



# THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN ACHIEVING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Ibrahim Salah Mahdi  
Professor Chokri Slim

MANOUBA UNIVERSITY/ Entrepreneuriat  
iibm104@gmail.com

Article history:	Abstract:
<p><b>Received:</b> 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 <b>Accepted:</b> 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023 <b>Published:</b> 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023</p>	<p>This study investigates the strategic function of human resource management (HRM) in attaining competitive advantage in Iraqi businesses. The purpose of this study is to examine the level of strategic human resource management and competitive advantage, as well as their relationship. Additionally, previous research is utilized to support the study's findings. The study employs a quantitative methodology, acquiring data via a questionnaire disseminated to employees of Iraqi businesses. The cohort consists of a diverse variety of organizations across various industries. Using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, the level of strategic human resource management, competitive advantage, and their relationship are determined. With a mean value of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 0.98, the findings indicate a high level of strategic HRM. This indicates that Iraqi businesses recognize the significance of aligning HRM practices with organizational strategies to attain a competitive advantage. In addition, the study reveals a substantial degree of competitive advantage, with a mean value of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.96. This indicates that companies in Iraq are effectively leveraging their HRM practices to obtain a market advantage. In addition, the research establishes a statistically significant relationship between strategic HRM and competitive advantage. The analysis reveals a negative relationship between the variables, indicating that a one percent increase in strategic human resource management results in a 1.41 percent increase in competitive advantage. These insights can help organizations establish effective HRM strategies for success and longevity in the Iraqi business environment.</p>

**Keywords:** Human resource management, Competitive advantage, Strategic role, Iraqi companies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the evolution of strategic thinking, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the various changes that occurred in the corporate environment, it became evident that industry structure was not the sole determinant of a business organization's profitability and competitive ability. Instead, it was necessary to look within the organization and its strategic resources. The resource-based approach in organizational research primarily focused on human capabilities and human resource management in development.

Recent studies have identified human resource management (HRM) strategy as a fundamental component of a business organization's overall strategy. This aspect was relatively overlooked from a top management perspective, as executives did not consider it directly related to their activities concerning employees, which were relatively unknown in terms of rewards, promotions, punishments, and organizational status changes. The significant changes in the business environment did not revolve around the HRM department, which is characterized by its abbreviation (HRM), and its shortcomings.

In the early 21st century, it became increasingly recognized that the path to competitive advantage would be achieved through employees. Therefore, if an organization relies on its human resources to shape its strategy, it means that the effective presence of employees is prioritized before the existence of a strategy, especially in the context of diminishing strategic efficiency of human resources, which the comprehensive strategy development process focuses on. In the knowledge era, having a strategy derived from knowledge is more important than having a strategy itself. There is a need for an effective human resource management strategy before considering the existence of capable human resources capable of formulating strategies and engaging in strategic thinking.

The strategic importance of human resources in creating a competitive advantage is not only reflected in the possession of these value-generating resources, which possess the necessary characteristics and advantages for resources and strategies, but also in light of the challenges of globalization and the emergence of the so-called knowledge-based economy and positive integration facilitated by these investments. Thus, investing in human resources and capacity development continues to contribute to enhancing the competitiveness, effectiveness, and necessity of business organizations.

This vision is based on four main pillars: the philosophical framework of human resource strategy, the importance of managing business organizations, the intellectual approach practiced at the applied level, and finally, the role in achieving competitive advantage.

Today, the world recognizes the role that human resource management plays in controlling various productive factors and improving the conditions of nations and people at all levels. Human development, creativity, and innovative capacity vary from person to person, depending on their experience, performance, intellectual and physical abilities, and other factors that can make a difference between individuals. Therefore, the problem in researching the misunderstood philosophy of strategic human resource management in some organizations lies in the lack of true knowledge among the responsible HR managers about their assigned tasks and roles, as well as the weak organizational efficiency of the sector, as it exists as an independent sector in different business organizations. This means there is a lack of organizational awareness of the role this sector can play in building intellectual capital and how it contributes to the development of employees' knowledge and experiences, creating a real differentiation in its management that allows it to compete and survive in the job market. The importance of this study lies in clarifying the significance of the concept of strategic human resource management as a resource that helps increase the value and efficiency of business organizations and achieve a competitive advantage at various local and global levels.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Sadiqi (2022) aims to identify the nature of the relationship between strategic human resource management and competitive advantage. The study included a sample of employees in Mobilis Telecommunications Company - Beshar. Acquiring competitive advantage is closely related to the application of strategic perspectives related to human resources, which can be strengths or weaknesses. Therefore, strategic human resource management has become a fundamental reference for many successful organizations worldwide seeking to achieve sustainable and enduring competitive advantage. Descriptive and analytical methods were used, and questionnaires served as the primary tool for data collection and analysis using statistical software (SPSS) to test hypotheses using various statistical methods.

