

The Moderating Role of Human Resources Strategic Role in Human Resources Outsourcing Decision at Telecommunications Sector

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate and comprehend the moderated impact of the strategic function of human resources in the relationship between Asset Specificity and the decision to outsource human resources in Syria's telecommunications sector. The study seeks to analyse how the relationship between these two variables is influenced and how the presence of the strategic role of human resources can affect this relationship.

In order to analyze the intricate link between various components, this study used a multi-theoretical framework that incorporated the Transaction Cost Economics and the Resource-Based View theories. To do this, the researcher sent electronic questionnaires to human resources employees in Syrian telecoms companies. The researcher then conducted a thorough survey of the statistical population. A total of 150 questionnaires were found, which corresponds to a 62.5% response rate from the sample population. The researcher used hierarchical multiple regression analysis and the SPSS program to statistically test the hypotheses.

The extent of outsourcing human resources was found to be negatively impacted by asset specificity, according to the study. Additionally, it was discovered that the strategic role of human resources had a moderating effect, strengthening and intensifying the link between Asset Specificity and the degree of outsourcing and so boosting its explanatory power. Based on these findings, the report offered a number of suggestions for Syria's telecom industry. It is important for decision-makers to be aware of the level of asset specificity and how it affects outsourcing choices.

Keywords: : Human resources outsourcing (HRO), Human Resources strategic role (HRSR), human resources asset specificity, Hierarchical Multiple Regression, Transaction Cost Theory, Resource-Based View

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Introduction

The escalating competitive landscape and the accruing advantages resulting from the progression of superior organizational performance are attaining heightened significance in contemporary business environments. Outsourcing is regarded as one of the tools used by organizations to reinforce their core competencies and assign their resources effectively (Alzhrani, 2020). Enterprises participate in the act of outsourcing various functions, spanning from design, manufacturing, and product innovation to marketing and the final delivery of products to their ultimate consumers. The utilization of outsourcing permits a company to concentrate its efforts on its core business operations (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2005).

Prior investigation discloses an escalating flow of literary works concerning diverse endeavors and undertakings that could potentially be delegated by an organization. There exist widely recognized publications regarding the delegation of certain functions such as, internal auditing (Holkeri, 2020), accounting (Asatiani et al., 2019), banking services (Hanafizadeh & Ravasan, 2017, 2018), maintenance services (Suweero et al., 2017), information system (Berg & Stylianou, 2017), facility management (Gbadegesin & Babatunde, 2015).

Therefore, in addition to outsourcing other tasks, businesses are more tempted to outsource their human resources (HR) functions (Mishra et al., 2018; Nguyen & Chang, 2017). The inception of human resource outsourcing (HRO) is frequently attributed to the significant contract valued at US\$600 million that was signed between BP and Exult (Adler, 2003).

Human Resource Outsourcing (HRO) is typically described as the strategic choice to delegate HR functions, previously

handled internally, to external service providers (Delmotte & Sels, 2008). This involves the provision of HR services through long-term contractual agreements established between organizations and their service providers. In this arrangement, both the outsourcing firm and the service provider are anticipated to allocate resources to ensure favorable HRO results. Many of these reasons align with the outsourcing of other organizational functions. Notably, the pursuit of enhanced productivity, profitability, and expansion has compelled organizations to scrutinize their internal HR processes. This has led to a shift towards strategic outsourcing services, departing from discrete service models (Seth, 2011).

And The Degree of Outsourcing (OD), can be defined as the amount of outsourcing as indicated by percentage of budget outsourced and/or type and number of business services outsourced (Gilley et al., 2004). In terms of the degree of outsourcing of human resources, it is crucial for a company to distinguish between "core" and "noncore" activities and, as a result, to outsource those that have no bearing on its core competency and performance.

Finn (1999) proposes a fundamental categorization between HR activities as 'core' and 'non-core.' 'Core' activities encompass high-level strategic functions, HR policies, and line management duties such as performance appraisals and disciplinary actions. On the other hand, 'non-core' activities consist of specialized tasks like recruitment and outplacement, routine personnel administration including payroll and pension management, and providing professional HR advice, for instance, legal counsel related to employment regulations (Mishra et al., 2018).

Telecommunication companies commonly show a preference for outsourcing various HR functions, including recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, job design, compensation and rewards, employee benefits, strategic HR planning, and employee assistance or counseling (Mahmud et al., 2012).

Similar to the degree of human resources outsourcing, a critical concern when deciding to outsource HR is determining which HR activities to outsource. Organizations making this decision must take into account various factors (Lacity et al., 2017), including the characteristics of HR activities.

Transaction Cost Analysis (TCA) provides a robust framework for assessing decisions related to in-house production or outsourcing. In recent times, it has found widespread application in various industries to examine the selection of governance structures. TCA posits that rational decision-makers aim to reduce operational and transactional costs, with these costs being contingent on contextual factors (Tremblay et al., 2008).

The decision to make or buy is a central theme in the extensive body of outsourcing literature. One of the key inquiries within this domain has been whether the characteristics of the activity have an impact on the decision to outsource HR activities.

