Explaining a Model of Human Resource Development and Empowerment Using the Service Provision Approach

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Original Article

Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Health and healthcare services are of paramount importance in every society and are regarded as the essential needs of people. The present study aimed to assess, describe, and explore the model of human resource development and empowerment adopting a service provision approach in Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services in 2019.

METHODS: In the current study, theoretical sources were collected using systematic and library studies, and experts' opinions were collected through open-ended interviews. Thereafter, these sources were analyzed using grounded theory and structural modeling. In this qualitative study, a researcher-made checklist was provided to experts to identify the internal relationship among the components of each variable. The exploratory approach was used in the current study since the focus was on the use of qualitative methods. To identify the dimensions of the model and its associated factors, the indicators were firstly extracted using library studies. The Delphi method was then performed in three steps to monitor the indicators and obtain the final dimensions of the model. The statistical population of the study included all managers and experts of the human resources unit with more than 15 years of work experience in the studied university. MAXQDA software was used to record and manage the codes, and finally, the concept model was designed.

FINDINGS: After analyzing the studies and conducting interviews with experts, "employee development and empowerment" was selected as the main category. It encompasses such issues as training and productivity of human resources, development of personnel capabilities, sustainable development of human capital, highlighting the importance of strategic human resource management by the management system, senior managers' support from human resources, and the independence of human resources unit. The relationship of other classes with the central class can be realized in five ways: causal conditions, control system, motivation, and appropriate counseling lead to the development and empowerment of employees.

CONCLUSION: Healthcare organizations assume more importance since their human resources are mostly experts in charge of specialized activities. As evidenced by qualitative and library studies, as well as the conducted interviews, the development and empowerment of human resources in Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services is positively correlated with the service provision approach and exerts a significant impact on it.

Keywords: Development and Empowerment; Grounded Theory; Human Resources; Ilam.

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Introduction

Human resource empowerment refers to the involvement of employees in the organizational decision-making process and the concepts of employee collaboration in team building, participation, and total quality management. The empowerment and development of human resources as soft assets of organizations

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is not an easy task and depends on the commitment of managers at all organizational levels. To achieve organizational goals, empowerment must start from the top of an organizational pyramid. This means that the senior managers of the organization should firstly update their knowledge and function according to the new needs of the organization.

Therefore, the human resource development process depends on the relationship among the activities of the head of the organization, the organizational environment, and the management style. Since organizations are continuously challenged by the current issues in their surrounding, human resource development and empowerment should adopt a sustainable approach (1). Under these circumstances, the knowledgeable managers of organizations are aware of the fact that their investments in human resource development and empowerment will guarantee the success, efficiency, and competitive superiority of their organization.

Some studies have indicated that human resource empowerment is directly correlated with an increase in the competitive advantage of the organization (2). The adopted approaches to human resource empowerment and development include the following dimensions: communication, motivational, cognitive, empowerment, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, boosting self-confidence, and delegation (3). Psychological empowerment is a set of motivational-cognitive domains that encompasses the senses of self-efficacy, autonomy, significance, and effectiveness among the employees in an organization (4). Nonetheless, later in the mid-nineties, the feeling of self-sufficiency was added to this concept (5).

These changes and transitions in the concept of human resources empowerment and development in an organization and shifting from the mere delegation of authority in empowerment to motivating employees point to a mechanical and organic approach to empowerment (6). In this context, to increase organizational efficiency and productivity and develop employee skills, the senior managers of the organization implement some programs that increase their capabilities and capacity. One of these measures is to plan, implement, and evaluate in-service training programs (7).

In today's world, sanitation, health, healthcare services, and the management of these centers are among the most complicated social and managerial issues. It has given rise to new and various ideas about service centers, especially healthcare centers. With this disposition, the health and medical organization is moving towards the achievement of medical and educational goals, as well as the implementation of the ten priorities determined by the Ministry of Health in order to improve the structure and system of healthcare management, as well as modern medical education and training.

One of the ten priorities of Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services is the improvement of human resources, as well as training and empowerment of employees through the development of psychological programs which instil positive attitudes in employees toward their career and the organization where they work. The development of the culture of employee empowerment in the psychological dimension in the aforementioned organization has a managerial-psychological approach due to its special position.

