The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Employee Performance among manufacturing employees in Malaysia

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Abstract

The effective and efficient use of human resources could paly vital roles in success and productivity in the organization. Based on the 4th Industrial Revolution and the Diversity of Employees, it is mandated that Human Resource Management (HRM) practices be adopted for hiring and retaining employees. In this study, the main objective is to determine the relationship between training and development, performance appraisal, leadership styles and reward system, and their effect on the performance of employees in manufacturing sector. The study adopted a quantitative approach and data gathered from manufacturing employees in Malaysia. The current study showed a positive effect of HRM practices on enhanced employee performance amoung manufacturing employees. The fidings of this study may help to manage the diversity in the workplace and promote HRM pracices for organizational success and establish win-win employees and employers relationship.

Keywords : Training and development, performance appraisal, leadership styles, reward system, and employee performance.

Introduction

Human resources play a significant role in implementing organizational policies and strategies for ensuring sustained growth and productivity. Humans are the catalyst for the long-term survival and success of the organization (Aslam et al., 2013).

Human Resource Management (HRM) has a different function. Each function plays a significant role in the transformation of human resources into human assets for the development of the organization. Due to 4th industrial revolution and diversity in the workforce, human resources departments are encountering new challenges. Human resource challenges can be resolved through the application of HRM tools and methods.

This study primarily aims to identify the effect of different HRM factors on employee performance and accordingly, the study objectives are as follows; to examine the way performance appraisal, as an HRM factor, affect employee performance, to examine

the way staff development, as an HRM factor, affect employee performance, to examine the way leadership style, as an HRM factor, affect employee performance, and to examine the way reward system, as an HRM factor, affect employee performance.

The training and development involve directing and inspiring employees. This also helps to develop employees' knowledge, skills and abilities. Moreover, well-planned and consistent training sessions boost employees' confidence and prepare them to understand and respect HRM practices for achieving organizational goals.

The leadership style of the company is an important factor in the achievement of organizational goals and in motivating employees. In relation to this, a suitable and positive leadership style could influence the turnover issue of employees, loyalty of employees to the company and their productivity. This study assumes that leadership style in the sector/industry has considerable effect on the employees as employee performance need the adoption of an effective leadership style.

Moreover, the reward system in its complexity, frequency and fairness has a potential to affect the performance of employees along with their satisfaction and eventually their performance and the company's performance as well. In relation to this, the internal and external environments could influence the reward system, which highlights the importance of developing an effective one. Consequently, enhancing the reward system could enhance the performance of employees.

To sum up, this study considers performance appraisal, training and development, leadership style and reward system as factors of HRM practices that influence employee performance. An insight into the relationships between HRM factors as the independent variables and employee performance as the dependent variable would be a great contribution to literature and thus, this study provides the way such factors influence employee performance in different levels (managerial, industrial, and circumstantial).

Literature Review & Hypotheses Development

Employee Performance

The company's success or failure is largely determined by the performance of its employees (Kelidbari et al., 2016), with such performance described as the activity performed and not performed by the employee. The performance concept is measurable through work quality, productivity, attitude, and work attendance and it has a significant relationship with job support and employee effort (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). This shows that if one of the factors dips, the employee's performance also dips; for instance, job support covers training initiatives and equipment used to complete tasks, which are all related with performance. Aside from this performance of employees may also be influenced by their characteristics (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). According to Chacha (2013), employee performance may be described as a process and guideline of a management system that are considered during employee management.

Relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance

Human resource management functions encapsulate motivational, administrative and informative elements that enlighten employees on their strength and weaknesses when it comes to work. To begin with, work appraisal, an HRM function, facilitates a learning environment at work that boosts employee productivity. Employee performance can in fact be maintained through such appraisal (Shaharyar et al., 2014) However, it can be detrimental for self-motivated and open-minded employees because the performance gap may widen. Performance appraisal entails identifying low or high performance on the basis of established company standards, and thus this study proposes that;

H1: Performance appraisal has a significant influence on employee performance.