(Milgrom & Roberts, 1992) have pinpointed five attributes of business exchanges that substantially affect transaction costs: (1) the need to invest in transaction-specific assets; (2) the frequency of transactions; (3) the complexity and uncertainty of tasks; (4) the challenge of measuring performance; and (5) interdependence with other transactions.

The existing literature offers a plethora of activity characteristics that potentially affect the decision associated with

outsourcing human resources activities, such the asset specify required (Asatiani et al., 2019; Wan et al., 2019), activity complexity (Hassanain et al., 2015; Schneider & Sunyaev, 2016; Suweero et al., 2017; Tremblay et al., 2008), activity frequency (Asatiani et al., 2019), uncertainty (Asatiani et al., 2019; Schneider & Sunyaev, 2016; Wan et al., 2019), information intensity and need for customer contact (Asatiani et al., 2019), the activity competitive advantage (Espino-Rodríguez & Ramírez-Fierro, 2017; Schneider & Sunyaev, 2016), Variability of activities (Klaas et al., 1999; Tremblay et al., 2008), Performance ambiguity and Uniqueness of HR activities (Klaas et al., 1999; Tremblay et al., 2008), activity difficult to control (Hassanain et al., 2015), and other factors related to Characteristics of HR activities.

Two opposing perspectives on HR outsourcing are presented in the literature (Delmotte & Sels, 2008). The initial perspective looks at outsourcing as a chance for the internal HR division. This viewpoint makes it easier to pinpoint the essential tasks that a firm must carry out internally and contends that it should concentrate on its core capabilities while contracting out less important tasks (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

The second viewpoint sees outsourcing as a way to reduce HR costs. In this situation, downsizing or employee cutbacks in HR are equated with outsourcing, which at first glance appears to add little to the organization's core competencies. The primary motivation behind outsourcing is thought to be the pursuit of the greatest possible cost savings in the HRM sector. This viewpoint perceives HR outsourcing as a potential threat.

Outsourcing, which concentrates the initial view, creates time and resources for tactical and strategic HR contributions and enables a tighter emphasis on core

activities. In other words, this scenario presupposes that the strategic position of HRM benefits from the outsourcing of transactional and operational HR functions (Delmotte & Sels, 2008).

As per this perspective, companies with a stronger strategic orientation are inclined to outsource non-core HR functions more than organizations with a weaker strategic focus (Mishra et al., 2018).

A few studies concentrate on strategic involvement of Human Resources Management as a determinant to the degree of Human Resources Outsourcing (Klaas et al., 1999; Tremblay et al., 2008), some results indicate high correlation between the strategic HRM participation and the level of HR outsourcing (Nguyen & Chang, 2017). Additionally, (Sheehan & Cooper, 2011) emphasize the importance of strategic Human Resources Outsourcing in the decision to outsource HR, whether in developed or developing nations. This strategic role is likely to influence the relationship between the level of HR outsourcing and the characteristics of HR activities.

The strategic role of human resources (HR) plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between activity characteristics and the degree of HR outsourcing. Activity characteristics refer to the nature and complexity of HR functions being considered for outsourcing. The strategic role of HR involves aligning HR practices with the overall organizational strategy and goals. When HR takes on a strategic role, it assesses the impact of activity characteristics on outsourcing decisions. HR strategically evaluates which functions are best suited for outsourcing based on factors like cost-effectiveness, expertise required, and internal capacity. By moderating this relationship, HR ensures that the degree of HR outsourcing aligns with the organization's strategic

objectives. This strategic approach helps optimize the outsourcing decisions, ensuring that HR functions are effectively managed while leveraging the benefits of outsourcing where appropriate.

In this study, we focused on a specific characteristic of HR activities discussed in prior literature that we considered highly relevant for human resources studies: human asset specificity, as introduced in transaction cost economics theory (TCE).

There is scarcity of publications studying the human resource's strategic role in activity characteristics-outsourcing decision relationship. Therefore, there is a need for "more fine-grained" research on these relationships, as well as a better understanding of the interactions, compounding effects, and contradictory effects between activity characteristic and outsourcing of human resources, as well as how the strategic role of human resources affects this relationship.

The studies mentioned above have motivated us to delve into this unexplored area of human resource outsourcing. Therefore, our aim is to enhance and extend this research body by addressing these three research questions:

RQ1: What human resources activities are being outsourced by Syrian telecom companies?

RQ2: How does the level of outsourcing vary concerning human resources activity characteristics?

RQ3: How does the strategic role of human resources influence the level of outsourcing?

RQ4: How does the strategic role of human resources impact the relationship between activity characteristics and human resources outsourcing?

Consequently, the primary aim of the present study is to address the aforementioned research inquiries by constructing a theoretical framework. The proposed hypotheses will be assessed

using robust statistical methods, specifically Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

2.1 human resources outsourcing

Outsourcing has played a role in corporate operations since the 1990s. While its precise definition may vary based on the business context, outsourcing fundamentally entails an organization delegating its internal operational functions to an external, independent service provider through a sustained contractual arrangement, and the degree of outsourcing can be defined by 'The amount of outsourcing as indicated by percentage of budget outsourced and/or type and number of business services outsourced' (Gilley et al., 2004).

