and solving the work problem with high efficiency. However, local managers are not achieving their tasks with great efficiency as well as they needs to enhance the required knowledge and skills to accomplish job objective. Furthermore, the interpersonal skills of local managers enable them to work individually or within a group. However, an enhancement required in local managers skills in understanding their subordinate and motivate them. Moreover, a significant linear relationship identified with five factors which are: Managerial Skills, Monetary compensation, Non-Monetary compensation, Workplace Culture and Interpersonal skills. The demographic variables had no predictive ability for Leadership Orientation factor. Also, there is a statistically significant relationship between specific demographic variables and obstacles to manager's localization. The study concluded by providing some recommendations in enhancing localization the occupation of administrators, managers, and directors in Oman's private sector.

Replacing Expatriates with Local Managers: An Exploratory Investigation into Obstacles to Localization in Oman's Private Sector

1. INTRODUCTION

Just like most of the GCC countries, the labor market of Oman has been influenced by many factors like younger working age population, an increasing reliance on foreign labor force - skilled as well as unskilled labour, and the demand for technical abilities (Bontenbal & Zerovec, 2011). Oman depends on importing labour from different countries such as Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (De Bel-Air, 2015). This is because of many reasons which are: the low cost incurred of hiring them, the ease of workers termination, and the belief that migrant workers exhibit greater efficiency and easy to control. In Oman public sector, the majority of the jobs occupied by Omani national employees while the expat are occupied the jobs of Oman Private sector (Randeree, 2012). Government jobs are preferred by locals as they are considered to be more secure and consistent in comparison to the private jobs due to the better compensation and work environment being offered by public sector. (Al Ali, 2008). The working age population in Oman, almost 41.2% of the Omani population is less than 15 years old, whereas 53.9% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 60 years. According to the statistics, high school is successfully completed by approximately 30,000 students each year, who are then ready to enter the job market (Das & Gokhale, 2009; NCSI, 2019). However, there is a significantly high rate of unemployment among the Omani youth. The unemployment rate in Oman is almost 15%, as stated in the Gulf Research Centre report (De Bel-Air, 2015). The government put forward the Omanisation policy to decrease reliance on foreign workers and to decrease the rate of unemployment. The purpose of which was to provide jobs to qualified locals instead of migrants. The localization (Omanisation) policy was enforced by the Government of Oman in the public sector in the latter part of the 1980s and 1995 in private sector (Bontenbal & Zerovec, 2011). However, even though the Government has taken these steps, it still depends to a large extent on foreign workers.

2. OBJECTIVE

- To determine the factors perceived to hinder localization practices in Oman's private sector.
- To propose a diagnostic model of localization for redesigning a localization programme.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many international organization reports indicates that Oman unemployment rate is between 16% and 17.5% (OCHR Oman, 2018). In Oman labour market, there is more than 1.7 million expatriate. Table 1 shows the localization (Omanization) rate of Oman's Private sector from 2007-2018 which clearly observed that it dominated by expatriate on the time that there is more than 44 thousand Omani seeking for jobs by the end of 2018. (NCSI, 2019)

Table 1 Omanization rate of Oman's Private sector from 2007-2018

Year	Omani	Expatriate
2007	17%	83%
2008	16%	84%
2009	14%	86%
2010	16%	84%
2011	14%	86%
2012	12%	88%
2013	11%	89%
2014	12%	88%
2015	11%	89%
2016	12%	88%
2017	12%	88%
2018	13%	87%

Source: National Centre for Statistics & Information, Sultanate of Oman 2019

By February 2019, there were 37,299 expat comparing to 27,987 Omani working under the occupations of administrators, managers, and directors in the private sector (Times of Oman, 2019). The core problem of this research is that expat manager occupied mangers positions more than Omani on the time Oman's government spend a lot to enhance citizen capabilities and skills to handle managerial position such as internal and external scholarship managed by Ministry of higher education. (MOHE, 2020)

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The localization policy in Oman has since its adoption in 1988, contributed in increasing the number of national employees in many various economic activities. Despite all the governmental efforts to sustain localization, and decreasing the rate of local job seekers, the move towards localization has encountered certain difficulties and barriers due to many factors which stand counter to promoting the localization initiatives and practices in the country (Mashood et al, 2009).

According to data published by Oman's National Centre for Statistics (2019), localization in the public sector has achieved great results standing at 85% in 2019 with some sectors such as banking and insurance reaching up to 92%. The same source indicated that localization in the private sector did not exceed 13% in the same period.

