



Effective Human Resources Practice and Employee Engagement: The Mediating Roles of Organizational Support

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ABSTRACT

Objective – Telecommunication companies need their people to engage in their activities to achieve organizational goals. So, employee engagement became a crucial aspect of a company that struggles to win the competition. Some literature shows that human resource practice affects employee engagement. The present study examines the impact of perceived organizational support as a mediator on the relationship.

Methodology/Technique – Data were collected from a branch office of the biggest telecommunication company in Bandung during May 2019. The questionnaires were distributed through the human resources department for four weeks. We analyze 112 valid responses by using SPSS and Macro Process.

Findings – By conducting regression with bootstrapping we found that perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between effective human resources practice and employee engagement. The result suggests that a telecommunication company should practice good human resources practice including proper recruitment, training & development, reward, career advancement, and employee relation so that the employees can perceive its support and increase their engagement.

Novelty – This finding provides the implication that good management of human resources practice and perceived organizational support can increase employee engagement.

Type of Paper: Empirical

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Human Resource Practice, Perceived Organizational Support.

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1. Introduction

In every company, especially telecommunications service companies that are loaded with sophisticated technology, aspects of qualified human resources are the main assets to achieve company goals. In every company, especially telecommunications service companies that are loaded with sophisticated technology, aspects of qualified human resources are the main assets to achieve company goals.

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Qualified human resources can be achieved through good management, such as by maximizing the performance of employees so that company goals are achieved effectively and efficiently. Employee performance can be achieved through effective human resource management practices (Du, et al, 2015), perceptions of organizational support, and employee involvement (Choo et al., 2013). Through effective human resource management, employees will develop a high level of engagement to which employees are fully involved in their work and the strength of their job and company. The work must be designed to be meaningful and allows employees to use a variety of their skills relates to several different aspects of their job (Noe, et al., 2010).

The relationship between employee and employer has been deteriorating and according to one study, only 11 to 29 percent of employees are fully engaged in their work (Federman, 2009). Engagement is an important key for the organization to pursue its goals. The return on investment of employee engagement has been documented in research and showed the link between high engagement to the discretionary effort, innovation, and customer loyalty (Zenoff, 2012). To foster employee engagement, organizations need to find out what are the antecedents that influence engagement. Various factors believed to have an impact on employee engagement. Sabiu et al. (2019) explained the role of effective human resource management practice which can make employees feel satisfied to work above the standard. Important factors which also have strong impact on engagement including perceived organizational support (Murthy, 2017), leadership style (Kovjanic et al., 2013), job satisfaction (Ang et al., 2013), work-life balance (Nishanthi & Thalgaspitiya, 2015), and knowledge sharing (Fatima & Khan, 2017). Those articles found a positive correlation between each variable with employee engagement. Research using mediators perceived organizational support has also been carried out, among others, conducted by Karatepe (2015), by Narang, & Singh (2012), and by Vatankhah & Raoofi (2017). However, research that uses perceived organizational support as a mediator between the relationship between human resource practice and employee engagement is still very rarely done.

Engaged employees who will always go above and beyond is an incredibly valuable asset and it also helps them stay around longer. Study regarding employee engagement in Indonesia still limited especially the one that relates to human resource practice and perceived organizational support. This study will contribute to giving a wider conceptual view both for an academic and practical purpose. The intense competitiveness faced by telecommunication companies can result in higher demand for the employees to perform better. To offset the increasing demands the organization should provide more attention to the employee's well-being. They can provide a supportive environment so that employees can have peace of mind when they do their work. Also, management can implement high-performance work practice which can be achieved by developing effective human resource management practice including training, compensation, career development.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 1 consists of an introduction that explains the study background and contribution. Section 2 consists of works of literature and hypotheses. Section 3 describes the profile of the sample, sampling method, measurement tools, and technique of analysis. The result and discussion will be explained in Section 4. Lastly, Section 5 provides the conclusion of the discussion in this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Human Resource Practice, Perceived Organizational Support, & Employee Engagement

As one of the main assets, human resources in a company must be managed properly. Mondy & Martocchio (2016) defines human resource management as the management and use of human resources (employees) to achieve targeted organizational goals. To be managed properly, it is necessary to understand the functions within human resource (HR) management. HR management responsibilities include analyzing and designing jobs, recruitment, training and development, managing performance, implementing compensation policies, establishing positive relationships with employees, managing administrative issues,

and ensuring that all activities are following labor regulations. Well managed HR function should be on the main list of organization since can improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Garg & Lal, 2016), engagement (Guan & Frenkel, 2018), perceptions of organizational support (Nasurdin et al., 2008), and employee performance (Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018).