In this regard, the researchers decided to conduct a study on the factors affecting empowerment to improve the provided services through interviews with hospital managers and experts, as well as their work experience in the mentioned department. These factors should be related to job position and organizational priorities.

Methods

In the current research, in order to answer the research questions, theoretical sampling was performed using scientific articles available in the study area. In order to comply with the principle of theoretical sampling, data were identified and collected in several stages during analysis in order to maximize the coverage of theoretical ideas and create comprehensiveness in the development of concepts and categories related to the research problem. In the present study, for theoretical sampling, the sample was identified according to the analysis of the data collected in the previous stages; therefore, the depth and focus of sampling was increased over time.

The initial stages focused on the discovery of new concepts and categories, while the depth and enrichment of these categories were considered in the later stages. In this stage, after the initial

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description of the research problem, the judgmental sampling method was used to collect the initial sample. To this end, scientific databases including, ProQuest, Science Direct, Emerald, and Scopus, were searched for the related articles published within 2010-2019 using the following keywords: employee empowerment, employee development, career advancement, and staff training.

After the commencement of the coding process, with the emergence of new categories, new keywords appeared in accordance with the concepts; therefore, the searching process was repeated using these new keywords. In so doing, the scope of the analyzed articles developed as the work progressed and continued until the theoretical saturation of each concept. Simultaneous with each step of the search, the title, and abstract of the initial findings were reviewed, and irrelevant papers, master's theses and doctoral dissertations, books, and book reviews were removed from the study. In addition, micro studies (organizational level) were excluded.

Other published articles in scientific journals and those under publication, as well as conference papers with available full texts were thoroughly studied. The adequacy of the samples was confirmed by theoretical saturation. This signifies that the collection and coding of data must continue until it is assured that a new code or category of structure will not be identified by analyzing new data. In the current study, due to the thematic diversity of articles that were identified and collected by the emergence of new concepts during the different stages of coding, the coding process was performed for all the collected articles until the final stage. To analyze the aforementioned articles, their text was carefully assessed, and semantic units were analyzed at different levels.

In the next stage, in-depth interviews were used to collect qualitative data obtained in the grounded theory stage. In the open interview stage, the statistical population were all managers and experts of the human resources unit with more than 15 years of work experience at Ilam University. Expert opinions (collected using open interviews) were also used for data collection and coding. In this stage, after the initial identification of the open codes obtained from the collected articles, a brief report of the literature review, as well as the identified codes, were provided to the interviewees, and their opinions on empowerment were collected via open-ended questions. The experts were asked the following in-depth and semi-structured questions:

1. Name the motivational factors affecting human resource development and empowerment using the service provision approach?
2. Name the educational factors affecting human resource development and empowerment using the service provision approach?
3. What are the environmental factors affecting human resource development and empowerment using the service provision approach?
4. What are the structural factors affecting human resource development and empowerment using the service provision approach?
5. Name the strategic factors affecting human resource development and empowerment using the service provision approach?

A number of 14 interviews were conducted, each lasting within 60-90 min. It is worth noting that after obtaining consent from the respondents, an audio recording was made of interviews. Open, axial, and selective coding were performed based on the criteria suggested by Corbin and Strauss (8, 9). During the selective coding stage, the central category was systematically selected and linked to other categories to validate the relationships and fill in the gaps with categories that need further modification and development. According to the results of the previous stages, the central phenomenon was selected as "empowerment system"; accordingly, the relations among the categories were explained around this concept. At this stage, theoretical relationships were developed between the accredited categories and the categories that needed to be interpreted and improved.

To this end, by selective coding, the categories were integrated and refined to develop a theoretical model of development and empowerment of the staff of Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services. After the identification of the central category, its relationship with other categories was explained and based on that, the initial framework was developed in form of a theoretical model of development and empowerment of staff of Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services. For this purpose, the relationships among the categories in the theory of

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development and empowerment of staff of Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services were tested using constant comparative analysis.

During this process, the causes, conditions, strategies, and dimensions of theoretical structures of the development and empowerment of the staff of Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services were re-examined by shifting the identified concepts and categories. The credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the data were confirmed by Guba and Lincoln criteria (10). All ethical considerations regarding the confidentiality of responses were also observed.

