Pay for Performance in Private Sector Higher Education Institutions in UAE

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UAE has higher education institutions and universities from several countries, each of them practicing different systems of educators' compensation. The present article studies the nature of pay-for- performance in UAE's private higher education sector and evaluates the employee perception of the role of pay-for-performance in encouraging the performance. The study has considered the feedback of 144 educators from 5 major categories of the higher education institutions in UAE. Data analysis and hypotheses testing have been through standard statistical tools such as Kolmogorov-Smirnov with Lilliefors correction and Shapiro-Wilk test, Kruskal – Wallis H test, Mean-ranks and Mann- Whitney test, spearman correlation, regression analysis etc. The research has found that pay-for-performance is not considered as a replacement to regular pay hike.

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Introduction

Variable pay-for-performance has become an increasingly fashionable proposal over the last few years, in private companies as well as in the public sector. Many firms have given up fixed salaries and have resorted to pay their employees in variable pays. Firms try to match payment to objectively evaluated performance. It is reflected in such popular concepts as stock options for managers and various types of bonuses. In the public sector, efforts to raise productivity in the wake of growing informalization of workforce have also resulted in attempts to adjust variability of the compensation for performance. Thus, firms and public administrations increasingly rely on price incentives. According to Osterioh and Frey (2009), extrinsic motivations have become more popular than the intrinsic motivation techniques across the sectors in many parts of Europe and USA. UAE has not remained any exception (Ahmed &Royen, 2010).According to them, with the growing corporatization of

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business and the workforce, the emerging practices of 'pay - for- performance' have started dominating the compensation scenario in both public and private sectors in UAE. The same study has further highlighted a few industries, those catching up the phenomenon. Higher education has been shown as one of them.

Pay-for-Performance in Higher Education in UAE

Some studies and reports found the practices of 'pay-for-performance' prevailing in higher education in UAE. It is well known that the diverse higher education sector in UAE is dominated by the western models and a large number of foreign universities and institutions are operating in this country for past many years. According to a report published by Social Research Foundation(2016), more than two hundred small, medium and large campuses of the private institutions of higher learning are operating across the country. Many such institutions are accredited to local and federal government bodies and many are not. However, according to the report a large number of educators are employed in full time and regular positions with these universities. Suhail and Aslam (2009),in their study, have estimated the approximate number of such educators as more than three thousand. In 2018, such number has increased a few folds**.** Suhail and Aslam (2009) have further discussed on the employee relations practices in these private places of higher learning in UAE. They have found many innovative practices, adopted in the sector to attract and retain the employees, mainly the educators. Another study by Husaini and Ruckjah (2010) observed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational techniques are adopted by majority of the private institutions and universities in UAE. They have listed such benefits as fringe benefits, performance-based incentives, occasional bonus, research grant, healthy working environment, autonomy etc.

Literature Review

The present research attempts to review the available literature on the concepts and implications of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The available studies and some empirical evidences on motivation crowding effects have also been discussed. The research gaps in the context of above discussions and reviews have been identified.

Extrinsic motivation exists when employees are able to satisfy their needs indirectly, most importantly, through monetary compensation. Money as such does not provide direct utility but serves to acquire desired goods and services (de Charms, 1968**;** Deci, 1972).Another survey conducted by Heckhausen (1991) has also shown that though many firms attempted to motivate the employees by linking employees' monetary motives with the goals of the firm, yet in many cases it did not happen. Here he has iden-

