

THE IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG PUBLIC UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES IN NORTHERN REGION OF MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *The management plays a very important role in ensuring that all administrative processes run smoothly to support all learning and research activities at the higher education industry. In this study, the relationship between the components of HRM practices that consists of working environment, training and development, compensation and benefits and employee engagement scope towards the employee performance will be measured. The scope of this study focuses specifically on non-academic employees in all public universities in the northern region and a quantitative survey design will be employed, involving respondents from various campuses in public institutions. Data will be analyzed to determine the significance of relationships between variables and this study is expected to see if there is a significant relationship between each variable and employee performance in the public university scope. It is expected that this study will be able to fill the gap in the challenges often experienced by non-academic staff who are often overlooked in the HRM practices and aims to explore into more depth towards any additional strategic influence on HRM components in the context of non-academic staff performance within public universities.*

Keywords: *HRM practices, employee performance, non-academic, higher education, public university.*

Introduction

Every employee is the most important asset for an organization, no matter what sector they are from. They are an asset because they can become important components in helping companies or organizations to remain relevant and competitive in this age of globalization which is more compact and advanced (Nondoh, 2021). Their ability to become an asset and important component in the organization is also aided and greatly influenced by administrative systems and policies, one of which is the human resource management practices (HRM) that exist in every organization (Siyal et al., 2020). Most HRM practices practiced by every organization will involve various practices, such as the working environment, training and development, compensation and benefits and also the influence of employee engagement which will play an important role in shaping a performance that affects the company's performance. Therefore, in the public sector perspective, especially in the education industry, HRM practices are essential for every employee to help them be equipped with the skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies required to produce an encouraging performance that can contribute to the success and growth of the institution (Keltu, 2024).

In the case of Pakistan, as their researchers state that most of their public higher education institutions do not have adequate HR practices or system that have disrupted their management procedures, it actually provides an evidence on the importance of involving work systems through various HR practices which can maximize knowledge, skills and commitment that can increase their motivation and performance, especially in ensuring that the management of the institute moves very smoothly and flexibly (Tariq et al., 2024). In addition, Hanh (2023) found that over the past decade, the changes in the higher education of Vietnam management have helped their scholars to identify that employee performance is not only viewed and related in terms of leadership and management only, but also the other factors such as work environment, salary, training, and culture that will influence the performance of their employees either directly or indirectly.

Furthermore, recent studies carried out in Malaysia also highlight the central role played by HRM practices in supporting the performance of staff within higher learning institutions. A study conducted by Noor et al. (2022) on 144 academic staff from a Malaysian public university showed that HRM practices expressed through recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, and reward systems had a positive and statistically significant relationship with job satisfaction, which in turn affected employee performance. This study focuses at how HR practices affect employee performance in public universities in Malaysia's Northern Region. The findings from this research are predicted to have a substantial impact on both theoretical and practical areas. This study is particularly significant since it contributes to the existence of knowledge by investigating the influences of employee performance in public university setting with a focus on non-academic employees. By doing this, this study closes important gaps in previous research and offers a more thorough comprehension of the variables affecting employee performance in this particular setting. The objectives of this study are to examine the effect of work life balance; training and development; compensation and benefits and employee engagement on employee performance among public university employees in the northern region of Malaysia.

Literature Review

Employee Performance

Employee performance is the outcome or level of accomplishment of an individual over a given time period in carrying out tasks in relation to various options, such as job requirements, desired outcomes, or jointly defined standards (Faozen & Sandy, 2024; Xiang et al., 2021). The organization's success is dependent on several factors which are the employee's performance, innovation, creativity and commitment (Belete, 2021). Employee performance is one of the important components of an organization that determines whether they meet success or failure (Ali & Anwar, 2021). According to Waal (2021), one of the key elements of success is employee performance, which they utilize to surpass rivals, meet goals, and make profits.

