

## LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                      |                                     |
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| Programme:                      | Campus MBA (FT/PT)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                      |                                     |
| Module:                         | Human Resource Management                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                      |                                     |
| Module code:                    | BMMB7007                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):       | 50%                                 |
| Lecturer:                       | James Moore                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Internal Verifier:                                   | TBC Natasha Davies                  |
| Assignment Title:               | Improvement of an HR priority area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Word count (or equivalent):                          | 2,500                               |
| Submission deadline:            | 23:59 (UK Time), Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2023                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Return date of provisional marks & written feedback: | Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 |
| Submission method:              | <p>All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.)</p> <p><b>Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark.</b> Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 50%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.</p> |                                                      |                                     |
| Academic honesty / referencing: | <p>Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                      |                                     |

### Module Learning Outcomes (from module syllabus)

- Critically review and appraise current HRM research and advanced scholarship.
- Critically evaluate business environments and analyse how resourcing an organisation is affected and informed by internal and external factors that in turn serve to influence the policies, procedures and processes adopted by the organisation.
- Demonstrate a systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge and understanding of a number of advanced and emerging issues in HRM and IHRM within a variety of organisations and how these can influence fulfilment of the strategic aims of the organisation and affect competitive edge.

## **Executive summary**

This study analyzes the challenges that Alibaba faces in promoting equality, diversity, and equity in their human resource management. Gender inequality in promotions and pay, age and geographic discrimination, a lack of workplace diversity, and pay equity gaps are among the issues highlighted. To address these issues, it is suggested that Alibaba prioritize gender equality by implementing equitable pay systems, establishing target ratios for female executives, and involving women in policy development. Furthermore, measures such as removing age and geographic discrimination, hiring from diverse backgrounds, and cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusion are required. These recommendations must be considered while keeping available resources, organizational needs and challenges in mind. Improving in these areas can boost Alibaba's employee satisfaction, innovation, and global competitiveness.

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# 1.0 Introduction

Equality, diversity and equity have been hotly discussed in the new millennium. This is an important issue in the field of human resource management. In today's development stage, enterprises need to face changes in values and development concept that keep pace with the times, which brings challenges to enterprises and also indicates that certain concepts of enterprises must be updated. In the vast majority of developed countries, the topic has shown some maturity and stage of development. But in many developing countries, there is still much room for improvement. Alibaba is a huge Chinese technology company, and its rapid development also indicates that this company may face greater challenges in this regard. This will be the research goal of this topic. This study will first introduce the business profile. This will cover corporate and HRM related information and characteristics. In this main part, the characteristics and challenges of the selected companies in the fields of equality, diversity and fairness are mainly discussed. And seek solutions from different aspects. Finally, suggestions for improvement are put forward to the research objects. Paying attention to equality, diversity and fairness in the field of HRM is of great significance for enterprises to achieve sustainable development and improve competitiveness. Through the case analysis of Alibaba, discussing the challenges faced by enterprises in these aspects and the improvement measures taken can also provide reference for other enterprises with the same challenges.

## **2.0 Organisational overview**

Alibaba is a Chinese multinational conglomerate founded in 1999 by Jack Ma. It focuses on e-commerce, retail, internet and technology. Headquartered in Hangzhou, China, the company has operations in more than 200 countries around the world. Alibaba employs more than 254,000 people across its various subsidiaries by 2023, making it a significant player in the technology sector.

Alibaba's human resources management function operates through a dedicated human resources team responsible for recruitment, training and development, performance management and employee relations. The HR team is led by a Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), who reports directly to the CEO. This executive-level representation ensures that human resource management plays a key role in the organization's overall strategic decision-making process, aligning human resources with business goals. However, the huge business scale and rapid development stage have always caused Alibaba to have HRM-related scandals or disputes. This is inappropriate for a giant corporation with a presence in most countries around the world. Most of the internationally renowned giant companies have a close to a consistent view of organizational culture development, and it is obvious that Alibaba needs to continue to improve in order to approach this generally accepted standard.

## **3.0 Main discussion**

### **3.1 Challenges in equality**

Although Alibaba has shown a certain degree of equality in talent recruitment and selection, within the company, there are still inequalities in the promotion and salary system of

employees. For example, Alibaba's inequality in career development is mainly manifested in the following aspects.

