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High Commitment Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Outcomes, HR Attribution Theory and a Proposed Model in the Context of Bangladesh

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Abstract: Human resource management (HRM) practices have been studied as a composite or bundle approach with different names including different practices. Each bundle includes common HRM practices of staffing, compensation, training and development, performance appraisal, job design and career development issues with varying dimensions. The present study refers these HRM practices as High Commitment HRM (HCHRM) practices. Prior studies identify these HCHRM practices related to employee outcomes of satisfaction, commitment and retention. Consistent with early findings, the present study believes a relation between HCHRM and employee outcomes. Additionally, HR attribution theory is discussed here to explain the causal relationship between HCHRM practices and employee outcomes. Based on the review of HCHRM practices literatures and existing HRM practices of Bangladesh, a research model is proposed and propositions are developed, The model is expected to be tested in future to identify the relationship among HCHRM practices, HR attribution and employee outcomes in the context of Bangladesh. The proposed model can be tested in other countries as well.

Keywords: *HRM, HCHRM, HR attribution, Employee outcomes, Bangladesh*

1. Introduction

Contemporary Human Resource Management (HRM) scholars are studying and documenting the developments in HRM in the management literatures (Som, 2007; Schuler & Jackson, 2008). Most of these developments have seen changes in the nature of the HRM being integrative and value-driven approach (Schuler, 1992; Andersen, Cooper & Zhu, 2007). Contemporary HRM literatures have highlighted the contribution of HRM to organization performance (alongside other factors) (Subramony, 2009; Caliskan, 2010) and to achieve competitive advantage in organisations (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Kazlauskaite & Bučiūniene, 2008). Researchers analyze HRM-performance link and HRM as a source of competitive advantage with a view of HRM as a set or bundle or composite of practices (Huselid, 1995; Delaney & Huselid 1996). Researchers use different names to refer the bundle or composite HRM practices such as, progressive or 'high performance' (Huselid, 1995; Delaney & Huselid, 1996), 'high commitment' (Arthur, 1992, 1994; Wood & de Menezes, 1998), 'high involvement' (Lawler, 1986), or "innovative" (Agarwala, 2003) HRM practices. Coaker (2011) uses the term "HRM Best Practices" referring to what different scholars name HRM set practices as; high performance work practices; high performance work systems; high commitment HRM; best practice HR; and Universal HRM practices. Gould-Williams (2004) find 'high commitment' HRM is widely applied in the UK and 'high performance' HRM is commonly employed in the US. The present study uses the term HCHRM to refer both "HCHRM and HPHRM" interchangeably through identifying the common HRM practices of these two approaches. From prior research review, common HRM practices included in HCHRM and HPHRM are identified. Additionally, HCHRM or HPHRM are found having relation with employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes such as, commitment and turnover (Arthur 1992, 1994; Huselid 1995) and; job satisfaction (Macky & Boxall, 2007). Based on these early literature findings, the aim of the present study is developing a research model and propositions regarding the link between HCHRM practices and employee outcomes to be employed in the organizations of Bangladesh. For this purpose, HR attribution theory will be explored to explain the effect of employee attribution to the relationship between HCHRM practices and employee outcomes. The present model is expected to future empirical test within and beyond Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

HCHRM: Arthur (1992) categories two broad groups of HRM practices and names them based on their uses such as "cost reducers" and "commitment maximizers". According to the author, HRM practices that aim to enhance employee commitment should include decentralized decision making, employee participation, extensive general training and higher wage rates. These HRM practices are better known as commitment focused HRM. In a later research, Arthur (1994) comments that these "commitment maximizers" HRM or HCHRM systems direct desired employee behaviors and attitudes by forming psychological links between organizational and employee goals. Delaney, Lewin, and Ichniowski (1989) as mentioned in Huselid (1995) use a more wider list of "high performance work practices" or HPHRM that includes personnel selection, performance appraisal, incentive compensation, job design, grievance procedures, information sharing, attitude assessment, and labor-management participation in HRM to promote employee performance in the organization. Becker, Huselid, Pickus, and Spratt (1997) include rigorous recruitment and selection, performance-contingent compensation systems, and management development and training activities directed to the needs of the business as part of their 'high performance work systems" which are also known as strategic HRM systems. Wood & de Menezes (1998) characterize High Commitment Management (HCM) by the use of HRM practices including information dissemination, problem-solving groups, minimal status differences, job flexibility and team working in combination. These practices are used as employer's commitment to the employees as assets or resources to be developed for the organization. Guthrie (2001) discusses organization uses high involvement or HCHRM practices when they view HR critical to organizational performance. The value-adding HRM system includes high-involvement work practices of internal promotions, performance- (versus seniority-) based promotions, skill-based pay, group-based (gain sharing, profit-sharing) pay, employee stock ownership, employee participatory programs, information sharing, attitude surveys, teams, cross-training or cross-utilization, and training focused on future skill requirements.