tified such a system as ideal incentive system that is strictly based on 'pay-for-performance'. In contrast, motivation is also identified as intrinsic, which has been defined as 'the internal feelings and happiness of an individual for its own sake and that appears to be self-sustained" (Calder &Staw, 1975*)*.According to Csiksztmihalyi (1975), intrinsic motivation can be directed to the activities flow. It has also been identified to be directed to the self defined goal (Loewenstein, 1999), or to the obligations of personal and social identities (March, 1999).The ideal incentive system resides in the work content itself, which must be satisfactory and fulfilling for the employees. Intrinsic motivation is emphasized by the behavioral view of organization. This approach has a long tradition in motivation based organization theory (Argyris, 1964; Likert, 1961; McGregor, 1960). More recent examples are the critics of the transaction cost theory (Ghosal & Moran, 1996**;** Donaldson, 1995)*,* as well as the literature on psychological contracts (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1995). They emphasize intrinsic motivation and identification with the firm's strategic goals, shared purposes and the fulfillment of norms for its own sake. Intrinsic motivation has been dealt with very few authors in economics; examples are trust (Arrow, 1974),sentiments (Akerlof & Yellen, 1986*;* Frank, 1992), firm royalty (Baker & Murphy, 1998),managerial incentives (Guth, 1995) and implicit contracts or norms (Akerlof, 1982). Some economists admit the existence of intrinsic motivation but leave it aside because it is difficult to analyze and control (Williamson, 1996).

For a long time, it has been taken as a matter of course that extrinsic motivation raises performance. It seemed to be a well-established result in both the psychological (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996) and the managerial literature (Blinder, 1990; Lawler, 1990) that positive reinforcement of a particular action increases the future probability of that action. Mechanisms of instrumental and classical conditioning lead to the (relative) price effect, which is fundamental for economics (Becker, 1976, Stigler & Becker, 1977; Frey, 1992).However, according to Osterioh & Frey (2009)*,* rewards crowd out intrinsic motivation under particular conditions. The most important conditions are, first, that the task is considered to be interesting and second, that the reward is perceived to be controlled by the recipient. This effect has been called the 'hidden costs of reward' (Lepper & Greene, 1978) or the corruption effect of extrinsic motivation *(*Deci, 1975).Frey (1997) has introduced it into microeconomics as the 'crowding-out theory'. Extensive surveys given by Lepper and Greene (1978), Pittman and Heller (1978) and Lane (1991).Kohn (1993) and Deci and Flaste (1995) provide popular applications.

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The crowding out effect is based on cognitive evaluation theory (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985) and on psychological theory (Schein, 1965; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993).According to cognitive evaluation theory, intrinsic motiva-

tion is substituted by an external intervention that is perceived as a restriction on acting autonomously. The locus of control shifts from inside to outside the person (Rotter, 1966). The person in question no longer feels responsible but, rather, attributes responsibility to the person undertaking the outside intervention. However, according to Williamson (1996), this shift in the locus of control does not always take place**.** According to him, each external intervention-e.g., rewards-has two aspects, a controlling and an informing one. The controlling, aspect strengthens perceived external control and the feeling of being stressed from the outside. The informing aspect influences one's perceived competence and strengthens the feeling of internal control. Depending on which aspect is more prominent, intrinsic motivation is reduced or raised (Enzle & Anderson, 1993).An undermining effect on intrinsic motivation, called crowding out, is complemented by a positive effect on intrinsic motivation, called crowing in. If a task is at one and the same time extrinsically and intrinsically motivated, the more devalued the attribution of a self determined action the more strongly the individual believes him to be subject to outside control (Kruglanski, 1975).

There have been a large number of laboratory experiments on the impact of performance based pay in general and on crowding out effects in particular. Fortunately, the experimental evidence has been the subject of several meta-analytical studies. Wiersma (1992) looks at twenty studies covering 1971 to 1990, and Tang and Hall (1995) look at fifty studies from 1972 to 1992. Yuiand Tasaki (2008) has also found ten studies on the same areas in more recent times, i.e., from 1999 to 2007. These researches mostly support the impact of pay for performance on employee performance. However, these observations have been challenged by Eisenberger and Cameron (1996), Guddi and Koestku (2007) and few others. Upton (1973), Frey and Oberholzer-Gee (1997), Barkema (1995), Buchholtz, Schulze and Dino (1996), Richard (2007) have, however, held with their respective studies that the effect of intrinsic motivation cannot always be neatly separated from extrinsic motivation. In the field of academics, the effects of extrinsic motivation on employee performance and intrinsic motivation on employee performance have been found. Some such studies have been found in the works of Green and Croker (1989), Guddi and Koestku (2007) etc. However, most of these studies have been conducted on the educators at the school and high school levels. A few studies have been found on the academic fraternity and very few have been found on Middle East. None of such studies has been on the relationship between performance based pay and its impact on employee performance in the private sector higher education. Therefore the present research attempts to cover the research gap and an attempt has been made to evaluate the relationship empirically.

