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The effectiveness of recruitment and selection methods in Saudi Arabia: the case of Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA).

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Abstract

This paper investigates the factors affecting the effectiveness of recruitment and selection methods in the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA). In the current study, the researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews with the managers from different departments operating in SFDA (human resources, IT, management and finance) using targeted sampling. The study revealed that national culture, gender family background and religion were of great influence to the recruitment, and selection process of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA). The paper holds essential implications for both theory and practice.

1. Introduction

As a result of an ever changing world, walks of life and other business sectors have also gotten to deal with this change, which remains a *constant*. Change has not only affected the way business is carried out, it has also affected the way personnel is managed from recruitment to selection and to retention of employees [18]. There are quite a good number of literature made available to employers who indulge in the day to day activity of recruiting employees. This amount of prescriptive information is made available to assist managers in improving the opportunities of attracting the right employee for the job, with great emphasis on the big companies. However, information on recruitment strongly suggest systematic procedures made up of four important steps namely; the job description, job analysis, person specification and a vacancy need assessment [9].

Despite the 'rich and deep' availability of literature on efficient recruitment practice, [22] noted that there was little evidence that even large companies follow the textbook advice. Recruitment and selection are very important ingredients in structuring an effective human resource management especially as certain methods are preferred to others and could be classified as the main 'push' and 'pull' levers for organisational change. The recruitment and selection processes provide the employer with options that determine the modification of attitudes and the competences of the labour force [31].

According to reports published by the [44], the labour market in the Middle East, remains uncommon in the light that 'it has the highest levels of labor force growth, the lowest levels of female participation, and, except for Sub-Saharan Africa, the youngest labor force' [44]. Based on formal documents of the Saudi Arabian government, the country faces great demands in its economic and human resource development programmes. These main difficulties include; high reliance on the oil and petroleum companies; increase reliance of expatriates; an underrepresentation of the female population in work places and an inadequate connection that exists between the education and economic sectors [2].

Encouraged by the aforementioned factors, this research seeks to explore the effectiveness of the methods of recruitment and selection in Saudi Arabia with the case study of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA). It is the intention of the research that the findings will be of great benefit to companies that are both local and international with links to Saudi Arabia. There has been little research carried out and published about HRM in Saudi Arabia and the effectiveness of the methods of recruitment and selection in particular

Therefore, the end-product of this piece of the current study is to try and close the gap that exists in the literature of HRM in Saudi Arabia. This research investigates into the methods of recruitment and selection at the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), findings and analysis of the factors that influence recruitment and selection in Saudi Arabia.

Our research is outlined as follows: the next section represents literature pertaining to the study variables and theories as well as the hypotheses development. Then we demonstrate our data collection and measures operationalization. Finally, study results, discussion, and managerial implications have been explained as well as demonstrating the limitations and future research.

2. The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) Background

The General Commission for Saudi Food and Drug Authority was established under the Council of Ministers Resolution No. (1) on 7/1/1424 AH; as an independent body with legal personality and is directly linked to the prime minister, and entrusted with all tasks of procedural and operational and monitoring carried out by the existing authorities to ensure the food safety and medicine for animals as well as human and safety of biologicals and chemicals, as well as electronic products that affect human health [36]. The Affairs of the Commission are managed by a board of directors headed by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General, and the membership of His Royal Highness the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs as a Vice-Chairman, and Council members include all cabinet ministers concerned (His Royal Highness the Minister of the Interior, Minister of Health, Minister of Commerce and Industry, ministry of water, agriculture , electricity, Finance, and Minister of Economy and Planning) and the Director General of Saudi Commission for Standardization and Metrology, the President of the Chambers Council of Industry and Commerce in Saudi Arabia, the Executive Chairman of the Commission, and a specialist in the field of medicine [36].

The Commission is regulating , control and supervise food, medicine and medical and diagnostic devices, and to

3. Literature Review

3.1 Recruitment and Selection Process

The definition of recruitment and selection have been written and discussed by numerous authors and practitioners. [29] Define recruitment as "a process which aims to attract appropriately qualified candidates for a particular position from which it is possible and practical to select and appoint a competent person and persons". [14] describes recruitment as a process whose aim is to decide what is required by the company from a candidate and initialize steps to attract the most skilled or competent candidate(s) for the job.

