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## **STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SELECTED INDIAN POWER SECTOR PSUS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The employee is the most valuable asset which constitutes the valuable Human Resource for an organization. This is an un-debatable and mostly accepted fact across the globe that performing employees means performing organization. Recognition given to the importance of Human Resource and managing it as a capital is the key factor that gives the competitive advantage to any organization. It also provides the professionals working environment to the HR functions with improved employee performance. Employee performance is also an outcome of various HR practices adopted by the firm which means identifying the right person and putting him at the right job and that too at the right time. Recently the HR policies and practices, in the organizations, are being designed and implemented in such a way that they are made by contemplating on various important issues which improve the employee performance in long term. Keeping in view the long term effect of such policy making may be called Strategy and effective implementation of these policies is called Strategic Human Resource Management. The present paper makes an effort to measure the effect of SHRM practices on employee performance in power sector PSUs. The data collected from four Power Sector PSUs of northern India has been used and analysed for drawing the conclusion.*

**Keywords:** *Strategic Human Resource Management, SHRM Practices, PSUs, Employee Performance*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The most valuable resource for an organization is its PEOPLE or Human Resource this is an un-debatable and mostly accepted fact across the globe. At the same time most corporate mission statements and annual reports of the companies reflect the same message frequently. People are the most valuable resource for a firm's business. Recognising the importance of and managing its Human Resource is a key factor that gives the competitive advantage to any organization. It also provides the professionals working to the HR functional areas with elevated status of organization and improved employee performance. Putting the right person at the right job and that too at the right time is of utmost importance for the survival and success of an organization. The acknowledgement of human resource management, however, presents professionals working in the area with a number of role changings and new challenges. For example, the creation of more central strategic roles for the HR function brings with it the expectation that it is not enough for HR to simply partner top management; it has to drive business success with enhanced employee performance.

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It has become a proven and accepted fact by the both corporates and academics that the human capital in an organization is the real source of competitive advantage, if the policies and practices of managing people are made and implemented strategically. As has been suggested by Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Quinn, Mills, & Walton, (1985) "Nowadays, it is a common belief in both the business and the academic world that the human resources of an organization can be a source of competitive advantage, provided that the policies for managing people are integrated with strategic business planning and organizational culture." This approach puts an emphasis on the importance of analogy between human resource policies and organizational objectives. Recent researches have focused on the links between human resource management and employees performance by Guest (2003, 2004); Purcell (2002, 2004), and much of the available and growing international literature in this field denotes that human resource management is directly and closely linked to the evolving strategies, especially in the large organisations whether public or private. Number of studies has produced evidences and findings to find out the facts in public sector organisations during a period when that sector has seen the implementation of private sector managerial principles and practices.

There is always a need to doubt the genuineness of the relationship of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices and Employee's Performance and whether a statistical analysis of data relating to the link between Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Employees Performance may prove the direction of the link. Can a performing organisation attribute its good performance to the quality of its HRM practices or its performance is due to some other unidentified factors? The present study was especially carried out to know the fact if there is an effect of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices and the Employee Performance in an organisation through testing hypotheses, taking employee performance as dependent and SHRM practices as independent factors.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The ultimate goal of a business organization is higher financial performance or maximisation of wealth for stake holders Becker and Huselid (1998); Horngren, Foster and Datar (2000). Nonetheless, attaining the organization's goals depends upon the extent to which its organizational performance is reached Katou and Budhwar(2007). Organizational performance is generally indicated by effectiveness (whether an organization can achieve its objectives), efficiency (whether an organization uses resources properly), satisfaction of employees and customers, innovation, quality of products or services, and ability to maintain a unique human pool Delaney and Huselid (1996); Dyer & Reeves (1995); Guest (2001); Katou and Budhwar (2007). There is broad agreement that strategic human resource management (SHRM) has made great strides for a few years. Several factors as economic, technological and demographic changes contributed to it while pushing companies to reconsider the place of HR, as well as to carry out a change of their mode of management and especially of their HRM practices. Weakening institutional constraints also contributed to the development of HR flexible practices.

