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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	DO EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS MANIPULATE EARNINGS? SEYED HOSSEIN HOSSEINI & MOHAMADREZA ABDOLI	1
2.	MANAGEMENT EDUCATION – IMPACT OF VALUE ORIENTATIONS ON CAREER & BUSINESS PUSHPA SHETTY	7
3.	STRATEGIC GAINS OF BY-PRODUCT MARKETING: A STUDY ON SELECTED COMPANIES OF BANGLADESH GOLAM MOHAMMAD FORKAN & TAHSAN RAHMAN KHAN	13
4.	THE EFFECT OF CURRENCY DEVALUATION ON THE ETHIOPIAN ECONOMY'S TRADE BALANCE: A TIME SERIOUS ANALYSIS FIKREYESUS TEMESGEN & MENASBO GEBRU	17
5.	MUTUAL FUNDS IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF INVESTORS PERCEPTIONS DR. PRASHANTA ATHMA & K. RAJ KUMAR	21
6.	FINANCES OF CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION, OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY G. VENKATACHALAM & P. MOHAN REDDY	27
7.	THE INFLUENCE OF MARKETING ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE FUNCTIONS FOR KITCHENWARE, A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KOCHI METRO ANILKUMAR. N	32
8.	BEHAVIOURAL FINANCE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR INVESTMENT IN FINANCIAL MARKET DR. SREEKANTH. M S	39
9.	THE EFFECT OF MERGER AND ACQUISITIONS ON THE SHAREHOLDERS' WEALTH: EVIDENCE FROM THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN INDIA DR. RAMACHANDRAN AZHAGIAH & T. SATHISH KUMAR	42
10.	WHETHER DIFFERENCES MAKE DIFFERENCES? A NEW PARADIGM ON WORKFORCE DIVERSITY D. RAMADEVI & DR. S. A. SENTHIL KUMAR	54
11.	CORPORATE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: NEW BASE LINE TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY KAVITA MEENA	59
12.	GREEN MARKETING BRIJESH SIVATHANU PILLAI & KANCHAN PRANAY PATIL	64
13.	MARKET EFFICIENCY AND INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS IN THE SECURITIES MARKET OF INDIA – A STUDY DR. MUNIVENKATAPPA	74
14.	CHALLENGE OF LIQUIDITY RISK AND CREDIT RISK IN INSURANCE COMPANIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN PUBLIC SECTOR GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANIES AVINASH TRIPATHI	82
15.	CONTEMPORARY ISSUE ON DEREGULATION OF SAVING ACCOUNT INTEREST RATE DR. RAJIV GANDHI	87
16.	A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS ON CHILDREN AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PARENTS BUYING DECISION GINU GEORGE	92
17.	DETERMINANTS OF CORPORATE DIVIDEND POLICY IN SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR CEMENT COMPANIES IN TAMIL NADU - AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS DR. V. MOHANRAJ & DR. N.DEEPA	107
18.	THE ROLE OF 'FOLLOW THE NEIGHBOUR' STRATEGY AND FACTORS INFLUENCING INVESTMENT DECISION WITH REFERENCE TO NASIK CITY BHUSHAN PARDESHI, PAVAN C. PATIL & PADMA LOCHAN BISOI	110
19.	IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON BRAND RECALL AND BRAND PERSONALITY FORMATION: A STUDY OF ORGANISED FASHION RETAILING HIMANSHU SHEKHAWAT & PREETI TAK	116
20.	A CASE STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT IN WORKING WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT\SEMI-GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES IN SHIMLA, (H.P.) SHALLU SEHGAL	122
21.	LEVERAGE ANALYSIS AND ITS IMPACT ON SHARE PRICE AND EARNING OF THE SELECTED STEEL COMPANIES OF INDIA – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY MUKESH CAJMER	129
22.	A STUDY ON LEVEL OF EXPECTATION OF MUTUAL FUND INVESTORS & IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE ON PERIOD OF INVESTMENT IN MUTUAL FUND TARAK PAUL	136
23.	IMPACT OF MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS ON FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TATA GROUP NEHA VERMA & DR. RAHUL SHARMA	140
24.	EXPLORING SERVICE INNOVATION PROCESS AND STRATEGY IN DEVELOPING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP-WITH REFERENCE 21st CENTURYBANK 'YES BANK' SHILPA SANTOSH CHADICAL & DEBLINA SAHA VASHISHTA	144
25.	EMPLOYEE LOYALTY ABOVE CUSTOMER LOYALTY AFREEN NISHAT A. NASABI	152
26.	FDI IN MULTIBRAND RETAILING IN INDIA: PERCEPTION OF THE UNORGANISED RETAILERS IN BUSINESS CAPITAL OF UTTARAKHAND DEEPAK JOSHI	156
27.	COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS IN INDIA NISHIT V. DAVDA	161
28.	IMPACT OF HRM PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA B. LAXMINARAYANA	167
29.	POST-MERGER FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF ACQUIRING BANKS IN INDIA: A CASE ANALYSIS AZEEM AHMAD KHAN	172
30.	MANPOWER REQUIREMENT ASSESSMENT CONSIDERING THE MAKE OR BUY DECISION POLICY OF CENTRAL WORKSHOP IN AN INTEGRATED STEEL & POWER COMPANY AKHILESH JHA, SOUPOARNO MUKHERJEE & RANDHIR KUMAR	176
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK	181

