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Identifying the Support of Human Resource Specialists to Facilitate the Learning of Education Workers in Hormozgan Province

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Education staff professional development is a comprehensive, focused and supportive approach designed to promote education staff for growth. The aim of the present study was to identify the support of human resource specialists in facilitating the learning of education workers in Hormozgan province.

Methods: The research method was qualitative and the studied population was education workers of Hormozgan province, 14 of them were selected as a sample by snowball sampling. An interview was used to collect data, and its validity was confirmed by experts. Strauss and Corbin coding method was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews.

Results: The findings showed that the results of the analysis of the interviews showed that human resource specialists, as representatives of the organization in the training unit, play the role of facilitating and supporting people's learning. These professionals can provide six types of support needed for learning, including providing information resources, funding, job promotion, financial and non-financial incentives, executive support, and networking.

Conclusions: The findings generally showed that human resource professionals can use the necessary learning supports provide the basis for more effective learning to be implemented in the organization.

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Introduction

Education constitutes one of the paramount social institutions within a nation, and its evolution has the potential to enhance conditions across multiple dimensions of society. In the developed nations of the globe, whenever deficiencies are detected, there is a concerted effort to reevaluate the educational framework to ameliorate and rectify the shortcomings; this is predicated on the belief that efficacious education serves as the cornerstone of sustainable development and functions as the propelling force of the social fabric (Popkewitz, 2012). Furthermore, the overarching objective of education is to convert human resources into human capital and to cultivate an evolved individual, inherently endowed with ethical principles. This significant responsibility is situated within the framework of a robust, well-defined, and objective educational system (Knowles et al., 2014). One of the salient challenges confronting education, particularly in light of the expansive human resources community, pertains to the fortification of human resources, specifically the augmentation of knowledge, skills, competencies, and motivations among the personnel within this institution, with such advancements being viable solely in the context of professional development and the acquisition of vocational skills. Learning is contingent upon the alteration of existing knowledge or the contemplation of it from a nuanced perspective (Iroegbu, 2017). The process of learning is intricate, influenced by myriad variables; these variables exert reciprocal effects on one another (Tylee, 1992). Moreover, the performance of personnel is integral to the success trajectory of the organization (Kamarei et al., 2021).

Professional development emerges as one of the most critical concerns within the domain of human resources management, culminating in the manifestation of varying levels of professional competence among employees (Kamarei et al., 2021; Postholm, 2012). The significance of professional development is underscored in the operational dynamics of any organization as it positions its human resources to navigate the evolving paradigms of globalization (Coventry et al., 2015; Heydari Amin et al., 2023). Darling-Hammond (2021) articulate that effective professional development encompasses enhancements in performance and educational outcomes. This may involve concentrating on pedagogical strategies that bolster learning in classroom settings, as well as fostering collaborative efforts among individuals to exchange ideas and engage in collective learning. Additionally, Scher and O'Reilly (2009) characterize professional development in terms of immediate outcomes related to knowledge and beliefs, intermediate outcomes pertaining to

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instructional modifications, and long-term outcomes associated with enhancements in student achievement.

Broadly defined, professional development pertains to the growth of an individual within their professional capacity, and specifically, it encompasses the professional advancement attained through the progressive accumulation of experience and ongoing educational oversight (Isfahani et al., 2019). Furthermore, the identification of particular content areas is crucial for the enhancement of a specific professional development initiative (Merchie et al., 2018). Loucks-Horsley et al. (2009) advocate for the formulation of a comprehensive professional development program, which incorporates the application of effective strategies aimed at achieving the ultimate objectives.

Providing assistance to novice learners is crucial, as such support and guidance furnish the cognitive resources imperative for the acquisition of new competencies. Nonetheless, empirical research indicates that as learners advance in skill development, the supplementary assistance provided to novice learners may inadvertently evolve into impediments to the learning process (Jerez-Gomez et al., 2005). Kenny et al. (2003) underscore the significance of developmental and educational support within their scholarly investigations. Occasionally, the learning environment cultivates conditions that necessitate human resource specialists to transition into trainers, thereby aiding operational managers in the identification and enhancement of learning tasks. In the execution of learning tasks among employees and managers, and to optimize their supportive functions within the learning framework, they may undertake initiatives such as allocating and sanctioning budgets for educational endeavors, fostering networking opportunities, formulating executive guidelines, as well as providing and discerning informational content.

