

THE STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF STRATEGIC THINKING ON HR DEVELOPMENT AT BUSHEHR NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of strategic thinking on human resource (HR) development in Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP). The study was applied concerning the purpose and descriptive-correlational considering data collection method. The population was all employees of BNPP – 496 people. According to Cochran formula, 216 subjects were selected the samples. We used simple random sampling method to select from the sample. The research tools were Goldman's Strategic Thinking Questionnaire (2005) and Nickerson and Eirby's Human Resource Development Questionnaire (1998) whose validity was confirmed by the relevant professors and reliability coefficients were 0.89 and 0.79, respectively. The results of the correlation coefficient test and regression analysis showed that strategic thinking affects HR development. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between systemic thinking, conceptual thinking, intelligent opportunism and futurism with the development of HRs at the level of 0.05 with confidence level of 0.95. The results showed that as the strategic thinking increases in the employees so does HR development, which leads to the success and development of the organization.

Keywords: Strategic thinking, HRs development, BNPP.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic thinking has been of great interest in strategic management over the past decade, and many studies have cited the importance of managers' having strategic thinking capabilities. Strategic thinking is considered as one of the two main capabilities of leaders with exemplary performance. They see the organization as it has to be, not as it is. Thus, one can consider strategic thinking as a prelude to the future designing of the organization. According to a study - aimed at identifying managerial skills required for Asian managers - all the respondents have identified strategic thinking as the first or second skill needed to improve the performance of managers. In harmony with the global trend of increase in tendency to use the tools and techniques of strategic management, for some reasons such as privatization and readiness to join the World Trade Organization, the need for effective use of such tools is increasing in Iran, too. Improving the ability to think strategically, as one of the key factors in the effectiveness of the strategic management process, needs more attention. Strategic thinking is the process of compiling future assumptions that form the base of the mission, goals and strategy of the organization and cover a wide range of issues, so, if not done in a structured way, it may turn into a time-consuming activity.

Nowadays, we witness the presence of more firms or new rivals in the competition arena, which has intensified the competitive environment at the national and international levels. In such a

space, the organizations and companies need a unique competence to survive and advance, to distinct them from other competitors. This exposes the managers to unexpected risks and has them take measures to adapt to change, rendering the survival of organizations dependent on the balance between changes and developments with development of HRs and extra-organizational innovations. Every organization requires trained and expert forces, as one of the most effective factors in the economic, social and cultural development of each country, to accomplish its mission. If the capabilities of the existing staff in the organization meet this need, training is not so necessary; yet if the employees of the organization do not have the knowledge, information, and skills necessary and appropriate, they will make the organization suffer problems and financial and administrative losses, and so on. Training and upgrading the labor force in the organization enable the employees continue their work effectively tailored to organizational and environmental changes and increase their efficiency (Rostami, 2013). Hence, the development of HRs, as the main source of development, is important both for organizations and the authorities in charge of the country's affairs. The development of HRs means the production of new ideas by the employees of the organization, and its new concept requires employees to be equipped with the qualities and skills, so that with compassion and full commitment have their abilities, energy, expertise and thought in realization of the assigned missions to the organization and create new, qualitative and new values for the organization. In the concept of HR development, the goal is to create the skills, by which that individuals can prepare themselves for higher business or heavier responsibilities. Thus, HR development training-programs are designed to grow individuals without communication with the current or future occupations of the organization. This does not mean that the outcomes of developmental education programs are useless in the current or future issues of the organization, but the programs are designed and to be short, the purpose of the developmental training-program is to keep the organization alive and update so that the process of adaptation and change of the methods and policies in the organization are done easily (Soltani, 2010). Without the growth and advancement of talents and capabilities of HRs in all areas of society, one cannot reach the goals of development, construction, and the creation of favorable conditions for a supreme life (Abtahi, 2010).

These days, strategic planning is so important in many organizations and companies. However, strategic planners and advisers are less concerned with the issue of strategic thinking, where creation of strategic thinking is the prerequisite for success in this regard (Abtahi, 2011). Strategic thinking is seeing what other competitors are unable to see. As human resources are considered as the major strategic element of any organization, neglecting its development will incur significant and irreparable damage to the organization. If strategic development of human capital is based on a principled thinking, such as strategic thinking, it can meet all the present and future needs. Thus, one can state that strategic thinking is one of the strategic management tools to direct the development of HRs strategically in line with organizational strategies and perspectives. If the development of HRs is consistent with strategic thinking, it will lead to the creation of value in the organization (Soltani, 2010). With this view, the differences between business and HR managers are resolved. Organizations require powerful HRs for innovation and creativity to provide the right strategies for a complex competitive environment. For obtaining a capable force, the organization must equip it in the framework of its HRs development strategy; the organization obtains the necessary resources through the values created by its



knowledgeable forces. This cycle fosters a positive state, so that each time the experience of the labor increases and helps create better ideas, it ultimately creates more values (Yazdani and Poursadegh, 2011).

