Impact of HRM Practices on Employee Engagement: Evidence from Banking Sector of Pakistan

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Abstract

In today's competitive environment, organizations in the service sector are struggling very hard to win the mind of customers by providing them with value-added, high-quality services. This can only be achieved by hiring highly skilled staff and providing them with training and a better organizational climate. The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices on employees' engagement in the banking sector of Pakistan. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data and a sample of 396 was utilized for data analysis. The study revealed that HRM practices like Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, and orientation have a significant positive impact on Employee Engagement (EE), whereas organizational climate acts as a partial mediator.

Keywords: HRM practices, Organizational climate, Employee Engagement, Banking sector

Introduction

Nowadays, accomplishments in the competitive market are not dependent upon benefits associated with technology, patents, and economies of scale, but are cultivated from human resources and high involvement of HRM practices (MacLeod & Clarke, 2011). For an organization to be more successful, it should have skilled and innovative employees for work and, should also be able to retain them. According to different researchers, there is not a sole HRM practice that an organization may adopt to retain and engage its employees (Geldenhuyset *et al.*, 2014). There are several HR practices that an organization may use to manage its HR system. An organization should always mix and implement "several best HR practices" for the survival and sustainability of the organization. HR practices improve the competency of an organization to deal with existing and future challenges, which it may face in a highly competitive environment. Good HR practices also energize people working in the organization. The commitment and motivation built through good HR practices can lead to hard work.

The banking sector of Pakistan contributes a higher percentage to the GDP under the services sector. This large service sector industry is highly dependent on its energetic, vigorous, task-oriented and enthusiastic pool of employees. But Aizenman and Hutchison

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(2012) have reported that the Pakistani banking sector was in a poor financial crisis from the year 2000-2008. Major Pakistani leading banks, such as the National Bank of Pakistan and NIB Bank suffered losses and downsizing, which affected the performance of their employees (Akhtar & Nishat, 2002). It created disengagement and feelings of insecurity among the employees of the banking sector in Pakistan.

Banks are nothing without their employees (Budhwar & Debrah, 2013). The provincial and federal governments usually work for the uplifting of their employees. Employee friendly policies are being devised for employees working in their organizations. The government sector and private organizations are facing the same problem. They are taking initiates for providing productive policies for the employees. But these are, in the least, not well-made and require more efforts across the board (Khilji, 2003).

Although the employees of the banking sector enjoy a handsome salary and other benefits, they do not get time for themselves. This affects their social and family life and creates feelings of discomfort due to the long working hours. Despite the monetary benefit, they also want a balanced and complete social life, leisure time for self and family, praise, pride, dignity and worth from their job and organization. Even in crucial circumstances, they hardly get leaves.

It has become a big problem for the banking sector to create, maintain and sustain a high level of engagement from the employees. But late duty hours, job stress and burnout, job demands for accumulating the deposit targets for the bank branches have shrunk the level of engagement in the hearts and minds of the employees.

The survival of every organization depends on the personnel that carry out the day to day activities of the organization. While organizations desire a high level of performance from their personnel, employees, on the other hand also desire some comfort and ease from the organization so that equilibrium can be achieved. If this equilibrium is not maintained, some employees may not be satisfied with their jobs or be committed to the organization. The Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains briefly the concept of EE which describes the reciprocal relationship between the employer and employee (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017). The researchers have observed if the employee receives socio-economic and social security by their employers, they in return feel a good sense of obligation, and reward the organization in respect of increased engagement. This research then focuses on integrating the relationship between HRM practices, organizational climate, and EE in the context of SET.

The main objective of this research is to examine the effects of Human Resource Management Practices (HRMP) on the problem of EE in the banking sector of Pakistan. As the banking sector majorly contributes to the services economy of the country, thus it is important to investigate the problem of EE in the banking sector of Pakistan. This research aims to investigate the impact of HRMP like Recruitment and Selection, Training

and Development and orientation on EE with the mediation effect of organizational climate. This study further evaluates the effect of HRMP on organizational climate and the effect of organizational climate as a mediator on EE.

