

IMPLEMENTATION OF HRM POLICY DESIGNED ACCORDING TO SHRM  
PERSPECTIVE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: CHAPTER I

Name of Student

Course

Name of Professor

University

Date



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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Introduction

The ability of public organisations to retain employees in rapidly developing countries is an important question for the debate because continuously changing conditions and environments make employers in private, semi-private, and public sectors adapt to new circumstances, as well as to the increased competitiveness in the labour market (Gberevbie 2010; Kashyap & Rangnekar 2014). Managers in public organisations in Qatar have also paid much attention to selecting and implementing human resource management (HRM) practices that can contribute not only to hiring the skilled workforce but also to retaining talents (Al-Horr & Salih 2011; Berrebi, Martorell & Tanner 2009). This chapter provides the background and rationale for this study focused on the topic of the relationship between HRM policies, practices, and retention of employees in public sector organisations of rapidly developing countries related to the case of Qatar.

#### Background of the Study: Qatar as a Rapidly Developing Economy

Qatar is amongst those nations that are characterised by the rapid economic growth because of the development of oil and gas industries as dominant sectors in the country (Berrebi et al. 2009). During the recent two decades, Qataris take one of the leading positions in the world that is associated with rates of income households and wealth (Berrebi et al. 2009). Thus, Williams, Bhanugopan, and Fish (2011, p. 194) note that Qatar “is one of the world’s wealthiest nations” that “boasts the highest per capita income in the world at US\$80,000 per annum, placing it first among industrialised nations in terms of income.” In 2008, Qatar achieved GDP of more than 25 percent (Williams et al. 2011, p. 195). This number is significantly higher than the percentage typical of other Middle East countries (Afiouni, Ruel & Schuler 2014; Duncan & Denaux 2013).

In the 2000s, Qatar “rapidly expanded its resource extraction through foreign investment,” which is rare for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Williams et al. 2011, p. 195). This rapid development and the extensive growth associated with active external investment in the country has increased the number of private companies, when the progress of semi-private companies is a characteristic feature of the modern economy of Qatar (Al-Khatib & Al-Abdulla 2001). This focus on foreign investment has also attracted more foreign workers to Qatar in spite of the fact that “the total of the economically active population grew from 322,906 in 2001 to 1,265,432 in 2009” (Scurry, Rodriguez & Bailouni 2013, p. 17). These data support the orientation of the Qatari economy towards integration with global markets and its concentration on North American and European economic patterns.

The changes in the economic status of the Qataris has affected their interest in finding jobs in governmental and private organisations; however, many high-skilled employees have begun to choose semi-private organisations as appropriate for guaranteeing security typical of governmental organisations and economic advantages characteristic of private companies (Williams et al. 2011). Berrebi et al. (2009) note that one of the reasons explaining the low level of employees’ interest in staying with governmental organisations can be a bureaucratic structure of public organisations. Thus, in some situations, bureaucracy can prevent talented workers from being promoted to higher positions or rewarded according to their performance. Therefore, it is important to focus on specific features of developing the semi-private sector in Qatar in contrast to the public sector.

#### Growth of the Semi-Private Sector in Contrast to the Public Sector in Qatar

The GCC countries are characterised by a high level of dependence on foreign labour resources, and this aspect contributes to forming a particular segmented labour market, in which employee retention is viewed as a challenging process (Al Waqfi & Forstenlechner 2010; Connell & Burgess 2013; Forstenlechner 2010). This segmentation reflects the typical

distribution of the workforce between private and public sectors. Governmental organisations traditionally recruit nationals while private organisations are more focused on attracting expatriates. As a result, in Qatar, as well as other GCC countries, it is possible to observe segments “between the public and the private sector, between indigenous and expatriate workers, and between skilled and unskilled workers” (Al-Horr & Salih 2011, p. 49). The direct consequence is a segmentation based on two types of economic and employment sectors and two types of the workforce.

