

Mediating Role of Organizational Ambidexterity in Relationship between Human Resource Practices and Perceived Organizational Performance

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Abstract

This research purposes to evaluate the mediation instigated by organizational ambidexterity (OA) in relationship between human resource (HR) practices and perceived organizational performance (POP). Human resource (HR) practices chosen for the study are participation, training and job description. This research is planned on first and middle management in two core industries of Pakistan; chemical and textile. Rationale behind choosing these sectors is their importance in economy, contribution towards GDP and GNP, and orientation towards organizational ambidexterity. The questionnaire was used to gather responses. Hypotheses of study were designed to check association between human resource (HR) practices and perceived organizational performance, along with mediation instigated by OA in connection between human resource practices and POP. Hypotheses were tested through regression techniques and PROCESS of Andrew F. Hayes (2014) was used to assess the mediation of organizational ambidexterity (OA). Results have shown significant positive association between HR practices and POP. Partial mediation instigated by organizational ambidexterity (OA) between human resource practices and perceived organizational performance (POP) is also observed in results.

Keywords: Human Resource (HR) Practices; Organizational Ambidexterity (OA); Perceived Organizational Performance (POP)

INTRODUCTION

In the earlier years, domain of strategic human resource management (SHRM) has taken an essential part in human resource management (HRM) writing by successfully enlightening the huge part of human assets (HR) in organizations (Paracha, Ismail, & Amin, 2014). Awareness is escalating at domestic and global levels that performance of business firms could be enriched through proper management of employees.

Literature is evidencing pragmatic relationship between performance of organizations and employees' management (HRM). Regardless of the already presented hypothetical approaches on the HPWS-Performance relationship, and significant studies; researchers have been uncertain to indicate the process involved in connecting HPWS to performance (Wall & Wood, 2005). Researchers have termed this hole as "black box" between HPWS and performance (Kim, Wright, & Su, 2010; Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007).

Further exploration, concentrating on examination of some mediating variables that can be the substance of this "black box" (Paracha, et al., 2014). However need for more exploration to investigate this system has been strongly advocated (Paauwe, 2009; Wei & Lau, 2010).

Still more research is required in this arena to implement the importance of effectiveness of human resource management (HRM) towards performance of organizations, mainly in outlook of Pakistan based organizations. This condition becomes a reason of current study.

Human resource (HR) practices include broad actions for staffing and selection of employees, functioning management and incentives management as compensation, and

participation and training of employees widely. These practices ensure to develop a firm's current and probable individuals' knowledge, abilities and skills. Value-added KSAs increase the level of motivation, decrease dodging and progress quality providing personnel in organizations while making non-performers move out of corporation (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Huselid & Becker, 1996) had studied that market value of a firm could be increased from \$15000 to \$45000 by carrying rational changes in human resource (HR) practices.

Perceived organizational performance (POP) is insight of employees regarding their organizational success in comparison to rivals/competitors of similar industry (Carmeli, Gilat, & Waldman, 2007; Delaney & Huselid, 1996).

When a human can use his hands together equally with same level of agility, it is called ambidexterity. According to Simsek (2009) organizational ambidexterity (OA) is an exemplification to ambidexterity. Discovery of new opportunities for corporation and exploiting prevailing competencies is organizational ambidexterity (Wang & Rafiq, 2014).

Pakistani manufacturing sector is under-researched regarding the relationship of variables of study. Rationale behind choosing these sectors is their importance in economy, contribution towards GDP and GNP, and orientation towards organizational ambidexterity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Resource (HR) Practices: HR practices denote exercises/actions coordinated at managing of human assets properly and ensuring that these assets are developed towards the fulfillment of objectives (Ghafoor, 2015). Many theoreticians and experts had been functioning to uplift HRM from functional level to level of strategy. (Ait Razouk, 2011). Strategic HRM is a blend of practices that target better performance of organizations (Delery & Doty, 1996).