Indeed, specialists in human resource development ought to facilitate the identification of requisite content that employees within sub-groups require for comprehending and executing learning tasks, while also ensuring the most accessible means for employees to obtain pertinent information. Participants have indicated that the establishment of an internal network and an online knowledge repository by educational professionals enables the seamless sharing of essential content in an accessible manner. Additionally, in the realm of performance technology, the electronic support system is recognized as a formidable instrument for mitigating training expenses and enhancing employee efficiency. The electronic support system has emerged as a critical resolution to the

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operational challenges encountered by organizations in recent decades (Vandenbosch, 1999). To more effectively implement learning tasks, human resource professionals should devise organizational policies that acknowledge the learning processes of employees within formal organizational documentation, and by instituting a distinct structure for this spectrum of learning, they will address employees' needs concerning the valuation of learning and development (Poell & Van Der Krogt, 2014). This is particularly relevant as participants in this study have articulated the necessity for designated learning time during work hours and diverse learning opportunities integrated within their daily tasks. However, a salient finding of this research pertains to the presence of motivational support, which human resource specialists should prioritize during the assessment and post-completion phases of learning tasks. Such support may manifest in the form of career advancement opportunities and both financial and non-financial incentives. In this context, Young et al. (2012) identify the provision of financial incentives, while Muhdi and Boutellier (2011) highlight motivational factors as contributors to the enhancement of learning. Building upon the findings of previous studies and the imperative to delineate the support essential for facilitating learning among educational personnel (Baruah, 2018; Pattison & Dierking, 2012), the current investigation endeavors to explore the role of human resource specialists in promoting learning among educational workers in Hormozgan province through a qualitative research framework.

Material and Methods

The current investigation was executed through a qualitative methodology with the objective of elucidating the role of human resource specialists in enhancing the educational development of personnel within Hormozgan province. The targeted demographic comprised educational personnel from Hormozgan province, from which a sample of 14 individuals was extracted utilizing snowball sampling techniques. This sample encompassed human resource specialists (2 individuals), mid-level managers (3 individuals), and senior organizational experts (9 individuals). Data collection was facilitated through interviews, the validity of which was corroborated by subject matter experts. Each interview was approximately one hour in duration. Following an exhaustive examination of the research subject, a series of tailored questions were formulated, which were subsequently reviewed and refined after multiple collaborative meetings with the

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research team, involving discussions and the exchange of perspectives. Structured interviews, aligned with similar themes yet varying in questions, were organized for the three distinct groups of middle and operational managers as well as human resource specialists. The queries for each managerial group were systematically categorized into two principal segments: inquiries pertaining to the existing conditions of learning facilitators aimed at garnering insights into the organizational context, and inquiries concerning the requisite support for these learning facilitators. Furthermore, an effort was made to elicit profound insights from the participants by employing exploratory and open-ended questions, while deliberately avoiding the use of clichéd and leading questions. It is noteworthy that theoretical saturation was reached following the execution of 14 interviews. The sample included human resource specialists (2 individuals), mid-level managers (3 individuals), and senior organizational experts (9 individuals). For the analysis of the data gleaned from the interviews, the transcripts were subjected to coding using the Strauss and Corbin method subsequent to data collection. To adhere to ethical standards, efforts were made to schedule interview times in accordance with the availability of participants, and it was communicated to the participants that their ongoing involvement in the research was entirely voluntary, allowing for withdrawal from the study at any point. In compliance with the principle of anonymity and to enhance the presentation of research findings, middle managers were designated with the letters A and B, while human resource specialists were assigned the letter C.