The progress of the private sector, the interest of governments in the foreign investment, and development of economic relationships on the international arena have led to creating the semi-private sector as a new phenomenon in the economic sphere of the GCC countries that actively developed as a response to new economic conditions in the region (Al-Hamadi, Budhwar & Shipton 2007; Al-Khatib & Al-Abdulla 2001). Semi-private organisations have appeared in the GCC countries as direct competitors to both public and private sector companies because they are owned by private owners and governments; hence, they can develop their strategies in reference to the advantages characteristic of both sectors. According to Al-Hamadi et al. (2007) and Thiollet (2011), semi-private organisations in the GCC countries can also be discussed as effective in addressing bureaucracy typical of governmental organisations.

Semi-private organisations are viewed as companies that can reflect the principles of the global market competition while utilising strategies to increase their competitive advantage (Thiollet 2011). While explaining the interest in private companies’ approaches to organising work, Harry (2007, p. 137) states that, in the 2000s, private sector companies in the GCC countries were expected to provide higher salaries for employees. In this context, private and semi-private sectors in such countries as Qatar have focused on adopting the standards of the competitive labour market with the emphasis on high salaries and expanded compensation

packages (Al-Hamadi et al. 2007; Hashim 2010; Thiollet 2011). As a result, the increase of wages in private and semi-private sectors has created additional competition for public sector organisations that chose to fix their salaries instead of making them grow. However, in contrast to public organisations, private sector organisations usually do not provide such advantages as stability and security (Connell & Burgess 2013).

The researchers who study the labour market of Qatar and other GCC nations along with perspectives for the development of public and private sectors in these countries note that different factors are regarded as attractive to employees in order to choose the position in this or that organisation (Al-Esmael & Faisal 2012). Traditional views regarding public or private sectors in Qatar mentioned above also influence the perception of the semi-private sector. These perceptions are related to job positions, provided benefits, and approaches to the treatment of human resources. Williams et al. (2011, p. 197) note that “almost 50 percent of Qataris indicate that they would be willing to take a private sector position if offered one.” Therefore, it is possible to state that employees are inclined to evaluate the attractiveness of positions in public, private, and semi-private organisations with reference to the information they have about proposed terms and conditions.

Changes in priorities for employees are based on their perceptions of the competitive market in Qatar. As a result, employees become more interested in semi-private sector companies as advantages of private companies are also typical of these organisations (Thiollet 2011). In spite of the fact that employment in the private sector was traditionally regarded by Qatari employees as “undesirable”, while positions in these companies have been looked at “as low status and low paying,” the situation changed with reference to the growth of the semi-private sector (Williams et al. 2011, p. 197). The reason is in the fact that employers in the semi-private sector can offer workers the same level of wages as it is in the public sector, and

they also guarantee flexibility and professional growth associated with the private sector (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011).

The impossibility to retain employees in public sector organisations is one of the key reasons for the low involvement of nationals in the country's economy. The employees who were traditionally employed in the governmental sector faced possibilities of being equally employed in the semi-private sector and receiving similar benefits. According to Forstenlechner and Baruch (2013), the increased competitiveness in the labour market of the GCC countries also led to changes in the people's career development through a process of evaluating career opportunities. In the public sector, there is an expectation that positions and career are associated with the entitlement; as a result, there are limited opportunities for selection and career development.

Harry (2007) suggests that such limited opportunities for job selection and promotion can influence the employees' choice of a sector where they will work. Therefore, the interest of nationals in semi-private organisations increased accordingly. In Qatar, as a rapidly developing country, the intensive economic growth has led to increasing the number of semi-private organisations that are multinational companies partially owned by the government, and they can be discussed as more competitive than public or private organisations (Afiouni et al. 2014; Forstenlechner 2010; Forstenlechner & Rutledge 2010). This situation has resulted in developing the problem of a high turnover rate that became typical of both public and private sector organisations in Qatar.

#### Problem of Turnover and Retention in Public Sector of Qatar

According to Hausknecht, Rodda, and Howard (2009), the employee retention is discussed as a tool to sustain talented employees and predict problems associated with recruiting procedures when it is necessary to select and hire new staff. However, it is important to state that employee retention remains a concern for managers working in both private and



public sectors in rapidly developing countries because a variety of factors can influence employees' intentions and decisions to leave a company (Ananthan & Sudheendra 2011; Ibrahim & Al Falasi 2014). Thus, a direct consequence of the rapid development of economies and changes in the number of potential workers is the increased turnover intention of employees because they become attracted not only to public and private organisations but also to semi-private organisations due to specific opportunities and conditions that they offer (Hasin & Omar 2007; Iles, Almhedie & Baruch 2012). As a result, highly skilled workers have become targets for retention in both public and private organisations, but they can choose job positions amongst the proposed ones because of their qualification and offered benefits (Watty-Benjamin & Udechukwu 2014; Williams et al. 2011).