The research study also briefly accounts to answer the following research questions. First, what is the impact of HRMP on EE? Secondly, what is the impact of HRMP on EE through the mediation effect of organizational climate?

The research adequately contributes to the literature while it focuses to determine the impact of HRMP over EE with the mediation effect of organizational climate in the commercial banks laying in Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The meaningful participation of variables for research has examined the relationship among the HRMP, EE and overall organizational performance (Sparrow, 2014; Truss *et al.*, 2013). Among the mediators, the organizational climate has been less used as an intervening variable (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). Mediation of the organizational climate has positively impacted the relationship between the individual HRMP and EE. Hence, it will contribute to filling the research gap. Furthermore, this research will also become helpful for the top-level management and leadership in increasing the level of engagement among the employees of the banking sector. It will provide a road map for building a better engaged human resource capital. Consequently, it will help to achieve higher and improved engaged employees and provide a competitive advantage to the banking sector.

Literature Review

There are many theories in the psychological, behavioral and humanistic perspectives of researches. In this regard, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a theoretical ground for EE behavior. The SET is broadly used and is the most recognized theory in the current studies of EE. According to the SET, when employees are developed and employees' opinion is given importance, they feel empowered, and it eventually increases their level of engagement. This development encourages employees to perform better than they were performing, resulting in an increase in their engagement. Also, engaged employees are a source of success and achievement, and they become a source of attraction for talented employees. If organizations do not value their employees, the disengaged employees result in an overall decline of the organization (Cooket *et al.*, 2013).

Human Resource Management Practices (HRMP)

HRMP play a very important role in the consolidation of organizational human resource. The previous literature has briefly explained many of the HRMP under the head of the HRMP. Albrecht (2015) has discussed four major HRMP which included Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, socialization and performance management. Similarly, Aktar (2018) has discussed six HR practices, namely Career Advancement, Performance Feedback, Training and Development, Rewards and

Recognition, Employee Participation, and Job Security. Kwan (2009) has suggested seven HRMP like Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Orientation, Performance Management, Rewards and Compensation, and Affective Commitment. Abbas (2011) has mentioned six HRMP like Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Orientation, Performance Appraisal, Working Environment and Compensation and Benefits. These studies have evaluated their findings that the variables of HRMP of this study like Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Orientation are considered as the HRMP and these HR Practices are integrated with each other in order to predict EE.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and Selection involve the procedure of inducting capable and suitable candidates for work. Dowling, Schuler and Welch (1994) state that the Recruitment and Selection process is very significant, and the processing should consider job responsibilities at the time of selecting a candidate for the job. With respect to a strategic HRM, focus on engagement as a source of competitive advantage, the adequacy of the Recruitment and Selection process cannot be neglected (Inceoglu and War, 2011). Vance (2006) stated that businesses can earn profits by the efforts of recruitment and staffing to a job and organizational engagement, culture and climate. The SET gives a brief explanation of the relationship between Recruitment and Selection, and EE. After the organization recruits the best personnel in the selection process, the employee observes a sense of honor and pride by being selected as a competent staff member, and in return respond as better engaged employees.

In previous studies, most of the researchers have considered Recruitment and Selection to predict different outcome variables. For instance, Abbassi (2016) has suggested that EE predicts the Recruitment and Selection. But this research study has utilized Recruitment and Selection to be the predictor of EE. Similarly, Aktar (2018) has argued that Recruitment and Selection predict organizational commitment and EE.

Training and Development

The HRMP elaborate the procedures for organizations to ascertain the employees with adequate Training and Development. HRM research identifies Training and Development as the predictors of EE (Huang *et al.*, 2017).

