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CONTENTS

Ecological Changes in Responsible Tourism Destinations of Kerala: An Evaluation Dr. Stanley George & Dr. Mahesh S.	5
Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Engagement in Academics Ms. Dhanya Raveendran & Dr. M. Radha	11
A Study on Work and Life of Women Media Professionals in Kerala Dr. Vivek S.A.	24
Role of Print Media on CSR and its Impact Dr. Rakesh Kumar S. & Dr. S. Jayadev	33
Women Empowerment at the Workplace by Eradicating Sexual Harassment- A Syndrome of Discrimination Pro. (Dr). Jubi R.	40
Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Gokul Nath G.	47
Perception of Entrepreneurs towards Green Business with Reference to Thiruvananthapuram Adarsh K.B. & Dr Pradeep Kumar N.	58
Revised CSR provisions a roadmap to deal Covid-19 crises Dr. S. Rakesh Kumar & Dr. Stanley George	62
Role of Business Incubators in Empowerment of Entrepreneurship Gouri R.V.	65
A Study on Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship , with Special Reference on Kerala Krishna Priya K.S.	70
Entrepreneurship through Cooperatives: A Study on the Knowledge of Cooperatives as a Means of Business among Youth Abhishek Ajayakumar	75
The Impact of Micro Finance on Entrepreneurship Growth and Development of Malappuram Jasmin K. & Prajitha M.	79

Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Engagement in Academics

Ms. Dhanya Raveendran¹ & Dr. M.Radha²

Abstract

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and their impact on employee engagement have not received massive cover in literature. This work took a gaze at HRM practices and assessed their impact on employee engagement in academics. The sample for the study was 120 teaching staffs from the self-financing higher educational institutions under Cooperative Academy of Professional Education (CAPE), Kerala. Data for the study was collected through the structured questionnaire. Karl Pearson correlation coefficient (r-value) and regression analysis were used to analyze the data collected. The HRM practices which formed the independent variable while employee engagement stood as the dependent variable. The study established a significant relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. It was found that 27 per cent of variance in employee engagement is explained by HRM practices (performance appraisal, workforce diversity and contemporary HR practices, training and benefits, HR planning and recruitment, selection and socialization of employees, and competitive compensation).

Keywords: HRM, HRM practices, Employee Engagement, Compensation, Academics.

JEL Classification: M12, M54, O15

Introduction

In today's modern competitive business environment, organizations are facing emerging challenges in the form of acquisition and optimization of human resources (HR). In the bid to conquer these challenges, there has generally been the call for a comprehensive Human Resource Management (HRM) practices to translate organization's human resources into a sustainable competitive advantage. The triumph of most, if not all, organizations depend largely on its human resource. According to Khan (2010), in a vigorous business atmosphere, there is the need for an approach to achieve better performance, to originate and implement HRM practices. This realization reinforces the grave role HRM practices play in this globally modern and increasingly competitive business landscape.

Scholastically, HRM practices is a form of system in which a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions and processes are directed at attracting, developing and maintaining or disposing firms' human resources (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Additionally, HRM practices refer to organizational activities directed at managing the pool of human resources and ensuring that the resources are employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Appelbaum (2001) captures HRM practices as

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being basically concerned with the management of people within the internal environment of organizations, comprising the activities, policies, and practices involved in planning, obtaining, developing, utilizing, evaluating, maintaining, and retaining the appropriate numbers and skill mix of employees to achieve the organization's objectives. According to Ahmed & Schroeder (2003), human resources are considered the most important assets of an organization, but very few organizations are able to fully harness its potential.

Employee engagement in an organizational context is usually defined as the extent to which an organization's member contributes to achieving the goal of the organization. Employees are primary source of competitive advantage in service oriented organization (Pfeffer, 1994). Employee engagement is originally what employee does or does not do. Currently, organizations are competing through implementation of unique, up-to-date, and exceptional HRM practices in order to achieve their organizational goals. Excellent HRM practices are advantageous for both employees and employers. These practices according to Guest (1997) consist of selection, training, appraisal, rewards, motivation, job design, involvement and status, and security.