Another aspect connected with the turnover rate and retention is the increase in the workforce associated with changes in demographics. In Qatar and other GCC countries, the higher number of employees in different sectors is correlated with the lower number of the skilled workforce, as it is noted by Connell and Burgess (2013) and Iles et al. (2012). Therefore, it is important to retain talented workers in all organisations, regardless of the sector to which it belongs. However, in Qatar, public sector organisations can be viewed as requiring more action in this area. Rehman (2012, p. 85) has studied this phenomenon in public organisations of Pakistan and found that those employees who see a public organisation as "a place with less opportunities to move ahead and have a poor governance system with poor level of professionalism" had higher turnover intentions. These conclusions can also be related to the case of Qatar where the employees' focus on semi-private organisations is explained with reference to their difference from public organisations.

#### Government's Focus on HRM Programmes and Practices

In the GCC countries, the focus on retention of employees, especially nationals working in public sector organisations, is associated with the development of localisation programmes

(Forstenlechner 2010; Harry 2007). The goal of these programmes is the provision of nationals with “lifelong employment,” and this practice includes “helping them to develop skills within national labour markets and encourage their recruitment” (Scurry et al. 2013, p. 17). Such programmes can be discussed as an aspect of the complex strategy developed in Qatar and other GCC countries, according to which nationals are promoted in every company. They become actively retained, especially in governmental organisations (Forstenlechner 2010; Harry 2007; Forstenlechner & Rutledge 2010). Thus, employee retention in public and semi-private sectors of Qatar is a management strategy that is applied differently in relation to promoting Qatari and non-Qatari workers.

While focusing on the fact that the majority of employees in public sector organisations are Qataris, it is important to state that, as the specific form of the localisation program typical of the GCC nations, ‘Qatarisation’ is the government’s response to the risks of increasing the number of expatriates in the country (Williams et al. 2011). In this context, ‘Qatarisation’ is the framework for the retention strategy followed by managers to sustain local talents in their organisations. However, for retaining skilled expatriates, it is relevant to follow other strategies and approaches because it is important to provide them with rights equivalent to the rights and opportunities of nationals.

While accepting the fact that retention in Qatari organisations is directly associated with the idea of ‘Qatarisation’, it is important to state that in addition to increasing the attractiveness of public sector organisations for Qataris, the focus of such localisation programme was also on making the private sector Qatarised. Hence, the aim is to achieve the balance when 20% of positions in the private sector are taken by the Qataris (Williams et al. 2011). However, it was found that the employment projects associated with the ‘Qatarisation’ movement in the country could be successfully completed only with the focus on the implementation of appropriate HRM practices that could include training and development programs, career promotion and

planning strategies, as well as performance and appraisal management amongst others. From this perspective, the retention of Qataris depends directly on the implementation of appropriate HRM practices in public and semi-private organisations (Al-Esmael & Faisal 2012; Scurry et al. 2013).

The high level of competitiveness in modern market relations makes employers find new approaches to maximising their productivity and increasing the effectiveness of HRM. At the governmental level, authorities in Qatar focused on developing efficient HRM policies in order to address the issue of high turnover levels in the public sector. In 2009, the Qatari Government addressed the issue while proposing Qatar's 2009 Human Resource Management (HRM) policy for the purpose of providing employees in the public sector with more advantages and opportunities for promotion (Council of Ministers Secretariat General 2009). The implementation of the 2009 HRM policy by the Qatari Government was an important step towards improving the practices followed in public sector organisations in order to retain employees and decrease turnover intentions amongst them. The focus of the HRM policy was shifted from adapting the expatriates to the labour environments of the country to providing a range of benefits for the Qatari nationals in order to guarantee their retention in public sector organisations (Forstenlechner & Baruch 2013). The 2009 HRM policy covered all aspects of managing human resources in governmental organisations.

