

Araştırma Makalesi

Küçük ve Orta Ölçekli İşletmelerdeki KOBİ İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi Sorunları ve Uygulamaları: Kuzey Londradaki Türk KOBİler¹

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Öz

Türk toplumu, Londra'ya göçlerini takiben yoğun olarak iş ve ticaret hayatına atılmış ancak eleman yönetimi konusunda yeterli gerekliliği ve profesyonelliği sağlayamamışlardır. Bu çalışma Kuzey Londra'da bulunan küçük ve orta ölçekli işletmelerin insan kaynakları yönetimine bakış açısını ve önlerindeki potansiyel engelleri araştırmaktadır. Çalışma süresince 12 Türk firma sahibiyle söhbetsel görüşmeler yapılmış ve tümevarımsal araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak, elde edilen bulgular tematik analiz yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Öne çıkan belirgin sonuçlar genel olarak; finansal masraflar, sosyokültürel yapı ve potansiyel Türk insan kaynakları uzmanı eksikliğinin Kuzey Londradaki Türk işletmelerini genellikle resmi olmayan eleman yönetimine itmesidir. Daha kapsamlı bir bölgede yapılacak başka bir araştırma, örneğin bütün Birleşik Krallık yada diğer Avrupa başkentleri gibi, göçmen Türk toplumunda insan kaynakları yönetimi sorununu anlamaya daha yakından bir ışık tutacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuzey Londra, Türk/ Kürt Göçmen İşverenler, Sosyokültürel Yapı, İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Eleman Yönetimi.

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Research Article

HRM Issues and Practices in Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs): Turkish SMEs in North London

Abstract

Despite massive involvement in trading and businesses since they first immigrated to the UK, Turkish Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) in London fail to comply with formalised human resources (HR) practices in their organisations. This is the study of Turkish migrants' SMEs in North London, and the purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers regarding professional formalised HR practices and the tendency of the informal approach to employee management. During the research, the inductive qualitative research method was employed through semi-structured interviews, and they were analysed by thematic analysis. This study included only Turkish SMEs in North London, with 12 participants. In fact, future comprehensive research in a greater area will be a better impact on understanding the issue, such as a study in the UK or other Europe capitals. Informal employee management is well common with Turkish SMEs in North London. Although employers are not opposed to formalising their HR practices via working with HR practitioners, financial cost and socio-cultural structure are the strongest barriers to formalised HRM.

Keywords: Turkish/ Kurdish SMEs, Socio-cultural Background, HR Practices, Employee Management, Immigrants.

1. Introduction

European Commission (EC) defined Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) as “enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million” (2020, p. 3). Most economies are heavily benefitting from SMEs. In the UK, 99.3% of the total business population is made by an estimated 5.94 million small businesses employing less than fifty people (BIS, 2020 cited in Razzak et al., 2021, pp. 47-67). At the same time, the EC (2020) revealed that SMEs are having difficulties with structural barriers regarding management skills and the inability to adapt to the labour market. Altinay (2008) addressed that owners’ values, personalities, and backgrounds are a strong influence in determining employee management practices in SMEs. Employers’ direct contact with employees and their effort to maintain the family-based culture at work increase employees’ tendency to develop informal relationships with owners and favoured managers. (Biloslavo & Lombardi, 2021, pp. 1747-1774). Informal recruitment and selection process (Crowley Henry et al., 2021, pp. 145-165) via personal connections or word-of-mouth (Kleplic, 2019, pp. 14–26) increase the risk of absence of a permanent HR department because employees may reject working with professionals (Marlow et al., 2010, pp. 954-966). Similarly, justice theory (Lind & Tyler, 1988 cited in Tzabbar et al., 2017, pp. 134-148) addressed that informality rules the shape and structure of small firms. For example, promoting from within in small firms might reflect favouring relatives or friends rather than the selection of the best person for the job (Tzabbar et al., 2017, pp. 134-148). These are some of the elements affecting HRM practices in SMEs (Crowley Henry et al., 2021, pp. 145-165). Poor job description and lack of job design force employees to do extra duties than originally assigned (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, pp. 295–323).

Meanwhile, migrant entrepreneurs’ structural conditions, such as their individual characteristics, ethnic resources, and cultural factors, trigger SMEs’ unfortunate circumstances (Tolciu, 2011, pp. 409-427). In terms of the Turkish/ Kurdish migrant community in London, Karan (2019) underlined that there is literature based on the Turkish community in London from the sociocultural perspective. However, their business practices are given minimal consideration, and the Turkish community in London is an under-researched area. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyse the importance of HR implementations in Turkish SMEs in North London for better-managed HR practices, to fill the gap and contribute to a better understanding of Turkish employers’ current business and employee management approaches to formalised HRM, and possible issues and challenges related to socio-cultural background. This study will be looking for the answers for:

- What HR solutions are adopted by Turkish SMEs in North London to replace the absence of formalised HR practices?
- What are the challenges Turkish SMEs in North London face while implementing HR practices?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of adopting particular practices?
- Does socio-cultural background affect organisational management?

This paper is organised as follows; the next chapter discusses formalised HR practices, the barriers causing Turkish SMEs in North London to avoid formalised HR practices and the approach of Turkish migrants to organisational management. Third, the methodology presented the qualitative approach adopted for the data collection and analysis. In the fourth section, findings are presented under four main themes and followed by sub-themes. Fifth concludes this research with a brief chapter. The final chapter reveals the limitations that I faced during this research.