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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IMPACT OF HRM PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper empirically examines the relationship between Human Resource Management practices and performance of non-academic employees of Open Universities in India. Non-academic employees of two open universities formed the population for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 433 respondents from the national open university and a state open university of India. The findings of the study indicate that except the practices of performance appraisal and the career opportunities, all the HRM practices were positively associated with perceived performance. Multiple regression results showed that 42 per cent of the variation in Employee Performance is explained by six variables, namely; Recruitment and selection, Training and development, Performance Appraisal, Career opportunities, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor subordinate relationship, Decentralization and Team work.

KEYWORDS

HRM practices, non-academic employees, open universities.

INTRODUCTION

Education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system has emerged as an alternative system to the conventional system and completed about five decades. Open and Distance Learning System is a method of imparting higher education through distance mode with flexible entry qualifications. Since the inception of the first correspondence course institute at the University of Delhi in 1962, open and distance learning in India has grown to include one national open university, 13 state open universities, and 119 correspondence course institutes affiliated to traditional universities, accounting for around 25 per cent of the total enrolment in higher education (Department of Education, MHRD, GOI, 2007, p.108). In the three tier-set up of open universities, non-academic employees interact with the target students right from pre-admission counselling to the completion of their programmes. "The teacher to non-academic ratio is 1:6 in the ODL system against 1:3 in the conventional system" (Kaushik et.al 2006). The various activities involved in the system are; Course Design and Development, Material production, Electronic Media Production, Students Registration, Students Support Services, continuous Evaluation through Assignments, and Students Data Base management. Further, the operational area of the open universities is distributed geographically. Thus, the HR management in ODL system universities needs special attention and thorough study.

Human resource management is responsible for selecting and inducting competent people, providing training and motivating to perform their duties with efficiency. An effective and competent human resource is strength of organizations in tackling the challenges of competitive environment prevailed in organizations today. The importance of possessing a competitive human resource is mandatory requirement for the success of today's organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of research studies established a positive impact of HRM on organisational performance. Becker and Gerhart (1996), Becker and Huselid (1998), and Dyer & Reeves (1995) empirical studies found that firms which align their HRM practices with their business strategy will achieve superior outcomes. MacDuffie (1995) found that some HRM practices are related to productively and quality of the firm. Delery and Doty (1996) found significant relationships between HRM practices and accounting profits among banks. Youndt et al (1996) found that certain combinations of HRM practices are related to operational performance of manufacturing firms. Guthrie (2001) surveyed in New Zealand corporations found that HRM practices are related to turnover and profitability of the corporations.

Chang and Chen (2002) investigated the linkage of human resource management and firm performance in Taiwan and found significantly positive relationship. In this study, they selected six dimensions of HRM practices, training and development, team work, benefits, human resource planning, performance appraisal and employment security and two items of firm performance, employee productivity and employee turnover and found that these practices were positively influenced employee productivity and firm performance. Green et al., (2006), in the study of US manufacturing firms, concluded that integrated approach to HR practices facilitated satisfied and committed employees who demonstrated remarkable individual and team performance.