Perceived organizational support (POS) is a form of individual thoughts and feelings related to the amount of support given by the organization to them to carry out their work well. Eisenberger et al. (2001) described POS as employees' perceptions about the organization's recognition, appreciation, and honor of their work and well-being. Recognition from the organization comes in various forms like attractive salary, freedom in deciding how to do the job, provide a healthy work environment, create equality, justice, and apply for an employee development program. Employees who strongly feel supported will develop positive perceptions and they turn it into a commitment to stay longer in the organization and willingly achieve organization goals. POS is related to several important outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, strengthen organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational commitment, lower intention to leave the organization, employee engagement, work motivation, and increasing work-life balance (Arshad & Puteh, 2015; Gillet et al., 2013; Ghafoor et al., 2016; Park et al., 2015; Alcover et al., 2018; Adresi & Darun, 2017; Dai & Qin, 2016). The previously mentioned kinds of literature suggest that employees' POS constitutes a situation that can positively affect and shape employees' behavior.

Many organizations now include employee engagement as a part to measure organizational performance. Engagement described as a stable personality trait that represents a predisposition to live and work with enthusiasm (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Furthermore, Whittington et al. (2017) viewed engagement as the investment of an individual's complete self-cognitive, emotional and physical into their work role. Employee engagement is individual passion and energy to give of their best to the organization (Cook, 2008). Engagement is a state of mind of employees regarding the level of willingness and ability to do extra effort in helping the organization. It is not permanent, because individuals tend to have ups and downs, rise and falls. In this case, organizations need to continuously carry out human resource programs that can cater to employees' needs to keep their engagement always on the highest level. Why is it so important to keep the engagement level? It is because the increase in employee engagement has a positive relationship with job performance and the achievement of company goals (Bailey et al., 2015). Meanwhile, Macey et al. (2009) found that higher engagement individuals will easily adapt and ready to be placed in various positions.

We study the relation of these variables based on the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964). Blau defines Social Exchange Theory as a voluntary act of individuals driven by the expectation of reciprocity. The nature of reciprocity emphasizes by Coprazano & Mitchell (2005) that the relationships between two parties start with one party gives value or meaningful action for others and then the recipient will do the same, sometimes directly but often in the future. An organization that has great human resources practice and provide support for employees, will gain respect from them. Some of the respect manifested in their level of engagement.

2.2 The Effect of HR Practice and Perceived Organizational Support on Employee Engagement

Effective HR practices can positively affect employee engagement. An organization who provide training, compensation, career development, and equal and fair policies that suit employees need can gain reciprocal action. The employees become more engaged. This works through the scheme of the availability and opportunity to improve their skills, wider career opportunities, and supportive working conditions. Previous studies found a correlation between HR practice and employee engagement. Karam et al (2017) conclude that effective HR practice will increase employee skills and gave them adequate job resources which can make them more engaged. Alfes et al. (2013) reveal the positive linkage between HR practice and engagement. While Bailey et al. (2015) conducted a study based on 214 articles and concluded that organization activities and individual perceptions of organizational factors as two antecedents of engagement. We propose our first hypothesis is that H1: HR practices will positively affect employee engagement.

POS implies the organization's "commitment" to its employees (Nasurdin et al., 2008). According to social exchange theory, when one party (organization) provide beneficial actions towards others (employee), the recipients reciprocate back to the provider. Positive action from an organization in terms of care and value for the employees can result in positive behavior like engagement. Employees' evaluation of the organization's action/practice that satisfied their social and emotional needs will create some kind of obligation to the organization. One result is the creation of a willingness to become more engaged in the organization. A study in French Air Force revealed the positive relationship between POS and elements of engagement like vigor, dedication, and absorption (Gillet et al., 2017). Past studies provided empirical evidence regarding the positive relationship between POS and employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2015; Shantz et al., 2014; Murthy, 2017; Shaheen & Krishnankutty, 2018). Thus, our study posits that H2: POS will positively affect employee engagement.

