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The Causal Relationship Between HRM Practices, Affective Commitment, Employee Retention and Organizational Performance

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Abstract: Organizational performance has been commonly used in the business world today to mean indicate an improvement in the organizational activities that could increase its performance indicator. Thus, the organizational performance has become the major concern of the previous scholars and has further taken a special place among organizations. Thus, the aim of this study is to discuss the causal relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance using affective commitment and employee retention as the mediating variables between HRM practice and organizational performance based on the existing literature review. It is also found that affective commitment mediates between HRM practices and organizational performance. Due to the fact that organizational performance to maintain a better Key Performance Indicator (KPI), its unique quality in human resources management cannot be over-emphasized. Any organization that fails to improve its performance will lack competitive advantage.

Key words: HRM practices, affective commitment, employee retention, organizational performance, quality, businees world

INTRODUCTION

Organizations come in all shapes and sizes and often exhibit more differences than similarities. Nonetheless, one factor, common to all organizations is that success is highly dependent on the skills, knowledge and experience of the employees within them (Anonymous, 2011). The matters of human resource activities have been commonly used to observe organizational performance. There is no doubt that the distinctive feature of the human resource management HRM, is its theory whereby better performance is achieved through the people in the organization (Guest, 1997). Delaney and Huselid (1996), identify several HRM practices among which are: Recruitment and selection, training and development, rewards and compensation; performance appraisal and human resource planning. These HRM practices are usually utilized as a starting point and appear to impact the organizational performance under all situations. According to AL-Damoe *et al*. (2012), there is a significant relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance.

Moreover, it is surprising then that in the present knowledge economy, human resources are now being recognized as strategic tools that are vital to organizational profitability and sustainability. As noted by Myloni *et al*. (2004), this realization results in human resources' practitioners assuming new roles as strategic partners in formulating and implementing organizational strategy. Not surprisingly, organizations are implementing proactive HRM practices and activities, in order to capitalize on the strength of this critical asset for sustained competitive advantage in today's knowledge economy. HRM is positively associated with organizational performance; there is still the need for additional research to be undertaken to provide more evidence that supports the HRM-performance relationship from different cultural contexts. For this reason, ever since the emergence of the concept of strategic human resources in the mid-1970, there has been much debate as to which of the numerous HRM policies or practices that have been put forward, those that actually facilitate superior organizational performance.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Recruitment and selection is the process of attracting applicants for the positions needed in the organization which is highly interdependent on other variables. It attracts a maximum number of highly talented candidates and selecting the right ones to enhance organizational competitiveness. Most organizations recruitment that is fully integrated with other HRM activities, particularly the selection phase will enable the gathering and assessment of information about job candidates so that a good decision can be made. The process of recruitment and

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selection involves some actions by the management in making sure that it brings success in the implementation of organizational strategy. As a matter of fact without effective induction, the implementation of organizational strategies may waver (Cascio, 2006). Thus, an effective selection system depends on modern and need-based tests which are actually the key in facilitating effective selection. Moreover, substantial allocation resources are required to make selection tests a success (Pfeffer, 1998). Also, the merit-based and transparent induction systems enhance organizational credibility and make subordinates loyal to the organization. Researchers like Delaney and Huselid (1996) have concluded that the implementation of an effective recruitment and selection process yields a positive relationship with organizational performance while Terpstra and Rozell (1993) have found a positive and significant link between recruitment and selection procedures and corporate profits and subordinates' productivity (Koch and McGrath, 1996; Huselid, 1995).

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEE

Training and development of employee is actually an investment for an organization with the aim to reduce employee turnover. In this modern time, the emphasis on training and acquisition of new skills is increasingly becoming more and more pressing for organizations in order to attain enduring outcomes (Blair and Sisakhti, 2007; Bitner and Zeithaml, 2004; Kundu, 2000). The training of employees significantly increases the competitive advantage and significantly encourages team social networks between members (Wimbush, 2005). Castrogiovanni and Kidwell (2010) mention that with the training implementation, organizations will enhance the workforce capabilities and improve their current skills for long term purposes. According to Katou and Budhwar (2006), the importance of training cannot be underestimated since it enhances organizational performance by producing high committed employees to stay longer within the organization.

The training and development yields tangible outcomes, such as enhanced productivity, superior quality of products and services and resource maximization or optimization. It also generates intangible results, such as high self-esteem, enhanced morale and satisfaction of subordinates due to of the acquisition of additional Skills, Knowledge and Abilities (SKAs). In line with this, Kundu (2000) notes that firms should invest a great deal in their employee training, for the effective implementation of customer-oriented strategies. Similarly, Blair and Sisakhti (2007) establish the idea of making investments on training and development to produce enormous benefits. Scholars like Bitner and Zeithaml (2004) conclude that expenditures on training leads to organizational competitive advantage.

