

The role of organization, individual and job characteristics on work performance: A theoretical review

Roziyana Jafri^{1,*}, Dr. Tan Yao Sua¹, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sa'ari Ahmad²

¹Centre for Policy Research and International Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM, Penang, Malaysia

²School of Business Management, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Abstract: Work performance has become a topic of great interest to human resource practices. It has brought about many new challenges to human resource researchers and professionals. Employees are key elements in improving organizational performance and accountability. As such, it could be said that an organization's success or failure depends on the employees' work performances in that organization. Work performances of employees in an organization are therefore an important push factor in ensuring excellent organizational outcomes. Despite the wide acknowledgment about the importance of work performance in organization, there are still a dearth of comprehensive research in identifying factors that influence work performance. This raises the question of what exactly constitutes and influences work performance. This paper offers theoretical insights on factors that influence work performance based on human resource management theories and practices. It aims to investigate existing literature and theory to construct a conceptual model that influencing the employees' work performances. This model shows that organization, individual and job characteristics have direct effects on work performance.

Key words: Work performance; Organization; Individual; Job characteristics

1. Introduction

Work performance is an important issue confronted by organizations all over the world and has attracted a great deal of interests among researchers and professionals (Koopmans et al., 2011). Numerous studies on work performance have been conducted involving different approaches in the studying of employee's work performance. Indeed, work performance is crucial to development and administration of an organization.

An organization needs to focus on its competitive advantage and to manage its human resource in order to ensure achievement of the goals and strategy of the organization. Each organization is always looking for dedicated and skilled employees to voluntarily advance the organization. A dedicated and skilled employee not only becomes important to an organization and if an employee tries to maintain his or her performance at the maximum level, this would become a key impetus to the success of an organization (Faridahwati et al., 2006). Therefore, by knowing the factors that influence the employees' work performances, an organization could successfully optimize its human resource capabilities and potential to the benefit of the organization (Selladurai, 1991).

2. Work performance

Work performance has become one of the most important dependent variable and has been studies for several decades in relation to the success of an organization (Jankingthong and Rurkkhum, 2012). A wide range of interpretations for work performance have been highlighted by researchers. According to Abdel Razek (2011), work performance is one of the most important indicators to reflect on both the goals and means of an organization to achieve efficiency or exceeded the required level of performance. Other than that, work performance also involves a certain level of performance that can be considered as accomplishing the minimum requirement of an organization (Byars and Rue, 2008).

2.1. Performance concept

Performance refers to the degree of perfection and success made by the employees to the tasks entrusted to them. In the context of an organization Byars et al. (2008) have stated that performance is usually defined as the extent to which members of the organization contributes to achieving organizational goals. Performance is judged by the results of the work done by the employees. Performance affects workers themselves to fulfill the task and complete it as quickly as possible. According to Snell and Bohlander (2010), the term "performance" evaluates the extent to which the performance of each employee has been met.

* Corresponding Author.

Byars et al. (2008) associated the concept of performance with the performance of duties carried out by employees and how an employee meets the requirements of their jobs. Thus, performance is evaluated based on the results obtained from the employees. Lim et al. (2012) also mentioned that the work attitude and performance of the adult workers come from their wishes, needs and goals of their life. In view of this, it is important to understand factors influencing work performance to fulfill the needs of an organization with the hope that this will lead employees to meet the minimum standard in order to achieve their personal goals.

3. Work performance and organization

Few studies have looked at the organization as a factor on work performance. In organization there are several elements that become really importance as a guideline to know what actually influence employees in terms of their performances. Elements of the organization factor that are predicted to have important impact on work performance include: culture; environment; administration; appreciation; workplace relationship; and facilities.

Culture refers to the unique quality and the style of organization (Kilmann et al., 1985) and has been associated with performance and effectiveness of an organization (Kim and Yu, 2004). Organizations have the authority to decide how their culture will be practiced so that it could play a major role in influencing work performance of the employees. According to Schein (1996), more attention should be given to the culture of an organization. Organizational cultures are shared by a particular group of people leading to better work performance (Rousseau, 1990; Triandis, 1996). All this indicates that organizational culture could contribute towards work performance.

Vischer (2007) identifies comfort in organizational environment as the supportive environment for employees to perform their job. An effective organizational environment which is supportive and comfortable enables employees to work positively. Moreover, an effective organizational environment also enables employees to give their full commitment and contribution in performing their task (Lim et al., 2012).

Organizational administration refers to the emphasis that organization places on goal accomplishments and effectiveness related to task and activities (Selladurai, 1991). Triandis (1959) mentioned that low levels of organizational administration will lead to low work performance because of complacency and higher level of organizational administration will increase employees' work performances to a certain point.

Appreciation plays an important role in attracting and retaining top-performing employees. Most employees perceive that a better performance would lead to a higher appreciation by the organization. If the appreciation match with the employees' expectations, they are more likely to be high

performers (Lawler and Porter, 1967). However, if the appreciation does not match with employees' work performances, this will probably affect their performance (Adams, 1963).