According to Sari (2009), training and development is seen as one of the key practices of HRM and it refers to the programs designed to teach the employees about the company specifics, educate them on the general rules of an organization, to provide them technical knowledge which is considered important to complete the job tasks effectively and to eradicate the probable imperfections at work. Rajput (2011) considers motivation as another component of HRM practice and defines it as individual desire to demonstrate the behavior and reflect willingness to expand efforts. Performance appraisal as HRM practice in the words of Shahzad, Bashir, and Ramay (2008), represents as a formalized process for monitoring workers and is intended to be a management tool to improve the performance as well as productivity of employees. Similarly, it is an accepted fact that compensation has been found to play motivational role and include but not limited to pay strategies such as performance related pay, production based pay, skill based pay, knowledge based pay, and base pay. Wright (2003) opined that an effective HRM strategy is to integrate performance and compensation system that enhance employee's will to work effectively and efficiently.

According Wright and Gardner (2003), sustainable competitive advantage can be created through a careful and thorough attention and energy being channeled to these practices in the bid to optimize human resources. Wright and Gardner (2003) even goes further to contend that, it is purely a conventional wisdom that has been upheld by numerous literature that complementarities among HRM practices greatly contribute to or create sustainable competitive advantage. Becker and Gerhart (1998) added empirically that, HRM practices significantly influence the skills and motivation of employees as well as job design and work structure which ultimately make up an organizational outcome; success or otherwise. Works on HRM practices in terms of their effect on customer retention and employee performance abounds (Mensah & Alemna, 1997; Mensah, 2010; Nartey, 2012).

Economic theory proposes that good working conditions for workers lead to good productivity. The capability of management to motivate and equip their employees with the necessary skills is vital, effective and efficient for enhanced engagement. Employees are generally inspired by the activities of HRM practices in an organization and thus it is important for HRM units in organizations to be aware of the kind of practices that highly motivates employees (Agyapomaa, 2011). Available literature shows that HRM practices create competitive advantage particularly when they are in line with a firm's competitive strategy (Schuler & Jackson, 2007). This can also affect a company's discretionary efforts as well as organizational structures that grant employees the opportunity to control tasks they perform (Birdi, Patterson, Robinson, Stride, Wall, & Wood, 2008). Khoreva and Wechtler, (2018) illustrated that HRM practices enhances employee well-being, which, in turn, increases employee performance. Aladwan, Bhanugopan and D'Netto (2015) offered new perspectives on how HRM practices have direct and indirect effects on employees' organizational commitment and would assist in reshaping the HRM policies in organizations located in the Middle Eastern regions.

Nonetheless, in the quest to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in this turbulent environment organizations need to develop their human resources. Such development requires a judgment on the impact of HRM practices on employee engagement. This study focuses on the examination of the HRM

practices and its impact on employee engagement in self-financing higher educational institutions under Cooperative Academy of Professional Education (CAPE), Kerala.

Literature Review

HRM Practices

According to Boxall (2007) there is no agreement on what constitute HRM practices let alone a prescribed set of them. Researchers over the years have however come up with countless varied lists of practices. Yet, the argument still exists that there is no definition on what or which practice qualifies as an aspect of HRM practices (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Quinn Mills, Walton 1984; Bosellie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005; Guest, 1997; Storey, 1995). It is interesting to note that there are still some practices that form the heart of the various practices proposed. These include recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and compensation. Others such as job design and employee involvement are more intermittent and are yet to gain grounds in the HRM literature (Bosellie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005). The detailed explanation of core HRM practices is presented below.

Job analysis is the process of obtaining information about jobs i. e. information about the tasks to be done on the job, as well as personal characteristics (education, experience, specialized training) necessary to do the tasks (Cascio, 1998). Job analysis is the first human resource activity that affects commitment and performance (Dessler, 2003).

Human resource (HR) planning analyzes and identifies the need for and availability of human resources for an organization to meet its objectives (Mathis & Jackson, 2004). Recruitment is a process of attracting a pool of high quality applicants so as to select the best among them (Kulik, 2004). Performing organizations devote considerable resources and energy to creating high quality selection systems (Pfeffer 1995). Placement involves assigning a specific rank and responsibility to an employee (Jyothi & Venkatesh, 2006). Socialization, the process of orienting new employees to the organization, can make the difference between a new employee's feeling like an outsider and feeling like the member of the team (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy, 2003).

The current challenges caused by the globalization pressures in the realm of economics behave work communities to review their training and development practices (Pitkanen, 2007). Organizations must develop a workforce to deliver service quality, which is met through training (Kundu, 2000). Training must be viewed as an important investment for future success (Zeithmal & Bitner, 2004). Long-term basis training has a systematic influence on the improvement of management techniques (Zadel, 2006).

