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THE IMPACT OF ABILITY-ENHANCING HRM PRACTICES ON PERCEIVED INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE IN IT INDUSTRY IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

The Human Resource Management is usually the source of sustainable competitiveness in the constantly changing environment and business world. There is no doubt about the impact of the HRM tools and HRM practices on performance. HRM practices can be clustered into the bundles according the model AMO, focusing on the abilities, motivation and opportunities to perform. This paper tests the correlation between the ability-enhancing HRM practices and the determinants of the individual performance. The research was conducted in IT industry in Slovak Republic with the aim to understand the relationships between HRM practices and individual performance. The outcome provides an important message for the HR management in order to influence and manage employee performance with the focus to create competitive advantage of the organization.

Key words: Human resource management practices, Training and development, Employee performance model AMO, ability

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Introduction

Human resource management represents the most important part of the strategic management of every organization. It is impossible to achieve objectives and create revenue without having skilled and qualified workforce. Even nowadays, when we all live in a VUCA environment and all the circumstances around are changing constantly. Most of the organizations face the lack of talented employees and they create various learning programs in order to fill these gaps.

Organizations need to focus on proper set and managed HRM practices, in order to fulfil their goals and create competitive advantage.

HRM practices and its impact on employee performance have been studied for years, with various important outcomes. There is an excellent and structured framework that provides a better understanding of the relationship between HRM and performance, called the AMO model (Marin-Garcia and Martinez-Tomas, 2016). AMO theories describe that optimal performance arises from a combination of three key elements: ability (A), motivation (M) and opportunity (O) (Blumberg and Pringle, 1982; Tian et al., 2016). According to the model, people perform well when they have the capabilities, they have the adequate motivation, and their work environment provides opportunities to participate (Boselie, 2014; Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Choi, 2014; Marin-Garcia and Martinez-Tomas, 2016).

The research focuses on the selected bundle of HRM practices using the model AMO and their impact on individual performance in IT industry in Slovakia. . This industry has huge potential for the future, also in the Slovak Republic. Based on statistics, it is employing more than 78000 employees and brings huge contribution into GDP of the country. There are more and more companies trying to join the IT market, as they all see the knowledge potential of employees and students in Slovakia. There is a big need of talented and qualified employees in this industry. Organizations can influence their performance by having the right employees in the right job, supported by implemented HRM practices.

Theoretical background

The AMO model is comprised of basic concepts of psychology (Kroon et al., 2013), which are related to three systems that shape individual characteristics: ensuring that employees have the appropriate abilities, motivating employees to enhance discretionary behaviour, and empowering them toward organizational outcomes (Harney & Jordan, 2008).

Ability dimension is usually defined by the acronym KSA (knowledge, skills and abilities) (Fu, Flood, Bosak, Morris & O'Regan, 2013). Ability-enhancing practices aim to improve those three components. Examples of these practices are employee recruitment techniques or formal training (Kroon et al., 2013; Raidén et al., 2006).

Ability is the group of all kind of behaviour that employees have to use in their job to be able to manage working task competently (Kubeš, 2004). It can be defined as the ability to transform inner skills into visible outcome. Abilities are crucial personal characteristics that lead to effective and excellent performance (Armstrong, 2007). Abilities can be defined also as the set of skills and behaviour that organizations expects to be used by employee job performance (Rankin, 2002).

Organizations use the abilities by managing employee performance, training and development, selection process and remuneration (Armstrong, 2007). The abilities represent the basics in terms of the employee performance. Employee needs to be skilled, needs to have some knowledge and experience to be able to fulfil the tasks. Abilities are basic determinants for employee performance. Organizations place great emphasis on training and development of their executive employees since all abilities and competencies can be developed, including social intelligence. All this affects the overall process of HRM. Therefore, it is inevitable that

companies should apply HRM practices focused on ability-enhancing should be applied in the organizations to be more competitive.