On the other hand, [14] stipulates that, "selection involves testing and evaluating the skills and attributes of these individuals to determine which are the best for the job at hand". But putting these definitions in a more concise and precise manner, [6] puts it this way:

"Recruitment is the process of finding and engaging the people the organisation needs. Selection is that part of the recruitment process concerned with deciding which applicants or candidates should be appointed to jobs"

Meanwhile, in hiring, the manager in charge will need to pick-out the main qualities of the required individual through ajobdescription/person specification,

 Via advertising (for example the media) to find people appropriate with the required qualities. In a brief therefore, recruitment thus includes: attracting appropriate candidates for jobs by firstly recognizing the needs of the company's vacancy [14]. Incorporated with those activities involved in recruitment, are pre-recruitment activity (e.g. establishing a *prima facie* case for hiring; job analysis; consideration of the labour market and exterior influences), use of hiring methods, and responding to enquiries [29]. Recruitment could also be seen in the

put forth mandatory standard specifications for them, whether locally manufactured or imported, and take upon themselves to control and test them in the laboratories of the commission or labs of others, and to educate consumers about all what related to food, medical devices and medicine and all pharmaceutical products related to that, in order to achieve the following main objectives [36]:

1. Food safety and effectiveness and medicine for humans and animals.
2. Safety of supplementary biologicals and chemicals, pesticides and cosmetics.
3. Electronic products safety from the impact on the public health.
4. Accuracy safety and standards of diagnostic and medical devices.
5. Setting forth of policies and clear procedures for food, medicine and planning to achieve and activate these policies.
6. Applied studies and doing researches to identify health problems and their causes and to determine their effects with methods and evaluation of researches, as well as setting forth a scientific base which can be used for educational purposes, executive programs and consulting services in the areas of food and medicine.

words of [24], 'as part of a trio, recruit, reward and retain', which includes performance management and can be described by the broader term 'resourcing'. Authors like [12] divides recruitment activities into job analysis, workforce planning & forecasting, and recruiting. By workforce planning and forecasting, [12] means that employer should analyse personnel trends, the position that has to be filled and how to fill it i.e. with inside or outside candidates from maintenance clerk to CEO.

Employee hiring and selection in accordance with the ACAS guiding principles should be 'effective, efficient and fair' – effective in selecting the right person, efficient in doing it on time with low expense, and fair by dealing equitably and preventing discrimination of any kind [29]. Selection is a very important factor in any organization's management of employee, just because it is not ease to maximise the efficiency of human resources by any method, if the organisation's needs is greater than the quantity or quality of people [32]. However, informed decisions can be made instead of uninformed estimates. But [37], edited by [7] take a building block approach as to what does hire and selection mean; it is a process of selecting the right jigsaw piece (the 'right' individual) from wrong pieces (the 'wrong' individuals) to fit into a specific hole in a jigsaw puzzle. However, people undoubtedly do have differences such as in their bodily appearance and also psycho-socially: differences between people in terms of abilities, character, motivation and emotions [37]. Given that organisations and jobs have unlike requirements, some individuals would tend to be suitable to some jobs and organisations more than others. [27] Supports this proposal by confirming that it is rare for organisations to ignore the personality of a candidate at an

interview of selection. For some organisations such as hospitality industry ones, personality is one of the essential criteria for selection or rejection.

Moreover, 'recruiting' is the same activity as 'the recruitment method' defined by [29] and it is very important because the more candidates you have, the wider the scope of selection you have to hire [12]. Also, 'hiring' the 'right' people has vital importance and this depends on effective hiring and selection procedures, that target at selecting the 'right' individuals and reject the 'wrong' ones [37], edited by [7], because if the needs of the job are not understood worries in performance could arise (as in the case where a job is 'over-sold' at interview), or if the employees are over or under qualified [24]. These authors suggest that candidates could be from both inside and outside the organization.

However, before current employees' fill-up new vacancies training development and coaching/mentoring may be some of the requirements. Recruiting from outside entails deciding what sources of recruitment are vital to use what the turn out will be [12]. Rehiring and succession planning are some of the means by which the search for candidates from internal sources. Succession planning in a nutshell according to [12] refers to the plans that a company puts in place to fill its most vital executive vacancies.