Findings

The results of the systematic review are depicted in Figure 1. Finally, 57 articles were selected for final analysis.

Systematically collected resources included 57 articles that were selected from the relevant scientific databases as described in Table 1.

In the next stage, in-depth interviews were used to collect the qualitative data obtained in the grounded theory stage. In the open interview stage, the statistical population included all managers and experts of the human resources unit. The number of population and sample are displayed in Table 2.

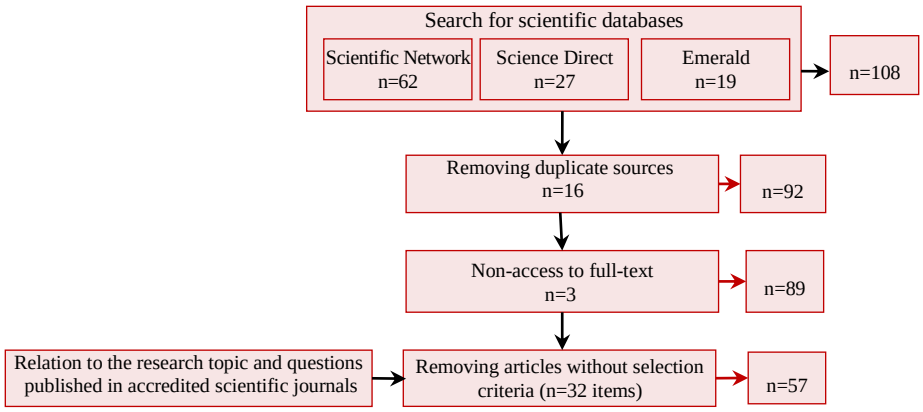


Figure 1. Steps of the systematic review of data sources in the theoretical sampling stage

Table 1. Statistical sample of theoretical articles in the qualitative stage

Scientific database	Emerald	Science Direct	Scientific Network	Total
Number of articles before refinement	19	27	62	108
Number of articles after refinement	11	17	29	57

Thereafter, the axial and selective coding processes were performed to achieve the main dimensions and axial categories, and finally, the paradigm model was extracted. A total of 40 sub-concepts were obtained from the integration of the extracted codes; subsequently, they were classified into 28 main concepts. Based on the open coding presented in Table 3, some of the codes extracted from an interview may be repeated in articles, publications, as well as records from other countries or interviews, which highlight the importance of that code. In the present study, the indicators of creativity, professional knowledge, organizational policies and procedures, organizational commitment, management principles, and individual characteristics had the first priority. The indicators of the reward system, innovation development, sustainability, skill training for employees, and organizational relationships came in the second. Finally, safety considerations and improving

Table 2. Size of statistical population and sample in the interview stage in the Grounded theory

Expert Group	Statistical population	Sample size
Senior and middle managers	18	4
Human resource experts	57	6
University Professors	7	4
Total	82	14

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Table 3. Preliminary coding of interviews

Initial code	Interview transcript (key points)
Training personnel to achieve the strategic goals of the organization	Training personnel to achieve strategic goals
Evaluating the quality of training and human resources in the organization	The representative comes to Iran from the main company in Germany and examines the level of training and the quality of employees
Using the experiences of other successful organizations in the world	Strategic management is not extensively used in Iranian organizations since it is a novel field
Increasing human resource productivity	Improving the productivity of human resources
Increasing the level of commitment and satisfaction of staff	We are looking for competent employees We strive to improve the level of commitment and satisfaction among the staff in our organization
Prioritize employee commitment over their expertise	Employees must be committed to the organization, and it is much more important than expertise.
Motivating human capital	We have a motivational system and a suggestion system
Develop a human resource strategy in harmony with organizational strategies	We can design the human resources strategy in line with the strategy of the organization and move towards being strategic
Attention to privatization Decreased government support for the industry / Independence of the automotive industry from the government	Another reason for the failure of strategic management or lack of attention to strategic management is the dependence of this industry on the government and public sector's support from this industry
Attracting qualified people	We are looking for competent employees
Development and empowerment of human resources	Training personnel to achieve strategic goals
No ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination to recruit staff	We do not adhere to the employment regulations in most companies, including paying attention to a particular religious sect

patient satisfaction ranked the third priority.