#### Qatar 2009 HRM Policy

Law No. (8) on the Promulgation of the Human Resources was adopted in April of 2009 in order to modernise the existing approach to managing employees who work in public sector organisations (Council of Ministers Secretariat General 2009). It was important for the authorities to restore the image of governmental organisations and address the increasing competition in the country's labour market, as well as reduce possible barriers to taking high and well-paid positions in public organisations. The Qatari authorities and developers of the

Law No. (8), often referred to as Qatar's 2009 HRM policy, aimed at attracting more skilled employees to public sector organisations while accentuating the promotion plans, training budget, benefits, salary levels, bonuses, rewards systems, and pension schemes (Council of Ministers Secretariat General 2009). The goal was to revise the approach to implementing HRM practices in public organisations, with the focus on introducing all proposed practices as bundles according to the principles of the configurational perspective of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) to achieve maximum results (Williams et al. 2011). From this perspective, HRM policy was proposed to make conditions in public sector organisations more flexible and advantageous for employees.

Modern public sector organisations in Qatar have faced the necessity of adopting practices typical of private sector organisations related to the promotion of employees, development of their knowledge, and improvement of their skills, as well as training, appraisal, and rewards. To remain competitive and be able to attract talented employees, public sector organisations needed to modify their approach to implementing the HRM practices. According to Scurry et al. (2013), the problem of Qatari governmental organisations was associated not with recruitment and selection, but with promotion and development opportunities proposed in organisations. According to Watty-Benjamin and Udechukwu (2014), the minimal turnover rate is typical of organisations where managers provide employees with many opportunities to receive higher benefits and improve their potential as professionals.

Researchers determine economic factors as the main drivers that made the Qatari authorities and policymakers revise the HRM policy adopted in the country and regulate the relations in public sector organisations (Al-Horr & Salih 2011; Williams et al. 2011). Policymakers have assessed the risks associated with high turnover rates and the attraction only of low-skilled employees (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011). The active economic development of the country, the growth of the oil and gas sector, and the increasing

interest of foreigners in Qatar were identified as the factors that could lead to decreases in employees' interest in governmental organisations.

The primary goal of the Qatari government for the implementation of the 2009 HRM policy was a change in the image of public organisations with the focus on providing more benefits, promotion opportunities and advantages, as well as competitive salaries. According to Williams et al. (2011, p. 195), "generous employment packages are also prevalent in the public sector." In this context, it was a challenging task for the Qatari authorities to modify the HRM policy to make it even more attractive to employees for the purpose of addressing their needs and expanding the provided benefits. Modern Qatar requires concentration on strategies and practices that are important to balance the labour in the country with focusing on the localisation programs (Williams et al. 2011). This approach can be effective to guarantee the protection of the cultural identity of the country. Thus, "a key component of successful localisation is the implementation of effective human resources strategies to support the process" (Williams et al. 2011, p. 201). From this perspective, the 2009 HRM policy was developed to address the problem retention with the focus on implementing HRM practices and supporting the localisation programme.

#### Purpose of the Study

The retention of employees working in the public sector of Qatar remains a concern because of associated challenges (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011; Gheitani & Safari 2013). There is no single idea regarding practices, approaches, and strategies that can influence the employees' views and assessments of their organisations (Tangthong 2014; Yousaf, Sanders & Abbas 2015). The extent to which HRM policy and associated practices could affect employee retention in public organisations of Qatar is the question that was not actively researched and discussed in the research literature. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to evaluate how significant the 2009 Qatar HRM policy was in influencing

the aspect of employee turnover intention in the public sector of the country. The impact of the policy and associated HRM practices is evaluated with reference to the employees' perception of these practices' effectiveness. Therefore, the focus is on analysing the significance of the 2009 Qatar HRM policy and effectiveness of such HRM practices as performance management, rewards and promotion, and training and development from the point of employees' intentions to stay in an organisation or leave it.