Results

Learning, prior to its maturation at the individual level, necessitates the establishment of support mechanisms at the organizational level, specifically through the involvement of learning facilitators. The findings derived from the analysis of the interviews suggest that human resource specialists, acting as organizational representatives within the training unit, assume the critical role of facilitating and underpinning the learning processes of individuals. Within educational organizations, human resource specialists can construct a foundational framework by utilizing diverse forms of learning support, thereby ensuring that various learning modalities are executed with optimal efficacy within the organization. The following delineates several types of support employed by HR professionals:

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1 .Provision of information sources

The results obtained from the interview analysis illuminated that the provision of informational resources by the educational unit throughout the entire duration of learning projects constitutes a pivotal form of desired support. Learners necessitate access to relevant information pertaining to their respective learning topics. According to the perspectives of the interviewed employees and personnel, the provision of information congruent with the progression of organizational objectives can significantly enhance the learning experience, which is achievable through the collaborative efforts of upper management in conjunction with the specialists of the training unit. Several interviewees posited that based on the learning objectives delineated for each employee, the training unit should encompass the requisite informational resources. This information ought to be structured in a manner that facilitates the successful completion of the employees' learning endeavors.

Human resources experts (C1) and (C2) articulated: "*Occasionally, we facilitate opportunities for senior experts and vice-presidents in education to engage with various vice-presidents and departments within the organization to conduct benchmarking and acquire experiential insights, thereby updating their professional knowledge. Typically, these visits culminate in a series of reports, which is why we mandate that individuals present their achievements to the organization following the completion of the study excursion*".

A senior expert (B2) remarked: "*We obtain a portion of the information required during our work from the training unit. Consequently, I anticipate that the training unit will furnish me with specialized articles and contemporary theses to enable their application in my professional duties".*

A human resources specialist (C1) reiterated these observations in his interview and further elaborated: "*To augment learning, we endeavor to develop mobile learning programs that facilitate rapid information acquisition while individuals engage in their learning tasks.*"

Furthermore, the findings derived from the examination of the analyzed documents suggest that the Education Organization of Hormozgan Province, in its quest to enhance operational efficiency and cultivate individual talents, has employed strategies such as adopting role models from other organizations, offering theses and articles pertinent to employee needs, and organizing both virtual and in-person programs to disseminate essential information. In this context, the organization's excellence, policy, and strategy report articulates: "*The Human Development Education and Research Unit, with a focus on the comprehensive development of human resources, aims to foster learning opportunities and promote a culture of study and research within the organization through the provision of articles, books, emulating successful and progressive organizations, virtual education, and the enhancement of effective collaborations with scientific and research institutions to elevate training*" (code. C4).

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"*The system for proposals and problem-solving frameworks has been established and executed by drawing upon exemplary practices from the organization, and to bolster employee motivation, individuals are rewarded based on their contributions*" (code C3).

"*In an effort to facilitate the transfer of expertise and knowledge from the human resources training personnel, a compilation of internal and external program packages has been curated for the benefit of all employees, alongside plans to construct a library aimed at establishing a knowledge and science repository within the organization*" (Code C5).

2 .Funding

A proficient educational and training institution prioritizes the allocation of substantial financial resources for projects and employee development initiatives. According to the perspectives of the participants in this study, one significant form of support that human resource specialists, as crucial members of the learning facilitation team, can extend to employee learning is the provision of an adequate budget. Consequently, they contended that prior to the initiation of empowerment projects, a suitable budget must be sanctioned to avert complications during project execution stemming from insufficient funding.

The remarks of the senior experts (B8) and (B6) were as follows: "*When we convey the request for resources necessary for our training and learning to upper management, we are informed that there is no budget available, and we must proceed with the existing equipment. This highlights that if the education unit intends to implement a project for our empowerment, it should similarly allocate a budget for the acquisition of requisite educational and learning resources*."

However, the human resources specialist (C1) posits that: "*when evaluating educational initiatives, their corresponding budgetary allocations are typically taken into account, albeit this financial allocation varies contingent upon contextual factors*".

3 .Job Promotion

Job advancement serves as a significant resource within the facilitators' consortium, representing the educational support elucidated in this investigation. Findings derived from the interview analyses suggest that this form of support ought to be implemented by human resource professionals. The outcomes of the interview evaluations indicated a necessary convergence between organizational objectives and individual aspirations. The employees engaged in this study asserted that the promotion framework should reflect the individual's progress and efficacy in executing educational initiatives. They contended that career advancement engenders job security, thereby affirming that their

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contributions are recognized within the workplace, which subsequently enhances overall productivity and motivates other employees to pursue learning.

