

Taming *Wasta* through Training Opportunities in Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Manuscript type: Research paper

Research aims: This study examines the effects of *Wasta* on job performance in Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), Jordan. It also evaluates the mediating effect of perceived training opportunities (PTO) between *Wasta* and job performance.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A total number of 344 usable questionnaires were collected from employees working at GAM in 22 different regions in Jordan.

Research findings: The results indicate that *Wasta* has a negative effect on job performance. The results also show that PTO partially mediates the relationship between *Wasta* and job performance.

Theoretical contribution/Originality: The research findings enrich our understanding of the impact of *Wasta* practice on job performance in the public service of Jordan. The findings of this study expand on the existing literature on business relationships.

Practitioner/Policy implication: The findings of this study provide insights into how managers at GAM can enhance the performance

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of employees and gain citizens' satisfaction. This can be done by reducing or eliminating *Wasta* and avoiding the use of *Wasta* when nominating employees for training programmes.

Research limitation/Implications: The scope of this study is limited to only one governmental service organisation, specifically GAM, in Jordan.

Keywords: Job Performance, *Wasta*, Perceived Training Opportunities (PTO), GAM

JEL Classification: J20, J24

1. Introduction

Employees' job performance within the government service is crucial because it reflects the image of the government and the efficiency of the government administration. High job performance increases citizens' confidence in the government, hence their perception of its services (Yang & Holzer, 2006; Miao, Eva, Newman, & Schwarz, 2019). This has also been noted by Stredwick (2005) who emphasised that job performance improvement and behaviour is one of the many solutions taken by municipalities towards providing essential services efficiently and reliably to its citizens. One of the problems in the Jordanian public sector is over-hiring, which has led to a decline in the quality of the public services provided. This characteristic has led to the accessibility of unqualified employees with poor performance. In turn, this affects the government's image negatively. The poor performance of the Jordanian public sector is caused by the employees' lack of confidence in their employers' recognition of their hard work (Nimri, Bdair & Al Bitar, 2015). These employees do not believe that their starting salaries commensurate with the work they do; they also believe that their salaries are insufficient to meet their economic needs. They also lack the confidence in their work system, believing that the promotion system is not fair to them, nor would they be fairly and financially rewarded even if they were more productive. These employees also do not believe that the government cared enough about its employees' professional well-being. The reason causing all these lack of confidence is because the Jordanian government does not provide honorary promotions; it does not offer any training opportunities to its employees; it does not involve its employees in decision making; it does not recognise the ability of its employees for certain jobs, hence employees have very little opportunities to be transferred to a better department in lieu of their

good performance (Shaheen, El-Hneiti, Albqoor, & Ahmad, 2019). In this context, few studies have been conducted to show the factors that can motivate an individual to serve the public service better, particularly within the Arab culture, including Jordan. In particular, few studies had actually focussed on the *Wasta* practice within the Arab culture (Alreshoodi, 2018).

Wasta intervenes the daily lives of the people in Arab countries (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993). It plays an important role in the hiring process, employee promotion, employee nomination for training programs as well as employee consideration for decision making within Arab firms (Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008). Conceptually, *Wasta* can be defined as favouritism based on tribal and family affiliations (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993). *Wasta* is perceived as a process whereby the individual's objectives are achieved through linkages or relationships with key persons associated with the firm (Smith, Huang, Harb, & Torres, 2011). These linkages are based on personal associations derived from family or close relationships. *Wasta* is sometimes seen as a corrupt or unjust act that contradicts the teachings of Islam (Hutchings & Weir, 2006; Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008). Many civil servants in Jordan are employed primarily due to *Wasta* (Loewe et al., 2007). This practice of *Wasta* has consequently led to poor job performance because employees with better qualifications do not get the job as a result of *Wasta*. Comparatively, the vacancies are often filled by those with *Wasta*. Often, these individuals have lower qualifications. As a result, many well qualified individuals and employees feel frustrated due to the unjust treatment practised by the government bureaucracy (Makhoul & Harrison, 2004).

