

Impact of Sustainable HRM Practices on Employee Performance: A Study of Employees in a Selected Private Sector Company in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Private sector plays a distinct role in Sri Lankan economy at the present context. Lack of employee performance is one of the major challenging problems faced by the private sector organizations. Private sector organizations incur a huge investment on improving employee performances and introduce novel HRM practices in order to improve employee performance. Sustainable HRM is also such a novel concept aimed at improving employee performance with sustainable outcomes. The major objective of conducting this study is to investigate current sustainable HRM practices and to identify the impact of those sustainable HRM practices on employee performance in one of the leading broiler companies in Sri Lanka. Based on the objectives of the study, semi structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 100 employees through simple random sampling and the collected data was analyzed descriptively and statistically. Sustainable recruitment and selection, sustainable training and development and sustainable motivation and rewards were considered as the major factors to identify the existing sustainable HRM practices in the company and to test the willingness of employees for implementing sustainable HRM practices. Findings of the study reveal that all the selected sustainable HRM practices were existed within the company and employees were willing to practice, except the practices which are related with advanced technology. In case of impact identification of sustainable HRM practices on employee performance, sustainable recruitment and selection have a significant negative impact. Sustainable motivation and rewards have a significant positive impact on employee performance. In case of identifying the constraints for practicing sustainable HRM practices in the company, lack of knowledge was identified as the most affecting constraint. Consequently, the results of this study may give policy implications for the company to enhance employee performance with sustainable HRM practices while expanding existing literature on sustainable HRM in Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Employee performance, Sustainable HRM, Sustainable motivation and rewards, Sustainable recruitment and selection, Sustainable training and development

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

Within the current global context, managing human resources is challenged due to globalization, demographic changes, technological development, changes in educational background of employees and in their expectations regarding working conditions, work-life balance. Work stress, work life balance, employee burnout are some extremely relevant challenges in the human resource field (Stankeviciute & Savaneviciene, 2014). Within the Sri Lankan context, ageing of labor force, increasing demand for skills due to globalization and technological changes, underutilization of highly skilled workers, low training opportunities for adults and underutilization of science and technology workers are extreme human resource challenges (Arunatilake & Lanka, 2013). Above mentioned evidences lead to reconsider the HRM practices within the companies in worldwide, to get the contribution of human resources for further running of their business in future (Stankeviciute & Savaneviciene, 2018). As per De Prins et.al (2014), some scholars argue that sustainable HRM could serve as a possible solution for bringing humanity back into HRM, while sustainability refers to resource regeneration, development, and renewal. Sustainable HRM highlights the importance of HR practices for organizational outcomes that go beyond financial performance.

Employee performance is defined as “the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to his or her peers, on several job-related behaviors and outcomes” (Greenidge & Coyne, 2014). A study of Nadarajah et al. (2012) demonstrated a direct and positive connection among HRM practices and job performance. The current study examines the impact of sustainable HRM practices on employee performance by focusing on three sustainable HRM practices including sustainable recruitment and selection, sustainable training and development and sustainable motivation and rewards.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research study is to examine the impact of sustainable HRM practices on employee performances. Specific objectives are; to explore the existing sustainable HRM practices of the company, to explore the willingness of employees to establish sustainable HRM practices and to analyze the constraints and challenges in the company for implementing sustainable HRM practices.

Research Problem

Crysbro Group of Companies is a leading company in the poultry industry of Sri Lanka which was established in 1972. It consists six BOI companies including around 1500 employees. They were practicing traditional strategic HRM practices within the company and later they were observed a discrepancy between the potential performance and actual performances (Company report, n.a). In that scenario they have shifted to sustainable HRM practices which are aimed at improving employee performance with sustainable outcomes. Therefore, this study is attempted to identifying those sustainable HRM practices and their impact on employee performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sustainable HRM Practices

By integrating sustainability into HRM, a new branch was emerged as Sustainable HRM (Opatha,2019). The word sustainability means “longer” or “durable”; it means that what you do today has a positive effect on tomorrow. According to Ehnert et al. (2016), Sustainable HRM is referred as “the adaption of HRM strategies and practices that enables the achievement of financial, social, and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organization and over a long-term time horizon, while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback”. Ehnert (2008) states sustainable HRM is aimed at attracting and retaining motivated and talented employees as well as providing them with a healthy work environment and opportunities to develop. According to him, sustainable HRM is another option for employment relationships and it contributes to corporate development.