The results showed that strategic human resource management has an impact on the competitive advantage of Mobilis Telecommunications Company - Beshar through human resource management policies and functions (planning, recruitment, selection, training, motivation, and compensation). This can be explained by the determination coefficient  $R^2$ , which equals 0.932, indicating that 93.2% of the variation in competitive advantage is attributed to changes in strategic human resource management.

Moreover, Rizkallah (2017) aims to identify the role of strategic human resource management in achieving competitive advantage for organizations, especially in light of the new variables affecting the concept of human resources. The transition of organizations to the knowledge era requires updating their intellectual capital and learning how to transform it into profit or allow it to acquire a competitive advantage in specific strategic positions. This means that organizations need to search for intellectual wealth, creative and innovative ideas, and untapped human capabilities to invest in them and obtain higher value through their development, transforming them into sustainable competitive advantages. The importance of this study lies in highlighting the significance of strategic human resource management as a resource that helps increase the value and efficiency of business organizations and achieve a competitive advantage at various local and global levels.

Hassan (2017) aimed to identify the role of human resource management in enhancing strategic innovative practices to promote competitive advantage in Egyptian pharmaceutical companies. The study used descriptive and analytical methods, designed measurement tools (questionnaires), and distributed them to a random stratified sample of employees in those companies. The study found that the strategic innovative approach in human resource management had a positive impact on improving the competitive advantage of these companies. The study recommended the need for effective focus on the strategic approach of human resource management and its continuous connection to the innovative orientation of employees, as it had a positive impact on improving the competitive advantage of Egyptian pharmaceutical companies.

## 3. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1. STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (SHRM)

#### 3.1.1. DEFINITION

It is a set of methods and approaches through which an organization seeks to achieve its set objectives. It is a plan that determines the context and means of work. It is a strategy aimed at dealing with competitors and outsmarting them. It is a harmonious model of parts to reach a stable position or position in the environment. It is a perspective that gives a vision according to the correct relationship and the ability to perceive things.

It is the input or framework for making strategic decisions regarding employees in the organization at all levels, in accordance with the organization's overall strategy. It aims to create a competitive advantage for the organization and maintain it. In other words, it is an expression of the organization's general direction to achieve its strategic objectives through human resources, contributing to its efforts to implement the organization's strategic plan.

It encompasses all the new practices that establish a long-term treatment policy for human factors and related matters concerning their professional lives in the workplace. These practices align with the organization's overall strategy, future vision, and prevailing conditions. They aim to be achieved in the coming years.

### **3.1.2. STAGES OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **• First Stage: Identification and Study of the Organization's Mission Requirements**

This is the overall long-term objective that all employees of the organization must achieve. The mission sets the general framework for developing strategies in all departments. It represents the reason for the organization's existence and continuity. Therefore, the starting point or foundation for shaping strategic human resource management is the study of the requirements for achieving the organization's mission.

#### **• Second Stage: Environmental Analysis**

This stage consists of two parts:

The first part is the analysis of the internal environment to identify strengths and weaknesses in the existing human resource capabilities to determine their ability to achieve the strategic and future priorities of the organization.

The second part is the analysis of the external environment to identify opportunities that can be leveraged and potential risks that should be avoided.

#### **• Third Stage: Formulation and Shaping of Strategic Human Resource Management**

Based on the results of the previous environmental analyses, a comprehensive strategy is developed for the organization. This strategy determines the directions, work paths, and future activities in line with the organization's mission. According to the requirements of completing the organizational strategy, all departments, including human resource management, formulate targeted strategies and strive to serve the organizational strategy. If the organizational strategy is growth and expansion-oriented, human resource management will attract more human resources. If the organizational strategy focuses on cost leadership, human resource management will focus on attracting highly skilled employees capable of working efficiently and at a lower cost.

