

## **ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION WITH MEDIATING EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

TEHMINA SATTAR, KHALIL AHMAD AND SYEDA MAHNAZ HASSAN\*

**Abstract.** This study attempts to examine the impact of Human Resource (HR) practices on employees' satisfaction and performance through mediating role of employees' engagement. The study collects data from 181 employees of three leading banks of Multan city (Pakistan) namely: Habib Bank, Faysal Bank, and Allied Bank. The findings of the present study reveal that training and empowerment of the workers contributes more in employees' work performance and their job satisfaction than that of rewards/incentives. However, rewards/incentives are significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) related with the employees' engagement in organizational activities. Overall, HR practices (training, rewards and empowerment) are significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) related with employees' engagement and confirm the assumptions of Baron and Kenny (1986) for mediation analysis. The results of the study are gleaned by using the direct path way and multiple regression to investigate the impact of HR practices on mediating variable (employees' engagement) and mediating variable on both dependent variables (employees' satisfaction and employees' performance). The results of the study confirm that proposed hypotheses are statistically significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) and indicate that employees' engagement partially mediates the relationship between HR practices and both employees' satisfaction and employees' performance outcomes.

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\*The authors are, respectively, Ph.D. Scholar at the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore; Assistant Professor at the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore; and Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Work, University of the Punjab, Lahore (Pakistan).  
Corresponding author e-mail: khalil.iscs@pu.edu.pk

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource (HR) practices are vital for development of organizations (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006; Paul and Anantharaman, 2003). Some of the important HR practices include recruitment of the staff, selection techniques, market oriented training, performance enhancement, adequate exchange system, social security appraisals and planned strategic needs (Tessema and Soeters, 2006; Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Apart from various HR practices, external factors (such as equipment, technology and finance) play an important role in working capacity and manufacturing of organizations (Garavan *et al.*, 2008; Verkinderen and Altman, 2002). Although HR practices and external factors enhance workers' engagement, in turn workers' job satisfaction and performance (Harter *et al.*, 2002); retention of engaged worker is cardinal in quality performance and success of the business in organization (Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011). Workers' engagement divulges mental absorption and displays their positive connection with organizational work (Baumruk, 2004; Chandler and McEvoy, 2000; Hudson *et al.*, 2001). The elaboration of this process can be extended by considering virtuous relations which must involve the psychological containment (Fleming and Asplund, 2007; Zheng and Lamond, 2010). Hence, the job containment of employees can surely transmit their efforts towards prosperity and efficiency. Job satisfaction of the employees depends on various socio-demographic and cultural factors such as professional attitude towards job, tolerant outcomes, organizational commitment and emotional values attached with the professional behaviour (Saks, 2006).

HR conventions (such as quality education, market oriented training, career planning, workers' empowerment and performance evaluation) are interlinked with the organizational development (Pardo del Val and Fuentes, 2003; Richman, 2006) on the one hand. On the other hand, various HR practices (such as freedom of performance, team work, engagement and compensation) provide the placement of motivated and competent employees (Andrew and Sofian, 2012; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). But training, empowerment and reward are three important HR practices which largely contribute towards quality performance and high levels of productivity in organizations (Combs *et al.*, 2006). However, justice is the most appropriate

procedure that ensures employees' sense of security in an organization (Robbins, 2003, Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Tzafrir *et al.*, 2004). Alternatively, affirmative HR practices can help achieve constructive resonance between employees and managers in organizations.

Gravan *et al.* (2008) propose that HR strategy structure is a magnificent tool that can play a vital role in enhancing various HR practices. Inadequate salary structure, lack of opportunities, weak incentive schemes for excellent job performance, promotion code based on seniority rather than actual performance, delays in promotion, non-existent compensation modules, punitive treatment, and absence of motivational strategies are the salient determinants of employees performance and their engagement at workplace (Zheng and Lamond, 2010).