Employee performance is determined by employee effort as well as the skills and the level of identification with the tasks performed. This is usually evaluated based on selected criteria related to job requirements, goals of the job, specific job tasks, working environment and conditions and job position in the organization. This all requires an effort, commitment, focus, using all gained skills, knowledge, experience, learning type and approach, attitude and mindset, personal characteristics, using know-how, motivation and many other elements impacting the performance outcome (Vetráková, 2007). Besides, the individual personality and manager's approach to leading and managing people is an important factor influencing the individual's performance. Previously, organizational, planning and decision-making abilities played a key role in people management, while at the present, social competencies are preferred more often (Korauš et al. 2016).

The employee performance is influenced by objective and subjective factors that are described as follows (Armstrong, 2007):

- a) Individual factors – professional and personal competencies and motivation:
 - Individual determinants – professional skills, qualification, physical and mental skills , personal characteristics
 - Reactions on impulses from environment
 - The level, scope and articulation of cognitive processes and complex learning approach
 - Attitudes to work, morale profile and value system, interests
 - Motivational dimension (needs, desires, interests, aspirations)
 - Perception of social status and impact on co-workers

- b) Objective factors – support of the organization:
 - Working conditions – economic, organizational structure, technical equipment, technology
 - Working environment – working space, physical working conditions
 - Socio-mental conditions
 - Management and leadership

Employee performance is affected also by proper job content, heterogeneity, autonomy of employees, regular constructive feedback and social interaction among the employees that lead to employee satisfaction, higher working engagement and commitment as well as knowledge sharing. Higher the autonomy of the employee is, the higher impact of individual factors on employee performance shows, and the less impact of organizational factors plays an important role (Armstrong, 2007; van Wijk et al., 2008).

Human Resource Management Practices can be briefly described as standardized and formally processed programs in area of Human Resource Management in organizations. Those practices

contribute to successful strategy implementation mainly in the area of recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration, employee life cycle management and many other HRM processes (Kachaňáková et al, 2011; Mura, Horvath, 2015).

The studies vary which practices have the most impact on employee performance, mostly because different bundles of HRM practices used in the researches. Some of the studies (e.g. Chang and Chen, 2011) assume that employee work-related skills and competences are the main determinant of the employee productivity. Ability relates to performance primarily through job knowledge, and high-ability workers tend to demonstrate higher performance because they acquire and apply job-relevant knowledge better than those with lower level of ability (Van Iddekinge et al., 2017). Prior empirical studies provided support for the relevance of employees' abilities (A) to increase their job performance (Liao et al., 2009). These studies assume that employee performance depends on the extent to which employees are able to fully exploit their skills at work (Bos-Nehles et al., 2013). The abilities are considered as essential part influencing employee performance.

Several authors have proposed that HR practices could be classified according to the same three-dimensions, distinguishing among three HR bundles: ability-enhancing HR bundle, motivation-enhancing HR bundle and the opportunity-enhancing HR bundle (Bailey, 1993; Appelbaum et al., 2000; Lepak et al., 2006). Each bundle represents a combination of HR practices that share the same purpose. Ability-enhancing practices include comprehensive recruitment, rigorous selection and extensive training (Jiang et al., 2012).

Training and development is a function within Human Resources management used to fulfil the gaps between current and expected performance (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Nassazi, 2013). Training is focused on improving the skills necessary for accomplishing organizational goals (Elnaga & Imran, 2013), since it expands the efficiency of individuals, groups, and organizations (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). The concept of development can be seen as gaining new abilities and skills for personal growth (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013), it may also be seen as a broader concept. It may be seen as the holistic, long-term growth of individuals in order to perform future roles and responsibilities (Nassazi, 2013). When organizations provide the resources necessary to perform a job, individuals become satisfied with their job and will become more productive, while the organization becomes more successful (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013).

There are various way to develop employees, most often trainings are used, mentoring, lectures and knowledge sharing. In recent years, an important area of research has focused on information competence, security threats, sharing tacit knowledge and demonstrating its practical significance (Baričičová 2018; Ivančík 2020; Kazanský, Ivančík 2018). The leaders of organisations do not appreciate the importance of this behaviour appropriately and consider it to be a harmful organisational feature rather than an exploitable possibility (Bencsik et al., 2019).

Material and methods

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the relationship between ability-enhancing HRM practices and the employee performance in IT industry in Slovakia.

The research on impact of HRM practices according to AMO model has not been conducted yet in the IT industry in the Slovak Republic. This industry is based on the technology and knowledge, so we focused on the ability-enhancing HRM practices to study in this research.