Datta, Guthrie, and Wright (2005) consider HCHRM styles or systems are employee-centered by design. High employee capability coupled with employee commitment and involvement facilitates organization to achieve optimal performance. These systems include practices such as rigorous selection procedures, internal merit-based promotions, grievance procedures, cross-functional and cross-trained teams, high levels of training, information sharing, participatory mechanisms, group-based rewards, and skill-based pay. Lepak, Liao, Chung, and Harden (2006) opine a HCHRM system might rely on policies of selective staffing, comprehensive training, and pay for performance in combination to encourage employee commitment toward the organization and also maximizing their contributions toward organizational performance. Harley, Allen, and Sargent (2007) and Kwon, Bae, and Lawler (2010) view HRM as HCHRM for employee motivation and performance. Wei, Han and Hsu (2010) identify HRM practices as HPHRM practices. HPHR practices or HCHRPs has been treated as a system of a synergistic composition of HRM practices (Guthrie 2001; MacDuffie, 1995; Whitener, 2001; Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007). Therefore the present researchers considers five broad categories of HRM practices including rigorous staffing, training and development, equitable and competitive compensation, development oriented performance appraisal, career development and job design to be labelled as HCHRM practices as identified by early researchers.

Empirical Evidences: HCHRM practices can be applied across a variety of industries e.g., automotive assembly plants (MacDuffie, 1995); steel companies and minimills (Arthur, 1992, 1994); not-for profit organizations (Delaney & Huselid, 1996); high technology firms (Coolins & Smith, 2006); service organization (Harley et al., 2007). These studies reveal organizations with high commitment systems experience greater productivity, financial performance, and effectiveness than organizations with low commitment or control systems. Furthermore, a number of studies reports the positive impact of a bundle of HCHRM practices on employees' job satisfaction, trust in management motivation, retention and organizational commitment (Agarwala, 2003; Kown et al., 2010; Macky & Boxall 2007; Pare & Tremblay, 2007; Ramsay, Scholarios & Harley, 2000) and the significant moderating role of HCHRM in predicting employees' organizational commitment (Whitener, 2001). Following table (1) summarizes early references of HCHRM practices with their outcomes.

Table 1: Summary of widely used references for HCHRM practices

Authors	HCHRM Practices	Findings
Arthur (1994)	Employee involvement in managerial decisions, formal participation programs, training in group problem solving, and socializing activities and maintenance of skilled employees and average wage rates.	High commitment systems have higher productivity, lower scrap rates, and lower employee turnover.
Huselid (1995)	Personnel selection, performance appraisal, incentive compensation, job design, grievance procedures, information sharing, attitude assessment, labor-management participation in human resource management, the intensity of recruiting efforts (selection ratio), the average number of hours of training per employee per year, and promotion criteria (seniority versus merit)	HPWPs reduce turnover, increase productivity and thereby enhance firm's financial performance.
Whitener (2001)	Selective staffing, comprehensive training, developmental appraisal, externally, and internally equitable reward systems.	HCHRM practices moderate the relationship between perceived organizational supports and employee commitment to the organization.
Agarwala (2003)	Employee acquisition, retention, compensation and incentives, Benefits and services, Rewards and recognition, Technical training, Management development, Career planning and development practices, Performance appraisals, Potential development, Succession planning, Employee relations with a human face, Employee exit and separation management, Adopting responsibility for socially relevant issues.	The innovative HR practices are the most significant predictors of organizational commitment.
Gould-Williams (2004)	Team working, employee involvement, empowerment, the offer of fair rewards, training and job security.	HCHRM influences employee satisfaction, motivation, commitment and intention to quit in the public sector organizations.
Harley et al. (2007)	Autonomous team membership, rigorous selection, performance appraisal, performance feedback, performance linked to outcomes, competitive pay, pay linked to performance, training, consultation, say in decisions,	HPWS have more positive outcomes for low-skilled than high-skilled workers in service organization.
Kown et al. (2010)	Job design, participation in decision making, training and development, pay for performance, high level of pay and performance appraisal.	HCHRM practices are positively related to the affective organizational commitment of top performers more than that of lower performers.
Chiang, Han, and Chuang (2011)	Selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, developmental appraisal, as well as competitive and equitable compensation.	HCHRM practices dominate knowledge-sharing behavior via perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational commitment.