Performance is defined as the record of outcomes produced on a specified job function or activity during a specified time period (Bernardin & Russell, 1993). Organizations need to incorporate performance review and feedback as part of their day to day communications with employees (Webb, 2004). Appraisals are used widely for tying pay to performance (Schellhardt, 1996; Cleveland, Murphy, & Williams, 1989). Present day firms are facing increased pressure to create HRM policies and programs that avert discrimination against individuals on non-work related aspects with respect to the various functions within human resource management, particularly selection and performance appraisal (Lillevik, 2007).

Compensation is all forms of financial returns and tangible services and benefits employees receive as part of an employment relationship (Milkovich & Newman, 1999). An effective set of choices about compensation systems plays a major role in determining firm performance (Dreher & Dougherty, 2005). A fringe benefit is an indirect reward given to an employee or group of employees as a part of organizational membership (Mathis & Jackson, 2004), which affects performance and retention of employees. Benefits planning are a critical component of human resource planning (HRP) processes on account of enormous costs and the financial commitment made for the future (Bernardin & Russell, 1993). A pay for competence program enhances productivity and product quality, and reduces absenteeism, turnover, and accident rates (Jyothi & Venkatesh, 2006).

Human resource information systems (HRIS) is basically a data base system that offers important information about employees in a central and accessible location that, when needed, could be retrieved

and used to facilitate human resources planning decisions (Wolfe, 1998). Kovach and Cathcart (1999) noted that HRIS information could be used, first, for administrative purposes which reduce costs and time and, second, for the more analytical decision support.

A career comprises of series of work related activities that provide continuity, order, and meaning to a person's life (Schein, 1996). Career management includes both organizational actions and individual efforts aimed at setting career goals, formulating and implementing strategies and monitoring the results (Greenhaus, 1987). Intensified global competition, dynamic change, and increasing uncertainty have led organizations to become more innovative in order to survive and grow (Lassen, 2007). Innovation is critical to sustaining and enhancing shares of mainstream markets and obtaining a desirable balance between entrepreneurial and strategic forces (Lassen, 2007). So, organizations have to adopt new/innovative HRM practices like workforce diversity, work-life balance, attitude surveys, and leading with proactive HRM practices to remain competitive in the changing environment.

Workforce diversity refers to the co-existence of people from various socio-cultural backgrounds within the organization (Kundu, 2004). A growing diverse workforce (Kundu, 2003), increased competition for businesses (Jain & Verma, 1996), growing number of mergers and acquisitions, and increased emphasis on globalization (Terrisse, 2001) require an understanding and appreciation of a diverse set of cultures for having the 'best' people for an organization (Lillevik 2007). Dynamic organizations look for people who are different from us because the diverse workforce may bring different talents, interests, and viewpoints (Simmons, 1996). Organizations can succeed at diversity with full support from the top management (Hayes, 1999). The work communities as a whole should be helped to deal with increasing cultural diversity (Pitkanen, 2007).

Work-life balance is a state where an individual manages real or potential conflict between different demands on his/her time and energy in a way that satisfies his/her needs for well-being and self-fulfillment (Clutterbuck, 2004). Today's married employee is typically part of a dual career couple finding less time to fulfill commitments to home, spouse, children, parents, and friends (Robbins, 2004). Recent studies suggest that employees want jobs that give them flexibility in their work schedules, so that they can better manage work-life conflicts (Conlin, 1999).

Attitude surveys can provide information on the preferences of employees, give warning on potential problem areas, diagnose the cause of particular problems, and compare levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and morale in different parts of the organization (Armstrong, 2005).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a fairly new-fangled conception in the academic community but has been profoundly promoted by consulting companies (Wefald & Downey, 2009b). Scholars and practitioners in the HRM field tend to agree that the fundamental concept of engagement may help explain behavior at work, but they present different definitions of it. Thus, while the concept of employee engagement seems on the surface to be compelling, the concept lacks clarity in its definition. The purpose of this section is to converse the conceptual disparities among different schools of thought on the definition of employee engagement in order to develop a conceptual foundation for this study.

