

High-Performance Human Resource Management and Organizational Performance

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Introduction

Contemporary researchers are in great interest to redress the devastating effect on natural resources and the overall environment of the exponential rise of human business and economic activities (Almarzooqi, Khan and Khalid, 2019; Stahl, Brewster, Collings, & Hajro, 2020). Latest studies have shown what could be done to combat the impact of human factors on resource preservation and sustainability performance (Chams, & García-Blandón, 2019; Islam et al., 2020). Accordingly, organizations are now found interested to set environmental goals other than making profits, such as sustainable development and social responsibility (De Prins, Beirendonck, Vos, & Segers, 2014; Aust, Matthews, & Muller-Camen, 2020). Even earlier in 2012, it was found that 70% of 2800 international organizations surveyed have business strategies and plans including sustainability issues (Kiron et al., 2012). After that in 2015, the General Assembly of the UN presented “the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development” comprising of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets aiming to complete the unfinished objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). From these goals, three-dimensional sustainable development areas have been identified: economic, social, and environmental corresponding the goals related to 5 Ps: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

Regarding “people” as well as “prosperity”, SDGs intend to ensure a decent workplace for the people to make efficient use of resources, sustained economic development and collective prosperity. The business perspective of SDGs is to establish an all-inclusive particularly women and young generation to create sustainable, innovative, and people-oriented economies. The mission set for the organizations focuses on having healthy and well-educated workforces, making them productive employees and preemptive citizens to make social contribution. For

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successful accomplishment of sustainability, environment-friendly production and ensuring congruous societies, SDGs require participation and collaboration of several agents: individuals, organizations from both private and public sectors, local and international organizations, non-government and charitable organizations and local government. The 2030 Agenda describes itself as “an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people – and this will ensure its success” (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015, p. 12).

Consequently, it needs two-fold roles of people as initiators and recipients of the benefits of achieving SDGs. At the organizational level, Human Resource Management (HRM) could be one of the mechanisms to contribute to capitalize human elements as both initiators and recipients of SDGs benefits.

HRM and SDGs have a common component of the people factor, since human attitudes, behaviors, and eco-friendly performance are directly related to social and environmental accomplishments and HRM could shape and influence people attitude and behavior and mold their knowledge, skills and abilities directed to the sustainability mission. HRM can be identified as the managerial actions of shaping people

skills and abilities to achieve SDGs goals for all actors. Here, resource-based view (RBV) theory, Ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) theory and contingency theory could frame the bridge connecting HRM and social and environmental matters (Arulrajah & Opatha, 2016; Nejati, Rabiei, & Jabbour, 2017). HRM and sustainability are two models that work together toward common organizational benefits, doing business in a sensible manner for fulfilling all stakeholders’ needs and at the same time ensuring collective social welfare and protecting natural resources. High performance HRM (HPHRM) as performance oriented HRM fulfills the criteria to be the means of SDGs end as it uses human capital, develops their ability motivation and creates an opportunity to the sustainable performance of the responsible employees. Hence, HPHRM and employees are the complementarities for overall SDGs performance.

Meaning of High Performance Human Resource Management

Human resource management is continually facing the challenges of proving its strategic importance on achieving organizational success. In doing so both academics and practitioners are showing their concerns on exploring what constitutes HRM and how it contributes to business. A contemporary research interest on HRM is investigating its role in making

organization high performing through superior employee performance and identifying HRM as high performance HRM (HPHRM) or high-performance work system (HPWS) or high-performance work practices (HPWP). This interest is mainly concentrated on the potential of HRM to act as a distinctive and sustainable HRM mechanism to support the realization of business strategy and the attainment of corporate goals. Today, organizations have realized that human resources are the main source of sustained competitive advantage, and they invest and want to invest more on HR for utilizing as well as developing the collective human attributes in terms of knowledge, skill, experiences, training, and creativity possessed by the workforce of the organization. Such realizations have sparked a new interest on organization people being identified as intellectual capital and assets and on creating a system to attract, use, develop and retain them for superior organizational performance.