Training and Development are aimed to help the employees cope with the tasks, duties and responsibilities of the job so that they have a better work experience, leading to their engagement in the organization. Smith (2006) has argued that training is a way of bringing the employee towards the organization's demands, and Collings and Mellahi (2009) suggested that Training and Development give the opportunities to employees to better engage with the organization. The SET gives a brief explanation of the relationship

between Training and Development and EE. After getting trained by the organization, employees feel the spirit of investment by the organization, which in turn generates engaged employees (Suan & Nasurdin, 2014).

The HRM researchers and professionals recognize that organizations always seek to train and develop the best human resource personals, that include the environment of growth and engagement (Harter & Blacksmith, 2010). Today, the organizations have paid attention to the modern knowledge and exchange of information. Better trained and engaged human resource is the driving force in this new era of invention and innovation (Blunkett, 2000). Kristof (2006) argued that a well-trained and engaged working staff is the better source of obtaining the competitive advantage for the organizations. Among the HRMP, Training and Development coupe employees with job requirements and provide to better meet the challenges of engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

In previous studies, most of the researchers have considered Training and Development to predict a different outcome variable. For instance, Tangthong (2014) has suggested that Training and Development predicts employee retention. But this research study has utilized Training and Development to be the predictor of EE. Similarly, previous research has argued that Training and Development predict EE (Albrecht, 2015).

Orientation

Once new people are selected, they are given an orientation about the organization and their job roles. DeCenzo, Robbins and Verhulst (2016) have defined the workplace orientation as a process by which new employees are introduced to an organization. Of course, the new orientation or unofficial opening or running program is a form of organizational rules, policies and procedures, hierarchies and organizational perspectives.

The orientation of employees is a self-concocted effort by the institutions and organizations to introduce a new entrant to the norms and the working environment of the enterprises to get the newcomers engaged (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Even the orientation of new employees can convey significant task, duties, responsibilities and knowledge, skills, abilities; yet it produces inadequate detections related to the organization (Chao *et al.*, 1994). New employee's orientation initiates the process of orientation and helps the new employee adapt to their new environment and get engaged with organization (Barge & Schlüter, 2004).

The SET gives a brief explanation of relationship between orientation and EE. SET delineates that after the orientation of new employees is accomplished, the employees feel obliged to the organization and in return they respond in increased feelings of engagement with the organization. New employee's orientation or socialization is not different. It seeks to assess the need to train new employees for time and money, but the organization has the ability to develop teams, provide resources, and achieve engagement.

The new employee's orientation is best incorporated in order to predict the EE (Mestre *et al.*, 1997). It is important to involve a new employee in your work and organization when it comes to commitment and engagement (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). The orientation is the effective initiative in introducing the new entrants with knowledge and information to reduce uncertainty and getting engaged the newcomers.

In previous studies, most of the researchers have considered orientation to predict a different outcome variable. For instance, Kwan (2009) has suggested that orientation predicts the teachers beginning and effective commitment. But this research study has utilized orientation to be the predictor of EE. Orientation also predicts the organizational climate which is an intervening variable. Similarly, in this research, orientation has a direct and positive impact on EE (Sardar, 2011).

Organizational Climate

The organizational climate is very important; it can be analyzed by the organizations as the set of norms and values which create an environment inside the organization, at the workplace. The organizational climate mediates the relationship of HRMP and EE. The organizational climate can mediate either favorable or unfavorable for the employees, which may directly affect their behavior of engagement. In other words, the organizational climate can be seen as the uniqueness of an organization that its members experience while they work there (Steers, 1977). Bowen and Ostrof (2004) argued that management and its staffing policies articulate the organizational climate for sustaining and implementing such policies which can engage their personals.

It is evident that every initiative by the department of personal resource management portraits changes to the climate or environment of business concerns (Gelede & Ivary, 2003) and the organizational climate reacts prudently to affect desired level of human engagement (Kahan, 1990).

