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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES' WORK OUTCOMES IN DIRE DAWA UNIVERSITY: TAKING PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AS A MEDIATOR

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to investigate the association of employee perceptions of important HR practices on their evaluations of Perceived Organizational Support which would have further effect on their work outcomes in Dire Dawa University. The populations of this study were academic staff from institute of technology, school of business and economics, school of social science, school of natural science, school of Medicine and school of law which were a total number of 276 members of which 31 were department heads who were currently working. The researchers used census inquiry because of the manageable size of the study subject. Among those 276 respondents only 201 replied the questionnaire distributed. To collect the necessary data, 5 point scale Likert-type questionnaire which was adopted from the work of different. And the collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation and correlation analysis; to do so the researchers used SPSS latest version. The major finding of this study was that academic employee's of the university have low perception towards Human Resource practices of the university, namely pay system ($\mu=1.76$), career development opportunity ($\mu=2.48$), work-family support ($\mu=1.86$) and immediate supervisor-employee relationship ($\mu=2.58$) contributed to low level of perceived organizational support (POS) ($\mu=1.9$). Among HR practices POS of academic employees have strong association with Work family support ($r=0.88$) followed by career development opportunity ($r=0.82$), pay level satisfaction ($r=0.78$) and immediate supervisor-employee relationship ($r=0.51$). They also have low commitment in helping the organization achieve its objectives ($\mu=2.77$), have low feeling of organizational citizenship behavior ($\mu=1.86$) and strong intention to leave the organization ($\mu=4$). Additionally academic employees POS has positive association with employees commitment ($r=0.89$) and employee's organizational citizenship behavior ($r=0.82$), but have significantly negative association with turnover intention ($r=-0.88$).

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INTRODUCTION

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that the exchange relationship between two parties often goes beyond pure economic exchange and entails social exchange. Accordingly, organizational researchers argue that employer and employee exchange not only impersonal resources such as money, services, and information, but also socio emotional resources such as approval, respect, and support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). Social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) have recently been applied in organizational research to describe the motivational basis behind employee attitudes and behaviors in organizations (Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Wayne *et al.*, 2002). For example, Eisenberger and colleagues used the concept of perceived

organizational support (POS), which refers to employees' perceptions about the degree to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contribution, to describe the social exchange relationship between the organization and its employees (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). It is argued that based on the norm of reciprocity in social exchange, employees with higher levels of POS are more likely to repay the organization with positive attitudes and favorable work behaviors (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990 and 1997). Researchers have examined the effects of POS on various work outcomes. In contrast, although organizational support theory (Rhoades *et al.*, 2002) suggests that employees are likely to develop higher levels of POS when the organization cares about their wellbeing and values their contributions, until recently, in general, little research has been conducted to investigate the factors that contribute to POS. In particular, while human resource management plays a key role in developing and maintaining the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization (Tsui, 1984; Tsui *et al.*,

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1997), extant research offers little insight on how the implementation of appropriate human resource (HR) practices can help build high levels of POS, which in turn, contribute to positive work attitudes and organizational behaviors. In the human resource management literature, researchers argue that the implementation of progressive HR practices that affect employee skills, employee motivation, and structure of work can create strategic advantage for the organization (e.g., Arthur, 1994; Becker *et al.*, 1996; Delery *et al.*, 1996; Delaney *et al.*, 1996; Snell and Dean, 1992). However, although researchers have noted the strategic value of HR in successfully cultivating organizational culture and social relationships that cannot be readily replicated (Becker and Gerhart, 1996), the role of social relationships is yet to be explicitly investigated in the HR (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2000).

An important question to be addressed in the organizational behavior and HR literatures is the location of a specific set of HR practices that can promote relationship building (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). To address this question, one potentially helpful approach is to establish the linkage between the implementation of effective HR practices and the development of positive employee employer relationships. In other words, examining the role of HR practices in fostering higher levels of POS can meet the need for a more relationship-based approach in the HR literature. Generally, review of both the POS literature and the HR literature point to the importance of research on the linkage between HR practices and POS. Thus, one purpose of this study was to address this issue by investigating the effects of employee perceptions of several important elements of HR practices on their evaluations of POS.

