

Organizational Politics and Media Employee Performance during COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Many people have spoken about organizational politics about corporate well-being. Employee performance is examined in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic as a result of high-performance work practices (training, empowerment, and incentives). The findings suggest that the chosen high-performance work practices of media employees during COVID-19 had a poor association. Having a negative association with performance nullifies the current evidence of empowerment. Public media administrators must design standard operating practices that take into account the current upheavals. Performance may be improved by using organizational resources and time in a manner that fosters trust between the employer and the employee. The links are examined in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. While studying high-performance work practices and media worker performance in a developing nation, this is a novel addition. The result shows a lack of trust among the media employees, which might lead to the abuse of authority. As a result, media organizations must put in place sufficient checks and balances before empowering their staff. Since the recent epidemic of COVID-19, employees may be more inclined to take advantage of the technology development.

Keywords: High performance, work practices, training, empowerment, rewards

INTRODUCTION

A paradigm (a physical world to a virtual world) shift is observed in the recent past, called, 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 a 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 & Wilkesmann, 2018) argued that it allows human beings to fill in the gaps that machines cannot handle.

Bamber et al., 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 taking challenges in normal routine life. They can be a role model for another sector employees as well in order to innovate themselves in a new role. They can excitingly recognize their new role by making it fascinating to the viewers. (Bamber et al., 2017). On the recommendations (Bamber et al., 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 gotten even more potent by now.

Moreover, it is argued that 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 workers' performance and overall outcome of the success of an organization during certain periods of duty compared to the standard of the work (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). In this regard, the organizations are trying hard to maintain and sustain higher levels of employee 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 et al., 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 (Posthuma et al., 2013). A central premise in the study of HPWP is that dedication and flexibility in work practices can influence employee commitment, satisfaction, and performance (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Mahmood et al., 2018; 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 (Bohlander & Snell, 2007).

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 the managerial level). Thus, this research admires integrating employee practices and behavior (Zhang & Morris, 2014) contributing to performance. This study provides a new perspective in the field based on recent pandemic COVID-19 impacts from 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 (Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2020), who tested the model in Spain. 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 in a developing country context like Pakistan, where HR strategies and practices especially in media remain under discussion and have seen collapse (Chadwick et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2016; Maharjan & Sekiguchi, 2016). (D. Kim & Choi, 2014) found that higher investments in employee capability through practical measures bring employer-employee harmony that consequentially enhances 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.

METHOD

This research is quantitative. The sample was drawn from a pool of full-time working media employees working at the administrator and managerial levels. The public sector was particularly selected for the reason that does not ensure job security and other security benefits like pension and social security etc. A convenience sample of 334 employees (male, $n = 214$ and female, $n = 120$) was selected. The public sector media (PTV) in Pakistan are characterized by restricted resources (including financial benefits) that may call for looking at other opportunities available to the employees. Twenty public sector media sub-stations employees throughout the country were selected for a 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 a broader range of responses dealing with various aspects of freelancing activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural equation modeling was employed by using SmartPLS software. The partial least square provides structural modeling of the findings by defining cause and effect results. The measurement model and structural models were reported as a part of the results of this study. The details of this entire model are listed in the 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 on the same page (J. Hair et al., 2010). Factor loadings per item should have recommended value of 0.6 or above and it shows internal consistency (Chin et al., 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 (J. 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 0.6789	TR1	0.7590	0.8940	
	TR2	0.8453		
	TR3	0.8676		
	TR4	0.8152		
	TR5	0.8032		
	TR6	0.8096		
Empowerment 0.6278	ET1	0.7389	0.8707	
	ET2	0.8129		
	ET3	0.8777		
	ET4	0.8377		
	ET5	0.8373		
Rewards 0.7085	RW1	0.8455	0.9067	
	RW2	0.8655		
	RW3	0.8687		
	RW4	0.7339		
	RW5	0.7568		
Emp. Performance 0.7395	EP1	0.7038	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, 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 subsamples with the help of bootstrapping is used (J. Hair et al., 2010). The significance of the path coefficient is obtained by using the t-values (J. F. Hair et al., 2014; McIntosh et al., 2014). The value of R Square and path coefficients beta and significance indicate how well the model is supported (Surienty et al., 2013).

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 high-performance work practices do 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 (O. M. Karatepe, 2013; Kundu et al., 2019; Pruneda, 2015) in the normal functional contexts. The revolutionary contexts are ignored at large. In 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 priority.