Strategic thinking is an insight and understanding that assists the organization to understand the environmental realities and consequences properly in complex circumstances and control the discontinuities in and outside the organization. Using strategic thinking enables the organization to go on in creative ways and innovations, not be passive in shaping its future and move on according to the plan. Applying appropriate strategies can lead to the survival of our organizations if all aspects of the organization are adequately grown and developed. Strategy means creating a fit between different activities of a company. The success of a firm depends on doing a lot of things - and not some things - and creating a complete connection between these. If there is no proportion between activities, a certain strategy will not work either. The lack of a strategic look at the development of HRs in the country is one of these challenges (Mirsepasi, 2010).

Naghavi & Soltani (2014) conducted a study entitled "Studying the role of strategic thinking in HRs development in Central Insurance." The study type was correlation with descriptive design. The population was 400 employees of the Central Insurance Organization with 70 people were selected through random sampling method. Data were collected using systemic thinking and HRs development questionnaires. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between the implementation of strategic thinking (system thinking, conceptual thinking, intelligent opportunism and futurism) with the development of HRs. Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar (2015) conducted a study entitled "Studying the relationship between strategic thinking and HRs development at Bank Mellat of Iran. The study was applied with descriptive data. The population was Bank Mellat employees in East Azerbaijan with 300 people. According to Cochran formula, 170 people were selected by stratified random sampling as the sample. Data analysis was done in SPSS. The results of multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient showed a complete relationship between HR development and strategic thinking factors. In a study entitled "Strategic thinking for employers in nonprofit organizations," Ireland & Webb (2015) pointed to nine important characteristics of successful strategic thinking: 1) Organizational policy, 2) Goal-orientation, 3) Planning based on events, 4) Extensive thinking methods, 5) Focus, 6) Agreeing, 7) Engaging, 8) Coordination, and 9) Applicability. By combining these nine cultural attributes, the leaders in private organizations can be inspired by continuous strategic thinking that increases their chances of changing the environment with respect to time and responses. With more emphasis on strategic thinking and outward move in responding to the crises of private organizations can improve organizational results, increase customer loyalty and comfort. Lucas et al. (2016) explored the impact of strategic thinking on the performance of companies in Nigeria. Several studies on strategic thinking and corporate performance in developed countries have shown a positive or negative relationship. Thus, this paper will examine this using the Nigerian business environment, which has its own unique quality. The results of the analysis by Pearson correlation coefficient showed a positive and significant relationship between strategic thinking and firm performance. Since human resources are considered as the main strategic element of each organization, the implementation of strategic management for a strategic resource is not only justifiable, but also essential (Mirsepasi, 2014). HR management is considered as a domain of the phenomena of the current



century, whereas its presentation in the strategic management area is not more than two decades. The economic success of post-World War II countries and the widespread development of some of the Far East countries have played a significant role in the introduction of the importance of HRs in the development of organizations and communities. In the balance sheet of most companies, this is seen: "Our most valuable asset is our employees." However, as the financial statements of organizations ignore the value of this valuable asset due to their traditional accounting practices, explaining HRs strategy is neglected in macro planning of organizations (Mirespasi, 2014).

Although the development of HRs is considered as a great goal for all governments and organizations as a necessity to promote the standard of human life and the development of more affluent societies, and the peace and comfort of humans, in many of our organizations, strategic attitude towards human capital is still not seen. Even in many cases, the organizations consider this vital factor contrary to their development and see it as the loss of its financial capital (Ghasemi, 2015). Considering the importance of BNPP, as one of Iran's major power plants and the first Iranian nuclear power plant, it is necessary to identify the components of strategic thinking and their effect on HRs development of BNPP.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was applied regarding the purpose and descriptive research of correlation type considering data collection method. The population of the study was the employees of BNPP - 496 people. The sample was the employees of BNPP, selected by simple random sampling method.

Data collection tool

Data collection tools were questionnaires as:

A: Demographic information questionnaire:

This researcher-made questionnaire has 4 questions used to collect some demographic information such as age, gender, education, and service record.