#### **• Fourth Stage: Development of a Strategy for Human Resource Management Tasks**

This stage involves developing an integrated strategy for future tasks and practices. It means attracting, selecting, appointing, performance evaluation, training, job design, and employee motivation. These strategies align with the strategic direction of other departments and are consistent with the strategic objectives of the organization. The strategy followed by human resource management in each function depends on its relative strength in facing change elements and the expected benefits of each strategy.

#### **• Fifth Stage: Implementation of the Human Resource Management Strategy**

Human resource management strategies are implemented by translating them into programs, plans, budgets, and policies. Each represents specific activities to be implemented, allocated resources for each activity, specified performance timing, and acceptable performance criteria. The implementation process is based on various organizational structures and processes that the organization can choose based on the requirements of successful strategic implementation.

#### **The sixth stage: Evaluating the effectiveness of strategic human resource management implementation**

Evaluating the effectiveness of strategic human resource management implementation involves assessing the extent to which the department's activities can achieve the organization's objectives by creating employee satisfaction, happiness, and achieving the organization's long-term competitive advantage (Sadiqi, 2022).

## **3.2. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES**

### **3.2.1. THE CONCEPT OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES**

Once an organization finds itself more effective than the new methods used by its competitors and can implement this discovery in the field, a competitive advantage emerges. In other words, once the creative process is established in the broad sense. Acquiring a competitive advantage is related to two main dimensions:

#### **The first dimension: Perceived Customer Value**

Organizations can leverage their various capabilities to increase the value customers perceive from the goods and services they provide, helping build their competitive advantage. Failure to leverage unique capabilities can cost organizations significantly. For example, IBM's failure to recognize and realize the importance of the emerging personal computer market in the 1970s had a significant impact on the computer industry, resulting in a loss of approximately \$90 billion and forcing the company to rethink its strategy, policies, and organizational structure.

If customers perceive or obtain greater value from transactions with an organization than its competitors, the organization achieves a competitive advantage. Although research shows that price plays the most significant role in determining customer value, this issue is much more complex than simply comparing the relationship between product quality and price.

The concept of value includes, in addition to price and quality, the persuasiveness and reliability of the product or service, post-sales service, and more.

Human resource management plays a crucial role in supporting the concept of customer value, one of the fundamental pillars for achieving competitive advantage, by designing and implementing human resource management programs created to meet customer needs. It is committed to providing capabilities that meet these needs.

### **The second dimension: Differentiation**

Competitive advantage can also be achieved by offering goods or services that cannot be easily imitated or replicated by competitors. There are several sources for achieving differentiation, including financial resources, human resources, and organizational capabilities. In the case of financial resources, organizations can achieve differentiation by obtaining funds under special conditions to meet their needs for producing goods and services at a lower cost than others. Material resources, including equipment and technology, can also be used to provide unique products or services that differ from those of other organizations. Additionally, organizations can attract highly skilled human resources capable of working efficiently and at a lower cost.

Efficient organizational capabilities are another source of differentiation to achieve competitive advantage. Many organizations attribute their success primarily to the capabilities and skills of their employees. The fourth source of differentiation is organizational efficiency, which refers to the organization's ability to manage its systems and current individuals to meet customer needs. These organizational capabilities differ from other sources to excel in how they contribute to the value of the organization's products or services, making them difficult for others to imitate unless they are rare.

### **3.2.2. SOURCES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES**

#### **Characteristics of Competitive Advantage**

It is important to understand the characteristics of competitive advantage from a proper, comprehensive, and continuous perspective. These characteristics can be reflected as follows:

- Sustainability and continuity, meaning that the organization achieves leadership in the long term, not just in the short term.
- Comparative advantage over competitors or over different time periods, preventing organizations from understanding advantages within an absolute framework that is difficult to achieve.
- Adaptation according to external environmental data on one hand, and according to the organization's capabilities and internal resources on the other hand.
- Flexibility, relying on replacing competitive advantages with other advantages based on considerations of changes in the external environment or the development of resources and organizational capabilities on the other side.
- The use of these competitive advantages should be proportional to the goals and results achieved by the organization in both the short and long term.