Human Resource Practices Used for this Study

Participation (PAR): When employees feel free to narrate their reaction to decisions of management, plans made by management, initiatives taken by management, their grievances/complaints and can express their requisitions for change, it is participation (Farrell, 1983; Hirschman, 1974). As per study of Pfeffer (1995), participation is when organizations put emphasis on their employees to take part in decision making, handing over of authority, establishment of complaint system/grievance procedures and empowering them to regulate work procedures according to obligation. Participation let the employees feel as authorized and worthy assets for organization.

H1: Participation of employees (PAR) and perceived organizational performance (POP) are directly related.

Training (TRN): A tool of skill development in both new and old employees is training. Training is helpful for organizations in identifying and retaining quality producing employees. When organizations emphasize on providing such opportunities to their employees which may make them innovative and quality producing, improve their competencies and abilities, enable them to identify as well as solve the problems, it is basically training (Pfeffer, 1998). In literature training as HR practice had been found significantly related to financial performance, productivity and profitability.

H2: Training (TRN) and perceived organizational performance (POP) are positively related.

Job Description (JD): Job description can be termed as level of transparency in defining job in context of its duties and responsibilities (Murphy, 2006). Well defined and properly communicated jobs tend to bring better employees (Delery & Doty, 1996). Clearly defined job description lets potential candidates make a match between his own skills, abilities and anticipated organizational results.

H3: Job description (JD) and perceived organizational performance (POP) share a positive connection.

Organizational Ambidexterity (OA): When a human is able to use his both hands equally with same level of skill, it is called ambidexterity. According to Simsek (2009) organizational ambidexterity (OA) is an exemplification to ambidexterity. Discovery of new opportunities for corporation and exploiting prevailing competencies is organizational ambidexterity (Wang & Rafiq, 2014).

Emphasis of organizations/corporations on taking benefit of current competencies (exploitation) and put an effort on innovativeness/creativity (exploration) to encounter forthcoming challenges of market and to achieve maintainable competitive edge is organizational ambidexterity (OA) (Levinthal & March, 1993). According to Simsek (2009) organizational ambidexterity (OA) is gaining both exploration and exploitation at great levels.

In General terms, framework of ambidexterity is having the characteristics of discipline, belief and backing which is fabricated over implementation of practices of human resource (HR). To develop framework of ambidexterity, employees in the organizations are required to utilize their time and energies effectively among divergent requirements of flexibility and alignment (Chang, Hughes, & Hotho, 2011).

H1a: Relationship of participation (PAR) with perceived organizational performance (POP) is mediated by organizational ambidexterity (OA).

H2a: Relationship of training (TRN) with perceived organizational performance (POP) is mediated by organizational ambidexterity.

H3a: Relationship between job description (JD) and perceived organizational performance (POP) is mediated by organizational ambidexterity (OA).

Perceived Organization Performance (POP): Perceived organizational performance (POP) is what employees think about their organizational success if compared to rivals/competitors of similar industry (Carmeli, et al., 2007; Delaney & Huselid, 1996). This ration of performance had been evidenced likewise significant to objective/financial procedures of evaluating performance (Chang, et al., 2011; Powell, 1992)

Evaluation of subjective performance had been happening through comparative profitability, relationship of employee-management, customer satisfaction, developing and marketing of products, perceived growth in market share, employees' retention, ability to entice employees (Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Singh, 2004).

