



Media Employee Performance and High Work Practices

(A Special Context to COVID-19)

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the relationship of high performance work practices (training, empowerment and rewards) with employee performance in their media organization in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Three HR practices (training, empowerment and rewards) are examined in a cross-sectional sample of 334 male and female media workers by recording responses using self-reported questionnaires. Structural equation modeling is used to analyze the responses. Social exchange theory is used in order to explain the relationship of loyalty between organization and worker. The results show a weak relationship of the selected high performance work practices of media employee during COVID-19. Empowerment is having negative relationship with performance that nullifies the existing evidence. The media organizations have to re-think about the work practices being used in the organizations for achieving better performance. Training and reward regarding using organizational resources may also be considered as a remedy. Using organizational resources and time appropriately with develop trust among the employer and employees thus fostering performance. The fourth industrial context which is the implementation of science and technology in every field is considered for examining the linkages. The final result indicates a weak relation among the media employee because it leads towards the misuse of empowerment. Therefore proper check and balance is recommended before empowering the employees of media houses. This is because the workers may have more inclination towards availing benefits of technological revolution especially during a recent pandemic of COVID-19.

Keyword: *High performance, Work practices, training, empowerment, rewards, COVID-19, Pakistan, Media and Communication.*

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Introduction

A paradigm (a physical world to a virtual world) shift is observed in the recent past, called as, fourth industrial revolution or industry 4.0. It is the technological advancement affecting every aspect of the organization, including human resource management (Pandian, 2018) by using robotics, artificial intelligence, and so forth for reducing failures.

The recent outbreak of pandemic COVID-19 has brought with it multiple avenues to provide services and has introduced the concept of boundary-less organizations. The boundary less organizations at the same time provided access to reach broader range of people and compelled individuals to earn more and more. Although, it is in its infancy, in Pakistan, but has affected several aspects of the organization (Wilkesmann, & Wilkesmann, 2018). Moreover, Wilkesmann and Wilkesmann (2018) argued that it allows human beings to fill in the gaps that machines cannot handle.

Bamber, Bartram, and Stanton (2017) argued that media employee can easily focus on their job during the recent pandemic where working under SOPs are strictly observed in every sector. It also aims to find out if their new role can be easily adjusted and more convenient as they are used to take challenges in normal routine life. They can be a role model for another sector employee as well in order to innovate themselves in a new role. They can recognize their new role in an exciting way by making it fascinating to the viewers (Bamber, Bartram, & Stanton, 2017). On the recommendations (Bamber, Bartram, & Stanton, 2017), the current study is conducted. It was greatly considered in the year

2019 that there is a need to examine HRM practices in the light of pandemic type situations like the recent COVID-19; after witnessing the lockdown situation, the need has got even more potent by now.

Moreover, it is argued that if on one side, the organizations are becoming mechanized and prefer to use technology for better management; on the other side, people are getting smarter to manage multiple tasks and tap numerous opportunities simultaneously, contributing to their financial stability. Simultaneously, this multi-tasking disrupts their attention towards the primary job, and there are chances of disrupted employee performance at the primary workplace.

Media worker's performance and overall outcome of the success of an organization during certain periods of duty compared to the standard of the work (Pawirosumarto, Sarjana, & Muchtar, 2017; Rivai, 2004). In this regard, the organizations are trying hard to maintain and sustain the higher levels of employee's performance (Garg, 2019). The required levels of performance are necessary for better organizational outcomes (Shin & Konrad, 2017). Organizations try making an environment to support employee performance (Anitha, 2014), but the factors prevailing in the internal and external environment make things different (Murphy, Torres, Ingram, & Hutchinson, 2018).

As a part of enhancing employee outcomes, the organizations have adopted the concept of high-performance work practices (HPWP), which are a set of administrative and high authority practices intended to improve media employee training, self-learning, and performance (Postuma, 2019). A

central premise in the study of HPWP is that dedication and flexibility in work practices can influence employee commitment, satisfaction, and performance (Mahmood et al., 2018; Kehoe and Right, 2013; Posthuma et al., 2013). Further, it is noted that HPWP supports improvements in employee performance (Shin & Konrad, 2017). It is said that HPWP comprises various practices to maximize media employee information, dedication, and results (Bolander and Snel, 2017, p. 690).