3.2 Factors influencing recruitment and selection

In structuring an effective recruitment and selection system, the culture and habits of the people of Saudi Arabia is in no wise negated. The word 'culture' is mostly used for both nations and organisations suggesting that they are both similar phenomena [18]. However, [18] rebuts this stance by purporting that, "a nation is not an organisation, and the two types of culture are of a different nature…based on their different mix of values and practices". Amongst the researchers who used dimension of culture in their research is Geert Hofstede. Even though his research has been criticized because it was based on just one company (IBM), the result is indeed widely accepted and cited [20]. Hofstede differentiates nations' cultures by 5 dimensions; individuality/collectiveness, power distance, maleness, uncertainty avoidance, and long/short – term orientation [18].

Hofstede's analysis for the Arab world contains countries like Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates which portrays how important the Muslim faith is to the inhabitants/citizens of these regions with a more collectivists approach of living [18]. Moreover, as argued by [38], individualistic countries may have different recruitment and selection methods from collectivist countries. For instance, countries like the US – as an individualistic country – prefers to have impersonal hiring sources (e.g. online hiring, newspaper advertisement); whereas in collectivist countries, employers prefer relationship-oriented hiring sources (e.g. employee referrals, networking at job fairs). Nevertheless, when making reference to the result of the research conducted by [38] care should be taken due to the fact that, it was based solely on the U.S. The result may

not be able to be applied to other countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the UK.

The great Power Distance (PDI) (80) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) (68) are the main dimension attributes of countries in this region that are also highly rule-oriented with laws, rules, regulations and controls to minimise uncertainty. The high power distance (PDI) ranking portrays Saudi Arabia to be a society which has a high level of discrimination of power and wealth inside the society with the leaders expected and accepted by all and sundry to separate themselves from the rest of the people. However, the high uncertainty avoidance indicator (UAI) ranking of 68, is indicative of the society's low level of tolerance for uncertainty and as a result of this therefore, the society does not easily accept change, and not oriented towards taking risks [18]. This view is supported [41] as he showed that cultural dimensions are hypothetically important because they help to predict other important cultural features.

In addition to this, [30] posit that, recruitment and selection just as any other HR activities, are influenced by several factors both internal and external. These factors are organisational size, organisational and HR strategies, legal frameworks, economic situations, social and demographic changes, and competitor activities. These factors have a significant bearing on the Saudi HR system. The Shortage in labor supply due to inadequate educational systems and a low size in population, cultural issues such as religion, tradition and values orchestrate a significant role in this shortage. For example, the recruitment and participation of females in the Arab Gulf countries is very insignificant [2]. According to reports issued by the World Bank in 2007, the labor market in the Gulf countries, remains unusual in that 'it has the highest levels of labor force growth, the lowest levels of female participation, and, except for Sub-Saharan Africa, the youngest labor force' [44].

However, [32] found that cost is also the factor that influences the recruitment and selection methods chosen by company. The term 'cost' does not just refer to 'amount of money', but also hidden cost of time and effort that the company might face during the recruitment process [32]. Compared to other economies operating at the similar stage of both economic and social development, labour market, and employment in Saudi Arabia portray some definite factors. Saudi Arabia relies to a large extent on a foreign manpower, about two-fifths of total employment, and is overwhelmingly male [25]. This heavy reliance on foreign workforce over several five years. National Development Plans has created a continuous feeling of uneasiness within the government, which have been transformed into contempt and frustration over the years among young graduates who cannot find 'white-collar' jobs after graduating, due to an estimated unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia of about 25-30 per cent [26].

With these crises, measures have been suggested to control the large-scale foreign workforce recruitment by the private sector as a measure of the local market policy in addition to the human resources development policies. These measures are intended to reduce the high influx of

foreign workforce due to the 'ills' that comes with it such as: economic drawbacks, social drawbacks, psychological drawbacks and security drawbacks [13]. Moreover, another very important element of the factors that influence recruitment and selection in Saudi Arabia is nepotism. Nepotism in business context according to [1] equates showing preferential treatment to relatives/mates by giving them position and/or promotions due to their relationship with the concerned person or with another instead of their qualifications (i.e. the mixing of family and company business). The socio-cultural structure in Saudi Arabia has its origin in tribal and kinship relations. These tribal and extended-family ties constitute the basic institutions which shape the individual and societal value, norm, and behaviours [1].

This aspect has got an effect on hiring and selection in most organizations in Saudi Arabia that are affected by such behavior favoritism. However, little or no research has been conducted to experimentally examine the effect of favoritism practices on organizations except for the works of [15] who found out that nepotism affected the functions and policies of HRMs.