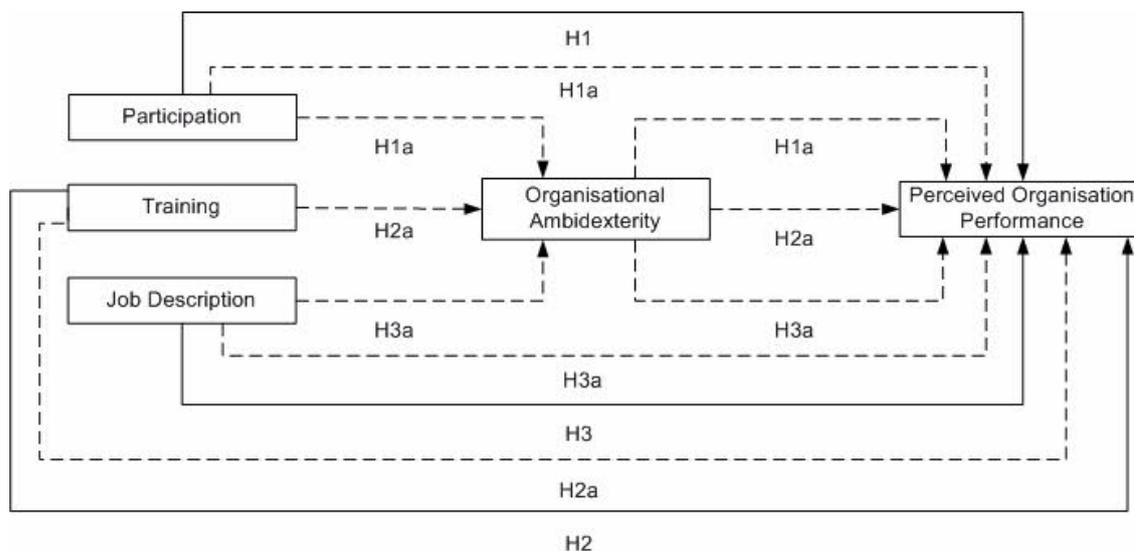


Fig 1.1. Conceptual Model

METHODOLOGY

Population, Sampling and Collection of data: Questionnaire had been used as tool of data collection. The study had targeted Lahore’s manufacturing sector. First and middle management functioning in two large industries; chemical and textile were the respondents. This study emphasizes on strategic HR rather functional, orientation of study is towards SHRM at industry level.

A self-guided questionnaire was established by mixing three instruments. Demographic information of respondents was collected through a separate segment titled as demographic containing captions of gender, age of respondent, organization name, designation of respondent and work experience. An introductory letter elucidating importance and purposefulness of study, general guidelines to ensure potential respondents about their confidentiality, was attached with each questionnaire.

Three sections were designed in questionnaire; first section endeavored to collect information about OA, second section contained questions about HR practices, third and last section had questions about POP.

Population: Population comprises of Chief Executive Officers, general managers, employees working at first and middle management of chemical and textile industry business concerns based at Lahore.

Sample: For collection of data from first and middle management employees, convenient sampling had been used in current research. At random, no of questionnaires distributed in sample of study was more than 400. Telephonic or email reminder was being sent to respondent to remind him/her to get back filled questionnaire. 216 questionnaires were received out of 400. In textile industry, eight organizations were targeted. Mainly data was collected from big units of textile.

Questionnaire Scheme: Main variables were measured through following three instruments. Organizational ambidexterity (OA) was measured by one instrument (Patel, Messersmith, & Lepak, 2013) , another was evaluating human resource practices (Hartog & Verburg, 2004; Patel, et al., 2013), last one was about organization performance perception (Delaney & Huselid, 1996).

Human Resource (HR) Practices: Literature evidences that researchers had been using normative method i.e. to consider previous research to select HR practices (Becker, et al., 1998). A blend of Delery & Doty (1996), Patel et al. (2013) Snell & Dean (1992) had been employed to measure human resource practices of organizations.

Organizational Ambidexterity (OA): Five-point Likert scale was used to measure organizational ambidexterity (OA). It was assessed by both items of ambidexterity. Both items were measured on Lubatkin et al., (2006) and Patel et al, (2013). This scale comprises of 12-items, six were measuring exploration and remaining six were measuring exploitation.

Perceived Organizational Performance (POP): POP/subjective performance had been measured on a scale of ten-items (Delaney & Huselid, 1996). It assessed perception of first and middle management (respondents) about their organizational functioning in contrast to rivals/competitors. Time span of current 03 years was investigated. Likert scale was used.

DATA ANALYSIS

Respondents Characteristics: Gender, different age group, organization’s name, designation of respondents and work experience were demographics of study. Biographic characteristics give vibrant image of sample.

In chemical industry, 104 were total number of respondents. Out of 104, number of males were 99 and 05 was the number of females. 70 out of 104 were falling in age groups above 30 years, rest of the respondents were in age group of 30 years. 54 out of 104 were first line managers working in various departments. In textile industry, 112 were total number of respondents. Out of 112, number of males were 81 and 31 was the number of females. 56% of 112 were falling in age groups above 30 years, rest of the respondents were in age group of 30 years. 42 out of 112 were first line managers working in various departments.

