

INNOVATIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE: UNDERSTANDING MEDIATING EFFECT OF SELF-EFFICACY IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVIST ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Evidence of positive and insignificant correlation has characterized research on the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and employees' performance in the last decades, but the notable difference lies in the contexts and designs employed by researchers. While it is obvious that most of these research studies took place in the developed economies, the focus of researchers on underpinning the relationship between HRM practices and performance has remained anecdotal in the developing countries, most especially in the collectivist economy context. Using data from a survey of 175 respondents in a university in Kenya, the study investigated the relationship between innovative employment practices and employees' performance with self-efficacy as a potential mediator. Findings from the study showed a significant relationship between innovative employment practices and employees performance ($R^2 = 94.38\%$, $P < 0.05$), and the relationship is also mediated by construct of self-efficacy. The findings from this study support self-determination theory which explains that fulfilment and satisfaction of certain innate psychological needs will generate positive discretionary efforts, which in turn, result to positive outcomes. The practical implication of this study is that experience of positive innovative practices by employees in the organization will enhance self-efficacy which will, in turn, result to performance outcomes. The study employed a cross-sectional design and therefore has inability to establish a causal relationship. Therefore, subsequent studies investigating innovative employment practices and performance relationship need to focus on longitudinal design so as to determine causal relationship. Also, it is limited to an educational institution (university), therefore, its findings cannot be generalized across other sectors especially in a collectivist environment.

Keywords: Self-determination theory, Human resource management practices

INTRODUCTION

The strategic level of any organization recognises the importance of innovation and as portrayed in varied literature, the ability of an organization to adapt to dynamic environmental changes greatly depends on its adaptability to innovative practices which eventually lead to firm performance (Subramaniam and Youndt, 2005; Montes *et al.*, 2004; Salanova, Lorente, Chambel, and Martinez, 2011). In human resource management (HRM), the general assumption is that performance of an organisation largely depends on the performance of its employees (Bowra, Sharif, Saeed and Niazi, 2012). The significance of people to the attainment of organisational goals has re-orientated management the need to invest in people as indispensable assets to obtain sustainable competitive advantage. The orientation has occasioned the shifting away from the traditional or conventional practices of personnel management to a new way of managing people which is often referred to as innovative employment practices (Connie, Grant, and Mark, 2009). Innovative employment practices, according to Ichiniowski, Shaw, and Prennushi (1997), refers to group or clusters of complimentary human resource management practices designed and implemented to enhance workforce's characteristics. Collins and Clark (2003) averred that

through innovative HR practices, an organization is able to effectively influence and modify the skills and behaviour of individual employees as they carry out their assignments. As posited by Zheng, O'Neill, and Morrison (2009), the extent to which firms have adopted innovative employment practices is shown to be closely associated with HRM outcomes and performance. In the similar vein, Scarbrough (2003), stated that strategic HR practices are vital and can be instrumental in enabling firms discover and utilize knowledge and expertise in the organization.

Innovative employment practices are the primary means through which employee's skills, attitudes, and behaviours are influenced and shaped in order to do their work and thus achieve organisational goals (Chen and Huang, 2007). The potency of these practices to enhance human capital- knowledge, skills, and abilities, may have significant impact on employee's self-efficacy in the organisation. Self-efficacy, according to Bandura (1997), entails belief in one's capabilities to mobilize motivation, ability and planned action towards a desired objective. It is concerned with the people's beliefs in their abilities or capacities to influence their own functions and control over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy is developed from

sources which include mastery experience, social model, social persuasion, and affective state, and this has been found to forecast work-related outcomes including employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction, competence and proficiency. Whereas HR practices are extrinsic to an individual, self-efficacy is within an individual and through innovative HR practices; self-efficacy may actually explain level of resilience as well as varied level of performance among individual employees within a uniform work setting (Ichniowski, Shaw and Prennushi, 1997).