Using Kahn's (1990) seminal work as the point of departure, the concept of engagement was first introduced by him to explain how people are personally engaged and disengaged at work. He defined 'job engagement' as 'the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles where people express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances' (Kahn, 1990). This definition clarified the concept of engagement as the manifestation of being 'present at work'. Being 'present at work' requires a particular mental state. In order to be engaged, an individual has to think, feel and act on their job. In other words, this mental state constitutes a driving force which requires physical, cognitive and emotional resources. These resources can be enhanced in certain psychological conditions like meaningfulness (feeling that one is receiving a return on the investment of the self in the work role performance), safety (a sense of being able to show and employ oneself without fear of negative consequences to one's self-image or status at work), and availability (a sense of possessing the physical, emotional and psychological resources

needed for investing oneself in the work role). These psychological conditions serve as the mechanism by which individuals connect to their role performance. In contrast, disengagement refers to withdrawal from the work role. The dominant contribution by Kahn (1990) is the identification of the conditions in which engagement would be likely to exist.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) reintroduced the concept of engagement as an energetic state of involvement that is posited to be the opposite of burnout. Engaged employees who are seen as energetic and take their work as a challenge appear as the opposite to burnt out employees who are stressed and see their work as demanding (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Maslach and Leiter (1997) added to their argument by asserting that, if an employee is not engaged, he or she will be more likely to move to the other end of the continuum and experience burnout. The state of engagement is characterized as having high energy (as opposed to exhaustion), high involvement (as opposed to cynicism) and efficacy (as opposed to lack of efficacy). Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker and Lloret (2006) supported this view and further characterized it by activation, identification and absorption. Activation refers to having a sense of energy, identification is a positive relationship towards work, and absorption is being fully immersed in one's job. This school of thought improved on Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement as being 'present at work' by adding these three dimensions.

Although a study by Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker and Lloret (2006) yielded empirical evidence supporting the conceptualization that the core burnout and engagement dimensions are conceptual opposites, the theory only supports two dimensions (i.e., vigour is the conceptual opposite of emotional exhaustion, and dedication is the conceptual opposite of cynicism). First, it must be emphasized that although burnout and engagement are conceptual opposites, they are still distinct concepts that do not lie on a continuum, and so different measures are required for assessing the construct. Secondly, by excluding 'absorption', these two dimensions do not provide a comprehensive meaning for 'job engagement'. Thus this approach is not the best approach for explaining employee engagement.

Britt (1999) have used the concept of 'self-engagement', which involves feeling a sense of responsibility for and commitment to a performance domain so that performance 'matters' to the individual. Britt's approach is practical in defining engagement at work by using the Triangle Model of Responsibility (i.e., engagement is feeling responsible at work), but the definition is not a sufficient one because of the overlapping issue with the commitment construct. Britt, Castro and Adler (2005) later argued that self-engagement involves a psychological state where individuals are committed to perform and put much effort into work. This school of thought emphasised the utility of the triangle model of responsibility developed by Schelenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy and Doherty (1994). Thus, an employee is engaged according to the responsibility they feel for work, which is dependent upon three elements like event, prescriptions and identity images.

Engagement has also been defined as an individual's involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). This definition was derived from items in the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) (Gallup, 2012), developed by the Gallup organization, which were based on employee perceptions of work characteristics. Perceptions of work characteristics resulted in this definition having conceptual overlaps with job involvement and job satisfaction. First, job involvement is a concept that focuses on how a job helps define a person's identity (Lawler & Hall, 1970). A person who is involved in their job: (a) finds their job motivating, (b) is committed to their work and organisation and (c) engages in professional relationships with co-workers (Brown 1996). Thus, as Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) argued, job involvement is a function of the individual and should be seen as an antecedent in a research model, whereas engagement, on the other hand, should be seen as a dependent variable in a research model. Furthermore, this definition overlaps with the term 'job satisfaction'. Job satisfaction explains how content an individual is with his or her job; it is a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job (Locke, 1976). Twelve of the thirteen items used in the GWA explain the variance in job satisfaction. Concepts derived from the literature on satisfaction were used in explaining engagement. Clearly, there are conceptual overlaps with both of these constructs describing engagement.

This school of thought captures only one domain of employee engagement, i.e., being enthusiastic about work. Being strongly engaged in one's work does require a considerable sense of significance and enthusiasm

at work. However, due to the fact that the definition of engagement was not theoretically developed and relied too much on perceptions of work characteristics, the definition from this school of thought is inadequate in explaining what engagement is. Perceptions of work characteristics, job involvement and satisfaction could be factors that affect employee engagement and not the concept itself. Clearly, there are conceptual overlaps in the constructs used by Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) to describe engagement. Jena and Pradhan (2017) draw the attention of both academicians and practitioners by offering a conceptual model that will compel them to rethink the ways employee engagement is considered.