Cronbach’s Alpha: Authenticated and valid instruments had been used for data collection of current study. The instruments had already been used for data collection in context of other than Pakistan as well as in sectors except sectors of present study. Therefore instruments were undergone reliability testing through cronbach’s alpha. Values of cronbach’s alpha for variables i.e. POP, OA, PAR, TRN, JD, OA and POP are .83, .85, 0.79, 0.86, and 0.84 correspondingly which are significantly good indicators of consistency. Reliability of whole instrument is 0.921.

Factor Analysis: To measure independent variables of study, researcher had used practices frequently used in literature. Exploratory factor analysis was applied to measure validity of instrument designed to collect data about human resource practices. These practices have been loaded with significant values.

Correlation Analysis: Identification of relationship between main variables of study is done through correlation analysis. Pearson correlation had been applied on variables of study to measure their relationship. Relationship between participation, training, job description and organizational ambidexterity was found moderate. Relationship of perceived organizational performance with human resource practices found out correlated at moderate level.

Table 1.1-*Correlation Analysis*

	PAR	TRN	JD	OA	POP
PAR	1				
TRN	0.46	1			

JD	0.36	0.54	1		
OA	0.59	0.43	0.33	1	
POP	0.38	0.49	0.45	0.57	1

Significant level for Correlation is 0.01.

Regression Analysis : Relationship among one dependent and one or in excess of one independent variables is measured through regression (De Vaus, 2002). It tells about impact with direction. In equation of regression, it is viewed like

$$“POP” = \alpha + \beta (PAR, TRN, JD) + \varepsilon$$

Table 2-Regression Analysis

Predictors	Coefficients	Std. Error	p-value
PAR	0.160**	0.04	0.00
TRN	0.289**	0.04	0.00
JD	0.240**	0.04	0.00
r-Square			0.313
Adjusted r-Square			0.305
p-value			0.000

*sign level 5% **sign level 1 percent%

Researcher had applied multiple linear regression to measure variation in POP because of human resource practices i.e. PAR, TRN and JD. The model displayed that three practices in sum described noteworthy portion of difference ($r = .559$, Adjusted $r^2 = .305$, $p < .01$). Furthermore the results are;

- 1.For PAR; 1-point rise in employees’ participation will reason .123 points deviation in POP whereas controlling for TRN and JD.
- 2.For TRN, It displays that a point change in TRN employees receive will cause .196 points variation in organizational performance perception (POP, while controlling other HR practices like PAR and JD.
- 3.For JD, value of standardized slope is 0.166 and value of unstandardized slope is 0.240. One point change in JD will incur 0.166 points variation in perceived organizational performance (POP), while controlling for PAR and TRN.
- 4.The intercept for POP, when HR practices i.e. participation, training and job description are zero, was 2.162 ($t = 12.55$, $p < .01$).
- 5.According to model, $r = .559$, $r^2 = .313$, Adjusted $r^2 = .305$, it demonstrates 31% of deviation in perceived organizational performance (POP) was explained by HR practices.

4.6 Mediation

It indicates a context where the effect of independent variable (IV) on dependent variable (DV) is explained employing central variable which is named mediating variable. It means before X is affecting Y explicitly, X is affecting M and this M is further creating Y. For such situation, the causal relationship central to X and Y is defined as mediation (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008).

4.6.1 Results of Mediation

Mediation was tested through PROCESS of Andrew Hayes (2014). Multiple step regression analysis was used to test mediation. Following steps testify mediation;

1. Confirm significant relationship between independent and dependent variable.
2. Testify significant relationship between mediator and independent variable.
3. Significant relationship between mediating and dependent variable in presence of independent variable.
4. Dependent and independent variables' relationship becomes insignificant (or reduction in coefficient) in the presence of mediator.

Indirect effect is difference between total and direct effect of X on Y. Bootstrapping was done to evaluate confidence interval. SPSS PROCESS of Andrew Hayes (2014) provides values for total, direct and indirect effects with confidence intervals after bootstrapping.

