

Determinants of Performance among Public Sector Managers in Saudi Arabia: An Analysis of the Organizational Factors and Job Attitudes

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Abstract: Employees are a strategic asset of organization and their contributions enable the organization to sustain in a highly competitive environment. Thus, employee's performance improvement has been key area under investigation by the organizational scientists and with the passage of time new mechanisms have been proposed to improve employee's performance. In this perspective, current study has also investigated the factors contributing to employee's performance especially in Saudi Arabian work settings. For this purpose, this paper looks at the organizational factors as determinants of employee's performance and investigated their effects on employee's performance through job attitudes. To test the proposed hypotheses, a sample of 385 employees was drawn from the Ministry of Civil Services and Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. Hypotheses were developed to test the direct effects of organizational factors and job attitudes on employee's performance. The simple regression results regarding the direct effects reveal that organizational factors and job attitudes were positively influencing the employee's performance. These results provide thorough insinuations to the practicing managers and policy makers in order to increase employee's performance at work.

Key words: Employee performance • Job attitudes • Organizational factors

INTRODUCTION

Employees are one of the critical strategic assets in any organization. By improving the employees' performance at work environment, organizations can successfully compete within the turbulent environment. Organizational members differ in their working capacities and have different modes of behavior regardless of the rewards. In order to judge the work performance of employee, the most common management practices employed, all over the world, is performance assessment. Within the large organizations, performance appraisal system is exercised by more than 90%, whereas annual performance appraisal is employed in 75 % of medium size organizations (Seldon, Ingraham and Jacobson, 2001).

Employees' performance is, most of the time, examined keeping in view the job attitudes, job motivation and job expectation. Workers job attitudes towards the organizations are pushing the researchers to establish the causal link of job attitudes on different individual's and organizational factors and employee's performance (Ackerman, Shapiro and Beier, 2008[1]; Chiang and Hsieh,

2012; Impleman, 2007)[2]. Thus, organizations must develop effective systems that affect the employees' attitudes in favorable ways to enhance their work performance. Judge and Ferris (1993)[3] asserted that the importance of human resources system that concerns with performance assessment in order to evaluate employees' performance is the crucial element.

It is the need of the day that the business objectives should be achieved by implementing an integrated organizational strategy which enables the employee to perform at the optimal level. Therefore, organizations must focus on the factors that positively affect the job attitudes of the employees and in turn favorable job attitudes would lead the employees to show the desired behaviors. Thus, this research attempts to examine factors affecting employees' performance through job attitudes of employees in the Ministries of Civil Services and Education in Saudi Arabia. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature followed by an elaboration of the research method for the study. The subsequent section covers the data analysis and final section sets the discussion and conclusions of the study.

Literature Review: Organizational factors refer to organizational elements that describe and differentiate one organization from others. Examples include leadership, structure, policies, procedure and climate. This study has incorporated top management support, training and leadership patterns of the managers as the organizational factors responsible for individuals' job performance. Considering the Blumberg and Pringle (1982) criteria, all these factors fall under the umbrella of opportunity dimension.

Organizational Factors: This study incorporated three factors; top management support, training and leadership style as organizational factors. In the subsequent subsections, each of these factors is defined separately.

Top Management Support and its Effects on Employee's Job Performance: Top management support refers to *"the senior executives' favorable attitude toward and explicit support for information systems"* (Yap, 1989) [4]. Managerial commitment is defined as "engaging in and maintaining behaviors that help others achieve a goal" (Gaertner *et al.*, 1987)[5]. This commitment can be in term of resource allocation that supports performing the job effectively and efficiently. The top management has far reaching effects on the entire ends of any organizations. In organization, any activity which is owned and supported by the top management has the high probability of success. Therefore, the top management should engage in such activities, attitudes and behaviors that prove the strong support in the successful accomplishment of any activity which favorably contributes to individuals and organizational performance (Haque and Anwar, 2012)[6].

Top management support refers to engaging in and maintaining behaviors that help the employees to successfully achieve a goal (Yap, 1989)[4]. Employees at work place are always dependent on the top management. Employees need resources, approval, affiliations and esteem to performance in efficient and effective manners (Eisengerber, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro, 1990)[7]. Top management readiness to acknowledge and compensate the enhanced employees' efforts with better rewards reveals the required support from the management (Gaertner *et al.*, 1987). Thus, employee's positive perception of being cared and provided necessary support from the top management in task performance encourages the employees to perform well (Eisengerber, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro, 1990)[7]. Miao (2011)[8] contended that the provision of support from the management and required resources to organizational

members more likely enhance the employee's job performance which in turn contributes to the organizational success (p. 109). Therefore, it is expected that:

H₁: Top management support has significant and positive effect on employee's job performance.