An account of studies in HRM literature shows that innovative human resource practices have been found to correlate positively with performance (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012; Obeidat, Mitchell, & Bray, 2016). The evidence of positive relationship of HRM practice and performance link is prominently concentrated in studies from the western countries classified as individualistic nations. Though, evidence of positive association of innovative employment practices and performance relationship has been recorded in emerging economies which are classified as collectivist countries such as India and China (Som, 2008; Zheng, *et al.*, 2009), research on innovative employment practice and employee performance has remained anecdotal in highly collectivist continent such as Africa, most especially in Kenya. Dimba and Obonyo (2015), asserted that Kenya is a country characterised with collectivism and therefore such national culture would have impact on strategic human resource management of multinational companies. This assertion is just a proposition that needs to be validated via empirical inquiry. Furthermore, several studies in HRM have justified the HRM practices-performance relationship employing mechanisms of employee attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, but self-efficacy, as this study is concerned, has not been investigated as mechanism underpinning the relationship between innovative employment practice and performance. Therefore, this study sought to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between innovative employment practices, employee's self-efficacy, and employee performance within the context of collectivist economy, especially in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Innovative Employment Practices

In HRM literature, human resource management practices have been conceptualised as combination of practices designed and implemented to improve organisational effectiveness and hence superior performance. Researchers have operationalised HRM practices in different forms based on the survey of HRM practices investigated in HRM literature. Som (2008) conceptualised HRM practice as innovative

HRM practices having drawn idea from the meta-analytic study of Boselie *et al.* (2005). Som posited further that innovative HRM systems comprise practices for identifying and recruiting best performers, providing them with ability to get the job done, setting performance target as a way of monitoring them, and rewarding them for meeting and surpassing such targets. In the meta-analytic study of how HRM influences organisational outcomes, Jiang *et al.* (2012) operationalised HRM practices as set of practices that enhance employee's skills, motivations, and opportunity to perform which in turn lead to organisational outcomes. Mostafa (2017) operationalised HRM practices as high performance human resource practices which include practice such as training, information sharing, team working, employee involvement, promotion, and performance feedback and appraisal. In the study of Ichniowski *et al.* (1997) HRM practices were operationalised as innovative employment practices for enhancing the productivity of an organisation.

Furthermore, irrespective of the various ways in which HRM practices have been operationalised in HRM literature, the common ground among researchers is that HRM practices are designed and implemented to enhance employee's characteristics so as to influence employee attitudinal and organisational outcomes. A flip through studies in HRM literature revealed the association of HRM practices and performance relationship in organisations. Zheng, Connie, and Mark (2008) study sought to demonstrate an understanding of innovative human resource practices and its adoption in emerging markets. The sample population was adopted from Chinese SMEs through cluster sampling. The study established that the extent to which firms adopted innovative HR practices is closely associated with HR outcomes and firm performance, and the study found out that innovative HRM practices were associated with performance.

Ichniowski and Prennushi (1997) study sought to establish the effects of innovative employment practices on productivity. The study used descriptive research design where purposive sampling was used to establish respondents from similar steel production lines owned by 17 companies. The findings showed that firms that used innovative practices such as incentive pay, teams, flexible job assignments, employment security, and training, achieve substantially higher levels of productivity than do lines with the more traditional approach, which includes narrow job definitions, strict work rules, and hourly pay with close supervision. The study highlights both traditional and current approach towards employment practices, and the study found out positive relationship

of innovative employment practices with productivity in organisations. The evidence of positive association of HRM practices and performance relationship in the aforementioned studies is consistent with findings of previous studies of Huselid (1995), Delaney and Huselid (1996), and McDuffie (1995).

Moreover, recent studies on HRM practices and performance relationship have also confirmed evidence of positive association. Obeidat et al., (2017) found out in their study of high performance human resource practices that HRM practices were directly related to job satisfaction and organisational citizen behaviour (OCBs), and the relationship was mediated by positive affect. The evidence of positive association of HRM practices and employee attitudinal and behavioural outcomes in Obeidat's study is also consistent with previous studies of Jiang et al., (2012), Gardener, Wright, and Moynihan, (2011), and Boseli (2010). Drawing from the review of the aforementioned studies, this study operationalised HRM practices as innovative employment practices that are designed and implemented to employ qualified and skilled people, improve their skills and abilities to do the job, set performance targets and appraisal, and reward them for meeting and surpassing the set targets.