Employee performance is a complex construct that involves one's capacity to execute the job adequately in a way that contributes to the achievement of organizational goals. Contemporary research literature highlights the fact that performance is not solely a function of task accomplishment but also of contextual and adaptive behaviors that enhance the organizational climate (Otoo, 2024). Besides, constructs such as employee motivation and ethical behavior have also been recognized as significant drivers of performance outcomes (Dogbe et al., 2024; Zenas et al., 2023). In the context of public universities, especially for non-academic employees, an understanding of such constructs is essential given that their performance directly impacts administrative effectiveness and service quality. Thus, examination of the interaction between human resource practices and performance determinants can yield practical lessons for organizational effectiveness enhancement.

Working Environment and Employee Performance

Past research proves that there is a positive relationship between the working environment with employee performance. Empirical evidence from various studies shows how important the physical conditions of the work environment are influencing employee performance (Martignoni, 2021; Saleem, 2020). In line with past researcher, Aruldoss (2022) stated that office facilities such as adequate air conditioner and Wi-Fi can increase employee comfort and focus in completing their tasks. Companies need to pay attention to aspects such as cleanliness, lighting, workspace layout and room temperature to create an environment that supports productivity (Dullah et al., 2023). Improving the physical environment, management can build a more comfortable and supportive work atmosphere, which ultimately significantly improves employee performance (Chafi, 2022; Persson, 2022).

According to past studies, the working environment has a significant positive impact on employee performance. Having a suitable and complete physical workplace coupled with supportive coworkers has been proven to improve employee's productivity and efficiency. This is reinforced by the findings from (Saidi et al., 2019) which indicated that all physical working environments, supervisor support, coworker's relationship shows a positive correlation to employee performance. In addition, past study stated that office facilities like Wi-Fi and sufficient air conditioning can improve worker comfort and concentration (Aruldoss, 2022). Based on the research that has been made on the health sector in Indonesia, hospital management should monitor the work environment wisely because a good work environment can boost employee performance and vice versa, if the work environment is poor, employee performance decreases and hospital conditions suffer (Parashakti et al., 2020). This empirical evidence supports the statement that the physical conditions of the work environment are an important factor that influences employee performance.

Training and Development and Employee Performance

Based on several research studies, training and development (T&D) and employee performance are positively and significantly correlated, especially in the higher education sector. According to Shah et al. (2023), well-structured and effective training programs contribute to enhanced employee motivation, confidence, and productivity. Employees are better prepared to do their jobs effectively and fulfil role expectations when they get relevant and focused training, which eventually improves organizational performance. Similarly, Ismail et al. (2020) highlighted that continuous training not only increases employee enthusiasm and adaptability but also sustains high standards of employee performance. When training is based on what the organization needs, employees are prone to stay on track with the organization's goals and do their best to accomplish them.

Moreover, training and development are important because they do more than help people improve their skills, but they also have a big impact on how well an organization does its job. Dublino (2022) argues that the true impact of training lies in the transfer of learning to real work situations. Despite this transfer, both efficiency and morale may suffer. Thus, training programs need to ensure that employees are supported in implementing their newly gained information in everyday duties. Effective learning transfer results in significant gains in employee performance. Therefore, based on previous research findings and the strategic relevance of successful learning transfer, this study claims that training and development have a significant relationship with employee performance among non-academic staff at Malaysian public universities

Compensation and Benefits and Employee Performance

According to Mojolou et al. (2023), extrinsic and intrinsic incentive systems demonstrate that these variables have a significant impact on employees, particularly work productivity. Furthermore, Felicia et al. (2025) found that an increase in salary, reward, promotion, and job security correlate with improved performance. Thus, there is a direct link between these variables. This study found a correlation between employee perceptions of salary, reward, promotion, and job security and job performance. Hence, employees who feel secure and motivated by their compensation and benefits are more likely to perform well at work. On other hand, Isuku et al. (2022) indicates that non-academic staff at the University of Ibadan have low levels of commitment. However, human resource management practices such as recruitment, training, compensation, and occupational health and safety are being implemented for this group. In addition, there was a favorable association between human resource management methods (recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration and benefits, occupational health and safety, and non-academic staff commitment at the University of Ibadan.

In line with past researcher, Zafar et al. (2021) performed research in public sector universities and established a strong positive relationship between reward practices and work performance. They emphasized that salary, rewards, promotion, and job security are some of the most influential factors that enhance employees' performance as a whole. In the public university setting, where efficiency in support services is provided by non-academic staff, equitable remuneration can be a key driver of work performance and dedication. Therefore, it can be concluded there is indeed a relationship between compensation and benefits with employee performance.