Organizations have to come out with meaningful ways of interacting and building good workplace relationship with their employees (Goleman et al., 2013). Maintaining lasting good workplace relationships will help to bring about mutually beneficial relationship which will spur work performance. Kerr and Jermier (1978), in their studies, stated that a strong workplace relationship can help to produce effective performers. Thus, when workplace relationship among employees is low, work performance of employees may be adversely affected.

One of the common problems of assessing work performance is about facilities that have been and have not been provided by an organization. An organization should pay more attention to the need for standardized facilities that will lead to better work performances of their employees (Halachmi and Bouckaert, 1994). The role of facilities of the work setting in bringing about improved work performance in terms of increased productivity has been noted by several studies (Slocum and Cron, 1985; Leaman and Bordass, 1993; Uzee, 1999).

4. Work performance and individual

This factor is often given minor emphasis in research, on work performance. However, it is an important one in determining the work performance level of an employee. The individual factors are described by his or her individual value; self-competence; career enhancement; and emotion.

Nikolaou (2003) has suggested that individual value is a concern for work performance. It is found that employees' values are related to successful completion of tasks and work performance (Ferguson and Reio, 2010). An employee with good values is most likely to achieve better work performance.

Boyatzis (2008) has defined self-competence as a capability or ability that affects work performance. It involves the capability that employees bring to the job situation as required by their job responsibilities. An individual's competence level is an indicator between effective and ineffective performers (Vathanophas and Thai-ngam, 2007). Employees that have high competencies may increase their work performance meanwhile work performance will be affected if an employee is low in competency.

Lepper and Green (1978) and Staw (1976), in their studies suggested that if employees have better career enhancement in an organization, this will lead to a higher probability of making endogenous attributions than the probability of making exogenous attributions that lead to work performance. It showed that career growth will ensure the employees' stability and giving them opportunities for better positions in an organization.

Emotion can be a valid predictor of work performance (Lim et al., 2012). Some studies such as Barrick et al. (2003) classifies that emotion of the employee can be used to predict the achievement of career success and work performance. If the emotion of employees is good and stable, they will show better work performance.

5. Work performance and job characteristics

Organizations use job characteristic techniques to improve their employees' work performances such as job rotation, job enrichment and work life programs. Selladurai (1991) have argued that these techniques are only based on assumption that satisfaction leads to better performance but there is no guarantee that these techniques will increase work performance. Meanwhile, Locke (1976) cites that job characteristic factors, i.e., job task, role of supervisor and feedback have shown to influence employees' performances.

Job task has been found to influence the employees' work performances (Locke, 1976). When employees find that their job load match with their eligibility and position, this will increase work performance because the employees are more satisfied and tend to perform better (Lawler et al., 1967).

The role of supervisor could also influence work performance. Herman (1973) in his studies revealed that if a supervisor shows low structured and low degree of supervision, this will lower the employees' performances. Meanwhile some studies such as Stogdill (1974) suggested that structured supervision and competent role of a supervisor will enhance the work performance level of the employees.

Hackman and Lawler (1971) argue that feedback is a key factor that influences employees' work performances. When an organization gives immediate feedback about employees' performance, this can motivate them to enhance their productivity and performances. Immediate feedback is considered one of the top performance factors for employees (Hackman et al., 1971).

6. A conceptual model

The role of organization, individual and job characteristics and be summed up by the below conceptual model:

The model suggested here attempts to examine in a comprehensive manner factors that influence the employees' work performances. Each of the factors included in the model has a strong bearing on work performances. The basic premise of this model is that organization, individual and job characteristics are viewed as independent variables, with work performance as the dependent variable. This conceptual model has integrated other findings on employees' work performances.

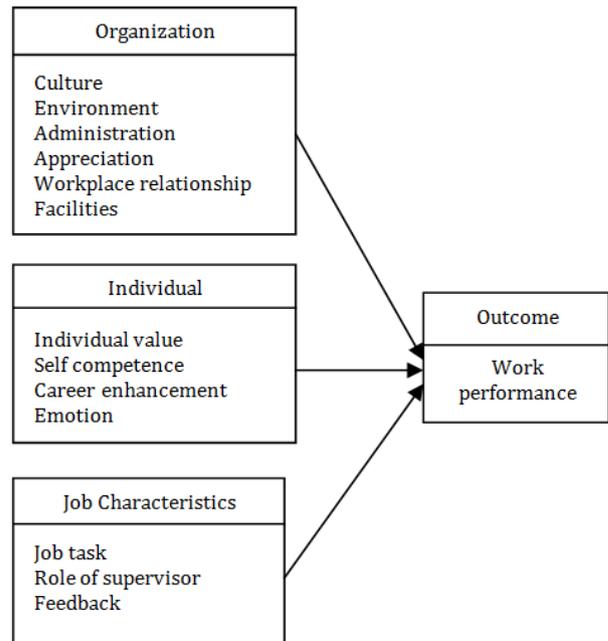


Fig. 1: A conceptual model for work performance

7. Conclusion

This paper shows that organization, individual and job characteristics influence employees' work performances. There appears to be a sustained work performance affected by these three factors. However, the impact of these factors may vary according to employees. For example, an employee may be motivated to perform better under high appreciation but he or she may not show the same type of performance under other factors. Similarly, high appreciation may not be a performance factor to other employees who are more influenced by other factors. Therefore, an organization must develop a performance system that consistently matches the employees' work performances and at the same time, this system should be equally applied to all employees. It is hoped that this review will provide a step forward in reaching consensus on the conceptualization of employees' work performances. A better understanding of this construct will improve practice, theory and research in all fields related to work performance.