(Al-Balushi, 2008)identified the main causes that hamper localization in Oman. He found out that over preference of the public sector among local job seekers is a main reason for hampering the localization efforts especially in the private sector. (Al-Balushi, 2008) argues that most job seekers in Oman tend to prefer working in the public sector rather than the private one due to many reasons which are: job security, fixed income, less working hours, better work environment, favorable working conditions and social status.

Even those who have objection to work in the private sector, they prefer to start up their own business rather than working for companies in private sector (Al-Balushi & Atef, 2015)

(Al-Balushi & Atef, 2015) believe that the employers in the private sector are also involved in limiting localization since they prefer to hire expatriates over locals. The reason behind that such preference is that expatriates require lower wages and demonstrate better skills and higher productivity than locals. Conversely, the recruitment of national locals means employers has to pay higher wages and might suffer greater staff retention and turnover rates.

(Goldman, et al., 2008) studied the localization barriers GCC countries including Oman. Their research shows that the education pattern represents a great impediment to localization

in the region. They argue that local labours in GCC countries as a whole lacks preparation to compete in the labour sector because of the mismatch between education output and market needs which explain the labour shortage in entire sectors despite the growing number of graduates.

The socio-cultural factors such as attitude towards work, female employment, family obligation and post-marital challenges also pose bold barriers against localization in most of the GCC states including Oman (AL-Selaimi, 2014)

(AL¬Nahdi, 2016) identified certain emergent obstacles to localization which are based on prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination explaining that most Omani-owned private enterprises are managed by expatriate managers who manage and control the selection and recruitment process and they prefer hiring expatriates over Omani nationals. They claiming that Omani employees show lower productivity rates in the workplace, greater absenteeism, limited skills, and above all cost higher wages.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research aims to determine the factors perceived to hinder localization of managers in Oman's private sector. The researchers depended on exploratory research design. This research adopted quantitative research methodology in which the questionnaire is the main tool for data collection. The study targeted the employees working under occupation of administrators, managers, and directors in Oman's private sector. By February 2019, there were 65,286 employees working under the occupations of administrators, managers, and directors in the private sector in which Omani represent 42.9% and non-Omani 57.1% (Times of Oman, 2019). The sample size is 84 respondents selected randomly from employees working in private sectors under the occupations of administrators, managers.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Test of Normality

Normality tests are adopted to identify whether the data distributed normally or non-normally. In this research, the well-known test of skewness and kurtosis were used. The result interpretation of this test indicate that value within +1 and -1 considered as normal distribution. Table 1 shows the result of skewness and kurtosis in which clearly indicates that all variable data within +1 and -1. It indicates that this research data is Normal distribution. (Hair, et al., 2017)

Table 1 Test of Normality

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis
V 1: Managerial Skills	-0.45	-0.28
Technical Skills	-0.72	-0.16
Interpersonal Skills	-0.99	0.83
Conceptual Skills	-0.04	-1.05
Diagnostic Skills	-0.24	-0.72
V 2: Compensation	-0.35	-0.36
Monetary	-0.22	-0.41
Non -Monetary	-0.25	-0.35
V 3: Workplace Culture	-0.16	-0.55
Employee relationship	-0.21	-0.8
Leadership	-0.54	0.1
Norms & Value	-0.09	-0.47

6.2. Demographic

Table 1 shows that Male respondents are more than the Females. Also, about 80 % [*Total of individual who are Less than 30 years and from 31 to 40 years*] of respondents are under the age of 40 years and around 64 % of respondents have bachelor degree where 7% are holding PhD degree. Furthermore, around 51% having between 1-10 years of experience and 19% are having experience more than 16 years. The Omani consist of 95 % where 5% only are non-Omani. Finally, most of the sample are staff (53%) and 47% are acting manager.

Table 2 Sample Demographic

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	67	80.7
	Female	16	19.3
Age	Less than 30 years	12	14.5
	30 to 40 years	55	66.3
	41 to 50 years	12	14.5
	Above 51 years	4	4.8
Qualification	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	53	63.9
	Masters	24	28.9
	PhD	6	7.2
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	18	21.7
	5 to 10 years	25	30.1
	11 to 15 years	24	28.9
	Above 16 years	16	19.3
Nationality	Omani	79	95.2
	Non-Omani	4	4.8
	Manager	20	24.1
	Head of Department	19	22.9
Occupation	Staff	44	53

6.3. Factor Analysis

The first step in data analysis is the using of EFA test in order to identify the obstacles to Manager's localization. The main objective of using EFA is to determine any overlapping variables and then group them into latent variables. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument evaluated by Cronbach alpha coefficients. A value of above 0.7 in Cronbach alpha coefficients is considered acceptable level of reliability. According to EFA principles, the factor loadings of more than 0.5 is practically significant (Anderson, et al., 2006).