The results of secondary coding and categorization are shown in Table 4.

To shape the main classes of the model, the relationships among the themes extracted in the previous stage were determined using axial and selective coding. In the previous stage, each case was separately analyzed, and related codes and themes were extracted. Nonetheless, in this stage, the extracted codes and themes will be simultaneously examined. The determined relationships among the themes are presented in Table 5.

Finally, selective coding was performed. This category is the concept label considered for the framework or design. Finally, according to the identified categories and codes, the paradigm model of this study is illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 4. Sample of secondary coding and shaping of concept codes and categories

Row	Title	Row	Extracted codes	Repetition
1	Motivational factors	1	Presenting and applying new methods, inclination to change, discovering and using individual talents, improving work methods	12
		2	Feelings of peace, meritocracy, employee satisfaction, lack of ambiguity in job definition, as well as job reputation and credibility	17
		3	Recognizing and meeting the needs of employees, appreciating successful employees by paying bonuses	19

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Table 4. Continued

2	Educational factors	4	Knowledge to perform job duties, the strengths and weaknesses of work, and how to overcome these shortcomings	21
		5	Regular and quality education system	14
		6	Aligning the educational system to the goals of the organization	13
		7	Increasing human resource productivity	9
		8	Systematic evaluation of the quality of personnel training	17
		9	Development of competence, capability, trust and mutual respect through educational planning, optimal use of education and acquisition of new skills, scientific progress through effective use of educational opportunities and courses	13
		10	career advancement, performance improvement, job fit, stress reduction, job performance anxiety	15
3	Environmental factors	11	Awareness of the principles and rules of workplace safety, adherence to these principles and rules to maintain the safety of yourself and your colleagues	19
		12	Creating an atmosphere of trust and understanding in the workplace, managing affairs with the lowest level of complaints, trying to resolve patients' problems, consulting customers to attract customers	17
		13	Observance of organizational hierarchy, punctuality, attention to the speed of work, timely work, compliance with the rules and regulations approved in the company	8
4	Structural factors	14	A sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization, trying to maintain adherence to the values of the organization, a sense of responsibility in performing the assigned tasks correctly and adhering to Islamic principles and work conscience	14
		15	Having the necessary and sufficient information about making timely decisions and in accordance with plans and programs, forecasting, needs, problems and needs, having a broad view on various issues, the ability to infer and analyze organizational opportunities and threats, inspiring motivation in the workplace, employee evaluation, effective work revision	9
		16	Establishing cooperation and collaboration among employees, inspiring motivation in the workplace, recognizing common interests, survival and health of the organization, transferring and exchanging information and knowledge among employees	18
		17	Sobriety and confidentiality, observance of ethical and working principles, having a spirit of criticism, the power to present and argue new ideas at work, having intellectual flexibility, honesty and frankness in expressing opinions and views, a sense of responsibility towards superiors, clients, colleagues, and society	16

Table 5. Shaping the main classes of the model

Row	Main class	Subclass	Extracted codes
1	Motivational factors	Creating creativity	Presenting and applying new methods, tendency to change, discovering and using individual talents, improving work methods
		Increase satisfaction	Feelings of peace, meritocracy, employee satisfaction, lack of ambiguity in job definition, as well as job reputation and credibility
		Reward system	Recognizing and meeting the needs of employees, appreciating successful employees by paying bonuses
		Proper control and consultation system	Control and monitoring system for achieving goals and strategies, employee reward and motivation system, theoretical support and knowledge of strategy development, capable and experienced consultants and specialists