2. Formalised HR Practices

2.1. Organisational Size

Although contingency theory argued that it is not clear how the effect size of HRM practices varies across different size companies (Delery & Doty, 1996, pp. 802-835), Nguyen and Bryant (2004 cited in Sheehan, 2014) believed that there is a positive relationship between the use of formal HRM practices and firm size. It could be a strong indicator for SMEs regarding the in-house HR department. Hence, the more an SME grows, the more formalised HRM policies they will have (Crowley Henry et al., 2021, pp. 145-165) because they move to professional and structured management with regulations and policies leading to a need to work with in-house HR department (Psychogios et al., 2016, pp. 1-38). Whilst the size restriction impact HR decisions, it is not the only element to determine HRM, but also external structural factors and internal dynamics shape HRM practices in SMEs (Harney & Dundon, 2006, pp. 48-73).

Contingency theory takes organisational size as an external contingent factor, and HR department either does not exist or is too small to put employee management pressure on department managers (Tzabbar et al., 2017, pp. 134-148). Therefore, SMEs might choose external individuals to organise HR practices, particularly within the areas they are not specialised to focus on the other core areas in which organisations need to grow the most (Irwin et al., 2018, pp. 134-140). In terms of recruitment, for instance, Dasborough and Sue Chan (2002) discovered that outsourcing gives the opportunity to SMEs to reduce their internal workforce because the recruitment agency already deals with the company's staffing. However, Wallo and Kock (2018) addressed the negative side of outsourcing HR in case a third-party agency becomes more advanced, so they might take advantage of SMEs' lack of competence and inability to handle the failure of their HR processes. Therefore, Li and Rees (2021) argued an alternative action called formalisation to help SMEs to deal with employee and management issues more effectively.

2.2. Barriers to Formalised HR Practices

Formalisation helps SMEs to avoid inadequate use of informal job evaluation (Burhan et al., 2020, pp. 1513-1529). However, financial costs, limited budget (Potgieter & Mokomane, 2020, pp. 1-11), opportunities for faster decisions, and easy communications through informal HRM (Dundon & Wilkinson, 2018, pp. 130-149) strengthen the reason why formalised HR practices are being neglected. Similarly, institution theory suggests that the organisational environment, such as organisational culture, beliefs, and thoughts, impacts formal organisational structure directly (Meyer & Rowan, 1977 cited in Mohamed, 2017, pp. 150-155). For instance, according to Ardito et al. (2021), SMEs' flat structured non-bureaucratic management style tends to give control mostly to owners, causing formal HRM policies to be absent. This might lure owners and managers into developing an ideology that informally handled HRM practices are much more effective, creating a potential risk for implementing an in-house HR department. (Burhan et al, 2020, pp. 1513-1529). As Welbourne and Cyr (1996) pointed out, in agency theory, agency (employee) cost will reduce when the owner controls the business and all the HRM functions, such as job analysis, job description and formalised employee management done by managers. However, in contrast to agency theory, when an organisation tries to save the cost of hiring a full-time HR specialist, they end up with potentially poor HR decision-making of limited-knowledge general managers (Klass et al., 2002, pp. 31-49). The argument of shortages of skilled HR professionals and lack of trained staff dispute the implementation of formalised HR practices (Potgieter & Mokomane, 2020, pp. 1-11).

2.3. Turkish SMEs Abroad

Immigrants are transforming developed Western countries at an unprecedented pace by mainly operating SMEs (Morgan et al., 2021, pp. 504-524). Ethnic minorities lead 5% of small businesses in the UK, and London is the most common area for those SMEs, which is run by 16% of ethnic minorities (Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2020). The Turkish/ Kurdish community is one of the ethnic minorities which migrated to the UK and mostly settled in North London boroughs, such as Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington (Karan, 2017). Erdogan's (2015) research on the UK business showed that 400.000 Turkish involved a wide range of small businesses, such as hospitality, supermarkets, cab offices and meat and catering wholesalers largely based in North London.

Arun et al. (2020) described Turkish organisational culture as a reflection of the mixture of values of Western and Eastern countries' cultures. In the meantime, Erdogan's (2015) study took a closer look at the Turkish community that immigrated to Europe in the 1960s brought their own strong traditional home culture from the perspective of sociologic and business, but this led to adaptation problems to host countries' culture and values (Stefanidis et al., 2021, pp. 626-656). According to Sen (2019 cited in Arun et al., 2020, pp. 422-440) and

Bayraktaroglu and Atay (2016), it can be risky for business management because Turkish society's collectivistic and hierarchical nature will push employers to ignore HRM as a strategic mindset. For instance, it is common in Turkey that candidates are hired through informal recruitment and selection process, and in a collectivistic culture, most of the time, individuals' connections to the organisation are more important than the knowledge, skills and ability required for the jobs (Chandrakumara & Rao, 2014, pp. 44-73). Therefore, Turkish SMEs insist on not changing their traditional personnel administration processes level (Ucanok & Karabati, 2013, pp. 89-129). Turkish SMEs in Europe employ less-skilled staff and face difficulties recruiting skilled individuals due to the absence of formalised HR practices. This inevitably brings the risk of losing the prospect of talented candidates as they choose to work with the host country's employers due to higher job security. (Aygun & Oeser, 2016, pp. 308-327).

On the other hand, the study of Arun et al. (2020) claims that this may change when people immigrate to a foreign country as migrants where national cultures are dominant. For instance, if the leader and employees share the same culture, leadership roles will be softened, and leaders will try hard to meet employees' expectations through an informal employee-employer relationship (Akin, 2021, pp. 193-211). Conversely, this might bring plenty of limitations and barriers to a professionally managed business approach. (Ucanok & Karabati, 2013, pp. 89-129). For instance, SMEs are usually family-owned in collectivist cultures. Thus, managerial positions are usually prioritised for family members to solve problems informally (Tatoglu et al., 2016, pp. 278-293).