Unlike alliances, partnerships, and joint ventures, outsourcing is characterized by the straightforward transfer of resources from the provider to the host, without any profit-sharing or mutual contribution involved, as outlined by (Belcourt, 2006).

There are major theories that can be linked to the outsourcing practice that help in understanding the underlying reasoning of specific business management practices, strategic decisions, and play an important role in demonstrating strategies and solutions used in business.

Outsourcing is frequently associated with transaction cost theory (Williamson, 1979). The Transaction Cost Theory (TCT) model compares the expenses incurred by internal production with market purchases. According to Williamson, in order to comply with cost-conscious corporate governance policies, the option of buying should be evaluated in terms of pricing because it may give cheaper options than preparing internally. (Klaas et al., 2001) emphasized this approach, claiming that the majority of the

HR outsourcing research relied on Williamson's TCE model.

In the initial phases, human resources outsourcing (HRO) entails organizations enlisting the services of a third party to handle HR functions such as recruitment, benefits administration, communication, benefits plan design, retirement services, and HR record-keeping, as noted by (Nguyen & Chang, 2017). (Klaas et al., 2001) delineate four categories of HR activities commonly outsourced: "generalist activities, transactional activities, human capital activities, and recruitment and selection". These HR practices can also be categorized into core and non-core activities (Mishra et al., 2018). Notably, in the telecom sector, many companies express interest in outsourcing activities like recruiting and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, job design, compensation and rewards, employee benefits, strategic HR planning, and employee assistance and counseling (Mahmud et al., 2012).

The level of Human Resources Outsourcing (HRO) varies depending on the scope and depth of outsourcing within an organization. HRO can be implemented at different levels, ranging from selective outsourcing of specific HR functions to comprehensive outsourcing of the entire HR department. At a lower level, organizations may outsource certain activities such as payroll processing, benefits administration, or recruitment. At a higher level, organizations may opt for complete HR process outsourcing, where an external provider handles all HR functions. The level of HRO chosen by an organization depends on factors such as cost-effectiveness, expertise required, strategic focus, Activity Characteristics, and internal capacity. A well-planned and executed level of HRO can provide benefits such as increased efficiency,

access to specialized expertise, improved compliance, and cost savings.

2.2 *Asset specificity*

Asset specificity refers to an investment made in a single transaction that has a high value for that transaction but is not “redeployable” for another transaction or has minimal value in another transaction (Williamson, 1979).

Williamson classified asset Specificity into several categories, including site specificity (e.g., a natural resource in the local environment, moveable at a high cost), physical asset specificity (e.g., special computer system design for a company), human asset specificity, and dedicated asset.

Human asset specificity is ‘The degree to which a human asset can be redeployed to alternative uses and by alternative users without sacrifice of productive value’ (Alvarez-Suescun, 2010).

According to TCE theory, when an organization has high levels of human asset specificity, it may be less inclined to outsource HR functions. The rationale behind this is that the specific skills and knowledge possessed by the organization's workforce may not be easily transferable to other firms or external vendors. As a result, outsourcing these HR functions may lead to a higher level of asset specificity and increase transaction costs, as the firm would need to invest in retraining or finding a vendor with similar specialized skills.

On the other hand, if the human asset specificity is low, meaning the skills and knowledge of the workforce are more generic and transferable, the organization may be more willing to outsource certain HR functions. In this case, outsourcing can be a viable option to reduce HR-related transaction costs, improve efficiency, and gain access to specialized expertise.

According to (Lepak & Snell, 1998), from the standpoint of the firm's resource-based perspective, as activities become less unique, organizations are more inclined to seek short-term solutions for their execution. Additionally, as the value of HR activities decreases, they progressively become less central to the firm's competitive advantage.

In accordance with the arguments of transaction cost theory and with the theory of resources, (Espino-Rodríguez & Lai, 2014; Klaas et al., 2001; Tremblay et al., 2008) found that asset specificity was positively and significantly related to HRO. and against TCE, (Asatiani et al., 2019) found that asset specificity was negatively and significantly related to HRO. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis H1: Asset specificity negatively influences the level of human resources outsourcing at the Syrian telecom sector.