Training and its Effects on Employees' Job Performance: Training is among organizational factors deployed to effectively utilize the human resource of the organization. Training is defined as *"set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands"* (Desimone, Werner and Harris, 2010)[9]. Through training programs, organizations ensure the necessary supply of competent and capable personnel for the effective organizational functioning (Haslinda, 2009)[10]. Training is also viewed an integral part of continuous improvement system in organization. Due to highly competitive environment, training programs are frequently planned by the organizations to update their employees' skills to meet the new job requirements. Thus, the organizations consider training programs as ways to develop their core competencies and heavily invest in training (Haslinda, 2009)[10]. In some organizations, training programs are designed in haphazard ways to meet the needs of organization while others organizations adopt the systematic approach in designing and offering the training programs (Scholz, 2007)[11]. The latter usually initiate the training process with identifying training needs of employees, designing the training programs according to employees' specific training needs, implementing training programs and then evaluating the training programs effectiveness.

Training programs should be designed and offered to employees after their need identification. In need identification process, the aim is to find out the reasons of poor performance. These organizations try to fill these gaps by providing training programs. Therefore, the primary purpose of arranging training programs is to develop the existing capabilities of the employees and which in return improves his/her performance level. Efforts and investments made in the form of training programs for developing the general or specific skills of the organizational members enable them to perform in well manner (Cooney, Terziovski and Samson, 2002). Thus, provision of the training is the stand alone practice which leads to effective task performance on employees' part (Cooney, Terziovski and Samson, 2002)[12].

Nelson and Cheney (1987)[13] asserted that training as a formal effort to transfer required information systems knowledge such as information systems concepts, technical and organizational skills and knowledge about specific products. Also, McCrae and Costa (1987)[14] argued that when the trainee comes in specific assigned training program, a critical success factor would be the way of this individual to absorb this training and make it applicable in his/her job. In empirical research, the direct effects of training program on employee's job performance are generally supported (Khan, Khan and Khan, 2011)[15]. Therefore, it postulated here that development in skills level through training program has positive effects on employee's performance.

H₂: Training has significant and positive effects on employee's job performance.

Leadership Style and its Impact on Employees' Job Performance: Leadership is critical to the individual's and organizational performance. Considering the importance of leadership, more than a century of scholarly research focused on it through different ways. However, the primary objective of the leadership studies remained same i.e. how a leader can be an effective leader? Despite the disputatious nature of leadership, many of the leadership scholars (Hemphill and Coons, 1957[16]; House, 1971; Hersey and Blanchard, 1974[17]; Bass and Avolio, 1994)[18] have reached consensus that leadership can be defined as behavioral and an exchange process in which a leader performs certain actions to influence the subordinates. The actions of the leader exerted to influence the subordinates are called the leadership styles (Warrick, 1981).

The term leadership style was first used by the Lewin, Lippit and White (1939)[19]. Different leadership styles are identified by the different leadership scholars: autocratic, participative and democratic (Likert, 1961); initiating structure and consideration (Hemphill and Coons, 1957); employee centered and production centered (Kahn and Katz, 1953)[20]; human oriented and task oriented leadership styles (Fleishman, 1953); task motivated and relationship motivated (Hersey and Blanchard, 1974); transformational, transactional and laissez-fair leadership styles (Bass, 1985). Although the terminologies used by these leadership researchers differ, careful analysis of these leadership styles showed that these leadership styles can be broadly grouped into two aspects; task and relationship. Thus, the term leadership style in the present study refers to the combination of task and as well as relational aspects considered by the leader. Therefore,

leadership style refers to the leader's actions directed to provide necessary task related guidance and moral support to his/her subordinates.

Contingency theorists (Hersey and Blanchard, 1974; Kerr and Jermier, 1978)[21] posited that leadership style exerted by the leader to influence his/her subordinates depends upon the type and degree of subordinates' need for leadership. In simple words, after understanding the subordinates' need for leadership, a leader tries to fulfill the subordinates' need for leadership by exercising the relevant leadership style (Bodla and Hussain, 2010[22]; De Vries, 2002). Many studies have identified that followers have two types of need for leadership at workplace; need for structure and need for social support (Bodla and Hussain, 2009[23], 2010; De Vries, 2002[24]; Landeweerd and Bouman, 1994)[25]. In need for structure, followers desire the leader's interventions to provide them necessary task related guidelines, clear operating procedures and methods to perform the work and deliver the task related feedback. In need for social support, employees desire social and moral support from their leaders.