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Table 5. Continued

		Working knowledge	Knowledge to perform job duties, the strengths and weaknesses of work, and how to overcome these shortcomings
2	Educational Factors	Innovation development	Development of competence, capability, trust and mutual respect through educational planning, optimal use of education and acquisition of new skills, scientific progress through effective use of educational opportunities and courses
		Staff retention (skill training)	career advancement, performance improvement, job fit, stress reduction, job performance anxiety
		Organizational leadership	Concerns about the development of personnel capabilities, sustainable development of human capital, understanding the importance of strategic human resource management by the management system, senior managers' support from human resources, the independence of the human resources unit
3	Strategic factors	Strategic requirements	Strategic and holistic view of the human management system, development-oriented view, localization of human resource strategies based on scientific theories, real implementation of written human resource strategies, transparency of goals and needs in the organization, transparency of macro-industry strategies, automotive And human resources, multilateral strategies, technology and innovation in strategy, reducing barriers and benefiting from successful experiences
		Improving patient satisfaction	Creating an atmosphere of trust and understanding in the workplace, managing affairs with the lowest level of complaints, trying to resolve patients' problems, consulting customers to attract customers
4	Improving service provision	Adherence to organizational policies and rules	Observance of organizational hierarchy, punctuality, attention to the speed of work, timely work, compliance with the rules and regulations approved in the company
		System dynamism in a changing environment	System dynamics in interaction with the environment, stability in the political-economic environment, competitive market and transparency of laws, promoting privatization and reducing government support
		Organizational Commitment	A sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization, trying to maintain adherence to the values of the organization, a sense of responsibility in performing the assigned tasks correctly and adhering to Islamic principles and work conscience
		Principles and style of management	Having the necessary and sufficient information about making timely decisions and in accordance with plans and programs, forecasting, needs, problems and needs, having a broad view on various issues, the ability to infer and analyze organizational opportunities and threats, inspiring motivation in the workplace, employee evaluation, effective work revision
5	Structural factors	Organizational relations	Establishing cooperation and collaboration among employees, inspiring motivation in the workplace, recognizing common interests, survival and health of the organization, transferring and exchanging information and knowledge among employees
			Participatory strategy and interaction of all managers and employees in designing strategy, alignment of strategy and goals of the organization, creating horizontal alignment and vertical alignment of organizational goals, coordination of human resources unit with other units of an organization, alignment of recruitment policies with strategy and goals of the organization based on commitment, expertise, personality dimensions and age of staff
		Intra-organizational coordination and interactions	Sobriety and confidentiality, observance of ethical and working principles, having a spirit of criticism, the power to present and argue new ideas at work

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Table 5. Continued

Individual characteristics	Presenting and arguing new ideas at work, having intellectual flexibility, honesty and frankness in expressing opinions and views, feeling responsible towards superiors, clients, colleagues, and society
Organizational Culture	Building an organizational culture, aligning organizational goals to employee goals, participation, interaction with the goals and other employees, respect, tolerance of ambiguity and conflict resolution, progress, and the need for change

