Factors Influencing the Employees’ Service Performance in Ministry of Education in Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract

Literatures explored that the employees’ service performance depends on the quality of training and performance appraisal. Although high skilled employees are possessing higher qualifications and sound standard of education, training is inevitable due to dramatic changes happening every second. Interestingly, the formal training not only increased productivity and bridged the gap between company performance and industry productivity standards but also improved product quality and reduced the product scrapping rate. As a result, the objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing employees’ service performance in ministry of education in Oman. A total of 514 employees were selected from the human resource department of ministry of education in Oman. The survey questionnaire’ validity was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictors of employees’ service performance. The results revealed that training and performance appraisal are the valid predictors of examining employees’ service performance. Thus, the findings suggested that training and performance appraisal have a significant influence on improving employees’ service performance those who are working in the human resource department of ministry of education in Oman

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Keywords: Training, Performance appraisal, Service performance, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Regression analysis

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1. Introduction

Strategic management represents a relatively new transformation in the field of human resources management. It is concerned with the significant role that human resources management plays in organization performance. Educational organizations are increasing aware that successful human resource policies and practices might increase quality performance of both students and their teachers and would increase the productivity (Brown, 2004; 2005; Batt, 2002; Becker & Huselid, 1998).

Researchers (David, David & David, 2009; Breene, Timothy, Nunes, Paul, & Shill, Walter, 2007; Brews, Peter & Purohit, Devararat, 2007) asserted that strategic-management process is meant an objective, logical, systematic approach for making major decisions in an organization. It attempts to organize qualitative and quantitative information in a way that allows effective decisions to be made under conditions of uncertainty. The organization relies on HR as its employees. Effective HRM strategy systematically organizes all individual HRM measures to directly influence employee attitude and behavior in a way that leads business to achieve its competitive strategy (Huang, 2001).

According to Sultanae (2012), identification the importance of training in the organization has been heavily influenced by intensification of competition and dramatic development of the organization where enhancement of employee skills is considerably emphasized. The added that technological development and organizational change have gradually led some employers to the realization that the relative success relies on the skills and abilities of their employees, and this means considerable and continuous investment in training and development. In brief, the objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing employees’ service performance in ministry of education in Oman.

2. Literature Review

It is well researched and documented that there is a positive link between a firm’s human resource practices dimensions under high performance work system (HPWS) practices, and various organizational outcomes, such as organizational performance, productivity, financial performance, innovation and employees’ turnover (Huselid, 1995; Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010; Carl don, Upton & Seaman, 2006; MacDuffie, 1995; Guthrie, 2001; Way, 2002; Lee & Miller, 1995). According to Sultanae, (2012) identifying the importance of training in the organization has been heavily influenced by intensification of competition and dramatic development of the organization where enhancement of employee skills is considerably emphasized. They added that technological development and organizational change have gradually led some employers to the realization that relative success relies on the skills and abilities of their employees, and this means considerable and continuous investment in training and development.

It is worth mentioning that training in some organizations is an ad hoc (unplanned and unsystematic) undertaking, while others are working hard to identify their needs, design the content of training and implement it accordingly and then evaluate the result based on their predetermined objectives (Dastmalchian, Blyton, & Adamson, 1989; Russell, Terbong, & Power, 1985). On the other hand, another theory emphasizes that organizations always adopt activities for symbolic reason (Pfeffer, 1981). According to this perspective, training is provided not because it is valuable or improves labor productivity, but rather is a good gesture from the employers that the organization caters for them and values their relationship with them. Training is an implemented activity which is pre-planned, systematic and aimed at enhancing the employee’s level of skill, knowledge and competency that is necessary to perform work effectively (Gerdale, 2006). Training plays a significant and pivotal role in improving performance, enhancing productivity and facilitating quality. Many studies have consistently established linkages between training and employee performance (Evan & Lindsay, 1999; Marwat, Arif, & Jan, 2009; Sultanae, 2012). This simply means that organizations that are dedicated to generating profits for stakeholders, providing quality service to customers and beneficiaries invest enormously in training of their employees which eventually contribute to their performance, quality service of the organization and increase in productivity (Evan & Lindsay, 1999). Huselid (1995) also stressed the importance of training as complement of selection practice through which the organizational culture and employee behaviors can be aligned to produce positive results. Cooke (2000) asserted that training is an important tool for developing the knowledge and necessary skills to increase individual employee performance.
(efficiency and effectiveness). Hornqren et al, (2002) state the evaluation of performance from the perspective of the organization and individual is significant. From the organization perspective, the goal is something that the organization wants and the result is what should be done; while from the individual view, effort is what that person does and result is the consequence of the effort and what is expected to get in return for effort is called the reward.