A question that follows is: What HR practices should be included in this investigation? In the POS literature, there two types of HR practices those are key to the development of higher POS: (1) discretionary practices that imply organizational caring but are not mandated by company policy or union contract, and (2) HR practices that symbolize organizational recognition of the employee's contribution. This proposition suggests that those HR practices that represent different ways in which the organization shows concern for the employees and values their contributions may be particularly critical for the development of high POS. Accordingly, several HR practices are very important in showing support for employees to satisfy needs. First, satisfactory pay is necessary for meeting individuals' physiological or existence needs. Second, growth needs can be met by sufficient career development opportunities that help employees extend their potential and expand their capabilities.

Third, HR practices that provide social support, such as helping employees maintain good work and family relationships and develop positive leader-member exchange relationships, can be instrumental in fulfilling employees' need for relatedness. Therefore, the HR practices chosen to investigate as antecedents of POS include: pay level, career development opportunities, work-family support and leader member exchange (LMX). In the POS literature, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and turnover intention were the set of outcome variables that are usually found to be related to POS.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate the effects of employee perceptions of important elements of HR practices on their evaluations of POS which would have effect on their work out comes.

Specific Objectives

- To examine the relationship between pay level satisfaction, career development opportunities, work-family support, and LMX with POS in Dire Dawa University.
- To examine the relationship between POS and important work outcomes such as turnover intention, organizational commitment and OCBs in Dire Dawa University.

Hypothesis

On the bases of the antecedents and outcomes of POS, the following hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis 1: Human resource practices are positively association with POS.

Hypothesis 2: Employee POS is positively related to organizational commitment and OCB but negatively association with turnover intention.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Dire Dawa University. It is characterized by quantitative nature in which the problem of the research showed the linkage between HR practices with work outcomes that was mediated by POS. The unit of analysis was academic staff from institute of technology, school of business and economics, school of social science, school of natural science, school of Medicine and school of law which were a total number of 276 members of which 31 were department heads who were previously(in 2011) working. The researchers used census sampling technique since the total number of population was few which were expected to be in a manageable size. The study gathered data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data was collected through 5 scale Likert-type questionnaire which was adopted from the work of different scholars. Secondary sources of data were included empirical literatures from HR and Organizational behavior theories.

The unit of analysis for this study was individual employees-academic staff. Although organizational practices were examined as antecedents of POS, it is individual employees' perceptions about how these practices were implemented that influence their beliefs in POS. Therefore, these variables were operationalized as individuals' evaluations of their satisfaction with these practices (e.g., pay level satisfaction, career development opportunities and work family support and leader member exchange). The outcome variables in this study were individual employees' attitudes and behaviors in the organization as a response to perceived support from the organization. Therefore, it was appropriate to measure all the

variables in the conceptual model at the individual level of analysis. Survey data was ratings on OCBs that was obtained from employees' direct supervisors, specifically department heads, and data on other variables were collected from academic staff. Unless otherwise noted, all the variables were measured by the subjects' responses based on 5-point Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). And further 3 considered as a cutoff point or expected mean. The study used correlation as a technique of data analysis. As shown below in the diagram, first the predictors, HR practices, were correlated with POS and then POS were correlated with important work outcomes. To do so researchers used SPSS 20.

RESULTS

Participants and Response Rate

Based on the collected information obtained from the human resource department, academic staffs of Dire Dawa University were counted as 276 in which questionnaires were distributed to them. Among these employees, 210 responded, yielding a response rate of 76.1%. Upon reception of employee responses, questionnaires were distributed to the direct supervisors of those who responded, to ask them to provide OCB ratings for these respondents. Supervisors of 201 employees completed the survey, providing OCB data for 72.8% of the employees who responded. Thus, the final population for this study is 201.

servicing for 2 to 5 years, 14.4% were servicing less than a year, and 8% were servicing for 6 years. As depicted in the table above the majority of the academic staff possessed graduate degree and having 2 to 5 years experience.