Against this backdrop, the present study makes an attempt to ascertain information on the role of basic HR practices in employees' performance and their job satisfaction through the mediating effect of work engagement. The major objectives of the present study are:

- (a) To investigate the relative importance of basic HR practices (Training, Empowerment and Reward) for employee engagement;
- (b) To examine the role of HR practices in employee work performance and job satisfaction; and
- (c) To investigate the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between HR practices and employee work performance and job satisfaction in customer care services.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The data for the present study were collected from three leading banks in Multan city (Pakistan) namely: Habib Bank, Faysal Bank, and Allied Bank. The study sample comprised all the employees engaged in customer care services from the selected banks because customers are usually believed to complain about the attitude of employees dealing with customer care services. Since employees engaged in customer care services are frontline employees who play an important role in delivery of quality services (Karatepe, 2013) their engagement, performance and satisfaction with the work is cardinal in determining organizational success and productivity. Alternatively, inadequate engagement of such employees could be attributed to ineffective HR practices, which in turn may influence their performance and job satisfaction. It is important to mention that the present study is based on Karatepe (2011) 'HR Practices and Employee Engagement' model.

Prior consent of the respective bank management was attained before data collection. Self-administered questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. Along with questionnaire there was an attached cover letter in which the name of topic, purpose of the study and ethical issues were described in precise manner. The questionnaire consisted of 7 parts. First part provided demographic information; next three parts addressed three major HR practices. Fifth part was about employees' engagement as a mediating variable. Every questionnaire was given an identification number for the purpose of anonymity. One of the researchers visited the banks personally and distributed the questionnaires with the help of assistant. A total set of 225 questionnaires was sent and 185 returned and finally 181 questionnaires were used for the analysis after the content error. Henceforth the response rate was 80.44%.

The survey instrument for this study was composed of three parts. The first part was related with HR practices; the second part was about employee engagement and the third part was related with employees' job satisfaction and work performance. The constructs were measured by using the multiple item scale of Karatepe (2013) and Utrecht Work Engagement scale with 9 items. The reliability of the scale was checked by Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). All these predictor and response dimensions had adequate values on reliability scale, *i.e.* employee engagement ( $\alpha = 0.865$ ), training ( $\alpha = 0.851$ ), empowerment ( $\alpha = 0.851$ ), reward system ( $\alpha = 0.883$ ), job satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0.874$ ) and performance ( $\alpha = 0.710$ ). Hence, all the variables had adequate values of reliability test (values greater than 0.7 are considered to be good on the reliability scale).

Using Baron and Kenny (1986) approach of mediation analysis, linear and multiple regressions were run to test the study variables. Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed certain assumptions to meet requirements of a mediation relationship. These assumptions are:

**Step 1** Conduct a simple regression analysis with  $X$  predicting  $Y$  to test for path  $c$  alone

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X + e$$

**Step 2** Conduct a simple regression analysis with  $X$  predicting  $M$  to test for path  $a$

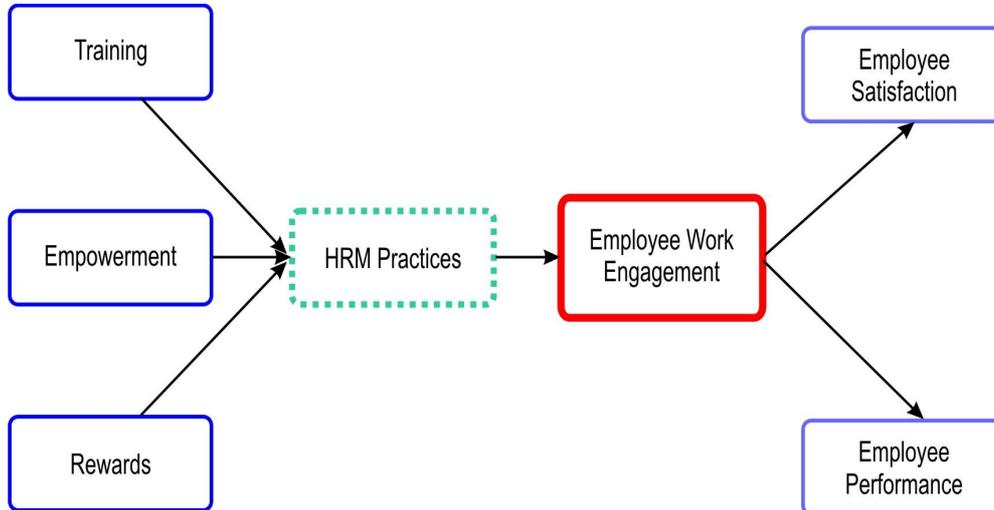
$$M = B_0 + B_1X + e$$

**Step 3** Conduct a simple regression analysis with  $M$  predicting  $Y$  to test the significance of path  $b$  alone

$$Y = B_0 + B_1M + e$$

**Step 4** Conduct a multiple regression analysis with  $X$  and  $M$  predicting  $y$

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X + B_2M + e$$



Source: Employee engagement model derivation from Karatepe (2011).

### Hypotheses

Research hypotheses for the present study are:

1. HR practices (training, reward and empowerment) are positively related with employee engagement.
2. Employee engagement is positively related with employee satisfaction and work performance.
3. Employee engagement mediates effect between HR practices and employee satisfaction and their work performance.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides information on demographic profile of the respondents. The data show that more than two thirds of the employees were younger (aged  $\leq 35$  years). A small proportion of the employees was aged 41 years and above. The gender divide indicates that almost one-third of the respondents were females. This is an interesting finding which implies encouragement of females in banking sector and a change in patriarchal culture of Pakistan. A

large proportion of the respondents held either master or bachelor (Hons) level degrees. Only small number of respondents with diplomas was working in banks. The qualifications of these respondents might have implications for their retention and work engagement in the years to come. The data in Table 1 show that a substantial number of respondents had  $\leq 6$  years' work experience. This finding corroborates with the previous finding that a substantial number of respondents was younger and newly inducted into the banks' customer care services. This finding also warrants the need to train, empower and reward the younger employees with small length of service to enhance their engagement and retention in the banks.

TABLE 1  
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	$\leq 30$ years*	68	37.5
	31-35 years	74	40.8
	36-40 years	25	14.0
	41 years and above	14	7.7
Gender	Female	58	32.0
	Male	123	68.0
Education	M.A./M.Sc.	82	45.3
	B.A./BS (Hons.)	95	52.5
	Others**	04	2.2
Experience	Less than 1 year	32	17.7
	1-6 years	80	44.2
	7-12 years	59	32.6
	Above 12 years	10	5.5

\*Minimum age was 20 years

\*\*Diploma holders

Table 2 illustrates that training explained the highest variance with regard to the employee engagement ( $R^2 = 16.8\%$ ). In addition to this, work performance of the employee increased by training ( $R^2 = 10.6\%$ ). Training is

a proactive strategic need that can prepare the workers for organizational commitment and dedication (Kyndt *et al.*, 2009; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008). On the other hand, skill oriented training helps achieve improved levels of performance (Brown, 2005). The data show that empowerment turned out important predictor of employee satisfaction (19.9% variance in the whole model), while *t* value shows the extent of relationship between HR practices with employee engagement, satisfaction and performance.

TABLE 2

Linear Regression Analysis – Summary Statistics  
Dependent Variables: Employee Engagement, Satisfaction and Performance

		$R^2$	$T$	$P$
H1	Training → Employee engagement	0.168	5.95	0.001
	Rewards → Employee engagement	0.050	3.148	0.002
	Empowerment → Employee engagement	0.042	2.907	0.001
H2	Training → Employee satisfaction	0.182	6.243	0.001
	Rewards → Employee satisfaction	0.158	5.749	0.001
	Empowerment → Employee satisfaction	0.199	6.595	0.001
H3	Training → Employee performance	0.106	4.602	0.001
	Rewards → Employee performance	0.082	4.042	0.001
	Empowerment → Employee performance	0.084	4.075	0.001

$R^2$  = Regression square indicates the percentage of change caused by the predictor variables in response variables.