Historically, the field of human resource management has been concerned with the study of specific HR functional areas often categorized as selection, training, appraisal and compensation by the field of industrial and organizational psychology Boxall and Purcell (2001). Past research involved the study of these specific HR functional areas as means and ends within themselves. Initial studies addressing HRM and its relationship to business strategies continued to focus on specific HRM functional areas such as compensation and its individual impact on the accomplishment of business strategy. The findings from these initial studies suggested that HRM functions such as training or compensation could be aligned with firm strategy and proper alignment between these individual HRM functional areas and strategy contributed to sustainable competitive advantage Schuler and Jackson (1987); Miles & Snow (1984). Russel, Terborg and Powers (1985), for example, examined human resource training at an organizational level and linked training to organizational performance. While this research addressed the issue of individual HR practices and performance as well as aligning specific HR practices with strategy, it did not address the alignment of individual HR practices with each other or the impact of the entire HRM system on firm performance.

Traditionally, HRM function was in charge of primarily administrative management of human resources, controlling them to minimize their costs. Partisans of SHRM disagree with this vision.

They consider that human capital is a resource in which it is necessary to invest by mobilizing a set of strategic practices. These practices contribute to attract, to develop and to retain the competences that improve firm performance. Researchers in the field of strategic human resource management (SHRM) have increasingly relied on the resource-based view of the firm to explain the role of human resource practices in firm performance. Indeed, theoretical research on SHRM has suggested that systems of HR practices may lead to higher firm performance and be sources of sustained competitive advantage because these systems of practices are often unique, causally ambiguous, and difficult to imitate. However, HR practices can only be a source of sustained competitive advantage when they support resources or competencies that provide value to a firm. Thus, Wright, Snell, and their colleagues, e.g., Snell, Youndt, and Wright (1996); Wright et al. (2001) have argued that SHRM research should identify resources that are critical for advantage in a given competitive context and the HR practices to build and support these resources.

Research on SHRM suggests that HR practices can enhance firm performance when they are internally aligned with one another to manage employees in a manner that leads to competitive advantage Delery and Doty (1996). Further, the appropriateness of a set of HR practices may depend on the competency that a firm is trying to develop. Huselid found that strategic HRM has positive correlation with firm performance, while technical HRM effectiveness was found not to have any correlation. SHRM helps attain competitive advantage, Chew and Sharma (2005). Researchers mostly agree that HRM systems, rather than single HRM practices have an impact on organizational outcomes. Researchers in this stream posit that firms should create a high degree of internal consistency among their HR activities for better results. Wright and McMahan (1992) defined strategic human resource management as “the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable the firm to achieve its goals” (1992). There are two assumptions implied in this definition. First, organizations are able to impact firm level outcomes through their human resource management and second, it is the combination or system of HRM activities working in concert rather than single practices that defines the ability of HRM to impact the firm at a strategic level.

The systematic studies that linked HRM practices and performance were published by number of authors some of them are Gerhart and Milkovich (1992); Arthur (1994); Huselid (1995); MacDuffie (1995) and Guest (1997). Thereafter a large number of researches were conducted on different sectors of different countries. Most of the researches showed significant impact of HRM practices on employee’s performance. Employee performance is directly linked with performance of the organization. The successful organizations consider the HRM practices as a crucial factor that directly affects the employee’s performance. Boseliet al. (2005) stated that in 104 research studies, HRM was taken as a set of employee management practices. Delery and Doty (1996) described seven HRM practices that are relevant to overall organizational performance. Pfeffer (1994) argues that organizations must hire skilled and capable employees in order to be successful in today’s global environment. Actual HR practices are applied by line managers on a daily basis that positively impact employee’s perception about HRM practices applied to them Purcell and Kinnie (2007). The successful implementation or failure of HRM practices depends on the skills of the managers Guest (2011).