Wei et al. (2010)	High-performance HR practices include offering internal career opportunities, extensive training, employment security, participation and communication, sensitive selection, and incentive compensation,	HPHRPs explain psychological climate. Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between psychological climate perceptions and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) at the individual level. At the plant level, HPHR practices have a positive and significant relationship only with job satisfaction.
Sun et al. (2007)	Selective staffing, extensive training, internal mobility, employment security, broad job design, results-oriented appraisal, rewards, and participation.	Service-oriented OCB partially mediates the relationship between HPHRPs and both performance indicators of turnover and productivity.

HRM in Bangladesh: Examining the organization of HRM within the Government of Bangladesh, Siddiquee (2003) highlights the current flaws of and future challenges to HRM in Bangladesh civil services. Current HRM deficiencies combined with bureaucratic corruption and increasing incidence of politicization adversely affect quality and performance of civil services. Ehsan (2008) discusses the challenges of the structural and management aspects of public sector HRM (PHRM) of Bangladesh. Based on theoretical perspective and associated themes derived from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' (UN/DESA) WPSR (World Public Sector Report) 2005 titled *Unlocking the Human Potential for Public Sector Performance,* Ehsan develops a model for PHRM with a broad ranges of recommendations in upgrading PHRM system. Bangladeshi private sector organizations are not matured enough at the stage of their development (Absar, Nimalathasan &, Mahmood, 2012). At this condition, the importance of HRM as well as role of HR department in the private organizations is still not very visible (Mahmood & Akhter, 2011). However, as the country is experiencing gradual economic development with more FDI inclusion and business growth, Bangladeshi managers need to be prepared to adopt systematic HRM to acquire, motivate and retain employees (Absar et al., 2012). Local researchers suggest improving different aspects of HRM that will have expected effect on employee attitude namely, job satisfaction, commitment, retention, turnover intention and morale of HR of private commercial banks (Billah & Islam, 2009; Islam, Mohajan, & Datta, 2012; Rahman & Iqbal, 2013; Newaz, Ali, & Akhter, 2007); Islamic banks (Rahman & Shahid, 2009); pharmaceutical company (Ahmed, Tabassum & Hossain, 2006); private university (Joarder & Sharif, 2011); and Ready Made Garment industry (Hossan, Sarker & Afroze, 2012). The following table (2) summarizes research works on HRM practices in the organizations of Bangladesh.

Table 2: Summary of studies on HRM practices of Bangladesh

Authors	HRM Practices	Findings
Siddiquee (2003)	HR planning, staffing policy, promotion and transfer policy, performance appraisal system and reward structure of Government organizations.	Existing HRM practices suffer from serious lack in promoting employee performance and in getting merit, professionalism and integrity in the public service in future.
Ehsan (2008)	Public sector HRM practices of recruitment policy, pay scale, performance appraisal system, career management issues, and performance-based promotion policy.	Inappropriate HRM practices to promote public administration services.
Ahmed et al. (2006)	HR planning, recruitment and selection, induction, training, performance appraisal, employee development, compensation plan of Pharmaceutical company.	HRM practices are not capable to give competitive advantage to the organization.
Joarder and Sharif	Compensation, supervisory support, job	HRM practices significantly influence