COMPENSATION AND REWARDS

The strategic human resource management consisting of pay-for-performance activities, may assist in bringing out the best in people and in the process of identifying emerging leaders or where performance difficulties or pay imbalances may exist (James, 2005). Nonetheless, all of these approaches assume that organizations are doing very thorough selection that is appropriate for the organization and thus, is worth nurturing. Compensating employees on the other hand is in the form of rewards and incentives; both which can be termed as the best way to achieve organizational performance, for they trigger the employees' enthusiasm to put in their best performance which in turn increases the productivity and hence, organizational performance. Milkovich and Newman (1999) have posited that the activity of compensation encompasses all forms of monetary returns and related services provided to subordinates or employees. It is usually argued that a comprehensive compensation blend complemented by an effective disbursement system plays a valuable task in attracting the best applicants. Mathis and Jackson (2004) posit that a balanced, transparent and competitive reward and compensation system influences the retention of talents. Similarly, Dreher and Dougherty (2005) conclude that a reward-based approach functions as the driver of team and individual performance in organizations. The significant evidence subsists in the existing literature about the positive relationship between compensation and reward systems and organizational performance. In this regards, Chiu *et al.* (2002) state that rewards and compensation have a considerable effect on organizational outcomes. Similarly, Jyothi and Venkatesh (2006) further establish that competency-based rewards and pay enhance the quality of goods and services, improve subordinates' behavior and decrease accident rates in organizations, thereby improving organizational performance. Rather expectedly, studies have investigated the link between compensation and reward and organizational performance. As mentioned earlier, researchers have found that an effective compensation and reward process enhances productivity, sales and overall organizational performance (Delaney and Huselid, 1996; Chiu *et al.*, 2002; Dreher and Dougherty, 2005).

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Performance appraisal indicates an activity that ensures mutual understanding between the subordinate and the supervisor, through the process of evaluating directly the subordinates' job-specific performance priorities and expectations, communication and assigned responsibilities. The activity of performance appraisal also denotes a process of providing episodic and scheduled feedback that seeks to enhance teamwork and promote greater efficiencies and abilities. Generally, the performance appraisal activity is utilized by the management to help develop and nurture subordinates within their organizations and in their supply chain partners. In a way, appraisals can enhance job performance by focusing and emphasizing on organizational communication and its shared values and objectives. This process also systematically spells out job duties and responsibilities as they evolve over time. Appraisals are generally regarded as useful because they add value to the organization. However, the main objective of the performance appraisal process is its emphasis on subordinates' or employees' job performance. Through appraisals, decision makers can also set goals and continuously support employees to improve their work output. It is no wonder then that the critical functions of performance appraisal include deciding who should be promoted, given a pay raise, so on and so forth (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). Similarly, compensation and salary decisions may depend primarily on performance appraisals. One should note that salary satisfaction is one of the key factors that shape job performance. It may also show proof of the weaknesses of the existing performance management system. It should be highlighted that superior results or performance can be attained and sustained within organizations by individuals or groups. Thus, inter-team and organizational competitions can be harnessed to stimulate contributions to staff improvement schemes.

Moreover, performance appraisal is premised on recognizing the attainment of certain objectives belonging to a specific job within a given time period. Thus, this activity plays a crucial function in shaping the perception of subordinates about themselves and about their contributions to the realization of organizational goals. In a study, Bernardin and Russell (1993) posit that broader communication of policies on performance appraisal within organizations is critical to make subordinates understand their specific functions in organizations. Performance appraisal has a positive relationship with organizational performance because client-based performance appraisal enhances quality and productivity, firm performance and increase subordinates' commitment (Lee and Lee, 2007; Rahman, 2006). Also, Brown and Heywood (2005) maintain that the process of performance appraisal system has a positive association or relationship with enhanced productivity of firms. For Cook and Crossman (2004), the relationships formed between employees and supervisors during the process of performance appraisal can strengthen the relationships of the players involved. From the above discussion, performance appraisal is an important instrument on which career development, recognition and promotion of employees are based (Larsson *et al*., 2007).

HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING

Empirical research shows that the establishment of well-defined organizational goals and objectives influence or shape employee retention and job productivity. For instance, Kim *et al*. (2005) cited in Moncarz *et al*. (2009) have found that organizational direction and support have had a major impact on employees' job satisfaction and overall commitment to the organization. In much the same way, results from another empirical study indicate that perceived organizational support strongly influences job satisfaction and employees' commitment to their organizations (Susskind *et al*., 2000).

AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

Affective commitment is expected to have the strongest positive relation, followed by normative commitment then continuance commitment is expected to be unrelated or related negatively, to these desirable work behaviors (Meyer *et al*., 2002). Although, Meyer and Allen (1984) have projected three components of commitment namely; affective, contiuance and normative commitment, this study will focus more on affective commitment. Thus, researchers define affective commitment as an emotional attachment to identification with and involvement in the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1984, 1991, 1997; Meyer *et al*., 1990). The previous scholars argue that affective commitment relates to outcome variables, others are of the opinion that affective commitment can safeguard the negative impact of employees' stress at work whereas others suggest that committed employees might experience more negative reactions than those who are less committed (Begley and Czajka, 1993; Meyer *et al*., 2002).