The research was conducted in IT companies of various size in terms of employees in Slovakia. From the max number of employees in IT industry in 2018 in SR, N=67 600 employees, we calculated minimum size of research sample as 382 respondents, if $z = 1,96$ (z-score); $e = 0,05$ (error range; percentage in decimal form). Finally, we had 393 responses on the questionnaire survey to obtain primary data and information.

Considering the methodology applied, we have chosen a mixed approach in the empirical part of this contribution. We used a questionnaire survey to obtain primary data and information. A five-point Likert scale was used ranging the respondents' answers from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire survey was completed with the basic scientific methods of research e.g. description, deduction, induction, synthesis, analysis and comparison. In order to make the results easier to understand and transparent, we have also applied a graphic apparatus in the form of tables and pictures. The data from survey questionnaire was processed by statistical software Statistica 13.5 EN. At the end of the paper, we provide suggestions and recommendations for everyday practice.

We tested the hypothesis:

H: A significant positive relationship can be detected between the ability-enhancing HRM practices and the perceived individual performance.

Based on the theoretical analysis of employee-performance indicators, we selected the following bundle of determinants that was used in the research.

1. Professional knowledge
2. Quality of the work done
3. Performance over the set targets
4. Result orientation
5. Customer orientation
6. Company values' orientation
7. Ability to work in team
8. Time keeping /accuracy
9. Adaptability, flexibility
10. Communication skills
11. Stress resistance, resilience
12. Development potential
13. Job experience
14. Relevant praxis

Another bundle for testing was represented by the ability-enhancing HRM practices:

1. Recruitment
2. Selection
3. Training & Development

To test the hypothesis, we used the statistical method called canonical-correlation analysis. As we had two bundles of variables, this method was the best to use. We had two vectors $X = (X_1, \dots, X_n)$ and $Y = (Y_1, \dots, Y_m)$ of random variables. We wanted to test the correlations among the variables, then applied canonical-correlation analysis to find linear combinations of X and Y which have maximum correlation with each other.

A chi-square test, also written as χ^2 test was also used for testing hypothesis. This test is a statistical hypothesis test that is valid when the test statistic is chi-square distributed under the null hypothesis, specifically Pearson's chi-square test and variants thereof. The Pearson's chi-square test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the expected frequencies and the observed frequencies in one or more categories of a contingency table.

Results and discussion

The main findings of the testing hypothesis are showed in following tables.

Table 1: Canonical analysis summary

N=393	Canonical Analysis Summary (DATA) Canonical R: ,52677 Chi2(42)=156,13 p=0,0000	
	Left Set	Right Set
No. of variables	3	14
Variance extracted	100,000%	36,4388%
Total redundancy	14,1805%	7,46484%
Variables: 1	Recruitment	Professional knowledge
2	Selection	Quality of the work done
3	Training & Development	Performance over the set targets
4		Result orientation
5		Customer orientation
6		Company values' orientation
7		Ability to work in team
8		Time keeping /Accuracy
9		Adaptability & Flexibility
10		Communication skills
11		Stress resistance, resilience
12		Development potential

13		Job experience
14		Relevant praxis

Source: outcome of software STATISTICA 13.5 EN

The total redundancy shows the size of correlation between the variables on left side (7,4648%) and right side (14,1805%). This value differs from canonical R^2 . The redundancy can be described that the values are based on all canonical variables and roots, so 14 determinants of individual performance. The results of testing show that there exists a relatively weak correlation between the bundles of variables. According to Cohen (1988), an absolute value of r of 0.1 is classified as small; an absolute value of 0.3 is classified as medium and of 0.5 is classified as large. We can state that the correlation between the ability-enhancing HRM practices and the determinants of individual performance is **large**.

Referring to the reached significance level of canonical correlation coefficient $p = 0.000$, we could state that there exists a significant relationship between the ability-enhancing HRM practices and the perceived individual performance, on the set level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$.

The hypothesis was proved.