In contrast, the equity theory focusses on the exchange relation whereby individuals give something while expecting something in return (Adams, 1965). Among individuals, it is noted that feelings of injustice lead to dissatisfaction, anger and guilt. People tend to have anger and dissatisfaction when they get less than what is expected compared to their input, and people tend to experience guilt when they get more than what they deserve (Adams, 1965). *Wasta* is a kind of corrupt or unjust act, and as such, the equity theory suggests that the employees' perception of unfair distribution may negatively affect their performance with regards to quality and quantity (Adams, 1965). The employee may have intentions of harming the organisation so as to make his/her sense of injustice less painful, and also for the sake of restoring a sense of justice through retributions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

While the impact of *Wasta* on employee or job performance has been acknowledged in literature (e.g. Alreshoodi, 2018), there are studies which did not find any conclusive evidence on the *Wasta* relationship. Altindag (2014), for example, found that even though nepotism was considered an organisational weakness, it can be turned into an opportunity in the case of Turkey's small and medium businesses. The study reported that recruiting and placing close-related employees in a critical position helped to deliver good performance. Such employees felt that they were accountable for the organisation. Such inconsistent results makes it thus necessary to conduct further studies in this area of research. It is possible that the inconsistent results may be due to the interactions of certain intervening variables. In line with this contention, the present study expands on the existing literature by incorporating training opportunities as a mediating variable so as to explore how training opportunities could weaken the negative impact of *Wasta* on employee performance.

Various literature (e.g., Appiah, 2010; Mporu & Hlatywayo, 2015; Shaheen et al., 2019) have highlighted the importance of training in enhancing organisational performance and productivity. Through training, employees' performance could be improved. Training enables employees to gain new skills and to improve on their existing ones. This will eventually facilitate their job performance. Similarly, an organisation that invests in staff training and development appears to have more satisfied employees (Algharibeh, Almsafir, & Alias, 2014). Relevant exercises provide learning opportunities for the employees, enhancing their self-confidence to embrace new things, thereby leading to improved morale. Employees who are given opportunities to attend training would see themselves as staff who are valued by their organisation, which in turn, motivates them to work harder. In contrast, the concept of *Wasta* may discourage or demotivate some employees from performing well due to the fact that *Wasta* is based on relationships such that it could foster negative perceptions, for example, unfairness in training opportunities. Although such training opportunities have been argued to intervene the impact of *Wasta* on employees' performance, little empirical work can be detected to demonstrate this phenomenon. While some past literature had discussed the influence of *Wasta* in organisational or employee performance, most literature (e.g., Alreshoodi, 2018; Alreshoodi & Andrews, 2015) tend to focus on examining the direct relationship between *Wasta* and employee outcomes, perceived competence, employee behaviour, human resources management, career success and employment process.

Motivated by the above limitations, the current study therefore, attempts to investigate the role of training opportunities (PTO) on employees' performance in the public sector of Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), Jordan. GAM is one of the governmental organisations in Jordan. It provides municipal services to more than three million citizens in the capital of Amman, which is divided into twenty-two regions.

The remaining discussion of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature pertaining to job performance and *Wasta*, and its theoretical development. Section 3 discusses the methodology employed, while Section 4 reports on the results. Section 5 discusses the findings and Section 6 concludes the paper by focussing on the implications for management and theory.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Job Performance

Job performance is one of the crucial variables that has been studied widely within the context of organisational psychology (e.g., Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Johari & Yahya, 2016; Xie & Yang, 2020). Earlier studies (e.g., Campbell, McHenry, & Wise, 1990; Murphy, 1989; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002) referred to job performance as actions and behaviours of employees which may influence organisational performance. Other studies (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993) had conceptualised job performance as a multidimensional construct that is made up of two dimensions, namely: core task performance (in-role performance or behaviour) and contextual performance (OCB – organisational citizenship behaviour) (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Core task performance refers to the results of technical tasks and job responsibilities carried out by an employee (Witt, Kacmar, Carlson, & Zivnuska, 2002). Contextual performance goes beyond the core job responsibilities. It is reflected by the activities performed by an employee in support of the social needs, such as coaching co-workers, strengthening social networks within an organisation and going the extra mile for the organisation.