According to Turk (2005) performance appraisal is a process of attempting to determine the employee’s work results. Rather than just concentrating on the performance results and compensation aspect, it also looks at how to create good work conditions, find competent management teams and develop staff successfully, all of which enables the organization to guarantee a high level of motivation and work satisfaction amongst staff. The performance appraisal process can be described as the process of identifying, observing, measuring, and developing human performance in organizations (Carroll & Schneir, 1982). Henderson (1980) defined the performance appraisal as “a measure of the output of a job holder that contributes to productivity” (p. 4). Collins (2006) unequivocally asserted that performance appraisal is one of the most valuable instruments in the manager’s toolbox, as no other management process has as much influence over individuals’ careers and work lives. Performance appraisal has a crucial role in reforming the education system and increasing academic staff productivity as well as raising the overall quality of higher education (Turk, 2003). Ali, Mahdi, and Malihe (2012) in their study conducted on transportation organization employees in Iran found that the performance evaluation process in the organization influences employee intrinsic motivation ($r = .414$, $p = .001$). The performance appraisal is used to evaluate employees on their performance for the appropriate compensations and rewards on the work. In addition, it is necessary to grant procedural justice, accuracy and suitability of appraisal procedures and to continuously drive toward a result-driven climate through the shaping and changing of organizational performance appraisal and compensation culture (Boyd & Ken, 2004; Grote, 2000; Weiss, 2001). It was firmly believed that a negative appraisal can have adverse consequences on an employee’s sense of self worth and importance within the work environment. Other job aspects (e.g., work motivation, performance, interpersonal relationships, communication and support of organizational goals) also can be negatively impacted. The key is to implement an effective appraisal system consistently, with employees having confidence that the process is objective. Most often, employees must understand the process of identification, observation, measurement, and development and believe that the performance appraisal can aid in improving their work performance.

In addition, establishing positive rapport and interactive relationships between employees and customers is thought to increase customer loyalty and organization performance. Salanova, Agut, and Peiro (2005) in their empirical study found that service climate correlated with employee performance ($r = .32$, $p = .001$) which consequently affected customer loyalty ($r = .76$, $p = .001$). This finding suggests that when service climate is positive, customers collectively appraise employee performance positively which subsequently generates customer loyalty. Consistently, Schwepker and Good (2012) discovered in their study that customer oriented selling as marketing contributed significantly to behavior sale performance ($r = .67$, $p = .001$) and outcome sales performance ($r = .53$, $p = .001$). Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H1: Training would be significantly related to employee’s performance.
H2: Performance appraisal would be significantly related to employee’s performance.

3. Methodology

The population of this study comprised all the employees of directorate of human resource of ministry of education in the Sultanate of Oman. The Oman is divided in two 11 districts which also further divided into Directorate General of Human Resource Department. Furthermore, every district has its own directorate general of education at state level which manages the educational system in the Sultanate. A total of 514 employees were selected using purposive sampling procedure. The data for this research was analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Several demographic information were emphasized through descriptive statistics. The sample consisted 61% male and 39% female stuff. The majority of employees (49%) were between 11 to 20 years of experience whereas only
27% employees were between 21 to 31 years experienced and the remaining 24% were within 1 to 10 years experienced.

3.1. Instruments

The instrument of this study is a questionnaire. It contains two types; the first type of the questionnaire was adapted from Chuang and Liao (2010) which contained 18 items and divided into three dimensions. The first five items examined training, six items for performance appraisal and seven items for service performance. The researchers (Chuang & Liao, 2010) tested the validity and reliability of their constructed instrument and it was found to be valid and reliable to be used in any meaningful research activities. According to Chuang and Liao (2010) for high work performance system scale which consisted of training, staffing, involvement, performance appraisal, compensation and caring, many methods were used to assess their suitability and appropriateness.

The respondent was asked to judge their current situation and the desired or ideal situation in their school system for each item using an ascending 11 point Likert scale of five possible responses for each item. (Number 1 is Strongly Disagree and number 11 is Strongly Agree). Demographic items were also included (position, gender, level of education and years of experience in current or similar job).

4. Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire’s validity was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The primary EFA was run 18 items. The results of EFA indicated that the employees’ service performance is represented by the three underlying factors, namely, training, performance appraisal as well as service performance as predicted. The three factors are consisted by 18 items. However, the exception of item (Q17) which had a cross loading. Thus, the present study removed that item to finally validate the questionnaire. After removing the items (Q17), the findings of EFA showed that that the extent of inter-correlation among the items is statistically significant. Meanwhile, the inter-correlation among the service performance items tested the starting of EFA as indicated by anti-image matrices showed that all items correlations between themselves more than .791. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .873, indicating the adequacy of the data for EFA. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was revealed to be statistically significant (p = .000), which indicates the satisfactory correlation between the items. In addition, the total variance of three factors explained 59.26% which showed that the items were able to measure employees’ service performance in terms of training and performance appraisal. The highest Eigen value was obtained on the first factor of 5.463, whilst the other two factors showed the values of 3.06 and 1.54, respectively. The majority of communalities estimates for each of the items were greater than .60. The rotated component matrix exhibited three valid components. The first component of service performance was represented by the seven items indicating loadings ranging from .680 to .858, and explained 32.134% of the total variance. The second component of performance appraisals was represented by the six items showing loadings from .408 to .747 and explained 18.030% of the total variance. The final component of training was represented by the four items and demonstrated loadings ranging from .603 to .845 and explained 9.102% of the total variance as shown in Table 1.

| Q1  | Our employees are able to help customers when needed.  | .858 |
| Q2  | Our employees explain items (services) features and benefit to overcome customers’ objection. | .854 |
| Q3  | Our employees point out and relate item (service) features to customers’ needs. | .849 |
| Q4  | Our employees approach customers quickly. | .841 |
| Q5  | Our employees suggest (services) customers might like but did not think of. | .780 |
| Q6  | Our employees ask good questions and listen attentively to find out what customer wants. | .768 |
| Q7  | Our employees are friendly and helpful to customers. | .680 |
| Q8  | Performance appraisals provide employees feedback for personal development. | .747 |

Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix
Reliability analysis with regard to the internal consistency yielded Cronbach alpha coefficients of .725 for training (TR), .730 for performance appraisal (PA) .913 for service performance (SP). The further examination of item-total correlations revealed that all items in each subscale contributed to the consistency of scores with item-total correlation higher than .40.

5. Results

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between training, performance appraisal and service performance. In the present study, the correlation coefficients were interpreted by employing Davis (1971) descriptors (negligible = .00 to .09; low =.10 to .29; moderate = .30 to .49; substantial = .50 to .689; very strong = .70 to 1.00). The correlations show statistically significant relationships between training, performance appraisal and service performance. As we seen in table 2, there was a positive, low relationship between performance appraisal (r=.271, p<.01). In this case, the higher level of service performance associated with a high level of performance appraisal. Whereas, it was a positive, low relationship between performance appraisal and service performance (r=.211, p<.01). In this case, the higher level of service performance associated with high level of training.

A Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the best predictors of the dependent variable and to show the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (service performance) explained by the independent variables (training and performance appraisal). A direct method entry was used for the multiple linear regression analyses. The standard multiple regression with a direct method entry was used to measure the relationships among variables. Prior to conduct multiple regression analysis, the assumptions of multiple regression analysis have been checked; they include lack of multicollinearity, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, influential points and outliers, and independence of participants’ scores (Steven, 1990). Accordingly, no violation for conducting multiple regressions analysis was found.

The association between the dependent variable and independent variables ($R$), the proportion of the dependent variable’s variance (service performance), which is accounted by the linear combination of the independent variables ($R$ Square ($R^2$)), and the population $R^2$ that can be used to generalize the findings from the sample (Adjusted $R$ Square) were extracted. The results revealed that 7.9% of the variance in service performance was explained by the independent variables as shown in Table 3.

Furthermore, the test statistic was significant at the .01 level of significance ($F =$22.934; $p<.01$) as shown in Table 4.
Table 4 Summary Results of ANOVA (Regression Significance)

| Model       | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F          | Sig |
|-------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------------|-----|
| Regression  | 215.342        | 2   | 107.671     | 22.934     | .000|
| Residual    | 2394.373       | 510 | 4.695       |            |     |
| Total       | 2609.715       | 512 |             |            |     |

The standardized regression coefficients (Beta) were extracted in Table 5; Beta gives an indication of the contribution of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable (Aron, 2005). The results revealed that performance appraisal was statistically significant predictor of service performance ($t = 2.247$, $\text{Beta} = .108; p < .05$). Also, the training variable test was statistically significant ($t = 4.597$, $\text{Beta} = .221; p < .05$). These suggested participants’ perceptions of their training and performance appraisal were significant predictor of participant’ perceptions about service performance.

Table 5 Summary Results of Regression Analysis

| Model             | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------|-----|
|                   | $B$                         | Std. Error                | Beta   |     |
| Training          | .100                        | .044                      | .108   | 2.247| .025|
| Performance       | .217                        | .047                      | .221   | 4.597| .000|
| Appraisal         |                             |                           |        |     |

To determine the best predictors of service performance, standardized regression coefficients (Beta), partial correlation coefficients, and part correlation coefficients were used. Table 6 shows that performance appraisal variable has the greatest value of Beta, partial correlation coefficient, and part correlation coefficient. As such, performance appraisal variable was the best predictor of dependent variable that had the most significant effect in predicting service performance. This predictor accounted for 4% of the total variance of performance appraisal after controlling for the variable in this study.