Guest and Conway (2004) concluded that human resource is an important potential source of sustained competitive advantage. Huselid (1995) argued that the impact of HRM on behaviour of the employees results in the effectiveness of the employees.

Lee & Lee (2007), in the study of Taiwanese Steel Industry, investigated six HRM practices on business performance, namely, training and development, teamwork, compensation/incentives, HR planning, performance appraisal, and employee security help improve firms' business performance including employee's productivity, product quality and firm's flexibility. This study revealed that three items of HRM practices influence business performance: training and development, compensation/incentives, and HR planning. In a study in Sri Lanka, Ruwan (2007) empirically evaluated six human resource practices with reference to Marketing Executive Turnover of Leasing Companies in Sri Lanka. The HR practices assessed were realistic job information, job analysis, work family balance, career development, compensation and supervisor support and their likely impact on the marketing executive intent to leave in leasing companies. Results indicated that out of the six human resource practices job analysis, compensation and career development are strong influence of their turnover. Shahzad et al., (2008), examined the relationship between HR practices (compensation, promotion and performance evaluation) and perceived employee performance in university teachers in Pakistan. Results indicated that compensation and promotion practices were positively correlated while performance evaluation practices are not significantly correlated with employee performance.

A significant body of previous research has reported significantly positive relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance. These studies were focused on the impact of number of specific HRM practices on organisation performance. Some of the studies focused on the impact of HRM practices on employee retention and employee commitment. There has been not much work done in this area in Indian context. Some researchers have focused on Indian context and tried to see applicability of emerging theories in India (Balasubramanian, 1995; Budhwar & Sparrow, 1997; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001). One of the conclusions drawn by the researchers is the context specific nature of HRM. It also showed that a shift is taking place in the pattern of HRM practices in Indian organisations from traditional administrative type to a more strategic and proactive type. No empirical research was found during literature survey with reference to Human Resource Management practices in open and distance learning universities. However a few studies from countries Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan have focused on HRM practices in Universities (Olufemi, 2009; Shahzad et al, 2008). Thus a gap exists in the research in this area. The purpose of the study was to study the existing Human resource practices in Open Universities with special reference to the non-academic employees. This study will offer valuable insight about the importance of HRM practices for superior and sustainable performance of open universities.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

After reviewing the literature, the following null hypotheses formulated.

- H₀₁: There is no significant association between Recruitment and selection and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₂: There is no significant association between Training and Development and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₃: There is no significant association between Performance Appraisal and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₄: There is no significant association between Career opportunities and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₅: There is no significant association between Top Management Leadership and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₆: There is no significant association between Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₇: There is no significant association between Decentralization and perceived non-academic employee performance.
 H₀₈: There is no significant association between Team Work and perceived non-academic employee performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined the relationship of HRM practices on perceived performance of non-academic employees in Open Universities. Non-academic employees of two open universities formed population for this study. The sample selected for this study was 500 non-academic employees of all cadres of hierarchy. Convenience sampling technique was adopted for this study. Descriptive research method is adopted considering the suitability to the research study which measured the impact of HRM practices which have categorized under eight dimensions on the perceived performance of non-academic employees of the Open Universities. These were independent variables and the Employee performance was dependent variable.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

A structured questionnaire consisted of 3 sections with 54 questions was administered for collecting the primary data. The measures used in this study have been developed from a review of the available literature. Wherever the variables adopted from the available scales the same have been thoroughly examined to suit the present study.

Section 1 of the questionnaire contained 9 items related to demographic information of the respondents. These items are related to gender, age, designation, employee level in the hierarchy of the organization, years of experience and qualifications of the respondents.

Section 2 of the survey instrument was structured in to 8 dimensions of HRM practices consisting of 45 items. Section 3 of the questionnaire contained (8) eight items on job satisfaction and employee performance. The degree to which employees were satisfied with their performance, promotions in career, higher education pursued during the service and job satisfaction were asked in this section. All the variables asked in the sections two and three were measured on 5 point Likert-type scales (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree). A covering letter that explained the purpose of the study was incorporated.