According to Paille et al. (2014), sustainable HRM contributes to improve green performance of staff members and has direct and indirect effects on the organization and employees. As per Wikhamn (2019), customer satisfaction in Swedish hotels has positively affected with sustainable HRM practices within the organizations and sustainable HRM practices have played a significant role in enhancing the organizational performance. Guerci et al. (2014) viewed sustainable HRM from the stakeholder perspective. According to him, HRM practices are challenged with the integration of growing number of stakeholders’ needs and to aid the long-term viability of organizations, organizations keep gradually adopting a stakeholder perspective in their sustainability strategy, an HRM function that operates solely towards the value creating for the bottom-line employees. Manzoor et al. (2019) revealed that the sustainable HR Practices, i.e. selection, training, participation, and employee empowerment,

have a significant and positive effect on job performance and training has a positive moderating role on job performance. A study of Arman (2017), assess how these various instruments of sustainable HRM create an impact on the organizational performance. According to him, human resource recruitment and selection, human resource marketing and disemployment have positive impact on organizational performance.

Sustainable Recruitment and Selection

Employee selection is an important activity in organizations and aims to assess individual characteristics which are considered as important in predicting applicants' future effectiveness as employees and also it is an important practice which selects right employees with necessary characteristics for the organization (Manzoor et al.,2019). Recruitment and selection of a new employee is costly for an organization and obviously it is a lengthy process. To eliminate the unwanted costs related with recruitment and selection, sustainable recruitment and selection is used which goes beyond traditional recruitment and selection. According to Kepha et al. (2014), recruitment and selection affects personal performance of employees and the relationship between recruitment and selection and employee performance was highly significant. Manzoor et al. (2019) have investigated that sustainable selection process is positively related with employee performance. Mwitwa and Kinemo (2018) found that green recruitment and selection practices contribute in attracting more qualified job candidates.

Sustainable Training and Development

Training is organized attempt of which an employee is trying to acquire efficient performance in activities. Development is a process of planning and preparing employees for future challenges. Sustainable training and development help to correct the behaviors of employees as well as help in adopting in new technologies (Khan et al., 2016).

Sustainable Motivation and Rewards

Motivation is a force that enables an individual to act towards a particular goal. It is meant to facilitate behavior alteration of individuals (Shahzadi et al., 2014). Asim (2013) has concluded that employee performances are enhanced with employee motivation. A study of Shahzadi et al. (2014) has showed a significant positive relationship between employee motivation and employee performance. Rewards have positive impact on employee performance in organizations because rewards increase the work efficiency of workers of the organization

(Ajila & Abiola, 2004). Rewards promote the happiness and job satisfaction and thereby employee performances (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008). Monetary and nonmonetary rewards motivate the workers of any organization and these rewards also resulted in higher growth and productivity (Reio & Callahan, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis of the Study

Previous researchers have found that there is a relationship between sustainable HRM practices and employee performance (Manzoor et.al, 2015) and in order examine the impact of sustainable HRM practices on employee performance, following hypothesis were developed by considering the measures taken to implement sustainable HRM practices within organizations.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between sustainable recruitment and selection and the employee performance

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between sustainable training and development and the employee performance

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between sustainable motivation rewards and the employee performance

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework summarizes the relationship between sustainable HRM practices and employee performance.