(2011)	security of Private University.	faculty turnover intention.
Islam et al. (2012)	Pay, Decision making authority, Promotional policy of PCBs.	HRM practices are significantly related with bank employees' job satisfaction and morale.
Rahman and Iqbal (2013)	Job security, professional development, promotional opportunity, working autonomy, working environment, compensation package, and financial benefits of PCBs.	HRM practices determine employee job satisfaction and turnover.
Newaz et al. (2007)	Job design, job recognition, pay and benefits, training opportunity, career development of PCBs.	HRM practices are related with employee turnover.
Rahman and Shahid (2009)	performance appraisal, compensation system, selection and recruitment of Islami Shariah based PCBs.	Except recruitment, all other HRM practices affect organizational commitment of employees.
Zaman (2011)	Recruitment process of hospital	Dissatisfactory recruitment policy and practice in hospitals of Bangladesh.
Hossan et al. (2012)	Wages and overtime payment, performance appraisal, job security, bonus system of RMG industry.	HRM practices cannot improve employee performance of labour intensive manufacturing organization.

HR Attribution Theory: Research study shows that HRM practices are associated with organizational performance through their influences on employee attitude and behavior (Colakoglu, Lepak & Hong, 2006; Azmi, 2011) and employee perceptions of HRM (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Based on this suggestion, Nishii, Lepak and Schneider (2008) construct HR attributions theory. The theme of the HR attribution says the attributions that employees develop about the intentions of management adopting particular HR practices have consequences for their individual attitudes and behaviors, and ultimately, unit performance. Nishii et al (2008) examine five main HRM practices including staffing, training, benefits, pay, and performance appraisals and identify employees attribute these HRM practices to (1) enhance (service) quality; (2) keep costs down; (3) promote employee well-being; (4) get the most work out of them; and (5) comply with union requirements. Employee attribution to HRM practices as management intention to promote employee service quality and well-being is positively related to HRM practices and employee attitude and behavior relationship. On the other hand, employee attribution to HRM practices as management policies to minimize costs and to exploit employees is negatively related to HRM practices and employee attitude and behavior relationship. However, employee attribution to HRM practices as management conformity to the pressure of union is not significantly related to their attitude and behavior. Nishii et al (2008) confirm their assumptions by testing the theory in a service organization. The authors find that employees have developed varying attributions for the same HRM practices and that these attributions generate different level of employee commitment and satisfaction. In turn, individual attribution is shared within units and consequently it affects unit-level OCB and customer satisfaction.

Research gap: In HR attribution theory, Nishii et al. (2008) refer HR attributions to "employees' causal explanations for HR practices to which they are exposed on an *ongoing* basis". Here the proponents discuss how HRM practices influence HRM outcomes on employees via employees' attribution to management intention to use specific HRM practices. Based on the HR attribution theory, the present researchers believe that HCHRM practices can enhance employee commitment, satisfaction and retention if employees attribute HCHRM practices promoting their service or performance quality and well-being. The present model aims to explore the HR attribution effect on HCHRM-employee outcomes (satisfaction, motivation, retention) relationship as fulfilling the gap of studying HCHRM-HR attribution-HR outcome relationship.

3. Proposed Research Model

The present researcher proposes a research model on HCHRM practices to be tested in the organizations of Bangladesh. HCHRM practices are identified based on HCHRM literature study. These HCHRM practices are also found related with existing HRM practices of Bangladeshi organizations. The model explains that

organization should introduce HCHRM practices (rigorous staffing, training and development, development oriented performance appraisal, competitive and equitable compensation, career development and job design) that will increase employee performance quality and well-being which in turn will enhance employee satisfaction, commitment and retention. Here emphasis is given on understanding employee perceptions in improving, developing and implementing HCHRM practices to generate positive employee outcomes. Figure (1) shows the proposed HCHRM model. The following table (3) summarizes HCHRM practices with early references.