2.3 human resources' strategic role

Strategic human resources management (HRM) is viewed as a “planned structure of human resources being used by a firm and other activities that are targeted towards achieving the organizational goals.” (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). The idea in this definition of strategic HRM is the ability of a firm to influence its performance with the management of its human resources and also combine with other activities to make it a system, rather than a single entity at a strategic level. Also, Strategic Human Resource Management (HRM) can be defined as: “the pattern of planned HR deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals” (Wright & McMahan, 1992). In recent years, there have been repeated calls for HR to become more of a business partner or play a more strategic role that focuses on organization-level performance (Klaas et

al., 2001). HR managers who are more strategically involved are likely to direct their attention toward HR activities that have strategic relevance, are central to organizational performance, and require a deep understanding of the firm's practices and culture. Consequently, companies aim to elevate HR to a critical and strategic component of the value chain, and to achieve this, they may outsource some HR services in order to free up HR staff to work at a more strategic level (Woodall et al., 2009). According to Klaas et al. (2001), strategically focused managers may eliminate in-house tasks that are less HR-intensive, such as regular tasks like payroll and specialist tasks like training. In contrast, less strategically oriented managers may choose to keep all HR functions in-house.

In line with the findings of (Klaas et al., 2001; Nguyen & Chang, 2017; Tremblay et al., 2008) which suggest that when HR managers are perceived as playing a strategic role in the organization, there is a greater tendency to rely on outsourcing. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H2: The strategic role of human resources positively influences the the level of human resources outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) has consistently held its place as one of the most influential theories in the realm of strategic human resource management. Rooted in strategic management literature, the RBV has served as a framework for explaining why HR systems can confer a competitive edge. Although single HR practices are not capable of delivering a sustained competitive advantage, mainly because they can be readily identified and replicated, HR practices as a whole can encompass causal ambiguity and social complexity, rendering them challenging

for competitors to duplicate (Boon et al., 2018).

Although the idea of outsourcing seems rational in terms of enabling HRM to concentrate on its strategic role, there are inherent risks. As pointed out by (Adler, 2003), as organizations become increasingly dependent on a particular HRM supplier for activities like recruitment and selection, training and development, or performance management, there is a risk of eroding internal knowledge and competence in these areas. This could potentially result in the loss of any future strategic advantages associated with these HRM activities. Consequently, some organizations opt to retain these activities in-house, regardless of factors like human asset specificity, transaction frequency, or uncertainty.

The strategic role of human resources (HR) plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between activity characteristics and the degree of HR outsourcing. Activity characteristics refer to the nature, frequency, asset specificity, and complexity of HR functions being considered for outsourcing. The strategic role of HR involves aligning HR practices with the overall organizational strategy and goals. When HR takes on a strategic role, it assesses the impact of activity characteristics on outsourcing decisions. HR strategically evaluates which functions are best suited for outsourcing based on factors like cost-effectiveness, expertise required, and internal capacity. By moderating this relationship, HR ensures that the degree of HR outsourcing aligns with the organization's strategic objectives. This strategic approach helps optimize the outsourcing decisions, ensuring that HR functions are effectively managed while leveraging the benefits of outsourcing where appropriate. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H3: The negative impact of asset specificity on the level of human resources outsourcing is moderated by the strategic role of human resources at the Syrian telecom sector.

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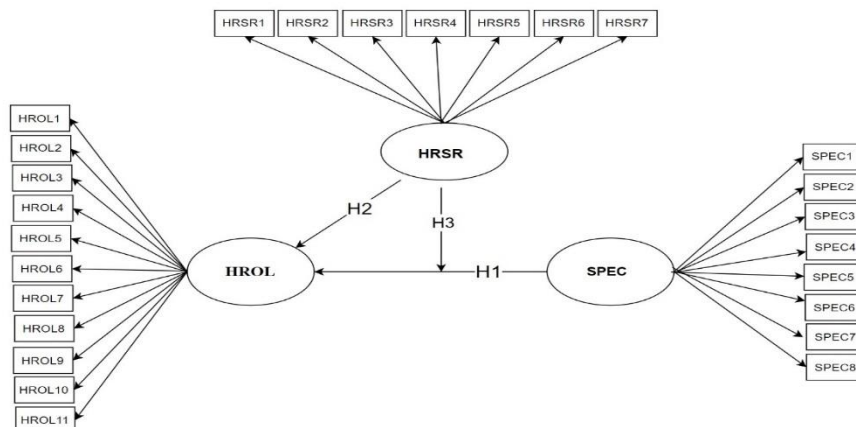
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The strategic role of human resources (HR) plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between activity characteristics and the degree of HR outsourcing. Activity characteristics refer to the nature, frequency, asset specificity, and complexity of HR functions being considered for outsourcing. The strategic role of HR involves aligning HR practices with the overall organizational strategy and goals. When HR takes on a strategic role, it assesses the impact of activity characteristics on outsourcing decisions. HR strategically evaluates which functions are best suited for outsourcing based on factors like cost-effectiveness, expertise required, and internal capacity. By moderating this relationship, HR ensures that the degree of HR outsourcing aligns with the organization's strategic objectives. This strategic approach helps optimize the outsourcing decisions, ensuring that HR functions are effectively managed while leveraging the benefits of outsourcing where appropriate. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

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3. Research Method

Figure 1 Study hypothesized model



A total of three scales were employed in our survey questionnaire, as follows: one scale representing asset specificity, and one scale for human resources’ strategic role, along with one scale for the dependent variable of level of HR outsourcing. These scales were administered to human resources departments within a three telecom companies. For all scales, a five-point response scale was adopted to capture participants’ answers.