References

Abdel Razak, W.A. (2011). Factors affecting the effectiveness of the job performance of the specialist working in the youth care at Helwan University. *World Journal of Sport Sciences*, 4(2), 116-125.

Adams, J. S. (1963). Towards an understanding of inequity. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5), 422-436.

Barrick, M.R., Mount, M.K. and Gupta, R. (2003). Meta-analysis of the relationship between the five-factor model and Holland's occupational types. *Personnel Psychology*, 56, 45-74.

- Boyatzis, R. E. (2008). Competencies in the 21st century. *Journal of Management Development*, 27(1), 5-12.
- Byars, L. L., and Rue, W. L. (2008). *Human resource management*. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Faridahwati, M. S., Md. Lazim, M. Z., Zuraida, H., Hadziroh, I., Chandrakantan, S., Ghazali, D., Mohamad Ismandi, W., and Edora, I. (2006). *Pengurusan sumber manusia di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: McGraw Hill.
- Ferguson, K. L., and Reio, T.G. Jr. (2010). Human resource management systems and firm performance. *Journal of Management Development*, 29(5), 471-494.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., and McKee, A. (2013). *Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard Business Press.
- Hackman, J. R., and Lawler, E. E. (1971). Employee reactions to job characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 55(3), 259-286.
- Halachmi, A., and Bouckaert, G. (1994). Performance measurement, organizational technology and organizational design. *Work Study*, 43(3), 19-25.
- Herman, J. B. (1973). Are situational contingencies limiting job attitude-job performance relationships?. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 10(2), 208-224.
- Jankingthong, K., and Rurkkhum, S. (2012). Factors affecting job performance: A review of literature. *Silpakorn University Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts*, 12, 115-127.
- Kerr, S., and Jermier, J. M. (1978). Substitutes for leadership: Their meaning and measurement. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 22(3), 375-403.
- Kilmann, R. H., Saxton, M. J., and Serpa, R. (1985). *Gaining control of the corporate culture*. Jossey-Bass Inc Pub.
- Kim Jean Lee, S., and Yu, K. (2004). Corporate culture and organizational performance. *Journal of managerial psychology*, 19(4), 340-359.
- Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C. M., Hildebrandt, V. H., Schaufeli, W. B., de Vet Henrica, C. W., and Van Der Beek, A. J. (2011). Conceptual frameworks of individual work performance: A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 53(8), 856-866.
- Lawler, E. E., and Porter, L. W. (1967). The effect of performance on job satisfaction: Industrial relations. *A journal of Economy and Society*, 7(1), 20-28.
- Leaman, A., and Bordass, B. (1993). Building design, complexity and manageability. *Facilities*, 11(9), 16-27.
- Lepper, M., and Green D. (1978). *The hidden costs of reward: New perspectives on the psychology of human motivation*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lea Publishers.
- Lim, K. B., Yeo, S. F., Cheah, C. S., and Ong, K. Y. (2012). Factors affecting individual job Performance. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Management, Economics and Finance, Malaysia*, 661-676.
- Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1, 1297-1343.
- Nikolaou, I. (2003). Fitting the person to the organisation: Examining the personality-job performance relationship from a new perspective. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 18(7), 639-648.
- Rousseau, D. M. (1990). Normative beliefs in fund-raising organizations linking culture to organizational performance and individual responses. *Group and Organization Management*, 15(4), 448-460.
- Schein, E. H. (1996). Culture: The missing concept in organization studies. *Administrative science quarterly*, 229-240.
- Selladurai, R. (1991). Factors affecting job satisfaction-job performance relationship. *American Business Review*, 9(1), 16-21.
- Slocum, J. W., and Cron, W. L. (1985). Job attitudes and performance during three career stages. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 26(2), 126-145.
- Snell, S., and Bohlander, G. W. (2010). *Principles of human resource management*. South Western Cengage Learning.
- Staw, B. M. (1976). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation*. Morristown, N.J., General Learning Press.
- Stogdill, R. M. (1974). *Handbook of leadership: A survey of the literature*.
- Triandis, H. C. (1959). A critique and experimental design for the study of the relationship between productivity and job satisfaction. *Psychological Bulletin*, 56(4), 309-312.
- Triandis, H. C. (1996). The psychological measurement of cultural syndromes. *American Psychologist*, 51(4), 407-415.
- Uzee, J. (1999). The inclusive approach: creating a place where people want to work. *Facility Management Journal of the International Facility Management Association*, 26-30.
- Vathanophas, V., and Thai-ngam, J. (2007). Competency requirements for effective job performance in the Thai public sector. *Contemporary Management Research*, 3(1), 45-70.

Vischer, J.C. (2007). The effects of the physical environment on job performance: Towards a

theoretical model of workspace stress. *Stress and Health*, 23, 175-184.