It is noted from the results that the relationship of training, empowerment, and rewards is weak with the performance of employees. This is because the employees are functioning in a different environmental context at present. The training, empowerment, and rewards are among

the first six topmost preferred HR practices rather than high-performance work practices that contribute positively towards employee performance (Boselie et al., 2005; Osman M Karatepe, 2013). Media Organization is the place 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 (Allen & Kilmann, 2001; Garen, 2016; H. Liu & Li, 2017; S. Liu et al., 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, even though the media provide their employee with the relevant training they do not care about the organization but focus on fulfilling their 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 et al., 2019).

The contradiction is observed in results concerning the employees having empowerment (Krylova et al., 2020; Sattar et al., 2015). The empowerment extended from the organization side aggravates the performance of employees instead of having a 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 websites and might have joined other work forums for assisting the 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", seem more evident in reducing the required levels of performance. Thus the workers do not concentrate upon their working and supervising practices (Kundu et al., 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's boundaries in offering their services (Osman M Karatepe, 2013). Therefore the result indicates that to maintain the decorum of an organization it is not much desirable to empower employees especially during a situation like a pandemic where certain SOPs have to follow while working and keeping a social distance is essential.

Training and Employee Performance

Training helps employees equip them with the learning and expertise required to do a better job. Relevant training equips the people in the right direction whereas irrelevant training is the source of wastage of time and resources (Pruneda, 2015). In the media, the workers need to have training 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 et al., 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 (H. J. Kim et al., 2009). At the same time, it has several managerial implications in enhancing employee performance (Osman M Karatepe, 2013). Further reduced errors can be ensured by providing training to the employees (Aladwan et al., 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 by empowering employees and giving them the appropriate resources (Sattar et al., 2015). More recently, (Kundu et al., 2019) found employee empowerment positively and significantly related to employee performance. When the employees are given powers and responsibilities, and they are encouraged to participate in decision making. This enriches them with the confidence and freedom to perform in their way without the direct involvement of the management, thus leaving them to use power and resources as and when they require (Awamleh, 2013).

It is also noted that the knowledge explosion, as a result of the fourth industrial revolution, also known as the information and communication technology revolution (Hsu & Sabherwal, 2012; Kasasbeh, 2015) has empowered employees to get better outreach and making it a challenge for the organization (Krylova et al., 2020) to retain and sustain the HR.

Moreover, a delegation of authority is an 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-Jammal 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 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 (H. Liu & Li, 2017).

Without offering appropriate rewards the high performance cannot be ensured. The rewards have a reciprocal effect on the employees. Employees work for rewards and rewards motivate them to work harder and smarter (S. Liu et al., 2016). For achieving more rewards the employees get involved in their work and show higher performance. Performance pay is rightly used as a tool for achieving higher performance standards (Garen, 2016).

Looking at the worker's perspective, the workers are generally seen as motivated to work for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards available at the 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 the likelihood that trusting and loyal relationships may develop when the mutual commitments between employees and employers are fulfilled keeping in view their mutual benefits by following certain rules. The relationships between employee and employer are generally built due to economic or social reasons (Osman M 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 the organization's point of view. The theory also helps in understanding employee working behavior and habit. As in general practice, all employee works for a reward whether it is in appreciation form or it is in money form

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 afraid of getting effected by a virus). Generally, training and rewards are used to strengthen employee performance but in the current scenario, employee performance is not healthily supported by such practices. During pandemics like the COVID-19 situation as most of the employees are forced to do work from home, media employees were rear besides doctors and law enforcement agencies who work directly from within the organization and on the front foot.

The Social Exchange theory suggests that empowering media employees is not desirable as it leads the employee in crossing the limits and decorum of the organization. During a pandemic, most media employees use the negative advantage of empowerment especially when it comes to reporting the cases and creating panic in the society. Therefore high work practices of media employees are rejected due to weak performances keeping in view the Social Exchange Theory. 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 highlights 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 flexibility the organizations and employees must practice their psychological contract for better and long-lasting relationships. Training regarding the use of organizational resources is an important area to consider for managers. Empowerment towards doing the 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 help develop a commitment to the organization and people feel obliged and thus try to return to their organization in terms of better performance. People, instead of using training as a positive tool may likely use it for their purposes. The skills learned may be used for earning more instead of using them for organizational purposes.

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 similar linkages. The use of questionnaires may limit the 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 the COVID-19 context. Moreover examining the difference between males and females regarding the model tested will also be an interesting insight.

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