Not having new technical or transferable skills of migrant Turkish to Europe (Panayiotopoulos, 2008, pp. 395-413), Karan (2019) explained that Turkish/ Kurdish migrants in London barely have formal education. Therefore, Turkish/ Kurdish organisations are dominant in providing a social platform for Turkish SMEs to fulfil their employee needs during recruitment, such as consulting weekly Turkish community newspapers. Based on Altinay (2008), ethnic businesses' decision to stay heavily within their community plays a major role in restricting their business growth as close communities bring low-cost capital. For Karan (2019), the main reason is that the Turkish community used to be too close to workplaces in the 1990s when working in clothing factories. Those factories were popular and the only job choice amongst Turkish migrants. This situation brought informal close employee-employer relationships and permissive negotiated wages, rewards and working hours.

3. Methodology

This study applied the case study method to answer the research questions such as “how” do Turkish SMEs’ in North London’s typical daily employee relations look like and “why” do owners tend not to use an in-house HR department? Firstly, I conducted a literature review focusing on SMEs’ nature, role in the world economy, approaches to employee management, and HRM practices in Turkish migrant SMEs. Secondly, I collected the primary data by using qualitative research methods and gathered a great deal of information about Turkish migrant SMEs’ experiences and thoughts on employee management using qualitative research methods and open question interviews. Qualitative research examines a large number of phenomena and addresses different types of research questions in a multitude of contexts (Kohler et al., 2022, pp. 183–210). Rialp (1998 cited in Larrinaga, 2016) mentioned that in business management, in particular, the qualitative method has a great potential for providing increased knowledge of organisational behaviour and in-depth information about the subject, especially when the researched area is not fully identified (Smith & Bowers Brown, 2010 cited in Podgorodnichenko et al., 2020, pp. 576-608). Indeed, this research aimed to explore a not well-known area of Turkish SMEs’ HRM practices and to discover organisations’ daily HR applications, future plans about HR, and migrants’ experience, culture and background, which may affect their HR practices. Semi-structured interviews focused on answering research questions, such as the method Turkish SMEs are using to cover HR implementations, the impact of Turkish cultural background on employee management, cost management and obstacles to building an in-house HR department in their organisations.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews ranging between 20 to 30 minutes. 12 participants from various locations in North London were enough to complete this study. Except for two participants who were born and raised in London and preferred to communicate in English, the rest of the participants preferred Turkish as it is both researcher’s and participants’ first language and provided comfort. I was familiar with most of the local Turkish organisations due to my previous employment experiences with them. Hence, I approached them mostly unannounced, introduced the study and took appointments. Prior to the interviews, participants were given enough information about the study. Samples chosen randomly from Turkish migrants were catering, and meat wholesalers, supermarket chains, and cab offices, and interviewees were either directors or general managers of the organisations.

Organisation	Role in the Organisation	The Number of Employees
SME1: Catering Wholesaler	Account Manager	85
SME2: Catering Wholesaler	Owner	10
SME3: Catering Wholesaler	Owner	4
SME4: Catering Wholesaler	Owner	13
SME5: Catering Wholesaler	General Manager	70
SME6: Catering Wholesaler	Owner	90
SME7: Supermarket Chain	Owner	15
SME8: Minicab Office	Owner	10
SME9: Meat & Doner Wholesaler	Owner	8
SME10: Meat & Doner Wholesaler	Owner	15
SME11: Meat & Doner Wholesaler	Owner	10
SME12: Catering Wholesaler	HR Manager	128

3.2. Data Analysis

In this study, I was also an interpreter for translating interviews from the Turkish language to English through a credible and ethical process. Once spoken data were transcribed in written and translated into English, it was coded and interpreted to make data more manageable and meaningful. Data were analysed by thematic analysis, and patterns emerged throughout data collection for me to build themes. Identifying a theme is a stage from coding data in terms of initial or open codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006 cited in Bell et al., 2019).

4. Findings

According to the emergent codes, key and sub-themes (Figure 3) were created by integrating the codes into meanings. Four dominant themes emerged:

- Barriers to Formalised HR Practices
- Preferred Routes for HRM
- Issues that Informal HR Practices Cause
- Turkish SMEs with In-house HR Department