Based on the aforementioned arguments, the current study proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. National culture influences to the recruitment, and selection process of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA).
Hypothesis 2. Gender influences to the recruitment, and selection process of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA).
Hypothesis 3. Family background influences to the recruitment, and selection process of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA).
Hypothesis 4. Religion influences to the recruitment, and selection process of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA).

4. Research Methodology

The current study employs a post-positivism approach. Reasons being that a post-positivism research is more flexible than the positivist approach in terms of considering all internal and external factors, and not just focusing on elements like organisational and labor market characteristics. Using the post-positivism approach, the author attempts to generate 'rich' data regarding recruitment and selection methods in Saudi Food & Drug Authority and reasons why these methods are implemented whilst considering some influencing factors that surrounds. The out-come will project 'why and how' the phenomenon happens.

Therefore, inductive approach was used. Meanwhile, the reasoning that the study adopted to apply theory-building which involves the observation and investigation into the correlation that exists between meanings and actions of humans given a period of time. This will then act as a lee-

4.1 Methods of data recording

In order to obtain a reliable data analysis and avoid bias, data collection was tape recorded and/or taking down notes [35]. Soon after the interview, full set of notes were written in order to explore the information holistically and

way to establish general philosophies about the shape and nature of what has been observed hence culminating in theory-building [3]. Still in this vein of discussion with inductive reasoning, 'theory would follow data rather than vice versa as with deduction' [35].

Consequently, for the purpose of this research, the type of data collected is qualitative which is information obtained in the form of words and language with the observation and participation of people. It takes the form of one-to-one interviews or conversations, individual accounts or diaries of events and /or activities and focus groups [3]. As cited in [34], [33] posits that "qualitative data are characterized by their richness and fullness". These types of data are useful since the research aims to investigate "how and why" recruitment and selection methods in the Saudi Food & Drug Authority (SFDA) is influenced by many factors. For this research, various methods were used in order to get rich data from SFDA; One-to-one semi-structured interviews with one of the HR manager, Administrative manager, IT manager and the finance manager on a basis of face-to-face interview. This was used because all of the managers were present and ready to conduct the interview. Semi-structured interviews are methods of interview that gives the researcher an opportunity to 'probe' responses and interviewees can explain more on their answers; these interviews are flexible, and the order depends on the 'flow' of interviews [35]. These questions were aimed at reaching an in-depth understanding of how the organisation operates with regards to its recruitment and selections methods in the advent of a job vacancy.

One-to-one interviews are the most suitable methods for this research because the research is not aimed investigating people's behaviours in particular but to investigate recruitment and selection methods and other internal and external factors that may influence the recruitment and selection process, instead of people's experience and understanding of the work situation [3].

The sampling technique used in the current study is the non-probability sampling, which means that the sample does not statistically represent the research population as a whole but the findings could still be generalized [35]. The managers participated in the study interview were not just chosen randomly but with the intent of obtaining useful information from them. Those chosen for this research interview due to their expertise and experience were the managers; Finance manager, Administrative manager, IT manager and the HR manager. Other managers like the Purchasing manager, Food manager and the Animal Product manager were not included in the interview because they had little or no knowledge about the recruitment and selection methods of SFDA. Prior to carrying out the research and interviews, the voluntary consent of the employees was sought for.

to ensure that data were not lost [35]. The notes that were been taken down were vital in the process of transcribing and even in translating from Arabic into English (by a professional) and in data analysis. The researcher was not only concerned with what the participants said but also the

manner in which they said it (i.e. non-verbal communications) hence the vitality of notes taking [35].

4.2 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis incorporates the evaluation of generated explanations and propositions in line with evidences that were gathered [4]. For the purpose of this research however, the following steps were adopted in order to analyse the data. First of all, the researcher after collecting the data had to assess the vast amount of information and compressed it to meaningful proportions [4]. In the light of this, vital themes and concepts that 'popped' up from the interviews were noted and explored especially as the research had the focus on inductive reasoning [4]. Hence, from this stance, a section of data made up of paragraphs, sentences, words and numbers, was then categorized according to similar themes such as recruitment and selection methods, culture [35].

However, the mixture of both deductive and inductive reasoning may be of great advantages. 'not only it perfectly possible to combine deduction and induction within the same piece of research, but also in our experience it is often advantageous to do so' [35].