Employee Engagement and Employee Performance

HRM studies from Ruslan et al., (2019) and Akanmu et al., (2025) state that excellent employee engagement is important for the performance of educational institutions, especially the public university sector, as they are institutions that prioritize knowledge and skills, while a high level of continuous commitment through employee engagement will produce an affective and normative commitment that will influence positive and negative effects on employee performance. Previous studies have also shown that each employee's performance will be influenced by the level of employee engagement and positive results will be seen if employees are more motivated, committed and satisfied with their work. Therefore, the study findings underline the importance of appropriate strategies to foster an environment in improving employee performance, especially in the context of respondents who are non-academic staff because they require additional efforts to lead to more productive and efficient performance (Gede & Huluka, 2024; Gupta & Sharma, 2018).

Conversely, if employee engagement is low, especially for the higher education sector such as public universities, it will leave a negative impact on employee performance as it will contribute to increased stress, poor internal communication and management (Afrahi et al., 2021). According to various reports, only 13% of employees worldwide in the education sector are actively engaged in work while more than twice as many employees are inactive in work engagement (AlGhunaimi & AlGhenaimi, 2024). This clearly shows a strong relationship between employee engagement and their performance where both positive and negative engagement have a direct consequence on the success of the education institution. Therefore, it is important to create effectiveness in employee engagement and identify any barriers to ensure employee performance is impacted with only positive results.

In addition, according to Renusree (2024), the relationship between employee engagement and their performance has been a topic of discussion for a long time because according to several previous studies, employee emotional behavior, their engagement with employers and colleagues, as well as their existing principles and future views about their jobs can improve their performance as an employee. Abdullahi et al. (2023) in their study that examined employee engagement on their performance in developing countries has stated that 25 employees who have higher levels of employee engagement will be more likely to be in trustworthy relationships with their employers, colleagues and also their responsibilities and will always be ready to face changes and challenges in their work responsibilities. When employees feel engaged, motivated and happy with their work, they will have a positive perception in contributing and are ready to provide the best in their services. Psychosocial research in organizations has shown that when employees work and engage together, they will share trust and build an effective experience that can shape motivation and positive behavior that will ultimately improve their individual and team performance within the organization (Alsafadi & Altahat, 2021). Therefore, it shows that employee engagement has another significant influence on employee performance.

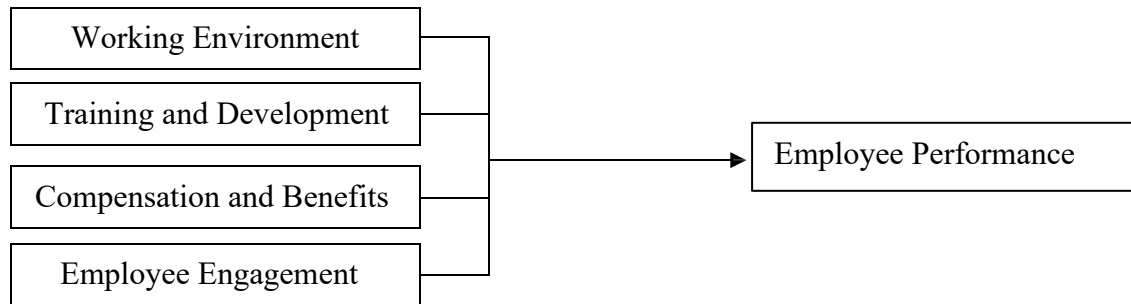


Figure 1: The Hypothesized Model of HRM Practices and Employee Performance

The hypothesized model of employee performance is shown in Figure 1 and the hypotheses developed show the relationships between working environment, training and development, compensation and benefits, and employee engagement towards employee performance.

H1: The working environment has a significant impact on the performance of non-academic staff at northern Malaysian public universities.

H2: There is a significant relationship between training and development with employee performance among non-academic staff in Malaysian public universities.