#### **Sources of Competitive Advantage**

The sources of competitive advantage for businesses are naturally diverse and varied. Since they depend on the organization's resources in a wide range of general concepts, the external environment of the organization provides areas where it can excel, including:

Internal sources: These are related to the tangible and intangible resources of the organization, such as the fundamental factors of production, energy, primary resources, distribution channels, assets, and others. Competitive advantage can also come from the management systems used and developed, administrative organizational methods, incentive methods, returns on research and development, innovation, and knowledge.

External sources: These sources are diverse and formed through external environmental variables and changes, leading to the creation of opportunities and advantages that the organization can benefit from and exploit, such as conditions of supply and demand for raw materials, financing, qualified human resources, and others.

The organization can build a competitive advantage through its strategic choices for horizontal and vertical integration, diversification, strategic alliances, and relationships with others.

### **3.2.3. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

The growth and development of competitive advantage occur when companies identify or discover new and better ways to compete in the industry and apply them in the market, resulting in innovation or a competitive edge. This is achieved through organizational learning and research and development (investing in skill and knowledge development). The key drivers of innovation that change competitive advantage include:

- Emergence of new technologies: Technological change can create new opportunities in product design, marketing methods, production or delivery, and customer services (Mowafak, 2013).
- Emergence of new or changing buyer needs: When buyers develop new demands or change their priorities, the competitive advantage may change or a new competitive advantage may emerge.
- Emergence of new market segments: Opportunities to create new advantages arise when new market segments emerge in the industry or new ways to restructure existing market segments.

- Changes in input costs or availability: Competitive advantage often gets affected if the absolute or relative costs of inputs such as labor, raw materials, energy, transportation, communication, advertising, or machinery change (Al-Rashidi et al., 2019).
- Changes in government regulations: There are various other influences that can affect or change competitive advantage, such as the nature of government restrictions in areas like product specifications, environmental pollution control campaigns, market access restrictions, and trade barriers.

### **3.3. STRATEGIES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **3.3.1. THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

In recent times, organizations have increasingly recognized the importance and effectiveness of human resource management and planning as key factors that impact the success of enterprises, both at the individual and organizational levels, as well as at the national economic level. The role of human resource management has evolved, considering it as part of executive management, which is executed through the management of daily operations such as payroll, employee files, and more (Rizkallah & Mesak, 2017).

Regarding the strategic role of human resource management, it differs from the traditional role in several aspects, including:

- Adapting the human resource system to the surrounding environmental conditions.
- Integrating human resource strategy with the organization's overall strategy.
- Focusing on long-term decision-making aspects.
- Emphasizing change issues.

#### **3.3.2. CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

The success of any human resource strategy relies on the following principles:

- Commitment of top management and delegation of responsibility: Active top management is one of the most critical factors for successfully achieving the strategic objectives of human resources. Commitment to human resource outcomes is assumed, but it is not enough. It has been observed that the human resource function is often treated as a secondary function within the organization. Therefore, top management should provide delegation and responsibility to ensure the success of human resource management strategies, and the key to managing this strategy successfully lies in the ability to instill trust.
- Specific efforts by the human resource team: Once the human resource department has a strategic perspective, developing and implementing human resource strategies requires specific efforts from the human resource team. Developing the strategy or implementing it cannot be done in a vacuum. To be successful, it requires the formation of a good team where members are functionally interconnected, and each member is responsible for implementing different activities according to the defined boundaries for developing and implementing human resource strategies.
- Establishing a specialized top-level human resource council: There is a need for a top-level human resource council consisting of representatives from top management in each work group. The council is responsible for reviewing human resource strategies and implementing human resource plans for the organization. They should be provided with a clear workgroup strategy for all customers, processes, suppliers, quality, and all key leadership activities of the organization. The board should meet regularly to provide guidance and support for the human resource strategy.
- Role of overlapping functions in human resources and work: Any work, regardless of its size, good or bad, should have a human resource strategy. Human resource strategies should be developed side by side with work without exceptions to this rule, except for differences in degree.

#### **3.3.3. STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AS AN APPROACH TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Creating a competitive advantage through strategic management and practice of human resources can yield significant returns for the organization in the short term until competitors can overcome it by creating their own competitive advantage. Some of the most important benefits obtained from strategic human resource management include (Rizkallah & Mesak, 2017):

- Guiding with a strategic plan that helps the organization identify important changes and adapt to them effectively, creating an area that can learn and adapt to current and future needs.
- Improving the organization's ability to identify multiple objectives, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Predicting the organization's quantitative and qualitative human resource needs and developing them.
- Finding a way to link human resource policies and systems, including employee training and development policies, to the business strategy.
- Enhancing coordination and alignment between organizational human resource plans and operational processes.
- Improving the effectiveness of human resource utilization, increasing productivity, reducing accident rates, turnover rates, and absenteeism rates, thereby improving organizational efficiency and overall performance.