Guest (2002) has demonstrated that the Impact of HRM on performance depends upon response of worker towards HRM practices, so the impact will move in direction of the perception of employees by practicing HRM. Qureshi et al. (2007) concluded that HR practices are positively correlated with employee’s performance. Huselid (1995) have argued that the impact of HRM on behavior of the employees results in the effectiveness of the employees. Patterson et al. (1997) has explained that HR practices in selection and training effects the performance of the employee provided appropriate skills. Verbeeten (2008) suggested that quality and quantity performance is positively associated with clear and measurable goals; incentives are also positively related with the performance. Medlin & Green (2009) has stated that goal setting, employee engagement and high level of workplace optimism collectively improves the performance of an individual of an organization. Lyons (2006) explained that involvement of team member in designing of training for team leader improves leader knowledge, skills learning and performance.

HRM practices as a concept have been defined by different scholars in many ways. Schuler and Jackson (1987) defined HRM practices as the organizational activities directed at managing the

employees and ensuring that these resources (employees) are utilized towards the attaining organizational goals. Similarly, Delery and Doty (1996) conceptualized HRM practices as set of policies and practices specifically designed and executed to ensure that organizations' employees (human capital) contribute toward the attainment of organizational objectives. Simply put, building on the above definitions, HRM practices comprises set of specific practices, philosophies and formal policies, designed by organizations to attract, motivate, develop, and retain human resource (employees) for effective functioning of the organization. HRM practices are a process of attracting, motivating, and retaining employees to ensure the survival of the organization Schuler and Jackson (1987). HRM practices are designed and implemented in such a way that human capital plays a significant role in achieving the goals of the organization, Delery and Doty (1996). The appropriate use of HRM practices positively influence the level of employer and employee commitment Purcell (2003). HRM practices such as, training and development, performance appraisal encourage the employees to work better in order to increase the organizational performance Snell and Dean (1992); Pfeffer(1998).

Human resource management (HRM) as a discipline has developed through various stages over the last 20 years or so. HRM has shifted from being viewed as a cost centre responsible for plugging parts into positions, to the viewing of human resources as being individually important assets and vital sources of revenue and profit. Recently, the dominant focus on HRM literature has been to demonstrate the importance of effectively managing the human resources within organizations, Ahmad & Schroeder(2003); Ichniowski et al. (1997). Storey (1995) defines HRM as a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to obtain competitive advantage through the deployment of a highly committed and skilled workforce, using an array of techniques. Several scholars have noted that managing people is more difficult than managing technology or capital Barney (1991); Lado and Wilson(1994). Furthermore, Pfeffer (1998) reported that approximately half of all executives, at that time, believed that human resources really mattered and, of this group, only half of these executives actually acted upon their beliefs. At least part of these beliefs can be attributed to the fact that investments in human resources (such as training sessions and incentive programmes) can be highly visible, while the return on these investments is much more difficult to measure. Researchers interested in HRM have spent considerable amounts of time and energy attempting to understand exactly how much, and under what conditions, different investments in HRM enhance employee performance. HRM can help organizations improve their organizational behavior in such areas as staff commitment, competency and flexibility, which in turn leads to improved employee performance, Koch and McGrath (1996).

A number of researchers have reported that HR practices are positively linked with organizational and employee performance Wright et al. (2003); Tessema and Soeters(2006); Park, et al.(2003). Most of these studies were conducted in the private sector, but research on the contribution of HRM to support these developments in the public sector has been scarce Gould Williams (2003). The lack of research conducted in public sector organizations seems to suggest that improving organizational performance is not seen as being of strategic importance to public organizations. The question still left unanswered is the extent to which HRM practices influence human capital or specifically, employees' performance in other contexts, Katou and Budhwar (2006). Huselid (1995) argues that the effectiveness of transfer on the behavior of employees is as a result of human resource management, which also proves to have a positive association. Furthermore, Tessema and Soeters (2006) carried out a study on eight HR practices and concluded that these HR practices had positive and significant associations with the performance of employees.