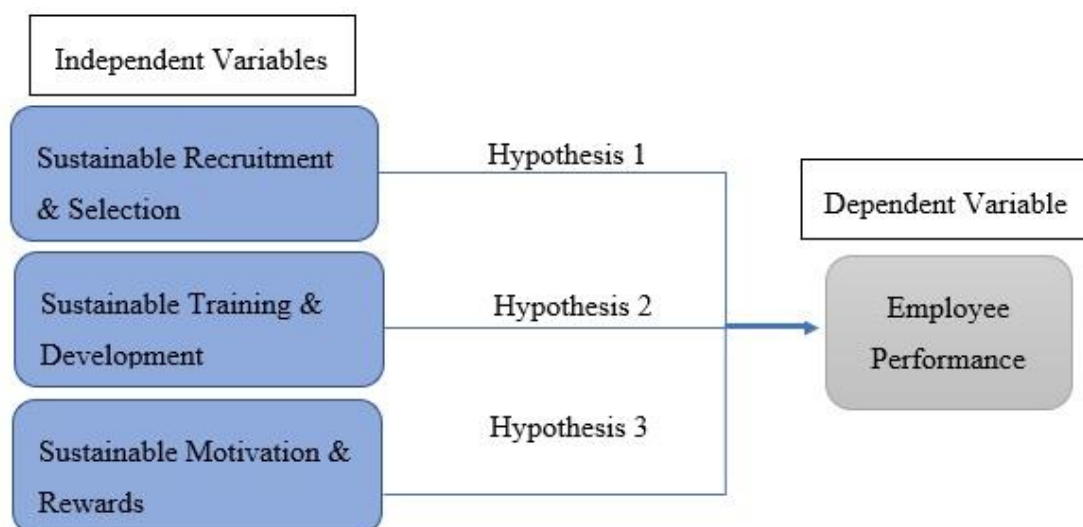


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's own data, (2020)

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

All the direct employees (1586) who currently work in the company were selected as the population. Total sample size was 100 employees. As the sampling technique, simple random sampling was used with the support of the EPF numbers of the employees.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a survey with the guidance of a pre tested questionnaire. Secondary data was obtained through journals, articles, reports, books, research articles, web pages and internet which were related to the study.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 (IBM: Chicago, USA) was used for data preparation and data analysis. For inferential analysis Wilcoxon signed rank test, Multiple linear regression analysis and Friedman test were used. Reliability of the collected data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha value. This study has identified main three sustainable HRM practices carried out within the firm with the basic involvement of Human Resource department in the Crysbro company: Sustainable Recruitment and Selection, sustainable Training and Development and sustainable Motivation and Rewards. Those practices were considered as the main three variables to investigate the existing sustainable HRM practices within the company and to test the willingness of employees on sustainable HRM practices. Cronbach's alpha for sustainable recruitment & selection, sustainable training & development and sustainable motivation & rewards were 0.781, 0.829 and 0.825 respectively.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS**Inferential Data Analysis****Exploration of Existing Sustainable HRM Practices in the Company and Exploration of Willingness of Employees on Existing Sustainable HRM Practices:****Sustainable Recruitment and Selection:****Table 1: Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Sustainable Recruitment and Selection**

Sub variable	Existence in the company				Willingness of employees			
	Mean	P value	Test value	Decision	Mean	P value	Test value	Decision
Online advertisements for recruitment	1.06	0.000	7.16	Online advertisements are used for recruitment	0.60	0.000	6.39	Willing to practice
Online applications are called for first screening	0.91	0.000	6.55	For first screening, online applications are called	0.56	0.000	6.18	Willing to practice
Online reference checking is done	0.39	0.000	3.74	Online reference checking is done	0.23	0.000	2.95	Willing to practice
Usage of Teleconferencing for interviews	1.05	0.000	6.80	Teleconferencing is used for interviews	0.73	0.000	8.01	Willing to practice
Usage of Video conferencing for interviews	-0.35	0.002	-3.06	Video conferencing is not used for interviews	-0.04	0.564	-0.57	Not significant

Significance level = 0.05

Source: Author's own data, (2020)

According to the Table 1, five sub variables of sustainable recruitment & selection are significant ($p < 0.05$) in terms of existence within the company. Usage of online advertisements

for recruitment, usage of online applications for first screening, doing online reference checking, usage of Teleconferencing for interviews are practiced within the company and usage of Video conferencing for interviews is not practiced. In terms of willingness of employees on sustainable recruitment & selection practices, four practices among five are significant and employees are willing to practice those four practices. Willingness on usage of teleconferencing for interviews is insignificant. Results shows that highly technical factors such as using video conferencing for interviews are not practiced within the company and also employees are not willing to practice. The findings on teleconferencing align with Hing lo at el. (2014), that the company employees in Limburg show a favorable attitude towards teleconferencing. The findings on video conferencing contrast with Denstadli et al. (2012), the findings of that 68% of employees have the access to video conferencing systems in Norway.