Research Objectives

Based on the research gaps identified, following research objectives have been formulated:

1) To study the nature of pay-for-performance at the workplace in the private higher education sector in UAE

2) To evaluate the employee perception of the role of pay-for-performance in encouraging the performance at workplace in the private higher education sector in UAE

The researches by Green and Croker (1989), Tusing et al. (1998) and Rao and Sinha (2005) have been on the nature of pay-for-performance in higher educational institutions in Europe, East Asia and South Asia respectively. According to them such pay-for- performance is a part of extrinsic reward policy in the West (Green & Croker,1989), whereas in East Asia and South Asia the trend is fast catching up (Tusing et al.,1998; Rao & Sinha, 2005). Another empirical study by Richard and Benn (2009) has concluded that pay-for-performance is widely used as an alternative to regular pay hike in most of the higher education private institutions in large part of Europe, Africa and Asia. Pay-for- performance has also been found to be related to the outcomes such as class feedback, student success rate, employability grading of the students in some cases etc. The same study has indicated that the majority of the educators in private sector higher education have welcomed such practice as their recognition and reward, whereas in Africa and Asia, the same has been accepted at moderate rates. Richard and Benn (2009) have held certain factors responsible such as individual orientation, professional and career orientation for such diverse opinions of the private sector higher education educators from different geographies.

Based on these studies and the research objectives (objective 1), following null hypotheses can be framed:

1) Pay-for-performance is not considered as a replacement of regular pay hike

2) Pay-for-performance does not comprise a major portion of pay package as the part of compensation policy

3) There is no significant relationship between the perception of the educators' to pay-for-performance experience and their working duration.

Based on many significant studies, discussed in the literature review and few others by Kenderson and Hooker (2008) and Robins (2009) as well as the specific research objective (objective 2), following null hypothesis has been framed:

4) Pay-for-performance does not encourage better performance at the workplace.

Methodology

For the purpose of data collection a structured questionnaire has been prepared, which comprises two sections. Under the first section, two main aspects of the respondent have been captured. These are:overall experience of the respondent with the private higher education sector in UAE and the type of institutional affiliation the respondent is attached currently. As per the recent report by Ministry of Higher Education, Government of UAE (2017), universities and higher academic institutions

from almost 10 countries are operating in UAE. Based on this information, the researchers have classified the affiliation groups in to 5 major categories i.e., European Universities and Institutions, American Universities and Institutions, Arabic Universities and Institutions, Asian Universities and Institutions and Australian Universities and Institutions).Experience groups have also been created following the very popular research on the same sector in Europe by Tinman and Roger (2000). Three experience groups have been created and placed under this section (0-less than 5 years, 5years- 10 years and More than 10 years). Under the second section of the questionnaire, a total of seven questions have been asked and a5 point Likert type scale has been used to capture the responses. The questionnaire has been sent to a total number of 200 educators through social media (linkedin) connections. However, at the end of two months (January-March 2018), 153 responses could be received (76.50% of the targeted sample). Out of 153, responses a total 144 have been finally considered for further research progress. Once the feedback has been collected, the same has been analyzed through appropriate statistical techniques. For example, once the percentage calculation has been done to identify the respondents profile and response patterns this was followed by Kolmogorov-Smirnov with Lilliefors correction and Shapiro-Wilk test, Kruskal – Wallis H test, Mean-ranks and Mann-Whitney test, spearman correlation, regression analysis etc. for hypotheses testing.

Data Analysis & Testing of Hypotheses

It is found that majority of the responses have been received from the educators teaching in the Asian universities or institutions of higher learning (29.10%), followed by Arabic Universities (27.08%) and others. Experience group wise, maximum respondents are found to be from the group of 5-10 years (65.97%), followed by 0- less than 5 years (20.83%) and more than 10 years (approx.13%).