Consequently, HRM researchers have designed and suggested to implement and even tested in several work settings a HRM approach focusing on utilizing human capital within an organization for making high performing organization and name it HPHRM or HPWS (Shin & Konrad, 2017; Zhai & Tian, 2019; Rubel, Kee & Rimi.,2020). HPHRM is defined as a HRM mechanism that makes employees productive in a way through which employees achieve a real success in their jobs and the wider organizational accomplishment (Mitchell, Obeidat, & Bray, 2013). The focus of such HRM practice is to establish a performance-oriented culture, where working people would experience workplace norms and values in achieving superior performance and would take such norms as a normal work-life phenomenon (van Esch, Wei, & Chiang 2018). The current effort conceptualizes what HPHRM is, explains the benefits and pitfalls of HPHRM, describes how they make an impact and recommends some suggestions on how they can be utilized in practice.

HPHRM includes a bundle of consistent practices viewing people as a source of competitive advantage. The scholarly evidence of the relation between HRM and performance is substantially available. What is interesting is over recent decades attention has been given to identifying the most specific and yet effective HRM bundle to improve performance results (Rubel et al., 2020). In pursuit of such a performance oriented HRM bundle, HPHRM is recognized as a collection of logical and coherent HRM practices combined and intended to boost employee ability, commitment, and productivity to create superior performance and competitive advantage for an organization (Garg & Sharma, 2015).However, still

researchers are in debate in consistently defining or uniformly naming such HRM approach (Fu et al., 2017). High-commitment (Walton, 1985), high-involvement (Lawler, 1986) and high-performance (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg 2000) approaches to HRM are similar as far as their goals are considered common, namely superior performance. High performance organizations seek to ensure that their employees are equipped to make decisions, have the necessary information, skills, and incentives and are responsible for decisions essential for innovation, improvement, and rapid response to change, bringing all approaches close together for improved performance. Similarly, HPHRM is synonymously used as “high-performance work systems” (Delaney & Godard, 2001) and both share some common HRM practices including selective staffing, extensive training and development, performance management, compensation and incentives based on performance directed to organizational goals, participation and communication (Mitchell et al., 2013; Fu et al., 2017; Peccei, R., & Van De Voorde, 2019). Accordingly, throughout the current work, HPHRM and HPWS/HPWP are used interchangeably.

HPWS aims to attain, refine, and emphasize employees’ skills and behaviors essential to execute the firm’s competitive strategy (Huselid, 1995). HPWS provides the conceptual basis that organizations use persistently to achieve business vision and mission through human resources (Fareed, Isa & Noor, 2016). This is an HRM approach that allows high organizational performance through making a practical influence on employees’ competencies, empowerment and commitment (Sun & Pan, 2011; van Esch et al., 2018; Arefin et al., 2019). It has been claimed as an operational means of promoting human capital within an organization (Wang & Chen, 2013). As such it is further recognized that it is a people management philosophy that organizations believe to be imperative for utilizing human capital to perform successfully and sustain competitive advantage (Fareed, Noor, Isa, Salleh, 2016).

HPHRM creates integrated HRM content, process and climate, which promotes both employee and organizational performance. HPHRM is a system of strongly integrated HRM content, process and climate (Bowen and Ostroff 2004). The HRM content is a cluster of practices and policies that organizations use to make their employee selection, retention and development processes more efficient, and to improve the use of human capital in line with their strategic goals (Arefin et al., 2019). Selective hiring and rigorous selection help organization to get high quality human capital; training and development mark organizational opportunity creation for

tapping human capital; and compensation and reward motivate workforce to invest their intellectual capital in their jobs and altogether influence the overall climate in the organization and thereby its performance. The HRM process is about how HRM practices are communicated to employees and whether employee understanding of HRM practices are similar as intended by the organization (Li, Frenkel, & Sanders, 2011). The strength of a HPHRM system means that it ensures the common understanding and interpretation of HRM practices by employees, thus fostering their positive attitudes and behaviors and consequently enhancing the organization's performance (Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2020). The HRM climate is an employee's subjective experiences and the assessment of general work climate of an organization (Veld & Alfes, 2017). HRM climate is equally important as it determines how individual employee perception of work climate differs and to what extent from expected. Since individual perception and experiences affect their performance, variations in perceptions would result performance differences. When employees' perceptions of HRM practices are consistent across the organization, HRM climate will be stronger, employees' performance would fulfill organizational expectations (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) concluded that for a HPHRM system to have a real influence on performance its content and process must be well integrated. They also observed that the manner of communicating HRM practices (HRM process) can develop a relationship between HRM practices (content) and the way they are perceived and experienced (climate). From such understandings, it can be concluded that the HPHRM bundle may have different sets of HRM practices, but they should be interrelated and reinforcing in terms of content, process and climate.