The objective of this research is to observe the effects of three specific work practices (i.e. training, empowerment, and rewards) on media employee performance (at managerial level). Thus, this research admires to integrate employee practices and behavior (Zhang & Moris, 2014) contributing to performance. This study provides a new perspective in the field based on recent pandemic COVID-19 impacts in a developing country perspective. The research elaborates implications for theory and lessons for practitioners by testing a model that is similar to the one tested in Cannada by Fabi et al. (2015), and by Luana-Aocas and Camp (2007), who tested model in Espain. Compared to these studies we demonstrate hypothesized HR-performance linkages in the context of the higher media and information sector in Pakistan. This started the debate a developing country context like Pakistan, where HR strategies and practices specially in media remain under discussion and clearly seen collapse (Chenn et al., 2016; Chadwik et al., 2015; Mahajan and Sekiguci, 2016). Kimm and Chui (2014) found that higher investments in employee capability through practical measures bring employer-employee harmony that consequentially enhance performance on the job

but have ignored keeping in view the influence of pandemic COVID-19 on HR practices in media performance that this study addresses particularly.

Training and Employee Performance

Training helps employees equip them with the learning and expertise required to do a better job. Relevant trainings equip the people in the right direction whereas the irrelevant trainings are sources of wastage of time and resources (Pruneda, 2015). In the media the workers need to have trainings related to work and behavioral advancements that enhance their performance (Arif & Ilyas, 2013).

Providing training to the employees show a gesture that the employees are ever valuable partners of the organization (Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019) and are sources of gaining sustainability (Takeuchi et al., 2007). Training is regarded as an effective tool to manage people's commitment and in enhancing service quality (Kim et al., 2009). At the same time, it has several managerial implications in enhancing employee performance (Karatepe, 2013). Further reduced errors can be ensured through providing training to the employees (Aladwan, Bhanugopan, & D'Netto, 2015). Thus, the hypothesis developed is:

H1: Training has a strong positive link with employee's job performance.

Empowerment and Employee Performance

Quality performance can be ensured through empowering employees and giving them the appropriate resources (Sattar, Ahmad & Hassan, 2015). More recently, Kundu, Kumar and Gahlawat (2019) found employee empowerment positively and significantly related to employee performance. When the

employees are given the powers and responsibilities, and they are encouraged to participate in decision making. This enrich them with the confidence and freedom to perform in their own way without direct involvement of the management, thus leaving them to use power and resources as and when they require (Awamleh, 2013; Hong, Tan, & Bujang, 2010). It is also noted that the knowledge explosion, as a result of fourth industrial revolution, also known as information and communication technology revolution (Hu & Sabhrwal, 2012; Kasabeh, 2015) has empowered employees to get better outreach and making it a challenge for the organization (Krylova et al., 2016) to retain and sustain the HR.

Moreover, delegation of authority is the important part of the empowerment by using which the employees perform duties, but at the same time it is to keep in mind that the performers should be made accountable for their actions (Al-Jamal et al., 2015) otherwise they may show undesirable performance. Thus the hypothesis developed of examination is;

H2: Media Employee empowerment has a strong positive relationship with employee performance.

Rewards and Employee Performance

Organizations offer their employees the monetary and non-monetary rewards as a result of the efforts done by them. Motivating the pool of HR possessed by the organization is the main reason behind (Liu, & Li, 2017).

Without offer appropriate rewards the high performance cannot be ensured. The rewards have the reciprocal effect on the employees. Employees work for rewards and rewards motivate

them to work harder and smarter (Liu, Zhao, & Xie, 2016). For achieving more rewards, the employees get involved in their work and show higher performance. The pay for performance is rightly used as a tool for achieving higher performance standards (Garen, 2016). Looking at the workers perspective, the workers are generally seen motivated to work for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards available at workplace. The more satisfied the workers are the better contribution towards the job they can make (Liang, & Akiba, 2015). Thus the hypothesis developed is:

H3: Rewards have a strong positive relationship with employee performance.