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Avoiding or better-still reducing the possibility of obtaining wrong answers is almost synonymous to paying attention to two very important emphases on research design. [35]; Reliability is 'the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings' [35]. The raison d'etre of the post-positivist research is not for it to be replicable since it attempts to investigate into a case or phenomenon over a given time and context [35]. That notwithstanding, the researcher made sure that the methodology used were well described and justified so that further researchers could comprehend and be able to replicate the data collected [35].

The other important point is that of validity which is 'a judgement of whether the data really provides evidence about what it is supposed to be about' [4]. Also, in an attempt to ensure a high level of validity, the researcher while conducting the interviews, made sure the questions were well understood, searched deeper into the various reasons why SFDA choose particular recruitment and selection methods. This is supported by [34] who argued that a valid research study is when the researcher could "gain full access to the knowledge and meanings of informant".

Moreover, the interviewees were selected by method of purposive sampling which according to according to [4], includes the choice of interviewees based on their experiences and positions they occupy within the organisation, which is considered vital to the research by answering the research questions.

4.4 Data Access

Access into the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) was gained by means of the researcher being an employee of the organization. This is advantageous to this research study because the researcher already understands the politics of the organization, who to talk to and who to gain access from [4]. The rationale behind using this strategy is that the researcher has worked for a long period of time in Saudi Arabia and has a number of contacts; however, the researcher will attempt to obtain informed consent prior to using these contacts.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 Analysis

In view of the fact that the SFDA is a Saudi company and within a cultural environment that is ascriptive, the applicant's family background and school attended influence the selection process [40]. Students from top quality Saudi universities and those from outside Saudi Arabia (especially the UK and USA) have special advantages in the face-to-face interviews. The interviews, however, is regarded by SFDA as an opportunity to get to know and familiarize themselves with the applicant before they commence work. This is because, they feel comfortable working with somebody that they know and can trust.

Moreover, operating in a country of a very high power distance, SFDA adopts the same culture of the country into the organization itself. This implies that, decisions or orders from the chief executive or managers, are meant not to be argued by subordinates but simply obey and act accordingly. As a result, therefore, preferential treatments are shown towards those who have personal relationships of any sort with either the chief executive or any of the managers and thereby stand a better chance of being recruited and selected. It could be clearly seen that the principle of equal opportunity and fairness in recruitment is not actually a norm at SFDA. However, merit and suitability should be the sole driving force and factors in the recruitment process of applicants [8].

In addition, factors and elements such as ethnicity, religion, race, nationality, sex and age do have an effect in the recruitment process; which otherwise is the legal premise of employers to ensure that these elements do not influence the selection process [8]. These elements have led to a working environment where ladies are not represented because of their sex and not based on merit. This goes further to support arguments put forward by the [34] who raised the issue of women (few or none) not been represented in companies such as those of science and engineering.

From the standpoint of view of SFDA, the raison d'etre of using online recruitment as their main method of recruiting employees and employment agencies for cleaning and canteen staff is because, they are cost effective, time saving and effort minimization thus profitable for the organization. This also goes a long way to cut out on so many applicants applying for the job(s) especially those from the external labor market (i.e. foreigners) thus adopting the principle of that 'Saudi jobs for Saudis', which in other words, is the Saudization principle [25]. The Saudi labor market and employment depends to a larger extent to foreign labor (which constitutes about $2/5^{th}$ of the total employment population). This shortage of labor is largely due to inefficient educational systems [2].

However, just like every other recruitment method, online recruitment has its own positives and its own

negatives. Thus, in contemporary times, most employers would rather use a mix of methods and techniques in attracting a wider pool of employees. That notwithstanding, there is hardly any 'right' [8] or wrong method of recruiting, so long as it works for the company. Despite the fact that potential candidates would not check on a company's web page under normal circumstances, unless told by another source of recruitment method (such as word of mouth), the increase usage of online recruitment are hard to sideline even though considered as the less effective strategy [21].

Further reports from SFDA also suggest that the company competes with other companies such as the oil companies in recruiting good caliber employees (due to shortages of both skilled and unskilled labor) [2], which leave the applicant in a rather 'decision making position' as to which company to join. However, if the applicant's perceptions about the recruitment and selection processes are considered unfair, unjust and unprofessional, employment will be sought elsewhere by the 'alleged' good caliber employee [10]. This makes it even harder for SFDA to attract and retain the desired employees.