A senior expert (B8) asserts: "*The educational division should establish a promotion framework such that every individual (acting as an agent within the learning facilitators' consortium) reaps benefits commensurate with the significant impact they exert on learning outcomes, which should facilitate their advancement*".

The human resources specialist (C1) articulated: "*We frequently advise our specialists and deputies that if their success rate in employee education or knowledge transfer to their colleagues is substantial, in addition to offering encouragement, we will designate them as coaches and mentors; we derive utility from this to enhance our organization. We thereby integrate human resources processes with the employee learning trajectory within the organization, fostering a culture of encouragement for others to engage in learning*".

The senior expert (B6) commented on this matter: "*I anticipate more that if I am entrusted with responsibilities and duties, the training division will not solely consider the organizational interests. This is primarily because, typically, we do not perceive any advantages following the completion of tasks, which consequently diminishes our motivation. If at the very least, these responsibilities contributed to our professional development, it would afford us a semblance of psychological security*".

4 .Financial and non-financial incentive

The findings derived from the analysis of the interviews indicated that monetary compensation for the experts and assistants upon the completion of educational projects constitutes a critical form of support that they seek. As articulated by the employees interviewed, the provision of rewards subsequent to the fulfillment of learning assignments, commensurate with the magnitude of the work undertaken, can significantly enhance employee motivation to persist in their learning endeavors, a process that necessitates the active involvement of senior management. Furthermore, middle-tier employees who assume the roles of coaches, mentors, or educational facilitators should be eligible for inclusion in the compensation framework contingent upon the successful transfer of knowledge to their colleagues or the execution of tasks beyond their designated job descriptions. It is imperative to maintain a positive outlook.

A senior expert (B4) addressing this issue in his discourse remarked: "*Within the human resources framework of the provincial education department, the discourse surrounding financial support is markedly insufficient. I do not assert that it is entirely absent; however, it remains unsatisfactory. Indeed, there exists a correlation between the scope of the learning initiative and the corresponding reward. Financial resources are lacking. A project characterized by extensive scope yet minimal financial remuneration fails to manifest effectively*".

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The human resources specialist (C2) further articulated: "*Our endeavor is to implement a system of rewards and penalties aimed at optimizing employee learning, which will subsequently foster an enhancement in learning motivation among the workforce. For instance, should you successfully complete this learning task, I will ensure its incorporation into your salary*".

Senior experts (B8) and (B5) proposed: "*Given that the discourse surrounding organizational learning is not particularly systematic, if the HR department were to approach me and acknowledge my performance as a proficient learner, then from that point onward, rather than solely transferring knowledge to my colleagues, I would be informed that a specific financial reward would be conferred upon me. I would certainly exert greater effort in my own learning and in disseminating knowledge to others*".

The middle manager (A3) expressed: "*Should the human resources division bestow upon me enhanced authority as a senior manager, thereby granting me the latitude to allocate greater financial rewards to my subordinate managers upon their successful completion of learning tasks, it is assured that their motivation to engage in ongoing learning will be significantly amplified*".

Based on the results of the analysis of the examined documents, to augment motivation and participation in enhancement activities, there exists a pressing need to support and acknowledge the efforts of personnel within the educational organization of Hormozgan province, thereby necessitating the establishment of a mechanized compensation service system, a reward framework, and motivational welfare assistance. In this context, the following strategies have been formulated accordingly: "*Monthly bonuses are allocated and disbursed contingent upon the performance evaluation framework. The remuneration of diverse bonuses during various organizational events, the acknowledgment of employees for their engagement in enhancement initiatives, and the provision of services to the families of colleagues constitute additional forms of financial incentives provided. The organization further contemplates rewards for the contributions of colleagues engaged in proactive working groups, including but not limited to: curriculum planning working group, textbook authoring working group, student affairs working group, educational evaluation working group...* (code. C6)

"*In response to the organizational imperative for a systematic wage structure and with the objective of fostering a rational framework in labor relations, ensuring equitable compensation for equivalent work, and establishing an appropriate rapport between the laborer and the employer concerning organizational responsibilities, the salary framework was instituted*" (C7).