The first null hypothesis of the study aimed to explore the respondents' view as 'pay – for – performance' being a replacement to regular pay hike based on the statement as "pay-for-performance is not considered as a replacement of regular pay hike". The question administered to understand is"pay-for-performance is the technique used by your employer to avoid regular salary hike at your workplace- what is your opinion". The data shows a steep inclination towards disagreement with the statement; 35% respondents strongly disagree, 37.8% disagree, only 2.8% agree. As the data set contains various groups with smaller number of respondents, a normality test was conducted on the data set. The result shown in the Table 1 informs that the data set is non normal (as the p value < 0.05 according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov with Lilliefors correction and Shapiro-Wilk test, rejects the null hypothesis).

A Kruskal – Wallis H, test performed on the dataset, based on academic experience and the university groups. The data found to retain the null hypothesis (as p

Table 1 Tests of Normality for the Variable Share of Pay- for-Performance as Replacement of Total Pay Package

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Q3	.212	143	.000	.832	143	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction
Data source: Primary Data

value 0.126> 0.05) across the categories of university groups and experience of the respondents (p value .553> .05).

"Pay-for-performance is not considered as a replacement of regular pay hike."

The null hypothesis retained across the categories of universities and experience of the respondents as"pay-for-performance is not considered as a replacement of regular pay hike."

We aimed to understand the proportion of the pay package (Q4) as a part of the compensation policy. The question used to understand the responses is: "How big is the share of pay-for- performance allowance in your total pay package". Majority of the data reveals that pay- for- performance comprises a negligible part of the total compensation (extremely negligible 16.8%, Negligible 20.3%, Moderate 40.6%, Good 20.3%, Very Good 2.1%). Cumulative values show 37.1% are of the view that pay- for- performance amounts a negligible portion in total compensation package whereas only 22.4% respondents agrees to the proposition that a major portion of the compensation is based on pay – for – performance.

The dataset is examined further to understand whether there is any statistically significant difference in the opinions of the respondents. The fact that the data set is non normalas the p value < 0.05 according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Statistic .241) with Lilliefors correction and Shapiro-Wilk test (Statistic .891), rejects the null hypothesis test. To understand whether there is any statistical difference among the respondents, who are the educators from various institutions a Kruskal – Wallis H test is performed (Table 2).

Table 2 Individual Sample Kruskal – Wallis H test Results on Performance Linked Pay in Proportion to Total Compensation Package (Q4) across University Groups

UE	N	Mean Rank		
American and Canadian Universities/ Institutions (A)	27	69.54	Chi-Square	4.547
European Universities/Institutions (B)	24	71.10		
Asian Universities/Institutions (C)	41	82.40	Df	4
Australian Universities/Institutions (D)	39	66.59	Asymp. Sig.	.337
Arabic Universities/Institutions (E)	12	61.38		
Total	143			

Data source: Primary Data

The null hypothesis, i.e., pay-for-performance does not comprise major portion of pay package as the part of compensation policy stands rejected.

The p value from chi square test assumes the value .337> 0.05, so we reject the alternative hypothesis and accepts null hypothesis of similarity of opinion across the distribution. Thus, there is no opinion difference between the respondents from various university groups related to proportion of pay-for-performance as the part of total compensation policy. In short, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis, i.e., pay-for-performance does not comprise major portion of pay package as the part of compensation policy stands rejected.

The data is further tested against the year of experience using individual sample Kruskal – Wallis H test. The p value is calculated as 0.03< 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected. The opinion of the respondents differs based on experience. To understand where the difference of opinion lies, a Mann- Whitney test is conducted between each pair of groups. Table 3 depicts that there is a significant opinion difference between respondents with 0- less than 5 years of experience and respondents with 5 - 10 years. The respondents with 5 -10 years are found more agreeing with the view that pay-for–performance creates a bigger share in total compensation package. Comparing the other two groups also it is understood that respondents with 5 -10 years experienced people are more positive over respondents with 10 years or more of experience.