Self-efficacy

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy reflects people's beliefs in their abilities to exercise control over their own functioning and events that affect their lives. People develop their efficacy from different sources which include; mastery experience, social model, social persuasion, and affective state. People developed their efficacy based on the experiences they have acquired over some years, may be on the jobs or other activities. Self-efficacy is also developed by people when they see others performing tasks and responsibilities successfully. Social persuasion that one has the capabilities to perform a task successfully and affective state of people's mind influence their efficacy and consequently their behaviours. Pati and Kumar (2010) conceptualised self-efficacy as occupational self-efficacy, defined as the belief of people in their own ability and competence to perform a task successfully and efficiently in a given situation.

Self-efficacy has been researched by different scholars across studies. Hmieleski and Baron (2008) study sought to establish when entrepreneurial self-efficacy enhanced or reduced firm performance. This was conducted by examination of dispositional optimism and environmental dynamism as potential moderators. The study established that dispositional optimism and environmental dynamism were moderators in the relationship between self-efficacy and firm

performance. The relationship was positive in dynamic environment coupled with moderate optimism but was negative when combined with high optimism. Furthermore, the relationship was relatively weak under stable environments and no moderating effect of optimism, suggesting that self-efficacy was not always beneficial and had negative effects sometimes.

Pati and Kumar (2010) sought to establish the role of self-efficacy, organizational support and supervisor support in employee engagement. The study used secondary data and past empirical studies. Aside from the evidences of varying enegement levels among employees in similar organizational conditions, the study found out that self-efficacy played a significant role in employee engagements levels. Tai, (2006) sought to investigate the effects of training framing from supervisors on trainee self-efficacy and training motivation, and further test how this eventually influenced overall training effectiveness. The study employed longitudinal research design where respondents were purposively sampled and questionnaires helped collect data. The study found out that training framing had a great impact on self-efficacy and motivation of trainees which eventually impacted reactions, learning and transfer motivation.

In the same vein, Walumbwa (2011) sought to establish the relationship between transformational leadership and supervisor-rated performance and further establishing the mediating the role of relational identification with the supervisor and self-efficacy mediate on this relationship. Using purposive sampling, the study established that relational identification had a significant mediating role on the relationship between transformational leadership and supervisor-rated performance which subsequently influenced employee performance. Also, there existed a significant and positive relationship between transformational leadership, self-efficacy and rated performance. Raub and Liao (2012) study sought to establish the influence of initiative climate and self-efficacy on the proactiveness of employees.

The study was cross-sectional where sample population consisted of front-line service employees and their supervisors in multinational hotel chains located in Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The study found out a significant relationship between initiative climate, self-efficacy and employee proactiveness. Drawing from ideas and explanation from the aforementioned studies, this study operationalised self-efficacy as the employee's beliefs that they have the ability and competency to perform assigned tasks successfully and effectively in any given situation.

Theoretical and Hypotheses Development

The quest to comprehend the relationship between innovative employment practices and performance has necessitated the mobilisation of theories as theoretical lens. As averred by Guest (1997), the relationship between HRM practices and performance, and the mechanism underpinning the relationship needs to be best understood via the development of relevant theories. Social exchange theory has therefore remained one of the theories that have been used as theoretical lens for explaining the relationship that exists between HRM practices and performance in an organisation. According to Blau (1964), social exchange theory provides a premise for comprehending the employment relationship that exists between organisations and their employees. The theory is grounded on the view that relationship that takes place in an organisation is interdependent and contingent of the action of another will produce reciprocal returns.

Researchers have drawn from social exchange theory as a theoretical lens for rooting the relationship between HRM practices and performance linkage in HRM literature. HRM practice have been seen as interventions that signal and communicate to employees that organisation values them as pivotal members, and as a result they (employees) may see it as a gesture to be reciprocated by exhibiting positive attitudes and behavioural outcomes (Boselie, 2010; Snape & Redman, 2010). Drawing from this explanation, it is therefore argued that innovative employment practices would signal to employees that the organisation is interested in them beyond short-term basis, and therefore they would consider such as obligation or gesture to be reciprocated in terms of positive performance outcomes. This study thus stated the following hypotheses in relation to innovative employment practices and performance:

- H₁: Innovative recruitment practices do not have positive correlation with employee performance
- H₂: Innovative retraining and redevelopment practices do not have positive correlation with employee performance
- H₃: Innovative performance appraisal system does not have positive relationship with employee performance
- H₄: Innovative compensation and reward practices do not have positive relationship with employee performance.