"*Employees express appreciation for both individual and collective contributions by disbursing monthly bonuses and recognition to those who successfully execute improvement endeavors. To synchronize individual aspirations with organizational objectives, the extent of the coordination and cooperation budget allocated among various educational*

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units is directly correlated with the attainment of the organization's goals, the caliber of service, and the productivity of human resources" (Code. C8).

"*In pursuit of establishing a conducive environment to augment employee motivation, efforts are made to cultivate equitable opportunities for the attraction, remuneration, and professional development of employees*" (Code. C9).

5 .Executive support

Another category of facilitators that bolster learning within the educational organization in the specified province, which was articulated by a significant number of participants through various lenses and is acknowledged as a pivotal element in the learning of employees, is the executive support for the learning endeavors of personnel. In essence, executive support ought to be administered by the training division and human resource professionals. During the interview process, it was discerned that the experts and aides within the educational organization of Hormozgan province exhibit a tendency toward a coherent structure and formulation in the organizational documentation pertaining to the learning process. According to their insights, the educational content within organizational documents is often inadequately articulated, and its operational mechanisms are not distinctly delineated. In other words, if the education unit and human resource specialists aspire to facilitate the learning endeavors of their subordinates, they must cultivate a structured framework and executive regulations for all forms of formal and informal learning within the educational organization, thereby ensuring that the significance and value of this learning modality are explicitly articulated in organizational documentation. This is instrumental in enabling employees to engage in learning during work hours and throughout the professional process.

In this context, the remarks made by the middle manager (A1) were articulated as follows: "*In order to enhance the focus on employee learning and the associated educational tasks within the training organization of Hormozgan province, it is imperative that these learning activities are structured in a manner that does not impede the job responsibilities of the employees. Such learning endeavors ought to be incorporated within the designated working hours of the human resources unit. It is crucial to emphasize that this form of learning should be conducted during the employees' working hours*".

The human resources expert (C2) concisely articulated: "*The human resources unit ought to endeavor to minimize structural divisions as much as feasible to promote learning within the organization*." He has facilitated open and transparent learning opportunities to ensure the maximization of the available working time for this mode of learning.

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However, the high-ranking experts (B7 and B2) underscored in their discourse: "*What the organization primarily requires is for the training unit to establish a defined framework and regulations governing learning. It is essential that these learning processes adhere to specific regulations. The service compensation system and the management system for employee learning content must be explicitly delineated in our discussions and meetings. We consistently underscore that this form of training is significantly effective; however, it remains unacknowledged in formal documents, leading us to revert to conventional training programs. The reason being is that they are thoroughly specified and thus, more readily manageable*".

Moreover, the high-ranking expert (B4) remarked: "*In my perspective, the education unit should, akin to the formal programs that it delineates for us annually to enhance our knowledge, also develop informal initiatives for our empowerment both in worksheets and in the articulation of its regulations*".

6 .Networking

From the perspectives of the interviewees, one critical form of facilitation in the requisite support for learning involves a heightened emphasis on the internal networks dedicated to knowledge sharing within the educational organization of Hormozgan province. In essence, networking assumes a pivotal role in the learning processes of employees, or as members of the community of learning facilitators. The employees engaged in this study contended that the presence of internal networks for knowledge sharing, along with access to intranet and online databases, is essential for the effective execution of learning initiatives. They posited that the establishment of such networks fosters the exchange of experiences and information with individuals both within and external to the organization.

High-level expert (B7) articulated in this context: "*In general, within the framework of educational pursuits, it is imperative that we remain cognizant of contemporary resources and pertinent information. Consequently, the educational institution ought to facilitate our access to the Internet within the offices or departments of the Hormozgan Education Organization, thereby enabling us to conduct online research for information. However, within my office or unit, whenever I endeavor to explore a novel topic, I am compelled to consult the Internet for training purposes, as there exists no access to the intranet*".