The first is sexism. Women are underrepresented in Alibaba's senior leadership and management team. (Kia, 2015) This can lead to barriers for female employees in terms of career development, which in turn affects the overall diversity and innovation capabilities of the company. The company does not set a target ratio of female executives like larger companies in the US and Europe, nor does it demonstrate that it is making more efforts in equal hiring. (Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek and van Praag, 2013) propose that gender diversity can improve team performance. Most of today's top companies include the proportion of women in senior management as part of their corporate governance goals. There are even companies in the same industry that release annual work reports on women every year. These moves will help enhance Alibaba's reputation and attract more talents of different genders to join the company. (Catalyst, 2004) believed that improving gender equality can enhance the market performance of enterprises. Companies with more female directors tend to perform better financially. In many cases, the higher the degree of gender homogeneity, the faster the bottleneck in the development of the company's business department may come. In Alibaba, men and women have different ways of thinking, which leads to the need for suggestions and thinking of members of different genders in the team when many problems arise. (Suranjan, 2021) Gender centralization tends to stifle innovation, which is fatal to technology companies. (Staw and Ross, 1985) believed that improving gender equality can reduce occupational sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In the past, Alibaba often had workplace incidents about sexual harassment, which greatly damaged the rights and interests of female employees. (Guardian, 2021) In addition, the damage to the company's reputation and culture is also obvious. Companies need to push gender equality further, as well as the percentage of female managers. In this way, women's work rights will be more protected.

Age and geographic discrimination are also important challenges. There may be a certain degree of age discrimination in Alibaba's promotion system, and the development space of young employees in the company may be limited. (Posthuma, 2009) believed that there are

stereotypes about age in the workplace, and these stereotypes may affect equality and employee relations in Alibaba. (Liao, 2018) Older employees need to worry about whether they are easy to be dismissed, resulting in reduced work efficiency and potential conflicts among colleagues. These can lead to a loss of team productivity and cohesion, and ultimately long-term and profound problems. The best solution is to implement effective HR strategies to eliminate ageism. Comprehensive ability should be an important criterion for evaluating companies, not age. (Van Dalen, 2010) argues that the productivity of older employees is influenced by the perception of employers and employees, which may affect their status and equal treatment in Alibaba. (Brief et al., 2005) Geographical discrimination may lead to employees' psychological stress and dissatisfaction, thereby reducing employee engagement and job performance. Alibaba should set up strict anti-discrimination clauses for recruiters and company employees, which will help more talents from different regions integrate into the company environment.

### 3.2 Challenges in diversity

Alibaba faces many problems in workplace diversity, which may cause significant losses in the future if not improved. (Lu, 2021) When a company recruits and selects talents, it may be biased towards candidates with a certain cultural background, which leads to a homogeneous corporate culture and a reduction in innovation capabilities. For example, if the manager of the company is a promoted programmer. Then he prefers to recruit more people similar to himself, which will increase the degree of homogeneity. (Hong and Page, 2004) argue that homogeneous teams may lack innovative thinking because team members are similar in background, skills, and perspectives. Conversely, diverse teams are able to see problems from different perspectives, leading to improved innovation and problem-solving abilities. Additionally, lower diversity (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999) can lead to team conflict and communication problems. In fact, when team members have similar backgrounds and perspectives, they may be more prone to conflict and communication problems. This phenomenon can lead to misunderstandings among team members, further affecting team performance. For example, product managers and programmers tend to have the same views

on certain things. Then the prospect of the product will become bleak because of the lack of sense of crisis and inspiration.

In the diversity of professional background and educational background, Alibaba is still lacking. There may be an overemphasis on technical background in Alibaba's recruitment process. (Adam Jourdan, 2021) This can lead companies to overlook those with non-technical backgrounds but with expertise and experience in other fields during the hiring process. Examples include marketing, human resources, and public relations. (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2010) believe that in a multi-cultural team, different cultural backgrounds, experiences and skills can help improve team innovation and adaptability. In fact, thanks to the huge talent market supply in China, there are still many talents with strong abilities but difficult to be valued and discovered. Many times the appearance of mandatory conditions of recruitment will divide their resumes in the mail junk box. (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2010) believe that promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion in organizations can help create a more harmonious and positive work environment. Considering the huge workload of the company's HRM department, they may be able to design a set of excellent resume interpretation algorithms. This will allow them to minimize potential talent being overlooked. Developing programs is also their area of expertise, which is a perfect fit for them.