HPHRM ignores employee control rather encourages employee independence, judgmental capacity and responsibility. HPWPs or HPHRM are expected to manage a workforce who are very skilled, well-motivated, and sufficiently empowered having their task-related aims and responsibilities fully integrated with the wider organizational objectives (Boxall, 2012). Employees are assumed to be internally controlled, intrinsically motivated, and fully encouraged to exert their efforts in decision making and taking responsibilities for the organization. It is a self-initiated process in which managers do not try to impose external forces to control employees and their decisions rather employees trust the organization and perceive HRM positively that influence them to utilize their efforts and talents for organization. Equally organizations trust employees and believe that their contribution is the ultimate source of competitive advantage since

other traditional sources (quality, economies of scale, technology etc.) have become easily imitable. HRM acts as a strategic weapon in utilizing human knowledge and potentiality in facing the contemporary business challenges and provides flexibility and adaptability to the organizations. As other sources of competitive advantage have become dysfunctional, organizations could realize and tap the development of high performing workforce to open the opportunity for creating sustained competitive advantage. Employees have the freedom to decide whether they would use their time and talents for the organization and as such they have the chances to perform below their actual capacities. Lack of discretionary power and required job opportunity may instigate employee reluctance to employ their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). To address such challenge, organizations need to search the ways of motivating employees to work for the organizations and HPHRM is found as a solution to this purpose.

Theories in HPHRM

HRM scholars have used different theoretical frameworks to portray their epistemic assumptions related to HRM and the objectives they want to achieve through exploring HRM. Likewise, their theoretical frameworks facilitate to understand what HRM practices they would select and what would be their related expected outcomes based on the propositions they developed from the frameworks. HRM researchers have widely relied on the theoretical foundation of HRM-performance relation by grounding on the acumens from the 'Big three' theories – AMO theory, RBV theory and contingency theory. The grace of the 'AMO' theoretical framework is that it incorporates enabling modifications of employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to participate through HRM and thus, improve employee performance and consequential organizational performance. RBV has as its basic belief in recognizing employees' contribution to value-adding performance (that their responses are potentially pivotal for sustained competitive advantage). Contingency theory says that HRM strategy-performance relation is basically determined by the contextual factors and here, business strategy is an obvious candidate. These three are thought to offer congruent frameworks: AMO's attention to employees' skills, motivations and opportunities to participate in individual and organizational productivity achievement justify HR and HRM importance in organizations; RBV views HR as a critical source to create and sustain competitive advantage; while contingency approaches offer a lens on the possible link between these two, emphasizing in particular the vital

importance of examining the impact of contextual factors from the external environment for instance competitive business strategy and its impact on human capital building for gaining competitive advantage. However, researchers are yet to reach a consensus regarding how these theories need to be translated into a unified model regarding the operationalization of the HRM-performance relation. Nevertheless, all these three theories hold a sophisticated position in research to shape HRM-performance linkage philosophy as reflected particularly in HPHRM.

Why does HPHRM Matter?

HRM scholars have proved scientifically the positive link between HPHRM and performances of both employees and organizations and thus, justified when HRM can be approached as high performance HRM. HPHRM has its beneficial impact on both employees and organizations. HRM interventions, derived from an HR strategy, are understood to give rise to HRM-related outcomes, typically manifested in influencing employee attitudes and behaviors, employee related outcomes of HPHRM- also known as proximal outcomes of HPHRM. Better employee attitudes and behaviors then contribute to delivering improved internal performances (such as increased productivity and quality, profitability and CSR performances). Following table shows why HPHRM matters for the organizations.