2.3 Perceived Organizational Support as Mediator between HR Practice and Employee Engagement

HR practices have been considered factors that influenced POS. Effective HR practice could be in the form of the organization's investment in employees and also provide recognition to their contributions. Our model proposed the mediation role of POS in the relationship between HR practice and employee engagement. This is based on the pattern of relationships between POS and engagement which found positive linkage. To support the mediation, the HR practice and POS should also have a significant relationship. Previous studies found a positive correlation between HR practice and POS (Tang et al., 2006; Bui et al., 2016; Kuvaas, 2008; Mayes et al., 2016; Detnakin & Rurkkhum, 2019). This leads to our third hypothesis that H3: HR practice will positively affect POS.

Regarding the role of POS as a mediator, we found one article that supports the notion. Zhong et al. (2015) conducted a study in China using 605 participants from various organizations and found that POS partially mediated the relationship between HR practice and engagement. We still have not yet found other articles that have the same discussion. Therefore, we base our study on the role of POS mediation on the findings of previous articles that discuss the relationship between POS and engagement. Most of the scientific articles support the significant and positive link between both variables (Dai & Qin, 2016; Zhong et al., 2015; Shantz et al., 2014; Zacher & Winter, 2011). Thus we propose that H4: Perceived organizational support will mediate the relationship between HR practice and engagement.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

We drew our sample from one branch of the largest telecommunication organization in Indonesia. The organization provides telecommunication and other related communication services in Jakarta. The management assigns the branch to participate in the study since it is also their intention to measure the engagement level. We distributed 250 questionnaires and receive useable feedback of 112 responses. The questionnaire completed in four weeks in May 2019. The sample comprised 56.3% of men; the majority of 46.4% have more than 10 years of service. The participants represented a range of job levels as an officer (66.1%), supervisor (19.6%), and managers (14.3%). About 60.7% of them have an undergraduate degree.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Category	Number	Percentage	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender			Education		
Male	63	56.3%	High School	7	6.3%
Female	49	43.8%	Diploma	1	0.9%
Length of Service			Under Graduate	68	60.7%
< 1 year	3	2.7%	Post Graduate	36	32.1%
1 - 3 year	19	17.0%	Age		
> 3 - 5 year	9	8.0%	< 25 year	14	12.5%
> 5 - 10 year	29	25.9%	25 - 30 year	18	16.1%
> 10 year	52	46.4%	> 30 - 35 year	21	18.8%
Position			> 35 - 40 year	19	17.0%
Officer	74	66.1%	> 40 - 45 year	21	18.8%
Supervisor	22	19.6%	> 45 - 50 year	11	9.8%
Manager	16	14.3%	> 50 year	8	7.1%

3.2 Measurement

Employee engagement was measured with a 14 item adapted from Schaufelli et al. (2002). A sample item is, 'I am enthusiasts about my job.' The response scale ranged from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 6 ('strongly agree') with internal consistency was 0.913. POS was measured with the 6 items based on Eisenberger et al. (2001) and also has ranged from 1 to 6. Participants responded to items such as 'The company respects my personal goals and values.' Internal consistency was 0.887. We used 33 items from Tessema & Soeters (2006) to measure the level of HR practice. The internal consistency was 0.962 and also with 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Sample item including 'organization provides an attractive compensation system.'

4. Results and Discussion

Participants in this study reported having high levels of belief that organizations implement effective HR practice ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .657$). Indicating that employees quite satisfy with the HR management in this telecommunication company. That is the recruitment, selection, training & development, compensation, career development, work relations are considered fair and supportive working environment. Participants also develop a high level of perceived organizational support ($M=4.68$, $SD=0.619$). The employees believed that the organization was giving adequate and favorable support for them to finish the job. At last, employees also indicated that they were highly engaged ($M = 4.62$, $SD=0.583$). This implies that the employees demonstrate vigor, absorbed in their activities, and show a strong dedication to their work and organization. The findings for HR practice, POS, and employee engagement are summarised in Table 2 which shows that each relation between variables is significantly positive.