In recent times, employee engagement was re-categorized as vigour (Wefald & Downey 2009a). According to this school of thought, to realize that employee engagement is a different construct, the only non-confounding construct that should be measured is vigour. 'Vigour' as defined by Shirom (2003) refers to an individual's feeling that they possess physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness. This definition refers to an affective state that individuals attribute to their job and workplace. Vigour in this respect focuses on the notion of having 'energy' at work. It does not refer to behavioral responses to events at work such as dedication to work, which is a significant characteristic of employee engagement. Thus, adopting the concept of vigour (i.e., energy) does not capture a holistic concept of engagement. Clearly, this school of thought only covers one facet of engagement. For this reason, this school of thought's definition of engagement cannot be used to conceptualize employee engagement in this study.

Having presented all the arguments, this study contends that engagement does not lie along the same continuum tangentially opposite burnout but is, in fact, an independent concept. If an individual does not experience burnout (at one end of the continuum), it does not mean that he or she is experiencing engagement (at the other end of the continuum). Employee engagement is a state of mind which is a pervasive affective cognitive state requiring a person's attention and immersion in their job. In order to give full attention to one's job and to be fully immersed, one needs to be positive and enthusiastic about it.

As an independent concept, employee engagement can best be defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002b). These three dimensions seem to provide the most precise, valid and comprehensive conceptualization thus far (Kim, Shin, & Swanger, 2009; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002a; Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2009; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009). From the psychological perspective, engagement is a state-like phenomenon which is portrayed as an affective-cognitive state-like condition. It is not a temporary state such as mood nor as relatively non-malleable as fixed characteristics such as personality traits (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010). It is deemed quite stable.

The first element of employee engagement, vigour, is a positive affective response to an employee's interactions with the elements of the job as well as the environment. The concept of vigour is drawn from the view that individuals share a basic motivation to obtain, retain and protect the things that they value, such as resources (in this case, energetic resources) (Hobfoll, 1989). Energetic resources refer to physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness. According to Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002), vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in the work and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Vigour relates to psychological capacities for exercising will power and developing alternative ways to achievement, optimism in expecting future success, and resilience to persist in the pursuit of goals. A person who is vigorous at work distinctly represents an engaged employee.

The second element of employee engagement is dedication. This refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Being dedicated to one's job includes motivated acts such as working hard and giving the best that one can at work. Work not only seems to be important but also requires self-disciplined behavior, as demonstrated by following rules, taking the initiative to solve a problem at work and exceeding one's personal job requirements (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). A person who is dedicated to work is veritably engaged to his or her job.

The third element of employee engagement is absorption. This describes the feeling of contentment while performing work. Absorption represents a state of being fully concentrated on and happily engrossed

in work, a state in which time passes quickly and one has difficulty in detaching oneself from work. This domain of employee engagement concerns the hedonic aspect of work. For a person to be engaged, he or she should enjoy the work and find pleasure in performing it. Thus, a happy and focused employee embodies an engaged employee. A study using 30 in-depth interviews confirmed that absorption is a relevant aspect of engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001). The study argued that this facet of engagement relates to individual efficacy through having the confidence to be absorbed and the resilience to be persistently absorbed in a task.

To sum up, different school of thoughts have conceptualized employee engagement in various ways. The lack of agreement among scholars in establishing a solid foundation for the definition of employee engagement has caused many gaps in the research area. Some have defined engagement as being present at work, some as the opposite to burnout on a continuum, and some have overlapped it with other constructs such as job satisfaction and job involvement. The arguments presented in the above sections justify why Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) conceptualization of engagement is most thorough and precise. Employee engagement focuses upon the positive and fulfilling aspects of doing work. For a person to be engaged, he or she must be vigorous, dedicated and absorbed in their job. This positive reflection is in line with the movement of positive organizational behavior in seeking to understand how individuals thrive at work. For this reason, Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) view on engagement is seen as more dominant and comprehensive than others. Given these key attributes and following Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker, (2002a) conceptualization, this study defines employee engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption.

Research Methodology

The current study is descriptive in nature that examines the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. HRM practices are viewed in terms of performance appraisal, workforce diversity and contemporary human resource (HR) practices, training and benefits, HR planning and recruitment, selection and socialization of employees, and competitive compensation whereas employee engagement consists of three subscales like vigour, dedication, and absorption.