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Employee retention has emerged to be the focus of attention of talent management programs (Bairi *et al*., 2011) and human resource practitioners who attempt to integrate it into a talent program may be shocked by the extensive volume of research that has been dedicated to it. Some of them include the studies undertaken by Law (2003), Buenger (2006) and Gallagher *et al*. (2006). There is no doubt that attracting and retaining key employees should be a top priority for any organization. However for many organizations, this issue is not generally regarded as very vital. Whether it is down to naivety or obduracy or any other possible reasons, the effects of failing to implement effective employee retention strategies can negatively affect the most proficient of firms or organizations. When someone quits an organization, it means that the lengthy process of identifying, hiring and training a suitable replacement has to begin all over again.

By and large, losing talented employees can also have consequences on organizational performance. If a talented employee subsequently falls into the lap of a rival or competitor, the organization will experience a double negative impact. Surprisingly however, many senior managers fail to appreciate the relationship between staff turnover and how their organization performs. One should note that in order to enhance employee retention and thus, help keep talented individuals on board, organizations must develop retention strategies, such as rewards, autonomy and image (Anonymous, 2011). However, organizations need an integrated set of human resource capabilities or assets to address employee retention challenges (Bairi *et al*., 2011).

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Previous scholars have utilized both non-financial and financial metrics to measure firm or organizational performance (Dyer and Reeves, 1995; Khan, 2010). Some of the financial measures are sales, profit and market share. Notable non-financial measures include efficiency, quality, productivity and the behavioral and attitudinal measures, such as satisfaction, intention to quit and commitment. As is evident from the foregoing discussion, there are different approaches that measure organizational performance which are premised on non-financial as well as financial measures. In this regard, Hoskisson *et al.* (2000) have observed that the lack of market-focused financial reporting, lack of fairness in financial reporting, insufficient regulatory mechanism and enforcement about financial reporting and the provision of fabricated financial information are key issues that have come forth to confront developing countries.

By and large, a non-objective measure compels decision makers to take into consideration various organizational goals when assessing the performance of the organizations. One should note that several studies have raised convincing doubts about the causal distance between an HRM input and such output premised on purely financial performance. To put it in another way, somany other factors, both internal and external, influence organizations that this direct link between HRM and performance is rather lacking credibility (Boselie *et al.*, 2005). As such, many scholars have argued that more proximal measures over which subordinates exert influence are in theory more credible and easier to link. These include productivity (Huselid, 1995; Chang and Chen, 2002), job satisfaction (Guest *et al.*, 2003), employees' turnover intentions (Batt, 2002), absenteeism (Delbridge and Lowe, 1997), quality of product and service (MacDuffie, 1995), trust in management (Whitener, 2001) and commitment (Tsui *et al.*, 1997). Some studies also dwell into the negative effect of HRM policies on organizational performance that includes subordinates' stress level (Ramsay *et al.*, 2000). In extant literature, the dominance of subjective measures still exists (Youndt *et al.*, 1996; Delaney and Huselid, 1996). Significant evidence subsists in earlier studies showing that subjective measures and objective measures of organizational performance link rather well (Powell, 1992; Geringer and Hebert, 1991).

EMPLOYEES SATISFACTION

Employee satisfaction could be defined as the level at which employees love their jobs (Antoncic and Antoncic, 2011). When an employee derives satisfaction on their job, the manifestation is that it will steer them to increase production, render good services and become an active participant of organizational growth. In return, the employees will be rewarded with both cash and other forms of rewards, such as incentives and promotion that will work towards increasing organizational performance (Miskell and Miskell, 1994; Pierce and Newstrom, 1980; Christensen and Staines, 1990).

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Organizational climate is defined as an enabler of interactions between the employees and the employers.

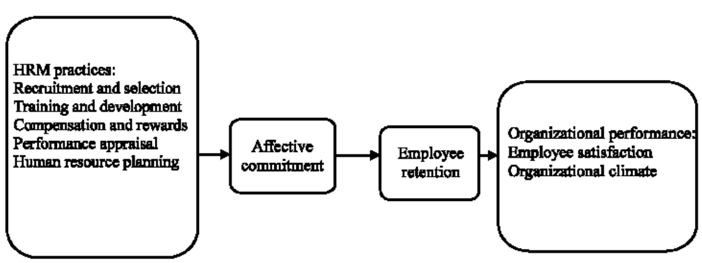

Fig. 1: HRM practices and organizational performance model

It is also an avenue where employee shares the same perceptions and sentiments of the organizational goals, policies, practices and processes. Kepes and Delery (2006) have the opinion that organizational effectiveness is achieved through a positive organizational climate because it creates a strong situation which guides employee's behavior (Kepes and Delery, 2006) (Fig. 1).

CONCLUSION

This research study discusses the causal relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance, using affective commitment and employee retention as the mediating variables between HRM practice and organizational performance based on the extant literature. It also presents a model that can enhance organizational performance. The ability of the organization to improve performance through human resource management practices avails the continuity of business and enables them to gain a competitive advantage, especially in the era of globalization; this in turn will increase organizational performance.

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