Table 3 Mean Ranks & Mann – Whitney test Based on Experience&Opinion Related to Performance Linked Pay in Proportion to Total Compensation Package (Q4)

	Experience	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks		
Proportion of Pay- for – Performance in total compensation package	0-Less than 5 years	30	49.28	1478.50	Mann-Whitney U	1013.500
	5years to 10 years	94	66.72	6271.50	Wilcoxon W	1478.500
	Total	124			Z	-2.450
					Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.014
	5years to 10 years	94	58.92	5538.50	Mann-Whitney U	712.500
	More than 10 years	19	47.50	902.50	Wilcoxon W	902.500
	Total	113			Z	-1.452
					Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.146
	0-Less than 5 years	30	24.25	727.50	Mann-Whitney U	262.500
	More than 10 years	19	26.18	497.50	Wilcoxon W	727.500
	Total	49			Z	-.481
					Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.631

Data Source: Primary

So, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is understood that there is an opinion difference among the respondents from various experience levels related to proportion of pay-for-performance as the part of total compensation policy.

There is no statistically significant correlation among the experience and performance linked pay in total compensation.

The study also aimed to understand whether there is any correlation among pay–for- performance amount and respondents' experience. True, the results show a mean difference of opinion among the respondents, but the Spearman's rank correlation value calculated further (Spearman's Rho = 0.087 and the p value is 0.3> 0.05), accepts the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant correlation among the experience and performance linked pay in total compensation.

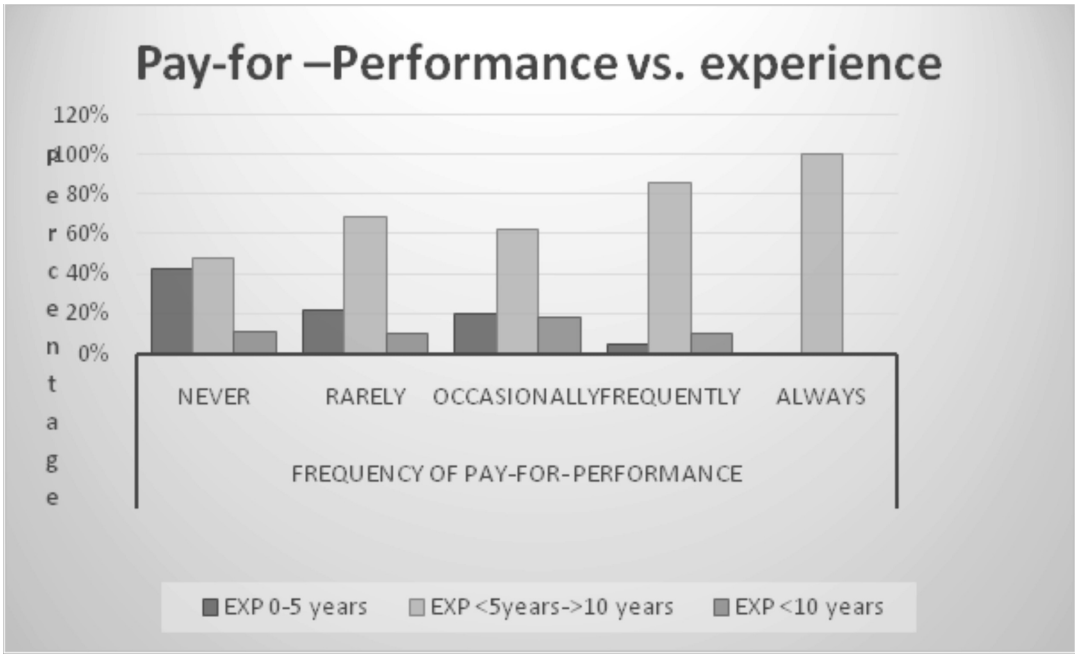
To get a deep insight into the issue, the variable Q1 (frequency of linking performance with pay) is studied further. Table 4 and fig. 1show the structure of responses related to frequency of pay – for – performance (Q1) and experience.

Table 4 Percentages of Responses on Frequency of Pay-for –Performance (Q1) vs. EXP

	0-Less than 5 years	5years -10 years	More than 10 year
Never	42%	47%	11%
Rarely	22%	68%	10%
Occasionally	20%	62%	18%
Frequently	5%	86%	10%
Always	0%	100%	0%

Data Source: Primary

Fig.1: Structure of responses related to frequency of pay –for – performance (Q1) and experience



Statistically, the table 5establishes a correlation between pay-for-performance and experience as spearman rank correlation is calculated as 0.03<0.05.