In order to develop a sound HRM system, the organization should have effective HRM practices. HRM practices refer to organizational activities that are directed at managing the pool of human resources while also ensuring that the resources are employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals Schueler& Jackson (1987); Wright& Snell (1991). HRM practices may differ from one organization to another and from one country to another. Several attempts have been made, from time to time, by different researchers to identify the different types of HRM practices in the different sectors. Many researchers have identified significant relationships between HRM practices and employee performance. Tessema and Soeters (2006) studied eight HR practices and their relationship with perceived employee performance. These eight practices include: recruitment and selection practices, placement practices, training practices, compensation practices, employee

performance evaluation practices, promotion practices, grievance procedures, and pension or social security practices.

Moreover, Huselid (1995) used eleven HRM practices in his study, specifically: personnel selection, performance appraisal, incentive compensation, job design, grievance procedures, information sharing, attitude assessment, labor management participation, recruitment efforts, employee training, and promotion criteria. He found a significant relationship between high work practices such as compensation and employee outcomes. In a different study, Wright, Garden & Moynihan (2003) used survey questions and identified four domains of HR practices: selection and staffing, training, pay for performance, and participation. Furthermore, Baloch et al. (2010) found the following three HRM practices: promotion, performance evaluation and compensation practices, to have a significant impact on perceived employee performance in the banking industry in NWFP Pakistan. Recently in the study conducted by Soomro, Gilal&Jatoi (2011), it was found that some HRM practices (including: training, selection, career planning, employee participation, job definition, compensation, and performance appraisal) were positively correlated with employee performance.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of the study is given as:

To measure the effect of various Strategic Human Resource Management practices, i.e., Selection policies, Performance Appraisal, Training, Compensation practices, Career Development and Promotion, Work Climate, Organizational and Job Engagement and Employee Relations on employee performance in the Indian Power Sector PSUs.

### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR VARIOUS HYPOTHESES**

In the present study while Employee Performance is the dependent variable, various SHRM practices, which are taken for the study namely Selection policies, Performance Appraisal, Training, Compensation practices, Career Development and Promotion, Work Climate, Organizational and Job Engagement and Employee Relations have been identified as independent variables.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

For conducting the present research study a method of descriptive research design was adopted because for this type of study descriptive research design is suitable the best as it involves assessment of various factors related to the employee's performance in an organisation.

#### **4.3 SAMPLE POPULATION**

Convenient sampling procedure was adopted for the present study and four power sector PSUs viz. Tehri Hydro Development Corporation, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam, National Hydro Power Corporation, and Power Grid Corporation Limited were identified for carrying out survey.

#### **4.5 SAMPLE SIZE**

The present study has been conducted in the selected Power Sector working in the public sector units (PSUs). Four power sector PSUs had been identified and a total of about six hundred questionnaires were distributed among the respondents from all the four PSUs. Out of which 445 Questionnaires were returned out of which few were incomplete, total of 408 responses were found complete in all senses and suitable to be analyzed. The present study is based on a sample size of 408 respondents working at different levels in the selected power sector PSUs. The collection of data has been done using field surveys which include development of questionnaire and administering the questionnaire on the sample identified.

#### **4.6 DATA COLLECTION**

The problem was studied by way of a survey which was deemed appropriate for this study as it explored the opinion of the respondents about HRM practices adopted in the organization and their impact on attrition. The methodology applied for data collection in this research study constituted mainly of survey technique (structured survey) *i.e.* surveys using a structured questionnaire. This was done to obtain responses from respondents on various factors identified in the literature review.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A regression analysis of the factors that influence Employee performance was done. For this purpose, it was assumed that there is a linear relationship between the factors extracted and their bearing on the performance of employees. The analysis was done wherein the dependent variable is taken to be employee performance and the independent variables being the factors that were extracted from the factor analysis. In order to examine the combined effect of all the predictors on Employee Performance, multiple regression analysis was conducted, with the dependent variable as Employee Performance and the independent variables as the factors that were extracted from the factor analysis.