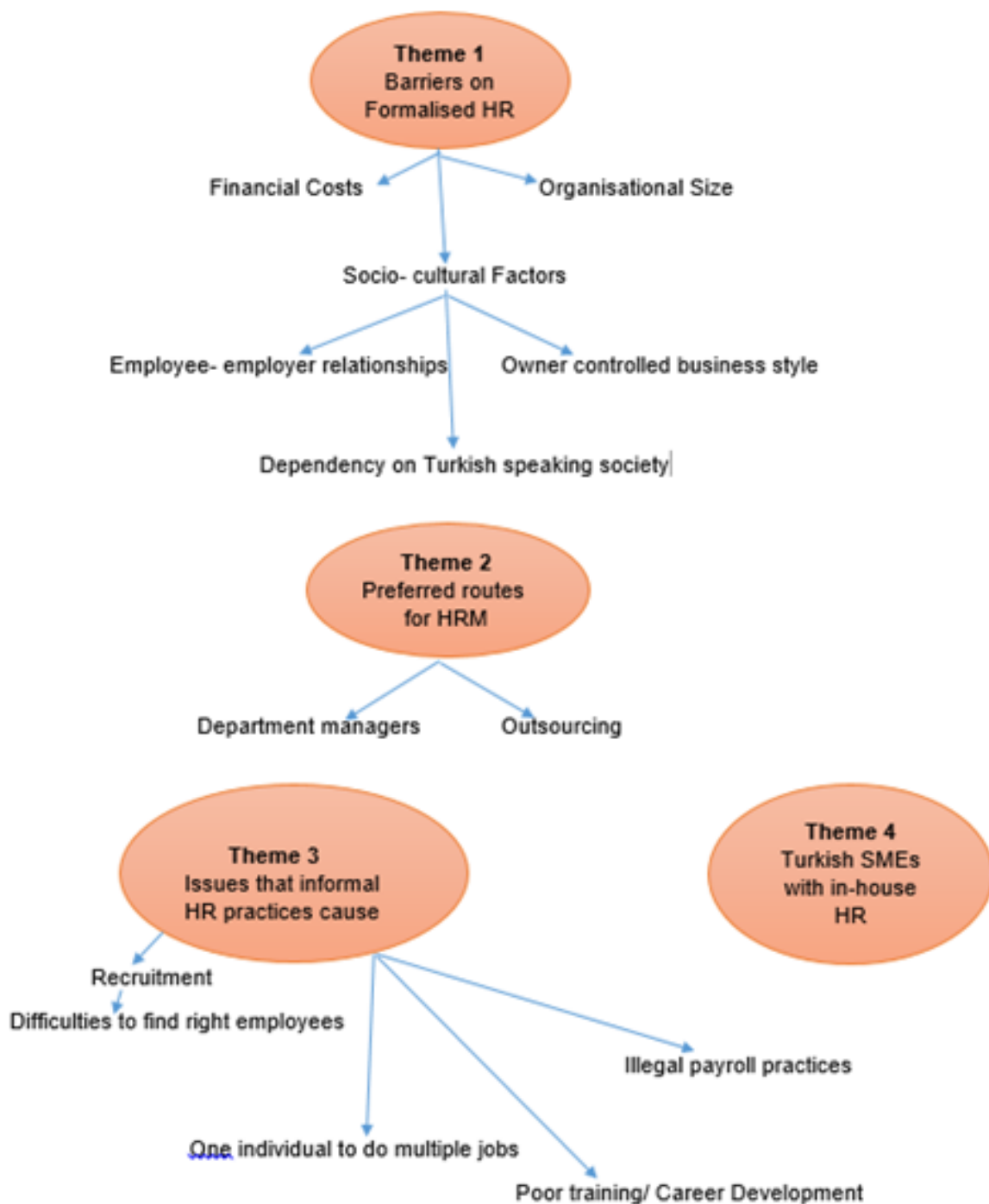


Figure 3: Research themes and sub- themes

4.1. Barriers to Formalised HR Practices

The main barriers for Turkish SMEs in London to employ HR specialists are sub-themed as costs, business size and sociocultural factors, as pointed out earlier (Potgieter & Mokomane, 2020, pp. 1-11; Crowley Henry et al., 2021, pp. 145-165; Karan, 2017). The research found employee-employer relationships, owner-controlled businesses and dependent on Turkish-speaking employees as typical socio-cultural barriers.

4.1.1. Financial Costs

Monetary costs are common issues and major obstacles for Turkish SMEs in North London to build an in-house HR department (Antonioli & Torre, 2016, pp. 311-337). Organisations are not ready to pay higher salaries asked by HR specialists (Klass et al., 2002, pp. 31-49).

I have to allot a certain budget for this department which I do not think is necessary for the moment (SME4).

We need a strong budget to employ a good number of qualified specialists in HR (SME6).

4.1.2. Organisational Size

Turkish migrants believe that the size of the business is an important factor for SMEs to implement formal HR practices (Crowley Henry et al., 2021, pp. 145-165). According to interviews, most Turkish SME owners believe in the benefit of HR specialists; however, they must expand their borders for this.

End of the day, we are not Amazon or Apple. This is a small company with 15 employees, so HR manager cannot be proactive here (SME10).

Working with HR professionals is a great idea. But, my business needs to be larger and should employ more people, then HR will help me, for instance, on performance management of employees (SME4).

Each participant had different opinions on the number of employees an organisation needs to employ an HR professional, which has no evidence of how they justify these numbers.

There must be at least 20 people for an in-house HR department (SME3).

In contrast, SME6 employs 90 employees running the business without an in-house HR department:

"What comes down is, on the business aspect, what having an HR department means in terms of cost for the company and gain for the company, and until the gain out versus the cost, the current system continues. This is the business outlook on it."

4.1.3. Socio-cultural Factors

The cultural attributes of minority migrants in developed countries are considered unchangeable because they widely ignore to adapt changes in the business. Cultural differences, therefore, lead to conflict in business practices (Karan, 2017). Turkish/ Kurdish society carried their strong traditional home culture as a migrant, which inevitably caused troubles during the adaptation period to host countries' culture and values (Stefanidis et al., 2021, pp. 626-656).

"The mindset of people growing up in Turkey is, instead of working as a collective company, to set up a business with two or three friends where one business partner looks after sales and marketing while the others look after employee management. In our society, employees have not been considered a source of human; therefore, business owners don't even know what HR department is. For them, HR department is only a huge waste of money. Formalised HR practices are not something important, and owners do their job on their own to save money. Owners act individually if a company is not a public limited company. They ignore legal papers work. Culturally, we look like Iran or Syria, where employees are treated in the same way (SME3)."

4.1.3.1. Employee and Employer Relationships

Turkish organisations' friendly relationships with staff increase employees' informal interactions with employers (Biloslavo & Lombardi, 2021, pp. 1747-1774). Informal relations are attractive for employees, but it is a risk for employers to implement formal HR departments (Marlow et al., 2010, pp. 954-966).