PRE-TEST OF THE INSTRUMENT

A pilot test over 30 employees was undertaken from all the cadres of non-academic employees of the University to measure the consistency of the questionnaire. The table 1 shows the reliability results of the instrument. The Chronbach's coefficients alphas for all the HRM variables ranged from .71 to .87, which is acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

THE SURVEY

Survey conducted with 500 employees from all the cadres of Non-teaching employees of two Open Universities by a questionnaire. The sample was selected to proportionally have representation from all levels of hierarchy in the sample from various divisions of the organizations. To select the respondents, convenience sampling method was adopted. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to obtain and ensure maximum number of usable questionnaires. A total of 433 questionnaires returned from all the cadres of employees yielding response rate of 86.6 per cent.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study examined the impact of HRM practices which have categorized under eight dimensions on the perceived performance of non-academic employees of the Open Universities.

PROFILES OF THE RESPONDENTS

TABLE 1 – DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Description		Frequency n=433	Percentage
Gender	Male	324	74.8
	Female	109	25.2
Age	20-29	9	2.1
	30-39	72	16.6
	40-49	244	56.4
	50 and above	108	24.9
Designation	Senior level	22	5.1
	Middle level	111	25.6
	Junior level	300	69.3
Division/ Functional area	Administration and allied	184	42.5
	Students services	249	57.5
Experience	below 5 years	35	8.1
	6-10 years	18	4.2
	11-15 years	65	15.0
	16-20 years	93	21.5
	above 20 years	222	51.3
Qualification	Matriculation	11	2.5
	Intermediate	13	3.0
	Graduation	213	49.2
	Post Graduation	182	42.0
	Doctorate	14	3.2
		433	100
Qualifications obtained after joining IGNOU	Diploma	65	31.4
	Degree	22	10.6
	Masters	117	56.5
	Doctorate	3	1.4
	Total	207	100.0
Higher studies pursuing at present	Diploma	28	35.9
	Post Graduate	47	60.3
	Doctorate	3	3.8
	Total	78	100.0

Source: Primary data compilation

The table 1 presents the demographic profiles of the respondents. It displays the characteristics of 433 respondents in the study. In terms of gender, 324 (74.8%) are male respondents and 109 (25.2%) are female respondents. Majority of the respondents 244 (56.4%) are under age group of 40-49 years. Of the 433 respondents, 300 (69.3%) respondents are junior level employees followed by 111 (25.6%) middle level employees and 22 (5.1%) senior level employees. Regarding experience, 222 (51.3%) respondents have more than 20 years of experience. Majority of the respondents 213 (49.2%) are graduates and 182 (42.0%) post graduates. Of the 433 respondents, 207 have completed their higher education after joining the organisation while 78 respondents are pursuing their higher studies at present.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

TABLE 3: REGRESSION MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.648	.420	.409	.429

Table 4: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	56.558	8	7.070	38.326	.000 ^a
Residual	78.213	424	.184		
Total	134.771	432			

Source: survey data

a. **Predictors: (Constant)**, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Career Opportunities, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship, Decentralisation, and Team-work.

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

TABLE 5: COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.458	.144		10.149	.000
	RS	.292	.039	.382	7.531	.000
	TD	.059	.053	.067	1.127	.260
	PA	-.065	.047	-.084	-1.381	.168
	CO	-.054	.034	-.075	-1.590	.113
	TML	.107	.043	.143	2.464	.014
	SSR	.130	.044	.149	2.927	.004
	D	.040	.048	.051	.839	.402
	TW	.163	.052	.190	3.135	.002

Source: survey data analysis

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

The **regression table** summarizes the model performance through the following statistics

R: represents the multiple correlation coefficients with a range lies between -1 and +1. Since the R value of 0.648 is close to 1 Employee Performance has a high positive relationship with Recruitment and selection, Training and development, Performance Appraisal, Career opportunities, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor-subordinate relationship, Decentralization, Team work

R square: represents the coefficient of determination and ranges between 0 and 1. Since the R square value is 0.420, 42 % of the variation in Employee Performance is explained by Recruitment and selection, Training and development, Performance Appraisal, Career opportunities, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor subordinate relationship, Decentralization and Team work.

The **Model Summary table** describes the Regression sum of squares and Residual sum of squares. Since the Regression sum of squares value of 56.55, Residual sum of squares value of 78.21 the **coefficient of determination** value indicates 40% of the variation explained. Further, a significance value of 0.000<0.05 indicates a significant R squared.