*t* shows the extent of change in the predictor variable due to response variable.

*p* shows the significance of relationship.

The data in Table 2 show that *t* value was highest for the employee training in enhancing their engagement compared to the reward and empowerment of employees. The findings show that empowerment had the highest *t* value in comparison to the other HR practices. Similarly *t* value for increased work performance was highest for the training of the employees. *P* value remained significant for all the dimensions of HR practices in relation to the dependent and the mediating variable. According to Okpara and Wynn (2008), organizational performance can be enhanced by appointing various line managers in an appropriate manner (who are duty bound to establish controlled environment for quality production) for various HR practices.

TABLE 3  
Mediation Analysis – Employee Engagement

Effect of employee empowerment on employee performance through mediation variable of employee engagement						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>		
1	(Constant)	2.894	0.280		10.342	0.001
	Empowerment	0.271	0.066	0.298	4.075	0.001
2	(Constant)	2.025	0.341		5.940	0.001
	Empowerment	0.212	0.065	0.234	3.265	0.001
	Engagement	0.285	0.069	0.295	4.110	0.001
Effect of employee rewards on employee performance through mediation variable of employee engagement						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized confidents	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>		
1	(Constant)	2.782	0.309		8.994	0.001
	Reward	0.294	0.073	0.296	4.042	0.001
2	(Constant)	1.968				0.001
	Reward	0.226		0.228	3.153	0.002
	Engagement	0.283		0.292	4.051	0.001
Effect of employee training on employee performance through mediation variable of employee engagement						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>		
1	(Constant)	3.051	0.215		14.202	0.001
	Training	0.255	0.055	0.333	4.602	0.001
2	(Constant)	2.409	0.288		8.372	0.001
	Training	0.175	0.059	0.229	2.956	0.004
	Engagement	0.243	0.075	0.251	3.241	0.001

TABLE 4

## Mediation Analysis – Employee Training Through Employee Engagement

Effect of employee training on employee satisfaction through mediation variable of employee engagement						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>		
1	(Constant)	2.682	0.228		11.779	0.001
	Training	0.367	0.059	0.432	6.243	0.001
2	(Constant)	1.804	0.299		6.040	0.001
	Training	0.258	0.062	0.303	4.185	0.001
	Engagement	0.333	0.078	0.310	4.276	0.001
Effect of employee empowerment on employee satisfaction through mediation variable of employee engagement						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>		
1	(Constant)	2.187	0.290		7.544	0.001
	Empowerment	0.454	0.069	0.451	6.595	0.001
2	(Constant)	1.030	0.342		3.016	0.003
	Empowerment	0.376	0.065	0.374	5.773	0.001
	Engagement	0.380	0.070	0.354	5.465	0.001
Effect of employee reward on employee satisfaction through mediation variable of employee engagement						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>		
1	(Constant)	2.207	0.328		6.720	0.001
	Reward	0.444	0.077	0.403	5.749	0.001
2	(Constant)	1.093	0.368		2.971	0.003
	Reward	0.351	0.074	0.319	4.767	0.001
	Engagement	0.072	0.072	0.361	5.397	0.001

*t* shows the extent of relationship.

*p* shows the significant *p* value for the relationship among the predictor and the response variables in presence of mediator variable.

Standardized  $\beta$  value shows that which factor has the greater impact than the other (magnitude of the relationship).

Unstandardized  $\beta$  value shows the direction of relationship among the predictor and response variables.

Organizational expertise about HR practices signifies the role of workers to execute their described jobs for enhancement of the organizational work. In addition to this, Gould-Williams (2003) concludes that training reflects the aspect of an employee preparedness to inflate his commitment for performing various organizational tasks.