### 3.3.4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND THEIR ROLE IN BUILDING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The effectiveness of human resource management strategies and their role in building competitive advantage can be summarized as follows:

- **Acquiring human resources:** This involves identifying the organization's need for human capital and taking measures to attract suitable employees. This activity enables organizations to access the necessary workforce to ensure operational continuity and achieve their goals. Recruitment is often assessed using various criteria.
- **Training and development:** Training is a planned effort to facilitate learning, acquire knowledge, skills, and necessary behavioral patterns for effective work. The importance of training goes beyond employee mastery; it also contributes to creating a competitive advantage by fostering a learning organization.
- **Career development:** Career development refers to a set of jobs an individual performs throughout their professional life. Developing career paths is essentially developing employees, but the key difference lies in the time frame, which is associated with the effectiveness and long-term success of the organization's employee development program.
- **Performance management:** This process ensures that managers align employee activities and performance outcomes with organizational goals. It is a governance mechanism that achieves the organization's competitive advantage and objectives by adopting and utilizing performance management. It also aims to achieve strategic objectives and establish a link between employee activities and their goals.
- **Incentive program management:** To ensure sustainable performance with maximum efficiency, it is crucial for managers to understand the motivations, behaviors, and patterns of employee behavior and the inputs that influence them. This involves effectively motivating individuals to achieve both organizational and personal goals.
- **Wage structuring management:** Wages are a fundamental element for employees as it is a significant source of livelihood, well-being, and their ability to provide for themselves and their families. Wages can also impact an individual's status in society and within the organization. Therefore, the possibility of obtaining higher wages may encourage workers to become more efficient by improving their qualifications and contributing to their work to benefit from wage opportunities.

### 3.4. RESEARCH POPULATION

The study community consists of all employees in the telecommunications sector in Iraq. Due to the difficulty of conducting a comprehensive census of all individuals in the study community, the study used a sampling method to collect data.

### 3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The research used the following methods through SPSS software:

- Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the reliability of the study instrument.
- Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the internal consistency and validity of the study instrument and to explore the relationship between study variables.
- Ratios and frequencies to describe the characteristics of the study sample.
- Mean and standard deviation to describe the level of response of the study sample to the statements in the study instrument.
- Simple linear regression equation to measure the impact between study variables.

### 3.6. RESEARCH TOOL

The study utilized a questionnaire as the field research tool. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section included personal data. The second section comprised statements related to the strategic human resource management axis, consisting of 16 statements. The third section included statements related to the competitive advantage axis, consisting of 10 statements. A 5-point Likert scale was used to answer the questions related to the study axes.

**Table 1:** Response levels to phrases in the study tool

<b>Level</b>	<b>Degree</b>
<b>Very low</b>	1.00-1.79
<b>Low</b>	1.80-2.59
<b>Moderate</b>	2.60-3.39
<b>High</b>	3.40- 4.19
<b>Very high</b>	5.00-4.20

### 3.7. VALIDITY

**Table 2:** Correlation coefficients for the terms of the study tool

Paragraph	Correlation coefficient	Significance	Paragraph	Correlation coefficient	Significance	Paragraph	Correlation coefficient	Significance
<b>The axis of strategic human resource management</b>								
1	0.726**	0.000	7	0.729**	0.000	13	0.733**	0.000
2	0.759**	0.000	8	0.748**	0.000	14	0.729**	0.000
3	0.734**	0.000	9	0.748**	0.000	15	0.716**	0.000
4	0.698**	0.000	10	0.636**	0.000	16	0.711**	0.000
5	0.683**	0.000	11	0.593**	0.000	-----	-----	-----
6	0.652**	0.000	12	0.610**	0.000	-----	-----	-----
<b>Competitive advantage</b>								
1	0.794**	0.000	5	0.729**	0.000	9	0.691**	0.000
2	0.750**	0.000	6	0.730**	0.000	10	0.797**	0.000
3	0.771**	0.000	7	0.723**	0.000	-----	-----	-----
4	0.766**	0.000	8	0.708**	0.000	-----	-----	-----

It appears that all the statements in the study tool are statistically significant at 0.01, indicating that the tool has a high level of validity and is valid for the purposes of the study.