Relationship between training and development and employee performance

Programs dedicated to training and development are crucial human resource activities towards enhancing the performance of employees (Al-Qudah et al., 2014). Such activities improve employees' skills and knowledge in dealing with difficult tasks, which explains the positive relationship between training and development and performance. (Al-Qudah et al., 2014). In a related study, Sal and Raja (2016) indicated that training and development significantly affects employee productivity and performance; this may be exemplified by the private sector transportation firm, which provided training to employees towards creativity and new thoughts on resolving logistic and production issues, leading to decision effectiveness. Several studies have found a direct relationship between training and development and employee performance, so this study proposes testing the following hypothesis;

H2: Training and development has a significant influence on employee performance.

Relationship between leadership style and employee performance

According to Al-Malki and Juan (2018), leadership behavior is related with employee performance considering that the duties and responsibilities of the leader is a crucial condition in HRM and thus largely affects the productivity and performance of employees. Aside from this, the authors found this to be true in different levels, levels and departments. Different leadership levels influence the leader-follower communication and effectiveness when working in groups.

Similarly, in Sougui et al. (2015), The authors discovered that transformational leaders influence employee performance through heroic and charismatic characteristics. Also, transformational leaders may not be effective in enhancing performance when employees lack work motivation when swift rewards are not forthcoming. Additionally, Chua et al. (2018) revealed that autocratic leadership is significantly related to employee performance, with the leader getting sufficient authority to direct and control employees' work based on rules. Another leadership style is the laissez-faire, which combines both autocratic and democratic styles – and it has a weak relationship with employee performance. This was attributed to the slow decision-making process

that leads to lower task performance effectiveness and efficiency. Hence, the laissez-faire leadership style is not as effective when enhancing employee performance in comparison to other styles. This study proposes the following hypothesis for testing;

H3: Leadership style has a significant influence on employee performance.

Relationship between reward system and employee performance

A reward system covers intrinsic and extrinsic reward that work towards motivating employees to enhance their performance over the sales targets established by the leader/manager (Ngwa et al., 2019). Employee productivity is expected to increase when praises are provided for effort and contribution and in this regard, leaders that recognize the effort and performance of employees through rewards can enhance the latter's performance more than just providing a once a year financial reward.

In the same line of study, Martono et al. (2018) revealed that remuneration/reward systems have a positive effect on employee performance, with a fair and proportional reward system encouraging employees to perform to the best of their abilities in lieu of fair pay and reward. Also, a reward system that is effective and timely can contribute to performance as a significant relationship exists between employees' contributions and services, and the work stress level (Karami et al., 2013).

It is obvious that a reward system is one of the major functions in HRM that influences employee performance, with the system covering both monetary and non-monetary rewards. As a result, this study suggests that;

H4: Reward system has a significant influence on employee performance.

Theoretical Framework

Under this section, the underpinning theories that encapsulate the study variables are presented based on the conceptual framework (refer to Figure 1).

Herzberg: Two-factor theory

Herberg segmented human motivation factors into two categories: hygiene factors and motivation factors. Employee dissatisfaction, according to Herberg, will not occur if their lower-level needs are met, even if they are not motivated enough to exert more effort through the same means (i.e., their experience of the company policies or relationship with the company). This may be clarified by the comfort experienced by the employee while working in the company and receiving wages/salaries that could avoid their dissatisfaction but may not motivate them enough to perform at their full potential (Fauziah et al., 2013). On the other hand, the motivation factors lead to positive outcomes and work achievement if they are recognized and thereafter, these would lead to higher efficiency and productivity.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

This theory expounds on the individuals constant search for demands – demands which largely depends on their relationships and connections (Mc Leod, 2007). The theory is directly related with HRM as work is a part of life and different need levels are addressed – in the case of work, financial support is needed which is related to the company's reward system. Aside from this, leadership style and training and development influence the employee's belongingness needs and esteem needs considering there is a positive relationship with subordinates, peers and supervisors. Team praise is also appreciated for new ideas. According to Maslow, there are 5 levels of needs from the lowest (basic needs) to higher needs (safety needs, social needs and ego needs) and the highest being self-actualization needs.

McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory

Human motivation was described by Mc Clelland under this theory into 4 stages, namely achievement, sexual, affiliation and power motive. Mc Clelland (1961) shifted his focus and attention towards the above motivation factors as needs that needs to be met during the lifetime of the individual and employee (Oliver et al., 2010).

To begin, achievement is the first requirement for employee success in which the employee is challenged with a distinct standard of distinction - such achievement can be referred to as the employee's inclination and desire to achieve a difficult and complex task, attain and surpass a higher success standard. This is followed by power needs, which is described as the ability of the individual to affect others through his position of authority or leadership. The third need is the personal relationship of the employee through warm friendship and connection with other employees and co-workers. Employees must be connected to both personnel and the company as a whole. In other words, motivation, leadership style, and training and development can all contribute to improved performance.

Great Man Theory

This pioneering theory was the first to describe leadership in the early 20th century, contending that leaders are innately made (Madachian, 2016). The theory describes leaders as heroic, mythic and male and they arise when required. A strong and powerful leader will develop through age, notwithstanding the challenges ahead. According to Wiggam (1931), there is a need to have high birth rate among individual classes that are titled to retain and maintain sufficient number of great leaders. Specially endowed leaders are set apart from the followers through their traits and effective leaders often have masculine traits. This theory has shifted to a more enlightened mentality in current studies.
Based on the above discussed theories, the relationship between the study variables are presented in the following schematic diagram.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework-schematic diagram
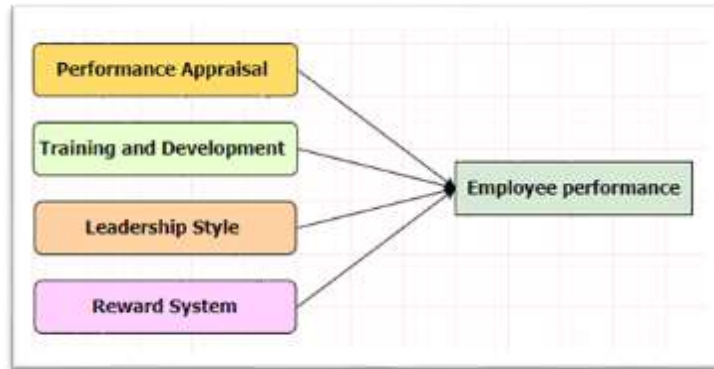
Research Method

This is a descriptive study that aims to shed light on population characteristics and statistics to provide insight into the relationship between the dependent variable (employee performance) and the independent variables (performance appraisal, training and development, leadership style, and rewards system).

Population and sampling:

The Malaysian manufacturing industry has contributed significantly to boosting the local economy and ensuring employment opportunities for both local and foreign workers. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022) more than 10 million people are employed in Malaysia's domestic manufacturing sector, and in January 2023, the manufacturing sector's sales value climbed marginally, by 6.5%, to RM148.0 billion. The manufacturing industry will be observing more transformation and digitalization due to the 4th industrial revolution. In this connection, alignment of HRM practices will be a must to ensure a sustainable workforce and manage diversity in the manufacturing sector. Therefore, the researchers have chosen this sector to conduct this current study.

The study adopts a positivist and deductive approach coupled with a quantitative method, with the survey method used to obtain cross-sectional data.

The study employed convenience sampling for sample selection as the participants are simple to determine and access. According to Taherdoost (2016), engaging family and friends as a sample group is easier than selecting unknown study barriers (limited time and resources). The author further stated that the size of the sample is important in reaching conclusions regarding the target population in an empirical study as it works towards minimal biases/errors in generalization. Also, the higher the number of the population, the lower will be the chance for skewed results (Chatterjee & Diaconis, 2018). Thus, this study used 200 sample size of the population in Malaysian manufacturing firms.

Data Collection Procedures:

As mentioned, a questionnaire survey was used to collect primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire items were adopted from past relevant literature (i.e., Alfandi & Alkahsawneh, 2014; Iqbal, Ahmad, Haider, Batool & Ul-Ain, 2013; Al-Qudah, Osman, Ab Halim & Al-Shatanawi, 2014; Truitt, 2011; Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi & Shaikh, 2012; Chacha, 2013; Husin, Chelladurai & Musa, 2012; Alfandi & Alkahsawneh, 2014). Along with the primary resources, secondary ones were gathered using the UTAR Library, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Science Direct, and some other public sources.