Human resources specialist (C2) addressed this matter: "*Typically, we possess a designated area within the organization's internal network to disseminate content such as articles and theses for utilization therein; however, the accessibility of this resource is restricted to mid-level management. That is to say, the mid-level manager of the content is responsible for its acquisition and subsequent dissemination to the experts and subordinates within his category. Should we succeed in enhancing the accessibility of this network for the experts, we could furnish them with the pertinent materials related to the learning content*".

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In this context, the human resources expert (C2) further elaborated: "*In addition to the internal knowledge-sharing network, we are endeavoring to establish online knowledge repositories in alignment with the educational development of personnel within the organization*".

Upon an examination of the documentation pertaining to the education organization in question, it was discovered that this entity employs technology to enhance communication and possesses strategies aimed at establishing knowledge-sharing networks within its operational framework. The following points are articulated within the educational policy and declaration of excellence:

"*Facilitating information exchange via the internal network constitutes one of the most critical strategies in information management. All information is systematically categorized according to its nature and is made accessible to relevant stakeholders based on the access levels delineated by the system administrators."* (C10)

"*A comprehensive communication network at the educational group level, utilizing point-to-point communication, Internet, and satellite technologies, has facilitated the online exchange of systemic information*." (C11)

Discussion

The primary objective of the present investigation was to ascertain the role of human resource specialists in the facilitation of educational practitioners' learning within Hormozgan province. The results indicated that professionals are capable of providing six essential forms of support necessary for the learning process, which encompass the provision of informational resources, financial backing, opportunities for career advancement, both monetary and non-monetary incentives, executive assistance, and the establishment of networks. In this context, Kenny et al. (2003) underscore the significance of developmental and educational support in their study. At times, the learning environment generates conditions that necessitate human resource specialists to assume the role of trainers, thereby assisting operational managers in the identification and promotion of educational tasks. During the execution of employees' and managers' learning tasks, and to enhance their supportive function within the learning process, they may also undertake actions such as allocating and approving budgets for educational initiatives, fostering networking opportunities, developing executive guidelines, as well as providing and identifying relevant informational content.

Indeed, specialists in human resources development ought to assist in pinpointing the requisite content that sub-group employees require for the comprehension and execution of learning tasks,

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while also ensuring the facilitation of the most accessible means for employees to obtain information. As indicated by the participants, the establishment of an internal network and an online knowledge repository by educational professionals facilitates the seamless sharing of essential content in an easily accessible manner. Furthermore, within the realm of performance technology, the electronic support system is recognized as a formidable instrument for minimizing training expenditures and enhancing employee efficiency. The electronic support system is acknowledged as a pivotal solution to the operational challenges encountered by organizations in the past few decades (Postholm, 2012).

In order to enhance the efficacy of learning tasks, human resource practitioners must devise organizational policies that acknowledge the learning processes of employees within organizational documentation, while simultaneously establishing a dedicated framework for this domain of learning, thereby affirming the significance of employee needs. This is essential for the purposes of learning and professional development. Participants in this study indicated a requirement for designated learning time during work hours, with diverse learning opportunities woven into their daily professional activities. Notably, a salient finding of this research is the crucial role of motivational support, which human resource practitioners ought to prioritize during evaluations and following the completion of learning tasks. Such support may manifest in various forms, including career advancement opportunities and both financial and non-financial rewards.

The study sample was confined to educational personnel within Hormozgan province, and access to participants was hindered by the geographical constraints of the Hormozgan educational administration and the participants' demanding schedules. Consequently, it is recommended that this research be replicated in other provinces and cities across the Iran, as well as among employees of different organizations. The findings indicated that autonomy in action constitutes a form of support within the learning tasks of employees in the Education Department of Hormozgan province; therefore, it is advisable to broaden the scope of autonomy granted to senior management to enhance their supportive role, in addition to augmenting the authority of managers and subordinate employees in the processes of goal-setting, task design, and overall job oversight. Moreover, the research findings suggest that both financial and non-financial incentives provided by a learning facilitators' club contribute to heightened employee motivation for learning. Hence, it is recommended that human resource practitioners devise a comprehensive and precise incentive

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system for the establishment of a learning facilitators' club, ensuring that each individual receives financial and non-financial rewards commensurate with their contributions to the execution of learning projects or advancement within their job classifications. In this context, it is imperative to consider the motivational styles of individuals.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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