Social Exchange Theory and COVID-19

Social Exchange Theory is of the view that there is likelihood that trusting and loyal relationships may develop when the mutual commitments between employees and employer are fulfilled keeping in view their mutual benefits by following certain rules (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The relationships between employee and employer are generally built due to economic or social reasons (Karatepe, 2013). It can be inferred from the theory that the supportive work environment may compel employees to indulge in activities liked by employees. The pandemic COVID-19 brings with it additional avenues that allow employees to jump from inside to outside to use their knowledge, skills and abilities. Thus adding something instead of positive but negative to the employee behaviors as per organizations point of view. The theory also helps in understanding employee working behavior and habit. As in general practice all employee works for reward whether it is in appreciation form or it is in money form.

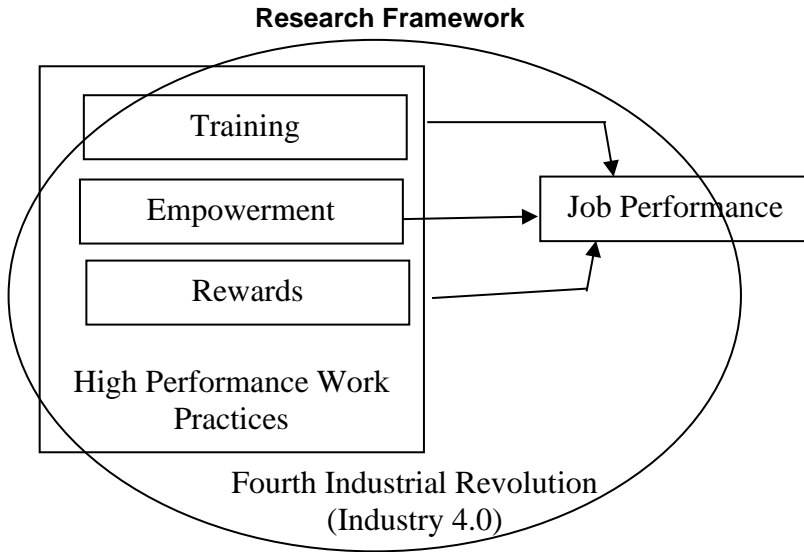


Figure 01: Research framework examining HPWP and Employee Performance

Methodology

Sample and procedure

The sample was drawn from a pool of the full-time working media employees working in the administrator and managerial level. The public sector was particularly selected for the reason that does not ensured job security and other security benefits like pension and social security etc. A convenience sample of 334 employee (male, n = 214 and female, n = 120) was selected. The public sector media (PTV) in Pakistan are characterized with restricted resources (including financial benefits) that may call for looking at other opportunities available to the employees. Twenty public sector media sub stations employee throughout the country were selected for broader response rate. The media organization were having different departments four

departments were selected for collecting responses such as finance, marketing, IT and management. This provided an edge to collect broader range of responses dealing various aspects of freelancing activities.

Instrumentation

The questionnaires used for gathering responses are adopted. Few questions were added in the beginning of the questionnaire to ensure that people are involved in other practices for earning and showing their capabilities assisted by the work practices context during COVID-19. All questionnaire were designed keeping in view the working conditions during lockdown and working using social distancing. The questionnaire for training, empowerment, rewards and employee job performance were adapted from the study of Karatepe (2013) having statements based on five points Likert type scale. Moreover three questions/statements were asked regarding working for outside people/clients while at work, to which the respondents agreed. The statements used to record responses are provided at the end of the research paper as an appendix.

Results

Structural equation modeling was employed by using SmartPLS software. The measurement model and structural models were reported as a part of results of this study. The details of all these models are listed in below table.

Measurement Model - Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is examined through factor loadings (outer loadings), composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). These indicate the degree to which multiple items to measure the same concept are in same page (Hair, Black,

& Babin, 2010). Factor loadings per items should have recommended value of 0.6 or above and it shows internal consistency (Chin, Gopal, & Salisbury, 1997). The composite Reliability depicts the degree to which the indicators of construct indicate the latent. The cut-off point for this is more than or equal to 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) shows the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct. It should have the recommended value of 0.5. All the constructs used for this study that are training, empowerment, rewards and employee performance fulfill the criteria, see table 1.