B: Questionnaire of the effect of strategic thinking on HR development:

1. Strategic Thinking Questionnaire: This test is based on the Goldman's Standard Questionnaire (2005) with 36 questions based on Likert scale. The questionnaire has four dimensions. Different dimensions of strategic thinking include system thinking (questions 1-11), conceptual thinking (12-22), intelligent opportunism (23-29), and futurism (30-35).
2. HRs Development Questionnaire: This test is based on the standard HRs development questionnaire by Nickerson and Eirby (1998). This questionnaire has 5 dimensions. Different dimensions of HR development are individual development (questions 1- 10), educational development (11-18), organizational development (19-30), professional development (31-35), and socio-cultural development (36-40).

RESULTS

Main hypothesis: Strategic thinking has a significant effect on HRs development of BNPP.

To examine the strategic thinking model (x) and HR development (y), after reviewing the adequacy of the model, the following table is presented for the fit model.

Table 1: Model adequacy index between strategic thinking and HR development at BNPP

Error standard deviation	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Coefficient of determination	The correlation coefficient
6.28558	0.337	0.340	0.583

The correlation between independent and dependent variable is 0.583. The coefficient of determination is 0.340, meaning that 34% of HR development changes are related to strategic thinking. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. The table below calculated the significance of the regression by F test:

Table 2: F test table of the significance of the relationship between strategic thinking and HR development of BNPP

Source of changes		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Strategic thinking	Regression	4356.66	1	4356.66	110.272	0.001
	Residual model	8454.81	214	39.508		
	Total	12811.48	215			

According to the above table, the significance level calculated for this statistic is 0.001 and indicates the significance of the regression at the level of 0.99.

Table 3: T-test result for the relationship between strategic thinking and HRs development of BNPP

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant value	119.027	3.380	-	35.210	0.000
Strategic thinking	0.260	0.025	0.583	10.501	0.000

For one unit change in strategic thinking, 0.583 unit of change is created in HR development ($R = 0.583$), which is due to the assumption of other variables as constant. The t-test for regression coefficients is also shown in this table for the independent variable, which is 0.000, so strategic thinking affects HR development.

Sub-hypothesis 1: Systemic thinking has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP. For examining and presenting the model of systemic thinking (x) and development of HRs (y), after examining the adequacy of the model, the following table is presented to present the fitted model.

Table 4: Model adequacy index between systemic thinking and HR development at BNPP

Error standard deviation	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Coefficient of determination	The correlation coefficient
5.684	0.333	0.336	0.580

The correlation between independent and dependent variable is 0.580. The coefficient of determination is 0.336, meaning that 33.6% of HR development changes are related to systemic thinking. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. The table below calculated the significance of the regression by F test:



Table 5: F test table of the significance of the relationship between systemic thinking and HR development of BNPP

Source of changes		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Systemic thinking	Regression	3502.668	1	3502.668	108.404	0.001
	Residual model	6914.627	214	32.311		
	Total	10417.31	215			

According to the above table, the significance level calculated for this statistic is 0.001 and indicates the significance of the regression at the level of 0.99.

Table 6: T-test result for the relationship between systemic thinking and HRs development of BNPP

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant value	127.120	2.640	~	48.152	0.000
Systemic thinking	0.643	0.062	0.580	10.412	0.000

For one unit change in systemic thinking, 0.580 unit of change is created in HR development ($R = 0.580$), which is due to the assumption of other variables as constant. The t-test for regression coefficients is also shown in this table for the independent variable, which is 0.000, so systemic thinking affects HR development.

Sub-hypothesis 2: Conceptual thinking has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP. For examining and presenting the model of systemic thinking (x) and development of HRs (y), after examining the adequacy of the model, the following table is presented to present the fitted model

Table 7: Model Adequacy Index between conceptual thinking and HR Development at the Nuclear Power Plant

Error standard deviation	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Coefficient of determination	The correlation coefficient
6.78238	0.230	0.234	0.484

The correlation between independent and dependent variable is 0.484. The coefficient of determination is 0.336, meaning that 23.4% of HR development changes are related to conceptual thinking. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. The table below calculated the significance of the regression by F test:

Table 8: F test table of the significance of the relationship between conceptual thinking and HR development of BNPP

Source of changes		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Conceptual thinking	Regression	2996.34	1	2996.34	5.239	0.001
	Residual model	9815.140	214	45.865		
	Total	12811.48	215			

According to the above table, the significance level calculated for this statistic is 0.001 and indicates the significance of the regression at the level of 0.99.