3.1 Asset Specificity Scale (SPEC)

To assess asset specificity, we developed a scale, consists of 8 items measure the employees’ perception of the level of asset specificity for HR processes in the organization. It is the answer to the questions: “On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicates “Strongly Agree.”

Table1: Asset Specificity Scale (SPEC) items

Item	Source
Our human resources processes are customized to meet the unique needs and requirements of our organization.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
Our HR policies and procedures are tailored to align with the strategic objectives of our organization.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
Our HR policies and procedures are tailored to align with the strategic objectives of our organization.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
The software and technology used in our human resources department are specialized to suit our HR management needs.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
Our recruitment and selection processes are designed to select candidates who fit our organization's culture and values.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
We have developed HR practices that are different and distinctive from standard practices in other organizations.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
The performance appraisal system in our organization is designed to evaluate employees based on specific job criteria.	(Klaas et al., 2001)
We continuously evaluate and update our HR practices to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.	(Klaas et al., 2001)

3.2 human resources’ strategic role scale (HRSR)

we developed a scale, consists of 7 items measure the employees’ perception of human resources’ strategic role in organization’s strategy and decisions.

Respondents were asked to answer on a five-point scale, where 1 indicates “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicates “Strongly Agree.” To the next questions:

Table 2: human resources’ strategic role scale (HRSR) items

Item	Source
HR professionals in our organization have a clear understanding of the overall strategic goals and objectives.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)
HR initiatives are aligned with the organization's strategic priorities.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)
HR actively participates in strategic planning discussions and decision-making processes.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)
HR's performance is regularly evaluated based on its contribution to achieving organizational objectives.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)
HR is instrumental in attracting and retaining top talent to meet the organization's strategic talent needs.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)
HR collaborates with other departments to ensure effective implementation of strategic changes.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)
HR provides leadership development programs that align with the organization's strategic leadership needs.	(Armstrong & Taylor, 2017)

3.3 level of outsourcing scale (HROL)

We assessed the level of outsourcing using a scale measuring the degree of extent of HRM outsourcing. We adopted items from existing studies. Items measuring level of HR outsourcing were adopted from a study by (Sheehan & Cooper, 2011). Respondents were asked to identify on a five-point scale 1 (not at all outsourced), 5 (completely outsourced) to what extent a range of HRM activities

were outsourced. The following eleven HRM activities were listed: training and development, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, performance-related pay, employee relations, pay administration, HRM information systems (HRIS) and change management.

Table3: level of outsourcing scale (HROL) items

Item	Source
recruitment and selection outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
background checks and screening outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
outplacement services outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
training and development outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
payroll processing outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
HR technology and systems outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
employee benefits administration outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
performance management outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
HR compliance and legal support outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)
employee relations and conflict resolution outsourcing level	(Sheehan & Cooper, 2011)

3.4 Participants and procedure

The statistical population comprises all human resources employees, totaling 240 individuals. A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed. Of the 240 questionnaires, 90 questionnaires were not retrieved, resulting in a total of 150 usable questionnaires and the total response rate was 62.5%.

3.5 Data analysis

The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis. The following statistical methods were employed:

1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient: Utilized to verify the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire.
2. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient: Employed to ensure the stability of the questionnaire.
3. Means and Standard Deviations: Used to calculate the average values and standard deviations for answering the research questions.
4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): Applied to study the effect of the

independent variable on the dependent variable in testing hypotheses.

5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis: Used to study the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable while accounting for the presence of a moderator variable.

These statistical methods were used to analyze and interpret the research data, enabling the research to draw valid conclusions and insights.

4. Results

4.1. Scale validity

Prior to running hierarchal regression analysis, several tests were conducted to check the consistency of the scales, reliability and appropriateness of the items. Verifying the internal structure validity of a survey aims to evaluate the degree of consistency between the survey's items and their ability to consistently measure the same concept or dimension. We conducted (Pearson coefficients) between the scores of each item and the scores of the construct it belongs to, as shown in table (4).

Table 4: Pearson coefficients

asset specificity		human resources' strategic role		level of HR outsourcing	
item	Pearson coefficients	item	Pearson coefficients	item	Pearson coefficients
1	.666**	9	.863**	16	.820**
2	.858**	10	.847**	17	.843**
3	.832**	11	.416**	18	.530**
4	.804**	12	.603**	19	.837**
5	.850**	13	.881**	20	.808**
6	.734**	14	.833**	21	.663**
7	.865**	15	.827**	22	.739**
8	.818**			23	.728**
				24	.729**
				25	.538**
				26	.375*

The information from the preceding table indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficients between the scores of the items and their respective construct scores were all statistically significant at either the 0.05 or 0.01 level. The values of these coefficients for the first construct varied between 0.666 and 0.865, for the second construct between 0.416 and 0.881, and for the third construct between 0.375 and 0.843, Therefore, the survey demonstrates

a suitable level of internal consistency and achieves appropriate indicators for its structural validity.