Table 2: Chi-Square tests

Root Removed	Chi-Square Tests with Successive Roots Removed (DATA)					
	Canoniel R	Canoniel R-sqr.	Chi-sqr.	df	p	Lambda Prime
0	0,526771	0,277488	156,1337	42	0,000000*	0,665205
1	0,214310	0,045929	31,6507	26	0,205054	0,920684
2	0,187070	0,034995	13,6433	12	0,324115	0,965005

* - significant on level 5 %.

Source: outcome of software STATISTICA 13.5 EN

Based on the data in Table 2, testing is significant on the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. In the 2nd row, the first and the most significant root was cleared and the next tests are not significant. We closed the testing with the result that only canonical root U1 and V1 are significant. This can be confirmed also by Figure 1, Cattel's index.

The next testing was done for factor structure for left set of variables. Based on the canonical roots testing outcomes in Table 2, we will analyse only the first root, Table 3.

Table 3: Factor structure, left set

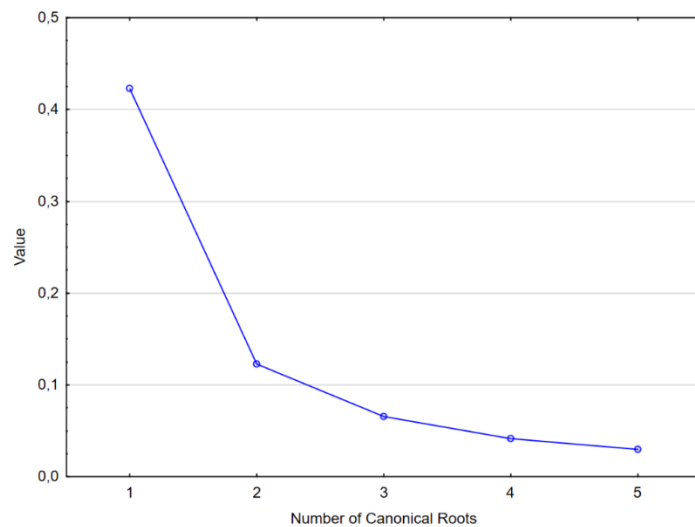
Root Variable	Factor Structure, left set (DATA)		
	Root 1	Root 2	Root 3
Recruitment	0,465918	-0,230474	0,854285*
Selection	0,562442	0,825426*	0,048279
Training & Development	0,865275*	-0,369566	-0,338704

* - significant on level 5 %.

Source: outcome of software STATISTICA 13.5 EN

According the Table 3, only Training & Development correlates with the first canonical root. We see that the variable „Recruitment” correlates with the “Root 2” and the variable “Selection” correlates with “Root 3”. Based on the Root tests we know, that Root2 and Root3 are not significant, we do not consider this as a result.

Figure 1: Cattell's index



Source: outcome of software STATISTICA 13.5 EN

Table 4: Factor structure, right set

Root Variable	Factor Structure, right set (DATA)		
	Root 1	Root 2	Root 3
Professional knowledge	0,470924	-0,029542	-0,473262
Quality of the work done	0,212935	0,303298	-0,140473
Performance over the set targets	0,566600*	-0,258712	0,029019

Result orientation	0,565339*	-0,232713	-0,355160
Customer orientation	0,568200*	-0,210265	0,282239
Company values' orientation	0,548887*	-0,041492	0,220066
Ability to work in team	0,593652*	0,083565	-0,108570
Time keeping /Accuracy	0,580555*	0,324202	0,023345
Adaptability & Flexibility	0,427450	-0,040695	-0,366146
Communication skills	0,351646	-0,256382	0,322714
Stress resistance, resilience	0,463219	-0,418502	-0,272521
Development potential	0,623594*	0,162963	0,043450
Job experience	0,440028	-0,259668	0,043724
Relevant praxis	0,464624	0,142413	-0,067898

* - significant on level 5 %.

Source: outcome of software STATISTICA 13.5 EN

Factor structure in the right set of variable testing is seen in Table 4. "Root1" shows relatively higher correlation values by following determinants of perceived individual performance: Customer orientation, Result orientation, Company values' orientation, Ability to work in team, Adaptability & Flexibility, Time keeping/Accuracy and Development potential.