The **model coefficient table** reports the coefficients for Recruitment and selection, Training and development, Performance Appraisal, Career opportunities, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor-subordinate relationship, Decentralization, Team work along with the significance value. A low significance value of less than 0.05 for Recruitment and selection, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor subordinate relationship, Team work indicates they significantly impact the Employee Performance. Further Training and development, Performance Appraisal, Career opportunities, Decentralization have a significance value greater than 0.05 implying that the impact of these variables on Employee Performance is negligible and hence can be ignored

The regression equation for the above data is:

Employee Performance = 1.458 + 0.292 (Recruitment and selection) +0.059 (Training and development) - 0.065 (Performance Appraisal) -0.054 (career opportunities) +0.017 (Top management leadership) +0.130 (Supervisor Subordinate relationship) +0.040 (Decentralization) +0.163 (Team work)

The above equation is the calculated contribution for the tested elements to achieve Employee Performance effectively. From the Regression equation we notice that except Performance Appraisal and Career opportunities, remaining all the factors have a positive impact on Employee Performance. Therefore, the null hypotheses 3 and 4 need not to be rejected while the remaining can be rejected.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study examined the impact of HRM practices which have categorized under eight dimensions on the perceived performance of non-academic employees of the Open Universities. They were; Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Career Planning, Top Management Leadership, Supervisor – Subordinate Relationship, Decentralization, and Team Work.

The results of multiple regression analysis revealed that the two practices, Performance Appraisal and the Career Opportunities are negative impact on the performance of employees. The remaining six factors have a positive impact on Employee Performance. The dimensions which have positive impact on the performance of employees are recruitment and selection, training and development, top management leadership, supervisor-subordinate relationship, decentralization, and team-work.

The performance appraisal (-0.012) was negative impact on the employee performance. In the university, it was observed that the performance appraisal system is known as Annual Confidential Report (ACR) which is done annually. The ACR is written by the immediate supervisor of the section and reviewed by the head of the department or division. This is a one way process in this organisation and the employees are not informed about their performance. Therefore, this system of ACR is a one way process in the university and ends with keeping the records in the safe custody. This may be the reason that employees may not have confidence of their performance review.

The practice of career opportunities (-0.014) was also negative impact on the performance of employees as perceived. This may be because of the promotion policies of the university. As described in the profile of the university, the employees are promoted to the next higher post based on only seniority and not on

merit. Since the employees with merits also get promotion as per seniority, they would be in the line along with the employees who perform average. Hence this may be reason for disappointment in the employees who performance excellent.

The open universities have the responsibility of providing support to learners on time where the large number of students pursuing their studies while working. The operational area of an Open University is not confined to the University Campus as in the case of a conventional university but distributed geographically. In the present study, the university has its operational area across the country. Most of the activities in the processes are executed with the non-academic employees only. The non-academic employees have significant role in providing services to the distance learners right from the pre-admission counselling to the completion of their respective programmes.

The students of the university largely interacts with the staff of non-academic employees of the university in connection with their admissions, materials and the examinations matters. Thus, the HR management in ODL system universities needs special attention and thorough study. This research study revealed that human resource management practices have significant impact on the performance of the non-academic employees of the university.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is subject to the usual limitations like all fields of survey research. Firstly, the respondents were drawn from only two open universities. Secondly, the study was restricted to non-academic employees of the organization. Another limitation of the study is the academic employees were not considered for this study.

There are a number of areas which are related to the present study and where future studies can be conducted. A few important areas relevant to the area for future study are summarized below: First, findings of this study provide some insight into how human resource management practices can influence employees' behaviour, which potentially contribute to employees' performance. However, to understand fully, the relationship between human resource practice and employee performance, studies may be conducted collecting data from conventional universities and other open universities.

Secondly, the study centres in the ODL System are working at gross root level where part-time staff deputed to look after multi tasks. This area is required to be researched focusing the work load and the services provided at the centres.

The teaching staff of various schools of study in ODL universities are engaged in preparation of course materials pertaining to the programmes of the respective school of study. Course materials development is the prime task of the faculty concerned besides other academic work like preparation of assignments questions. Studies may be conducted to evaluate the impact of HRM practices on the performance of teaching faculties.

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