Simon *et al.* (2015) explained briefly that organizational climate has provided the mediating role between the human resource practices i.e. Recruitment and Selection, orientation and EE. Most of the research studies have argued that the organizational climate is helpful for the environment building inside the organization. The organizational climate is the name of a uniform environment. This shares the organization's norms, values and priorities. It also demonstrates an atmosphere of collectively organizing the human resource capital and motivating them towards EE. Huang *et al.* (2017) has suggested organizational climate as the mediating role between the human resource practices i.e. Training and Development and EE. EE has a positive relationship with organizational climate. (May *et al.*, 2004). In the previous study of Henriques (2013), organizational climate has served to mediate the relationship of HRMP and organizational outcome, but currently it serves to mediate HRMP and EE.

Employee Engagement

The HRMP are regarded to generate a meaningful influence on the EE (Rai *et al.*, 2017). HRMP are the key elements in predicting the level of engagement within the employees. Huang *et al.* (2017) argued that the SET briefly explained that when the employees are valued and recognized for their efforts, they in return experience a high sense of engagement.

EE is well-expressed as the in-depth feelings of the heart and mind, full of the spirit of hard work and enthusiasm, with full determination and solitude (Schaufeliet *et al.*, 2002). Employees devote their heart and soul with gratitude to achieve high engagement and high performance. Kahn (1990) described engagement as "the involvement of employees in their work in such a way that their heart and soul mindfully indulge in the assignment". So, EE is associated with energy, vigour and full involvement to achieve the overall organizational goals and objectives (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Albrecht (2015) has discussed four major HRMP which included Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Socialization and Performance Management, generating a positive, direct and significant influence over EE. Similarly, Aktar (2018) has discussed six HR practices namely Career Advancement, Performance Feedback, Training and Development, Rewards and Recognition, and Employee Participation as directly predicting EE as the dependent variable. Abbassi (2016) has generated the relationship of EE and HRMP. As similar to the above, orientation has a direct and positive impact on the predicted construct of EE (Sardar, 2011). Based on the above literature, we derive our hypotheses as:

H_1: *Recruitment and Selection has a positive impact on EE*

H_2: *Training and Development has a positive impact on EE*

H_3: *Orientation has a positive impact on EE*

H_4: *Organizational climate has a positive impact on EE*

H_5: *Organizational climate mediates the relationship between Recruitment and Selection and EE*

H_6: *Organizational climate mediates the relationship between Training and Development and EE*

H_7: *Organizational climate mediates the relationship between Orientation and EE*
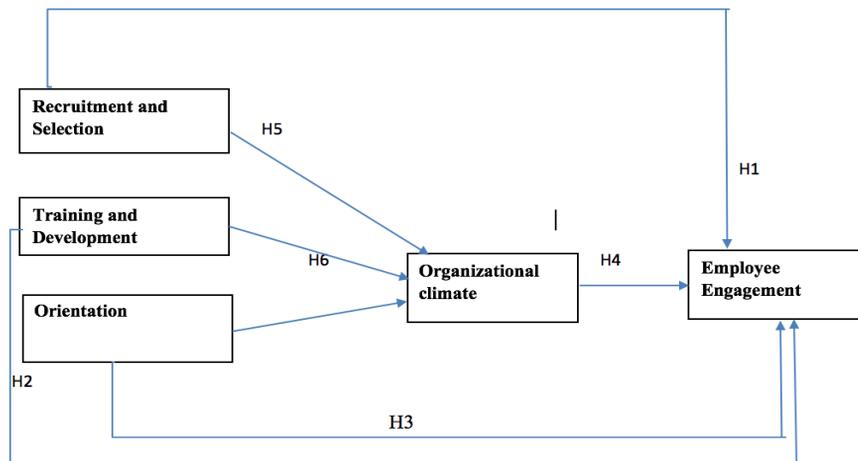
Fig. 1: *Conceptual Model*

Methodology

Population and Sample

A quantitative study was opted for data collection, sampling and analysis. A survey questionnaire was adapted to collect the data. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to collect the data. Banks were chosen on convenience basis, whereas bank officers of grade OG1, OG2, and OG3 were purposively chosen to determine the impact of HRMP on EE. The target population of the study consisted of the private banks of South Punjab. The size of the sample had been finalized using Chou and Bentler (1986). The sample consisted of 410 employees of operational grade (OG1, OG2, and OG3). Out of 410, 396 questionnaires were utilized for the research analysis, while 14 questionnaires were rejected due to missing values.