Even if we had an HR department, employees would come and talk to me or to my dad about their problems at work or even personal life. Because their mentality is "you gave me the job, you must deal with my problems"; hence employees would not recognise HR department. This is the challenge for family-based companies like us (SME6).

Employees are also willing to keep close relationships with owners rather than an HR professional (Storey et al., 2010, pp. 305-329).

We are a small business and close to each other culturally wise. Employees approach me directly to solve their problems (SME10).

On the other hand, employees may abuse informal employee-employer relationships causing continuous dilemmas between staff and SMEs (Dundon & Wilkinson, 2018, pp. 130–149) and it brings unprofessional HRM practices (Nyamubarwa & Chipunza, 2019, pp. 1-6), such as unrecorded, informal termination of staff.

I call one of my drivers every morning to wake him up. He is late every day. I tend to build a friendly relationship with my team but don't let them abuse me. I am tough enough. A driver hit my van, and I fired him straight away (SME4).

4.1.3.2. Dependency on Turkish-Speaking Society

Turkish/ Kurdish SME owners choose to work with the same ethnic groups because they congregated in the same workplaces when they first immigrated to London. According to Tolciu (2011), the comfort of sharing the same language, unique skills, and cultural competencies are some other reasons that attract owners to employ the same Turkish ethnicity.

If an employee is not one of us, this can be a barrier. Although I can speak English, I prefer working with Turkish-speaking people so that we can understand our jokes and traditional values (SME11).

This is not a family business, but we work like a family. We understand our language and values (SME10).

Hiring individuals from the same culture is also preferable for Turkish migrant business owners because they are confident that the job will be done without any mistakes and followed by owners' expected standards (Tolciu, 2011, pp. 409-427). Because, in Turkish culture, employees are trained to fully obey to their employers. (Chandrakumara & Rao, 2014, pp. 44-73)

We prefer Turkish employees because they are hardworking. I tried working with eastern Europeans. But they don't have enough discipline. They don't work as much as Turkish employees do. They don't look like us at all. We work hard because, culturally, Turkish people do not want to be ashamed by their employers. This is how we are as culturally. I truly trust Turkish people when I give a responsibility, I know that person will complete duty %100 (SME5).

Turkish owners often employ co-ethnics because of the poor language skills of the host country. In this case, the reliance on the ethnic workforce does not reflect owners' desires but shows the lack of other possibilities (Tolciu, 2011, pp. 409-427).

Hiring Turkish people is not a must. However, our customers are mainly Turkish/ Kurdish, so employees must be Turkish speaking for easy communication (SME1).

The above statement could also be associated with circumstances not related to language barriers. For instance, in contrast to SME5, the quality of Turkish people disappeared after illegal immigration started in the mid-1990s.

I have to hire from my community due to despair. If I had a chance, I would not employ even one single Turkish individual. After 1995, illegal immigration from East Turkey boomed. Since then, I cannot find the same quality in Turkish people as much as I used to in the '70s (SME9).

SME owners believe that individuals from external communities other than the Turkish migrant community cannot be successful as they will not be able to communicate or deal with Turkish/Kurdish-based organisations where the majority of the workforce is from Turkish minorities (Tolciu, 2011, pp. 409-427).

HR practitioners are mainly English. But, we are all from Turkey in this firm, so an English employee feels discriminated no matter how good he is at his job (SME10).

HR is not a common job among Turkish people, so I cannot find any HR professionals from my own community (SME2).

4.1.3.3. Owner-Controlled Business Style

Owners' decisions and ideologies play a strong role in losing faith in formal HRM practices in Turkish SMEs in London. Turkish owners believe that their way is the only right way for employee management (Altınay, 2008, pp.111-129; Mustafa & Elliot, 2019, pp. 281-290).

I like taking control of my own business so that I can involve more and see if my employees are doing right (SME4).

Conversely, SME2 agreed that the collectivistic and hierarchical culture that Turkish people came from made a huge impact in avoiding formal HRM practices (Bayraktaroglu & Atay, 2016) instead of drawing their own HRM practices.

We carried the same business mindset we learnt in Turkey. We are not professional enough to hire an HR specialist. Because we do not even allow managers to work comfortably. Turkish owners want their own management style to be followed, put their noses into managers' jobs and control managers all the time.

Lack of education impacts Turkish migrants' HRM practices (Karan, 2017).

Employers' lack of vision and poor education impact their employees; hence employees gain unethical habits (SME6).

4.2. Preferred Routes for HRM

Turkish organisations are reluctant to employ an in-house HR department and created their ways of dealing with employee and organisational management.

4.2.1. Department Managers

SMEs without formalised HR leave their employee management to poorly educated department managers (Klass et al., 2002, pp. 31-49), and those managers cause informality which is a potential barrier to the implementation of an in-house HR department (Burhan et al., 2020, pp. 1513-1529). Conversely, Guerrero et al. (2021) argued that not all HR professionals could equally be useful and efficient to every company. According to Guerrero et al., when department managers collaborate, the value they are adding to SMEs will be greater so that medium-sized Turkish SMEs will be satisfied.

Department managers deal with their teams' training and motivation and finalise the job descriptions they need (SME5).

Each department manager is responsible for their own recruitment and selection also training. They scrutinise their own candidates to determine if they are suitable for them or for the whole business (SME1).

