

Transforming Work Environments: The Impact of HR Guidance and Counseling in the Construction Sector in Saudi Arabia

Mohammed Almhesni ^{1*}, Mazuri Abd Ghani ², Khalil Ahmed ³, Bashar Barkat ⁴.

^{1*} Faculty of Business and Management Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin - Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia
M.almhesni@sbg.com.sa.

² Faculty of Business and Management Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin - Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia
mazuri@unisza.edu.my.

³ International Islamic University Malaysia, Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance, Selangor, MALAYSIA
e-mail: khaleel8344814@yahoo.com.

⁴ Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia.
bhb_bhb2002@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This study investigates the transformative impact of HR guidance and counseling on work environments within the construction sector in Saudi Arabia. Through a survey-based approach, primary data was collected to assess the influence of HR advice and support on working conditions. The findings underscored the significant enhancement potential of implementing new HR guidelines and support systems in construction companies. Embracing policies promoting diversity, respect, and equality emerged as crucial factors in fostering positive work environments. Furthermore, counseling initiatives and open discussions were identified as effective strategies in improving overall workplace satisfaction. Despite notable insights, limitations such as a small sample size and cross-sectional analysis were acknowledged. Additionally, the study focused on a single company and industry, suggesting avenues for future research expansion. Recommendations include enlarging the sample size, conducting longitudinal analyses, and exploring other industries to provide a more comprehensive understanding of HR guidance and counseling effects in the construction sector in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: HR Guidance and Counseling ¹, work environment ², HR Guidance, Workplace³, Construction Sector⁴, Saudi Arabia⁵, Workplace Diversity⁶.

1. Introduction

Organizations are currently encountering numerous obstacles in maintaining a work environment that is both friendly and competitive. These challenges, which can be internal or external, highlight the significance of employee happiness within public organizations. Modern Human Resources (HR) practices now focus on proactive guidance and counseling to enhance organizational work environments. Quality HR support through guidance plays a crucial role in boosting employee performance, which is vital for achieving organizational objectives in today's competitive landscape.

The primary objective of counseling is to enhance coping mechanisms, strengthen relationships, and empower individuals to make informed decisions while observing positive behavioral changes. The aim is to help employees cultivate understanding and self-acceptance. According to Hillborg, Lövgren, Bejerholm, and Rosenberg (2024) counseling is a collaborative process where one person aids another in resolving career-related issues to cultivate a positive work climate. Counseling offers support, guidance, and different perspectives to assist employees in exploring various work options.

The work environment is pivotal in managing employee productivity and remains a significant challenge in organizational management. Employees serve as a crucial asset in driving an organization's daily operations and functions. Consequently, workforce productivity directly impacts organizational profitability, growth, and effectiveness (Jocelyne & Kariuki, 2020; Milhem, Tahayna, et al., 2024). Moreover, the work environment plays a pivotal role in shaping employee productivity and organizational effectiveness. As the backbone of organizational operations, employees significantly influence the overall performance and profitability of the company (Xu & Liu, 2020). Therefore, creating an environment that fosters employee engagement, satisfaction, and well-being is paramount for achieving sustainable growth and success. Effective leadership is essential in driving HR initiatives aimed at enhancing the work environment, as leaders set the tone for organizational culture and values. According to Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (2002) the

realm of Human Resources (HR) involves a wide array of tasks and approaches carried out by HR professionals and specialists. Activities falling within the domain of human resource management encompass employee training, performance assessment, employee relations, recruitment, and talent management. Successful leadership is pivotal in guiding and backing HR teams in designing and implementing training programs that align with the organization's goals and cater to employee needs. Effective leaders establish an environment conducive to the success of training initiatives by fostering plentiful resources, support, and motivation (A. Ateeq, A. A.-A. Al-Refaei, et al., 2024; Ateeq, Alzoraiki, Milhem, & Al-Absy, 2023). The introduction of training programs can lead to a notable enhancement in employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies. Moreover, a supportive HR work environment, influenced by leadership's support for training, can help reduce the stress levels experienced by employees. When staff members are provided with appropriate training opportunities, they develop confidence in their ability to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