2.2 *Wasta*

Wasta or sometimes called nepotism (Brahms & Schmitt, 2017; Fawzi & Almarshed, 2013) is a silent practice in many Arab organisations

(Hutchings & Weir, 2006; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). It is a practice that intervenes the daily lives of the society at large (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993). *Wasta* represents a kind of personal relationship that plays an important role (Branine & Pollard, 2010) in human resource practices, such as hiring, promotions and decision-making among Arab firms (Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008). With *Wasta*, one would be employed and promoted, regardless of his/her skills, capabilities or education (Altindag, 2014; Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993), due to personal connections.

Wasta is widespread in the Arab world, due to the culturally-based need to maintain authority. The high unemployment in many of the Arab countries has been observed to be one of the de facto that led the society to practice *Wasta* so as to secure a job (Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008). The use of *Wasta* to bypass a formal process leads to reduced workplace diversity and job engagement; it also damages organisation reputation (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2012). *Wasta* is considered as a kind of corruption (Bekker, 1991) since it involves the abuse of power to gain personal advantages (Al-Shamari, 2012; Hallak & Poisson, 2005). It is a negative phenomenon, built into political, economic and social friendship systems that treat people and groups unfairly (Alwerthan, 2016).

2.3 *Wasta and Job Performance*

Within the literature, many studies have documented the negative impact of *Wasta* on job performance (Makhoul & Harrison, 2004; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). These studies have noted that under the practice of *Wasta*, employees who have good personal connections may have higher chances of securing a job, regardless of the suitability of the qualifications possessed. In this regard, organisations may end-up hiring a workforce that is incompetent. This, in turn, can affect their productivity. On a similar note, employees who are qualified may not be able to secure the job opportunities. Subsequently, they may not perform well as they feel that they are treated unfairly. As a practice, *Wasta* reduces employees' motivation especially those who want to develop their skills and abilities. This is because such employees may have secured the job due to their connections rather than their capabilities.

In the context of Arab countries, Mohamed and Hamdy (2008) examined employees in the private and public universities in Egypt. They found that employees who were recruited through *Wasta* demonstrated lower efficiency and work ethics than employees without *Wasta*.

In Saudi Arabia, *Wasta* was found to negatively affect public service motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Alreshoodi & Andrews, 2015). In another study, Kilani, Al Junidi and Al Riziq (2015) reported that the presence of employees without adequate experiences and who were employed through *Wasta*, seemed to affect business ethics and the employees' failure to perform work accordingly. The use of *Wasta* also created conflicts between group members in the organisation. This conflict negatively affects group performance, company performance and outcomes. In Turkey, Bute (2011) reported that in organisations where nepotism practices were widespread and yet considered normal, managers could not behave reasonably toward their employees. This affected the efficiency of the qualified employees who were enthusiastic about their work and organisation. Based on this, the current study postulates that:

H₁: *Wasta* is negatively related to job performance.

2.4 Perceived Training Opportunities (PTO) and Job Performance

Employees' training is vital for improving their job performance (Mpfu & Hlatywayo, 2015). When organisations provide employees with development opportunities, employees are motivated to do their best so as to benefit the organisation (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2008). The high levels of training opportunities make employees feel important and valued (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). This would eventually enhance their task performance as well as motivate them to engage in their work, hence generate a higher intention to stay. These employees tend to consider training opportunities as social exchanges between employees and employers (Maurer, Pierce, & Shore, 2002). It appears that training plays an important role in job performance because through training employees also acquire new skills whilst also sharpening their existing skills (Appiah, 2010; Mpfu & Hlatywayo, 2015). Based on these arguments, this study further postulates that:

H₂: Perceived training opportunity is positively related to job performance.