Perceived Organizational Support Measurement

In Table 2 below, a summary of the means, standard deviations, and inter-item reliabilities for all the variables are provided. As can be seen, the scale reliabilities (shown in parentheses) for all these variables exceed the value of 0.70. Thus, as Nunnally and Bernstein (2004) suggested, the instruments used in this study provide reliable measures of the variables of interest. As we can observe from the table below the majorities of academic staff of the Dire Dawa University were dissatisfied by human resource management practices namely the level of pay, career development opportunities and work family support, but they prefer to keep no say or neutral in their response to relation to their immediate supervisors. Regarding their perceived organizational support, the mean result showed that the degree to which the university cares about their wellbeing and values their contribution was significantly low. As shown in the table below perceived organizational support has significantly a positive relationship with four important human resource practices; pay level satisfaction($r= 0.78$), career development opportunities ($r= 0.82$), work-family support ($r= 0.88$), and immediate supervisor to employee relationship (LMX) ($r= 0.51$).

Table 1. Demographic Data of academic staffs of Dire Dawa University

	Males	Females	Total
Gender (%)	92.5	7.5	100
Educational background (%)			
B.A	91.8	8.2	24.3
Graduate degree	94	6	74.1
PHD/MD	33.3	66.7	1.6
Year of Service (%)			
Less than a year	82.8	17.2	14.4
2-5 years	94.1	5.9	76.6
6 years	93.8	6.2	8

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

No	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Pay level satisfaction	1.76	0.74	(0.75)							
2	Carrier development opportunity	2.48	0.96	0.58	(0.81)						
3	Work-family support	1.86	0.78	0.542	0.471	(0.89)					
4	LMX	2.58	0.92	0.373	0.387	0.324	(0.88)				
5	POS	1.9	1	0.78	0.82	0.88	0.51	(0.89)			
6	Turnover intention	4	1.25	0.07	-0.06	0.07	0.08	-0.88	(0.89)		
7	Organizational commitment	2.77	0.84	0.26	0.26	0.27	-0.39	0.89	0.1	(0.77)	
8	OCB	1.86	1.22	0.04	-0.13	-0.06	0.035	0.82	-0.14	-0.28	(0.96)

The number of employees evaluated by each supervisor varied from two to eleven, with most supervisors rating two or more than two employees. Among the 201 respondents for whom employee self-reports and supervisor ratings were available, 7.5% were women and 92.5% were men. As depicted in table 1 below, among 15 women respondents, 4(8.25%) were bachelor's degree, 9(6%) were graduate degree and the remaining 2(66.7%) were Medical doctors. Regarding male respondents 45(91.8%) possessed bachelor's degree, 140(94) were graduate degree and 1(33.35%) was medical doctor. When we look at respondents' experience of working as academic staffs in the university, the majority (76.6%) was

Even if the degree to which human resource practices contribution on POS has some marginal differences, we can understand that those important HR practice are playing their role in determining the level or the degree to which how academic staff perceive about the university cares about their wellbeing and value their contribution to the university. As respondents indicated their evaluation to those four important HR practice were a mean of 1.76, 2.48, 1.86, and 2.58 for pay level satisfaction, career development opportunities, work-family support, and LMX respectively which is showing a relatively significant dissatisfaction in the perception of those academic employees. Consequently, their POS will become a

mean of 1.9 to signify that the university doesn't care about their well-being and value their contribution to it. From this we can understand that HR practice of the University shaped the level of POS they developed towards the University and employee work outcomes which had its own significant impact on employees turnover intention ($r = -0.88$), their commitment to organizational objectives ($r = 0.89$), and their Organizational citizenship behavior ($r = 0.82$). The average result of respondents reply on those important work outcomes were turnover intention (4), Organizational commitment (2.77), and OCB (1.86).