Table 1: Results of the Measurement Model

Construct	Measurement Item	Loading	CR	AVE
Training	TR1	0.7590	0.8940	0.8940
	TR2	0.8453		
	TR3	0.8676		
	TR4	0.8152		
	TR5	0.8032		
	TR6	0.8096		
Empowerment	ET1	0.7389	0.8707	0.8707
	ET2	0.8129		
	ET3	0.8777		
	ET4	0.8377		
	ET5	0.8373		
Rewards	RW1	0.8455	0.9067	0.9067
	RW2	0.8655		
	RW3	.8687		
	RW4	0.7339		
	RW5	0.7568		
Emp. Performance	EP1	0.7038	0.8949	0.8949
	EP2	0.7080		
	EP3	0.7122		
	EP4	0.6897		
	EP5	0.7202		

CR= Composite Reliability, AVE= Average Variance Extracted

Discriminant Validity

To examine whether one measure is different from the other one, the discriminant validity is used. The construct must share more variance with its measures than the sharing with the

other construct in the same model (Hulland, 1999), for this the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the correlation coefficients are used. The square roots of AVE values are available in the diagonal and the lower value of correlation coefficient than the square root of the AVE indicates “distinct theoretical entities” (Hulland, 1999), see table 2.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity of Constructs

Construct	TR	ET	RW	EP	
TR	0.8240	0.7923			
ET	0.7914	0.7114	0.6932		
RW	0.4123	0.3680	0.5486	0.8417	
EP	0.4360	0.4231	0.5653	0.6278	0.8599

Diagonals represent the square root of AVE, TR= Training, ET=

Empowerment, RW= Rewards, EP= Employee Performance.

Structural Model

The path coefficients of the model are the hypothesized relationships to provide the coefficients linking the constructs and to obtain the significance level the method of 5000 subsample with the help of boot strapping is used (Hair et al., 2012). The significance of path coefficient is obtained by using the t-values (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014, McIntosh, Edwards, & Antonakis, 2014, Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Haier Jr, 2014). The value of R Square and path coefficients beta and significance indicates how well the model is supported (Surienty et al., 2013). Table 3 shows the structural model. The training ($\beta = 0.4854$, $p \leq 0.01$), empowerment ($\beta = 0.2977$, $p \leq 0.01$), rewards ($\beta = 0.1585$, $p \leq 0.01$) explaining 0.755 variance that is 75.5% variance in the employee performance.

Table 3: Summary of the Structural Model

Path Hypothesis	Path Coefficient= β	t- value	Results
TR----->EP	0.4850	13.0342	Supported
ET----->EP	-0.2988	2.5093	Not- Supported
RW----->EP	0.1592	4.5670	Supported

The findings of the results show a weak positive relationship (see beta values) of all the selected factors considered for testing such as training, empowerment and rewards with employee performance. It can be inferred that the high-performance work practices does not play a significant role in shaping employee performance within the organization.

Discussion

Earlier studies have found strong positive linkages between providing training to employees, empowering them, rewarding them and their performance (Pruneda, 2015; Karatepe, 2013; Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019) in the normal functional contexts. The revolutionary contexts are ignored at large. In the revolutionary contexts the practices are changing at the individual and organizational levels. In the current study the relationships of the constructs are examined at the time when the traditional practices of doing work are changing and people are focusing on themselves as compared to considering their organizations the first priority.

It is noted from the results that the relationship of training, empowerment and rewards is weak with the performance of employees. This is due to the fact that the

employees are functioning in a different environmental context at present. The training, empowerment and rewards are among the first six top most preferred HR practices rather high performance work practices that contribute positively towards employee performance (Boselie, et al., 2005; Karatepe, 2013). Media Organizations the places creating and disseminating knowledge. The people working in the media are the knowledge distributors. The public sector media restrict the people to disseminate knowledge outside of the organization premises while at work (Takeuchi et al., 2007).