2.5 *Wasta* and Perceived Training Opportunities (PTO)

Under the *Wasta* practice, some studies (e.g. Zhrah, 2015) have indicated that employees are often not given equal opportunities to attend train-

ings. Since employees working under the *Wasta* influence were given 'first class' treatment due to their personal connection, the same employees would also be offered chances to attend educational and training courses for upskilling purposes, even though these employees may not require them. Similarly, the organisation also tends to discriminate employees who were not employed through *Wasta* by denying them similar opportunities for training and development (Altarawneh, 2009). It was observed by Arasli, Bavik and Ekiz (2006) that *Wasta* is considered a non-professional act, it offers benefits for career growth only to family members or close friends. This practice has been found to paralyse the HR department of firms. Based on this argument, this study postulates that:

H₃: *Wasta* negatively influences PTO.

2.6 *Wasta*, PTO and Job Performance

Whilst *Wasta* appears to be negatively associated with job performance (Alreshoodi & Andrews, 2015; Mohamed & Hamdy, 2008), the relationship between these two variables was observed to be inconsistent (e.g., Altindag, 2014). This indicates a possibility of interaction of the intervening variable. In this study, it is expected that the relationship between *Wasta* and job performance is dependent on a third variable – training opportunities. Studies (e.g. Appiah, 2010; Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015) have demonstrated that training could help firms to enhance their performance since training enhances the employees' individual value. Employees who had been offered and experienced such trainings often feel indebted to their organisations, hence this made them loyal to their organisations. In return, many of these employees would reciprocate by performing their work tasks and responsibilities effectively. In this regard, it is deduced that even though *Wasta* may demotivate some employees from performing well, this relationship may be tamed by providing employees with training opportunities. Based on these arguments, this study postulates that:

H₄: PTO mediates the relationship between *Wasta* and job performance.

Based on the literature review and hypotheses developed, this study presents a research framework as shown in Figure 1.

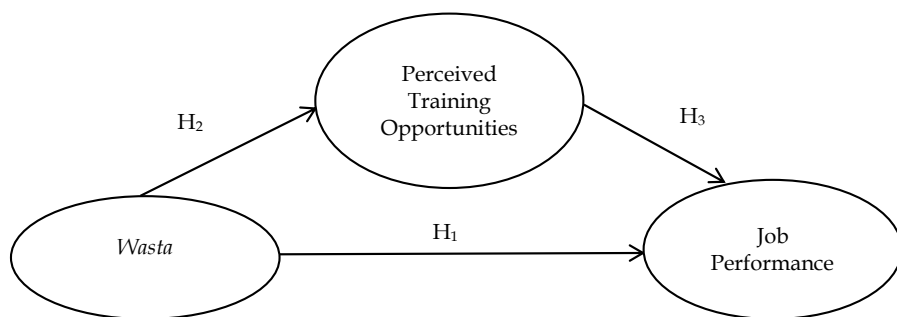


Figure 1: Research Framework

Note: H_4 is the mediating effect.

3. Data and Methodology

The target population of this study comprised employees (based on the information provided by the human resources department at GAM headquarters) who were attached to GAM units located in 22 regions in Jordan. As the total population of this study amounted to 7,805 employees, the sample size required was worked out to 365 (Sekaran, 2005). For this reason, the stratified random sampling was used for the classification and separation so as to make random selection of subjects from each stratum and region (Sekaran, 2005). This type of sampling technique was chosen because it provides equal opportunities for each respondent to be selected as a sample (Sekaran, 2005). This sampling technique has an advantage because there is no researcher bias involved in the selection of samples (Salkind & Rainwater, 2003). Table 1 shows how the 365 samples were derived from the total population.

Prior to the data collection, permission to conduct the study was sought from the management. The self-administered questionnaires were distributed to approximately 365 employees from the 22 regions through the heads of department. The participants were given one week to complete the questionnaire before a follow-up was made through telephone calls. Of the 365 questionnaires distributed, only 344 were deemed usable, indicating a response rate of 94 per cent. The respondents' profiles are depicted in Table 2. It appears that gender is almost equally distributed. Majority of the respondents are between 36 to 40 years old (26.2%), qualified with Bachelor's degree (41%), and with work experience of at least 11 to 15 years (38.1%). The results also show that more than half of the respondents work as administrators (55.25%).