There are two major sections in the questionnaire, namely Section A, which consists of demographic information and Section B, which consists of measurements directed towards gauging the effects of HRM factors on employee performance. The reliability statistics results were conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, the result of which showed that performance appraisal and training and development obtained 0.828 and 0.838 values respectively (higher than 0.8), indicating good reliability.

The study distributed more than 200 questionnaire copies to the respondents to examine the effects of HRM factors on the employees' performance. Such distribution was conducted using digital platforms, including Facebook, Gmail, WhatsApp, WeChat, Microsoft Teams and Instagram.

Variable Measurement

Primary data was collected through the items in the questionnaire survey and aside from the demographics section, the measurements are tabulated in Table 1. Section A covers demographic information including gender, experience level, employment status, marital status, age, education and income range, while Section B covers the measurement items gauged through 5-point Likert scale with the following range; 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1 Summary of measurement of the variable

Variables	Measurements
Employee Performance	5-point Likert Scale
	1= Strongly disagree
Performance Appraisal	2=Strongly disagree
Training and Development	3=Neutral
Leadership Style	4= Agree
Reward System	5= Strongly agree

Result

The research distributed more than 200 survey copies, out of which 207 were retrieved and deemed acceptable for analysis. From the 207 responses, 74 (35.7%) constituted male respondents with the remaining 133 (64.3%) were female respondents. The demographic analysis of the study is tabulated in the following table;

Table 2 Demographic Analysis (N= 207)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	74	35.7
Female	133	64.3
Total	207	100.0

Respondent's Employment Status:

Based on Table 3, the current employment status of the respondents indicates that 119 (57.5%) respondents are employed, 77 (27.2%) were unemployed, 9 (4.3%) were self-employed, and 3 (1%) were retired.

Table 3 Respondent's Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Employed	119	57.5
Unemployed	77	37.2
Self-employed	9	4.3
Retired	2	1.0
Total	207	100.0

Table 4 Result of Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std.Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.71	0.23		3.054	0.003
	Mean_PA	0.14	0.07	0.132	2.057	0.041
	Mean_TD	0.19	0.66	0.183	2.952	0.004
	Mean_LS	0.32	0.66	0.332	4.902	0.004
	Mean_RS	0.20	0.50	0.258	3.978	0.004
a. Dependent Variable: Mean_EP						

H1: Performance appraisal has a significant influence on employee performance.

According to the data gathered from statistical analysis and given in the preceding table 4, the p-value of performance assessment is lower than the significant level in which 0.041 < 0.05 is used to define statistical significane. As a result, hypothesis 1 is accepted. Consequently, it is shown that performance appraisals have a considerable influence on employee performance levels.

H2: Training and developmen have as a significant influence on employee performance.

Based on the data acquired by statistical analysis and displayed in the preceding table 4, the p-value for training and development is lower than the significant threshold, which is 0.004 < 0.05, which indicates that training and development are effective. As

a result, H2 is acceptable. So it is shown that an effective training and development programme has a major impact on staff performance.

H3: Leadership style has a significant influence on employee performance.
According to the data gathered via statistical analysis and summarised in Table 4 above, the p-value for leadership styles is less than the 0.000 < 0.05 threshold of significance. Hence, H3 is accepted. Thus, it shows that there is a significantly close relationship between leadership style and employee performance.

H4: Reward system has a significant influence on employee performance.

H4: Reward system hasystemsignificant relationship with employee performance Based on the data captured from statistical analysis and shown in table 4 above, the p-value of reward system is lower than the significant level in which 0.000 < 0.05. Hence, H4 is accepted. Thus, it shows that Reward system have a significant relationship with employee performance.