Objectives

1. To understand the concept of HRM practices and employee engagement.
2. To determine the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement in academics.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for the study is as follows:

H0: There exists no significant positive relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement.

H1: There exists significant positive relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement.

Sample

This study is based on a sample of regular full time permanent teaching staffs having minimum three years of work experience in CAPE institutions in Kerala. The data was collected personally by the researcher and also by mail using stratified random sampling from CAPE institutions from north, central, and south Kerala. The total sample size is 120 numbers, forty from each region.

Data Collection Tool

This study was based on primary data gathered with the help of a questionnaire comprising three sections. The first section contained six background questions, consisting of gender, marital status, age, highest level of educational qualification, experience in the present organization, and total work experience. The second section contained twenty statements about the HRM practices developed by Kundu and Malhan

(2009). The respondents were asked to rate statements on a five point rating scale where one indicated that respondents strongly disagree, two meant disagree, three indicated neutral, four indicated agreeing and five meant strongly agree with the statement. The third section contained 17 statements related to employee engagement. For this study, engagement was measured on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002). The items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (0) 'Never' to (7) 'Always'.

For HRM practices and employee engagement scales, reliability was examined to measure internal consistency within the test items utilizing the Cronbach's alpha. The values calculated are .79 and .86 respectively through a pilot study on a sample of 36 numbers of regular full time permanent teaching staffs having minimum three years of work experience from CAPE institutions in Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts in Kerala .

Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical tools were employed for data processing, analysis and presentation. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 and Microsoft Office Excel 2007 were used for the processing of the data. Simple descriptive statistics such as charts, tables, mean, and variance were used to analyze the data collected. These descriptive statistics were used due to their ability to convey information to a good number of people easily because they are relatively simple to understand and interpret than rigorous mathematics (Saunders Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Correlation analysis (Karl Pearson coefficient of correlation) was carried out to test the relationship between the study variables. Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of the predictor variables on the criterion variable.

Analysis and Discussion

As regard to the dissection of the gender of 120 respondents, 68 are male and 52 are female, in lieu of 56.7 and 43.3 per cent correspondingly. This designates that majority of the respondents in the sample were male employees during the study. Concerning to age distribution of the respondents, the analysis shows that, 39.2 per cent of the respondents were in the age category of 36-45., 32.5 per cent, and 28.3 per cent were also in the age category of 26-35, 45 and above correspondingly. On the education status, respondents were asked to specify their highest education level. Based on the responses, post-graduate recorded the highest education level which accounted for 65.8 per cent of the total respondents in the sample. Ph.D degree, with a frequency of 41 out of 120 recorded the second highest education level accounting for 34.2 per cent of the total respondents. Subsequently, respondents' length of service at academics was investigated. It was obvious that, 89 employees have worked in the present institute for 3 to 8 years which represents 74.2 per cent of the total respondents and 25.8 per cent of the respondents have worked in the present institute for more than 8 years. Concerning the total work experience, 85.0 per cent of the respondents have worked for more than 8 years and 15.0 per cent of the respondents have total work experience of 3 to 8 years.

Assessment of Research Hypothesis

To find out the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement, correlation analysis was conducted. Multiple regression analysis was also done to determine how each of the five components of HRM practices and employee engagement, as well as the various dimensions of employee engagement, are related.

Relationship between HRM Practices and Employee Engagement

Table 1 presents the results of correlations analysis regarding the intra and inter-relationship among HRM practices and employee engagement. The results indicate that, there exist significant positive relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement ($r = .601$).

It can also be observed that significant relationship between all variables of HRM practices and employee engagement. Based on the above results, hypothesis (H0) is rejected, i.e., The relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement is statistically significant.

Table 1
Correlations between HRM Practices and Employee Engagement

Variables	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption	Employee Engagement
Performance Appraisal	.317**	.326**	.364**	.400*
Workforce Diversity and Contemporary HR Practices	.252**	.196**	.337**	.268**
Training and Benefits	.261**	.263**	.209**	.316**
HR Planning and Recruitment	.252**	.196**	.337**	.268**
Selection and Socialization of Employees	.286**	.339**	.278**	.352**
Competitive Compensation	.357**	.321**	.366**	.409**
HRM Practices	.650**	.522**	.449**	.739**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Multiple regression analysis was carried out to determine how the six components of HRM practices are related to employee engagement and each of its components of employee engagement.