According to a rule of thumb, if relationship between dependent and independent variable becomes insignificant when mediator is present; it shows complete mediation. Partial mediation occurs if relationship between dependent and independent variables remain significant in the presence of mediator, but meaningful reduction in coefficient is seen.

Effect of PAR on POP Mediated by OA:As per table-4, PAR is enlightening 35.5% of variation in OA (mediating variable) independently. In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of PAR on POP, ignoring the mediator, was significant, $t(216), p < .001$. Step 2 showed that the regression of the PAR on the mediator, OA, was also significant, $t(216) p < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the mediator (OA), controlling for PAR was significant, $t(216), p < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediator (OA), PAR score was not a significant predictor of POP, $t(216), p = .367$. A Sobel test was conducted and found full mediation in the model ($z = 3.91, p = .0001$). It was found that OA fully mediated the relationship between PAR and POP.

Table 1.3- *Mediating effect of OA on PAR and POP*

	Outcome VAR	Predictor	r²	Co-efficient	p-value
	OA	PAR	.35	.45	.00
Direct effect	POP	OA	.33	.56	.00
		PAR		.04	.37
Total effect	POP	PAR	.14	.29	.00

Effect of TRN on POP Mediated by OA: In mediation model, the regression of TRN on POP, ignoring the mediator, was significant, $t(216), p < .001$. Step 2 showed that the regression of the TRN on the mediator, OA, was also significant, $t(216) p < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the mediator (OA), controlling for TRN was significant, $t(216), p < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediator (OA), TRN score remained significant predictor of POP, $t(216), p = .367$ but meaningful reduction in coefficient is observed. It was found that OA partially mediated the relationship between TRN and POP.

Table 1.4- Mediating effect of OA on TRN and POP

	Outcome variable	Predictor(s)	R ²	Coefficient	pvalue
	OA	TRN	.18	.28	.00
Direct effect	POP	OA	.40	.46	.00
		TRN		.20	.00
Total effect	POP	TRN	.24	.33	.00

Effect of JD on POP Mediated by OA: In mediation model, the regression of JD on POP, was significant, $t(216), p = <.001$ in first step of mediation model. Step 2 showed that the regression of the JD on the mediator, OA, was also significant, $t(216) p = <.001$. Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the mediator (OA), controlling for JD was significant, $t(216), p = <.001$.

Table 1.5-Effect of JD on POP Mediated by OA

	Outcome variable	Predictor(s)	R ²	Coefficient	p-value
	OA	JD	0.11	0.22	0.0
Direct effect	POP	OA	0.41	0.49	0.0
		JD		0.20	0.0
Total effect	POP	JD	0.20	0.31	0.0

Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediator (OA), JD score remained significant predictor of POP, $t(216), p = .367$ but meaningful reduction in coefficient is observed. It was found that OA partially mediated the relationship between TRN and POP.

Findings

Researchers and experts in the zone of SHRM had endeavored to measure the influence of single or set of various HR practices on performance of firms. Consequently, one can see improvement in system used to manage human resource which ultimately can have significant effect on outcome/performance (Fabling & Grimes, 2010).

The present research aimed to measure degree of mediation because of OA in correlation between HR practices and POP. The present study was steered in two leading industries of Pakistan which are chemical and textile.

If three HR practices i.e. PAR, TRN and JD were executed and conducted correctly, will these practices affect ability of employees to take advantage of prevailing opportunities and to find new ones concurrently? This developed ambidextrousness will affect employees' perception about performance of their organizations as compared to rivals of same industry. It is the research question which has been responded through present research work.

First and middle level managers working at Lahore in industries chosen for study were targeted for data collection. Firstly collected data was cleaned and screened, then mean values and values of standard deviations were calculated through descriptive statistics. Kurtosis and Skewness were applied to check normality of data.

Cronbach’s alpha was applied to check instruments’ reliability. Exploratory factor analysis was run to measure validity of tool of human resource practices.

Pearson Correlation was run to find relationship between independent and dependent variables. Correlation matrix highlighted value of relationship but did not tell about direction of relationship.

Regression was used to identify the being of relationship along with direction. Regression was run on participation (PAR), training (TRN), job description (JD) and perceived organizational performance (POP). Results showed positive connection between practices of HR and organizational performance perception (H1, H2 and H3).