### 3.8. RELIABILITY

**Table 3:** Reliability of the research tool using Cronbach's alpha method

Axis	N	Cronbach's alpha
Human resource management	16	0.930
Competitive advantage	10	0.910
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.960</b>

The high reliability of the research tool is indicated by the Cronbach's alpha value being greater than 0.70.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.3. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS:

**Table 4:** Distribution of study sample individuals according to their characteristics

Personal characteristics	Categories	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	163	56.8
	Female	124	43.2
Age	20-30 years	96	33.4
	31-40 years	146	50.9
Educational Qualifications	Secondary	45	15.7
	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	89	31.0
	Postgraduate	167	58.2
Number of years of job experience	3 years or less	31	10.8
	3-less than 5 years	160	55.7
	5 years or more	53	18.5
The administrative level	Lower management	74	25.8
	Middle management	94	32.8
	Higher management	141	49.1

## 4.4. ANSWERS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## 4.4.1. RESEARCH QUESTION 1

**What is the level of application of strategic human resource management in Iraqi telecommunications companies?**

**Table 5:** Average, Standard Deviation, Agreement Degree, and Ranking of Strategic Human Resource Management Statements

Statements	Mean	Deviation	Arrangement	Agreement
Employees are recruited based on actual human resource needs.	3.679	0.997	12	High
Recruitment and selection of employees are based on objective criteria.	3.784	0.940	4	High
Recruitment and selection policies align with organizational goals.	3.770	0.998	6	High
Recruitment and selection procedures are clear and precise.	3.509	1.010	15	High
Human resource management establishes specific and clear performance evaluation criteria.	3.606	0.943	14	High
Human resource management transparently implements performance evaluation standards for all employees.	3.401	1.089	16	High
Human resource management is concerned with informing employees of all their rights, duties, and job responsibilities.	3.742	0.966	7	High
Human resource management is concerned with implementing regulations and laws for all employees without any exceptions.	3.620	0.949	13	High
Human resource management is concerned with providing the training programs needed by employees.	3.773	0.984	5	High
Training courses and programs are determined based on the actual needs of employees.	3.882	0.935	3	High
Human resource management encourages employees to participate in training courses and programs and provides them with rewards and incentives.	3.930	0.947	1	High
Human resource management enables employees to utilize all methods and means that contribute to increasing their experience and efficiency at work.	3.909	0.898	2	High
Human resource management is concerned with empowering work teams with sufficient authority to plan and execute assigned tasks.	3.700	0.901	9	High
Human resource management is concerned with providing a suitable climate and environment for cooperation among employees in task performance.	3.697	0.932	10	High



<b>Human resource management delegates employees with sufficient flexibility to carry out assigned tasks.</b>	3.707	0.952	8	<b>High</b>
---	-------	-------	---	-------------

It was found that the statement "Human resource management encourages employees to participate in training courses and programs and provides them with rewards and incentives" ranked first with a value of 3.930, while the statement "Human resource management transparently implements performance evaluation standards for all employees" ranked last with a value of 3.401. It was also found that all the statements were in the high agreement level, indicating a high level of strategic human resource management with a value of 3.749 and a standard deviation of 0.980. This answers the first question of the study.

#### 4.4.2. RESEARCH QUESTION 2

**What is the level of competitive advantage in Iraqi telecommunications companies?**

**Table 6:** Average, Standard Deviation, Agreement Degree, and Ranking of Competitive Advantage Statements

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Deviation</b>	<b>Arrangement</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
<b>The company relies on providing specific services in certain areas.</b>	3.679	0.997	12	<b>High</b>
<b>The company focuses on modern technology that aligns with customer needs and demands.</b>	3.606	0.943	14	<b>High</b>
<b>The company emphasizes continuous changes to develop services and products in light of market conditions.</b>	3.401	1.089	16	<b>High</b>
<b>The company distinguishes itself by offering new and different products and services compared to other companies.</b>	3.742	0.966	7	<b>High</b>
<b>The company is concerned with providing new services that respond to changes in customer needs and demands.</b>	3.620	0.949	13	<b>High</b>
<b>The company is committed to providing its services and products to customers at competitive prices.</b>	3.773	0.984	5	<b>High</b>
<b>The company strives to perform its tasks and services with higher accuracy, effectiveness, and efficiency than its competitors.</b>	3.882	0.935	3	<b>High</b>
<b>The company is focused on providing distinct and diverse services in its portfolio.</b>	3.930	0.947	1	<b>High</b>
<b>The company is interested in innovating services that help in competition and market sustainability.</b>	3.909	0.898	2	<b>High</b>
<b>The company offers new and innovative offers or services to stimulate its sales.</b>	3.700	0.901	9	<b>High</b>