Table 1: Summary of Research on HPHRM/ HPWP/HPWS

Authors & Year	Constructs	Context	Black-box Factors (Mediator/ Moderator)	Findings
Global Perspective				
Shin & Konrad (2017)	<p><u>Organizational level study</u></p> <p>In this study, the authors consider HPWS as multi-dimensional constructs with five dimensions such as, training, incentive compensation, employee involvement, empowerment and participative work design.</p>	The study tests the causal relationship between HPWS and organizational performance employing a large longitudinal data set with three time points from Canadian context.		<p>Findings of the research exhibit that in all three different cases HPWS was found as the contributor of organizational productivity.</p> <p>The reciprocal relationship supports the need to extend strategic human resource management theory by considering productivity as an antecedent as well as an outcome of human resource management practices.</p>
van Esch, Wei, & Chiang (2018)	<p><u>Organizational level study</u></p> <p>Five dimensions are incorporated as HPWS such as, selective staffing, training, performance appraisal, rewards and self-managed work teams.</p>	The study focuses on the influence HPWS on firm performance through employee competencies in the context of China. The study also uses climate for creativity as moderator.	Employee competencies as mediator and climate for creativity as moderator.	Positive relationship between high-performance HR practices and firm performance was found that was partially mediated by employees' competencies. The organizational climate for creativity was found to strengthen such relationship.

Dastmalchian et al. (2020)	<p><u>Organizational level study</u></p> <p>In this research the authors have used Ability-Motivation –Opportunity (A-M-O) dimensions of HRM practices as HPWS.</p>	The study tests the relationship between HPWS and organizational performance based on financial and non-financial performances from 14 countries data.	Three dimensional societal culture such as power distance, in-group collectivism and institutional collectivism as moderator.	Results of the study show that all three dimensions of HPWS have significant positive influences on two dimensional organizational performances. Moreover, Three dimensional societal culture also has significant moderating effect between HPWS and organizational performances.
Garg & Sharma (2015)	<p><u>Individual level study</u></p> <p>This study employs five dimensional HPWS such as, job design, selective hiring, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation.</p>	The research tests the cross-sectional relationship among HPWP, employee engagement and job performance of employees from different organizations in Indian context.	Employee engagement as mediator	Result of the study shows significant relationship between HPWP, employee engagement and job performance of employees. Moreover, the current study employs employee engagement as mediator and finds significant mediating effect between HPWP and employee job performance.
Van De Voorde, & Beijer (2015)	<p><u>Individual level study</u></p> <p>Five dimensions are employed to measure HPWS for instance, selective hiring, employee development, performance appraisal, career opportunity, rewards and participation.</p>	This study is a multi-level analysis combining both line managers and workers and examines the impact of HPWS on employee attribution and employee outcomes in the context of Netherlands.	HR Well-being attribution and HR performance attribution are employed as mediator	Findings of the research show significant positive effect of HPWS on both dimensions of HR attribution as well as employee outcomes (commitment and Strain) in the work place. Both dimensions of HR attribution also play a significant mediating role between HPWS and employee work outcomes.

Zhai& Tian (2019).	<p><u>Organizational level study</u></p> <p>This research employs unidimensional measures to explain HPWS.</p>	The research is a meta-analysis approach and to see the influence of HPWS on organizational performance (OP) with the moderating effect of performance measures.	Moderator-performance measure, country of origin and level of analysis.	Output of the meta-analysis show the significant influence of HPWS on organizational performance. HPWS strongly influences operational performance rather than financial performance. Moreover, performance measures as moderator enhance organizational performance with HPWS.
Ogbonnaya& Valizade (2018).	<p><u>Both organizational and Individual level study</u></p> <p>This research employs Ability-Motivation – Opportunity (A-M-O) dimensions of HRM practices and HPWS.</p>	This study is conducted using secondary data from the British National Health Service.	Job satisfaction and employee engagement as mediators.	HPWS minimizes absenteeism through job satisfaction and engagement. HPWS increases customer satisfaction through employee job satisfaction.
Heffernan, & Dundon (2016)	<p><u>Individual level study</u></p> <p>Under HPWS the research employs employee resourcing, training and development, performance appraisal and remuneration and communication and involvement.</p>	Cross sectional research conducted in the context of Irish organization. The study examines the effect of HPWS on employee attitudinal outcomes (satisfaction, commitment and work pressure) with mediating effect of organizational justice.	Three dimensions of organizational justice	Result of the study shows significant relationship between HPWS and three different attitudinal outcomes of employees in the organization. Among the three dimensions of organizational justice two (distributive and procedural justice) are found significant mediator between HPWS and employee outcomes. Whereas, one dimension such as, relational justice is found insignificant.

