Role Of Human Resources Management Practices (Hrmp) On Organizational Performance: An Exploratory Study From Malaysian Smes

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ABSTRACT
Although much research has been conducted on the various aspects of human resource management (HRM), knowledge is still lacking concerning its impacts on SMEs. Hence there exists a general assumption that the HRM practices employed bylarge business entitiesare also applicable to SMEs. Using a theory known as the resource-based view, the current exploratory study examines the effects of HRM practices on Malaysian SMEs. Questionnaire surveysinvolving 298 respondents based within local SMEs were gathered to further understand how HRM practices affect the organizational performances of these SMEs. The outcomes were analyzed using the Pearson Correlation as well asthe Multiple Linear Regression analyses which indicate that specific HRM practices significantly affect Malaysian SMEs.

Keywords: Malaysia, Exploratory Research, Human Resource Management, HRM, Organizational Performance, Resource Based View, SMEs

INTRODUCTION
Many SMEs seetoday's global business landscape as an obstacle, resulting in them being unable to thrive, or needing to cease operations (Rodriguez-Gutierrez et al., 2015). One reason for such an outlook is the SMEs' unwillingness to venture out of their comfort zones, i.e., beyond operating their businesses locally(Peschken et al., 2016). Nevertheless, this could be addressed byan efficient utilization of their resources and HRM practices (Dabic et al., 2011). Fabi et al.'s (2009) findings highlight that: (a) the SMEs'innovativeness could be enhanced viaworkers' professional developmental processes;performance appraisals, incentive programs and rewards, etc(ABDULGAWAD BUSADRA, 2022). This is in line with Hassan's (2010) findings of SMEs undergoing rapid expansions when they focus on their: (i) hiring processes; (ii) training processes; (iii) performance evaluations; and (iv) incentivization programs. Despite this, the exact manner by which the SME's HRM practices affect their organizational performancesis still unclear (Hooi&Ngui, 2014). One reason for this could be that most of the studies related to HRM are based on the more formal and conventional aspects within larger business entities (Kasturi et al., 2006). There has been less focuson the more informal HRM practices that are commonly seen among SMEs (Montoro-Sanchez & Soriano, 2011). This exploratory researchseeks examine and expand on the lesser-knownaspects of HRM practices found within Malaysian SMEs(Mahendran and Valliappan Raju, 2023).

The Resource Based Theory (RBT)
The RBTholds that numerous business entities competeby offeringproducts or services that are similar because of their resources being from similar sources (Peteraf& Bergen, 2003). The effective management and coordination is these resources is of utmost importance (Holcomb et al., 2009), which ultimately determines the success of any firm. This theory pertains to strategic management that elaborates on how business entities could gain competitive edges by leveraging their resources (Raymond, 2017). This resonates with Kunc&Morecroft's (2010)findings concerning thelinks between the management of vital resources and organizational performances.This study employs the (RBT) to analyzethe ways by which HRM practices impact Malaysian SMEs'organizational performances(Ali et al., 2022).

SMEs' Organizational Performances
Some of the key aspects which affect SMEs' organizational performances are: (i) resources; (ii)management skillsets;(iii)informal setups; and(iv) employment of generalistsinstead of specialists(Dutot et al., 2014). It is possible to define the performance of SMEs based on their prior and present accomplishments, which could be further divided intofiscal and non-fiscal performances (Saunila, 2016)(SulaimanAlfawzan, 2022).

HRM Practices Among SMEs

HRM practices can be seen to attract, develop and drive workers toward attaining business objectives and strategicallyconsolidating practices aimed at the management and development of workers (Newman & Sheikh, 2014).Generally, the HRM practicesfollowed by SMEs are predominantlyinformal. However, SME heads are recommended tokeep these practices relevant with contemporary business settingsbecause otherwise, their strategic developments could lag (Jing et al., 2005).

The Hiring Processes

Business entities with large workforcesemploy complicated hiring processes, unlike SMEs which consist of fewer workers. Among the role of HRM is: attractingworkers with relevant skills who complement the enterprises'key aims (Langwell& Heaton, 2016).

With regard to this, this study'sproposed hypotheses are:

H1A:SMEs' hiringprocesses positively affect their overall organizational performances.