The result of Factor analysis are presented in Table 3. The tables show the significant obstacles to manager's localization which are: Leadership orientation, Managerial Skills, Monetary compensation, Non-Monetary compensation, Workplace Culture and Interpersonal Skills. The identified highest factor loading was in Leadership orientation (0.916).

7. DEFINING LATENT VARIABLES

Factor 1: Leadership Orientation

Leadership orientation refers to the attitude of company's leadership toward local managers. An example of leadership orientation statements is "Top management having more trust on local manager's capability" with a factor rating of 0.916. Leadership orientation has the highest overall factor loading which indicates strong and highest explanatory power. This result means that there is a strong positive relationship between leadership orintation and

manager's localization. Furthermore, it seems that company's leadership in private sector are depending, supporting and trusting local manager's capabilities.

Factor 2: Managerial Skills

An example of leadership orientation statements is "Local managers have the ability to recognize and implement the optimal solution to problems" with a factor rating of 0.883. The highest factor loading in managerial skills indicates that local managers having the ability of identifying and solving the work problem with high efficiency. Furthermore, it seems that local managers are not achieving their tasks with great efficiency as well as they needs to enhance the required knowledge and skills to accomplish job objective. This latent factor had the second highest factor loading after leadership orientation, and presented an obstacle to manager's localisation.

Factor 3: Monetary Compensation

An example of leadership orientation statements is "My company have a bonus or incentive plan" with a factor rating of 0.771. The highest factor loading in monetary compensation indicates that local managers are satisfied from the monetary benefits and employee merit review process of their companies.

Factor 4: Non -Monetary Compensation

An example of leadership orientation statements is "My Company promote social relationship with co-workers" with a factor rating of 0.729. The highest factor loading indicates that companies in private sector promote social relationship among employees and managers. In the other hand, there is negative perception toward company's concentration on enhancing dignity, employee's satisfaction, providing required resources to perform tasks, physiological health and intellectual growth.

Factor 5: Workplace Culture

An example of leadership orientation statements is "My Company adheres to a zero-tolerance policy against any kind of discrimination" with a factor rating of 0.726. The highest factor loading indicates that companies in private sector are against of any kind of discrimination. Furthermore, the workplace culture needs improvement in supporting an equity environment between local and expat managers.

Factor 6: Interpersonal Skills

An example of leadership orientation statements is "Local managers have the ability to work individually and/or with group" with a factor rating of 0.844. The highest factor loading indicates that the interpersonal skills of local managers enable them to work individually or within a group. Furthermore, an enhancement required in local managers skills in understanding their subordinate and motivate them.

Table 3 Factor Analysis of Localisation

	Factor 1 (Leadership orientation)	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Cronbach's alpha
1	Top management depends more on local managers than expat managers in accomplishing tasks	.849	.227	.945
2	My company Offer supportive leadership and management for local managers	.841	.197	
3	Top management having more trust on local managers capability	.916	.165	
4	Top management having empower local mangers more than expat mangers.	.893	.145	
5	My company provide sense of job security for local managers	.824	.125	
	Factor 2 (Managerial Skills)			
6	Local managers have the required knowledge and skills to accomplish job objective	.666	8.149	.867
7	Achieving the work assigned to me with great efficiency.	.553	4.875	
8	Local managers have the mental ability to well analyse , diagnose and address complex situations	.713	1.071	
9	Local managers ensure that changes in work methods occur from time to time.	.645	1.007	
10	Local managers have the ability to find new solutions to work problem	.834	.799	
11	Local managers have the ability to understand and analyse cause-and-effect relationship	.727	.765	
12	Local managers have the ability to recognize and implement the optimal solution to problems	.883	.717	
	Factor 3 (Monetary compensation)			
13	Local managers are satisfied with salary and another benefits plan	.737	.554	.833
14	my company reviewed the salary structure regularly	.736	.506	
15	My company have a bonus or incentive plan	.771	.479	
16	My company have a formal employee merit review process	.780	.446	
	Factor 4 (Non -Monetary compensation)			
17	My company enhance dignity and satisfaction from work performed.	.526	.402	.809
18	My company promote social relationship with co-workers.	.729	.382	
19	My company Allocate sufficient resources to perform work assignments.	.580	.349	
20	My company Enhance physiological health and intellectual growth.	.580	.312	
	Factor 5 (Workplace Culture)			
21	My company support equity environment between local and expat managers.	.648	.275	.859
22	my company operates in a socially responsible manner	.601	.216	
23	My company adheres to a zero-tolerance policy against any kind of discrimination	.726	.097	
24	I'm satisfied with my company norms and value	.692	.072	
	Factor 6 (Interpersonal Skills)			
25	Local managers have the ability to work individually and/or with group	.844	2.516	.738
26	Local managers have The ability to understand their subordinate and motivate them	.647	1.152	