Table 5 Correlation between Frequency in Pay – for – Performance (Q1) & Experience

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.182	.077	2.193	.030

Data Source: Primary

To understand the opinion difference about frequency of pay-for-performance across the different ranges of experience pair wise Mann- Whitney test is conducted. The result is tabulated in Table 6:

Table 6:Mean Ranks and Mann – Whitney test based on experience to understand the frequency (Q1) in pay-for-performance

Experience	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks			
Frequency of pay-for–Performance	0-Less than 5 years	30	48.80	1464.00	Mann-Whitney U	999.000
	5years to 10 years	94	66.87	6286.00	Wilcoxon W	1464.000
	Total	124			Z	-2.525
					Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
	5years to 10 years	94	57.09	5366.00	Mann-Whitney U	885.000
	More than 10 years	19	56.58	1075.00	Wilcoxon W	1075.000
	Total	113			Z	-.065
					Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.948
	0-Less than 5 years	30	22.17	665.00	Mann-Whitney U	200.000
	More than 10 years	19	29.47	560.00	Wilcoxon W	665.000
	Total	49			Z	-1.870
					Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.061

Data Source: Primary

Table 6 shows a significant opinion difference among the respondents with 0 -5 years and others, though the difference of opinion between 0-5 years experience group and more than 10 years experience group is significant at 10% level. 5 – 10 years experience group is found to be more positive than the other group members. Hence it is understood as per the responses collected that pay–for- performance is more regular for this group, whereas for the senior group the pay- for- performance is not so regular. So, from the above discussion it is understood that linking pay with performance is correlated with the experience of the employees. It is found that with experience of the employees the practice of linking payment with performance is also increasing.Therefore, the null hy-

The null hypothesis i.e., pay for performance does not encourage better performance at the workplace is not accepted.

pothesis i.e., pay for performance does not encourage better performance at the workplace is not accepted.

Discussion

Pay-for- performance policy and its' implementation process has always been an issue of debate. While pay - for- performance increases the motivation among the employees to perform best through the promotion of healthy competition among them, on the contrary, the over emphasis on it, may create grievances, dissatisfaction and lack of motivation among the employees. The paper aimed to study the responses of the people who are working in different universities in UAE and segmented them based on their experience level. There is a difference in opinion among the respondents regarding the effects of implementation of the policy in academic settings. It is understood from the study that though, on an average, the respondents across universities under study accepted that pay-for-performance is encouraging to showcase their better performance. But there are some opinion differences based on their affiliating country. Respondents from Australian and Arabic universities have presented their concern whether the policies are encouraging at all. It seems that the policy, its' implementation procedure and its effect on employee engagement and satisfaction depend on the organizational culture and philosophy. Therefore, while implementing this policy the management must have the knowledge of cultural dynamics of the organization. It is found from the regression analysis that, if pay-for-performance is embedded in the total compensation package, then it can lead to employee satisfaction. But over emphasis on it or replacing the regular salary hike by this policy is not accepted by the respondents. As observed from the administration of questionnaire and in depth interviews that the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction over the communication and management of the metrics on which the policy is implemented.

Limitations & Future Scopes of Study

The study provides a small representation of the academic fraternity in UAE, so the results may be biased to some extent. There is further possibility to increase the scope of study by increasing the sample size. The procedural pros and cons can be further studied to have a better perceptive idea about the possibility of the policy to succeed.

Conclusion

The entire research has thus contributed to identify the perception patterns relating to the employee motivation based on the pay-for-performance issues among the educators of the private higher educational institutions in UAE. The study has further contributed to understanding the differences of opinions according to different affiliations and it's notable to see that the entire concept and practice of 'pay-for-performance' significantly varies throughout the private higher education system in UAE. The findings of the study can therefore be considered as important indicators for

policy related initiatives on the relevant issues in the private higher education sector in UAE.

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