4.2.2. Outsourcing

Despite its unpopularity amongst Turkish SMEs, some of the participants are using outsourced HR through consultation companies widely for recruitment. As Irwin et al. (2018) discussed, participants believe that outsourced HR firms are specialised in specific areas such as employment law, and Turkish SMEs find outsourced companies are trustable and better on recruitment activities, in particular (Dasborough & Sue- Chan, 2002, pp. 306–321).

We use a consultant company where we ask about employment law, documentation, implementation, and annual audits to make sure everything is in place (SME6).

Outsourced HR mainly deals with the recruitment and selection process and its legal side of it, such as the employee act. Because, as a manager, I am not good at that employee regulation in England (SME5).

On the other hand, some of the participants do not find outsourcing as effective. Similar to what Wallo and Kock (2018) addressed, third-party agencies may become dominant and take advantage of organisations' lack of competence and their inability towards HRM practices; Turkish SMEs complain that consulting firms are not doing the job properly and ignore organisations' need for staffing.

We used to outsource HR. But they failed to find the right candidates. They were not as sufficient as we expected (SME1).

Therefore, Irwin et al. (2018) addressed the importance of also training activities that outsourced HR firms provide because the selection of qualified employees only works when associated with training and development. Otherwise, outsourcing will decrease the performance of the firm.

Maybe the outsourcing firm supplied the right people, but it didn't answer our purposes (SME1).

4.3. Issues that Informal HRM Practices Cause

4.3.1. Recruitment

SMEs prefer informally designed recruitment activities during the employee selection process, and Turkish SMEs have no exemption (e.g. Newman & Sheikh, 2014, pp. 414–430; Chandrakumara & Rao, 2014, pp. 44-73). Recruitment is usually done through referral or from friends or family of the employers' own circle (Klepik, 2019, 14–26).

When I need staff, I ask common friends doing the same business as mine if they know anyone who is looking for a job (SME7).

However, in contrast to Nyamubarwa and Chipunza (2019), analysis which is word-of-mouth staffing is cheap and quick, it is mainly because referred candidates are more trusted and have a high chance to be more loyal to the organisation as they have prior social interaction with employers (Chandrakumara & Rao, 2014, pp. 44-73).

I prefer referral because when someone I know recommends a potential staff to work, I feel safe. They give their reference for this person (SME8).

Nonetheless, word-of-mouth is not the only route to recruitment and selection; according to OECD (2017), the use of digital technologies can also ease SMEs' access to talented individuals through social media, LinkedIn and job recruitment sites regardless of their organisational size.

When the company grew, we moved to professionalism and left word-of-mouth techniques. Because the skills we are looking for have changed. Now we are using recruitment agencies and job postings online, such as Monster. Com (SME6).

Although Turkish SMEs are trying to move to formalised recruitment practices, such as newspaper advertisement (Sameen, 2016, pp. 286-291), they still prefer to stick to people from their own minority ethnic groups. Because the paper they are using is in a Turkish-written newspaper and only addresses the Turkish community in the UK.

We used LinkedIn or Indeed.Com, but it was not to our benefit. Therefore, Turkish newspapers are the main channels, followed by word-of-mouth kind of recruitment, as readers are predominantly Turkish (SME1).

4.3.1.1. Difficulties in Finding the Right Employees

Based on Reid et al. (2002), family-owned SMEs are widely dependent on family members, and the management of HR is done informally by the owner-manager, who often lacks expertise in HR management (Dundon & Wilkinson, 2018, pp. 130–149). Furthermore, as Karan (2017) discussed, Turkish/ Kurdish SME owners did not have a good education; they did not have enough qualifications from Turkey. Therefore, their business experiences are insufficient to apply to their businesses abroad. Inevitably, they must stick to their own children who are educated in the UK.

Like most Turkish employers in London, I learnt how to be a boss from my work experiences in Turkey. I didn't go to any college or university to learn how to run a business. Therefore, I carried my previous experiences to my UK business. Being a family business is even worse. My children don't really care about the business. They trust their dad, but my potential is limited as I am now an old man. My children have no intention to grow the business (SME2).

Due to a lack of specialised HR staff, SMEs are at a disadvantage in recruiting experienced individuals (Crowley Henry et al., 2021, pp. 145-165). This is even more challenging in Turkish SMEs as they need Turkish-speaking HR professionals.

There is no HR specialist that I can trust in our community because HR is not a common job in Turkish society (SME2).

Meanwhile, Turkish SMEs' informal-based staffing strategies, usually selected owners' own networks, cause organisations to struggle to find the right employees (Jack et al., 2006, pp. 456-466).

Finding the right individuals is the biggest issue right now. If they don't have enough experience in this business, it is a challenge to bring business further (SME1).

Word-of-mouth-based recruitment and selection bring people from the same ethnic minority, and this is also a problem for Turkish organisations' candidate journey.

Customers are largely Turkish/ Kurdish, and employees need to be Turkish speaking. This really reduces the workforce, and when you don't have a large amount of workforce to choose from, you are stuck with particular communities rather than larger ones (SME6).

4.3.2. One Individual is Doing Multiple Jobs

Informal HRM practices make job descriptions unclear, causing poor job design due to employees having more duties or unrelated jobs than originally assigned (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, pp. 295–323).

*We have not earned that much money yet to build an HR department. Being in an institutional organisation is hard, then one individual must do a job equivalent to two individuals creating work intensification; furthermore, employees cannot work as efficiently as they normally do (SME6).
At the moment, we have an in-house accountant, but at the same time, he helps me deal with employee management overall (SME9).*

Employees from the same ethnic groups and family members in Turkish/ Kurdish SMEs can work on a schedule that other external communities may not accept (Tolciu, 2011, pp. 409-427).