In HRM literature, the calls to unearth the relationship between HRM practices and performance link have been made among researchers. The calls are response to the assumption that HRM practices do not only influence performance directly but do indirectly (Paré

and Tremblay, 2007). The relationship between HRM practices and performance is often described as the 'black box' in HRM literature. In an attempt to unravel the contents of the so called 'black box', several mechanisms have been employed by researchers in HRM discipline. Employee attitudinal and behavioural outcomes such as employee commitment, job satisfaction, organisational citizen behaviour, employee engagement, and amongst others, have been investigated as mechanisms for unearthing the contents of the black box, and they have been found to explain the indirect relationship of HRM practices and performance link (Boselie, 2010; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016). Furthermore, the indirect relationship between HRM practices and performance link has also been grounded on theories.

Self-determination theory, as an important lens for explaining the behaviour of people in an organisation, states that people assume and exhibit a particular behaviour based on the satisfaction of three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competency and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The need for autonomy reflects the need for freedom or liberty to make one's own choice without interference, competence as a need reflects that one has the capacity to accomplish a desired outcome, and the need for relatedness expresses the need for belongingness and to be understood by others (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Researchers have posited that HRM practices that satisfy one or more of these innate psychological needs will engender the development of positive employee and organisational outcomes (Marescaux, *et al.*, 2013). Drawing from this explanation, we therefore proposed that innovative employment practices would enhance employee self-efficacy which would in turn lead to performance. The indirect relationship between innovative employment practices and employee performance was hypothesised as follows:

- H₅: The relationship between innovative employment practices and employee performance is not mediated by employee self-efficacy.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descripto-explanatory research design. The target population was Kenyatta University staff where both teaching and non-teaching staff from various departments were involved in the survey. Out of a target of 100 respondents, the study had a response rate of 95%. The respondents were required to fill structured online questionnaires. The findings were analysed by use of SPSS application. The data was analysed by use of SPSS so as to identify the descriptive and inferential analysis.

Measures

Responses to questionnaire items were measured on five-point Likert scale where 1= "strongly disagree" and 5= "strongly agree". Innovative employment practices used in this study were innovative recruitment practices, innovative retraining and redeployment practices, innovative performance appraisal practices, and innovative compensation and reward practices. These practices contained 14-item scale adapted from Som (2008). The self-efficacy was measured based on 8-item of New General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001). Employee performance was measured as individual task performance and innovative work behaviour. Individual task performance contained five-item scale and innovative work behaviour contained six-item scale (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004).

Data Analysis

From diagnostic tests, the reliability was established by measuring the internal consistency of the instrument using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The resultant

value of 0.792 indicated that the instrument had met the threshold of internal consistency (Field, 2009). Based on gender, more males (58%) participated in the study as compared to females (42%). Most respondents had a work experience of above 10 years (34.7%).

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics are summarised in the Table 1. From the above table, the respondents agreed to the statements on the study variables where the mean of the responses were above 4.00. However, the respondents were undecided based on the statements on innovative recruitment practices (mean=3.67). Based on the empirical literature it is evident that human resource practices lead to employee performance (Bowra *et al.*, 2012; Gardner, *et al.*, 2011; Jiang, *et al.*, 2012), Furthermore, the studies e.g. (Raub, 2012; Pati & Kumar, 2008; Hmieleski & Baron, 2008)) have established that self-efficacy enable clear explanation of employee performance. The respondents' responses generally had a normal variation.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Innovative recruitment practices	3.67	0.97
Innovative retraining and redeployment practices	4.15	0.67
Innovative performance appraisal system	3.24	1.00
Innovative compensation and rewards	4.05	0.73
Self-efficacy	4.00	0.91
Individual task performance	4.11	0.97
Innovative works behaviour	4.20	0.87

Source: Author (2018). Source: survey data (2018)

Hypothesis testing

The study indicated a positive direct relationship between innovative employment practices and employee performance. Further, the study also found out that self-efficacy played a mediating role on the relationship between innovative employment practices and employee performance. The value of the β Innovative employment practices increased by 0.96 after mediation while significance was at $p < 0.05$ showing the mediating effect self-efficacy as depicted in Baron and Kenny (1986).