H1B:SMEs' hiringprocesses positively affect their nonfiscal performances.

H1C:SMEs' hiringprocesses positively affect their fiscal performances.

The Workers' professional developmental Processes

These processes facilitate the enhancement of workers' skillsets, knowledge levels and attitudes bysharing knowledge, and enhancingtheirawareness levels(Meena&Vanka, 2017). Though SMEs do train their workers, theseare usually informal, ad-hocor short-term affairs mostly due to financial considerations (Newman & Sheikh, 2014).

The proposed hypotheses:

H2A:SMEs' workers' professional developmental processes positivelyaffect their overall organizational performances.

H2B:SMEs' workers' professional developmental processes positively affect their non-fiscal performances.

H2C:SMEs' workers' professional developmental processes positively affect their fiscal performances.

Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are assessment processes which control and enhance organizational performances. Generally, such appraisals among SMEs, tend to be less formal and systematic, being usually performed amongstsupervisors, colleagues and subordinates(Kramar& Parry, 2014).

The proposed hypotheses:

H3A:SMEs' performance appraisals positively affectstheir overall organizationalperformances.

H3B:SMEs' performance appraisals positively affects their non-fiscal performances.

H3C:SMEs' performance appraisals positively affects their fiscal performances.

Reward Systems and Incentivization

This is related torewarding workers for their contributions and serves to drive performances because the workers are aware that their performancesare associated with incentives (Castrogiovanni et al., 2011).

The proposed hypotheses:

H4A:SMEs' reward systems and incentivization positively affects their overall organizationalperformances.

H4B:SMEs' reward systems and incentivization positively affects their non-fiscal performances.

H4C:SMEs' reward systems and incentivization positively affects their fiscal performances.

Communication Channels

Business entities utilize formal and informal communication channels to disseminate information among their workers. Effective communication channels that are properly regulated and supervised by the SME head is crucial toward providing clear informationto workers(Castrogiovanni et al., 2011).

The proposed hypotheses:

H5A:SMEs' communication channels positivelyaffect theiroverall organizationalperformances.

H5B:SMEs' communication channels positively affect their non-fiscal performances.

H5C:SMEs' communication channels positively affect their fiscal performances.

Engaging With Workers

Thispaves the way for business entities to perceive and gauge organizational performances from their workers' viewpoints, which is relevant becauseit has been shown that when workers get involved in their firms' business objectives, their dedication levels along with theirjob-related performances rise (Sancho et al., 2018).

The proposed hypotheses:

H6A:SMEs' worker engagement sessionspositivelyaffecttheiroverall organizational performances.

H6B:SMEs' worker engagement sessions positively affect their nonfiscal performances.

H6C:SMEs' worker engagement sessions positively affect their fiscal performances.

HR Specialists

Renwick (2003) mentions that SME leaders tend to stick with limited HRM practices due to their cost-effectiveness, particularly during the SMEs' initial stages. Consequently, the SMEs'early HRM practices are more informal, emergent as well as reactive. Nevertheless, with their expansion, some adopt formal HRM practices, which include the hiring of HR specialists(Huiwu and Hongmei, 2022; Yosraalkhaled, Valliappan Raju and Salina Kassim, 2022).

With regard to this, the proposed hypotheses are:

H7A:HR specialists positively affect the SMEs' overallorganizational performances.

H7B:HR specialists positively affect theSMEs' nonfiscal performances.

H7C:HR specialists positively affect theSMEs' fiscal performances.

METHODOLOGY

The non-probability sampling strategy was employed in this study, with the sample size calculated to be n=348. Questionnaire surveys were utilized as data gathering toolsto develop descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Of the 348 distributed questionnaires, 298 responses were obtained, representing an 85.6 % response rate. The questionnairesprovided information regarding: (i) the SMEs' demographics; (ii) their performance levels; and (iii) their HRM practices. The observable and measurable indices were used to operationalize the measurements involved in the analyses of behavioral domains and other conceptual aspects(Gao and Raju, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSES

Descriptive Findings

53.4% of this study's SMEs were small, with 22.1 % represented by micro and 24.5 % bymedium sized businesses. 34.8% of them were in operation for more than fifteen years, 30.1% for between two and five years, 22.6% for between six and ten years and 12.5% for between eleven and fifteen years. The top three SME sectors involved in this study were: a) the retail sector (15.8%); (b) FNB (13.2%);(c) skilled services (12.3%).