Table 1: Sampling Design

Region	Number of employees (X)	Percentage of employees per strata ($Y=X/N$)	Percentage of employees per strata = $Y * 365$	Actual sample of employees from the strata
Al-Abdali	416	$416/7805*100=5.3\%$	$5.3\% * 365$	19
Rasualain	316	$316/7805*100=4.0\%$	$4.0\% * 365$	15
Almadina	380	$380/7805*100=4.9\%$	$4.9\% * 365$	18
Zahran	344	$344/7805*100=4.4\%$	$4.4\% * 365$	16
Alyarmouk	403	$403/7805*100=5.2\%$	$5.2\% * 365$	19
Badir	328	$328/7805*100=4.2\%$	$4.2\% * 365$	15
Tariq	333	$333/7805*100=4.3\%$	$4.3\% * 365$	16
Marka	416	$416/7805*100=5.3\%$	$5.3\% * 365$	19
Alnasir	365	$365/7805*100=4.7\%$	$4.7\% * 365$	17
Basman	484	$484/7805*100=6.2\%$	$6.2\% * 365$	23
Alquisma	431	$431/7805*100=5.5\%$	$5.5\% * 365$	20
Kerpet Assoq	437	$437/7805*100=5.6\%$	$5.6\% * 365$	20
Muqabalin	300	$300/7805*100=3.8\%$	$3.8\% * 365$	14
Aljobeha	356	$356/7805*100=4.6\%$	$4.6\% * 365$	17
Swaileh	412	$412/7805*100=5.3\%$	$5.3\% * 365$	19
Tela'lali	455	$455/7805*100=5.8\%$	$5.8\% * 365$	21
Abu Nusair	253	$253/7805*100=3.2\%$	$3.2\% * 365$	12
Shafabadran	205	$205/7805*100=2.6\%$	$2.6\% * 365$	10
Wadiassir	483	$483/7805*100=6.2\%$	$6.2\% * 365$	23
New Badir	122	$122/7805*100=1.6\%$	$1.6\% * 365$	6
Marjulhamam	306	$306/7805*100=3.9\%$	$3.9\% * 365$	14
Uhod	251	$251/7805*100=3.2\%$	$3.2\% * 365$	12
Total	7805	100%		365

Table 2: Profile of respondents (N=344)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	182	52.9
	Female	162	47.1
Age	< 20	4	1.2
	20-30	65	18.9
	31-35	67	19.5
	36-40	90	26.2
	41-45	67	19.5
	46-50	33	9.6
	51-55	11	3.2
	> 55	7	2.0
Education Level	High School or Less	85	24.7
	Diploma	94	27.3
	Bachelor's degree	141	41.0
	Master degree	21	6.1
	Ph.D.	3	0.9
Working Experience	< 5	15	4.4
	5-10	77	22.4
	11-15	131	38.1
	16-20	79	23.0
	21-25	36	10.5
	> 25	6	1.7
Job Title	Section Head	41	11.9
	Unit Head	20	5.8
	Administrative	190	55.2
	Field Worker	26	7.6
	Engineer	21	6.1
	Accountant	31	9.0
	Legal Researcher	7	2.0
	Painter	8	2.3

The instruments used in this study were adopted from prior literature. Five items adapted from Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) measured the degree of *Wasta* being adopted in the organisation, seven items adapted from Kuvaas and Dysvik (2008) measured perceived training opportunities, and six items adapted from Chiah and Hsieh (2012) measured job performance. The instrument was based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

This study performed a descriptive analysis so as to analyse the mean and standard deviations of the constructs used. The results show that the use of *Wasta* in Jordanian society appears to be socially unacceptable ($M=1.85$). This outcome suggests that the use of *Wasta* which is perceived to be widespread in the Arab culture is generally viewed as negative by the respondents. This is not surprising as many of the Arab countries have started to experience revolutions, as a result of *Wasta* practice. For instance, in Tunisia, Morocco and Syria, *Wasta* has started to cause tensions and political unrests (Kilcullen & Rosenblatt, 2014). Unemployed graduates who were deprived from the opportunity to obtain a good education and to obtain a decent job due to the “elite” society have also started to express their dissatisfaction. Table 3 further illustrates the outcome.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Dimensions

Dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job Performance (JOP)	344	4.22	.702
Perceived Training Opportunities (PTO)	344	3.80	.666
<i>Wasta</i> (WAST)	344	1.85	.830

4.2 Measurement Model Results

This study employed structural equation modelling (SEM) to evaluate the conceptual model and to test the hypotheses formulated earlier. In line with Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the two-stage modelling was performed by incorporating measurement model analysis and structural model analysis. The measurement model was assessed through the convergent validity and discriminant validity. The purpose is to validate the psychometric properties of the measurement.

To assess the convergent validity, results of the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were inspected (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013), with items having a loading of more than 0.70, AVE of at least a value of 0.5, and CR having a value exceeding 0.7, are to be retained. Table 4 shows that all the latent constructs in this study have achieved convergent validity since the

Table 4: Items Loading, AVE and Composite Reliability for the Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Items loading	CR	AVE
Job performance	JOP1	0.88	0.96	0.79
	JOP2	0.89		
	JOP3	0.90		
	JOP4	0.92		
	JOP5	0.85		
	JOP6	0.90		
Perceived training opportunities	PTO1	0.87	0.95	0.74
	PTO2	0.83		
	PTO3	0.87		
	PTO4	0.87		
	PTO5	0.88		
	PTO6	0.86		
	PTO7	0.83		
<i>Wasta</i>	WAS1	0.93	0.96	0.84
	WAS2	0.91		
	WAS3	0.93		
	WAS4	0.87		
	WAS5	0.93		

factor loadings are between 0.74 to 0.84, the CR values are above 0.9 and the AVE values are more than 0.7.

Following the above, the discriminant validity was then tested in the measurement model. Discriminant validity is the extent to which a variable is genuinely distinct from other variables in terms of how much it correlates with other variables, and how much the indicators represent only a single variable (Hair et al., 2013). The criterion and cross-loading scores of Fornell and Larcker (1981) were used to establish the discriminant validity. Table 5 demonstrates that the square root of the AVE for all the latent variables (diagonal) is higher than the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal). Therefore, this confirms the discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5: Discriminant Validity Analysis

	JOP	PTO	WAST
JOP	0.890		
PTO	0.617	0.859	
Wasta	-0.564	-0.537	0.914

Note: Diagonal elements represent the square roots of AVE values.

4.3 Structural Model Results

This study utilised the PLS algorithm and the standard bootstrapping procedure with a number of 5,000 bootstrap samples to examine the path coefficients’ significance (Hair et al., 2013). Table 5 shows the path coefficient values and the bootstrapping results. The results explain the hypothesised relationship among the study variables.

To illustrate the research model conceptualised for this study, Figure 2 is provided. As shown, the R² values for job performance and PTO are 0.457 and 0.288, respectively. This outcome indicates that *Wasta* can explain 45.7% of the variance in job performance and 28.8% of the variance in PTO.

In this study, *Wasta* is found to have a negative relationship with job performance among employees attached to the GAM in Jordan ($\beta = -0.326$; $t = 5.88$; $p < 0.001$). This therefore supports H₁. The findings further show that the employment of GAM employees performed through *Wasta* is perceived to negatively affect job performance. The respondents viewed the influence of *Wasta* in the hiring decision had caused unqualified employees to obtain positions which were