Based on the rankings, the statement "The company is interested in providing new services that respond to changes in customer needs and demands" ranked first with a value of 3.784, while the statement "The company is interested in innovating services that help in competition and market sustainability" ranked last with a value of 3.401. It was also found that all the statements were at a high level of agreement, indicating a high level of competitive advantage with a value of 3.653 and a standard deviation of 0.967. This answers the second question of the study.

#### 4.4.3. RESEARCH QUESTION 3

**What is the relationship between strategic human resource management and achieving competitive advantage in Iraqi telecommunications companies**

**Table 6:** The impact of strategic human resource management in achieving competitive advantage

<b>Effect coefficient (B)</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Computed F-test</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (R)</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>1.410</b>	45.152**	2038.708**	0.937	0.877	0.000

\*\*With a statistical significance of 0.01, it is evident that there is a significant effect of strategic human resource management on achieving competitive advantage. There is a negative relationship between the variables, indicating that as the level of strategic human resource management increases by 1%, the achievement of competitive advantage increases by 1.410%. This answers the third question of the study.

**4. CONCLUSIONS**

- The level of strategic human resource management is high, with a value of 3.749 and a standard deviation of 0.980, answering the first question of the study.
- The level of competitive advantage is high, with a value of 3.653 and a standard deviation of 0.967, answering the second question of the study.
- There is a statistically significant effect of strategic human resource management on achieving competitive advantage, and there is a negative relationship between the variables. Increasing the level of strategic human resource management by 1% results in a 1.410% increase in achieving competitive advantage. This aligns with the findings of previous studies by Sadeqi (2022), Rizkallah (2017), and Hassan (2017).

**5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is necessary to work on maintaining a high level of strategic human resource management in the studied companies by providing all the requirements and methods that contribute to achieving it.
- Provide training programs and courses that enhance the capabilities of HR management staff in implementing the latest methods and strategies related to the field of work.
- Focus on maintaining a high level of competitiveness in the studied companies by providing all the methods that preserve it.

**REFERENCES**

1. Al-Aifawi, Fareeda, and Sahrawi, Ammara. (2017). "Effectiveness of Strategic Human Resource Management in Organizational Development: Reality and Perspectives." *Integration Journal*, Issue 1, pp. 78-99. Retrieved from <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/1358571>.
2. Al-Rashidi, Badr Awad Lazam Dhaifullah, Ahmed, Ahmed Ibrahim, and Shaalan, Abdulhamid Abdel-Fattah. (2019). "Competitive Advantage Approach and Strategies: An Analytical Study and an Integrative Vision." *Journal of Education*, Vol. 30, No. 120, pp. 388-405. Retrieved from <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/1013965>.
3. Hassan, Mohamed Mahmoud Saeed Mohamed. (2017). "Strategic Practices of Human Resource Management for Innovative Orientation and Their Role in Enhancing Competitive Advantage." *Scientific Journal of Business and Environmental Studies*, Vol. 8, Supplement, pp. 128-155. Retrieved from <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/890122>.
4. Mufaq, Suhaim. (2013). "The Contribution of Strategic Leadership in Achieving Competitive Advantage for the Organization." *Economic and Administrative Research*, Issue 14, pp. 293-315. Retrieved from <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/892247>.
5. Razzak Allah, Salma, and Mssak, Amina. (2017). "Strategic Human Resource Management and Its Role in Creating Competitive Advantage for Algerian Organizations." *Afaq Journal of Sciences*, Issue 7, pp. 304-315. Retrieved from <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/800450>.
6. Sadiqi, Khadra. (2022). "Strategic Human Resource Management as an Approach to Achieving Competitive Advantage in the Organization: A Case Study of Mobilis Telecommunications Company - Beshar." *Contemporary Economic Research*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 421-438. Retrieved from <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/1331056>.