Factor Analyses (FA)

This study employed the FAfor the grouping of the study variables, withtwo additional components being derived and designated as non-fiscal and fiscal performances. The former concerningaspects like: (a) workers' morale; (b) workers' productivity levels; (c) amount of organizational aimsfulfilled; (d) the product or services' quality with thelatter pertaining to (a) net profits; (b) returns on investments. The factor analysis ofHRM practices, were based on seven components: (a) HR specialists (HS); (b) engagements with workers (EW); (c) performance appraisals (PA); (d) hiring processes (HP); (e) rewardsystems and incentivization (RI); (f) workers' professional developmentalprocesses (WD); (g) communication channels (CC). Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the FA loadings representing the SMEs' organizational performances and HRM practicesrespectively.

Table 1: SME Organizational Performances: Factor analysis loadings

	Components	
	Non-Fiscal Performances	Fiscal Performances
Workers' morale	.857	
Workers' productivity	.836	
Fulfilled objectives	.808	
Product & services quality	.726	
Netprofits		.923
ROIs		.915
KMO:.793 Variance:77.700% Bartlett'sSphericityTest (BST):932.013Sig:0.000		

Table 2: SMEs' HRM Practices: Factor Analysis Loadings

| | Items | | | | | | |
	HS	EW	PA	HP	RI	WD	CC
HS-2	.915						
HS-1	.895						
HS-5	.896						
HS-4	.883						
HS-3	.856						
HRM-8	.623						
HRM-10		.895					
HRM-19		.868					
HRM-18		.843					
HRM-21			.856				
HRM-20			.776				
HRM-9			.735				
HP-5				.853			
HP-4				.847			
HP-3				.715			
RI-1					.815		
RI-4					.765		
RI-3					.745		
HRM-4						.826	
HRM-16						.783	
HRM-17						.667	
HRM-2							.825
HRM-3							.715

KMO: .873
Variance: 78.626 %
BST: 4438.816
Sig: .000

Reliability Test

Table 3 presents the outcomes pertaining to the reliability test- the Cronbach's alpha. As can be seen here, the scores ranged between .736 to .938, which areacceptable for exploratory studies.

Table 3: Reliability Test Findings

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
SMEperformances	6	.853
Non-fiscal performances	4	.856
Fiscal performances	2	.887
HRMProcesses	25	.905
HS	7	.938
EW	5	.833
PA	4	.824
HP	4	.805
RI	4	.786
WD	4	.736
CC	3	.765

Pearson's Correlation Analysis(PCA)

The PCAfindings are presented in Table 4. The analyses were based on a 2-tailed statisticalsignificance testingat $p < 0.01$.As seen from the findings, high SME performances were linked to: (i) WD processes; (ii) EW; (iii) HS; and (iv) PA. The HRM practices which were moderately associated with the SMEs non fiscal performanceswere: (a) WD processes ($r = .333$, $p < 0.01$); (b) HS ($r = .333$, $p < 0.01$); (c) EW($r = .321$, $p < 0.01$). As for SMEs' fiscal performances, PA showed the strongest linkwith the practices seen within HRM ($r = .264$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4: The Correlation Analyses: HRM Practices And The Organizational Performances Of SMEs'