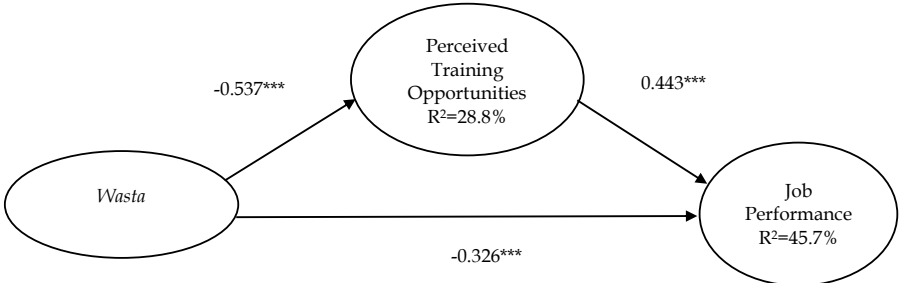


Figure 2: Structural Model

not matched with their qualifications. This situation may lead to inadequacies among employees while performing their duties as required. Not only was this noted, it appears that training of such employees who may not need the training was not a good move for the organisation because these employees would create further problems. If untreated, these problems would also affect the productivity and resources of the organisation. Similarly, the Jordanian employees also perceived the *Wasta* practice as an unethical behaviour, hence, an unfair treatment. These perceptions derived from the employees could lead to poor job performance. One expected outcome of this study is that a working environment that does not practise democracy or fairness leads to discontent and discouragement among employees. Such an atmosphere could lower employees' engagement and loyalty to the GAM. As a result, it could lead to negative consequences such as work absenteeism, work delays, weak performance and high turnover rates. The result derived from the current study is in line with prior studies (Alreshoodi 2018; Bute, 2011; Khatri & Tsang, 2003; Makhoul & Harrison, 2004). Table 6 displays the effects of the hypotheses testing.

Table 6: Hypotheses Testing (Direct Effect)

Path	Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	t-value	p-value	Decision
<i>Wasta</i> → JOP	H ₁	-0.326	5.88	0.000	Supported
PTO → JOP	H ₂	0.443	9.267	0.000	Supported
<i>Wasta</i> → PTO	H ₃	-0.537	11.011	0.000	Supported

This study has reported the positive relationship between PTO and job performance at GAM in Jordan ($\beta = 0.443$; $t = 9.267$; $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H₂. The findings are consistent with previous studies (Diab & Ajlouni, 2015) which argued that individuals who have the opportunity to participate in a training programme tend to see an increase in their job performance and skills. Increased training opportunities would also help to reduce turnover rates, increase organisational effectiveness, and increase the growth and development of the organisation (Issahaku, Ahmed, & Bewa-Erinibe, 2014). According to this result, employees who gained training opportunities at GAM can provide municipal services with higher efficiency because the training is reflected positively in their job performance.

As expected, *Wasta* is found to have a negative effect on PTO at the GAM in Jordan ($\beta = -0.537$; $t = 11.011$; $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H_3 . It indicates that *Wasta* will exert a significant negative influence on PTO. Working in an unfair and competitive environment makes GAM employees dissatisfied, thus it demoralised them in their jobs. This could turn them to become disloyal and uncommitted to GAM. They may also lose interest in their work involvement, in cooperating with their co-workers, and in their coordination with GAM activities. The intervention of *Wasta* in the nomination of employees for training programmes at GAM is also considered a waste of time and expenses. This is because the training was allocated to employees who do not need the training while those who require training was not given the opportunity. This intervention of *Wasta* made the GAM employees felt a sense of injustice and inequity, which was reflected in their performance and loyalty to GAM. The practice of *Wasta* had upset many of the employees. As a result, productivity was low. If this persists, it could lead to work absenteeism, and high turnover rates. Based on this, it can be said that *Wasta* leads to unfair advancement. The result of this study is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Arasli et al., 2006; Ali, Kirk, & Raidén, 2017).

Finally, this study used the bootstrapping method to investigate the mediating effect of PTO between *Wasta* and job performance. Specifically, the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples and 95% confidence intervals (CI) was utilised to estimate the indirect effect. This method is in line with Preachers and Hayes (2008) and Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt (2014).