Hauff et al. (2020)	<p><u>Individual level study</u></p> <p>Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) oriented HRM practices are used in the current study. Single dimension such as training activity is employed under ability enhancing practice. Whereas three dimensions such as, job security, career advancement prospects, and incentive compensation are incorporated under motivation enhancing practice. Lastly autonomy, self-directed teamwork, and organizational participation are considered under opportunity enhancing practice.</p>	The study is cross-sectional research in the context of three German speaking countries such as, Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. The focus of the study is to explore the effect of high performance HRM/HPWP on employee well-being with the mediating effect of job satisfaction and employee engagement.	Job satisfaction and employee engagement are mediators. Furthermore, supportive leadership is a moderator.	Result of the study shows significant positive influences of HPWP on employee well-being through job satisfaction and employee engagement. Supportive leadership lessens HPWPs' effects.
Local Perspective				
Aktar & Pangil (2017).	Three dimensions are employed as HPWS such as training and development, rewards and recognition and employee participation.	The focus of the study is to examine the effect of HPWS on employee commitment in the context of banking industry in Bangladesh with 376 valid respondents.		The study finds all three dimensions of HPWS are positively related with employee commitment in the banking industry in Bangladesh.

Arefin et al. (2019)	<p><u>Individual level study</u></p> <p>Six dimensions are used as HPWS such as, staffing, selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation and flexible work design.</p>	Data collected from 287 employees in a large manufacturing organization are analyzed using structural equation modeling and hierarchical regression analysis.	Psychological empowerment is used as mediator.	The results show that perceived HPWS and psychological empowerment positively influence job engagement. Psychological empowerment mediates the influence of HPWS on job engagement.
Rubel et al. (2020)	<p><u>Individual level study</u></p> <p>The study considers HPHRM as a second order reflective model and employs five dimensions in explaining HPHRM such as, competency development, compensation, performance appraisal, training and development and participation.</p>	The study is a cross sectional type of research on hospital employees in the context of Bangladesh. The study finds the influence of HPHRM on employee behavioral outcomes through the mediating effect of perceived organizational support.	Perceived organizational support as mediator	The research finds significant positive effect of HPHRM on both dimensions of employee outcome as well as perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support significantly mediates the relation between HPHRM and employee retention and performance.
Wahid & Prince (2020)	Five dimensions are employed as HPWS such as, selective hiring, training and development, performance appraisal, self-managed team and rewards	The current research aims to identify the effect of HPWS on employee performance in the telecom industry in Bangladesh with a mediated-moderating effect of power distance.	Power distance as both mediator as well as moderator.	The findings indicate that HPWS have a positive impact on employee performance, and that power distance mediates and moderates the relationship between HPWS and employee performance.

How does HPHRM Create Impact on Organizations?

HRM researchers have further proved how HPHRM could be a good thing for the organizations. In this effort, they have answered the black box effect of HRM-outcomes relations. Black-box concept of HRM exclaims that it is not enough to say that HRM is good for organization, rather it should be answered that what makes HRM good. Accordingly, it can be stated that HPHRM is significantly influencing organizations however, it should be again evident what makes significant impact of HPHRM on organizations. Between the input (HPHRM intervention) and output (performance indicators) –lies what, how and why HPHRM does to improve performances. This interference is popularly referred to as the so-called ‘black box’, because we know little of what happens at these interactions, and hence, its contents remain somewhat mysterious (Wright and Gardner, 2003). In search for such answer, several black box factors have been identified that explains how HPHRM impacts its outcomes. These black box factors are widely known as mediators in the research. For instance, Hauff et al. (2020) find that HPHRM enhances employee job satisfaction and engagement which eventually lead to increased employee well-being. Table 1 also shows the black box factors between HPHRM and its outcomes.