Table 9: T-test result for the relationship between conceptual thinking and HRs development of the nuclear power plant

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant value	2.432	0.194		12.511	0.001
Conceptual thinking	0.365	0.050	0.449	7.344	0.001

For one unit change in conceptual thinking, 0.449 unit of change is created in HR development ($R = 0.449$), which is due to the assumption of other variables as constant. The t-test for regression coefficients is also shown in this table for the independent variable, which is 0.000, so conceptual thinking affects HR development.

Sub-hypothesis 3: Intelligent opportunism has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.

For examining and presenting the model of intelligent opportunism (x) and development of HRs (y), after examining the adequacy of the model, the following table is presented to present the fitted model

Table 10: Model Adequacy Index between intelligent opportunism and HR Development at the Nuclear Power Plant

Error standard deviation	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Coefficient of determination	The correlation coefficient
6.3977	0.313	0.316	0.374



The correlation between independent and dependent variable is 0.374. The coefficient of determination is 0.316, meaning that 31.6% of HR development changes are related to intelligent opportunism. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. The table below calculated the significance of the regression by F test:

Table 11: F test table of the significance of the relationship between intelligent opportunism and HR development of BNPP

Source of changes		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Intelligent opportunism	Regression	4052.237	1	4052.237	99.002	0.001
	Residual model	8795.244	214	40.931		
	Total	12811.48	215			

According to the above table, the significance level calculated for this statistic is 0.001 and indicates the significance of the regression.

Table 12: T-test result for the relationship between intelligent opportunism and HRs development of the nuclear power plant

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant value	124.508	3.020		41.230	0.000

Intelligent opportunism	1.130	0.114	0.562	9.950	0.000
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For one unit change in intelligent opportunism, 0.562 unit of change is created in HR development ($R = 0.562$), which is due to the assumption of other variables as constant. The t-test for regression coefficients is also shown in this table for the independent variable, which is 0.000, so intelligent opportunism affects HR development.

Sub-hypothesis 4: Futurism has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.

For examining and presenting the model of intelligent opportunism (x) and development of HRs (y), after examining the adequacy of the model, the following table is presented to present the fitted model.

Table 13: Model Adequacy Index between futurism and HR Development at the Nuclear Power Plant

Error standard deviation	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Coefficient of determination	The correlation coefficient
7.3122	0.103	0.107	0.327

The correlation between independent and dependent variable is 0.327. The coefficient of determination is 0.107, meaning that 10.7% of HR development changes are related to futurism. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. The table below calculated the significance of the regression by F test:

Table 14: F test table of the significance of the relationship between futurism and HR development of BNPP

Source of changes	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F	Sig.	
Futurism	Regression	1369.25	1	1369.25	25.609	0.001
	Residual model	11442.23	214	53.468		
	Total	12811.48	215			

According to the above table, the significance level calculated for this statistic is 0.001 and indicates the significance of the regression at the level of 0.99.

Table 15: T-test result for the relationship between futurism and HRs development of the nuclear power plant

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant value	139.19	3.049	-	45.597	0.000
Futurism	0.584	0.115	0.327	5.060	0.000

For one unit change in futurism, 0.327 unit of change is created in HR development ($R = 0.327$), which is due to the assumption of other variables as constant. The t-test for regression coefficients is also shown in this table for the independent variable, which is 0.000, so futurism affects HR development.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Main hypothesis: Strategic thinking has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.

The results show that the correlation between strategic thinking and HRs development is 0.583, which is a positive correlation and as the strategic thinking is higher, HRs development will be more. The coefficient of determination is 0.340, meaning that 34% of HR development changes are related to strategic thinking. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. Thus, strategic thinking is effective in HRs development.

This result is in line with the results of the studies by Heidarzadeh (2015), Bashirbenaem (2015), Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar (2015) and Naghavi Soltani (2014). Concerning these results, one can state that enhancing strategic thinking in organizational employees will be along increase in the organization's capacity for successful implementation of HRs development. The prevailing atmosphere of today's businesses and organizations, where HRs development has become an integral part of them, shows the importance of addressing and reinforcing strategic thinking among organizational staff. Adopting strategic thinking approach to organizational issues helps managers face the challenges and changes that the organization face in the future and enhances the organization's capacity for successful implementation of HRs development.

Sub-hypothesis 1: Systemic thinking has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.