The results of the bootstrapping on the mediating effect of PTO on the link between *Wasta* and job performance are presented in Table 7 and Figure 3. The results show that the confidence interval of the indirect effect of *Wasta* on job performance ($\beta = -0.332$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI= - 0.426 to -0.238) does not include zero, therefore, PTO significantly mediates the relationship between *Wasta* and job performance. The results also show that the indirect effect ($a*b$) is significant, thus implying that PTO is a partial mediator on the relationship between *Wasta* and job performance. Based on this, it can be concluded that H_4 is supported. This result shows that employees at GAM who did not obtain the training opportunities due to the influence of *Wasta* have the potential to perform well if properly trained. The result suggests that PTO could reduce the negative effect of *Wasta* on job performance at GAM. These findings are consistent with previous studies which had noted the use of

Table 7: Results of Mediating Effects

Hypothesis	Path a	Path b	a*b	SE	t-value	95% LL	95% UL	Result
H ₄	-0.537	0.618	-0.332	0.048	6.854	-0.426	-0.238	Partial Mediation

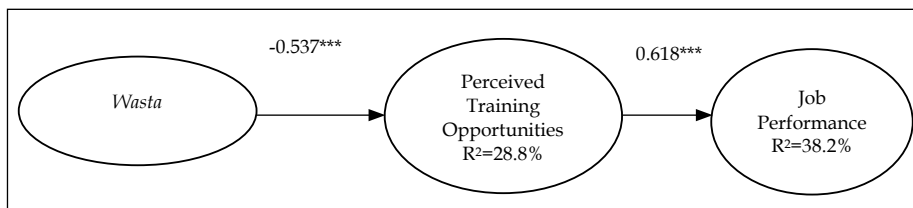


Figure 3: Results of Mediating Effects

training as an intervening variable between organisational practice and job performance (Asim, 2013; Van Eerde, Tang & Talbot, 2008; Sarkis, Gonzalez-Torre, & Adenso-Diaz, 2010).

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study has examined the relationship between *Wasta*, PTO and job performance. The findings derived from this study are in line with previous literature, thereby providing additional empirical evidence in the context of Arab countries. This study expanded on previous studies, especially in business relationships, by focussing on *Wasta* as a concept and PTO as a mediator in the relationship between *Wasta* and job performance. This study has also provided insights into the importance of PTO as a factor that could weaken the negative effect of *Wasta* and its impact on job performance.

The findings of this study also offer practical implications. Based on the results, it is suggested that the managers of GAM make an effort to reduce or eliminate the *Wasta* practice in their respective organisations, and to avoid the intervention of *Wasta* when selecting and nominating employees for training programmes. This is because the *Wasta* practice has a destructive impact on an organisation's abilities to enhance its "know-how" competence or intellectual skills. Employees under the influence of *Wasta* may not require the training opportunities provided. Similarly, allocating training resources based on relationships and

family networks, rather than employees' qualifications and merits create organisational stress. Doing so could make employees feel unmotivated or demoralised in their work because no matter how hard they work, their status would be unchanged. It seems clear that organisations that are under the influence of *Wasta* are perceived as undesirable workplaces, particularly for those ambitious employees who depend solely on their hard work, knowledge and talents. If not addressed, such situation could lead the talented and qualified individuals to quit and opt for global opportunities rather than staying and serving in Jordan. These employees may feel unvalued and they may not have the equal opportunity to improve their career and enhance life conditions. Therefore, the situation would have a negative impact on the employees and the organisation. The Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (2018) in Jordan has currently begun to fight against the use of the *Wasta* in the workplace, and in looking for equal opportunities for employees. In this regard, it would be advisable for GAM to take a similar path by providing its employees with equal opportunities in training opportunities, rewards and promotions so as to elevate employees' performance.

This study has offered some good insights into the issue of *Wasta* and training opportunities in the context of Jordan. Nonetheless, like all studies, it also faced several limitations. First, this study incorporated employees from only one governmental organisation working in 22 regions of Jordan. Thus, the findings of this study may not be generalised to all governmental organisations. Second, the current study used cross-sectional data which only tested the association between constructs at one-point in a time. Given that the impact of *Wasta* in organisations may require lag time, it is suggested that future researchers conduct a longitudinal study. Third, this study had limited the mediator variable to PTO, while other variables such as fairness could be employed so that the remaining indirect effect on the job performance can be further explained.

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