Almost every leadership study designed to test the direct or indirect effects of leadership styles on followers' behaviors, estimated the effects of leadership behaviors on followers' job performance (Bass and Bass, 2008[26]; Yukl, 2011[27]). In general, this notion that relevant leadership style enhances the followers' performance has been supported by the findings of empirical research (Yukl, 2011; Avolio, Walumbwa and Webber, 2009; Podsakoff, Mackenzie and Boomer, 1996[28]; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2006[29]). Therefore, it is postulated here that leadership style exhibited by the leader to facilitate the followers in task performance and also providing them the necessary social support has direct and positive effect on employee's performance. The following is hypothesized:

H₃: Leadership style has significant and positive effect on job performance

The next section establishes the mediating effects of job attitudes on the relationship between determinants of employee's performance and employee's performance itself.

Job Attitudes as the Mediators of the Relationship Between Organizational Factors and Job Performance:

While considering the central premise of the attitude formation and change theory, job attitude job satisfaction and job involvement are proposed as the potential mediators of the relationship organizational factors and

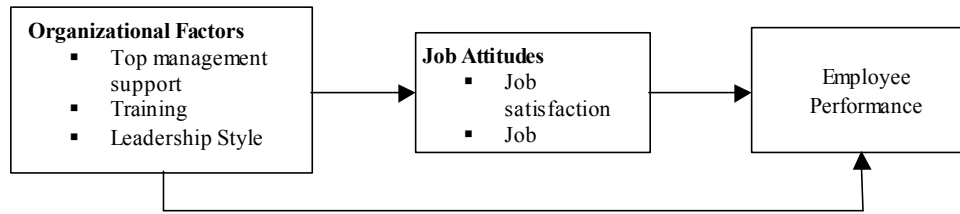


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

job performance. Attitude formation and attitude change theory suggests that cognitive evaluations of the events, outcomes and situations affect the individuals' affective reactions and in turn these determine the individual's behavior. In connection to above statement, an assessment of organizational factors like perceived management support, provision of training and leadership style influence employees' job satisfaction and involvement and as net effects of this relationship, employees' job behaviors are affected. Employees evaluate the organizational practices and develop the feelings about their organization (Kim, Tavitiyaman and Kim, 2009). Their feelings lead to form the attitude and emotional response towards (job satisfaction and job involvement) their jobs and attitude and emotional responses affect the individual's behaviors. The results of a study by Kim, Tavitiyaman and Kim (2009) [30] confirmed that job satisfaction significantly mediates on organizational factors (organizational support, training, reward system and empowerment) and service behaviors.

As has been discussed, perceived management support, provision of job related training and leadership style directed at primarily fulfilling employees' needs lead the employees to develop favorable attitudes and ultimately leading to superior performance at workplace. Thus, it is expected that:

H₄: Job attitudes significantly mediate on the relationship between organizational factors and job performance

Methodology: This study uses quantitative research approach. It mainly concentrated on public sector in Saudi Arabia, particularly, Ministries of Civil Services and Education. The scope of this current study deals with factors affecting employees' performance in the selected ministries to a get deeper understanding of individual's work performance and what strategies will be effective for public sector employees. For an in-depth analysis of the individual's performance phenomenon, variety of organizational factors (top management support, training and leadership style) and job related attitudes

(job satisfaction and job involvement) have been put in a single framework. The target population of the study consists of 385 managerial employees and representative sample were drawn through random sampling technique. Moreover, the data from the sampled groups were collected through self-administered questionnaire [31-35].

Findings: This section offers the analysis of the data. Demographics profile of the respondents is shown in the following two cross tabulations (managerial level, gender and qualification level). Based on the responses retrieved, the descriptive statistics of the demographics variables are provided in the following two tables below.

Table 1 presents the cross tabulation results of gender and management level of the respondents. Among the 385 retrieved responses, 375 respondents provided information on both categories. The results revealed that 183 (144 male and 39 female) respondents were holding top management position. One hundred and forty one respondents (103 male and 38 female) were in middle level management positions and 51 respondents (29 male and 22 female) were occupying the supervisory position.

Table 2 summarizes the results upon gender and education levels of the respondents. Among 385 respondents, total 383 respondents provided information on both categories. Large percentage (63%) of the respondents were holding bachelor degree, 23% were holding master degree, 7% were holding degree in master in business administration, 4% were holding PhD and 3% were holding professional certificate.