4.2. Scale reliability

To measure and assess the internal consistency or reliability of a set of items that are intended to measure the same underlying construct, we conducted Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as shown in table no. (5).

Table 5: Cronbach's alpha coefficient

scale	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Item counts
asset specificity	.842	8
human resources' strategic role	.837	7
level of HR outsourcing	.861	11

From the previous table, it is evident that the values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient were high. The value for the first construct (Asset Specificity) was 0.842, for the second construct (human resources' strategic role) was 0.837, and for the third construct (level of HR outsourcing) was 0.861. These values indicate high reliability for both constructs. Consequently, the survey exhibits high indicators of stability.

4.3 Testing Research Hypotheses

To test our first hypotheses (H1), The utilization of a simple linear regression model investigated how the independent variable (asset specificity) correlated to the dependent variable (the level of HR outsourcing). The outcomes were presented in the following table:

Table 6: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of asset specificity on the level of HR outsourcing

Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.		
1	.710	.504	150.473	.000		
Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	7.054	.343		20.570	.000
	asset specificity	-1.142-	.093		-12.267-	.000

Based on the preceding table 6, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Correlation Coefficient (0.710): This value indicates a robust correlation between “asset specificity” and “the level of HR outsourcing.” To put it differently, when “asset specificity” increases, the “level of HR outsourcing” tends to decrease, and vice versa.

R Square (0.504): This value implies that “asset specificity” accounts for approximately 50.4% of the variation in “the level of HR outsourcing”. This implies that “asset specificity” plays a significant role in explaining a considerable portion of the changes observed in “the level of HR outsourcing.”

In summary, there exists a pronounced inverse relationship between “the level of HR outsourcing” and “asset specificity.” Notably, “asset specificity” elucidates a substantial proportion (50.4%) of the fluctuations witnessed in “the level of HR outsourcing.”

Consequently, there is a significant impact of (asset specificity) on (level of HR outsourcing). The simple linear regression model is effective in representing the relationship between the variables and can be employed for predicting the behavior of the dependent variable.

The information from table (3) highlights a noteworthy influence of the Coefficients in the regression equation (asset specificity) on the variable (level of HR outsourcing). This suggests that the significance levels of the constants can indeed have a meaningful impact on the variable of interest, contractual performance. The relationship between these variables can be clarified using the equation:

$$\text{level of HR outsourcing} = 7.045 - 1.142 \times \text{Asset Specificity}$$

This equation serves to predict the values of contractual performance based on the values of asset specificity. Interpreting this equation indicates that a one-unit increase in asset specificity results in a decrease of (1.142) in (level of HR outsourcing) in the opposite direction. This observation aligns with the robust inverse relationship detected through correlation coefficients and the effects of the constants.

To test the second hypotheses (H2), The utilization of a simple linear regression model investigated how the moderator variable (human resources’ strategic role) correlated to the dependent variable (the level of HR outsourcing). The outcomes were presented in the following table:

Table 7: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of human resources’ strategic role on the level of HR outsourcing

Model	R	R Square	F	Sig.		
1	.676	.457	124.796	.000		
Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	6.615	.337		19.610	.000
	HR strategic role	-1.150-	.103	-.676-	-11.171-	.000

Based on the preceding table 7, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Correlation Coefficient (-0.676): This value indicates a robust negative correlation between “the level of HR outsourcing” and “human resources’ strategic role.” In simpler terms, when “human resources’ strategic role” increases, “the level of HR outsourcing” tends to decrease, and vice versa.

Coefficient of Determination (0.457): This value suggests that approximately 45.7% of the variance in “the level of HR outsourcing” can be explained by “human resources’ strategic role.” This implies that “human resources’ strategic role” plays a significant role in explaining a substantial portion of the observed changes in “the level of HR outsourcing.”

A significance level (p-value) of 0.000, being much smaller than the conventional threshold (0.05), indicates a highly statistically significant outcome. This implies that the observed differences are unlikely to have occurred by random chance and, therefore, hold substantial meaning.

Impact of Human Resources’ Strategic Role: As a consequence of the low p-value, In summary, it can be deduced that the "strategic role of human resources" significantly affects the "level of HR outsourcing." In

simpler terms, the extent to which HR activities are outsourced is substantially influenced by the strategic role played by the human resources department.

The data presented in Table (4) underscores a significant impact of the coefficients within the regression equation, particularly pertaining to “human resources’ strategic role,” on the “level of HR outsourcing” variable. This implies that the significance levels of these coefficients carry meaningful weight in influencing the variable of interest, which is contractual performance. The relationship between these variables can be elucidated using the following equation:

The level of HR outsourcing = 6.76 – 1.150 × human resources’ strategic role.

This equation aids in predicting level of HR outsourcing values based on human resources’ strategic role values. Interpreting this equation reveals that a one-unit increase in human resources’ strategic role leads to a decrease of (1.150) in the “level of HR outsourcing,” with this decrease occurring in the opposite direction. This observation aligns with the robust inverse correlation detected through correlation coefficients and the impacts of the constants.