Sustainable Training and Development:

Table 2: Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Sustainable Training and Development

Sub variable	Existence in the company				Willingness of employees			
	Mean	P value	Test value	Decision	Mean	P value	Test value	Decision
Individual training needs are identified by the company	0.83	0.000	7.78	Company identifies the individual training needs	0.72	0.000	8.49	Willing to practice
Individuals are having regular training schedules	0.59	0.000	6.65	Individuals are having regular training schedules	0.40	0.000	5.89	Willing to practice
Group training is practiced	1.31	0.000	8.67	Group training is practiced	0.77	0.000	8.56	Willing to practice
Cross functional training is practiced	0.46	0.000	6.20	Cross functional training is practiced	0.23	0.000	3.59	Willing to practice

Trainers are selected from within the company	1.37	0.000	8.74	Trainers are selected from within the company	0.67	0.000	7.26	Willing to practice
Web seminars are holding	-0.51	0.000	-4.68	Web seminars are not holding	-0.43	0.000	-5.10	Willing to practice
Online courses have to be followed	-0.81	0.000	-5.99	No online courses have to be followed by the employees	-0.44	0.000	-5.18	Willing to practice

Significance level = 0.05

Source: Author's own data, (2020)

According to the Table 2, all the sub variables (factors) of sustainable training & development are significant ($p < 0.05$) in terms of existence in the company and willingness of employees to implement. Identifying individual training needs, having regular training schedules, practicing group training, practicing cross functional training and selecting trainers from within the company are existing within the company as well as employees are willing to implement. But holding web seminars and following online courses are not practiced within the company as well as employees are not willing to implement. Accordingly, it is clear that sustainable training & development factors like web seminars and online courses, which need a higher IT knowledge and resources are not practiced within the company and employees are also not willing to practice them. Malik et al. (2015), indicate that willingness on web seminars based on perceived ease of use and computer self-efficacy of employees.

Sustainable Motivation and Rewards:

Table 3: Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Sustainable Motivation and Rewards

Sub variable	Existence in the company				Willingness of employees			
	Mean	P value	Test value	Decision	Mean	P value	Test value	Decision

Career advancement opportunities	1.48	0.00	8.54	Career advancement opportunities are existing in the company	0.98	0.00	9.89	Willing to practice
Autonomy over employees'	1.56	0.00	8.78	Autonomy over employees' job existing	0.99	0.00	9.95	Willing to practice
Leadership opportunities	1.20	0.00	8.12	Leadership opportunities are existing	0.89	0.00	9.43	Willing to practice
Job simplification	1.54	0.00	8.86	Job simplification is done	0.99	0.00	9.95	Willing to practice
Recognition and accomplishment for employees	1.67	0.00	9.02	Recognition and accomplishment are existing	0.99	0.00	9.95	Willing to practice
Work-life balance	1.33	0.00	8.09	Work-life balance is given	0.93	0.00	9.44	Willing to practice
Superiors listen to the ideas of employees	1.04	0.00	7.02	Superiors are listening to the ideas of employees	0.99	0.00	9.95	Willing to practice
Employee can affect the decisions affect over him	0.37	0.00	2.81	Employee can affect the decisions which affect over him		0.00	9.79	Willing to practice

Significance level = 0.05

Source: Author's own data, (2020)

According to the Table 3, all the sub variable of sustainable motivation and rewards are significant ($p < 0.05$) in terms of existence in the company and willingness of employees to implement. Also, all the sub variables are existing within the company and employees are willing to implement.

Identification of the Impact of Sustainable HRM Practices on Employee Performance:

Similar variables were considered for the impact identification of sustainable HRM practices on employee performance. Employee performance was measured using three criteria; job efficiency, employee satisfaction and employee motivation in lining with the research of Muda et al. (2014). Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the variables and determine their effect on the performance of employees. Assumptions of multiple linear regression were tested and all of them were valid. Sustainable recruitment & selection, sustainable training & development and sustainable motivation & rewards were regressed on employee performance to identify how they influence on employee performance. Table 4 below shows the coefficients of regression.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.235	.089		13.922	.000
1 SRS	-.161	.074	-.360	-2.178	.032
STD	.044	.102	.066	.434	.665
SMR	.411	.081	.645	5.093	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance; (where SMR = sustainable motivation & rewards, STD = sustainable training & development, SRS = sustainable recruitment & selection and EP = employee performance)