The problem with Turkish small businesses is that they hire an accountant, but they use this person in every area of the business. When we apply business practices, we do it in whichever way we learn in Turkey. Otherwise, of course, normally, every department should be separated like account is account, HR is HR (SME2).

4.3.3. Poor Training/ Career Development

This study has found that many Turkish SMEs do not invest as much in training and development activities as they should. According to Antonioli and Torre (2016), SMEs avoid proactive training due to financial cost risking risk to voluntary turnover of trained employees.

Training is an additional cost to me. Not only financially, but I provide them with good training, and then they leave us (SME11)

Once a staff is ready and fully trained, someone else offers more money, and they prefer, of course, more wages and leave us (SME6).

Antonioli and Torre (2016) argued that training and development activities are not related to firm size and can be associated with innovation. The employees need to have new knowledge and skills to be involved in the new work system. Lack of training and development may lower employees' attitudes towards acceptance of the change.

In our culture, we are not innovative. There is one way that employees are used to working, and they don't want to change their mindset. They are not willing to try new approaches. Because they are not open to changes. Turkish employees set a boundary, a strict boundary that they don't want to leave.

On the other hand, the owner/manager in SMEs plays a crucial role in workplace learning, they are experts with the firm's specific skill requirements, and this visibly influences learning practices (Csillag et al., 2019, pp. 453-476). Some Turkish migrant organisations follow this statement, and they believe it is successful.

We prefer to bring someone who didn't work anywhere else so that I can give them training unique to our organisation, as we have our own ethics (SME6).

As Aygun and Oeser (2016) pointed out, organisations believe that there is no career development with migrant Turkish SMEs, which is why employees prefer working with larger organisations.

"In small businesses, the employee is a huge problem. Therefore they are merging now. For instance, Tesco buys Londis shops which were Indian SMEs. Inevitably, people choose to work with them, not with me. They think there is more sustainable job security with Londis as the owner is now Tesco brand (SME7)."

Turkish SMEs close the absence of the career development gap by using monetary and non-monetary reward management in their firms.

"Why people wish to work in corporate companies is because of career progression. Employees know once they are promoted, they will earn more wages. In small businesses, it doesn't work like that. So what we do then we provide a less stressful working environment. We cannot provide career progression, but we provide a warm, friendly, happy environment (SME6)."

I reward my employees' efforts with off days on their birthdays and by giving New Year presents (SME4).

4.3.4. Illegal Payroll Practices/ Tax Evasion

Interviews and findings revealed that the absence of in-house HR in Turkish migrant SMEs in North London give owners high power and priority to deal with employee management, including employees' personal issues, wages and payroll. In the UK, life expenses cost high for families and individuals. Therefore, people demand state benefits such as housing benefits and child benefits on top of their wages (Hayez & Novitz, 2021, pp. 118-141). However, a greater number of employees in Turkish SMEs abuse the UK benefits system with the help of their co-ethnic employers.

Our people here work just like in Turkey. One person from the household is working, and the woman is at home looking after the children and doing the housework. Most of the earnings go to rent. Therefore, we show full-time workers as part-time so that they can be entitled to partial benefits. Otherwise, here they earn £300-400 every week, then all money goes to rent and bills (SME5)."

On the other hand, unemployment benefits paid through Universal Credit (Sanders et al., 2021, pp. 42-65) are a dominant reason for high turnover.

Because of this, government funds like Universal Credit, housing benefits, and council tax benefits people don't want to work. They quit their job even after a polite warning for their mistake. They are not afraid of being unemployed. Because they already receive benefits while they are working anyway, and they can survive in this country without working either. (SME4)

Besides, the benefits system is an extra burden for employers because they have to deal with payslips with reduced working hours than reality, along with the extra employer tax they must pay.

The real problem is their payslips. They don't want to pay taxes as they are on benefits, so I have to cover them. I show them part-time while they actually work full-time, so I have to pay extra tax on goods. We don't only deal with employees; we also have to deal with their part-time payslips and cash wages, too (SME7).

4.4. Turkish SMEs with in-house HR

Only a few Turkish medium size enterprises in London are choosing to formalise their HR practices via an HR department. I have managed to access only one of them due to limited availability and interest from employers. The main point that participant SME12, address is how regulated policy and practices by law strengthen employee relations in the organisation through the in-house HR department.

We, as an HR department, are working under the policy and procedure that the government outlined. Those policies and procedures tell us what to and how to do in case of any issue with employees. The attendance policy, for instance, is the same for everyone without favour. Therefore, this strengthens employee relations because we work in a fair system.

We apply highly fair reward management. Job evaluation, followed by pay structure and progression, is important for both our employees and us. Otherwise, reward management would depend on owners' values. Salaries would determine depending on owners' values creating conflict and disturbance among employees such as late coming, low motivation and abuse of the system at work

5. Conclusion

This study looked for the possible HRM solutions Turkish SMEs in North London could implement in the case of the absence of formalised HR practices. Advantages, disadvantages, issues, and challenges were discussed during the adaptation of HRM practices. The study also revealed the substantial link between socio-cultural traditions and employee management of Turkish migrant SMEs in North London. I included a Turkish SME with HR department to compare how organisational culture differs if formal HR practices are in place in an organisation. Four main themes have been developed to answer research questions clearly.

Most SMEs apply informal HR practices for employee management (e.g. Tatoglu et al., 2016, pp. 278-293; Mustafa & Elliot, 2019, pp. 281-290) and findings supported by Nguyen and Bryant (2004, cited in Sheehan, 2014) that Turkish migrant SME owners had to choose informality due to high cost, and organisational size. Nonetheless, employers are not completely against an in-house HR specialist. However, until organisations reach a specific size and budget, Turkish migrant SMEs manage their HR practices through outsourced recruitment agencies or themselves with the help of department managers. In fact, owners agree that outsourcing does not always give satisfactory answers to their needs.