To test our final hypothesis (H3), the Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis was employed to assess the impact of asset specificity on the level of HR outsourcing while accounting

for the moderating role of human resources' strategic role as a moderated variable. This is demonstrated in the following table:

Table 8: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of human resources' strategic role as moderator

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Model 1			Model 2		
		β	t	Sig	β	t	Sig
level of HR outsourcing	asset specificity	-1.142	-12.267	.000	-----		
	asset specificity* human resources' strategic role	-----			-1.292	-21.672	.000
	R	.710			.739		
	R ²	.504			.547		
	F	150.473			88.651		
	Sig (F)	.000			.000		

As shown in Table 8 and following an analysis of hierarchical multiple regression based on two models, the outcomes of the initial model revealed the influence of the variable “asset specificity” on the level of HR outsourcing. The coefficient of correlation stood at (0.710) within the first model, signifying a robust and inverse correlation. The coefficient of determination (R²) reached (0.504), demonstrating that “asset specificity” might explain around 50.4% of the variance in the level of HR outsourcing. The value of the F-statistic was recorded as (150.473) with a significance level (Sig = 0.000), suggesting that the regression model adequately represented the connection between the variables. The impact coefficient (β) was calculated as (-1.142), which implied that a single-unit escalation in asset specificity led to a

reduction of (1.142) in the degree of external contracting.

Regarding the second model, the adjusted variable “strategic role of human resources” was incorporated into the regression analysis. The correlation coefficient value escalated to (0.739) in the second model, maintaining its nature as a strong inverse correlation. The coefficient of determination (R²) reached (0.547), implying that the interaction between “asset specificity” and “strategic role of human resources” accounted for 54.7% of the variation in HR outsourcing level.

This displayed a rise of (4.3%) when compared to the initial model. The value of the F-statistic was computed as (88.651) with a significance level (Sig = 0.000), reinforcing the adequacy of the regression model in portraying the connection between the variables. The effect coefficient (β) was

determined as (-0.545), and the associated t-value stood at (-21.672), both demonstrating significance at the (0.000) significance level. These findings underscore the noteworthy role of the adjusted variable “strategic role of human resources” in impacting the “relationship between asset specificity and the level of HR outsourcing”.

In conclusion, the hypothesis is accepted: There is indeed an influence of asset specificity on the level of HR outsourcing, while accounting for the presence of the strategic role of human resources.

5 Discussion

I. Our analysis sheds light on the intricate “relationship between asset specificity and the level of human resources (HR) outsourcing” within the Syrian telecom sector.

Hypothesis (H1): There is a negative impact of asset specificity on the level of human resources outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector.

Our findings support the hypothesis, revealing a statistically significant negative impact of asset specificity on the level of HR outsourcing. This indicates that telecom companies operating within the Syrian context, where assets are specialized and tailored to specific functions, are less likely to engage in high levels of HR outsourcing.

Asset specificity refers to the uniqueness of assets and resources that are dedicated to specific tasks or functions. In the context of HR outsourcing, high asset specificity suggests that organizations possess highly specialized HR capabilities, systems, or processes that are closely aligned with their core operations. Our results suggest that these specialized assets act as a deterrent to extensive HR

outsourcing. Organizations with specific assets may be concerned that outsourcing HR functions could compromise their control over these assets or lead to a loss of competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the presence of high asset specificity indicates that the organization has invested resources in developing internal HR capabilities that are tailored to its unique needs. In such cases, outsourcing might not align with the organization's strategy of retaining control over these valuable assets, even if it means sacrificing some potential cost savings or efficiency gains.

The negative impact of asset specificity on HR outsourcing levels underscores the intricate balance organizations in the Syrian telecom sector must navigate between capitalizing on external expertise and preserving their specialized internal capabilities. The findings emphasize that asset specificity serves as a contextual constraint that shapes the outsourcing decisions of telecom companies in this sector.

It's important to acknowledge that the negative impact observed does not imply a one-size-fits-all approach. Different organizations may have varying degrees of asset specificity and strategic orientations, leading to nuanced decisions regarding the extent of HR outsourcing.

Future research could delve deeper into the specific types of assets that are most affected by asset specificity and explore strategies that organizations employ to maintain a balance between the benefits of outsourcing and the need to retain control over specialized assets.

II. The analysis of our data offers valuable insights into the connection between the strategic role of human

resources (HR) and the extent of HR outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector

Hypothesis(H2): There is a positive impact of the strategic role of human resources on the level of human resources outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector.

Contrary to our initial hypothesis, the results reveal a statistically significant negative relationship between the strategic role of HR and the level of HR outsourcing. This unexpected finding challenges the conventional assumption that organizations with a more strategic HR orientation would be more likely to outsource their HR functions.