Instruments

All items were measured on the five-point Likert scale. Table 1 shows the sources from which the item of constructs was adopted.

Table 1: *Scale Adaption*

Construct	Adopted from
HR Practices	Desseler (2006) and Young (2008).
Organizational Climate	Psicothema (2013)
Employee Engagement	Thomas, H (2007)

Results

Table 3 below depicts the demographic data of respondents.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics table*

Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-30 years	161	40.7
30-40 years	157	39.6
40-50 years	58	14.6
50-60	20	5.1
Gender		
Male	96	24.2
Female	300	76.8
Education		
Bachelor	191	50.3
Master	161	40.7
Any other degree	36	9.1
Marital Status		
Single	156	40
Married	240	60
Income		
20000-50000	151	38
50,000-100,000	181	48
Above 100,000	64	16

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed. The factor loadings for all the items were greater than .7, which is strongly significant.

Table 4: *Exploratory Factor Analysis Factor Loading*

Item No.	ORN	E-ENG	T&D	OC	R&S
O1	.805				
O2	.737				
O3	.735				
O4	.721				
EE1		.933			
EE2		.878			
EE3		.854			
EE4		.825			
EE5		.734			
EE6		.726			
EE7		.715			
EE8		.703			
TD1			.874		
TD2			.863		
TD3			.747		
TD4			.721		
OC1				.899	
OC2				.890	
OC3				.860	
OC4				.858	
OC5				.855	
OC6				.813	
OC7				.803	
OC8				.746	
OC9				.737	
OC10				.708	
OC11				.717	
RS1					.970
RS2					.918
RS3					.804
RS4					.721

Note: O= Orientation, EE= Employee Engagement, TD= Training & Development, OC= Organizational Climate, RS= Recruitment & Selection.

The reliability of the instrument was checked. Table 5 shows the Cronbach's alpha value of each construct.

Table 5: *Reliability analysis*

Construct	Cronbach alpha
Recruitment and Selection	.778
Training and Development	.794
Orientation	.719
Organizational Climate	.745
Employee Engagement	.854

Table 3 shows that the dependent variable EE is positively correlated to the independent variables of Recruitment and Selection (R&S), Training and Development (T&D), Orientation (OR), and Organizational Climate (OC).

Table 6: *Correlation matrix*

Variables	R&S	T&D	OR	OC	EE
RS	1				
TD	.380**	1			
OR	.289**	.356**	1		
OC	.478**	.272**	.220**	1	
EE	.515**	.331**	.438**	.421**	1

Table 7: *Results of Mediation Analysis between Recruitment and Selection and Employee Engagement through Organizational Climate*

Variables	S.E	Beta	T	P
Step 1: Employee Engagement				
Recruitment and Selection	.059	.247	4.186	.000
Step 2: Organizational learning				
Recruitment and Selection	.053	.550	9.982	.000
Step3: Employee Engagement				
Recruitment and Selection	.060	.213	3.550	.000
Organizational learning	.062	.566	9.567	.000

The relationship of EE and Recruitment and Selection was evaluated. At first, EE was directly analyzed with Recruitment and Selection. The value of R-sq=.2911 and p-value is significant (p<.05), and t-value is more than 2 i.e. t=4.186. When organizational climate was added as a mediator, the results were significant. The above table clearly describes that with the addition of organizational climate, the relationship between Recruitment and Selection and EE became significant and positive. The value of R-sq=.328

increased with mediation of organizational climate. Similarly, p=.0 which is <.05 and t-value is greater than 2.