Thanks to China's huge supply of talents in colleges and universities, Alibaba can easily obtain students with excellent grades. But in the long run, this recruitment model can easily make the company ignore those talents who come from non-top schools but have rich practical experience and innovative thinking. (Gable, Hopper and Schooler, 2019) found that the diversity of educational backgrounds within an organization can help improve the team's innovation ability, because employees with different educational backgrounds can provide a variety of perspectives and problem-solving methods. Hiring employees with different academic backgrounds can give a technology company an advantage over its competitors. This is mainly reflected in the ability of innovation, teamwork and decision-making, and the status in the face of market changes. (Valls, González-Romá and Tomás, 2016) argue that educational diversity has a positive impact on team performance, especially in situations that

require innovation and complex problem solving. A team with a high degree of diversity can often provide a lot of different perspectives on things. In many cases, managers are not capable enough, but their inherent thinking limits their imagination and ability to choose. For example, in the face of customers with different preferences, employees with different educational backgrounds may be able to produce different countermeasures due to the different regional cultures they have experienced in the past. This can help companies better communicate with customers. (Paoletti et al., 2019) argue that academic diversity in organizations can help promote inclusive leadership, thereby increasing employee satisfaction and retention. A more diverse team does not have everyone in danger, everyone welcomes their differences from others and promotes inclusion in the team. This allows team members to focus more on their work.

### 3.3 The challenge of equity

Alibaba still has the possibility of unequal pay for equal work. This phenomenon is very prominent among men and women. This phenomenon is very common among Chinese technology companies. (Chan, 2018) Regulators often ignore this, and regulators pay little attention to the rights and interests of gender equality. (Kulik, 2014) argues that the gender pay gap in organizations needs to be addressed through fair pay systems and policies. This will reduce the gender pay gap and increase employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. For Alibaba, which needs to increase the proportion of female employees and executives in the future, the setting and updating of such policies are very important. In addition, gender discrimination and unfair promotion are also reflected in Alibaba's working environment. (Schneid et al., 2014) believe that only by involving women in improving the situation can the bad situation be avoided. An effective way is to allow women to lead the establishment of regulations on equality in salary and promotion regulations, and finally release them after repeated discussions and votes. This will help increase female employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. The ultimate goal of the above measures is to let the company's equity be reflected in the corporate culture.

## 4.0 Conclusions

Several important points appear as we delve into Alibaba's challenges in terms of equality, diversity, and equity. For starters, women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions due to gender inequality in the promotion and salary systems. This can result in a dearth of diversity and innovation within the organization. Furthermore, the group faces major challenges due to age and geographic discrimination. Second, Alibaba's ability to innovate and perform as a team is hampered by a lack of workplace diversity, especially in terms of cultural, professional, and educational backgrounds. Finally, the problem of wage equity, particularly the gender pay gap, must be addressed.

To handle these issues, Alibaba must prioritize gender equality by establishing goals for female executives, implementing equitable pay systems and policies, and involving women in policy creation. By adopting effective HR strategies and cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusion, age and geographic discrimination can be eliminated. Alibaba should hire workers from diverse cultural, professional, and educational backgrounds to boost workplace diversity. By tackling these issues, Alibaba will be better positioned to improve employee happiness, improve innovation, and, ultimately, strengthen its global competitiveness. With a more diverse workforce, Alibaba can become a more inclusive and dynamic company that values all of its workers' contributions.

## 5.0 Recommendations

Several critical issues emerged as we dug deeper into Alibaba's challenges in equality, diversity, and equity. For starters, Alibaba has struggled with gender inequality, with women underrepresented in senior leadership and experiencing disparities in the promotion and salary systems. These issues have hampered women's career advancement and the company's overall diversity and innovation capabilities. Second, Alibaba's workplace lacks diversity, particularly in terms of cultural, professional, and educational backgrounds, which has

hampered the organization's innovation potential and team performance. Finally, employees have expressed serious concerns about the company's pay equity issues, particularly the gender pay gap.

To address these issues, Alibaba's human resources department must prioritize gender equality by setting goals for female executives, implementing fair pay systems and policies, and involving women in policy development. In addition, the organization must eliminate age and geographic discrimination, cultivate a culture of diversity and inclusion, and diversify its talent pool by hiring people from diverse backgrounds. By taking these steps, Alibaba can improve employee satisfaction, strengthen innovation, and increase its global market competitiveness.

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