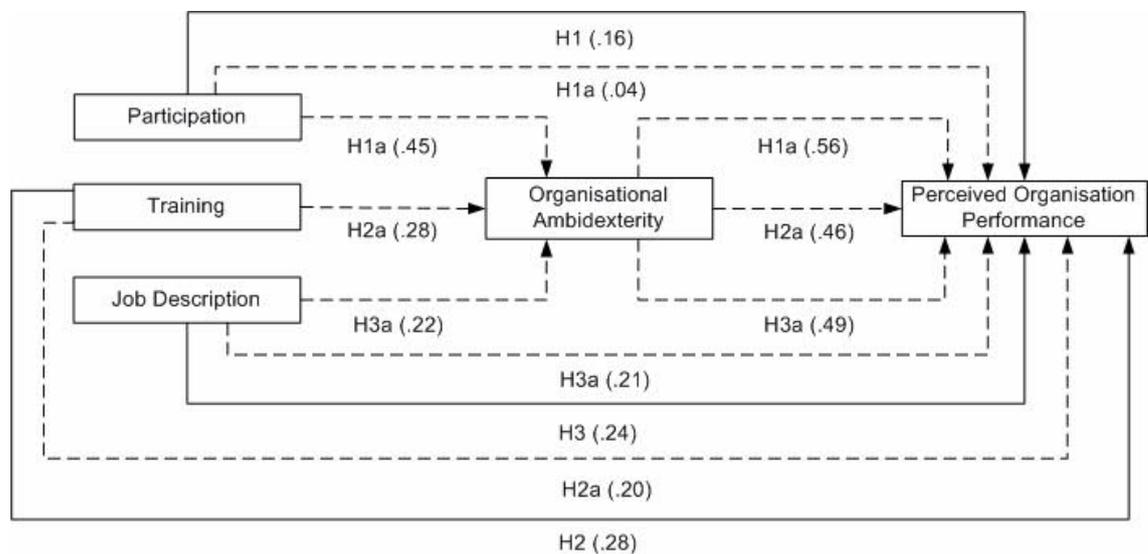


Figure 2.1. *Regression and Mediation Results*

One of the research objectives was to evaluate the degree to which POP is connected to HR practices. So this objective is duly met by enlightening the extent to which POP is related to HR practices. JD and TRN were studied by researchers who evaluated connection between organizational performance and HR practices (Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995).

Second objective of study was to measure degree of mediation instigated by OA in relationship between HR practices and POP. Process given by Andrew Hayes was used for evaluation of mediating effect of employees’ ability to manage both exploration and exploitation concurrently. Aim of study was to measure whether the impact of HR practices on POP is supported or elucidated or more properly mediated by OA.

Results displayed partial mediation instigated by ability of employees to manage exploration and exploitation. OA completely mediated relationship of participation (PAR) with POP. Presence of mediator happened to make impact of PAR on POP insignificant.

This research has happened to meet its objective by measuring mediation because of OA in relationship between HR practices and (POP) in two main industries of Pakistan. This mediation effect may be enhanced if this model is conducted in other industry or by altering HR practices.

Conclusion

This study has duly met its objectives. Research aimed to find connection between HR practices and organizational performance perception and additionally to evaluate mediation caused by OA in relationship between HR practices and POP. The organizations/corporations which aim to achieve competitive edge through positive insight of their performance must ponder on researched HR practices. Discovering new markets and taking advantage of the current opportunities could improve the influence of practices of HR on perception of employees. Approaching resources and right to use the resources become qualifications for creating context of organizational ambidexterity (OA).

Chemical and textile are the major industries of Pakistan and contribute towards gathering of GNP and GDP, serve consumers in bulk, provide skilled labor, deal in B2C and B2B, capture main market share. These industries could get benefits by proper implementation of model of present study. These industries can improve productivity of their employees by structuring better image of performance of their organizations in eyes of their first as well as middle level managers. It could be done through operative application of suggested practices of HR and crafting context of organizational innovativeness that alternatively touches employees' perception regarding their organizational performance.

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