Mediating Effects of Job Attitudes on the Relationship Between Predictors and Performance: This section offers the statistical results in testing the mediating effects of job attitudes on predictors and employee's performance. In order to test the mediating hypotheses, Barron and Kenny (1986) procedure was followed. In cases where all four conditions of mediating test were met, are reported only. The mediating effects of job attitudes on the relationship between organizational factors and employee's performance are tested and significant results are reported in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 offers

Table 1: Gender and management level

		Management			Total
		Top management	Middle management	Supervisory	
Gender	Male	144	103	29	276
	Female	39	38	22	99
Total		183	141	51	375

Table 2: Gender and education level

		Education					Total
		Bachelor degree	Master Degree	MBA	PHD	Others	
Gender	Male	180	70	19	7	4	280
	Female	61	19	6	10	7	103
Total		241	89	25	17	11	383

Table 3: Mediating effects of job satisfaction on organizational factors and employee's performance

Relationships Tested	Model 1 β_1	Model 2 β_2	Model 3 β_3	β_4
Performance – Top management support	.29**			
Job satisfaction – Top management support		.26**		
Performance – Top management support + Job satisfaction			.14**	.58**
Performance – Training	.23**			
Job satisfaction – Training		.27**		
Performance – Training + Job satisfaction			.06	.60**
Performance – Leadership	.48**			
Job satisfaction – Leadership		.47**		
Performance – Leadership + Job satisfaction			.23**	.52**

** $p < 0.01$

β s are the standardized regression weights associated with predictors in estimating the criterion variables

Table 4: Mediating effects of job involvement on organizational factors and employee's performance

Relationships Tested	Model 1 β_1	Model 2 β_2	Model 3 β_3	β_4
Performance – Top management support	.29**			
Job involvement – Top management support		.22**		
Performance – Top management support + Job involvement			.23**	.28**
Performance – Training	.23**			
Job involvement – Training		.13**		
Performance – Training + Job involvement			.19**	.30**
Performance – Leadership	.48**			
Job involvement – Leadership		.14**		
Performance – Leadership + Job involvement			.44**	.26**

** $p < 0.01$

β s are the standardized regression weights associated with predictors in estimating the criterion variables

the results of job satisfaction on the relationship between organizational factors (top management support, training and leadership style) and employee's performance.

The results offered in the above table show the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between organizational factors and employee's performance. These results indicate that in all three cases, job satisfaction has significantly mediated on this relationship. Looking into the significance levels of beta coefficients of organizational factors and job satisfaction,

the partial mediating effects of job satisfaction are found in of cases of relationship between top management support and performance and leadership and performance. However, in case of relationship between training and employee's performance, job satisfaction has fully mediated on this relationship.

Table 4 presents the results of mediating effects of job involvement on the relationship between organizational factors and employee's performance. These results indicate that in all three cases, job

involvement has significantly mediated the relationships. For the follow up analysis, the significance levels of beta coefficients of organizational factors and job involvement reveal that in all three cases, partial mediating effects of job involvement are found.

CONCLUSION

The results regarding the effects of organizational factors on employee's attitudes have shown the significant and positive effects. These results strongly corroborate the hypothesized relationships that organizational practices greatly affect the employee's attitudes and play major role in forming the favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards the jobs.

Looking into the effect sizes, job satisfaction is greatly influenced by the organizational factors than job involvement. Further, in case of job satisfaction, leadership style has the greater impact on job satisfaction ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) than top management support ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) and training ($\beta = .27, p < .001$). These results suggest that the leader and employees are in close contacts with each other and therefore, the job satisfaction of an employee largely depends on the way leadership is given to him. Besides the leadership style, top management support and training are also found the necessary elements of an employee job satisfaction.

Same also holds true in case of job involvement. However, the top management ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) has the high impact on the job involvement than training ($\beta = .13, p < .001$) and leadership style ($\beta = .14, p < .001$). These results suggest that when top management provides the necessary resources and facilities to employees then employees also show the greater involvement in carrying out their tasks. These results regarding the direct effects further suggest that job involvement may also depends on the job satisfaction and job satisfaction lead to the job involvement and hence, mediating effects of job satisfaction on different factors and job involvement would better clarify this relationship.

This research is aimed at identifying the specific organizational factors expected to play important role in the performance of an employee and that help increasing the outcome of the organization. It is, therefore, important as it measures the effects of the organizational factors through job related attitudes on performance in the public sector organizations in Saudi Arabia. This is a pioneer study and can be considered as a valuable contribution in this field. Further, identifying factors that influence the performance of the organization will help the organization to understand the tools required to develop strategies

focused on the employees' attitude and organizational environment. The suggested model of this study will add to the theory new integration among the selected variables that expected enriches the existing body of knowledge. As diversified cultural element is a reality for most of the organizations in Saudi Arabia, therefore, organizations need to implement the effective human resource (HR) strategies that focus on the improvement of the commitment and the development of competent worker. HR strategies are required to concentrate on development of managers' skills and knowledge while efforts are also needed towards improving creativity and initiative among the workers.

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