The study sought to establish the role of innovative employment practices on employee performance and the mediating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between employment practices and employee performance through the following hypotheses:

H₁: Innovative recruitment practices do not have positive correlation with employee performance

The study established that innovative recruitment practices had a positive significant influence on performance and the null hypothesis was rejected.

H₂: Innovative retraining and redevelopment practices do not have positive correlation with employee performance

The study established that innovative retraining had a positive significant influence on employee performance and hence the null hypothesis was not supported

H₃: Innovative performance appraisal system does not have positive relationship with employee performance

The study established that innovative performance appraisal had a positive significant influence on employee performance and hence the null hypothesis was not supported.

H4: Innovative compensation and reward practices do not have positive relationship with performance.

The study established that innovative compensation and reward practices had a positive significant influence on employee performance; the null hypothesis was not supported

H5: The relationship between innovative employment practices and employee performance is mediated by employee self-efficacy.

The study established that self-efficacy improved the relationship between employment practices and employee performance

Table 2. Summary for mediated relationship

Parameter	Model 1: Direct relationship	Model 2: Mediator	Model 3: Mediated relationship	P	Change
β Innovative employment practices	0.623		1.583	0.00	0.96
β Self-efficacy		0.266	1.509	0.00	1.243
R Square	0.623	0.055	0.646	0.00	0.023
β Constant	1.411	3.086	1.732	0.00	0.321
F	50.053	5.416	41.074	0.00	-8.979

Source: Survey data (2018)

From the above summary table for mediated relationship, it is observed that the coefficient of composite index of innovative employment practices increases after the variables have been mediated, implying that when all the factors remain constant a unit change in innovative employment practices will lead to an increase in employee performance when self-efficacy is included as mediating factor. This is supported by past studies such as (Pati & Kumar, 2010); (Raub, 2012); (Hmieleski & Baron, 2008), further the most frequent employees had work experience of above 10 years and this may also have explained the increased effect, indicating that organizational factors as cited in Tannenbaum and Dupuree-Bruno (1994): Pati and Kumar (2010) also play a role in the explanation of the role of self-efficacy in the relationship between innovative employment practices and performance. Further the fact that most respondents agreed to the statements of self-efficacy points out the significance of self-efficacy in the functions of business as it determines positive or negative employee performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

From the above findings, the study concludes that innovative employment practices are significant factors in explaining employee performance and hence a necessary factor in dynamic environment. The study also noted that self-efficacy as a stand-alone construct had limited relationship with employee performance, however when used as a mediator it strengthens the relationship between employment practices and employee performance.

The study recommends that policy makers in the Kenyan government should consider modern innovative practices when handling employee issues especially in the service sector which has been

negatively impacted by rampant industrial actions in both secondary and tertiary levels. School management should initiate programmes that facilitate and manage self-efficacy among employees so as to encourage effective motivation and employee performance.

The findings of this study indicated that innovative employment practices have a positive correlation with employee performance, and the relationship is mediated by the construct of self-efficacy. However, this study is embroidered with some limitations and with adequate cognisance; future studies will be properly guided. Firstly, the study is cross-sectional and therefore the findings of positive correlation effects cannot be equated to causation effects. Therefore, future research should concentrate on longitudinal studies so as ascertain the causation effect of innovative employment practices and employee performance. This study employed unit-level analysis (i.e. single university), and therefore its findings cannot be generalised to other sectors. Future research studies can, therefore, employed multiple-levels of analysis for the purpose of wider generalisation. This study has added to the knowledge in Human Resource Management by contributing to unearthing the contents of the 'black box' via the construct of self-efficacy.

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