**Table-1 Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.745	0.555	0.549	0.62501

As per Table-1 the value of multiple R is 0.745 and the value of  $R^2$  is 0.555 in the equation. It implies that these factors have a bearing to the extent of 55.5% on the employee performance. By any reckoning, 55.5% is a significant value that influences employee performance. Whereas, the remaining 44.5% can be attributed to so many other factors which are varied and contribute jointly towards employee's performance.

**Table-2 Overall Model Fit**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	652.999	8	81.625	19.07	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1 Residual	1707.794	399	4.28		
Total	2360.792	407			

The overall regression model obtained from the analysis is a highly significant as shown in Table-2 where  $F=19.07$  ( $P<.05$ ). The overall  $R^2$  of the model is 0.277.

**Table-3 Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	-1.880	.269		-6.996	0
Selection	-0.009	0.058	-0.007	-0.154	0.877
Performance Appraisal	0.335	0.064	0.217	5.241	0
Training Programmes	0.163	0.048	0.128	3.366	0.001
Compensation	0.379	0.056	0.274	6.775	0
Career Development & Promotion	0.512	0.062	0.350	8.241	0
Working Climate	0.323	0.062	0.282	5.248	0
Organizational and Job Engagement	0.107	0.045	0.115	2.389	0.017
Employee Relations	0.398	0.084	0.245	4.741	0

Table-3 shows that Career Development & Promotion is the most important factor that influences employee performance, having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.512 ( $t=8.241$ ,  $p=.000$ ) ( $P<.05$ ). Employee Relations has emerged as the second important factor having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.398 ( $t=4.741$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Thirdly, Compensation figures as a significant factor having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.379 ( $t=6.775$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). Performance Appraisal having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.335 ( $t=5.241$ ,  $p=0$ ) Working climate having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.323 ( $t=5.248$ ,  $p=0$ ) Training Programmes having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.163 ( $t=3.366$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) Organizational and Job Engagement having a standardized beta coefficient of 0.107 ( $t=2.389$ ,  $p=0.017$ ) have also emerged as significant factors Whereas, Selection having a standardized beta coefficient of -0.009 ( $t=-0.154$ ,  $p=0.877$ ), Performance Appraisal having a

standardized beta coefficient of .042 ( $t = 0.847$ ,  $p = 0.397$ ), Career Development & Promotion having a standardized beta coefficient of .029 ( $t = 0.492$ ,  $p = 0.623$ ), Selection having a standardized beta coefficient of  $-0.007$  ( $t = -0.154$ ,  $p = 0.877$ ) was not found to be a significant predictor since it is having P value is greater than .05 for 5 % significance level. It implies that employee performance is significantly influenced by factors related to Career Development, Employee Relation, Compensation, Performance Appraisal, Training Programmes, Working Climate, and Organizational & Job Engagement.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This research offers some important insights into importance and implication of Strategic Human Resource activities/initiatives and its effect on Employee performance. The research tries to explore the relationship between employee performance and impact of SHRM activities. The results of the research show evidence to support the hypotheses. The findings from the research clearly establish that SHRM affects organizational effectiveness and in turn affects Employee performance. Strategic HRM practices like HR Planning, Recruitment, Salary & Monetary incentives, Promotion, Reward system, Training all such factors mentioned in the questionnaire showed that there is a healthy relationship between implementation of the SHRM strategies and overall employee performance. Organizations are increasingly looking at human Resources as a unique asset that can provide sustained competitive advantage.

SHRM practices are considered to be a source of sustained competitive advantage, since it contributes to acquire, and motivate employees. This study focused on SHRM practices and its impact on employees' performance. It has been found that there is a significant relationship of SHRM practices and employees' performance. From the present study after detailed review of literature and analysis of primary data through well designed questionnaire, it is evident that SHRM practices have a significant impact on employees' performance which ultimately affects the organizational performance. If the organizations want to grow, these Strategic HRM practices should be formulated properly and implemented effectively. It is universally assumed that there are always HR activities that are better than others and therefore organizations should adopt these practices. If HR practices can impact business success through building up organizational capabilities, improving employee satisfaction and commitment, New HR measures should be developed to drive business performance.

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