		HP	WD	PA	RI	CC	EW	HS	SME Performance	Non-Fiscal	Fiscal
HP	Pearson Correlation(PC)	1	.218 **	.227 **	.354 **	.193 **	.311 **	.345 **	.192**	.207 **	.096
	Two-Tailed Sig. (TTS)		.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.001	.000	.102
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
WD	PC	.216 **	1.00 0	.415 **	.295 **	.353 **	.208 **	.257 **	.343**	.333 **	.244 **
	(TTS)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
PA	PC	.226 **	.415 **	1.00 0	.325 **	.476 **	.275 **	.335 **	.305**	.267 **	.264 **
	(TTS)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
RI	PC	.353 **	.295 **	.327 **	1.00 0	.334 **	.447 **	.384 **	.263**	.253 **	.185 **
	(TTS)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
CC	PC	.196 **	.355 **	.477 **	.330 **	1.00 0	.337 **	.348 **	.272**	.253 **	.207 **
	(TTS)	.001	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
EW	PC	.311 **	.208 **	.275 **	.447 **	.336 **	1.00 0	.381 **	.337**	.323 **	.256 **
	(TTS)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
HS	PC	.343 **	.257 **	.337 **	.383 **	.343 **	.381 *	1.00 0	.332**	.335 **	.215 **
	(TTS)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
SMEs' Performa nce	PC	.193 **	.344 **	.307 **	.265 **	.273 **	.335 **	.332 **	1.000	.935 **	.768 **
	(TTS)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
Non-Fiscal	PC	.207 **	.331 **	.268 **	.254 **	.253 **	.321 **	.330 **	.935**	1.00 0	.486 **
	(TTS)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
Fiscal Performa nce	PC	.096	.243 **	.265 **	.183 **	.207 **	.252 **	.215 **	.766**	.485 **	1
	(TTS)	.102	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298

Linear Regression

The linear regression was utilized here to analyze existing links amongstHRM practices and (i) SMEs' overall organizational performances; (ii) SMEs' nonfiscal performances; and (iii) fiscal performances.

Effects of HRM Practices on SME's Organizational Performances

The regression analytics involving HRM practices and SMEs' organizational performances is presented in Table 5. Of the various HRM practices, the standardized beta coefficientwas seen to be highest in the (WD) component(β = .211, t = 3.558, p = .000), followed by(EW) (β = .195, t = 3.206, p = .001) and (HS) (β = .156, t = 2.573, p = .011). Here, the accepted hypotheses were 2A, 6A and 7Awhile the rejected hypotheses were 1A, 3A, 4A and 5A.

Table 5: Regression Analytics: HRM Practices With Organizational Performances

Model		Non-Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Correlation			Collinearity	
		B	Standard. Error	Beta			Zero-Order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.645	.234		6.996	.000					
	HP	.004	.046	.002	.017	.986	.190	.002	.002	.806	1.245
	WD	.145	.042	.211	3.558	.000	.343	.207	.182	.767	1.301
	PA	.047	.034	.093	1.447	.148	.304	.086	.073	.675	1.484
	RI	.011	.053	.022	.181	.859	.271	.021	.020	.693	1.463
	CC	.015	.033	.025	.458	.644	.277	.037	.034	.688	1.453
	EW	.177	.056	.195	3.206	.001	.339	.186	.166	.716	1.387
	HS	.095	.036	.156	2.573	.021	.340	.160	.143	.731	1.397

Dependent Variable: Organizational performance of SMEs
R: .476
R^2: .227
Adjusted R^2: .211

Effects of HRM Practices on SMEs' Non-Fiscal Performances

The regression analytics concerning this is presented in Table 6. Here, the standardized beta coefficient was seen to be highest in the(WD) component (β = .212, t = 3.563, p = .000), followed by (EW) (β = .172, t = 2.831, p = .005) and (HS) (β = .174, t = 2.776, p = .006). The accepted hypotheses were 2B, 6B and 7B, whereas the rejectedhypotheses were 1B, 3B, 4B and 5B.

Table 6: Regression Analytics: HRM Practices Versus SMEs' Non- Fiscal Performances

Model		Non-Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Correlation			Collinearity	
		B	Standard. Error	Beta			Zero-Order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.700	.263		6.494	.000					
	HP	.023	.053	.026	.494	.623	.207	.026	.023	.807	1.241
	WD	.163	.046	.212	3.563	.000	.333	.207	.185	.765	1.301
	PA	.026	.035	.047	.772	.436	.264	.048	.045	.676	1.484
	RI	.008	.066	.011	.154	.876	.242	.015	.011	.673	1.456
	CC	.017	.036	.036	.416	.675	.252	.035	.033	.675	1.467
	EW	.175	.062	.172	2.831	.006	.327	.167	.143	.715	1.379
	HS	.119	.048	.174	2.776	.006	.342	.173	.156	.733	1.376