The results show that the correlation between systemic thinking and HRs development is 0.580, which is a positive correlation and as the systemic thinking is higher, HRs development will be more. The coefficient of determination is 0.336, meaning that 33.6% of HR development changes are related to systemic thinking. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. Thus, systemic thinking is effective in HRs development.

This result is in line with the results of the studies by Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar (2015) and Naghavi Soltani (2014). Concerning these results, one can state that a strategic thinker has multiple thinking skills that can evaluate various factors simultaneously and recognize the relationship between them. His orientation is holistic, so that he first sees the whole and then the components. Systemic thinking helps employees predict outcomes of decisions and actions effectively. As one of the important tasks of the organization is decision-making and planning for the future of the organization, systemic thinking can help develop HRs.

Sub-hypothesis 2: Conceptual thinking has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.

The results show that the correlation between conceptual thinking and HRs development is 0.448, which is a positive correlation and as the conceptual thinking is higher, HRs development will be more. The coefficient of determination is 0.234, meaning that 23.4% of HR development changes are related to conceptual thinking. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. Thus, strategic thinking is effective in HRs development.

This result is in line with the results of the studies by Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar (2015) and Naghavi Soltani (2014). Concerning these results, one can state that conceptual thinking is the ability to understand a situation or problem by identifying the main and central patterns and issues. This method of thinking involves the integration of various and non-related factors in a conceptual framework. Conceptual thinking is the use of experiences, creativity and deductive reasoning and illuminating procedures, leading to finding potential solutions and stable options that help increase HRs development and increase it.

Sub-hypothesis 3: Intelligent opportunism has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.



The results show that the correlation between intelligent opportunism and HRs development is 0.374, which is a positive correlation and as the intelligent opportunism is higher, HRs development will be more. The coefficient of determination is 0.316, meaning that 31.6% of HRs development changes are related to intelligent opportunism. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. Thus, intelligent opportunism is effective in HRs development.

This result is in line with the results of the studies by Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar (2015) and Naghavi Soltani (2014). Concerning these results, one can state that the discovery of opportunities and utilizing them through the experiences and understanding the appropriate conditions are important principles in organizations. Employees must have a high level of awareness to be at the right place at the right time. Opportunism helps employees take the most advantage of the opportunities and make the right choices in decision making to achieve the desired goals. Knowing the opportunity needs specific mental characteristics. Without creating such characteristics, finding effective opportunities and strategies will not be possible. For the opportunities to be understood and the hidden messages in them revealed, some conditions must be created for the managers to provide the context for doing so. Effective strategy must rely on real opportunities. When a transforming opportunity is understood, it provides the context for HR development and creating a strategy for the organization.

Sub-hypothesis 4: Futurism has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP.

The results show that the correlation between futurism and HRs development is 0.327, which is a positive correlation and as futurism is higher, HRs development will be more. The coefficient of determination is 0.107, meaning that 10.7% of HR development changes are related to futurism. Given the indices mentioned, the model has the necessary adequacy. Thus, futurism is effective in HRs development.

This result is in line with the results of the studies by Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar (2015) and Naghavi Soltani (2014). Concerning these results, one can state that futurism includes possible, probable and superior future. Moreover, they are characters and events that are less likely to occur, but they should happen. Futurism or prospective leadership attempts to create the desired future by identifying states. Futurism is not specific predictions and forecasts, but a systemic process of thinking about the future to formulate the reasonable expectations for identifying the opportunities and threats ahead of the organization and take actions that will enhance the desired outcomes. Futurism can help develop HRs through understanding multiple processes and their probable consequences to use opportunities.

Concerning the paper title, it was shown that strategic thinking has a significant effect on the HRs development of BNPP. According to the results of this study, useful and effective suggestions and strategies are presented as follows: Holding training classes and seminars to teach strategic thinking and strategic decision making, so that the managers and staff use knowledge and work experience that contribute to the development and promotion of strategic thinking. In the mission and purpose of the organization, optimal use of strategic thinking in the organization's working processes should seriously be taken into account. By studying successful organizations in the use of strategic thinking, new ways of using and applying strategic thinking should be taught to employees in conducting their duties. The information needs of different parts of the organization in the field of HR development should be identified scientifically and appropriately. Identifying and evaluating risks should be done at all stages of project implementation, so that



appropriate responses shall be formulated in risk response programs. Specialized and advanced training should be considered for the employees and motivation should be created among them to use the new approaches in conducting their tasks.

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