H3: Compensation and benefits practices positively and significantly impact the performance of non-academic staff at northern Malaysian public universities.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance among non-academic staff in Malaysian public universities.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to examine and measure the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and employee performance in the context of public higher education institutions among non-academic staff. This study also aims to fill the existing research gap which mostly only focuses on academic staff or the private sector and see how HRM practices can improve the performance of non-academic staff and understand the importance of a consistent HRM system in order to contribute to the performance of a motivated, efficient and productive workforce. The positive relationship between the components of human resource management practices such as working environment, training and development, compensation and benefits as well as employee engagement shows the importance of its own impact on employee performance. These components, if focused and executed brilliantly, will influence employee career development, satisfaction, commitment and transformational leadership for employees which will simultaneously improve employee performance (Yek et al., 2024; Yusoff et al., 2020).

In the context of employee performance in higher education, it is an important element that determines the overall success of an institution. Employee performance is seen as the ability of staff to perform tasks efficiently, responsibly and in line with the goals of the institution (Salim et al., 2020). Their ability will be influenced by internal and external factors as well as HRM components that will help them shape individual competence, strategic operations and the rewards that will be obtained from the above efforts. These components not only improve the quality and quantity of work produced but will contribute to the mental and physical satisfaction of employees. Focusing on these components will not only have a positive impact on employee performance, but it will also influence the overall picture of strategic institutional operations and development as well as the quality of effective public university services. It can be

interpreted that this study can lead to another exploration that the implementation of a planned and comprehensive HRM strategy not only has a positive impact on the scope of employee performance but also has an impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution, especially in facing various future challenges and competition.

This study also proves the consistent evidence that align with previous study by (Chafi, 2022; Persson, 2022) which believes that improving the physical environment, management can build a more comfortable and supportive work atmosphere, which ultimately significantly improves employee performance. This study showed create a good working environment can affect employee performance by examine the relationship between both of it. Studying employee performance can contribute to obtain the knowledge in different ways such as working environment divided to two types (physical working environment and non-physical working environment) and how it impacts directly or indirectly towards employees. Poor working environment able to decrease job motivation and satisfaction among employees at once can lower the work productivity. Thus, university management should focus on improving better physical facilities, equipment and working spaces for the staff to promote healthier working practices.

Effective training and development also significantly enhance employee performance, especially among non-academic staff in public universities. When employees receive structured and relevant training, they tend to be more motivated, productive, and capable of meeting job expectations. However, the success of training does not rely solely on its delivery but also on how well the learning is applied in the workplace. As highlighted by Dublino (2022), proper support and guidance are essential to ensure the transfer of knowledge into actual job tasks, which ultimately leads to improved performance. This confirms that structured and supported training plays a key role in improving employee performance.

Zafar et al. (2021) stated that compensation and benefits have a tremendous effect on employee performance. According to the new research, factors such as competitive salaries and rewards, career development opportunities, and employment stability play an important part in enhancing the performance of employees. Integration of new data states that employees will feel motivated, dedicated, and productive when they perceive that outcome is fairly remunerated and the inputs are duly valued by society. However, we also discovered that countless organizations have yet to embrace comprehensive Human Resource Management (HRM) processes fully, even when there is convincing evidence that this will be advantageous. In many circumstances, this resistance is explained by the perceived lack of funds, organizational resistance to change, or a lack of understanding concerning the long-term benefits and impacts of HRM on organizational performance. These observations spotlight the enduring gap between the purported advantages of HRM techniques and their application, particularly in institutions of higher learning.

Concurrently, in the context of employee engagement, employees who are highly engaged tend to provide good quality work and job satisfaction. Interpersonal relationships, employee availability and an inclusive work environment can also be achieved along with challenges that can be faced positively. Other factors such as a sense of appreciation and support from leadership also play an important role in building a quality employee engagement in the institution. This is because when employees feel connected in line with the objectives of the institution, they seem to be given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully while also demonstrating a good quality and work performance.

Implementing right human resource management practices are believed to enhance employee's performance among non-academic staff in public university. Higher education institutions can focus on working environment, training and development, compensation and benefits and employee engagement component in order to improve work productivity in the institution. Furthermore, there is still a lacking in research the impact of HRM practices on employee performance related to non-academic staff in public university. So, future researchers can continue to investigate by use or add other variables to see how its effectively impact the employees, as it may help improve work productivity in the institutions.

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