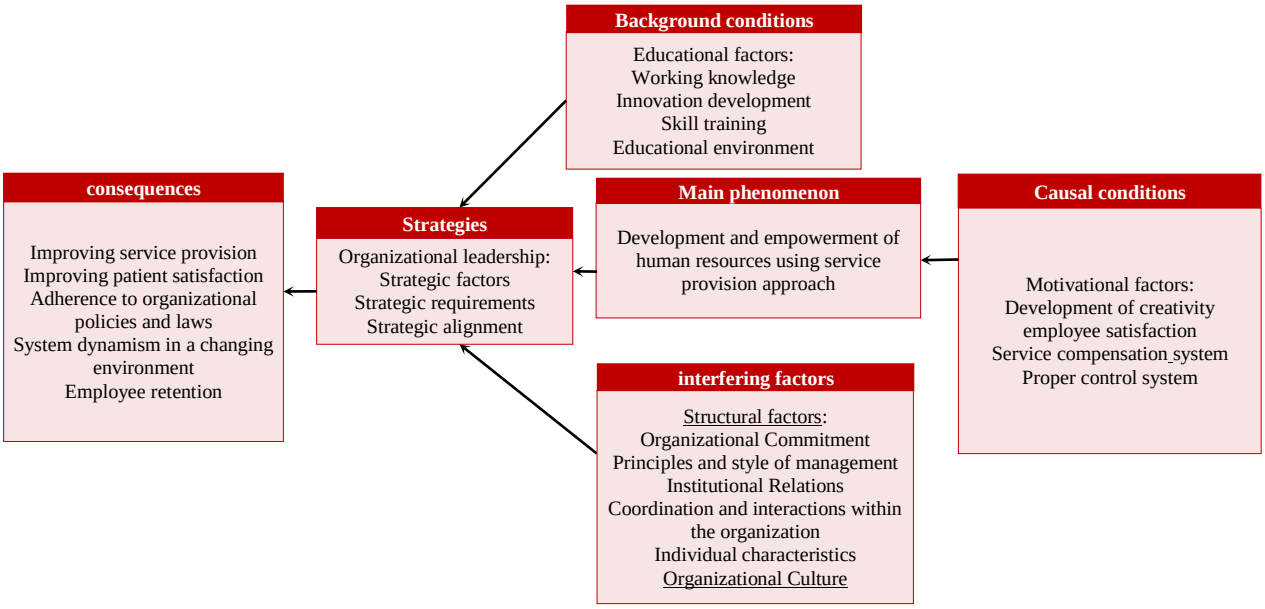


Figure 2. Paradigm model of human resource development and empowerment using service provision approach in Ilam University of Medical Sciences

Discussion and Conclusion

Employees are the most valuable assets available to achieving organizational goals. In an organization, employees must be equipped with special capabilities and take advantage of their capacities and potentials to fulfill organizational goals. Due to the characteristics of service organizations, especially in the field of human resources, they are very sensitive to the loss of even a single employee and solving problems related to the commitment and employment of human resources is one of their most important concerns. Therefore, human resource empowerment is an effective factor influencing employee learning and empowerment; consequently, small organizations can be more successful in this regard by taking organization development into account (11).

In the strategic development of human resources, firstly, random and scattered processes are modified, followed by training development, encouraging creativity in the workplace, and skill training. Human resource development should be in harmony with organizational goals and supported by senior and middle managers of the organization; otherwise, it will not achieve the desired result. Improving the quality of programs and increasing the motivation and skills of employees contribute to the acceptance of this issue (12-14).

Based on the findings of the present research, in order to realize the strategies and goals of human resource development and increase the effectiveness of programs designed to improve employee knowledge in an effort to achieve the executive goals of product development, the following suggestions were put forward: increasing the commitment and senior managers' continuous support for human resource development, paying attention to human resource development in designing and reviewing the

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strategy and goals of the center, creating positive cultural changes for employee development, evaluating and improving human resource management processes and making use of them to develop human resources, devoting special attention to the human resource retention system, applying a committed strategy in human resource management, creating appropriate conditions for human resource development and improving the knowledge of employees, including inspiring employee motivation in the workplace, promoting cooperation and continuous participation of managers, focusing on increased effectiveness of training and development processes (15, 16).

The requirements for the success of human resource development and empowerment at the University of Medical Sciences were investigated in the current research. After the collection of data, their analysis in the open coding stage, and the revision of the presented characteristics, employee development and empowerment was selected as the central class, which encompasses the following issues: training and productivity of human resources, development of personnel capabilities, sustainable development of human capital, highlighting the importance of strategic management of human resources by the management system, senior managers' support from human resources, and independence of the human resources unit.

The relationship of other classes with the central class can be realized in five ways: causal conditions, control system, motivation, and appropriate counseling lead to the development and empowerment of employees. Training and productivity of human resources, development of personnel capabilities, sustainable development of human capital, understanding the importance of strategic human resource management by the management system, senior managers' support from human resources, independence of human resources unit leads to intra-organizational coordination and interactions. System dynamism in a changing environment helps intra-organizational coordination and interactions, and the promotion of organizational culture as a confounder exerts a significant impact on coordination and interactions.

Participatory strategy and interaction of all managers and employees in strategy development in alignment with organizational strategies and goals, as well as creating horizontal alignment and vertical alignment of the organizational goals are among the purposeful actions and interactions that lead to successful development and empowerment of human resources to promote service provision. Successful strategic human resource management results from intra-organizational coordination and interactions. Since the nature of the organization affects the principles of human resources and personnel's skills, service organizations, especially health care centers, fundamentally differ in human resource skills, infrastructure, and public resources.

Healthcare organizations assume more importance since their human resources are mostly experts in charge of specialized activities. Accordingly, in the present research, this important issue was addressed using the exploratory method. As evidenced by qualitative and library studies, as well as the conducted interviews, the development and empowerment of human resources in Ilam University of Medical Sciences and Health Services is positively correlated with the service provision approach and exerts a significant impact on it.

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Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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