Note: N = 84

Extraction method: principle component analysis

Rotation method: varimax -Meyer-Olkin =0.837

Chi-square = 1422.020

8. CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

CFA was applied to evaluate the strength of the scale structure. The value of goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and incremental fit index (IFI) are between 0 to 1. Furthermore, value above 0.9 refers to a good model fit. The best indicator for model fit is RMSEA. A value of less than 0.05 is considered a good fit and value between 0.05 to 0.10 is acceptable (Dardas & Ahmad, 2014). In this study, RMSEA value is 0.064 which is

acceptable fit indices. Table 4 shows the possible fit indices of the model and Figure 1 shows the structural model.

Table 4 Goodness of Fit Indices for the modified model

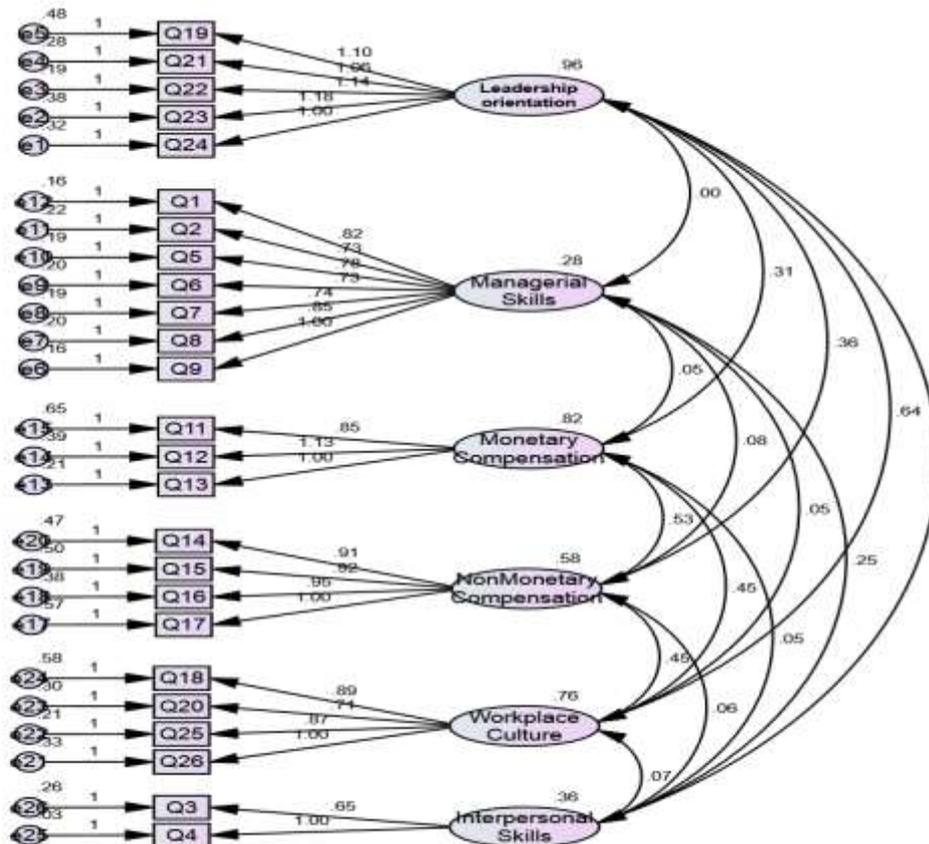| Parameters	ECVI	NFI	CFI	IFI	GFI	RMR	RMSEA
Goodness of fit	5.807	0.778	0.932	0.934	0.768	0.064	0.064

p < 0.01

Figure 1 Structural Model for Obstacles to Manager's Localisation

9. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Regression analysis is a strong tool in explaining the selected predictor variables. (Anderson, et al., 2006) In this study, a standard linear regression was adopted in order to examine the relationship between independt variables (demographic) and dependent variables (obstacles to Manager's localization).