Figure 1: Proposed HCHRM model

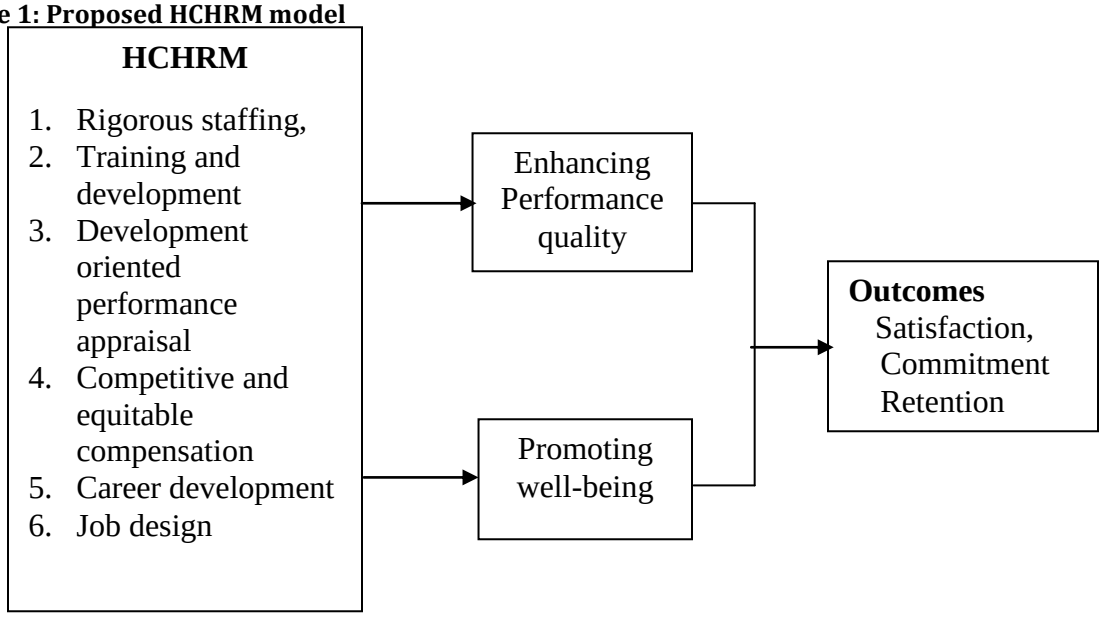


Table 3: Summary of different HRM practices included in the present HCHRM model

HCHRM practices	References
Staffing	Huselid, (1995); Whitener, (2001); Agarwala (2003); Chiang et al. (2011).
Training and development	Huselid, (1995); Whitener, (2001); Harley et al. (2007); Kown et al. (2010); Chiang et al. (2011).
Performance Appraisal	Huselid, (1995); Whitener, (2001); Agarwala (2003); Harley et al. (2007); Kown et al. (2010) Chiang et al. (2011).
Competitive and equitable compensation	Huselid, (1995); Whitener, (2001); Harley et al. (2007); Chiang et al. (2011).
Career Development	Agarwala (2003); Wei et al. (2010).
Job Design	Kown et al. (2010); Sun et al. (2007).

Propositions: Following propositions can be developed from the proposed research model:
Proposition 1: Employee perceived HCHRM as performance quality enhancing is positively related to employee job satisfaction, commitment and retention.
Proposition 2: Employee perceived HCHRM as well-being promoting is positively related to employee job satisfaction, commitment and retention.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, an overview of HCHRM practices with their effects on the organization is accumulated. HRM practices of the organizations across different industries of Bangladesh are also presented. HR attributions theory is discussed to relate HCHRM practices with employee outcomes. Based on the literatures on HCHRM and HRM practices of Bangladeshi organizations, this paper has proposed a set of HCHRM practices including rigorous staffing, training and development, performance appraisal for development, competitive and

equitable compensation, career development and job design. These HCHRM practices will most significantly influence satisfaction, commitment and retention of employees with an understanding of positive employee attribution of HCHRM as performance quality enhancing and well-being promoting. Such relationship is shown in a research model to be applied in the organizations of Bangladesh. Thus, well-designed empirical studies to be conducted to test the relationships offered in this model are sought. In this respect, more research can be conducted to explore HCHRM-HR attribution theory-HR outcomes relationship considering country context HRM practices that will validate the proposed model globally.

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