Impact of HRM Practices Dimensions on Employee Engagement

The results of multiple regression presented in Table 2 revealed that there exists multiple correlations between HRM practices and employee engagement (.520). The coefficient of multiple determination (R Square) was found to be .270. This implies that 27 per cent of variance in employee engagement is explained by HRM practices (Performance Appraisal, Workforce Diversity and Contemporary HR Practices, Training and Benefits, HR Planning and Recruitment, Selection and Socialization of Employees, and Competitive Compensation). Significant F-value denotes the availability of evidence to conclude that at least one of the predictors is useful for predicting employee engagement.

Table 2
Multiple Regression for Employee Engagement as a Function of HRM Practices

Multiple R	.520
R Square	.270
Adjusted R Square	.234
Standard Error of Estimate	16.119
F-value	16.553**
Level of Significance	.000

**Significant at $p < .01$ level

To know about the components of HRM practices that influences employee engagement, beta values were considered. From the output displayed in Table 4.4, the regression equation is arrived as under:

Employee Engagement = 254.257 + 1.267 Performance Appraisal + .413 Workforce Diversity and Contemporary HR Practices + 1.346 Training and Benefits + 2.783 HR Planning and Recruitment + 2.317 Selection and Socialization of Employees + 2.435 Competitive Compensation.

The t-value in Table 3 revealed that performance appraisal, workforce diversity and contemporary HR practices, training and benefits, HR planning and recruitment, selection and socialization of employees, and competitive compensation emerged as significant predictors of employee engagement.

Table 3
Beta Table of Multiple Regression for Employee Engagement as a Function of HRM Practices

Particulars	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-Value	Level of Significance
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
(Constant)	254.257	11.863		21.374*	.000
Performance Appraisal	1.267	.298	.319	3.826**	.000
Workforce Diversity and Contemporary HR Practices	.413	.302	.094	1.433*	.184
Training and Benefits	1.346	.624	.159	1.990*	.049
HR Planning and Recruitment	2.783	.695	-.270	-3.757**	.000
Selection and Socialization of Employees	2.317	.756	.216	3.294**	.002
Competitive Compensation	2.435	.682	-.261	-3.377**	.001

**Significant at p < .01 level

*Significant at p < .05 level

The above results indicate that performance appraisal, workforce diversity and contemporary hr practices, training and benefits, HR planning and recruitment, selection and socialization of employees, and competitive compensation contribute to employee engagement.

Recommendations

The result of the study clearly indicates that performance appraisal, workforce diversity and contemporary HR practices, training and benefits, HR planning and recruitment, selection and socialization of employees, and competitive compensation have positive relation with employee engagement. Meanwhile, according to the response obtained from the respondents, majority are not satisfied with the HRM practices of CAPE institutions. The following recommendations need to be implemented at CAPE institutions to enhance employee engagement.

- (a) Carry out annual performance appraisal that should ensure performance development.
- (b) Conduct adequate and appropriate training and developmental programs with the support of various bodies like All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), Department of Science and Technology (DST), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Department of Technical Education, Universities etc
- (c) Should implement merit-based motivation system. This helps increase employees' performance and increase efficiency. Other employees who recognize that the best performers are the ones who are motivated may put forth extra effort to be motivated as well.
- (d) Should maintain a continuous interaction with the employees by updating them on the organizational policies, procedures and decisions. Management also need to keep the employees well-informed on new developments in education field since well-informed employees make sound decisions, remain motivated, productive and feel as a member of one family in the institute.
- (e) Should also consider putting in-place good and fair remuneration/reward systems as par with AICTE on timely fashion that would encourage employees to become more motivated to achieve higher levels of engagement

Conclusion

It is worth mentioning from the findings of this research that, in today's capricious and increasingly innovative business atmosphere, the study's outcome more or less support the conventional wisdom that employees are the most valuable asset of a business organization and that an effective practice of HRM Practices to develop and tap this invaluable potential of employees will save the future of businesses. The significant relationship that the research elicits between HRM practices and employees engagement is in support of the various similar studies and this therefore should be indicative to researchers and business practitioners across board, not to downplay the importance of HRM practices as a strategic tool to achieving comparative advantage. Nonetheless, further research can be undertaken to further broaden the knowledge in this topic area of HRM practices and employee engagement in other sectors.

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