Dependent Variable: SMEs' Non-FiscalPerformances
R: .460
R^2: .212

Effects of HRM Practices on SMEs' Fiscal Performances

Table 7 presents the findings concerning this. Here, the standardized beta coefficient was highestwith the(EW) component (β = .163, t = 2.534, p = .012), followed by (PA) (β = .132, t = 2.002, p = .045) and (WD) practices (β = .135, t = 2.096, p = .036). The accepted hypotheses were 2C, 3C and 6C, whereas the rejectedhypotheses were 1C, 4C, 5C and 7C.

Table 7: Regression Analytics: HRM Practices Versus SMEs' Fiscal Performances

Model		Non-Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Correlation			Collinearity	
		B	Standard Error	Beta			Zeroorder	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.546	.311		4.983	.000					
	HP	-.045	.058	-.047	-.803	.433	.087	-.056	-.0.35	.811	1.235
	WD	.111	.053	.135	2.096	.036	.238	.131	.118	.776	1.310
	PA	.086	.045	.132	2.002	.045	.257	.121	.116	.669	1.475
	RI	.014	.076	.022	.147	.864	.175	.011	.011	.674	1.456
	CC	.018	.045	.031	.345	.731	.211	.030	.021	.679	1.465
	EW	.181	.071	.165	2.536	.012	.255	.148	.140	.716	1.397
	HS	.058	.050	.076	1.169	.244	.213	.069	.064	.721	1.387

Dependent Variable: SMEs' Fiscal Performances
R: .356
R^2: .124
Adjusted R^2: .106
Durbin Watson: 1.907

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The correlation analyses indicated every variable involving HRM practices and the SMEs' organizational performancesas being significant, except for the (HP) on the SMEs' fiscal performances. The findings indicate that the (WD) processes are significant for Malaysian SMEs' overall performances. This is in line with McEvoy & Buller's (2013) findings that the need for workers with the relevantskills during an SMEs' initial stages could be achieved by sustainable initiatives like (WD). Other findings show (EW)to significantly affectMalaysian SMEs' overallperformances and(HS)being partially significant for Malaysian SMEs' overall performances(Rasadurai and Raju, 2022). This could be due to formal HRM practices being reliant on the heads of the SMEs because dedicated HR departments are not available in the firms. This could also be due tothe formulation of HRM practices by the heads of the SMEs themselves. Thereason for the non-significance of the (HP) could be due to the hiring of fresh workers among SMEs beinglow. The work environments within SMEs are less intricate, with the workers being more familiar with each other, and hence open communication is more common here. Also, the SMEs having lesser resources tend to dismiss poor performers, hence not having to prioritize on the (RI).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

This study offers findings concerning HRM practices among Malaysian SMEs' in accordance with the resource-based theory (RBT). These findings support the notion of administering and coordinating resources efficiently toward ensuring the optimal performances of Malaysian SMEs. The (WD) processes, along with (EW)and (HS) were seen to significantly affect the Malaysian SMEs fiscal and also non fiscal performances. This cements further the vital RBT concept of implementing HRM practices as a means of sustaining competitive edges among business entities. In practice, these findings, indicate thatbusiness entities of various sizes, can flourish by leveraging their internal factors. The implication here is, though SMEs are lacking in formal structures as well as policies, they stand to gain much by investing in a HRM system to oversee their workers(Abdulrazzaqet al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Though this study reports on how specific HRM practices significantly affect Malaysian SMEs' organizational performances, it still lacks a solidfoundation. This could be in part due to the RBTbeing too broad and lacking a comprehensive explanation concerning the usage of resources. The implication here is that HRM practices could potentially become more efficient ifthey are synchronized with the Malaysian SMEs' business strategic needs. In other words, HRM practices ought to link with the SMEs business strategies by assigning workers to the

relevant organizational domains. At present, due to the plethora of resources as well as capabilities that need to be considered, a single management system which would result in optimal performances among all business entities is lacking. Nonetheless, this paper offers insights on how HRM practices affect the organizational performances of Malaysian SMEs, which could be valuable for similar research in future.

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