Source: Author's own data, (2020)

According to the Table 4, sustainable recruitment & selection has a significant impact on employee performance ($p < 0.05$) and as shown by standard coefficient beta ($\beta = -0.360$) the impact on employee performance is negative. The result disagrees with the finding of Manzoor et al. (2019), which indicates that selection has a significant positive impact on employee performance. According to the results, the first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) has to be rejected. Sustainable training & development has no significant impact on employee performance as $p > 0.05$. The result disagrees with the finding of Manzoor et al. (2019), which indicates that training has a moderate positive impact on employee performance. Rusdi et al. (2017) in a similar study found that technological training has significant relationship with employees' performance. Abualoush et al.'s (2018) findings indicate that an employee's knowledge in a particular technology or innovation impacts on his or her performance. As per the results, the second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) also has to be rejected. Sustainable motivation & rewards has a significant impact on employee performance ($p < 0.05$) and as shown by standard coefficient beta ($\beta = 0.645$) the impact on employee performance is positive. The results are consistent with the findings of Siddiqui and Rida (2019) and Edirisooriya (2018), which indicates that motivation and rewards has a significant positive impact on employee performance. According to the results, the third hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) has to be accepted.

Analysis of the Constraints and Challenges in the Company for Implementing Sustainable HRM Practices:

Five major constrains and challenges for implementing sustainable HRM practices were identified including lack of knowledge, lack of technology, organizational rules & regulations, lack of resources and lack of skills & abilities. Respondents were asked to rank them from one to five upon the perception of them. The ranked data were analyzed using Friedman test. According to the test statistics of Friedman test, the p value is 0.000 and chi-square value 160.831, constraints are statistically significant. According to the mean ranks of Friedman test lack of knowledge was the most affecting constraint. Second affecting constraint was lack of skills and abilities. Third affecting constraint was lack of technology. Fourth affecting constraint was lack of resources and least affecting constraint was organizational rules and regulations.

CONCLUSION

The study was carried out in a one private sector company in Sri Lanka with considering three sustainable HRM practices. According to the findings of the study all most all tested sustainable HRM practices are available and willing to be implemented in the company, except the practices which require high IT knowledge and resources (practices like using video conferencing for interviews, holding web seminars and online courses). Highly practiced sustainable recruitment & selection practice is the usage of online advertisements for recruitment. Highly practiced sustainable training & development practice is selection of trainers from within the company. Highly practices sustainable motivation & rewards practice is giving recognition and accomplishment for employees. From the selected sustainable HRM practices, sustainable recruitment & selection has a significant negative impact on employee performance, sustainable training & development has no significant impact on employee performance and sustainable motivation & rewards has a significant positive impact on employee performance. From among the identified constraints for practicing sustainable HRM practices, lack of knowledge was the most affecting constraint.

There were few empirical limitations of this study. Use of one private sector company for the analysis was the major limitation. This has limited the possibility of generating accurate conclusion for whole private sector is limited. Future research studies are recommended to include more private sector companies as well as public sector organizations. Selecting only three sustainable HRM practices was another limitation. Future researches are encouraged to consider other HRM practices including employee empowerment, employee participation, pay for performance, fair evaluation systems etc.

IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

It is recommended that the management of the organization need to revise its sustainable HRM practices by considering employee problems, identifying them and confronting the inequities they face. According to the results gained for existence and willingness on sustainable HRM practices, technical knowledge and IT knowledge of all employees have to be improved in order to practice highly technical sustainable HRM practices such as video conferencing, web seminars and online courses. It was observed that the education level of production sector employees is below than other sectors and company should implement new policies and programs which are aimed at enhancing knowledge on IT and sustainable HRM practices especially focusing on production sector employees. As the Impact of sustainable training and

development on employee performance is not significant, the training and development practices have to be revised by the means of using new sustainable training and development practices instead of existing practices.

When considering the significance of the study, the prior evidence on sustainable HRM in Sri Lankan context is significantly limited. This study has explored sustainable HRM practices and their impact on employee performance in Crysbro group of companies which is one of the leading companies in the broiler industry in Sri Lanka. This study is going to be a significant end over in the improvement of existing literature on sustainable HRM in Sri Lanka as well as the impact on sustainable HRM practices on employee performance.

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