This aspect of enhanced training structure could be constructed in an appropriate manner in various organizations. Job satisfaction holds prime importance in immense human resource studies (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Christian *et al.*, 2011). Job satisfaction creates an affirmative and evaluative approach for the people where the theories support the reaction of employees towards job accomplishment (de Jong and Ruyter, 2004; Saks, 2006). Hence, the findings of the present study confirmed that training, empowerment and rewards were the major HR practices in enhancing employee engagement, which in turn could affect employee performance and satisfaction contributing to organizational strength and development.

Table 3 indicates the relationship between under reference HR practices and employee performance. The findings show that strength of relationship was highest for training ( $\beta = 0.333$ ) compared to the other variables. This finding supports linear regression in Table 1 and mediation analysis in Table 2. The findings of Table 4 confirm that empowerment of employee increased his/her job satisfaction. Hence the strength of relationship for employee empowerment was highest ( $\beta = 0.451$ ) for satisfaction with mediating effect of employee engagement. Although other under reference HR practices were significant, increased satisfaction of employees resided in empowerment.

Overall, the findings of the present study are in agreement with various researches (Brown, 2005; Teseema and Soeters, 2006; Wan *et al.*, 2002; Katou and Budhwar, 2010) that training, empowerment and rewards/incentives are positively associated with employee engagement, employee performance, and job satisfaction. However, the regression results of the present study indicated that training and empowerment of the workers contributed more in employees' work performance and their job satisfaction than that of rewards/incentives.

While rewards/incentives were significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) related with the employees' engagement in organizational activities, rewards/incentives are source of motivation, in turn engagement (Andrew and Kent, 2007; Reio and Callahon, 2004). Alternatively increased motivation of the workers in organization increases employee performance (Bull, 2005) on the one hand and satisfaction for the positive contribution (Jones and George, 2008) on the other hand.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HR practices vary across regions and organizations. Researchers often mirror some of the important aspects of HR practices to highlight the functioning of organizations. Some of the important HR practices include recruitment criteria, work plan, compensation structure, staff training and reward attached with effective performance. However, training, empowerment and reward are three important HR practices which largely contribute towards quality performance and high levels of productivity in organizations (Combs *et al.*, 2006; Deepak *et al.*, 2003; Boselie *et al.*, 2005; Karatepe, 2013; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2007; Tang and Tang, 2012) The findings of the present study are in agreement with various researches (Brown, 2005; Combs *et al.*, 2006; Teseema and Soeters, 2006; Wan *et al.*, 2002; Katou and Budhwar, 2010) that the three under reference HR practices are significantly related with employee work performance and employee satisfaction. However, rewards/incentives contribute more towards employee engagement in customer care services.

It may safely be concluded from the findings of the present study that rewards/incentives to the workers, *albeit*, are influential in enhancing work performance and satisfaction of worker; adequate training and empowerment are more important towards that effect. The findings of the present study demonstrate the relevance and viability of Karatepe (2011) model with regard to the effect of training, reward and empowerment on employee work performance and satisfaction. Other theoretical models should be used to understand the subject. The results of this study propose that managers should realize the importance of various HR practices to utilize the potential of human resources adequately. Management should focus more on training and empowerment of the employees, particularly females, dealing with customer care services in banking sector. The present study took into account three aspects (training, empowerment and reward) of HR practices. Influence of other aspects of HR practices (such as employee security, teamwork, work family balance, staff selectivity and promotion opportunities) on employee performance and satisfaction should also be researched. It remains instructive for the researchers to explore the role of external factors (such as technology and modern appliances) in enhancing employee engagement and performance in organizations.

##### **Limitation of the Study**

The present research adopted general approach of using simple and multiple regression analysis against the backdrop of Baron and Kenny (1986) assumptions of mediation analysis. Alternatively, the present study has not

estimated the significance of indirect pathway that is to see the impact of independent variables on dependent variables through the compound pathway highlighted in the proposed model of Karatepe (2011). This is the major limitation of the study.

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