Moreover, it was also noted that more emphasis was placed on trying to fit applicants into the organization's value and culture system rather than the applicant fitting the job requirements [42] by giving preferential treatments, to nationality, place of study, relationships, and sex. But as [17] argues, this could rather lead to the creation of problems for the management of SFDA as recruitment might seem to be an opportunistic event rather than one of human resource planning.

From the above analyses, it was clear that the factors that influenced the recruitment and selection process of SFDA were both internal and external. By internal factors, elements such as the method of recruitment and selection were of great influence and by external factors, the national cultures and external labor force also play a major role. In fact, of prime importance were factors such as gender (sex), nationality, religion, family background and place of study were the sensitive domains within the recruitment and selection process of SFDA. Working with someone whom they already know was also the believe of the people and emphasis was not been placed on equal opportunity.

5.2 Findings

This current paper seeks to investigate the methods of recruitment and selection in the Saudi Food and Drug Authority here referred to as SFDA. In line with the aims and objectives of this research, this section will be divided into two parts: Findings that emerged from the interviews and Analyzing and interpreting responses from the respondents. A total of four managers were interviewed solely because of their experience, job description and knowledge about their job that would be of assistance in attaining the objectives and aims of this piece of academic study. These managers, in no particular order are; the information technology manager, the finance manager, the human resources manager and the administration manager. Other managers such as the animal product manager and the purchasing managers that make up the six managers of

SFDA, were not included in the interview, basically because of their knowledge about recruitment and selection methods and processes. In order words, they have little or nothing to do with recruitment and selection. However, the four managers were not asked particularly the same questions but geared towards meeting the aims and objectives. Being an employee of the SFDA, the researcher had accessibility to the documents and journals of the SFDA. The Human Resource Department (HRD) of SFDA is headed by the human resource manager and has got as responsibilities; training and developing employees, managing performance, reward and pay, recruitment and selection, conflict resolution, redundancy and employee relations.

The managers of both the finance and the administration departments explained that SFDA faces competition from other companies which range from local to foreign and even from some multinational companies. This makes it a little too difficult finding employees to fit in certain positions for the company. Thus, SFDA find it difficult to find employees for some positions thus resort to building a very competitive reward package that would attract good calibre employees. In contemporary times, SFDA in a bid to retain and attract good suitable employees, the mission statement, goals and vision are explained to employees so that they know what awaits them in the future if they stay with the company.

Another interview with the Administration manager on the nature of the relationship between the manager and the subordinates at SFDA portrayed information that possibly affected the methods of recruitment and selection and its processes.

5.2.1 Recruitment methods

The first of the managers being interviewed was the human resource manager who noted that the recruitment of 'unsuitable' employee has got a lot of consequences on the general performance of SFDA. This therefore implies that the other departments of the SFDA (such as finance, administration, information technology, purchasing and the animal product departments) would in one way or another get involved in the recruitment process. The human resource manager also underlined the fact that sometimes recruitment is done internally through posters on staff notice board and through emails. This is in the case where there is promotion of an employee (as a reward for good performance) thus creates a vacancy which could be filled by recruiting employee(s) from the external labour market. Sometimes, SFDA also rehire retired or ex-employees to undertake new research because the company is fully aware of their performances.

However, in order for any of the managers (e.g. administration manager) to recruit new employees, there are certain procedures that the manager needs to follow. That starts with filling a request form that demands the specific qualifications sought for by the manager. The manager in question has to fill a request form that carries the following information: age, sex, ethnic group, marital status, level of education, total number of employees needed, the vacant position that needs a new employee(s), the name of the previous employee(s) who has left,

reasons why the manager requires new employee(s), the start date of the new employee(s), duties and responsibilities, working experience, skills, other relevant qualifications. This will then be approved by the chief executive who then forwards to the human resource department at least one month in advance for the recruitment process to begin.

After filling this form, the human resource staff have to draft a job description alongside the person specification based on the initial request of the manager in question. There is basically just one main method of recruitment at SFDA and this is through online recruitment via the company website. The IT manager noted that SFDA have a 'data bank' where the information of successful applicants is kept with a very limited space allocated for unsuccessfully applicants.

"Due to issues of confidentiality, the documents of unsuccessful applicants who did not make it through to the short-listing stage are deleted from the system. Meanwhile, those who made it through but weren't offered the job have their documents saved in the 'just in case' file".