Table 6 Correlations Coefficients and Collinearity Statistics

| Zero-order | Partial | Part | Collinearity Statistics | Tolerance | VIF |
|------------|---------|------|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| .211       | .099    | .095 | .781                    | 1.280     |     |
| .271       | .199    | .195 | .781                    | 1.280     |     |

6. Discussion

The results of this study contributed in various ways to the employees’ service performance. Firstly, the hypothesis (H1) that training having a statistically significant effect on employees’ service performance, thereby validating the hypothesis. This was consistent with prior studies (Garldon, 1992), which claimed that training is an implemented activity which is pre-planned, systematic and aimed at enhancing the employee’s level of skill, knowledge and competency that is necessary to perform work effectively. Subsequently, several studies have consistently recognized linkages between training and employee performance (Evan & Lindsay, 1999; Marwat, Arif, & Jan, 2009; Sultanae, 2012). According to Cooke (2000), stated that training is an important tool for developing the knowledge and necessary skills to increase individual employee performance. On the other hand, researchers documented that there is a positive link between a firm’s human resource practices dimensions under high performance work system practices, and various organizational outcomes, such as organizational performance, productivity, financial performance, innovation and employees’ turnover (Huselid, 1995; Messersmith& Guthrie, 2010; Carlodon, Upton & Seaman, 2006; MacDuffie, 1995; Guthrie, 2001; Way, 2002; Lee & Miller, 1995). Besides, Sultanae, (2012) discovered that the importance of training in the organization has been profoundly influenced by intensification of competition and dramatic development of the organization where enrichment of employee skills is considerably highlighted. They added that organizational and technological development change have progressively led some employers to the realization that comparative success relies on the skills and abilities of their employees,
and this means considerable and continuous investment in training and development. Thus, the present study showed that training plays an important role in improving employees’ service performance.

Secondly, the hypothesis (H2) revealed that performance appraisal had a significant effect on employees’ service performance stands validated. This finding was consistent with previous studies (Turk, 2005), which stated that performance appraisal is a process of attempting to examine the employee’s work results as seems to be similar with service performance. According to Carroll and Schneir (1982), the performance appraisal process could be described as the process of identifying, observing, measuring, and developing human performance in organizations. In a related study, Allen (2003) explicitly asserted that performance appraisal is one of the most precious instruments in the manager’s toolbox, as no other management procedure has as much effect on individuals’ careers and work lives. On the other hand, Turk (2003) discovered that performance appraisal has a vital role in restructuring the education system and enhancing academic staff productivity as well as raising the overall quality of higher education. However, several studies (Boyd & Ken, 2004; Grote, 2000; Weiss, 2001) demonstrated that the performance appraisal is applied to assess employees on their performance for the suitable compensations and rewards on the work. Thus, it is obligatory to grant procedural justice, accuracy and suitability of appraisal processes and to constantly drive toward a result-driven climate through the shaping and changing of organizational performance appraisal and compensation culture.

7. Conclusion

This study explored the three valid factors, namely, training, performance appraisal and employees’ service performance of ministry of education in Oman applying Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Besides this, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient determined a significant correlation between training, performance appraisal and service performance. These findings suggested that employees’ service performance is related to their quality training as well as performance appraisal. Regarding the employees’ perceptions of training, it was manifested that organization provides an orientation for newcomers to learn about the company, continuous training programs, invests considerable time and money in training, comprehensive training but not limited to skill training. Concerning the performance appraisal, the employees revealed that the organization provides employees feedback for personal development, multiple sources (self, co-workers, supervisor, customers, etc.), objective and quantifiable results, lack of cooperation between supervisors and employees to set their personal goals, work guideline for Satisfying customers, needs for customers’. The perception of service performance indicated that employees are able to help customers when needed, explain items (services) features and benefit to overcome customers’ objection, point out and relate item (service) features to customers’ needs, approach customers quickly, suggest (services) customers, ask good questions and listen attentively to find out what customer wants, friendly and helpful to customers. The results also discovered that training and performance appraisal were significant predictor of employees’ service performance. Thus, training and performance appraisal had a significant effect on service performance. Whereas performance appraisal was the best predictor of dependent variable that had the most significant effect in predicting service performance. Therefore, this study suggested that the employees’ service performance depends on their quality of training and performance appraisal. In order to improve the service performance, organizations have to confirm their effective training as well as performance appraisal. However, these two predictors may not be adequate to measure the employees’ service performance. As a result, newer factors are recommended to include for further studies.

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