Table 5 Result of the Study

Performance Appraisal								
No.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean score	Standard deviations
8	PA1	3	8	30	111	55	4.00	0.836
9	PA2	1	14	34	110	48	3.92	0.841
10	PA3	1	6	20	109	71	4.17	0.756
11	PA4	2	13	37	98	57	3.94	0.890
12	PA5	1	4	23	99	80	4.22	0.756
13	PA6	3	21	39	86	58	3.85	0.993
14	PA7	2	23	49	83	50	3.75	0.977
Training and Development								
No.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean score	Standard deviations
15	TD1	1	5	19	98	84	4.25	0.760

No.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean score	Standard deviations
16	TD2	1	4	23	87	92	4.28	0.775
17	TD3	1	1	30	80	95	4.29	0.765
18	TD4	5	8	45	94	55	3.90	0.921
19	TD5	3	4	21	96	83	4.22	0.816
20	TD6	2	4	24	87	90	4.25	0.809

Leadership Styles

No.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean score	Standard deviations
21	LS1	9	19	42	81	56	3.75	1.085
22	LS2	2	10	43	82	70	4.00	0.911
23	LS3	4	8	31	109	55	3.98	0.864
24	LS4	3	9	37	98	60	3.98	0.881
25	LS5	6	16	45	81	59	3.83	1.023
26	LS6	4	11	45	89	58	3.90	0.937

Reward System

No.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean score	Standard deviations
27	RS1	6	13	39	100	49	3.84	0.956
28	RS2	3	17	39	92	56	3.87	0.952
29	RS3	6	25	38	84	54	3.75	1.063
30	RS4	4	21	35	90	57	3.85	1.003
31	RS5	5	18	46	91	47	3.76	0.980
No.	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean score	Standard deviations
32	EP1	4	8	30	94	71	4.06	0.904
33	EP2	1	6	27	97	76	4.16	0.796
34	EP3	9	15	42	87	54	3.78	1.050
35	EP4	3	1	18	76	109	4.39	0.785

Discussion

As shown in Table 5 above, each function of HRM adopted many items to collect data from respondents such as Performance appraisal (PA1-PA7), Training and development (TD1-TD6), Leadership style (LS1-LS6), Reward system (RS1-RS5) and

Employee performance (EP1-EP4). The highest mean score (4.22) was obtained by item PA5 for performance appraisal (PA), which showed that most of the respondents are of the consensus as to the statement, with 94 of them agreeing and 71 strongly agreeing. The performance appraisal process has a significant influence over the respondents' attitudes, behavior, and morale. Therefore, leaders, manager, and supervisors need to provide sufficient performance appraisal for the motivation of employees and to give them direction in the workplace.

Moving on to training and development (TD), item TD3 had the highest mean score (4.29), with 80 respondents from 207 agreeing to the statement (the link between training and development and work readiness) while the remaining 95 strongly agreed. This shows that training and development can facilitate employees' workplace adaption and contribution to the workplace.

Moreover, for leadership style (LS), item LS2 had the highest mean score (4.00), with 82 respondents agreeing and 70 strongly agreeing with the statement. The majority of the respondents believe that employees' originality and creativity allow them to tackle challenges at work. Leaders having faith in their followers' power and capacity for problem resolution enable them to work better.

As for the reward system (RS), item RS2 had the highest mean score (3.87), indicating that 92 respondents agreed and 56 strongly agreed that they will receive rewards when their performances are good. A good reward system thus influences the employee's performance, motivating them to work better at their full potential.

Finally, under employee performance (EP), item EP4 obtained the highest mean score (4.39), where most of the respondents (90%) agreed that they care about their work performance (76 respondents selected agree while 109 selected strongly agree). In this regard, the respondents are concerned about performing their best at work, and with HRM factors coming to play, this is achievable. The results of the study are tabulated in Table 5.

Conclusion

The Malaysian manufacturing industry is contributing to the economic development of Malaysia. In order to ensure a safe working environment and keep the growth of this sector on track, it is essential to recruit and retain qualified human resources including experienced and qualified engineers, fresh graduates, and well-trained foreign workers. These resources can help in making safe and efficient organizational planning, management of resources, and maintenance of production methods and processes for long-term growth and sustainability of the manufacturing industry of Malaysia. The finding of the study supported the significant relationships between HRM factors and employee performance in the manufacturing sector. So, more emphasis should be given to implementing basic human resource practices to manage workforce diversity effectively and efficiently.

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