Institution theory argues that organisational culture, beliefs, and thoughts play a crucial role in deciding formal organisational structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977 cited in Mohamed, 2017, pp. 150-155). Findings pointed to this theory as the majority of issues and challenges appeared from an “owner-controlled business style” mindset. As a result, Turkish communities’ socio-cultural background triggers this ideology as a huge barrier to formalised HR practices in Turkish migrants’ SMEs. Tolciu (2011) delivered the importance of individuals’ characteristics, ethnic resources, and cultural factors in employee management for ethnic groups. Findings intensified this argument as Turkish SME owners are too dependent on working with people from the same community. Because for them, it may be more comfortable to communicate within the same cultural values through the same language. Otherwise, employers assumed that they would not be able integrate nor work with the individuals from different backgrounds due to the possible conflict arising from the spoken language. Working with a group of people from the same ethnic background causes a relaxed working environment, allowing employees to abuse employers’ friendly approach. Some Turkish SMEs are willing to implement formal HR practices. However, apart from financial obstacles, owners’ preference for working with their community and having difficulties finding Turkish/ Kurdish specialists in this field show how migrants’ socio-cultural background could limit any effort to create a professional workplace in a different country (Fernando & Patriotta, 2020, pp. 1-13).

Secondly, informal HRM practices bring complicated issues to Turkish SME owners in North London. The study highlighted these issues mainly on recruitment, poorly designed job design, training and lack of job security (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, pp. 295–323). SMEs find word-of-mouth recruitment easier and, in fact, more dependable because employers know candidates through their close contacts. Organisations are trying to shift informal recruitment and selection to a more formalised process via a newspaper advertisement. However, the newspapers they choose, are the voice of Turkish community and they are only read by the same community. This proves that Turkish SMEs in North London are persistently creating their workforce from the people who come from their own society.

In contrast to the argument of Nyamubarwa and Chipunza (2019), which claims that word-of-mouth is cheaper than formalised recruitment and selection processes, Turkish SME owners are willing to pay a good amount of salary for the right candidate. However, the persistent tendency or despair to stay in a particular ethnic community limit Turkish SMEs from finding the right individuals. The inability to involve a wider candidate pool stops organisations from having a multinational workforce and, inevitably, cannot find the right employees. Turkish minorities have difficulties adapting to working with people from different nationalities, including prospective HR managers.

As Aycan (2005) stated that managers might implement HRM practices based on their assumptions about the nature of their firm and the employees, Turkish SMEs in North London suffer from inappropriate job design, which leads to work intensification (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, pp. 295–323) due to the fact that they mostly managed by owner/ managers. Cutting the number of employees to save costs forces employees from doing more jobs than what was originally agreed. Poor training and lack of career development investments in Turkish/ Kurdish migrants' organisations push employees to look for different opportunities elsewhere. Despite Turkish SMEs' efforts to retain employees in the organisations through an attractive rewarding system, employees look for job security and seek jobs in well-known companies.

This study made two important contributions. First is the comparison of Turkish SMEs working with the in-house HR department and ones with informal HR practices. The research discovered that the absence of formalised HR policies might vary depending on employees; for instance, the owner's favourite staff will be treated differently than others. Hence, there will be conflict and disturbance between employees. If there is no HR department in a company, there will not be fair rewards management; reward management will depend on owners' values, such as unfairly determining salaries. Tolerate on late comings, low motivation and abuse of the system in the workplace cause conflict and disturbance among employees. This paragraph also answered the aim of the study, which was the importance of HR implementations in Turkish SMEs in North London for better-managed HR practices.

The second contribution is that the study reveals how Turkish migrant SMEs' in North London adjust tax and state benefit systems in their favour. Law says the benefits system protects low-income people and provides extra support for them (Hayez & Novitz, 2021, pp. 118-141). However, Turkish ethnic minorities turn this benefit package into an opportunity to receive extra income, simply pretending to work low hours in pay slips despite working full time and receiving unregistered cash. On the one hand, this is an unpleasant situation for Turkish SME owners because employees do not worry about losing jobs due to being heavily dependent on state benefits which causes high turnover. It is also an extra duty for employers to amend and organise employees' paperwork and pay slips to get the intended benefits. On the other hand, employers do not pay the accurate amount of tax they owe to the government. These circumstances can be a reason for Turkish SMEs and Turkish-speaking employees to work with each other.

6. Limitations

Every research project has limitations, and this research has no exemption. This study has only included Turkish migrants' SMEs in North London and HR practices. In fact, expanded research with larger Turkish society could be more beneficial to understand Turkish migrants' employee management in depth. For instance, a comparative study of Turkish migrant SME owners in European capital cities may discover possible differences in HR practices that Turkish SME owners implement. The low number of participants and restricted time on semi-structured interviews limit this study, so a larger sampling strategy could add value to future studies. Gender inequality in male-dominated Islamic countries significantly negatively impacts females; moreover, patriarchal traditions restrict women's improvement (Koburtay et al., 2018, pp. 421–436). Concerning this argument, Turkey's male-dominant traditional structure and socio-cultural characteristics have been brought to the UK by Turkish migrants (Karan, 2017). My ability to conduct better research was affected during my study as some male employers rejected me due to this traditional socio-cultural gap. Some male employers' attitudes towards this research were underestimated due to my gender during my visits to organisations. A male colleague, as well as a female, can be helpful to minimise cultural issues in similar future research.

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