Table 8: *Results of Mediation Analysis between Training and Development and Employee Engagement through Organizational Climate*

Variables	S.E	Beta	T	P
Step 1: Employee Engagement				
Training and Development	.071	.346	4.896	.000
Step 2: organizational learning				
Training and Development	.065	.507	7.810	.000
Step 3: Employee Engagement				
Training and Development	.035	.186	5.314	.000
Organizational learning	.060	.593	9.883	.000

At first, EE was directly analyzed by Training and Development. The value of R-sq=.2410, and p-value is significant (p<.05), and t-value is more than 2 (t=4.896). When organizational climate was added as a mediator, the results became significant. The above table clearly describes that with the addition of organizational climate, the relationship between Training and Development and EE remained significant and positive. The value of R-sq=.4004 increased with the organizational climate mediation. Similarly, p=.0 which is <.05 and t-value is greater than 2.

Table 9: *Results of Mediation Analysis between Orientation and Employee Engagement through Organizational Climate*

Variables	S.E	Beta	T	p
Step 1: Employee Engagement				
Orientation	.041	.296	7.219	.000
Step 2: organizational learning				
Orientation	.064	.617	9.640	.000
Step3: Employee Engagement				
Orientation	.035	.206	5.885	.000
Organizational learning	.050	.692	13.840	.000

First, EE was directly analyzed by Orientation. The value of R-sq=.2360, and p-value is significant (p<.05), and t-value is more than 2 (t=7.291). When organizational climate was added as a mediator, the results became significant. The value of R-sq=.4112 increased with organizational climate. Similarly, p=.0 which is <.05 and t=5.885, which is greater than 2. Partial mediation occurred between Orientation and EE.

So, the results show that Training and Development, Recruitment and Selection, and Orientation have a significant impact on EE, while Organizational Climate acts as a partial mediator.

Research Implications

The research work of this study has placed some of the implications. Firstly, the study provides the empirical contribution in literature in the context to investigate the relationship of individual HRMP, organizational climate and EE. Previous researches (Menguc *et al.*, 2013; Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015) presented a combination of many HRMP to predict EE. Besides this, few studies (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010) have considered OC and engagement as a single construct, but this research has theoretically addressed each individual HRMP like Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, and Orientation as a significant predictor of EE. The research study also contributed to the literature by analyzing the mediating role of organizational climate. Although these combinations of variables have been focused in direct relationship in other researches, but not as a mediator.

This study has expressed the practical implications for the banking sector of Pakistan. The findings of the study may help banking management and policymakers to implement and prioritize the HRMP in the banking sector to reduce the anxiety of employees and increase in their level of engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study has certain theoretical and managerial contribution, it also has some limitations. First, the demographics of the sample were restricted to only three cities of South Punjab (Multan, Bahawalpur, and Dera Ghazi Khan). It was also limited to the officers of OG-3, OG-2 and OG-1. The study may be carried out in other cities of Punjab or Pakistan, and it can involve more peers of employees working in the banks. Secondly, the study involved cross-sectional data collection, and there is a probability of respondent biasness. Thirdly, the research is time-limited and budget-bound. By utilizing more resources and time, the sample size and demographics of the research can be increased. Fourth, this study has investigated three HRMP as predictors. Future researchers can investigate the relationship of HRMP and EE by involving and expanding on other mediators and moderators. The future research may be conducted by employees other antecedents of EE and HRMP, like reward and recognition, performance appraisal, socialization, etc.

Conclusion

The study was carried out to understand the concept of EE with regard to the HRMP among the employees of the banking sector of Pakistan. The major objective of this study was to explore the relationship of HRMP and EE in context of SET. This study also

explored the mediating effect of organizational climate between the HRMP and EE. Current research has contributed to the research gap by expanding the relationship among the HRMP, organizational climate and EE. Organizational climate mediates the relationship and integrates the relationship of three HRMPs i.e. Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, and orientation and EE. The study revealed the direct and positive relationship of HRMP and EE, which generates conducive environment of organizational climate leading towards a better engaged human resource.

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