#### Rationale

Although the recent literature has actively discussed the variety of practices that can be implemented in organisations to affect employee retention with the focus on the context of rapidly developing economies, there is a lack of research regarding the effectiveness of HRM policies and practices in public organisations, and the research on HRM in Qatar is particularly limited. Therefore, the available research does not allow for drawing conclusions about the efficacy of implementing HRM practices as bundles in governmental organisations with the focus on changes in employee retention (Rathi & Lee 2015; Tangthong 2014; Tzafirir et al. 2004). Moreover, comparisons of practices used to influence employee retention in public and semi-private sectors are also not presented in studies (Cunningham & Kempling 2011; Rehman 2012).

The current research is, therefore, important to provide the insights regarding the effectiveness of policies and practices used in Qatari public organisations after 2009. This study is significant in answering questions about possible changes in employees' perceptions of their organisations' practices. As a result, it is possible to evaluate the significance of the Qatar's 2009 HRM policy in terms of affecting the aspect of employees' turnover intentions in the country's governmental sector.

### Significance of the Study

This empirical study is the first one to explore how HRM policy adopted in Qatar in 2009 could influence the implementation of HRM practices in the public sector of the country and produce an effect on employees' perceptions, attitudes, and turnover intentions (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011). The relationship between employees' perceptions of HRM practices, their attitudes, behaviours and the effectiveness of employee retention is still unclear and understudied, especially in the context of public sector organisations and companies located in the Gulf region (Akingbola 2013; Al-Emadi & Marquardt 2007; Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner 2012). The literature on the relationship between HRM practices and the employees' turnover intentions and job satisfaction suggests that such connection exists between the implemented HRM practices and the further effective retention of workers (Brunetto et al. 2012; Choi & Lee 2013; Gberevbie 2010).

However, there is a lack of research stating how the implementation of the specific HRM policy that provides the framework for the HRM practices could influence employees' perceptions and associated behaviours (Lai & Kapstad 2009; Mohamed, Nor & Dahalan 2014). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the fact that little information is available about the actual relationship between HRM policy and the HRM practices implemented according to the configurational perspective of SHRM, employees' job satisfaction, and employees' retention based on their turnover intentions.

This study also provides the detailed analysis of HRM practices that can be effective in terms of increasing retention and decreasing turnover rates within organisations in rapidly developing countries. The understanding of this connection and the focus on the appropriate perspective of SHRM guarantees the provision of managers in public organisations of Qatar with practical recommendations regarding the improvement of their HRM practices and

associated retention. This study is important to determine which HRM policy frameworks and HRM practices can lead to an increased level of retention within organisations.

### Research Objectives and Questions

The major aim of this study is to evaluate how significant HRM policy was in affecting employee turnover intentions in the public sector of Qatar. In addition, it is significant to assess the impact of the policy with the focus on employees' perceptions of the implemented HRM practices' effectiveness in public organisations from the point of employees' intentions to stay or leave. This goal can be achieved with the help of completing three principal objectives that provide the background and support for the research questions. The following research objectives are formulated to be addressed in the study:

1. To evaluate how employees' perceptions of such HRM practices as performance management, rewards and promotion, training and development related to the HRM policy correlate with their turnover intentions in the public sector.
2. To compare how selected HRM practices related to the HRM policy have influenced employee turnover intention in the semi-private sector.
3. To assess how effective the HRM policy designed according to the SHRM configurational perspective can be in relation to employee retention in Qatar's public sector.

While referring to the stated objectives, it is important to formulate the appropriate research questions that could potentially deal with the problem identified for this research:

RQ1: How can the selected HRM practices influence employees' turnover intentions in the public sector?

RQ2: In comparison to the public sector, how do the selected HRM practices influence employees' turnover intentions in the semi-private sector?



RQ3: To what extent is the implementation of the HRM policy designed according to a configurational SHRM perspective effective to retain employees in Qatar's public sector?

#### Definitions of Terms

This section provides operational definitions of terms used in the study as variables, as well as definitions of other constructs that are important for our research to ensure that all terms are used consistently in this study.

**Employee Retention:** Employee retention refers the employees' desire and intention to stay with an organisation for a long period of time owing to motivation, engagement, and commitment, as well as managers' strategies to retain and sustain employees in the company (ALDamoe, Yazam & Bin Ahmid 2011; Ananthan & Sudheendra 2011). Employee retention is measured in this study through the reference to employees' turnover intentions because the negative turnover intention indicates the positive retention (Yamamoto 2013).