The negative impact identified in our study suggests that companies in the Syrian telecom sector that prioritize a strategic approach to HR management are inclined to minimize their reliance on external outsourcing partners for HR functions. This can be attributed to several factors. Organizations that perceive HR functions as strategic assets integral to their core competencies may be hesitant to outsource these functions due to concerns about losing control, confidentiality, or the potential impact on overall organizational performance. In such cases, the strategic role of HR may drive companies to retain direct control over HR processes to maintain alignment with strategic goals and ensure the protection of sensitive information.

Furthermore, organizations with a strong emphasis on cultivating internal HR expertise may view outsourcing as counterproductive to building internal capabilities. As a result, the negative relationship observed suggests that a strategic HR role encourages companies to develop and retain in-house HR skills and functions rather

than seeking external outsourcing arrangements.

These findings challenge traditional assumptions about the relationship between strategic HR management and outsourcing practices. They underscore the need to consider the nuanced ways in which strategic HR orientation can impact outsourcing decisions and organizational dynamics within the Syrian telecom sector.

It's important to recognize that while the results show a negative relationship, further investigation is needed to better understand the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that contribute to this unexpected pattern. Future research could delve deeper into the specific reasons why strategic HR orientation leads to decreased HR outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector.

III. Our analysis offers crucial insights into the complex interplay between the strategic role of human resources (HR), asset specificity, and the level of HR outsourcing within the Syrian telecom sector.

Hypothesis (H3): The negative impact of asset specificity on the level of human resources outsourcing is moderated by the strategic role of human resources in the Syrian telecom sector.

Our findings support the hypothesis, revealing a moderated negative impact of the strategic role of HR on the “relationship between asset specificity and the level of HR outsourcing”. This nuanced interaction underscores that the extent to which asset specificity affects HR outsourcing decisions is contingent upon the strategic orientation of the HR function within the organization.

When considering the negative impact of asset specificity on HR outsourcing, organizations with a

strong strategic HR role exhibit a more pronounced effect. In these organizations, the presence of specialized and specific assets serves as a stronger deterrent to outsourcing HR functions. This is because a strategic HR orientation places higher emphasis on retaining control over specialized assets that are intricately linked to the organization's core operations and competitive advantage.

Conversely, organizations with a weaker strategic HR orientation may find it easier to outsource certain HR functions, even in the presence of asset specificity. These organizations might be more inclined to prioritize cost savings and operational efficiency over the retention of specialized assets.

The moderation effect highlighted in our study signifies the importance of aligning HR strategy with organizational goals and contextual factors. Organizations need to consider both their strategic HR orientation and the nature of their specialized assets when making decisions about HR outsourcing.

1. Conclusion:

In conclusion, our comprehensive analysis has illuminated the intricate dynamics surrounding asset specificity, the strategic role of human resources (HR), and the level of HR outsourcing within the Syrian telecom sector. The findings provide valuable insights that challenge conventional assumptions and emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of these relationships.

Firstly, our study confirmed the negative impact of asset specificity on the level of HR outsourcing, underscoring the delicate balance telecom companies in Syria must strike between leveraging external expertise and preserving specialized internal capabilities. It revealed that

organizations with highly specific assets tend to be cautious about outsourcing HR functions, fearing a potential compromise of control and competitive advantage.

Contrary to expectations, the analysis uncovered a surprising negative relationship between the strategic role of HR and the extent of HR outsourcing. This challenges conventional wisdom, suggesting that organizations prioritizing a strategic HR approach are more likely to retain HR functions in-house. The study proposed that strategic HR orientation aligns with concerns about control, confidentiality, and overall organizational performance, leading companies to resist external outsourcing.

Moreover, our investigation into the interaction between asset specificity and the strategic role of HR revealed a moderated negative impact. This nuanced finding highlights that the influence of asset specificity on HR outsourcing decisions is contingent upon the strength of the strategic orientation of the HR function within the organization. Organizations with a robust strategic HR orientation experience a more pronounced effect, emphasizing the need for alignment between HR strategy and organizational goals.

Future Directions:

Building on these insights, future research should delve deeper into specific types of assets most affected by asset specificity and explore strategies organizations employ to maintain a balance between the benefits of outsourcing and the need to retain control over specialized assets. Additionally, understanding the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors contributing to the unexpected negative relationship between strategic

HR orientation and HR outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector requires further investigation.

Further exploration is also warranted to uncover the specific reasons why strategic HR orientation leads to decreased HR outsourcing in this sector. Analyzing how organizational culture, industry dynamics, and external market conditions shape these relationships will provide a more comprehensive understanding of HR outsourcing decisions.

Overall, the findings from this study lay the groundwork for a more nuanced comprehension of the factors influencing HR outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector. Future research endeavors can build on this foundation to inform strategic decision-making and organizational practices in the dynamic landscape of HR management and outsourcing.

2. Acknowledgement:

While our study contributes valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The findings are specific to the Syrian telecom sector and may not generalize to other industries or regions. Future research could broaden the scope by considering other sectors and cultural contexts, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the moderating effects identified in this study.

Additionally, exploring the role of other contextual factors, such as the regulatory environment and organizational culture, could provide a more comprehensive view of the decision-making processes related to HR outsourcing in the Syrian telecom sector.

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