Information of a personal nature such as age and ethnicity are still very important in the recruitment process of SFDA. Because of the job design, the human resource manager noted that most of their applicants are between the ages of 23 to 30 years old but for very rare occasions, the skills and experience of an older person are required if they are in good health and fit to do their job (e.g. managerial). It was also noted that ethnicity/religion of the applicant had a major role to play in the recruitment process. This according to the finance manager is to ensure that the culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and of the Muslim community is kept sacred. The finance manager said:

'Religion plays a big part in our society and we strive to ensure that the staffs have one belief and this belief will unite them to be able to work best as a team and enhance organisational culture'.

Another important point that came up during the interview was the fact that women are not and have not been recruited in the SFDA since its creation in 1992. According to the human resource manager, women are considered as the 'weaker vessels' at work and in the society in which they operate. But the manager also added that, in the next coming years, SFDA will surely start recruiting women to work in secretarial affairs. He had this to say:

"The SFDA like most companies if not all in Saudi Arabia do not employ both male and female workers to work together in the same office. This is against the Saudi culture and therefore not well appreciated in the eyes of the public. But this might change for SFDA in at most one year as females will be employed but have to work in a separate office from the males".

In addition, according to the finance manager, cleaning, canteen and coffee shop staff are being employed through recruitment agencies. These employees do work at SFDA when the company opens and when it shuts for the day.

5.2.2 Methods of selection

After advertising the vacancy on the websites, the next stage now is for the SFDA to wait for applicants to complete the online application form (which sometimes includes information like religion, nationalities and family background) with all required information and supporting documents. In addition, positions of a management (such as managers) and accountancy are always difficult to fill as there is competition with other companies for good caliber employees especially the oil and energy companies of Saudi Arabia. Another difficulty is the fact that most applicants for managerial positions fall below the experience requirements or demand a high salary. The finance manager also added that those applicants with a qualification from the western world (e.g. UK and the USA) have got an advantage in the selection process. This competition makes the cost of recruiting them to rise which now puts the applicant in a comfortable position to choose which company is the highest 'bidder' and which offers better benefits. In such a situation, the selection process would eliminate the limitation that was put on age and experience in order to see that the scope is wider in the process of short-listing. However, the human resource manager also noted that there are times when they have to recruit young and newly graduated degree holders because they are less costly than those that have experience.

Moreover, in completing the process of short-listing possible employees/staff, the human resource manager will discuss with the manager requesting a new employee; however, with positions like managers or even higher, the human resource manager discusses with the chief executive officer. Following an agreement on the suitable candidate, the selected candidate(s) will be called up for a face-to-face interview. In addition, the administration manager added that these interviews are conducted so that the management would know the applicant more before making a final decision. He reiterated the fact that it is vital for SFDA to know the applicant before hiring or recruiting them. After assessing the applicant during interview, a final decision is reached which might require calling the referees of the applicant just to be rest assured of their skills and character. The applicant is not required to come along with anything apart from his physical presence.

Furthermore, when SFDA reaches its decision of whom the suitable candidate is, a member of staff from the human resource department calls the applicant for a meeting to discuss on the contract of employment and to negotiate the salary. The signing of a contract is only possible if both SFDA and the applicant agree on a given amount of salary and if they fail to agree, discussion on whether to recruit the applicant or not is held between the human resource department and the manager who made the request for a new employee. During this meeting, the finance manager is present in order to look at the financial side of the contract and its effect on the company as a whole.

6. Conclusion

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is considered as the world's leading producer of oil. The benefits obtained

from the exportation of oil have laid the foundation for the rapid development of the economy, with a consequent increase in employment. This scenario has put most companies in Saudi Arabia including the SFDA in an atmosphere where they have to recruit talented and suitable employees in order to be able to compete with their business partners and those operating within their sector. With an increase in the number of expatriates working in Multinational companies in Saudi, the SFDA has been able to react by putting in place safe-guards to ensure that *'Saudi jobs are for Saudis'*. With these factors acting like a bulwark, this piece of academic research seeks to investigate the methods that make up an effective recruitment and selection in (SFDA). The findings will provide benefits of great significance to those multinational companies who want to open up branches in Saudi Arabia and those who just want to start up a new business within the Saudi territory. In order to close the gap in the literature, which has thrown so much light on the challenges faced by the economic system and the human resource development systems of Saudi Arabia [2], little or inadequate emphasis is placed on 'structuring an effective recruitment and selection method' in order to attract and retain good caliber employees.