Limitations of HPHRM

Though HPHRM is usually expected to have positive results on employees and organization, there have some certain opposing views. Since it follows universalistic approach of HRM, it ignores contextual differences of organizations that are more likely to influence HRM strategy of a particular organization. HRM of a star-up is naturally different from that of a matured organization. Similarly, quality -oriented business have HRM strategy different from HRM of an innovative organization. However, each organization would focus on improving performance whatever performance it might have in terms of its business objective considering where it operates and what workforce quality it might have. Moreover, self-discipline in a team setting may disorient employees from business as they may not know exactly what organization expect from them and members may pass responsibility from one to another. So having fun and freedom in an empowered environment characterized by flat organizational ladder, independence, agility and flexibility, self-motivation might be counterproductive. As workplace is a place for work, a well-stated work-life edifice including the aspects of systematic rules and regulations, explicit performance standard as well as measurement criterion, and

formal ways of communication are must to create a work environment for workers to feel work-oriented, comfortable and responsible. It is recommended that sensible access to information, accurate directions, certain responsibilities, and a genuine business culture could make employee satisfied with work and workplace that make workplace as a new home for fun and performance. HPHRM might lack such work life aspects as HPHRM signifies employee freedom and empowerment.

Implementation of HPHRM

HPHRM capitalize human capital through enabling them to employ their KSAs to make organizations benefitted. Adequate and proper recruitment and selection make sure of availability and utilization of KSAs; KSAs are further improved through related job design, training and development program; and retention of KSAs are ensured by availability of motivating factors such as adequate compensation, reward, empowerment and involvement practices. All are possible when organizations synchronize among HR content, process and climate.

Bangladesh and Implementation of SDGs: The role of HPHRM

Bangladesh has been identified as one of the leading nations in implementing the MDGs through accomplishing some targets before set time. Such success has inspired the country to fix a vision of achieving the SDGs within 2030. Before the pandemic, Bangladesh was progressing towards the goals; however, the uncertainty of the achievability of the SDGs has been raised due to the challenges of COVID-19. Bangladesh Government is working sincerely to combat the pandemic effect and accordingly, measures are taken. Under the dynamic and visionary leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister, the Bangladesh government is moving ahead to be the next Asian Tiger for which all sectors from both private and public and from individual to society should focus on making the best use of our available resources to renovate our export-led economy to manufacturing-led economy. Following such metamorphosis need, the present financial plan of the government stresses on employment generation for utilizing our labor force by adopting more productive and inclusive job identification in the economy.

In a report published in The Financial Express, Alam, (2019) mention that Bangladesh has accommodated the global goals and targets into its national five-year plan with a particular emphasis on SDGs implementation by including all the ministries of the government, private sector, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development

partners and other stakeholders, and named it as the "whole of society approach". HPHRM may work as an engine to make performance drive of all involved in SDG implementation.

Key Insights to Take-Away

HPHRM centers on leading employees for organizational achievements. HPWPs improve organizational performance by increasing employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Three broad concepts underpin HPHRM/HPWPs:

- a. A people-centered, open and empowered culture, where people have the discretionary power to take their task-related decisions, properly communicate and share information in the organization.
- b. Organizational investment in human capital for developing their KSAs.
- c. Organizational responsibility to motivate and retain people to use their KSAs through HR content, processes, and climate.

Conclusion

Since organizations want to make a wise use of money in managing employees, an increasing number of research confirms that HPHRM or HPWP pay off in terms of getting return in the investment of time and effort on people. Aligning HR strategies to performance culture recognizes that employees are the valued owners and partners who can think strategically, contribute to implement strategies, and add value through identifying and optimizing opportunities to create and maintain sustained competitive advantage. To support SDGs in the Bangladesh government's five-year plan, both private and public sector's organizations should focus on creating performance-oriented culture keeping people at the center of performance excellence. HPHRM could be an enabler to this purpose.

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