The rewards are found to have a positive relationship with employee performance (Liu, &Li, 2017; Allen, & Kilmann, 2001; Liu, Zhao, & Xie, 2016; Garen, 2016) but the need to earn more and more compel workers to jump into the open sea that is available to them in the form of freelancing websites as a gift of COVID-19 outbreak. Moreover despite the fact that media provide their employee with the relevant trainings they do not care about the organization but focus on fulfilling their own interest (Arif&Ilyas, 2013).It is noted here that the workers did not like to have empowerment for the reason that they were involved in doing other tasks instead of having empowerment to perform at their primary workplace (Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019).

The contradiction is observed in results with respect to the employees having empowerment (Sattar, Ahmad & Hassan, 2015; Krylova et al., 2016). The empowerment extended from the organization side aggravates the performance of employees instead of having positive impact. The employees started solving problems using other means of communication instead of using

the means that are acceptable by the organization. This is likely that media employee might have developed their own websites and might have joined other work forums for assisting public. The statements asked in the questionnaire, "I am allowed to do almost anything to solve student problems", and "I have control over how I solve student problems ", seems more evident in reducing the required levels of performance.. Thus the workers do not concentrate upon their working and supervising practices (Kundu, Kumar & Gahlawat, 2019).

Further the social exchange theory also suggests that the favorable factors existing in the environment push the employees to adopt certain behavior. The empowerment offered to the employees pushes them to cross the organization boundaries in offering their services (Karatepe, 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Therefore the result indicates that in order to maintain the decorum of an organization it is not much desirable to empower employee especially during a situation like pandemic where certain SOPs have to follow while working and keeping social distance is essential.

Conclusion

There is a weak relationship of HR Practices with media employee performance in the pandemic COVID-19 context. The performance is weak because people are involved in doing extra work that is not related to their original workplace rather they are involved in doing work for others (outside of the organization they are actually afraid of getting effected with virus). Generally, training, and rewards are used to strengthen employee performance but in the current scenario the employee

performance is not healthily supported by such practices. As during pandemic like COVID-19 situation as most of the employee are forced to do work from home, media employee were rear besides doctors and law enforcement agencies who work directly from within the organization and in front foot. The Social Exchange theory suggests that empowering media employee is not desirable as it leads the employee in crossing the limits and decorum of organization. During pandemic most media employees use negative advantage of empowerment especially when it comes to report the cases and creating panic in the society. Therefore high work practices of media employee are rejected due to weak performances keeping in view the Social Exchange Theory.

Implications

The feature in the special issue of Media Employee Review, "Human resources and workplace innovations: practices, perspectives and paradigms", elaborate that the media profession needs to accept and enable innovation and always be ready for new challenges and must consider their mind to have prepared for creativity and flexibility (Bamber, Bartram, & Stanton, 2017). The weaker relationship of HR practices with employee performance highlight the need that the media managers must focus on providing such rewards to the employees that compels them to work only for the organization in which they are working and avoid working for others. Although the COVID-19 has brought with it the flexibility but the organizations and employees must practice their psychological contract for better and long lasting relationships.

Training regarding use of organizational resources is an important area to consider for managers. Empowerment towards doing job is another area that needs attention. By using this as a strategy people will get involved in work and can avoid indulging in unwanted affairs. Similarly the rewards helps developing commitment to the organization and people feel obliged and thus try to return to their organization in terms of better performance. It is likely that people, instead of using training as a positive tool may use it for their personal purposes. The skills learned may be used for earning more instead of using it for the organizational purposes.

Limitations and Future Directions

A small from public sector media was selected for the study as a part of services providing organization. The sample may be extended to other sectors for examining the similar linkages. The use of questionnaire may limit study to using one way of data collection; it is recommended that the multiple sources of data collection may restrict common method bias to generate. Additionally the inclusion of other HR related variables such as employee involvement, supervisors trust and organizational commitment may also add value to the existing framework to examine under COVID-19 context. Moreover examining the difference between male and female regarding the model tested will also be an interesting insight.

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