Table 2 Correlations between constructs (N = 112)

		Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Age	3.1339	1.33892	1							
2	Education	3.9643	1.21499	.806**	1						
3	Tenure	1.4821	.73500	.401**	.342**	1					
4	Position	1.3393	.47559	-.652**	-.727**	-.343**	1				
5	Workhour	1.2589	.44002	.231*	.270**	.168	-.036	1			
6	HR Practice	4.7482	.65746	.211*	.219*	.041	-.208*	.084	1		
7	Perceive Support	4.6759	.61909	.370**	.378**	.366**	-.314**	.103	.399**	1	
8	Engagement	4.6214	.58285	.273**	.238*	.249**	-.215*	.091	.452**	.732**	1

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presented the results of the regression analyses. All p-values show a significant result ($p < .01$) which means our three hypotheses are supported. HR practice and POS have a positive impact on employee engagement (H1 & H2), while HR practice also develops a positive impact on POS (H3). Our study supports the findings from Alfes et al. (2013) who mention the positive effect of HR practice towards employee engagement and Murthy (2017) who determined that HR practice also had a significant effect on POS. That means when effective HR practice was applied, there will be an increase in employee positive perception towards POS and employee engagement. Regarding the relation of HR practice and POS, our case has the same result as Tang et al. (2006). Both studies confirm that the higher perception regarding the effectiveness of HR practice will make the employees feel stronger support.

Table 3 Regression Coefficient, Standard error, & Model Summary

	Perceived support			Engagement		
	Coeff	SE	p-value	Coeff	SE	p-value
HR practice	0.376	0.082	0.000	0.169	0.061	0.006
Perceived support	-	-	-	0.618	0.065	0.000
Constant	2.891	0.395	0.000	0.930	0.327	0.005
	R Square		0.159	R Square		0.567
	F =		20.832	F =		71.297
	p =		0.000	p =		0.000

Table 4 showed the test result regarding our prediction about the mediation of POS. POS has often been used as a mediating variable (Zhong et al., 2015; Vatankhah et al., 2017). And it was proven that POS can play as a mediator. Our study supports those findings, which means that POS mediated the link between HR practice and employee engagement. As we can see, the lower level and upper level of confidence interval were not contained zero.

Table 4 Indirect effect of POS in the relationship of HR practice & employee engagement

	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
HR practice → Perceived support → Engagement	0.232	0.061	0.139	0.379

Although this study brought new perspectives toward the study of employee engagement from Indonesia, this study has several limitations. First, as it was carried out in one of telecommunication company, which can prevent the generalization of the result. Future research could be conducted covering wider participants (like the whole company for example). Our study was based on a cross-sectional design so it does not capture

the dynamic of the relationships among variables. Human behavior tends to change over time, so the next investigation regarding work behavior can use a longitudinal design to give a deep description of the relationships. The use of self-report also can present bias in the participants' responses. Further study can utilize the qualitative method like a structured interview to add the depth of the employees' perception.

6. Conclusion

All our hypotheses were supported that all antecedent variables used have a positive and significant relationship with their dependent variables. So, our investigation provides the practical and conceptual contribution in regards to the role of perceived organizational support as a mediator in the relationship of human resource practice and employee engagement. Understanding the importance of human resource practice to increase employee engagement, management could improve programs: proper recruitment, job placement according to their interests and skills, training and development according to their field of work, adequate and fair compensation, objective performance appraisal, transparent career promotion/development, clear employee complaint handling procedures, and guaranteed job security and pensions. So do improve perceived organization support by making employees proud of their achievements, care about their welfare, value their contributions, value their personal goals and values, care about their problems, and willing to help could boost employee engagement. Development of both - human resource practice and perceived organizational support - simultaneously could benefit companies to achieve the optimum utilization of their most important assets, namely human resources, and ultimately support their company's achievements in the future. This research is limited to only one branch office of the largest telecommunications company, further research can be carried out broader covering all branches in Indonesia or further involving other smaller telecommunications companies.

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