While responding to the research question, an interpretive approach is used and the implementation of a case study. The collection of qualitative data by conducting semi structured interviews was carried out in order to ensure in-depth data. Also, the research samples were chosen using the purposive sampling method.

Based on the findings from the SFDA, research show that both the internal and external factors play an important role in the influence of recruitment and selection methods. Through the selection method of face-to-face interview, the managers of SFDA get the feeling as to whether or not their applicants have interpersonal and communication skills. SFDA basically uses just online recruitment method for its staff and employment agencies (minimal) essentially for cleaning and canteen workers. Family background, religion, ethnicity, nationality all constitute elements that influence recruitment and selection, with the belief that, people of a similar family background, religion and nationality are somewhat reliable and could be trusted.

Moreover, another factor that influences the recruitment and selection method of SFDA is the 'cost effective' nature of its recruitment and selection tools. The choice of this method by SFDA is apparently seen as being cheaper with effort reduced to minimum. This is very good from the SFDA point of view as management of every organisation needs to minimise its cost. However, cheapest means of recruitment and selection does not necessarily equate to employing good caliber employees. In a shortage labor market, working methods are most likely to be efficient [16]. The SFDA should be more active by posting adverts on news papers and advertising jobs on other websites which is considered by [8] as perhaps the most widely used method to attract candidates.

Subject to the findings drawn out of the research, SFDA portray cultures that align themselves with the national cultures of Saudi Arabia. The implementations of this research suggest that the cultures of a nation or country will in one way or another have an effect on the practices of human resource management [45,46,47]. Behaviors, expectations, beliefs and values are all ingredients that constitute national culture [23]. Because of its high power distance, applicants who share relationship with any of the managers, tend to have that extra edge in getting the job that they apply for.

The degree to which the equal opportunity law is been enforced also influences the treatment of employees and prospective employees. The employment law in Saudi Arabia urges employers to practice equal opportunity in order for people to have jobs, in spite of this law, the SFDA and most, if not all other companies in Saudi Arabia still request for applicants' age, sex, religion and nationality on the job applicants form.

From retrospect, some of the aforementioned factors actually favor the performance of companies while others, on the other hand, have unfavorable effects on the performance. However, considering the limitations outlined in the previous section, the findings of the research should not be generalized, if not use very carefully.

6.1 Recommendations and Limitations and Future Research

Being a newly formed organisation (approx. 7 years) and not so much yet a 'household name', it would be difficult for SFDA to depend on just online recruitment to attract applicants. Other methods like the word-of-mouth could be encouraged especially as it is almost free. Moreover, in the selection process of short-listing, such companies like SFDA should rather be interested not just in the education or family background of applicants but also in the full range of competences that an individual provides [28]. Regardless of either a high labor supply or a shortage in labor supply, organisations such as the SFDA should by all means adhere to the principles of equal opportunities with fair recruitment methods. Also, the recruitment and selection process of SFDA should incorporate the use of references as a major part of the selection process. This will be profitable for most companies as far too often, applicants misrepresent or misinform their prospective employers in areas such as qualifications, level of education and employment history and forcing employers to withdraw their previous offers [11]. In order for companies within this business environment to ensure diversity in recruitment, the key success is to broaden the targeted pool of talent with an effective strategy to meet your targeted audience [39].

6.1.1 Future Research

With this research implying that the national cultures of Saudi Arabia influence human resource management practices, it becomes imperative that future researcher embark on investigating and exploring 'deeper' into this result. This might take the form of questioning 'the extent to which recruitment and selection processes are been influenced by national cultures in Saudi Arabia'. Considering the fact that this research rather adopts an interpretive approach with a case study strategy, the

researcher strongly suggests that the results should not be generalised. However, in order to be able to make generalisation of findings, the author urges further researchers to adopt a mixture of positivist and deductive research approach. This will present a 'rich' and holistic understanding of recruitment and selection processes in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, considering the fact that this research adopts a case study strategy (SFDA), the researcher recommends further researchers to explore more by embarking on a comparative study with two or more companies under the research spotlight.

6.1.2 Limitations

The fact that the interview was tape recorded might strain the relationship that exists between the interviewer and the interviewee. This is because, some interviewees get nervous or better still reluctant to respond to questions while been taped-recorded [3]. This effect was however lessening by the fact that the researcher is an employee of the SFDA. In addition, the use of purposive sampling method as the sampling method for the interview is pruned to bias and generalizing the results of the research is not advisable [35].

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