Table 5: Correlations between right and left set of variables

Variable	Correlations, left set with right set (DATA)		
	Recruitment	Selection	Training & Development
Professional knowledge	0,041406	0,130024	0,246974*
Quality of the work done	0,014831	0,115472	0,081935
Performance over the set targets	0,156478	0,122368	0,276909*
Result orientation	0,093488	0,123124	0,298617*
Customer orientation	0,194945	0,133699	0,257757*
Company values' orientation	0,171933	0,157271	0,239526*
Ability to work in team	0,124223	0,189688	0,270848*
Time keeping /Accuracy	0,130204	0,229567*	0,237462*
Adaptability & Flexibility	0,048406	0,116139	0,221255*
Communication skills	0,150542	0,061747	0,160139
Stress resistance, resilience	0,090808	0,060749	0,261549*

Development potential	0,151945	0,213978*	0,268575*
Job experience	0,127810	0,084831	0,218361*
Relevant praxis	0,096148	0,162237	0,204799*

* - significant on level 5 %.

Source: outcome of software STATISTICA 13.5 EN

Testing the correlation between both set of variables is shown in Table 5. It is clear that most of the determinants of perceived individual performance could be impacted by ability-enhancing HRM practice Training & Development, except of two determinants.

This analysis we can close by a statement that significant canonical correlations between the characters in both set of variables based on the first canonical root are the result between the HRM practice Training & Development and the determinants as Customer orientation, Result orientation, Company values' orientation, Ability to work in team, Adaptability & Flexibility, Time keeping/Accuracy and Development potential. In other words, if Training & Development is considered as an independent variable, we can say that the ability-enhancing HRM practice Training & Development impacts perceived individual performance represented by characters: Customer orientation, Result orientation, Company values' orientation, Ability to work in team, Adaptability & Flexibility, Time keeping/Accuracy and Development potential.

Conclusion

Most of the studies in this area measured the opinion of managers. Our research was focusing on obtaining employee opinion on the discussed issue, so what is the employee perception on impact of HRM practices on the performance.

Based on the conducted test we can conclude that there is a positive significant correlation between the ability-enhancing HRM practices and determinants of the individual performance.

The HRM practice Training & Development, representing the ability-enhancing practices, influences the perceived individual performance represented by the following determinants: Customer orientation, Result orientation, Company values' orientation, Ability to work in team, Adaptability & Flexibility, Time keeping/Accuracy and Development potential. There was confirmed relationship between the seven determinants of individual performance out of fourteen. There is also a correlation between HRM practice Selection with the Time keeping/Accuracy and Development potential.

The key findings are related to Training & Development. This is crucial for the future of Human Resource Management, not only in IT industry. Managing Training & Development, the organizations could influence the individual performance that results in impact on the organizational performance. Organizations can focus on determinants of individual performance and set proper Trainings for employees in order to create the impact. We can see that Customer orientation could be influenced by Training. It is so simple to organize a training and provide it to employees who struggle with individual performance. However, it is not sufficient to provide employee training, more important is to manage the gained knowledge to

utilize it for the company purposes. Organizations need to measure the impact of new knowledge on the company processes and outcomes. We recommend to focus also on evaluation of effectiveness of the development activities in order to measure the best the impact of investments into training and development.

The abilities are seen as basic determinants for an employee performance. In the recruitment and selection process, all organizations check the level of skills the potential employee has and whether the skills match the job requirements. When the candidate is hired, the newcomer usually joins the adaptation program in the organization to learn about the company, values, processes, and the employee is guided into missing knowledge needed for job performance. When conditions change, the employee is provided by new training about the new technology, process or tool to be used. The abilities are the basics, so managing the abilities and the skills of employees should be the basic focus of the organizations in their journey to create competitive advantage. Focusing only on abilities is not sufficient. Organizations have to focus also on Motivation and Opportunities, according to the AMO model, as all three factors are important for managing performance to create the best impact.

We would recommend to conduct researches also about impacts of motivation-enhancing HRM practices and opportunity-enhancing HRM practices on individual performance.

The Training & Development is very important HRM practice accompanying employees through whole life-cycle in the organization. This is not just HRM practice but development and education should be a strategic approach of HRM, if organizations want to create competitive advantage. This uniqueness is possible just with the qualified and motivated employees. Organizations should keep this in mind and keep HRM as a part of the strategic management and focus.

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