**Turnover Intention:** Turnover intention refers to employees' emotions, feelings, as well as to job-related visions as psychological indicators causing employees' decisions to stay with or leave the employer (Cho & Lewis 2012; Reiche 2009). Turnover intentions are measured with reference to employees' perceptions and attitudes to their jobs, and this term is used to represent the factor of retention in measurable terms (Dhiman & Mohanty 2010).

**Job Satisfaction:** Job satisfaction refers to the state of pleasure experienced by an employee that is connected with the individual evaluation or vision of the person's job (Rehman 2012). Job satisfaction is measured with the focus on employees' positive associations with their jobs in public and semi-private organisations (Den Hartog et al. 2013; Onyemah, Rouzies & Panagopoulos 2010).

**Performance Management:** Performance management refers to a human resource management practice that includes administering performance appraisal and assessments for

the purpose of identifying the level and quality of employees' performance (Bambacas & Kulik 2013; Dhiman & Mohanty 2010)

**Rewards and Promotion:** Rewards and promotion refer to practices that are followed by human resource managers to plan and distribute compensation packages and benefits, as well as to choose employees for further promotion in an organisation (Alusa & Kariuki 2015; Bambacas & Kulik 2013).

**Training and Development:** Training and development refer to practices that include training and development activities oriented to improving employees' skills and knowledge, changing their behaviour according to job standards and requirements, and increasing their performance. The success of Training and development is to be measured with a focus on the provision of different types of training, development opportunities, and the planned budget appropriate to preparing employees for current or future positions (Al-Emadi & Marquardt 2007; Newman, Thanacoody & Hui 2011).

**Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM):** SHRM refers to the complex use of HRM practices with the focus on the concrete strategic goal set by an organisation. SHRM is used to influence the choice of practices with further impact on actions and behaviours of employees. SHRM is related to the complex vision of the organisational management in the context of certain strategies (Beh & Loo 2013; Ibrahim & Shah 2012).

**Public Sector Organisations:** Public sector organisations refer to governmental entities and organisations that are regulated by authorities (Rehman 2012).

**Semi-Private Sector Organisations:** For the context and purpose of this study, semi-private organisations are multinational companies that are partially owned by the government.

### Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter I is an introductory chapter that provides a discussion of the topic and the problem background along with the purpose of the

study, the rationale for it, and research questions. This chapter also highlights the features of employment in the GCC countries, and particularly, in Qatar.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature in the context of the theoretical framework selected for this research. The chapter presents the description of SHR and its perspectives, detailed discussions of HRM practices, such as performance management, rewards and promotion, and training and development. Retention theories and employees' perceptions of practices, as well as notions of job satisfaction and turnover intention, are also reviewed in this chapter. Moreover, human resource management in Qatar is discussed in detail. The chapter ends with a section on hypothesis development to provide the rationale for formulating the hypotheses in this research.

Chapter III explains the methodology selected for the study. This chapter presents the research philosophy, design, and method. It is focused on explaining the sampling technique, the choice and construction of the instrument, the aspects of the statistical analysis, as well as the discussion of ethics, validity, and reliability of the selected methods.

Chapter IV presents details related to the data analysis and reviews the tested hypotheses. Chapter V provides a discussion of the study results with the focus on research questions and the tested relationships. The chapter ends with the analysis of the contribution of the study to research and practice. Chapter VI, as a concluding chapter, discusses the overall implications of the study, concentrating on limitations and providing recommendations for further research in the field.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the background information on the problem of retention in the public sector of GCC countries with the focus on the case of Qatar. It has provided the preliminary discussion of HRM practices in their possible relationship with employees' perceptions and attitudes, focusing on the rationale for conducting the study. The chapter has

justified the necessity of the study with the focus on the outlined problem, while accentuating gaps in the theory and practice in relation to the implementation of the HRM policy and practices in Qatar organisations and the impact of these initiatives on employees' attitudes, satisfaction, turnover intentions, and associated retention.

Finally, the chapter has presented research objectives and questions, and much attention has been paid to formulating the rationale for this research. The significance of the study has also been explained clearly, with the focus on the expected contribution to research and practice. Definitions of the terms used in the chapter also contribute to understanding the background and conceptual framework of the study.

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