Tables 5 & 6 shows the results of the regression analysis. The results shows that experience had the strongest positive predictive ability for the factors of managerial skills (t = 3.194, β= 0.334) and Non -Monetary compensation (t = 2.090, β= 0.219). Interestingly, the gender had the strongest negative predictive ability for the factors of Monetary compensation (t = -2.086, β= -0.226), Non -Monetary compensation (t = -2.551, β= -0.267) and Workplace Culture (t = -2.783, β= -0.295). The demographic variable of age was the best positive predictive ability for Interpersonal skills ((t = 3.679, β= 0.378)

In general, the regression analysis result indicates significant linear relationship with five factors which are: Managerial Skills, Monetary compensation, Non -Monetary compensation, Workplace Culture and Interpersonal skills. The demographic variables had no predictive ability for Leadership Orientation factor. Also, the result indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between specific demographic variables and obstacles to manager's localization.

Table 5 Regression Analysis for Factor 1, 2 & 3

Factors	Leadership orientation			Managerial Skills			Monetary compensation		
Demographic variables	**Beta**	**t**	**sig**	**Beta**	**t**	**sig**	**Beta**	**t**	**sig**
Age	-.146	-1.014	.314	.136[b]	1.026	.308	-.044[b]	-.407	.685
Nationality	.201	1.745	.085	.074[b]	.707	.482	-.140[b]	-1.292	.200
Qualification	-.050	-.442	.660	.171[b]	1.640	.105	-.125[b]	-1.158	.250
Occupation	.033	.270	.788	.047[b]	.439	.662	-.098[b]	-.880	.381
Experience	.266	1.921	.059	**.334**	**3.194**	**.002**	.173[b]	1.616	.110
Gender	-.145	-1.299	.198	.000[b]	-.004	.997	**-.226**	**-2.086**	**.040**

Note: Adjusted R Squared for Factor 1 is 0.042, Adjusted R Squared for Factor 2 is 0.101, Adjusted R Squared for Factor 3 is 0.039.

Table 6 Regression Analysis for Factor 4, 5 & 6

Factors	Non -Monetary compensation			Workplace Culture			Interpersonal skills		
Demographic variables	**Beta**	**t**	**sig**	**Beta**	**t**	**sig**	**Beta**	**t**	**sig**
Age	.110[c]	.828	.410	.188[b]	1.787	.078	**.378**	**3.679**	**.000**
Nationality	-.016[c]	-.147	.883	.198[b]	1.884	.063	-.072[b]	-.685	.496
Qualification	-.094[c]	-.896	.373	-.104[b]	-.977	.332	.044[b]	.427	.670
Occupation	-.085[c]	-.774	.441	.071[b]	.657	.513	.048[b]	.448	.656
Experience	**.219**	**2.090**	**.040**	.165[b]	1.565	.121	.060[b]	.456	.649
Gender	**-.267**	**-2.551**	**.013**	**-.295**	**-2.783**	**.007**	-.002[b]	-.019	.985

Note: Adjusted R Squared for Factor 4 is 0.102, Adjusted R Squared for Factor 5 is 0.076, Adjusted R Squared for Factor 6 is 0.133.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the research's key findings has built four essential conclusions which are in relation with the study's aim of replacing Expatriates with Local administrators.

There is a strong positive relationship between leadership orientation and manager's localization. The company's leadership in private sector are depending, supporting and trusting local manager's capabilities.

Local managers having the ability of identifying and solving the work problem with high efficiency. However, it seems that local managers are not achieving their tasks with great efficiency as well as they needs to enhance the required knowledge and skills to accomplish job objective.

Local managers are satisfied from the monetary benefits and employee merit review process of their companies. Also, companies in private sector promote social relationship among employees and managers. In the other hand, there is negative perception toward company's concentration on enhancing dignity, employee's satisfaction, providing required resources to perform tasks, physiological health and intellectual growth.

Companies in private sector are against of any kind of discrimination. Furthermore, the workplace culture needs improvement in supporting an equity environment between local and expat managers.

The interpersonal skills of local managers enable them to work individually or within a group. However, an enhancement required in local managers skills in understanding their subordinate and motivate them.

Finally, a significant linear relationship identified with five factors which are: Managerial Skills, Monetary compensation, Non-Monetary compensation, Workplace Culture and Interpersonal skills. The demographic variables had no predictive ability for Leadership Orientation factor. Also, there is a statistically significant relationship between specific demographic variables and obstacles to manager's localization.

RECOMMENDATION

- Local managers should enhance their knowledge and skills to accomplish job objective.
- Local managers should enhance their skills in understanding their subordinate and motivate them.
- The companies in private sector should review and enhance the policies related to employee's dignity, satisfaction, providing required resources to perform tasks, physiological health and intellectual growth.
- Companies in private sector should enhance the workplace culture by supporting an equity environment between local and expat managers.

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