- Note: N= 201. Correlations above were significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed). Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) are shown in parentheses on the diagonal.
- M: mean response, SD: Standard Deviations

Since the level of POS of those academic staffs were so low, its implication is so significant in employees' intention to leave the university. As mentioned earlier extensively bigger number of academic staffs has still the intention to leave the university. In addition, the level of commitment of those academic staffs is so low since the employees perceived that university doesn't care about their wellbeing and doesn't consider their contribution to it. As a result, their loyalty or Organizational citizenship behavior is almost on the verge of come to an end. When we look at the level of perception that the academic staff have towards those human resource practices of the university (see on appendix), about 69.7% (which is a response rate of 2.25) of the respondents have showed their dissatisfaction towards their pay level, around 50% (which is response rate of 2.4) replied that the university is not supportive of their long-term career development goals, regarding work-family support 62.3% (which is response rate of 2) said University doesn't stress on the importance of family, leisure, and health issues, additionally 30.3% (which is response rate of 2) respondents expressed that their relationship with the immediate supervisors is almost poor. Coming to their level of POS, more than 66% (which is response rate of 2) said that the university does not show a great deal of concern for academic employees. Regarding important work outcomes, 76% (which is a mean of 4.5) have the intention to leave the university; 67.7% (which is a mean of 1.67) doesn't feel that they are part of the university which makes their OCB in question mark.

Hypotheses testing for the variables

Hypotheses 1

All of the HR practices hypothesized antecedents were found to be positively related to POS (Hypothesis 1). Therefore, these HR practices (antecedents) and their association are discussed here in under. Under Hypothesis 1, it is proposed that employees' satisfaction with their pay level (as one of the HR practices) would be positively related to POS. There is a significant positive relationship; while the relationship was in the hypothesized direction. This was only significant ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). The majority of the academic staffs have expressed their dissatisfaction with their current salary, incentives, overtime payment which has its own contribution on them to perceive the university that doesn't care about their wellbeing

and value their contribution to it (or POS). Again under Hypothesis 1, which predicted a positive relationship between employee perceptions of career development opportunities and POS, was strongly supported ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$). This result confirmed the assertion university helps its academic employees meet their needs for personal growth and ability development would be considered by the employees as more supportive. Even though the majority of academic staff possessed graduate degree, they still didn't consider the university supportive in their long-term career development; such a kind of perception has its own implication on the level of POS that those employees have. Also under Hypothesis 1, work-family support was also found to have a significant positive relationship with POS ($r = .88$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that academic employees who believe the university offers support to help deal with work-family balance issues were more likely to have higher levels of POS. Additionally, under Hypothesis 1, LMX was also found to be a significant predictor of POS ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). Academic employees with a higher quality relationship with the leader tend to perceive more support from the organization. This finding suggested that organizations can depend on leaders to help convey to employees that the organization cares about their well-being and values their contribution.

Hypotheses 2

In Hypothesis 2, employee POS is positively related to organizational commitment and OCB but negatively association with turnover intention. The discussion of the association between POS and important work outcomes in Dire Dawa University is discussed below. POS was found to be negatively associated with turnover intention ($r = -0.88$, $p < 0.01$). Employees with lower POS were high likely to leave the organization. As shown in table 1, the majority of the respondents have expressed their lower level of POS towards the university which has its own marginal significance on their intention to leave the university. In line to Hypothesis 2, POS had a direct positive relationship with organizational commitment ($r = 0.89$, $p < 0.01$). As discussed so far, academic employees of the university have lower POS; its significant effect was seen on employees' commitment towards organizational objectives. Also under Hypothesis 2, POS had a direct positive relationship with organizational citizenship behavior ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.01$). Since employees have lower level of POS it is not surprising to hear lower level of citizenship behavior from employees of the university. Generally, as indicated in table 2 academic employees' perception towards HRM practices of the university was low or below the average. Further employees' level of POS was with the mean of 1.9 indicating that employees' perceived that the university does not show a great deal of concern for academic employees. Consequently, the majority 76% respondents have the intention to leave the university; 67.7% of respondents (which is a mean of 1.67) didn't feel that they are part of the university which makes their OCB in question mark.

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