In the context of the construction sector in Saudi Arabia, transforming work environments through effective HR guidance and counseling practices is imperative for organizational success and employee well-being. The unique challenges faced by construction companies, such as tight deadlines, safety concerns, and resource constraints, underscore the need for a supportive and conducive work environment (Offia Ibem, Anosike, Azuh, & Mosaku, 2011). HR guidance and counseling play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by fostering employee resilience, enhancing communication channels, and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. However, despite the recognized importance of HR practices in organizational development, there is a dearth of empirical research focusing on the construction sector in Saudi Arabia. This gap highlights the need for comprehensive studies that explore the impact of HR guidance and counseling on work environments within this specific context, thereby contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical implications for construction companies in Saudi Arabia (Habtoor & Ali, 2022).

2. Literature Review

The optimum effectiveness and efficiency of an organization depend less on the economic resources or the technology but more on the work environment that encourages a dedicated and motivated workforce. Rewards, appraisal and training contribute to the motivation of employees to endorse work environment concerns, allowing organizations to become competitive in the market. Over the years, various HR guidance practices have been progressively adopted. The recent study conducted by Deepa, Sekar, Malik, Kumar, and Attri (2024) provides valuable insights into the evolution of HR guidance. The three main components of HR guidance include: selecting, recruiting, training and developing employees to encourage leadership abilities, the second component includes motivation along with implying rewards and appraisal and the third component is the stimulation of employee involvement thereby implying tacit knowledge and employee empowerment to create a positive work environment (Ateeq, 2023; Nawaz, Arunachalam, Pathi, & Gajenderan, 2024).

The organization under study has devoted in HR guidance and counseling to bring in a positive work environment at the workplace but the production is not as deliberate to provide employees with the required support level for smooth company operations. Continuous employee complaints show a clear indication that counseling and HR guidance have not been implemented efficiently to meet the essentials of all workers (Al-Refaei, Ali, Ateeq, & Alzoraiki, 2023) (Long, 2024). Lack of sufficient information on guidance being the main challenge acts as a clear pointer that counseling activities were insufficient which resulted in a poor work environment. The relationship between work environment, HR guidance and counseling has been extensively studied in the public sector and published in international HR journals too but very few studies have been conducted in the construction sectors countries. Petroleum and gas companies are not as attentive as other industries in improving the work environment. The major obstacles are recruiting, attracting, educating and retaining the right candidate and then counseling them accordingly which affects the work environment (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Tran & Kelley, 2024). The reviewed literature has indicated a gap in this area therefore the study sought to establish the extent to which HR guidance and counseling affects the work environment.

Counseling is a service that helps employees to manage themselves. Counseling is not new and is continued for ages in some way or the other to keep employees on the right track. In an organization, a counselor works with a designated workforce as a pacesetter, a revealing mirror and a thinking partner (Ragas, 2023). A counselor helps to leverage the core capacities of employees and helps to create a culture for greater synergy in organizational development and learning. The fundamental aim of counseling is to foster coping skills, improve relationships, facilitate the capacity of clients, support decision making and witness behavioral improvement. The goal is to assist employees to develop comprehension and self-acceptance. Counseling is described by Zhai et al. (2023) as a relationship in which one individual helps another to

solve and understand career or work issues to support a positive work environment. Counseling provides encouragement, advice and perspectives to help employees navigate and identify alternative and diverse work choices.

The work environment plays a very important role in managing employee performance and remains a major challenge in overall organizational management. The key goal of an organization is to take certain steps to inspire workers to achieve and deliver organizational competitiveness. Employees act as the major resource to promote the everyday activities and operations of an organization. Therefore, the output of workers is instrumental in organizational profitability, development, and efficiency (Alliu & Akinlabi, 2023).

3. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The framework addresses the relationship between the variables under study. The independent variable is HR guidance and counselling and the DV is work environment. The dimensions for HR guidance and counselling are Training and development and Leadership. The dimensions for Work environment are Stress, Absentees and workplace safety

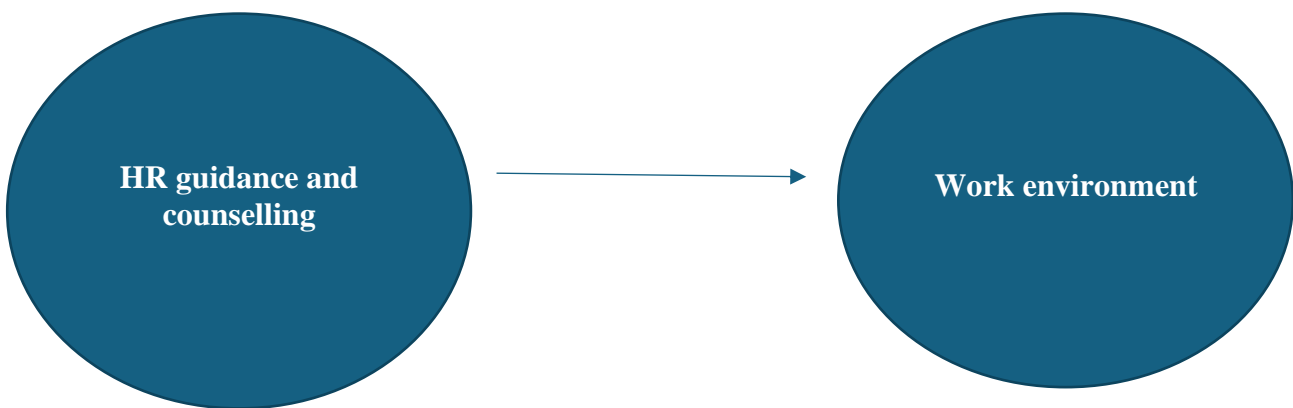


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

H1: There is a significant impact for training and development in the work environment.

H2: There is a significant impact for leadership in the work environment.

4. Research Methodology

The research design taken in the study is quantitative research design. Under the quantitative study, the researcher has investigated the cause and effect among the variables (Qaid et al., 2024). Taking the quantitative approach has benefited the researcher to conduct statistical analysis and generate accurate results (Khalil, et al.). The research approach taken in the study is deductive approach (Abro, Ateeq, Milhem, & Alzoraiki, 2024). Under the deductive approach, the researcher has been relying on the existing model for the study. Questionnaires have been taken as the primary instrument for the study. Five-point Likert has been taken in the questionnaire where respondents are given with five options to answer from (Al-Fahim et al., 2024; ATEEQ, AYYASH, MILHEM, ALZORAIKI, & ALZAGHAL, 2024; Milhem, Ayyash, Ateeq, & Alzoraiki, 2024). Taking questionnaires has benefited the researcher to conduct the real time data collection in a convenient way. The questionnaire has been made by Google forms and distributed by means of email and social media (Milhem, Ayyash, et al., 2024).

5. Findings

The regression model included two crucial dimensions of HR guidance and counseling: Training and Development, and Leadership. Notably, no variables were excluded during the analysis process, indicating a comprehensive approach. The selection method employed was "Enter," ensuring all independent variables were included in the model.

The regression model demonstrated a commendable fit, with an R value of .907 and an R-squared value of .822. This implies that approximately 82% of the variability in the work environment can be explained by the independent variables

under consideration. The Adjusted R-squared value of .817 further corroborates this, indicating a robust explanatory power of around 81% as shown in table 1 .

Table 1. The Regression Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.907 ^a	.822	.817	.51837
a. Predictors: (Constant), HR guidance and counselling (Training and development, Leadership)				

The ANOVA table provided compelling evidence for the significance of the regression model ($F = 197.721, p < .001$). This underscores the validity of the model in explaining the variation observed in the work environment. The sum of squares analysis highlighted the substantial contribution of the regression model, reaffirming its importance in understanding workplace dynamics at Aramco.

Table 2. The ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	95.510	2	45.755	197.721	.000 ^b
	Residual	21.690	77	.279		
	Total	117.200	79			
a. Dependent Variable: work environment						
b. Predictors: (Constant), HR guidance and counselling (Training and development, leadership)						

The coefficients table3 include the impact of HR guidance and counseling dimensions on the work environment. Training and Development exhibited a significant positive impact ($Beta = .726, p < .001$), suggesting its pivotal role in shaping a conducive work environment. Similarly, Leadership displayed a notable positive influence ($Beta = .247, p = .003$), underscoring its importance in organizational leadership practices.

Table 3. Coefficients - HR guidance and counseling dimensions on the work environment

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.140	1.517		2.070	.042
	HR guidance and counselling (Training and development)	1.535	.129	.726	9.596	.000
	Hr guidance and counselling	.465	.205	.247	2.173	.003

	(Leadership)				
a. Dependent Variable: work environment					

In conclusion, the findings underscore the critical importance of HR guidance and counseling, particularly in Training and Development and Leadership, in fostering a positive work environment at construction sector. These results provide valuable insights for organizational leaders and HR practitioners aiming to enhance workplace satisfaction and productivity within the companies as shown in table 3 below.

Table 4. Hypotheses Summary

S.No	Hypotheses Summary	Accepted/Rejected
1	There is a significant impact of Training and development on work environment in the construction sector	Accepted
2	There is a significant impact of Leadership on work environment the construction sector.	Accepted

6. Discussions and Conclusions

The study aimed to evaluate the effects of HR guidance and counseling on the work environment within the construction sector. Regarding the first research objective, the study extensively examined the positive impact of HR guidance on company work environments. Analysis revealed a noteworthy 63% improvement attributed to the effective implementation of HR policies and guidance strategies. These findings align with previous research, indicating the progressive adoption of various HR guidance practices over time. For instance, recent studies, including Fawehinmi, Yusliza, and Farooq (2022) research, have shed light on the evolution of HR guidance, emphasizing its three main components: selecting, recruiting, training, and developing employees to foster leadership abilities; motivation, including rewards and appraisal; and stimulating employee involvement to promote a positive work environment. Moreover, studies by Qawasmeh et al. (2024) and Jain, Jayakumar, Christy, Singh, and Inamdar (2023) have consistently shown the positive impact of HR practices on organizational performance, highlighting the critical role of HR guidance in shaping work environments. Despite the organization's commitment to HR guidance and counseling, shortcomings in support provision have become evident through continuous employee complaints (Cayrat & Boxall, 2023). Insufficient information on guidance presents a significant challenge, highlighting the need for more effective counseling activities to address the essential needs of all workers and improve the work environment.

Transitioning to the second research objective, the study further explored the enduring significance of counseling in organizational settings. Past scholars, such as Hargadon (2023) and Lewis (2024) assert the longstanding role of counseling in guiding employees and fostering self-acceptance and comprehension. Counseling serves as a means to navigate career and work-related issues, offering encouragement, advice, and diverse perspectives to help employees identify alternative work choices. In line with these findings, the study suggests that the implementation of new HR policies and guidance could lead to significant improvements in the work environment. Policies promoting inclusion, respect, and equality, when adopted and acted upon by all members of the workplace, can contribute significantly to creating a healthier work environment. Moreover, the introduction of counseling programs and discussions is also poised to play a pivotal role in enhancing the work environment, respectively. The findings from studies by Kehoe and Wright (2013) and Gotsis and Grimani (2017) further emphasize the importance of HR practices in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors, underscoring the potential impact of counseling initiatives on work environment outcomes.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Studying had certain limitations. The first limitation is the small sample size and cross-sectional analysis. Also, the study has been limited to single company and industry only. Based on these limitations, future scholars are suggested to expand the study to large sample size, longitudinal analysis and towards other industries. This would allow to conduct in-depth analysis of the area of study.

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